USING A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO EXPLORE NURSING FACULTY
PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING ONLINE

A dissertation submitted to the
Kent State University College and Graduate School
of Education, Health and Human Services
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Yvonne M. Smith

December 2014
© Copyright, 2014 by Yvonne M. Smith
All Rights Reserved
The purpose of this research study was to understand perceptions of faculty members regarding their experiences of teaching nursing courses in undergraduate baccalaureate and graduate programs, using asynchronous, web-based courses. The goal of this researcher was to explore faculty perceptions of online teaching and work to clarify workload and policy issues, barriers to quality online teaching and learning, and faculty needs for professional development and support.

A qualitative descriptive design method was used to explore nursing faculty perceptions of teaching online. Data were obtained through an initial demographic survey and through interviews with a subset of 10 faculty participants.

The findings from this study reveal that nursing faculty members perceive (a) that relationships are key to learning and that these relationships can be complex and difficult to establish in the online learning environment, (b) that support comes in a variety of forms and is needed to make learning work well in the online environment, (c) that constraints and concerns interfere with their ability to engage students and provide the best online learning opportunities for their students, and (d) that there are opportunities to improve online teaching and learning.
The findings from this study deepen our understanding of online teaching and learning in the discipline of nursing. Implications for nursing education include preparing nurse educators for the work of teaching in online environments, creating environments that foster teaching and learning, and enriching both faculty member and student experiences in online teaching and learning.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work has been influenced by many experts in Education and in Nursing. I have received tremendous support from many people, each of whom deserve my sincere appreciation and acknowledgment. First, I would like to thank Dr. Alicia Crowe, my doctoral dissertation chairperson, my academic advisor, my colleague, and my friend. Dr. Crowe has challenged me to develop a deeper understanding of a qualitative approach to inquiry and to more fully explore faculty perceptions of teaching in online environments. As a critical friend, Dr. Crowe has helped me transition from a student seeking understanding to a scholar studying online teaching. As a critical friend, she has helped me examine my own teaching practice. My committee member, Dr. Mark Kretovics, has provided excellent feedback and insight into opportunities to strengthen my research and enhance my communication. Dr. William Bintz, who was willing to join my committee later in the process, offered guidance and challenged my thinking about this research. Dr. John West joined my committee as the Graduate Faculty Representative. I am deeply appreciative of the time and effort each committee member spent reading, questioning, and discussing my work.

Dr. Mary Lou Holly served on my advising committee and offered gentle critique, thoughtful insights, and strong encouragement for this work. Dr. Richard Ambrose served as my advisor until his retirement. Though my time to learn from him was short, his influence is evident in this work. This team of expert faculty from the College of Education, Health, and Human Services (EHHS) were a pleasure to work with throughout
my doctoral education and I am appreciative for the opportunity to have each involved in this work.

Next, I am grateful to nursing colleagues who offered support, insights, and enthusiasm for my dissertation work. My colleagues at Kent State University encouraged me on my journey and provided a safe environment for my questions and conversations about both doctoral work and about online teaching and learning. College of Nursing colleagues served as mentors, guides, resources, supporters, and friends throughout this process. My gratitude towards nursing colleagues extends beyond Kent State University to those who were willing to participate in this dissertation research, sharing their experiences, helping to deepen my understanding of nursing faculty perceptions of teaching in online environments. I am thankful for the tremendous support from my nursing colleagues, both at Kent State and from across the country.

Finally, the support of friends and family has been ongoing throughout this educational process. The close relationships I have with these special individuals have afforded me the opportunity to pursue this process with support and understanding. Within my family, my strongest advocate for this work has been my husband Michael. His strength and understanding, has made this journey possible.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of This Study</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Organization of the Document</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Perceptions of Online Teaching</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Perceptions in Other Disciplines</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Faculty Perceptions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Preference</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality in Online Education</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Workload</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Commitment</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Size</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths and Weaknesses of Online Teaching</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Needs for Online Teaching</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Strategies for Faculty Professional Development</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Influences</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Transactional Distance</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community of Inquiry Framework</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Care</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Background and Role</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for Design</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant and Setting Selection</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of Data</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis ...................................................................................... 94
Ethics ............................................................................................... 99
Trustworthiness ................................................................................ 100
IV. FINDINGS ...................................................................................... 104
  Relationships With Students .......................................................... 105
    Student Engagement and Learning .................................................. 105
    Social Presence and Knowing Students ......................................... 112
    Meeting Students’ Needs ................................................................ 119
  Support ............................................................................................ 126
    Peer Support .................................................................................. 126
    Professional Development ............................................................. 129
    Technical Support .......................................................................... 135
    Administrative Support .................................................................. 138
  Constraints and Concerns ............................................................... 143
    Workload ....................................................................................... 143
    Student Behaviors ......................................................................... 156
    Technical Problems ......................................................................... 162
  Opportunities to Improve Online Teaching and Learning .................. 164
    Course Level .................................................................................. 165
    Administrative Levels .................................................................... 167
  Summary ........................................................................................... 170
V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS ..................................................... 171
  Introduction ..................................................................................... 171
  Relationships With Students .......................................................... 173
    Online Relationships Are Different .............................................. 174
    Online Relationships Are More Difficult to Establish .................... 177
    Online Relationships Are Key to Student Engagement ................. 178
  Support for Online Teaching ........................................................... 179
    Peer Support .................................................................................. 180
    Mentoring ...................................................................................... 182
    Technical Support .......................................................................... 184
    Administrative Support .................................................................. 185
    Creating Community ...................................................................... 187
  Constraints and Concerns ............................................................... 188
    Workload ....................................................................................... 189
    Student Behaviors ......................................................................... 193
  Opportunities .................................................................................. 195
    New Faculty Members .................................................................. 196
    Administrative Level ...................................................................... 196
  Limitations of This Study ................................................................. 198
  Implications for Nursing Education ................................................. 200
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The popularity of online courses among students, faculty members, and administrators is indisputable (Allen & Seaman, 2011; American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2012; Straumsheim, 2014). Seen by student and faculty members as a convenient manner in which to accomplish teaching and learning, both groups acknowledge the practicality of online courses (Huang & Hsiao, 2012; Lindsay, Jeffrey, & Singh, 2009). Academic administrators also value online teaching as a course delivery method that allows for increased enrollments without the constraints imposed by traditional learning environments, including classroom space and learning laboratories (Allen & Seaman, 2011). The latest advances in technology to support online teaching and learning are readily available to both the student and the institution and are an affordable investment for both groups. Despite the popularity of online courses among faculty members, students, and administrators, there are gaps in the literature regarding some aspects of online teaching and learning.

This dissertation study was designed to explore nursing faculty perceptions of teaching in an online environment to give voice to the stories and experiences of faculty members who are employed in full time positions, at public universities, with a nursing program accredited by the Collegiate Commission on Nursing Education (CCNE). In this chapter, the background of the research problem, the rationale of the study, the research purpose, and the research questions are presented. Terminology used throughout this dissertation is also defined to provide clarity.
Background of the Problem

The Sloan Consortium reported that growth in online enrollment has continued to exceed expectations with over 6 million students enrolled in at least one online course during 2010; a number that equates to one third of all students in higher education in the U.S. (Allen & Seaman, 2011). Data related to the current number of nursing courses or nursing programs offered online is lacking; however, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) reported approximately two thirds of all RN to BSN post-licensure programs are offered partially or completely online (AACN, 2012). Further, the majority of RN to MSN programs are reportedly offered in traditional face-to-face classroom setting but the number of programs delivered online or blended is increasing annually (AACN, 2012).

In an article addressing the current shortage of nurses and nursing faculty members, Kolowich (2010) touts online courses as the “cure for the nursing crisis” in the title of his article. Citing the January 2010 report from the Carnegie Foundation that offers the recommendation that all working RNs hold a minimum of a bachelor’s degree, Kolowich (2010) offered support for the rapid growth of online nursing courses and programs. There is evidence of growing support for this education recommendation in other public reports including the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) The Future of Nursing 2010, the Joint Statement for Academic Progression of Nursing Students in 2013 which was endorsed by five national organization concerned with the education level of nurses, and Charting Nursing Future: A Case for Academic Progression published by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) in 2013 (AACN, 2012; Institute of Medicine, 2010;
According to the AACN (2014b), a baccalaureate nursing education program, “prepares the new nurse for a broader scope of practice and provides the nurse with a better understanding of the cultural, political, economic, and social issues that affect patients and influence health care delivery” (para 4). Finally, acute care facilities that seek Magnet Designation as an indicator of excellence need to identify their specific plan for moving towards the IOM goal of 80% BSN staff by 2020 (American Nurses Credentialing, 2014). This national emphasis on increased education for nurses is a driving force in moving more nursing programs to online learning.

As individual states embrace the Carnegie recommendation for additional education, regulation is a likely outcome. To date, several states have considered a requirement that nurses holding a diploma or an associate degree in nursing be required to earn a bachelors degree in nursing (BSN) within 10 years of initial licensure. The “BSN in Ten” initiative has the support of major nursing organizations, including the American Nurses Association and the National League for Nursing, as well as legislators across the country, but to date has not been adopted by any state (NLN Nursing Education Policy, 2012; Trossman, 2008). Kolowich (2010) contended online education offers options to nurses that do not exist in traditional face-to-face programs. The resulting growth and popularity of online courses in nursing, and in higher education, in general, have necessitated research on a variety of related topics.

With such a large number of nursing programs, and record numbers of students enrolled in both pre and post licensure students, more colleges of nursing have moved to
offering programs partially or completely online. Though much has been written about
online teaching and learning, there is still much to be learned. The literature supports
online teaching as a delivery method that can be as effective as face-to-face delivery of
courses and that student learning in web, hybrid, and face-to-face courses is comparable.
It is important to study online teaching and learning in the context of nursing to better
understand how online education impacts faculty members who teach the online course
and students enrolled in those courses.

**Rationale for the Study**

Early research on the topic of distance and web-based education focused on student
learning. For example, Bata-Jones and Avery (2004), Bee and Usip (1998), Brown and
Kulikowich (2004), Buckley (2003), and Sullivan (2002) each compared the
effectiveness of strategies in web classrooms to those used in traditional classroom
environments. Aragon and Johnson (2008); Bocchi, Eastman, and Swift (2004);
Hyllegard, Deng, and Hunter (2008); and Morris, Wu, and Finnegan (2005) studied
factors related to student attrition. Contreras-Castillo, Favela, Perez-Fragoso, and
Santamaria-del-Angel (2004); Daroszewski, Kinser, and Lloyd (2004); Nussbaum,
Hartley, Sinatra, Reynolds, and Bendixen (2004); and Garrison and Cleveland-Innes
(2005) studied student engagement strategies.

More recently, the focus has shifted to include not only the impact on students and
student learning, but to begin to evaluate the impact teaching in an online environment has
on faculty members. Though frequently anecdotal in reporting, one common agreement
among many authors is that the act of teaching online increases faculty workload.
Andersen and Avery (2008), however, found no statistical significance in the differences between teaching online versus teaching in a traditional classroom setting, but other authors present opposing viewpoints. Ascough (2002) contended workload ranges from 50–300% more for designing and teaching courses online. Beffa-Negrini, Cohen, and Miller (2002) reported faculty members estimate one hour per student is needed each week to interact in the online classroom. Moisey, Ally, and Spencer (2006) and A. E. Johnson (2008) interviewed faculty members who raised concerns about the increased time commitment involved in teaching online and found this to be a barrier to developing and teaching web-based courses.

Of specific interest to this author is the impact of teaching asynchronous web-based courses on nursing faculty members. Asynchronous interactions in online courses add another layer of complexity for both faculty members and students. Positive aspects of online courses include flexibility in participation with regard to time, date, and location. Students and faculty members can be, literally, anywhere there is a broadband Internet connection. This observable fact allows greater diversity within the course when students and faculty members are not limited to one geographical location (Dabbagh, 2007). Noted strengths of asynchronous learning environments are that students have time to complete assignments at a time that is most convenient and that provides support for personal reflection on learning and strong composition of written work (Aquino-Russell, Struby, & Reviczky, 2007) consequently increasing the effectiveness of student learning (Hiltz & Goldman, 2005).
Asynchronous teaching and learning is not without challenge. With flexibility comes challenge in that the faculty member is no longer able to reach all students simultaneously, thus special consideration must be given to the type of communication tools used and the time frame the learner may need to access the information. Faculty members must also make certain that students understand how to access these tools and when they will be used with the course to limit student confusion and frustration (Sammons, 2003). According to Hiltz and Goldman (2005), successful asynchronous courses depend on a number of factors, including teachers having the necessary hardware, software, and teaching platform and possessing the appropriate knowledge and skills for teaching in a web-based environment. Student characteristics, particularly participation and motivation, and the fit of the course subject matter and content to the web-based learning environment also have a bearing on the success of online courses (Hiltz & Goldman, 2005).

A general concern of faculty members is the issue of work/life balance when teaching online. The 24 hour a day, seven day a week availability of the course is viewed as both a blessing and a curse to faculty life. Though work can be done virtually anywhere, at any time, faculty members struggle to confine work to a reasonable number of hours to allow space for other work and personal activities. Managing student expectations in an environment that lacks the traditional boundaries of time and space presents additional challenges (deNoyelles, Cobb & Lowe, 2012; DiBiase, 2004; Yoshimura, 2008).
Some faculty members report missing the face-to-face contact with students (Andrusyszyn, Iwasin, & Goldenbert, 1999), feeling disconnected from students and disjointed in their teaching efforts (Andrusyszyn et al., 1999; Avery, Cohen, & Walker, 2008; Baglione & Nastanski, 2007; Henning, 2012; Ironside, 2001; LeBlanc, Pruchnicki, Rohdieck, Khurma, & Dasta, 2007), lacking technical comfort or competency (Avery et al., 2008), and not being allocated additional time to interact, respond, and monitor students in the web-based classroom (Beffa-Negrini et al., 2002). Maintaining academic integrity in the online classroom (Haber & Mills, 2008), having adequate support (Marek, 2009; Mash et al., 2006; Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, & Marx, 2000), and concerns about others viewing online teaching as less credible than teaching in a traditional face-to-face classroom (Yick, Patrick, & Costin, 2005) have been identified.

Tremendous support for faculty development in the area of online teaching is evident throughout the literature. In a 2005 publication, Yang and Cornelious identified what faculty members need to know (e.g., preparation, design and delivery strategies, techniques, methods, etc.) to teach online and stated that administration needs to support faculty members in this teaching environment. G. L. Anderson and Tredway (2009) cautioned that faculty members may not be aware of the different instructional models or theories and may not be comfortable assuming the additional roles, such as advisor, developer, and designer, that are frequently required when teaching in online environments. Expertise in designing course elements that foster and support student engagement and attainment of course learning outcomes may be lacking in faculty members who are inexperienced in online teaching. Viewed as critical to the success of
online courses, many authors offer recommendations for helping faculty members transition from traditional classroom instruction to teaching in web-based environments but much of the literature pertaining to faculty development for teaching in a web-based environment is theoretical or anecdotal. Lacking is research specific to effective faculty professional development strategies and programs for online teaching.

Online education has expanded exponentially in recent years. The discipline of nursing has embraced the transition to online teaching and learning but there are still many questions and concerns about the nuances of teaching and learning in online environments. We know nursing faculty and their teaching are important to student learning. Concerns raised within the literature include that of faculty workload, faculty preparation for teaching in online environments, and in the case of nursing faculty members, preparation for teaching more generally. The need for adequate support and the changes in faculty role expectations are frequently identified but not always well explored from the standpoint of faculty perspective. Faculty satisfaction and performance and evaluation of teaching are areas that have not been fully explored. In general, the body of research related to evaluation of teaching is greater than that of faculty satisfaction. This study is not designed to address faculty satisfaction or to evaluate teaching; however, questions asked of participants elicit responses about student feedback and faculty perceptions of workload.

What is missing from the literature are the perceptions of expert nursing faculty members sharing their experiences of teaching in the online environment. To gain insight into these issues, this study explores the perceptions of full time nursing faculty
members, from across the country, who teach asynchronous online courses in
baccalaureate and higher nursing education programs. Exploring nursing faculty
perceptions of teaching in the online environment and examining their experiences will
begin to fill the gap in the existing literature.

These components of online teaching hold significance for faculty members,
students, and administrators because each directly impacts the learning environment
(Allen & Seaman, 2011; Avery et al., 2008; Mancuso, 2009). When the learning
environment is affected, student learning is influenced. In addition to student learning,
student satisfaction may also be affected (G. L. Anderson & Tredway, 2009; Avery et al.,
2008; Warger & Dobbin, 2009). Student satisfaction and overall quality of courses
offered can impact student enrollment and ultimately diminish revenue, and thus, would
be of interest to administrators.

**Purpose of This Study**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive research study was to understand
perceptions of faculty members regarding their experiences of teaching nursing courses in
undergraduate baccalaureate and graduate programs, using asynchronous, web-based
courses. The goal of this researcher was to explore faculty perceptions of online teaching
and work to clarify workload and policy issues, barriers to quality online programming,
and faculty needs for professional development and support.

In this study of experienced nursing faculty members, discussion about their
teaching online courses provided insight into the nuances of nursing faculty participants’
teaching practices in the online environment. The findings from this study will deepen our understanding of online teaching and learning in the discipline of nursing.

Though this study focused on nursing faculty members, the understanding gained from this inquiry has some transferability to other disciplines. Common elements, lessons learned by experienced nursing faculty members, and challenges of teaching in online courses, regardless of the context of discipline, can be gleaned from this research. Individual faculty members will benefit from the stories of others who are teaching online. Reviewing the findings from this study in combination with personal reflection could benefit faculty members who seek to develop a deeper understanding of their own teaching practice.

**Research Questions**

The following questions were addressed in this dissertation study.

- What are the perceptions of full time faculty members regarding their experiences of teaching nursing courses in baccalaureate and higher programs, using asynchronous teaching and learning strategies in web-based courses?
- What do experienced nursing faculty members identify as the positive and negative aspects of online teaching?

**Definition of Terms**

**Asynchronous course delivery:** In contrast to synchronous online learning activities, asynchronous is described by Aquino-Russell et al. (2007) as being time-independent because students and faculty members have access to the course content, learning activities, and discussions at their convenience. The ability to log into
the course anytime during the day or evening affords greater flexibility for both students and faculty members.

**Cognitive presence:** Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2010) identified cognitive presence as a “worthwhile educational experience” based on “Dewey’s notion of reflective thought” (p. 6). Cognitive presence is where learning occurs as a function of student inquiry, analysis, and synthesis (Y. M. Smith & Caplin, 2012). Cognitive presence is one of three constructs in the Community of Inquiry framework, and is foundational to online teaching and learning.

**Community of Inquiry Framework:** The Community of Inquiry Framework (CoI) consists of three constructs: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence, and is used to “provide the order and structural elements needed to begin the process of understanding the complexities of online learning” (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, & Fung, 2010, p. 32).

**Faculty workload:** Faculty workload is used to refer to the work of faculty members, which includes teaching, scholarship or research, and service. Serve, depending on the institution, may encompass service to the college, such as administrative functions, service to the university, service to the community, as in providing patient care, and service to the profession, such as serving in a leadership role in a professional nursing association. In this study, faculty members from three academic classifications were considered: Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Non-Tenure Track. Each of these classifications has assigned workload, but the distribution of that workload differs.
**Formal peer support:** In this study, formal support is defined as support that is structured. Formal support structures include planned support departments, activities, and programs.

**Hybrid or blended courses:** Both the terms “hybrid” and “blended” are used somewhat interchangeably throughout the literature related to online teaching and learning. Courses that are considered hybrid or blended use a combination of both online and face-to-face teaching and learning activities within the same course to maximize the best aspects of both types of courses. According to the University of Illinois Online Network (ION), the differentiation between blended and hybrid relates to the percentage of class time and activities completed online with blended involving more face-to-face activities and hybrid involving more online instruction (ION, 2010). For the purpose of this dissertation, both terms refer to courses that are neither 100% face-to-face nor 100% online.

**Informal peer support:** In this study, the concept of informal peer support refers to the relationship that forms as a result of commonalities and circumstances among faculty members rather than by formal structure.

**Margin of unpredictability:** No specific definition exists in the literature for this phrase; however, it is used in this work to characterize time that is needed to address elements of faculty workload that occur inconsistently, with variable frequency, and require variable lengths of time to resolve. These elements of workload are difficult to predict and thus, difficult to quantify for the purpose of managing faculty workload.
Nursing faculty members: Nursing faculty members are individuals who hold a full time position in a college of nursing, maintain a current license as a registered nurse, and hold a minimum of a masters degree. These individuals may have administrative responsibilities but are not in full time administrative positions. Thus, the majority of the participant’s workload is allocated to teaching.

Online courses: For the purpose of this study, online courses refer to courses that are delivered 100% online with no requirement of face-to-face meetings in traditional classroom settings.

Post licensure nursing programs: This category refers to programs for individuals who are already licensed as registered nurses. These programs include BSN completion programs for nurses holding associate degrees or diplomas in nursing and graduate level programs that do not lead to initial licensure as a registered nurse.

Social presence: The second construct in the Community of Inquiry Framework is social presence, which refers to the establishment of a social connection in the online classroom. Helping students establish a social presence is a faculty role that supports student engagement (Garrison, Anderson, et al., 2010).

Synchronous course delivery: In this study, the distinction between synchronous and asynchronous faculty/student interaction is significant. Synchronous interactions afford faculty members a more similar parallel to traditional classroom settings in that all students are engaged in the learning activity at essentially the same time (Myers-Wylie, Mangieri, & Hardy, 2009). Technology is the tool that brings the faculty members and students together and students, though not face-to-face, are
simultaneously interacting, in real time, with peers and faculty. Faculty members are able to reach all students simultaneously and succinctly in a web classroom in which synchronous activities occur and are immediately available to provide assistance and feedback to students. Through synchronous activities, students feel more connected to the instructor and peers and can more easily establish supportive relationships. Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2003) contended synchronous courses offer both students and faculty members the most comfortable transition from the live classroom environment to an online format.

**Teaching preference:** For the purpose of this dissertation work, teaching preference refers specifically to the course delivery method. In the literature review, teaching preference of traditional face-to-face teaching is compared to online learning. In this study, teaching preference was broadened to consider degrees of online teaching and learning, including: hybrid or blended courses in which some portion of the course is delivered online; asynchronous course delivery in which the course is delivered online but interactions occur at times that are convenient for the participants; synchronous course delivery which is also online but has specific times identified during which all participants are in the course at the same time. These options were included along with the option of face-to-face environments and a combination of environments.

**Teaching presence:** The third construct in the Community of Inquiry Framework is teaching presence, which refers to the work of faculty members in developing and teaching the course. Teaching presence includes the “design, facilitation, and direction of learning experiences within the online classroom to promote student
engagement and achievement of learning outcomes” (Y. M. Smith & Caplin, 2012, p. 121). Teaching presence is intricately linked to social and cognitive presence and is essential for the establishment of both (Garrison et al., 2003).

**Transactional distance:** Michael Moore’s (1997) definition of transaction distance is used for this dissertation research. Transactional distance refers to the perceived distance between the learner and the teacher. In the online environment, this distance is related to space, time, and relationship and impacts student learning (Moore 1997). The perception of distance in an online course creates a disconnectedness for the student in which there is decreased likelihood of student success. “Students who perceive distance between themselves and the instructor are at risk for lower satisfaction, weaker performance, and failure to meet learning outcomes” (Y. M. Smith & Caplin, 2012, p. 122).

**Web-based courses:** Whereas the definition of web-based courses may vary, for the purposes of this study, the Whitehead, Brown, and Kearns (2007) definition of web-based courses has been adopted. These courses are offered using the Internet, and a teaching platform or system, and have few or no live, face-to-face, traditional classroom interactions. In contrast, web-enhanced, blended, and hybrid courses offer a combination of live classroom interaction and using technology to facilitate student learning. These three terms are used interchangeably throughout the literature and include varying degrees of web-based and face-to-face activities and interactions.
Summary and Organization of the Document

This dissertation is organized in the format of five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study, background, rationale, purpose, and research questions. In chapter 2, I delivered a review of the relevant research and analysis of pertinent findings and theoretical stances that support this dissertation study in the areas of online teaching and learning, faculty professional development, faculty perceptions of teaching, and nursing education. In chapter 3, I delineated and described the research method used for this research. In chapter 4, the findings from this study are explained. This work concludes with chapter 5, in which I discuss the findings, share conclusions, and offer recommendations for future research in this area.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The design of this study led me to explore the current literature related to online teaching and learning. I needed to understand the current body of literature that pertains to online teaching and learning to determine what is known and what gaps exist. This review provides a foundation for this line of inquiry. To develop a deeper understanding of online teaching, the literature related to online teaching, online teaching in nursing education, and faculty perception of teaching in an online environment was narrowed to relevant works. The concepts of quality in online teaching and learning, faculty workload, support for faculty members teaching online, and faculty professional development emerged as important considerations in this work and as areas where additional study is recommended by other researchers.

The topic of online teaching and learning has generated much research beginning in the late 1990s. Preliminary searches of the literature involved the use of four electronic databases, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, the Scholarly Journal Archive (JSTOR), and Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL). While examining the results of these preliminary searches, additional selective resources were sought in an attempt to fill voids in the previously collected literature.

Two websites, EDUCAUSE.edu and the SloanConsortium.org, were also searched for relevant articles. EDUCAUSE “helps those who lead, manage, and use information technology to shape strategic decisions at every level” and includes the
provision of programs and resources for faculty professional development in its mission (EDUCAUSE.edu). The Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C) is another valuable resource when considering faculty professional development in online teaching and learning. Information found on the Sloan-C website describes the consortium as one that

Helps learning organizations continually improve quality, scale, and breadth of their online programs according to their own distinctive missions, so that education will become a part of everyday life, accessible and affordable for anyone, anywhere, at any time, in a wide variety of disciplines. (Sloanconsortium.org)

The review was approached in five phases. The first phase involved searching for articles that pertained to teaching online, in general. Thirty-eight articles were found in this search. In the second phase, the search was narrowed to online teaching in nursing, producing 57 articles considered for this review. The third search phase, focused on faculty perceptions, revealed 37 additional articles. The fourth phase was related to the topic of faculty professional development in online teaching, which produced 20 resources. The fifth and final search phase involved revisiting the literature to explore new publications that emerged during the process of writing this dissertation and to search for additional sources not previously discovered. Some articles fell into more than one category since these categories are not mutually exclusive.

In total, over 180 resources were initially collected. However, on review of those articles, some of these sources were eliminated because the focus of the article was not consistent with the subject of this review. An example of the elimination process used
was with articles that related to online teaching but were written about teaching K-12 courses using technology. Literature was included if it related to (a) online teaching and learning in higher education, (b) online teaching in nursing, (c) faculty perceptions that included aspects of online teaching, and (d) faculty professional development for online teaching.

**Faculty Perceptions of Online Teaching**

Despite the breadth of the current literature, there is a lack of depth of study around the issues embodied in this study. The first of these areas is faculty perception of teaching in an online environment. Faculty members who teach in online environments have key insights into factors that impact online teaching and learning. To understand these factors, it is necessary to talk with experienced faculty members. In an attempt to understand what has been written about faculty perceptions of teaching online, this topic is the first presented in this literature review. This introduction to the topic of faculty perceptions gives an overview of what was found in the literature. The initial faculty perception study conducted by Diekelmann, Schuster, and Nosek (1998) is discussed in this introduction. The remaining faculty perception literature is divided into two sections: (a) faculty perceptions in other disciplines, and (b) faculty perceptions in nursing.

Within this discussion of faculty perception are the concerns of faculty workload issues and institutional support, including faculty professional development for teaching in web-based environments. Though these concerns appear throughout the literature, there are a limited number of studies in which faculty members’ concerns about workload
and professional development for teaching web-based courses are explored through interview. In addition, most of the research related to web-based teaching is not specific to nursing education. Seventeen studies were found that address faculty perception of some aspect of teaching nursing in an online environment (Ali et al., 2005; Andrusyszyn et al., 1999; Avery et al., 2008; Christianson, Tiene, & Luft, 2002; Diekelmann et al., 1998; Gonzalez, 2009; Haber & Mills, 2008; Harroff & Valentine, 2006; Huang & Hsiao, 2012; A. E. Johnson, 2008; J. Johnson, Posey, & Simmens, 2005; Marek, 2009; B. Moore, 2005; Ryan, Hodson-Carlton, & Ali, 2004; Santilli & Beck, 2005; G. G. Smith, Passmore, & Faught, 2009; Worthen, 2013). Many issues and concerns are not discipline specific; however, the education of nursing professionals may present challenges not addressed in the larger body of literature such as those associated with teaching advance practice nursing skills.

The first study addressing faculty perceptions of online teaching was a phenomenological study by Diekelmann et al. (1998), in which 37 faculty members, from 27 departments within a major university system, were interviewed about their experiences using distance technologies and the issues and implications of common experiences. Diekelmann and colleagues are nursing faculty so nursing faculty members’ perceptions were captured in this data. Five major themes were identified as common among faculty:

1.) Losing familiar landmarks and touchstones: Rethinking schooling, learning and teaching; 2.) Challenging conventional pedagogies: Questioning reliance on the visual and physical presence; 3.) Reawakening new roles: Creating new
partnerships; 4.) Learning from experience: Developing expertise and practical knowledge; 5.) Creating new pedagogies: Re-visioning schooling, learning and teaching. (Diekelmann et al., 1998, p. 5)

Further, Diekelmann and colleagues recommended additional study to determine what works and what does not work in distance education and cautions that faculty members may spend too many resources on problem solving and not enough on examining their teaching (Diekelmann et al., 1998). This study is cited throughout the literature, providing a foundation for much of the work that followed. In addition, this work identifies the commonalities among nursing and other disciplines.

**Faculty Perceptions in Other Disciplines**

Across the eight studies in fields other than nursing, we learned that faculty members identified “content-focused” courses as being more appropriate for online teaching and learning environments. Faculty perceptions begin to provide insights into workload concerns and suggestions for easing those concerns including paid release time to develop online courses, recognition by administrators, and technology support for students and faculty members.

Ten years after the Diekelmann et al. study (1998), Gonzalez (2009) conducted a phenomenological study seeking faculty perceptions of approaches to teaching online. Participants in this study were seven lecturers, all of whom taught post-graduate courses, in the health sciences department in an Australian, research-intensive university. Per the author’s description, these faculty members were from the disciplines of medicine and social sciences. Nursing was not mentioned as one of the disciplines captured in this
study. Findings revealed three main themes of (a) what it means to teach online, (b) what approaches are used for online teaching, and (c) which factors influence online teaching (Gonzalez, 2009). The conceptions described include the importance of student-teacher interaction and facilitating understanding with the faculty members as both a source of information and a facilitator of the learning process (Gonzalez, 2009). The approaches to learning adopted by faculty members were either content-centered used by one faculty member in this study, learning centered used by four faculty members, or an intermediate position between these two positions used by two faculty participants (Gonzalez, 2009). Gonzalez identified the following contextual influences on online teaching:

1. Existing policies related to teaching online course were viewed positively but others were viewed as problematic. Staff development was viewed as a positive policy while faculty workload was identified as a negative.
2. Course design and structure have an impact on faculty workload, student interaction with peers and with the instructor, and on student learning.
3. The nature of the students enrolled in the courses was an important consideration. In this study, the students were all postgraduate students who were working in addition to taking coursework. (p. 313)

Marek (2009) conducted a mixed methods study that explored faculty perceptions of support structures need when teaching online. The factors ranked highest by the 296 participating library and information services faculty members were receiving release from courses, having formal training courses available and having release time to attend
them, and having an information technology (IT) infrastructure and an attitude of collaboration from IT staff (Marek, 2009).

Earlier studies that considered faculty perceptions include Haber and Mills (2008), Harroff and Valentine (2006), B. Moore (2005), and Santilli and Beck (2005). Haber and Mills (2008) met with 14 faculty members in three focus groups to explore barriers to online teaching. All faculty members in this study had at least one year experience teaching online and came from different disciplines within community colleges. Nursing was not identified as one of the disciplines. As identified in other studies, Haber and Mills (2008) also found faculty time and compensation for the time spent developing and teaching online was identified as the primary barrier. Factors that influenced faculty teaching in online courses were administrative decision-making and communication, technical support and infrastructure, student support services, and measures for evaluating online teaching (Haber & Mills, 2008).

Harroff and Valentine (2006) sought to determine faculty perceptions of quality in web-based adult education courses. The major areas of concern raised in this study were the below average rating of administrative recognition for faculty efforts (Harroff & Valentine, 2006). In this study, other areas of quality evaluated student support rather than faculty support. B. Moore’s 2005 study of 56 social work faculty members explored perceived effectiveness of online teaching, finding that participants perceived online courses to be less effective than traditional face-to-face courses. Moore (2005) did find that courses such as research and policy, that focused more on content, were most appropriate for online teaching.
Santilli and Beck (2005) assessed graduate faculty perceptions of teaching online courses using an 11-item survey that assessed faculty training, amount of time spent on instructional activities related to online teaching and major obstacles to effective communication. Findings indicate 75% of faculty members received training on the course delivery program (Web CT), 53% on online teaching methods, and only 25% on online course design; faculty members spent between 2 and 11 hours per week on teaching tasks in a six-credit hour course and 2 to 5 hours per week in two and three-credit courses (Santilli & Beck, 2005). Factors that influence communication include students’ technical skill and timeliness of student responses (Santilli & Beck, 2005). Faculty members perceived their role in online courses to be that of facilitator, conveyors of information, and planners and raised concerns about assuring academic integrity and the “authenticity of student work” in online courses (Santilli & Beck, 2005, p. 159).

In a more recent study, Huang and Hsiao (2012) explored faculty perceptions of communication in online teaching environments, comparing communication methods in asynchronous and synchronous courses. Sixteen participants from the same university but from different disciplines were interviewed. Disciplines included in this study did not include nursing. Asynchronous communication was preferred with email and discussion boards being the most utilized. Participants saw the discussions as higher quality, providing equal opportunity for all students to participate. Limitations of asynchronous communications included increased workload for instructor, difficulty connecting with the student and receiving feedback (verbal and non-verbal cues), and a lack of
spontaneity and creativity that can occur in synchronous interactions (Huang & Hsiao, 2012).

Gholami and Sayadi (2012) conducted a mixed methods study of faculty perceptions of web-based instruction in Iran but did not include nursing as a discipline. Findings indicated faculty members use of the Internet related to perception of barriers in that faculty members who used the Internet more found online teaching less daunting (Gholami & Sayadi, 2012). In this study, there were differences in perception based on field of study, with faculty members from “science” and from “natural resources” acknowledging “significant barriers” to online teaching (Gholami & Sayadi, 2012). It is not clear how closely the Iranian education system parallels the U.S. education system so it is difficult to make comparisons based on this work. Though the Gholarmi and Sayadi study and the other works discussed in this section did not include nursing faculty perceptions, a few studies, as identified in the next section, did seek to elicit nursing faculty insights into some of these issues. These studies are described in the next section.

The studies of faculty perceptions from disciplines other than nursing span 8 years and offer an overview of what faculty members see as the barriers to online teaching. Common areas seen as barriers in these studies include support, technology, and workload.

**Nursing Faculty Perceptions**

In the same eight-year time period, six studies of nursing faculty perceptions were published though three of these studies consider more than nursing faculty perceptions. Overall, the results of these studies offer some consistency with results from the studies
of non-nursing faculty. Common findings include the perceptions of the need for support, and the identification of challenges for faculty members who teach online.

In a mixed methods study, Avery et al. (2008) explored faculty and student perceptions of graduate nursing curriculum in online courses; however the focus was more on student perception than on faculty perception. An instrument was designed to measure quality standards in nursing courses and was used in this study. The primary intention for this instrument is that faculty members can use it to evaluate their own courses in meeting quality standards and use the instrument for peer review of online course. Significant findings related to faculty perceptions are that faculty members’ (and students’) technical competence is important, students need clear support, diverse learning styles must be supported, student voice must be present in the course, and interaction must occur in online courses (Avery et al., 2008).

G. G. Smith et al. (2009) chose a qualitative approach to discover faculty perceptions with regard to addressing challenges of teaching online. The seven nursing faculty members and two instructional designers who participated in this study identified concerns about the quality of assessment of the learning in online courses, assuring diversity in terms of “awareness and sensitivity to students’ needs and beliefs,” and adapting to course management systems (G. G. Smith et al., 2009, p. 102). Ali et al. (2005) sought faculty perception of their expertise in teaching online courses. Sixty-five faculty members from six disciplines, including nursing, responded to the survey. Faculty members were asked to rate their expertise on a scale of novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert, based on Patricia Benner’s Novice to Expert
Model. Faculty members not teaching online rated themselves as novice or advanced beginners. Faculty members teaching online were advanced beginners or competent. No faculty members rated themselves as proficient or expert (Ali et al., 2005). A. E. Johnson (2008) conducted a phenomenological study that explored the experiences of 12 graduate faculty members in nursing and their transition to online teaching. Participants identified the need to “rethink the processes of teaching and learning” to make a successful transition and identified concerns for the lack of face-to-face contact and the perceived increased time commitment for web-based teaching (A. E. Johnson, 2008, p. 21).

Findings from more experienced faculty members in this study concurred with the findings of J. Johnson et al.’s (2005) study identifying that teaching time was not necessarily increased but rather is grouped or “chunked” differently in online courses and requires a restructuring of faculty approaches to teaching (A. E. Johnson, 2008). Faculty partnerships, online course ownership, and faculty development for online teaching were also identified as key components in successful transition to online teaching (A. E. Johnson, 2008).

Worthen (2013) described a study by COCAL, the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor, in which 131 faculty members responded to a survey in which the organization attempted to explore what it is like to teach online and specifically, “Does the art of teaching survive online delivery?” (p. 29). Responses came from 107 different institutions in 36 states from 7 countries (including the U.S.). Specific disciplines were not identified in this reporting of the research so it is not clear if nursing faculty members had a voice in this work. Just under half of the participants were full time faculty
members allowing for a comparison between part-time and full-time faculty members. Responses from this survey were separated into the major categories of control of work, evaluation and compensation, and working conditions. A limitation of this publication was that it was published in a non-peer reviewed publication issued by a faculty members’ collective bargaining organization. Although the original survey was not available in this publication, the labor influence was clearly identified by the authors and was clear in the publication.

The number of studies on the topic of faculty perception, published since the Diekelmann et al. (1998) study, is limited, indicating the need for additional research in this area in general. Some additional early studies were broadly focused, but many evaluated faculty use of specific teaching tools or strategies such as computer conferencing (Andrusyszyn et al., 1999), interactive video (Choi & Johnson, 2005), training modules (Harrington & Walker, 2002), synchronous versus asynchronous discussions (Levin & Robbins, 2006), or compared online to traditional face-to-face teaching (Batta-Jones & Avery, 2004; Billings, Connors & Skiba, 2001; Buckley, 2003; Cueller, 2002; Rockwell et al., 2000). Further, in a review of the literature of nursing faculty members in distance education, Mancuso (2009) stated that research including nursing faculty teaching in online environment is meager and that more is needed to “establish best practices” (p. 202) and to expand the science in this area.

Throughout the faculty perception literature, three major areas were highlighted. The areas of teaching preference, quality in online education, faculty workload emerged as themes in the literature and are presented in the following sections of this literature.
review. Two additional categories of strengths and weaknesses of online teaching and support for online teaching are included to capture considerations that do not fit in the aforementioned headings.

**Teaching Preference**

Teaching preference in this study pertains to a faculty member’s preference for teaching courses online, in a traditional face-to-face learning environment, or with a combination of online and face-to-face courses. The literature in this area is sparse. A total of eight studies provided insight into teaching preference in their findings. In most of the studies reviewed for this work, few authors asked faculty directly about their teaching preferences. Some studies include the choice of faculty preference for teaching a combination of online and face-to-face courses. A teaching preference for hybrid or blended course or for asynchronous courses is not considered in the literature.

Faculty members who identified a preference for online teaching cited flexibility and convenience as the primary reason for this preference (Huang & Hsiao, 2012; J. Johnson et al., 2005; Shea, 2008). J. Johnson et al. (2005) considered both student and faculty perceptions, so teaching preference was not the major focus of this early study. However, faculty surveyed preferred web-based teaching because of flexibility, student participations, and overall convenience. Shea (2008) surveyed faculty about their experiences with web-based teaching with similar findings to Johnson et al. (2005) in that faculty members most appreciated the flexibility and convenience afforded by teaching online courses. Huang and Hsiao (2012) explored faculty perceptions of communications in online courses. In interviews with faculty members from a variety of disciplines,
Faculty identified preference for asynchronous communications in online courses because of flexibility and convenience.

Faculty members who preferred face-to-face courses or a combination of online and face-to-face courses most commonly cite the increased workload of teaching online as their primary reason (J. Johnson et al., 2005; Santilli & Beck, 2005). Some studies cited other reasons for their preference of face-to-face courses, including better assessment of analytic ability in students (Johnson et al., 2005), more effective teaching and learning (B. Moore, 2005), concerns about the complexities of technology and online pedagogy (Shea, 2008), and lack of recognition and compensation for online teaching (Shea, 2008; Yick et al., 2005).

Baglione and Nastanski (2007) found half of the faculty participants preferred a combination of both face-to-face teaching and online instruction. Christianson et al. (2002) found less than half of the faculty members surveyed (47%) preferred online teaching. Despite a greater preference for traditional face-to-face teaching, 76% of study participants indicated that teaching online exceeded their expectations and 89% considered their teaching to be successful. B. Moore (2005) found social work faculty members preferred face-to-face course over online courses for all areas of the curriculum, based on their perceptions of greater effectiveness of teaching in those courses.

The studies reviewed for teaching preference ranged from 2002–2008, which is relatively early in web-based learning history. None of the studies consider nursing faculty preference. Further, most of the studies cited do not ask about faculty preference directly. Many changes in technology and attitude about online teaching and learning
have occurred in the past six years, prompting the need to revisit the question of faculty preference and the factors that contribute to that preference.

**Quality in Online Education**

This issue of quality in online education is a common theme throughout the faculty perception literature. Studies on faculty perceptions of quality span eight years. Earlier study findings are more general with regard to faculty perceptions of quality being an issue in online courses compared to face-to-face teaching (Chen & Chen, 2006; Harroff & Valentine, 2006; Yick et al., 2005). Studies after 2007 revealed quality concerns more specific to student behaviors, student preparation, teaching strategies, and student learning.

A 2005 study revealed that faculty members were concerned that others still saw online education as less credible than education that occurred in the traditional classroom but indicated they thought this perception was changing (Yick et al., 2005). Faculty members included in the Yick et al. study indicated that those not involved in online teaching did not value a web-based learning environment. A study of faculty members in Taiwan by Chen and Chen (2006) lent supports to the Yick et al. (2005) findings. Faculty member beliefs and attitudes about the quality of online teaching and learning do affect their participation in teaching online courses (Chen & Chen, 2006). Therefore, Chen and Chen suggested that faculty attitudes and norms were predictors of faculty members’ participation in online education. In Harroff and Valentine’s (2006) research, faculty members perceived a lack of quality in four specific areas. These area were identified as: (a) meeting the needs of students with learning and physical disabilities, (b)
receiving administration recognition for online work, (c) overall communication, and (d) quality of advising within the web classroom.

A few studies attempted to address quality concerns through research questions about student evaluation methods. Both Mazzolini and Maddison (2007) and Baglione and Nastanski (2007) considered discussion forums used in online courses as a measure of quality. Mazzolini and Maddison (2007) raised the issue of the role of faculty members in the discussion forum and whether students posted more often or less often, depending on teaching presence. Findings from this study showed that students post less frequently in response to increased posting by the instructor (Mazzolini & Maddison, 2007). In a study of 122 faculty members, Baglione and Nastanski (2007) found: (a) 43% of faculty members teach primarily online, (b) 50% of faculty members who teach online prefer to teach both online and traditional courses, and (c) 75% of faculty members believed online environments facilitate more substantive discussions.

Though Baglione and Nastanski (2007) did not consider teaching presence, both studies offer discussion forums as an effective learning strategy for online courses. G. G. Smith et al. (2009) found faculty members identified the process of determining the most effective method of assessing student learning and course quality as challenging aspects of teaching in an online environment. Faculty participants in this study, according to Smith et al., described “the challenge of preventing cheating” as being enough of a concern to instructors that it “increased their reluctance to offer online testing” (p. 102). Oomen-Early and Murphy (2009) raised questions of quality related to student and faculty preparation for online education environments. In a survey of 101 faculty
members, 76% of participants expressed a need for universities to assess student readiness and 65% of participants identified the potential for plagiarism as a major issue in online courses (Oomen-Early & Murphy, 2009).

Avery et al. (2008) developed an evaluation tool with the intention of evaluating quality in graduate nursing courses, identifying the concern that quality has been left behind as online courses have proliferated. Findings from this study included the need to design learning activities that are derived from the course objectives, diverse learning styles need to be supported, students and faculty members need to have good technical skills and need to have support for online teaching and learning, and student voice and interaction are important components of online learning (Avery et al., 2008).

Three studies looked at quality perceptions related to teaching evaluation and opportunities for promotion and tenure. Oomen-Early and Murphy (2009) reported 55% of faculty participants indicated teaching evaluations need to be revised to capture quality issues in online classrooms, and 87% felt their administration lacked understanding of online teaching. Faculty members in two studies raised concerns about their opportunities for promotion and tenure when teaching online courses (Oomen-Early & Murphy, 2009; Yick et al., 2005).

Worthen (2013) cautioned about the erosion of the “art of teaching” through fragmentation of teaching work including using part-time faculty to teach online courses. In doing so, part-time faculty need to “patch together” enough work to achieve a livable annual salary. This creates unsustainably high workloads and results in a significant number of students being educated by faculty members who are disconnected from the
support and collegiality experienced by full time faculty members in supportive academic environments. Concerns about evaluation and compensations were revealed in the Worthen (2013) study. Evaluations of online courses focus on attrition, grades, and student complaints or feedback rather than on teaching and learning. Salaries varied by type of institution (community colleges, public state universities, private nonprofit institutions and private for-profits) and significantly within those groups. For example, public state universities offered the highest wages, paying between $3,000 and $5,000 per 3-credit hour course for part-time teaching. Faculty members at private for-profit institutions fared much worse with a range of $2,000–$3,000 (Worthen, 2013).

The literature pertaining to faculty perceptions of quality in online teaching is sparse but reveals significant concerns of faculty members from across disciplines. Across the findings, faculty preferred to teach face-to-face because of concerns about students’ lack of preparation for online learning environments, student cheating, lack of support for students in online courses, and lack of administrative support for online teaching.

**Faculty Workload**

Another key issue that surfaces in many of the studies is that of the workload in online courses. The major area of disagreement in the literature is around the question, does teaching online increase faculty workload? Attempts to address this question and explore workload issues more fully has resulted in four studies in which the time spent teaching online courses was similar to the time involved in teaching face-to-face courses (Hislop & Ellis, 2004; Lazarus, 2003; McLain, 2005; Thompson, 2004). Several authors
disagreed with the findings of these studies (Conceicao, 2006; Haber & Mills, 2008; J. Johnson et al., 2005; McKenzie, Mims, Bennett, & Waugh, 2000; Oomen-Early & Murphy, 2009; Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz & Mars, 1999; Salajan, Schonwetter & Cleghorn, 2010; Shea, 2008) finding that online teaching does take more time than teaching in traditional environments. In addition to the consideration of time, the size of class sections is another theme in the faculty workload literature. Published studies demonstrate support for smaller class sizes (Burruss, Billings, Brownrigg, Skiba & Connors, 2009; Dykman & Davis, 2008; Kenny, 2002; Kokkelenberg, Dillon & Christy, 2008; Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006; Orellana, 2006; Tomei, 2006).

Mancuso (2009) identified the need to look more closely at workload based on a review of 17 studies. The author raised several questions about workload and suggested “further research will continue the groundwork that has been laid and advance the knowledge needed to assist nursing faculty members to establish, grow, and develop their skills and talents in the realm of distance education in nursing” (Mancuso, 2009, p. 202). Conceicao (2006) interviewed 10 faculty members (5 males and 5 females) and followed up by email. Two major themes that emerged from these interviews were workload and rewards. Faculty members reported both the length and depth of engagement with students was greater than in face-to-face classrooms, contributing to the increase in workload experienced when teaching online (Conceicao, 2006). Faculty participants reported that they missed the live contact with students but did describe several positive aspects of their online teaching experiences (Conceicao, 2006). The faculty identified
teaching online as “stimulating, invigorating, exciting, rewarding, satisfying, gratifying and empowering” work (Conceicao, 2006, p. 40).

**Time Commitment**

A few studies from the last decade attempted to address the issue of faculty time that is needed to teach online compared to what is needed for teaching in traditional face-to-face environments. Lazarus (2003) used self-monitoring with the goal of documenting the amount of time spent on tasks that were categorized into three areas: reading and responding to emails; reading, participating in, and grading discussions; and grading 15 student assignments. According to Lazarus, the time spent on these tasks was consistent with time spent on similar tasks in face-to-face courses, but suggested the need for additional study in this area to pinpoint faculty time commitment in teaching online courses.

In 2004, DiBiase evaluated his own efficiency as the size of his course sections were increased. Measuring student satisfaction and learning effectiveness, DiBiase made modifications to his teaching and assessment strategies. In doing so, DiBiase identified a 12% increase in efficiency without a decrease in student satisfaction. In discussion of his findings, DiBiase did recognize the availability of a GA to assist with the large class sizes as a factor in his increased efficiency and acknowledged that, “a strong relationship between enrollment & instructor effort” was apparent (p. 58).

In an action project described by Thompson (2004), six faculty members from five disciplines, not including nursing, sought to categorize tasks and determine the amount of time spent on each by making a comparison of online teaching time to time
spent on tasks for a face-to-face course. Participant results varied with three persons reporting less time on online teaching and one person reporting comparable time spent. Faculty members reported that the “flow of tasks” and the “chunking” of the work as being different (Thompson, 2004, p. 86). Thompson identified the challenge for faculty members as being less about the length of time spent and more about the fact that other work, such as research efforts, was frequently interrupted with online teaching tasks, allowing fewer blocks of time with uninterrupted focus, contributing to a feeling of decreased productivity and increased time teaching online. In this project, it was not clear that task differences and other factors such as class size were considered.

McLain (2005) found actual number of hours spent in online course teaching varied among faculty members in her study and that the assumption of higher workload for online teaching is not supported. However, McLain supported Thompson’s (2004) premise that the work is different than the work of faculty members who teach only face-to-face courses. In online courses, students frequently attempt to contact their instructor without consideration of time, day of the week, or traditional working hours. McLain (2005) found “students attempted to contact their instructors twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, at least every fourteen hours” (p. 54), regardless of the type of course, number of students enrolled, and duration of the course. McLain (2005) identified a number of considerations not included in her study. For example, only interactions from students who successfully completed the course were considered, eliminating the hours faculty members spent with students who struggle and eventually withdraw from or fail the course from this study. Many tasks were not considered in this
The issues of time spent managing assignment submission and grading, including opening attachments and using grading tools, typing and reading speed variances, pedagogical differences in courses, and proofreading time are some of the issues not considered in McLain’s (2005) study.

Hislop and Ellis (2004) conducted a quantitative study in which no difference was found in the amount of time faculty members spent teaching online versus the reported amount of time spent teaching in a traditional face-to-face course but many other authors disagree with the findings of Hislop and Ellis, based on findings from their respective studies (Conceicao, 2006; Haber & Mills, 2008; J. Johnson et al., 2005; McKenzie et al., 2000; Oomen-Early & Murphy, 2009; Rockwell et al., 1999; Salajan et al., 2010; Shea, 2008). Oomen-Early and Murphy (2009) found that 67% of faculty members prefer teaching face-to-face because of the amount of time it takes to teach online. Uncompensated time was considered a major issue by 89% of faculty members surveyed (Oomen-Early & Murphy, 2009). Seventy-six percent of faculty members stated they spent more time interacting with students online than in traditional classrooms (McKenzie et al., 2000). Hislop and Ellis (2004) admitted limitations of their study and recommended further study on the issue of workload.

In an exploratory study, Spector (2005) found “experienced online teachers invest significantly more time in online teaching than their counterparts” (p. 5). Comparing daily time logs of faculty members and data collected from interviews, Spector conveyed communication, collaboration, design, development, and delivery of online course increase the amount of time faculty members who teach online spend on teaching tasks.
Dahl (2003) also recommended the use of teaching assistants, working with course faculty members, as a strategy for motivating faculty members to teach online courses.

**Class Size**

The relationship between class size and increased workload was evident throughout the literature reviewed for this study. Orellana (2006) and others (Burruss et al., 2009; Dykman & Davis, 2008; Kenny, 2002; Kokkelenberg et al., 2008; Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006; Tomei, 2006) recommended small class sizes to offset the increased workload and to allow for appropriate faculty interactions with students to promote engagement. Although most authors did not recommend a specific number as the perfect class size, Tomei (2006) was the exception, proposing 12 students as ideal. Burruss et al. (2009) reported that interaction in online classes decreased as class size increased and that students indicated decreased professionalism, satisfaction, and social presence with increased class size. Bocchi et al. (2004) proposed class sizes can be as large as 30 students if the faculty member has an associate or teaching assistant to assist with the course.

Berry (2008) was silent on overall class size, but a recommendation of between four and nine students per discussion group was suggested to maximize student interaction and allow for faculty feedback to individual students. Schellens and Valcke (2006) concurred, stating that participation in discussion groups provides an opportunity for knowledge construction, a phenomenon that best occurs in small to medium size groups. Large groups, for the purpose of this study, are defined as groups with more than 12 participants.
Typical class size in the Worthen (2013) study was 20–40 students though a few participants were teaching courses with 50–100 students. Those participants did not explicitly identify class size as a specific concern, though several faculty members teaching sections larger than 20 students complained about the associated workload. A concern of the full-time faculty members in this study was that courses designed for enrollments of 20 or fewer students to promote teaching and social presence and increase student engagement were passed along to part-time faculty with high teaching loads who were not able to teach the course as intended by the course creator and were not able to make adjustments to the course to accommodate the larger class size. Faculty “burnout” was also a concern raised in this study. A key factor contributing to burnout is having less control over faculty work and is compounded by proprietary curricula, automated grading systems, and inadequate evaluations (Worthen, 2013).

One of the main concerns about class size, in addition to faculty workload, is the impact on faculty teaching presence and student engagement in the online environment. Santilli and Beck (2005) contended, “it must be understood that the number of students in any class has a direct impact on the amount of time faculty spent on instructional activities” (p. 157). Sitzman and Leners (2006) raised concerns about how faculty members can convey caring behaviors, serving as role models to nursing students when courses are delivered online. The strategies identified as being important to demonstrating “caring” were frequent feedback and timely communications (Sitzman & Leners, 2006). Burruss et al. (2009) reported the amount of interaction in online courses decreased as class sizes increased. Isolation experienced in online courses can be a
source of dissatisfaction for both students and faculty members (Haber & Mills, 2008; Maier, 2012; McLain, 2005; Sitzman & Leners, 2006).

Kolowich (2013) wrote about faculty members who teach massive open online courses (MOOC) in a study conducted by The Chronicle of Higher Education. This study was open to anyone teaching a MOOC, a course that is open to anyone and enrolls hundreds or even thousands of users. Survey results showed the median number of students enrolled in a MOOC was 33,000, but the median number of students who completed the MOOC with a passing grade dropped to 2,600 (Kolowich, 2013). Kolowich spoke with faculty members who, after teaching a MOOC, indicated a shift in thinking about the success of teaching large size classes the resulting implications. Faculty members reported using more automated grading, fewer responses to individual students, and limited opportunity for use of peer review (Kolowich, 2013). Faculty participants stated they spent over 100 hours on the MOOC before the start of the course and spent 10 hours per week on the course once the session went live and that teaching the MOOC took time away from their other professional responsibilities (Kolowich, 2013). The impact of MOOCs and class size in general warrants further exploration.

**Strategies**

Crews, Wilkinson, Hemby, McCannon, and Wiedmaier (2008) studied workload in business education faculty members and trainers who teach online. These faculty members identified technical support availability as the most important organizational strategy in impacting faculty workload (Crews et al., 2008). Professional development was identified as the second most impactful strategy for addressing workload (Crews et
al., 2008). Harroff and Valentine’s 2006 study revealed that faculty members and administrators have different views of the support that is provided for web-based teaching. Administrators viewed the support as adequate while faculty members deemed both administrative and technical support fell short of what was necessary to offer quality programs. Lack of accessibility for students with disabilities is a concern that also surfaced in this study (Harroff & Valentine, 2006). Faculty members identified time and compensation as the greatest barriers to teaching online (Haber & Mills, 2008). Other issues raised by faculty members in this study included lack of social interaction, labor intensiveness without verification of cost effectiveness, lack of ability to track work, and inadequate training and technical support (Haber & Mills, 2008). “Pedagogical, technological, and embodied paradoxes were embedded in the experiences of faculty members teaching human science curriculum online” (Lindsay et al., 2009, p. 185).

Despite the perception of increased workload and debate over ideal class size, some faculty members do enjoy the challenge of teaching online. Faculty members participating in the Baglione and Nastanski (2007) study found online discussion to be more substantive. That said, half of the participants surveyed preferred teaching in both online and face-to-face environments (Baglione & Nastanski, 2007). Blignaut and Trollip (2003) measured faculty participation in asynchronous discussion forums in web-based classrooms, finding that overall faculty participation impacts discussion quality. When faculty members participated less, student participation decreased in frequency and the quality of the student postings diminished as the course progressed. Faculty members who interacted with students in four categories of postings: affective,
informative, Socratic and corrective, yielded a higher number of student postings and stated they felt more successful in their teaching (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003).

The overarching conclusion to this discussion of faculty workload is that more study is needed. There is some congruence in the literature around class size in that it is generally seen as a factor that increases faculty workload, especially in light of the need for frequent and timely feedback from instructors (Burruss et al., 2009; Haber & Mills, 2008; Sitzman & Leners, 2006) and consistent, thoughtful interaction in course discussion forums (Baglione & Nastanski, 2007; Blignaut & Trollip, 2003; Burruss et al., 2009; Haber & Mills, 2008). However, the trends to universities offering MOOCs challenges this congruency and points to the need for further study of class size. There is disagreement around the issue of time requirements for teaching online. Additional study of workload would help to clarify workload issues.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Online Teaching**

The subjects of strengths and weaknesses of teaching in the online environment is another topic frequently presented in the online teaching literature. Though workload was a consistent concern throughout, other strengths and weaknesses arose. Strengths of online teaching and learning environments were also categorized as positive aspects, rewards, and opportunities throughout the literature. Central strengths of teaching in online environments identified in the literature include innovation (McKenzie et al., 2000; Rockwell et al., 1999; Shea, 2008), flexibility and convenience (J. Johnson et al., 2005; McKenzie et al., 2000; Shea, 2008), and professional growth of faculty (Rockwell et al., 1999; Shea, 2008). In contrast, weaknesses of teaching in online environments
include level of skills needed (Haber & Mills, 2008; Rockwell et al., 1999), lack of recognition (Shea, 2008), and social isolation (Haber & Mills, 2008; Hogan & McKnight, 2007). Weaknesses were also identified as negative aspects, obstacles, and barriers.

Five studies considered both the positive and negative aspects of online teaching. The earliest was a study of incentives and obstacles in “distance” education by Rockwell et al. (1999). In this study, 207 faculty members from across disciplines were surveyed. Findings revealed the rewards of teaching online as innovative instruction, self-gratification, peer recognition, and extending the reach of education (Rockwell et al., 1999). Obstacles identified were time requirements, effectiveness of teaching skills, and assistance and support needs (Rockwell et al., 1999). McKenzie et al. (2000) sought to determine needs, concerns, and practices of faculty members who teach in online environments in a survey of 70 faculty members from across disciplines. Innovation and flexibility topped the list of reasons faculty chose to teach online courses along with getting students more involved with technology and meeting students needs (McKenzie et al., 2000). McKenzie et al. (2000) identified concerns about support for faculty and students and the lack of incentives for teaching online. Faculty participants raised concerns about teaching courses completely online; over 96% of faculty participants felt face-to-face meetings were essential to enhance online learning (McKenzie et al., 2000).

J. Johnson et al. (2005) compared online courses to face-to-face courses. In doing so, findings revealed 86 faculty members from a variety of disciplines rated online teaching higher in the areas of flexibility, student participation, and convenience but viewed classroom teaching more favorably in time spent with students, student analytical
ability, and in the amount of course prep time needed (Johnson et al., 2005). Online teaching and classroom teaching were viewed as equal in opportunities to be creative, student knowledge, academic integrity, and clinical readiness (Johnson et al., 2005). Haber and Mills (2008) studied faculty perceptions of barriers in online teaching. In addition to the issues of workload and quality, previously discussed, faculty members also identified social isolation, student lack of technical skills, the need for too many clerical skills, and concerns about legal issues (Haber & Mills, 2008).

Shea (2008) conducted one of the largest studies of faculty perceptions of barriers and motivators to teaching online, surveying 386 faculty members. As in previous studies, the top motivator identified was flexible work schedule. Other positives were faculty learning, professional advancement, access, benefits, and innovation. In contrast, the primary barrier was inadequate compensation for the increased workload. Other barriers included the lack of recognition, negative reputation of the quality of online courses, complexities of technology, and online pedagogy and reward structure misalignment, including the impact of teaching online related to promotion and tenure (Shea, 2008).

Hogan and McKnight (2007) took a different approach to strengths and weaknesses in their study of 76 faculty members, from institutions across the U.S. Using a survey to measure faculty “burnout,” Hogan and McKnight reported online instructors had “an average score on the emotional exhaustion subscale, high degree of depersonalization, and low degree of personal accomplishment” (p. 123). McCann and Holt (2009) also studied online faculty members on the topic of burnout and looked for
correlations with online work experiences, gender, educational level, and academic training and compared their findings to the Hogan and McKnight (2007) study results. As in the previous study, exhaustion was ranked average but there were differences in both of the other two categories (McCann & Holt, 2009). Depersonalization scores and personal accomplishment scores both showed improvement over the scores obtained by Hogan and McKnight (McCann & Holt, 2009). McCann and Holt attributed these improved scores to improvement in faculty professional develop, standardization of course management systems, and the convenience of working at home.

Support Needs for Online Teaching

As identified in the studies previously discussed, support is another commonly occurring theme throughout the faculty perceptions literature (Haber & Mills, 2008; Marek, 2009; Oomen-Early & Murphy, 2009; Orr, Williams & Pennington, 2009; Rockwell et al., 2000; Ryan et al., 2004). The types of support needed for faculty who teach online fell into the categories of technical support (Haber & Mills, 2008), peer support (Marek, 2009), administrative and infrastructure support (Barczyk, Buckenmeyer, Feldman, & Hixon, 2011; Marek, 2009; Orr et al., 2009; Reilly, Vandenhouten, Gallagher-Lepak, & Ralston-Berg, 2012; Ryan et al., 2004), and faculty professional development (Herman, 2012; Rockwell et al., 2000). Though mentioned in this section, the literature specific to faculty professional development for online teaching is discussed in the next section of this review.

In a survey of 207 faculty members, three levels of support emerged as important for faculty who teach online (Rockwell et al., 2000). These levels are (a) developing
interactions, (b) developing instructional materials, and (c) applying selected techniques (Rockwell et al., 2000). Rockwell et al. contended these results indicate support is more than having a technician to respond to calls when issues arise. Rockwell and colleagues further stated that, although support is necessary for all faculty members teaching online, those teaching for less than 10 years have the greatest need (Rockwell et al., 2000).

In later studies, Marek (2009), Reilly et al. (2012), and Ryan et al. (2004) found faculty members identified organizational infrastructure as key to successful online teaching with the need for faculty self-assessment of skills, policies that guide ownership and compensation, and open discussion around workload as themes throughout the literature. Marek (2009) identified release time for course development, financial incentive, and professional development as the three greatest infrastructure concerns of faculty members. Reilly et al. (2012) recognized faculty member concerns about policy and workload in the areas of intellectual property rights, course development and correspondence time, teaching time, and time learning new technologies. Infrastructure is key. Faculty members identified the need for policies and open discussion around workload as part of the administrative support for online teaching and learning (Ryan et al., 2004).

Five studies evaluated faculty members’ opinion of support structures in their universities. Harroff and Valentine (2006) found faculty perceptions of support were rated average. In 2008, Haber and Mills identified the need for strong technical support for faculty members teaching online. Throughout this decade of research, the need for faculty support continues to be identified. Marek (2009) surveyed 296 faculty members
and found the factors that ranked highest in impacting faculty confidence to teach online were administrative support for load release in developing courses, financial incentive, and technical support in both developing and teaching the courses. Further, Marek found 17% of participants had no training for online teaching available at their institutions and 63% reported they preferred to access peers for support in lieu of formal support from the university.

In another 2009 study, Orr et al. learned faculty members see the lack of administrative support and infrastructure as a barrier to teaching online. A reoccurring theme in this study was the need for faculty members to know how their efforts fit into the department, college, or university efforts (Orr et al., 2009). Further, the development of technical skills and the need for support were seen as essential (Orr et al., 2009). Barczyk et al. (2011) contended, “it makes strategic sense for universities to invest resources in professors who teach online courses” (p. 6) offering additional reinforcement of the need for administrative services which support faculty members teaching in web-based environments. Herman (2012) found that 20% of not-for-profit institutions that offered online courses did not provide training for faculty members teaching those courses and that the “majority of faculty members felt that their institution’s support for online course delivery was average or below” (p. 102).

**Professional Development**

Concerns have been raised, throughout the literature, about the preparation of faculty members for the challenges of teaching in an online environment. Faculty members report that much of the preparation that does occur focuses on technology,
rather than on pedagogy and on the evaluation of student learning. A McKenzie et al. (2000) study of the faculty members needs, concerns, and practices for online teaching revealed that 62% of faculty members receive some general training related to online teaching prior to their first class but felt additional training was needed. In 2001, Lan conducted a needs assessment of 31 faculty members who taught online. Findings of this study revealed some confusion and concern about online courses. Lan recommended institutional administration develop a clear vision for online programming and communicate that vision to faculty members, implement strategies to update the technology infrastructure, and develop a system of incentives for faculty members to create a culture that is “nurturing technological innovation” (p. 393).

Several years later, Taylor and McQuiggan (2008) found the greatest need for faculty members teaching online courses was in the areas of selecting the appropriate technology to enhance the online course (55.9%), converting existing course materials to online teaching materials (35.5%), and developing effective online assessment instruments (35.3%). The most valued professional development activity was one-to-one interaction with a mentor or colleague (Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008). Barriers to participating in professional development activities for teaching online were identified as limited time to participate, lack of recognition toward promotion and tenure, lack of incentives, and lack of awareness of professional development activities (Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008).

In recent studies, there is evidence that basic faculty development is provided but that more support is needed in specific areas. Rogers, McIntyre, and Jazzar (2010)
suggested mentoring programs as a method of meeting the four primary needs of adjunct faculty members teaching online, encompassing “professional development, effective communication balance and developing relationships” (p. 53). Lackey (2011) found that faculty members are resourceful in their collaboration with colleagues, and use this strategy for both support and for skill enhancement. Faculty members in this study identified the need for more individualized professional development opportunities such as one-to-one sessions with university personnel and for “both technical and pedagogical training” in online teaching and learning (Lackey, 2011, p. 1).

The Sloan Consortium recently released data from a 2012 study of 4,564 faculty members and 591 administrators that revealed that more than half (58%) of the faculty participants describe themselves as having “more fear than excitement” about the growth of online learning. In contrast, more than 80% of administrators report feeling “more excitement than fear” (Allen, Seaman, Lederman, & Jaschilk, 2012). Nearly two-thirds of faculty members rated learning outcomes for an online course as inferior or somewhat inferior to those for a comparable face-to-face course, and one third of faculty members believe their institutions are moving too much to a web-based environment, compared to less than 10% of administrators expressing this opinion (Allen et al., 2012). The results of this study offer further support for professional development activities that prepare faculty for developing effective online courses and for teaching in online environments.

Several authors identified the need for faculty orientation and ongoing professional development opportunities to foster faculty expertise in web-based teaching yet few studies exist that address outcomes related to such support. Ali et al. (2005)
identified redesigning or rethinking faculty roles as the highest priority to faculty members. Recommendations from the participants and authors include incremental and concurrent sessions that are staged or scaffolded for faculty professional development (Ali et al., 2005). Angulo and La Rosa (2006) found all participants, teaching in 27 disciplines, needed professional development in curriculum and teaching capacities. In this study, 70% of participants rated pedagogical preparation as “very low” and 23% reported they had no specific training prior to teaching online (Angulo & La Rosa, 2006).

In a critique of the literature to date, Amundsen and Wilson (2012) described a general perception that faculty members are inadequately prepared for their academic role and have “unsophisticated conceptions of teaching and learning and have little knowledge of effective teaching practices (p. 90).

LeBlanc et al. (2007) identified nursing as the health discipline that is most experienced in the area of distance education and cites a number of nursing studies that relate to web-based teaching; however, few studies address faculty professional development for online teaching in nursing. Ali et al. (2005) designed a faculty needs assessment survey using Patricia Benner’s Novice to Expert theoretical model. Faculty members from several disciplines were included in this study, with 30.8% from nursing. Participants rated themselves as advanced beginners and competent overall in their online teaching, and identified the need for training, resources, web tools, and departmental and instructional support for faculty members (Ali et al., 2005). In another 2005 study, findings by Santilli and Beck (2005) indicate 75% of faculty members received training
on the course delivery program (Web CT), 53% on online teaching methods, and only 25% on online course design.

**Effective Strategies for Faculty Professional Development**

Some effective strategies for faculty professional development in the area of online teaching and learning include the use of mentoring programs (Angulo & La Rosa, 2006; Barczyk et al., 2011; Dorner & Karpati, 2010; Rogers et al., 2010), and web-based discussion boards (Angulo & La Rosa, 2006; Barczyk et al., 2011; Dorner & Karpati, 2010; LeBlanc et al., 2007; Orr et al., 2009; Sherer, 2005; Villar & Alegre, 2008). Study findings demonstrate faculty perceptions of teaching improvement were positively impacted by participation in the mentoring program (Barczyk et al., 2011), and that participants were most satisfied with the quality of the mentoring experience and with the overall communication (Dorner & Karpati, 2010).

Rogers et al. (2010) stated the success of online faculty members is dependent upon the existence of quality mentoring processes and programs for transition and development and Angulo and La Rosa (2006) recommended further evaluation of mentor programs to expand our understanding of mentorship in faculty professional development. Barriers to successful mentoring programs, as identified by Barczyk et al. (2011) include a lack of commitment from senior administration, a lack of empowerment and shared governance, a lack of training and open communication, and a lack of orientation and evaluation of the program quality.

Kinuthia (2005) found that 93.5% of faculty participants rated individualized training as desirable (54.4%), followed by workshops and informal help. Herman (2012)
considered 25 types of faculty professional development programs and found that 75% of not-for-profit institutions with online courses offered 9 of the 25 types of programs but 50% of institutions did not offer 7 of these types. Commonly offered professional development strategies were identified as course management system online resources, technical services (not including content or pedagogical design), availability of books, journals, or other printed materials on online instruction, pod/vodcasts, DVD, online video instruction, or recorded online seminars, consultation with instructional design experts, internally-run formal workshops (less than 4 hours in length), informal support, conference attendance, and peer review of finished course (Herman, 2012). Fewer than 50% of institutions offered Quality Matters training, formal workshops over multiple weeks, externally run workshops of any length, or external review processes (Herman, 2012).

Orr et al. (2009) described the resourcefulness of faculty members and the willingness to share and help one another. Using asynchronous web discussions to engage new faculty members in dialogue about issues and concerns is a strategy that is convenient for participants and does not require everyone to be present at the same time (LeBlanc et al., 2007; Sherer, 2005; Villar & Alegre, 2008). Such a forum also affords faculty members the choice of when to participate and to perhaps read the comments post discussion. Maier (2012) found 87% of faculty members value and assign importance to creating a professional faculty community around online teaching to discuss effective teaching practices with colleagues. In a study of 328 faculty members, 48.1% responded that their academic institutions could have done more to support the formation and
maintenance of a faculty community around the topic of online teaching and learning (Maier, 2012).

The effectiveness of faculty professional development strategies and programs is an area that has received more attention in the past few years. In 2012, the *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* dedicated a special edition to this topic. Reilly et al. (2012) found best practices in faculty professional development include diverse methods such as seminars, short courses, workshops, and webinars. T. Johnson, Wisniewski, Kuhlemeyer, Isaacs, and Krzykowski (2012) criticized existing faculty professional development programs for not applying the principles of andragogy, but instead focusing on trying to “fix what is deemed to be broken in teaching” with workshops, orientation, and technology training (p. 64). Maier (2012) suggested professional development begins with the orientation of new faculty members to teaching in the online environment, educating them both about the use of the technology but also about the pedagogical differences with the course delivery format. Further, Maier (2012) included increasing the use of mentoring, providing a strong e-learning department, and exploring the use of social media as a means of building faculty communities as key professional development strategies.

**Summary**

In Chapter 2, I explained what is known about faculty perceptions of teaching online and issues or concerns that arose from studies with faculty members teaching online. Quality of teaching and learning in online environments is a concern though much evidence exists that supports online teaching as effective when faculty members are
supported in their teaching practice. The scope of research on faculty perception of online teaching spans 15 years but lacks depth and specificity in several areas. For example, only 17 studies, conducted during this timeframe, address faculty perception of some aspect of teaching nursing in an online environment (Ali et al., 2005; Andrusyszyn et al., 1999; Avery et al., 2008; Christianson et al., 2002; Diekelmann et al., 1998; Gonzalez, 2009; Haber & Mills, 2008; Harroff & Valentine, 2006; Huang & Hsiao, 2012; A. E. Johnson, 2008; C. G. Johnson, 2005; Marek, 2009; B. Moore, 2005; Ryan et al., 2004; Santilli & Beck, 2005; G. G. Smith et al., 2009; Worthen, 2013).

The areas of online teaching that are researched are varied, but issues such as faculty workload, teaching preference, policies guiding online teaching and learning, program and course quality, and support needed for faculty members teaching online are not fully explored. The nursing studies that relate to faculty perceptions are limited to 1998 through 2012, thus the focus was specific to technology such as using web conferencing (Andrusyszyn et al., 1999), comparing online courses to face-to-face course (Christianson et al., 2002; B. Moore, 2005), comparing faculty perceptions to student perceptions of successful teaching and learning (J. Johnson et al., 2005), studying communication in online courses (Huang & Hsiao, 2012), exploring issues confronting faculty members who teach using web based environments (Diekelmann et al., 1998; Gonzalez, 2009; Haber & Mills, 2008; A. E. Johnson, 2008; Santilli & Beck, 2005; G. G. Smith et al., 2009; Ryan et al., 2004; Worthen, 2013), assessing quality of online course offerings (Avery et al., 2008; Harroff & Valentine, 2006), and needs for support and
professional development (Ali et al., 2005; Marek, 2009). These authors recommended additional study in each of these areas to further explore the issues raised.

In this review, 60% of the research studies used quantitative methods, 27% were qualitative and 13% used mixed methods. Several authors identified the need to further explore concepts through qualitative study to delve more deeply into the issues to develop a deeper understanding. Crews et al. (2008) recommended conducting a qualitative study, interviewing faculty members teaching with technology, to gain further insight into the effectiveness of decreasing workload. Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2005) posited their quantitative study of cognitive presence would be greatly enhanced by having a “qualitatively richer view of interaction” (p. 145). Frith and Kee (2003) recommended further study interviewing faculty members and students regarding strategies to enhance learning and decrease attrition.

The research on professional development for faculty teaching online is very limited, in general, and nearly absent within the discipline of nursing education. Further, there is somewhat of a disconnect between the perceptions of faculty members and the perceptions of administrators in terms of what is needed to support faculty members who are teaching in a web-based environment. This disconnect is most apparent in the recently released findings of Allen et al. (2012) in which the majority of faculty members responded they were more fearful than excited about the growth on online teaching and learning compared to the majority of administrators indicating excitement at this increased focus. Further evidence is the ongoing concerns raised about workload (Conceicao, 2006; Haber & Mills, 2008; J. Johnson et al., 2005; Mancuso, 2009;
McKenzie et al., 2000; Oomen-Early & Murphy, 2009; Rockwell et al., 1999; Salajan et al., 2010; Shea, 2008). Amundsen and Wilson (2012) advised that the body of research is off track in terms of the questions being studied, fails to help us develop a deeper understanding of practice, and provides a weak foundation for further study. As is the case with research in the area of online teaching and learning and with the faculty perception literature, research using quantitative methods outnumbers those using qualitative methods, in the faculty professional development literature, and in the nursing literature on this subject.

Studying faculty perceptions of teaching in web-based environments, using qualitative methods will afford an examination of faculty experiences and insights into issues and concerns. This information would ultimately help me in my own teaching practices and assist others in their practices. The exploration of these experiences and using this knowledge to enhance the practice of others will consequently strengthen teaching and learning process and relationships in online environments. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology that was used in conducting this dissertation study.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In chapter 1, the rationale for this study was presented, based on the current popularity of online teaching and learning and the issues raised in published sources and through my own teaching experience. With the focus of understanding on the literature related to online teaching and learning, chapter 2 contained a review of the pertinent literature exploring empirical, conceptual, and theoretical writing related to online teaching in nursing, professional development for online teaching and faculty perceptions of teaching. In chapter 3, the methodology used to conduct this study, based on the rationale and literature described in the prior two chapters, is delineated.

The goal of this dissertation research study was to describe full time nursing faculty perceptions of teaching in an online environment. Ten nursing faculty members, from different universities throughout the country participated in this study. Demographic survey data and analysis of transcripts, obtained from the semi-structured interviews, were used to collect data from study participants and to provide insight into faculty perceptions.

Research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the perceptions of full time nursing faculty members regarding their experiences of teaching nursing courses in baccalaureate and higher programs, using asynchronous teaching and learning strategies in web-based courses?

2. What do experienced nursing faculty members identify as the positive and negative aspects of online teaching?
Theoretical Influences

The questions I have are well suited for a qualitative descriptive approach to study. C. Marshall and Rossman (2011) described qualitative researchers as having shared principles and being fascinated by the complex details embedded in the stories of the participants and inherent in the area of study. One of the shared principles is the rejection of the positivist belief that there is one truth and that the positivist’s “scientific truth” outweighs other “truths” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Throughout qualitative research, constructivism is foundational. The meaning for which one is searching is not discovered, but constructed (Merriam, 2002; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). Qualitative research allows the flexibility to see what the data will uncover in an open, meaningful, and constructive manner. However, the generation of data cannot be detached from the researcher, who determines that which will constitute data, the interactions between the researcher and the participants, and the researcher’s interpretation and communication of data and the research process (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007).

Though no specific theoretical framework guided this study, a number of theoretical influences have converged to facilitate this work and help me develop a deeper understanding of teaching and learning in the online environment. The works of John Dewey, Ralph Tyler, James Henderson, and Patricia Benner have guided my thinking about education. The influence of these theoretical perspectives is described in the following sections.

Two theories that elicit widespread support in online teaching and learning are Michael Moore’s (1997) Theory of Transactional Distance and the Garrison, Anderson
and Archer’s (1999) Community of Inquiry Framework. These theories provide important considerations in discussions of online teaching and learning. Both theories have influenced my practice as a nurse educator who teaches online courses and have been incorporated into this work.

In the following sections, both the Theory of Transactional Distance and the Community of Inquiry Framework are discussed. Further, the influences of Dewey, Tyler, Henderson, and Benner, in relationship to these models, are interjected. The final area of influence included in this section is that of self-care. Self-care is an emerging area of theory. Though not well developed conceptually, self-care theory does influence my thinking about my role as a faculty member, my teaching practice, online teaching and learning, and some of the issues that are commonly associated with teaching in the online environment.

**Theory of Transactional Distance**

A theoretical perspective underlying much work in online education is that of transactional distance. Originally identified to refer to distance education in the early 1970s, the Theory of Transactional Distance remains relevant to online or web-based learning environments, today. Transactional distance refers to the perceived distance between the instructor and the student in the online learning environment (Y. M. Smith & Caplin, 2012). Based on Dewey’s concept of transaction, the teacher must work to bridge the gap, engaging students in the learning process (Moore, 1997). Current technology affords faculty members a variety of methods for improving communication with students, addressing different learning styles, and providing a stimulating
environment for learning. It is important for faculty members to understand how to employ those technologies with teaching strategies to create the best opportunity for student success. Students who feel disconnected in online courses are at increased risk for poor outcomes, including dissatisfaction, decreased engagement, and unsatisfactory performance (Moore, 1997).

I, too, approach teaching online as an opportunity to bridge the distance gap between the learner and myself. Applying this theory to my own teaching has resulted in having a vision for my courses and clearer goals for my teaching. The application of this theory has also improved my communication with students, and resulted in more positive feedback about my teaching and about course structure and assignments.

**Community of Inquiry Framework**

A framework commonly used in the design, implementation, and study of online teaching and learning is the Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework first introduced in the online teaching literature in 1999 (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, et al., 2010). “This model has 3 concepts known as ‘presences’—cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence—that converge to create the educational experience” (Y. M. Smith & Caplin, 2012, p. 121). When a component of this framework is missing, learning is negatively impacted because each must be present to create the learning environment (Garrison, Anderson, et al., 2010).

The development of the CoI framework was strongly influenced by Deweyan concepts. In one of the initial articles describing the CoI framework, Garrison et al. (1999) discussed the significance of the learner’s personal world of “reflective and
meaningful” experiences combined with the shared world that is collaborative and “knowledge-focused” in creating the optimal learning environment (p. 92). The authors quoted Dewey’s definition of educational processes and defined his perspective on education as a “collaborative reconstruction of experience” (Garrison et al., 1999, p. 92). Dewey’s practical inquiry model, comprising pre-reflection, reflection, and post-reflection is the basis for the cognitive presence element of this model (Garrison et al., 1999).

Tyler’s influence can also be seen in the CoI Framework. Effective learning, according to Tyler, occurs when six conditions exist (Tyler, 1976). The learner must have motivation, a perception of the desired behavior or learning experience, and put forth the actual effort to achieve the behavior or experience (Tyler, 1976). These conditions support cognitive presence as defined by Garrison et al. (1999) in the CoI Framework. The three additional conditions identified by Tyler (1976), a reward system, a feedback system, and the opportunity for sufficient practice, are consistent with the CoI concept of teaching presence.

The CoI Framework is a theoretical perspective that I have used in my teaching practice. I have found it to be helpful in improving the design of my courses, enhancing my teaching, and deepening my understanding of online teaching and learning. The educational theories of Dewey and Tyler were foundational to the CoI Framework just as they have been in influencing my teaching practice and my thinking about nursing faculty perceptions of teaching in an online environment. Each of the three presences are discussed in the next three sections of this dissertation to further delineate the relationship
between the CoI Framework and this study of nursing faculty members. In addition to the works of Dewey and Tyler, the theoretical influences of Benner and of Henderson and Gornik are incorporated.

**Cognitive presence.** Cognitive presence is defined by Garrison et al. (1999) as “the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry are able to construct meaning through sustained communication” (p. 89). In his early works, Dewey identifies the importance of communication in education, viewing it as the basis for education. Though he is referencing education as a “necessity of life” in 1916, there is significance in his work in terms of online education (Dewey, 1958). Dewey stated communication is important both to the learning and to the socialization of the learning (Dewey, 1958). This is evident in the classroom, and based on the CoI Model, is an essential component of online learning. According to Dewey, “Communication is a process of sharing experience till it becomes a common possession. It modifies the disposition of both the parties who partake in it” (Dewey, 1958, p. 11). The learner creates meaning and makes judgments about their shared world, based on their experiences and communications. To do so, the learner must participate in conversations with others in the environment (Wahlstrom, 2010). Far more than an educational method, communication fosters common learning, allowing students to learn from listening to others. This is a key factor in online learning and in the CoI Framework. Students who do not engage in communication and experiences in the online environment fail to establish cognitive presence, thus are at risk for poor performance in the course (Y. M. Smith & Caplin, 2012).
Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, and Day (2010) also stressed the importance of communication in nursing practice and in nursing education, citing studies that “have shown improved patient outcomes when the communication channels between nurses and physicians work well” (p. 22). Patient safety is dependent on the communication of the nurse or student nurse and the ability of that nurse to advocate on behalf of the patient. Educators in the online environment face additional challenges in helping students develop strong communication skills for the clinical area, but innovative strategies can be incorporated to assist students in doing so. “Typically in professional fields, as the technical and instrumental nature of the knowledge and skilled know-how increase so does the need for effective communication and relational skills” (Benner et al., 2010, p. 24).

In online courses, communication is a key component to ensuring student success. “Quality Matters (QM) is a faculty-centered, peer review process that is designed to certify the quality of online and blended courses” (Quality Matters, n.d., para 1). The QM general standards encompass eight areas of consideration when evaluating the quality of an online course (Quality Matters). Six of these eight standards relate directly to communication with and between students. The remaining two general standards have at least one component that relates to communication, providing additional evidence of the importance of communication in online courses.

**Teaching presence.** In 2004, Nordkvelle identified concerns voiced by critics about using technology for teaching. These concerns are not specific to online learning, but instead encompass all technology. “Technology [is] mechanical, dehumanizing and
horrific; a static, alienating element in the modern life-world” (Nordkvelle, 2004, p. 434).

Though this opinion has softened, there are those who continue to criticize online learning and the use of technology in education. The role of the faculty member is to employ technology in ways that enhance student learning and to remove the “dehumanizing . . . static, and alienating elements” (Nordkvelle, 2004, p. 434). The need for faculty members to do so fits into the CoI Framework as teaching presence, which Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, and Archer (2001) defined as “the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educational worthwhile learning outcomes” (para 1).

There are varying opinions about the effectiveness of online teaching and learning. Maintaining a quality learning experience is one of the chief concerns of faculty members, administrators, and students. Dewey expressed contempt for the “pouring in” process stating,

Why is it, in spite of the fact that teaching by pouring in, learning by passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still so entrenched in practice? That education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and being told, but an active and constructive process is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory. (Dewey, 1958, p. 46)

Though the ‘pouring in’ through listening to lecture content is lessened in the online environment, a poorly designed online course can result in a passive approach to learning. This is evident by the fact that many students enroll in online courses thinking they are ‘easier’ than traditional face-to-face courses and are surprised at the amount of
time they actually spend on assigned readings and activities in well-structured online courses. According to D. A. Breault (2005),

Dewey described [the following conditions of active learning] throughout his work: thoughtful planning, solid understanding of the subject matter, a willingness to experience ambiguity in the learning context, and a relationship of mutual trust between the teacher and the students. (p. 19)

Tyler identified the need for “the whole-hearted participation of teachers” in educational efforts and the responsibility of administrators to understand the rationale (Tyler, 1976, p. 70). This certainly remains relevant in terms of online teaching and learning. Faculty members need to engage in curriculum development, evaluation of learning and in research related to online teaching and learning. The support of administration is imperative.

If students are to become active and engaged constructors of knowledge, teaching must evolve from the dominant, standards-based curriculum to practices that will enable students to foster an understanding of the unique relationships between subject matter and themselves as well as the relatedness to greater society. Under the curriculum wisdom paradigm the teacher and student are engaged in a process of reconceptualizing the received standards into “understanding goals” (Henderson & Hawthorne, 2005, p. 6), rather than measuring student achievement by the student’s ability to memorize and pass standardized tests. Teachers need to develop a skill in handling multiple sets of ideas and applying them rigorously and fairly to a variety of practical decisions (Walker & Soltis, 2004). The role of the teacher is more active, as well, when they assist students to
become active makers of meaning and to demonstrate subject matter understanding “through expressive and idiosyncratic performances that are integrated with self and social understandings” (Henderson & Gornik, 2007, p. 44). Teachers guide these active meaning-making experiences, cultivating reflective inquiry in their classrooms and helping students demonstrate subject matter understanding embedded in democratic self and social understanding (Henderson & Gornik, 2007). Reflective inquiry through curriculum wisdom teaching will allow students to truly “understand” the curricular components and assist them to become strong and vibrant thinkers, able to construct meaning and become active participants in college classroom settings.

Effective course design involves the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning activities, as well as clear communication about objective, expectations, and course assignments. Faculty members must be present in their courses to facilitate communication and student engagement. Teaching presence is seen as an essential component in creating a community of inquiry and serves as the connecting element that binds the social and cognitive presence in the online environment (Garrison et al., 1999).

**Social presence.** Education as a social function is a theme throughout Dewey’s work. Publications in which learning communities or communities of inquiry are discussed frequently cite Dewey’s democratic practices, communication, and socialization concepts. Dewey’s attention to communities was evident in his description of the process by which groups of individuals convene to discuss their needs and concerns and work towards resolution. The social awareness that is generated allows the group members to respond collectively to problem solve towards common goals (Dewey,
1927). Though not always focused on social concerns, students engaged in a community of inquiry in the online learning environment form a cohesive group that works together to complete assignments, to accomplish the common goals of meeting course objectives, and to develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter to be learned.

Being a democratic citizen has relevance in the online classroom. There are rules of engagement and personal responsibility that must be followed to establish a positive learning environment, just as there are expectations in the face-to-face classroom and in societies. Allowing students to have input into the rules is a strategy that helps students assimilate and participate. This process may be challenged by the short duration of some online courses (7 or 8 week) as well as by a variety of other factors, including student familiarity with online learning. The learning curve for students new to the online environment is more drastic than for those who have familiarity with such learning environments, but since faculty members structure their courses differently, even students who have taken online courses may need to allow time to adapt to the ‘new’ environment. Students need to apply principles of citizenship in their online learning environment, just as they do in society. According to Wahlstrom (2010), “one condition for acquisition of knowledge can be formulated as: to participate in and be influenced by conversations with a shared purpose, within and between different groups, with a shared but not identical world as the point of reference” (p. 446).

Brighouse (2006) illustrated this point best when he discussed how autonomy and social aspects are important to our understandings. He said,
Autonomy has a deeply social aspect, not least because human beings are deeply social beings. Individuals do not flourish separately from others; their interests are bound up with those of other people, and their reflection takes place within a given social context. (pp. 19-20)

Henderson and Gornik (2007) promoted the use of learning communities and critical friends in transformative curriculum leadership (TLC). Learning communities are formed when a group of individuals convene to address issues in a mutually agreed upon manner; the group “establishes a trusting, reciprocal and collaborative working relationship” with group members (Henderson & Kesson, 2004, p. 3). Although the purpose of a learning community solving curriculum issues differs from that of students convening in an online classroom, the need of a trusting, reciprocal, and collaborative working relationship is essential in both scenarios. Some learning may occur without such a relationship, but certainly learning will be enhanced through the learning community connectedness.

By treating students as critical friends, not only will you be encouraging students to use their mental capacities to build more sophisticated understandings, but you will also be provided real and insightful feedback on the quality of your designing, planning, teaching, evaluating, and organizing decisions from the people most intimately involved. (Henderson & Gornik, 2007, p. 207)

Dewey helped us understand the connection between curriculum, knowledge, and the learner. Walker and Soltis (2004) contended, “the curriculum contains traditional knowledge, but as curriculum it must be seen as knowledge in relation to the learner and
not as something separate from the teaching-learning process” (p. 45). Both Dewey and Tyler discussed and supported the importance of experiences in education. Tyler (1976) agreed that education can occur in a variety of settings and is not limited to the traditional school classroom. This idea supports the use of the online environment for learning.

Benner et al. (2010) suggested four shifts that must occur in the thinking of students and faculty members and in the approach faculty members use in designing and implementing curriculum. First, to assure relevance in nursing education, we must move from a “focus on covering decontextualized knowledge to an emphasis on teaching for a sense of salience, situated cognition, and action in particular clinical situations” and develop pedagogies that help students stay focused on the patient’s needs and experiences (Benner et al., 2010, p. 89). The second shift that must occur is moving from the fragmentation of delivery of teaching that occurs between classroom, clinical, laboratory, and online teaching (Benner et al., 2010). Teaching must be integrative in all settings to create experiential learning environments. In addition to integrative teaching, methods of assessment of student learning must be varied and appropriate for the learning experiences. A third recommendation is the need to shift from an “emphasis on critical thinking to an emphasis on clinical reasoning and multiple ways of thinking that include critical thinking” (Benner et al., 2010, p. 89). Focusing less on role socialization from student to professional and more on formative processes is the fourth recommendation (Benner et al., 2010). Each of these recommendations can be applied in the online environment, addressing a combination of cognitive, teaching and social presence in the CoI Framework.
Self-Care

An emerging area of study is that of self-care. The concept of taking care of oneself is not new, but the increased attention being paid to the subject as it relates to nurses and nursing students is new. The Kent State University College of Nursing founded the Interprofessional Institute for Self Care (IISC) in 2012 to study self-care in nursing students and nursing faculty members. Working to understand faculty perceptions of teaching in an online environment, and sharing the insights gained, is supported by the concepts of self-care and the need to support faculty members in their work. Dr. Laura Dzurec, Dean of the College of Nursing, offered these comments in response to the College receiving national recognition for these efforts.

Given the complex work they do, nurses’ need to take care of themselves through self-care activities cannot be overemphasized. We hope to see every U.S. nursing program adopt the strategies that we are emphasizing through out Care for the Caregiver program, and we expect that’s exactly what might happen. (Dzurec, 2012)

Bland, Seaquist, Pacala, Center, and Finstad (2002) described factors that affect a faculty member’s productivity. These factors included quality of students, productivity of colleagues, availability of resources, culture and climate, administrative structure, and decision-making process (Bland et al., 2002). The concept of self-care lends further support to the need to understand online teaching and learning from the faculty perspective.
**Researcher Background and Role**

The focus of this study arose from my own experiences as an educator and my search to learn more about managing the workload of teaching web-based nursing courses as a non-tenure track faculty member at a major mid-western university. In general, I enjoy teaching online. I find the challenges stimulating and the technology fascinating. As described in the previous section, my understanding of education and my role as an educator has been influenced by the theories of Dewey, Tyler, and Henderson. My practice as a nurse educator is also influenced by the work of Patricia Benner.

As a nurse educator with many years of experience, I was an early adopter of distance learning and have lived experience with using technology for student engagement and learning. I have found the Theory of Transactional Distance (Moore, 1997) and the Community of Inquiry Framework (Garrison et al., 1999) to be useful in my course designs and pedagogical considerations. The emergence of self-care as a theoretical perspective that pertains to faculty members and to students has resonated with me both as having personal meaning for me as a non-tenure track faculty member and a doctoral student and as having benefit to the profession by considering the messages we send to students about self-care.

In nursing education there has been a steady increase in student enrollment and a sharp increase in program proliferation. These changes have created a shifting of faculty workload assignments. The resulting shift is evident in larger class sizes, decreased load release for course preparation and modification, and less lead-time on faculty assignments to allow for course planning.
My own teaching practice has involved a variety of distance education methods over several years. The decision to teach web-based courses was originally my choice, but the current environment of high student enrollment, large online section sizes, heavy workload assignments, wavering policies related to online courses and programs, and limited technical support for students and faculty members has added to the challenge of providing quality learning experiences for students. The recent shift in emphasis has had a negative impact on me personally and has resulted in changes to courses that may not be in the best interest of faculty members teaching and the students enrolled in those courses.

I care deeply about the quality of nursing education and believe that online teaching and learning has a principal place in nursing education. One of my primary concerns is the quality of education in online courses. I believe online teaching and learning can be done well and that experienced nursing faculty have perspectives that must be considered to assure quality in online teaching and learning. My experiences as a nursing educator, with a history of using technology for teaching and student engagement and the recent changes I have experienced, has led me to this research interest.

**Rationale for Design**

Basic qualitative descriptive research was selected for this study. This method is described by Merriam (2002) as a qualitative research method that allows the researcher to capture the meaning study participants assign to their experience through description and interpretation of research data. The rationale for this study is found within what
Guba and Lincoln termed the “Naturalistic Paradigm” (Lincoln & Guba, 1999, p. 141). This paradigm supports the study of behaviors and events (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) within the context of their occurrence (Benner et al., 2010; Merriam, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The design of this study affords three components identified as essential to qualitative study: systematic design, manageability of process, and flexibility of interaction to assure holistic exploration (C. Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Through this approach, I hope to better understand the perceptions of 10 experienced full time nursing faculty members who are teaching online courses at the baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral level, using asynchronous teaching and learning strategies. This research study will contribute to the body of knowledge related to online teaching and learning and will reveal elements of faculty members’ experience such as positive and negative aspects of online teaching, workload distribution for faculty members who teach online, and efforts and initiatives that best support faculty members who teach online.

Methods

Qualitative designs are most useful when the researcher seeks to understand the rich descriptions of experiences (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). This study employs qualitative descriptive methodology. Such “generic” study is reported by Caelli, Ray, and Mill (2003) to be one of the most common forms of qualitative research and is based on concepts from education, psychology, or sociology. Though “generic” in nature, this type of study affords the researcher the opportunity to gather data about faculty perceptions by talking with experienced faculty members and listening to their unique stories.
Sandelowski (2010) identified descriptive qualitative research as wide-ranging and based on constructivist principles. Using the term “data-near,” Sandelowski stated that qualitative descriptive studies produce findings that are more directly aligned to the data, and that good qualitative description result from the interpretive process (Sandelowski, 2010, p. 78).

Using an inductive strategy and self as the instrument, the researcher seeks to determine how participants make meanings of the phenomenon, thus describing the phenomenon from the perspective of the participant (Merriam, 2002). Since this line of inquiry is relatively new, approaching the study as descriptive allows for exploration of faculty perceptions to begin to understand what can be learned from faculty members about teaching in an online environment. Themes arising from qualitative analysis of interview data, viewed in the context of current literature, provide insight into participant experiences. Similarities in experiences among participants were helpful in understanding factors affecting faculty members in the online teaching environment.

**Participant and Setting Selection**

The process of recruiting participants for this study occurred in four steps in which I: (a) distributed the initial survey, (b) established a list of potential interview candidates, (c) contacted potential participants, and (d) determined the final study participants. In this section, these steps are described and demographic information for the study participants is presented.

**Initial survey distribution.** The selection of faculty members to participate in the study began with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) website
listing of nursing programs that are members. Current membership in the AACN comprises 690 schools and colleges of nursing at public and private universities. Publicly funded member schools were initially selected. This primary list of nursing education programs was cross-referenced with the list of programs accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Based on this list, each school’s website was accessed for email addresses of faculty members. Colleges of Nursing that did not list faculty email addresses on their website were removed from the master list.

The initial criterion for participant inclusion was teaching for a publicly funded college or university with nursing programs accredited by the CCNE. CCNE was contacted for access to an email distribution list. The initial intent was to email a link to the survey to all deans of accredited nursing programs. However, access to this email list was denied per organizational policy. This denial resulted in the need to manually collect information about each nursing school or college listed on the CCNE accreditation webpage, yielding 247 accredited, publically funded nursing programs. The process used to gather contact information was to visit each school or college website, individually. During this process I discovered that many universities listed faculty members’ names, credentials, and email addresses on their websites. Seventeen accredited programs did not include faculty members’ names and email addresses on their websites, yielding 230 schools or colleges of nursing that did provide this information. After consultation with my advisor, my distribution strategy was modified to email the survey link directly to nursing faculty members at the schools that publically displayed faculty members email
contacts. Schools that did not provide this information were eliminated from the distribution list, resulting in a total of 230 schools on the distribution list.

The initial distribution list comprised 9,109 faculty member email addresses. The list was lengthy because there was no way to determine which faculty members actually taught online courses from the information posted on websites. When clearly stated on the website, nursing faculty with administrative appointments were not included on the initial distribution list, but I found this information was not up to date on several of the school or college of nursing websites.

Again, through discussion with my advisor, the decision was made to revisit the nursing program websites and eliminate schools or colleges that do not have evidence of online nursing courses because faculty members teaching at those institutions would not fit the selection criteria for this study. Three approaches were used to explore online course offerings. First, nursing program descriptions for post licensure nursing programs were explored for online courses offerings, since many post licensure programs are offered hybrid or completely online (AACN, 2012). If the school did not offer either RN to BSN or graduate programs online, the search phrase “online nursing courses” was used to search the website as the second strategy. The third strategy was to go to the “distance learning” or “online learning” section of the university website and look for nursing courses. The first search was found to be an accurate method of determining if online nursing courses were offered. Through this process of eliminating colleges and schools that did not offer nursing courses online, 2,286 faculty members’ names were removed from the listing of 9,109 faculty members, leaving a total of 6,823 potential faculty
participants for this study. This method of establishing a distribution list did not allow for determination of which faculty members met the specific inclusion criteria related to their teaching experience and online teaching load.

An email describing the study and participant qualification was sent to all 6,823 faculty members. Qualtrics survey software was used to make the survey available to potential participants so the software was used to initiate the recruitment email. The email used to seek volunteer participants to complete the initial screening survey can be found in Appendix A of this document.

**Initial survey questionnaire.** A researcher-designed survey questionnaire was used for the dual purposes of screening potential study participants from a national pool and gathering some initial data about the faculty member’s teaching experiences prior to the individual participant interview. The questions included in the survey were developed using the current literature, the research questions identified for this study, the expertise of the faculty committee members guiding this work, and the researcher’s personal experiences teaching in online environments. Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009) described the challenges inherent in developing a strong survey and the consequences of not doing so. Areas of consideration include: the type of question to be asked, the wording of the question stem, the wording and selection of possible responses to the question, how the question will appear in the survey, and how much space will be provided for the participant to answer the question (Dillman et al., 2009).

Obtaining demographic and experience data provided a basis for assuring diverse representation within a potentially narrow sample. According to Dillman et al. (2009), a
survey is an efficient manner to gather data about individuals, including their backgrounds, beliefs, and behaviors. Delivered in an electronic format, using Qualtrics Survey Software, this questionnaire allowed for the collection of information from a larger pool of participants from a variety of colleges of nursing throughout the country.

Web delivery of surveys is a process that has both strengths and weaknesses (Dillman et al., 2009). In this study, web delivery provided easier access to a variety of potential participants for the researcher and convenient access to the survey for the participant. Further, using the Internet for survey delivery affords the option of collecting a large amount of data, in a relatively short amount of time, at minimal cost to the researcher (Wyatt, 2000). The Qualtrics Survey Software allowed for the inclusion of survey logic. Using this option, the survey appeared individualized to the participant, based on individual responses. For example, if a participant selected “no” in response to a question that had follow-up questions associated with it, the follow-up questions did not appear. If the participant selected a “yes” response, additional relevant questions appeared in sequence. The intent of the option is to limit the amount of time and effort a participant would expend reading questions that were not relevant to their situation or their experiences. Doing so decreases participant fatigue and frustration and limits the potential for collecting conflicting data.

In the past, web-based survey delivery could be problematic for participants who were not computer literate or Internet savvy and would be a barrier to access for potential participants without convenient Internet access (Dillman et al., 2009). Because the target population of this study was nursing faculty members who teach online, computer
literacy and Internet access was not likely to be a problem. A potential issue was that of the amount of email communications received by a faculty member in a typical semester. In a study conducted by Duran, Kelly, and Keaten (2005), faculty members reported they were appreciative of the convenience offered by the availability of email, but found it to be problematic in that the immediacy of email communication blurred the boundaries between work time and personal time. Since the recruitment letter for this study was sent via email, there is a possibility that many faculty members would choose to ignore the email.

The survey was designed with 35 total questions. Not all participants received all questions since “skip” logic was used in the survey delivery software, hiding questions from participants when responses indicated the question would not be relevant. Nine of the 35 questions were linked to previous questions and required a “yes” response to be revealed. Consequently, participants who completed the survey responded to a range of 26–35 total questions.

The questions and response choices for this survey are included in Appendix E. Gender, rank, full versus part-time status, and teaching preference are examples of single response questions in which participants will be limited to choosing only 1 response. A few questions allowed faculty members to choose more than one response such as a question asking the type of program in which they teach. Because many nursing faculty members teach in more than one program track, indicating this variation may lend additional insight. Responses to this question include: pre-licensure undergraduate
(BSN), post-licensure undergraduate (RN/BSN), accelerated BSN, graduate (MSN), doctoral (Ph.D.), clinical doctorate (DNP).

Many questions were designed to allow the participant the opportunity to both answer the question and to elaborate, if they felt the need to do so. Many of the fill in questions related to workload. The fill in option was chosen since workload is determined and characterized differently within different institutions and may vary within the institution based on a number of factors.

**Potential interview candidates.** Participants for this study were recruited from a nationally distributed survey. Purposive sampling was then used to eventually narrow the list of potential candidates to arrive at the actual study participants. Because the purpose of this study is to understand perceptions of nursing faculty members teaching in an online environment, it was necessary to purposefully select participants based on identified criteria (Creswell, 2007). A purposive or judgment sampling technique was used for this study to obtain faculty perspective, based on teaching expertise, and to gain insight into variations that may occur at different institutions in different parts of the country.

M. N. Marshall (1996) characterized this type of sampling as the most common, allowing the researcher to stratify participant sampling to establish the best sample for the research question. Purposive sampling of individuals is preferred, according to Patton (2009), in situations where the researcher is able to identify individuals who would be good sources of information in the area of inquiry. Using this type of sampling allowed me to explore the perceptions of faculty members who are experienced in online teaching and
who are most able to talk about those experiences at a level of detail that will provide insight into the issues faced by faculty members.

Setting specific criteria for participants requires the use of informed judgment in sample selection rather than relying on other sampling methods. Criteria for participant selection in this study were based on the individual’s teaching experience and workload distribution, and were used to select as heterogeneous a sample of nursing faculty members as is possible within this criteria. The specific criteria used are defined in the participant section of this chapter.

According to M. N. Marshall (1996), the researcher must select a sample size that is best for the study being conducted, identifying the researcher as the person most qualified to make that decision and the “optimum number” to be that which is necessary to yield relevant data. Curtis, Gesler, Smith, and Washburn (2000) found support for small samples, thoroughly studied and productive in the generation of information, throughout the literature. Flexibility is needed in participant selection since determination of saturation is an imprecise judgment. Sandelowski (1995) described the balance that must be struck between a sample that is too large to permit the deep, case-oriented analysis that is indicative of good qualitative study and a sample that is too small to achieve informational redundancy. Setting a range allows for some adjustment in the total number; based on the data and keeping the projected number small allows for the deeper exploration Sandelowski (1995) described.

For this study, eight to 12 participants were sought for interview to allow saturation to occur. Saturation occurs at the point at which the researcher begins to hear similar
information related to the research questions. When no new information is offered by participants and redundancy occurs, saturation has been reached (Polit & Beck, 2012). Saturation is believed to have occurred with 10 interviews in this study of nursing faculty perceptions. This determination was made in consultation with my advisor and was based on the fact that no new data emerged from the experiences shared by faculty participants and there was repetition of data within the categories of interest.

**Avoiding conflicts of interests.** Faculty members from Kent State University and from neighboring institutions were invited to complete the initial survey based on the selection criteria for the colleges of nursing but were not the specific target institution for this work. To avoid potential conflicts of interest or trust issues with faculty members from Kent State or from neighboring institutions, faculty members from these organizations were not considered as potential interview participants. This decision was made in consultation with my advisor for this dissertation work.

**Criteria for selection of potential interview candidates.** Choosing from within the survey respondents, a total of 503 participants began the initial survey with 437 of those faculty members completing all items in the survey. Strong response to the request for faculty members to complete the survey created the need to narrow the participant field to determine which faculty members to interview. I began this process by downloading the data into Excel. The next step was to remove those who answered “no” to the question asking to interview them. Participants who did not complete the survey were also eliminated, as were individuals who indicated they work part-time. The number of completed surveys revealed 204 participants gave consent to be contacted for an interview.
Characteristics of the population were varied but limited to faculty members who are employed full-time in a College of Nursing, and who teach at least 50% of their teaching load online. Ideal candidates taught 75 to 100% of their teaching load online during the prior academic year. This higher percentage of teaching load was ideal since the literature indicates online teaching increases workload and requires expanded consideration and support. However, since this higher percentage was not a consistent criteria for this sample, consideration was given to faculty members who taught online for at least 50% of their assigned load.

A combination of both experienced and novice faculty members were included; however faculty members in at least their second year of teaching were sought. Consideration was given to academic ranking to provide a variety of perspectives. These criteria were selected to provide depth of consideration in the experiences of participants while attempting to reach faculty members best situated to offer rich insights into teaching nursing courses in asynchronous online environments. Several authors previously cited (Ascough, 2002; Beffa-Negrini et al., 2002; Conceicao, 2006; Haber & Mills, 2008; A. E. Johnson, 2008; J. Johnson et al., 2005; McKenzie et al., 2000; Moisey et al., 2006; Oomen-Early & Murphy, 2009; Orrellana, 2006; Rockwell et al., 1999; Salajan et al., 2010; Shea, 2008) contended teaching online involves greater faculty time. Faculty members with at least two years of teaching experience in teaching online were preferred because the purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of faculty members who have experience teaching in different environments, who have experienced other complexities, and who are beyond the initial phase of employment as a faculty member.
To narrow the field further, I looked at specific responses to the six items listed below. I also looked for stories in the survey data, reading comments offered by participants through which they elaborated on their responses and seemed willing to share their perspectives.

- Question 6 for years of teaching online,
- Question 8 for teaching load,
- Question 9 for release from teaching for administrative load,
- Question 11 for percentage of teaching load online,
- Question 14 for teaching load (courses/credit hours),
- Question 16 for number of students in classes or sections taught.

**Contact with potential participates.** Following the aforementioned steps, the number of potential participants for interviews was narrowed from 204 to 51. The 51 remaining participants were then sorted by geographic region and categorized to consider teaching load hours, academic rank (tenured, tenure track, or non-tenure track), preference for teaching (asynchronous, synchronous, hybrid, face-to-face, or combination), and the unique responses offered in the initial survey responses. Eighteen faculty members from across the country were contacted for interviews via follow up email. Of the initial 18, seven agreed to be interviewed, two declined, and nine did not respond. A second follow up email was sent but yielded no additional interviews. The next seven participants were then contacted by email, resulting in three additional interviews.
**Final study participants.** Table 1 includes the list of participants, identified by pseudonyms. A description of each participant’s academic rank, geographic region, teaching experience, and teaching preference is also included.

Table 2 highlights participant responses to initial survey questions about the types of programs in which they teach courses, teaching load, percentage of load related to online teaching, class size and familiarity with Quality Matter. Although familiarity with Quality Matters was not a criteria for inclusion in this study, it is does add to the background of the individual participants.
Table 1

*Descriptive Characteristics of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>Online Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ava</td>
<td>TT</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Combination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>NTT</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Combination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Combination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>NTT</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>NTT</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Academic Rank abbreviations: TT = tenure track; NTT = non-tenure track.
## Table 2

**Additional Descriptive Characteristics of Participants Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Nursing Programs Teaching</th>
<th>Teaching Load Hours Per Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Load Teaching Online</th>
<th>Class Size</th>
<th>Quality Matters Familiar / Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ava</td>
<td>BSN Accel/BSN RN/BSN MSN PhD</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Varies; Typically 5 – 20</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>BSN RN/BSN MSN DNP</td>
<td>18 but can vary (3-5 courses per semester)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Varies; Typically 25 – 30</td>
<td>No / NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>BSN Accel/BSN RN/BSN MSN DNP</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>Varies; UG 16 – 25 Grad 2 – 10</td>
<td>No / NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>BSN DNP</td>
<td>&gt;30</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>UG 40 – 50 Grad varies; typically 15</td>
<td>Yes / Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>RN/BSN Graduate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>UG 20 Grad 10-14</td>
<td>No / NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>BSN MSN</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Varies; 1 - 24</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>BSN RN/BSN Accel/BSN MSN</td>
<td>&gt;30</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50 in online; 100 in blended</td>
<td>No / NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>BSN MSN DNP</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Varies 10 – 35 in online; 40-60 in blended</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>MSN DNP</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Yes / Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>RN/BSN</td>
<td>&gt;30</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Varies; 20 – 50</td>
<td>No / NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) indicated the collection of data is accomplished by using study methods as “tools” (p. 19). In a qualitative descriptive study, data are “collected through interviews, observations, or document analysis” (Merriam, 2002, p. 20). Data sources for this study included both survey responses and recorded conversations obtained during interviews with 10 experienced nursing faculty members who teach online. The survey used for this study served two purposes in that it was initially used to screen participants for interviews but also provided additional data for analysis. The survey process was described earlier in this chapter and the interview processes is described in the next section. Researcher logs were used to note nuances pertinent to this topic and provide insights into all research processes, including data collection, data analysis, and researcher situatedness.

Participant interviews. Participant interviews provided the primary source of data for this study. All recruited participants engaged in a semi-structured interview. As Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) denoted, this type of interviewing provides some structure for the researcher but supports ample opportunity for participants to respond and elaborate on issues of greatest significance to them. It was expected that interviews would take 45-60 minutes and would be conducted via technology (Skype or Facetime preferred) at a pre-arranged time, mutually agreed upon by the participant and the interviewer. Actual interview lengths ranged from 31-68 minutes. The shorter interviews were more challenging because of the number of questions planned; however, some faculty members were pressed for time and needed to limit the discussion to just over 30 minutes. Only one
participant was willing to Skype but was not willing to be on camera. All other participants
preferred to talk by telephone rather than using video conferencing technologies.
Participants were contacted by email after they completed the survey. Consent to
participate in the study and to be recorded was obtained by email with the participant
printing, signing, scanning, and returning the signed documents electronically. The consent
to participate in the interviews can be found in Appendix C and the consent for audio
recording of the interview is included in Appendix D. All interviews took place between
the dates of September 24 and November 11, 2013.

The interview questions are intended to provide a framework that guides this
inquiry, provides structure for the process, and strengthens trustworthiness as identified by
Lincoln and Guba (1985). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) described the interview as an active
process in which a conversation, including both asking questions and listening for
responses, reveals embedded details, unique perspectives, and stories of significance to the
participants. The interviews conducted in this study allowed the interviewer to construct
research data that helps the researcher to understand nursing faculty perceptions of teaching
in an online environment. Interviews were structured as recommended by Rubin and
Rubin (2005), “combining main questions, follow-up questions, and probes” (p. 129).

All of the questions are intended to guide the process, create consistency, and allow
the researcher to explore and understand faculty perceptions. The degree to which each
was investigated varied based on participant response and interview timing. Knowledge of
the research process and of the subject area being studied is demonstrated by the
researching recognizing and prioritizing questions to be asked during data collection
The semi-structured interview format provided the opportunity to follow up on survey question responses and to enter into a deeper discussion of the online teaching experiences of nursing faculty members. Interview questions were developed to provide a structure for the conversation about faculty workload, teaching experiences, professional development and recommended support to address identified challenges. The primary questions used for the semi-structured interviews are found in Appendix F.

Throughout the interview, the researcher responded to the participants’ comments and stories to clarify unclear concepts or responses and to encourage reflection and conversation. Responses were probed to elicit depth and detail about the participants’ thoughts and experiences. Probes are an essential component of the interview process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Creswell (2007) asserted that the interviewer must remain flexible during the interview, thus it is difficult to plan for all probes that will be used.

The interviews were recorded using audio technology to assure accuracy of information obtained from the dialogue. The audio recordings were used only for the purpose of gathering data and analyzing for this project. Recordings were transcribed by a university research department transcription service. Electronic files were hand delivered to assure a secure process.

At the end of the interview, participants were asked for permission for follow up contact to clarify content of the first interview and to verify accuracy of information obtained. All were receptive to follow up contact. Participants were also asked, at the end
of the interview, if they would like to hear the audio or read the transcript of the interview. All participants declined but expressed an interest in the study findings.

**Researcher logs.** Qualitative researchers recognize researcher logs, also referred to as journals, as a data source that support qualitative data collection and analysis. Borg (2001) stated that such journaling is helpful, “as a form of reflective writing which researchers engage in during a project and through which they document their personal experience with the research process” (p. 157). In this study, the researcher log allowed for the careful consideration of the different aspects encountered. An important function of the research log is to document objective descriptions of the data collection methods.

Keeping a research journal and reflecting on both process and interpretation has assisted in creating researcher awareness and analysis. Documenting the process provided a systematic tracking to insure integrity of study design and implementation. In addition, keeping and reviewing the logs allowed for careful consideration of potential influences such as researcher experience and ideas, and the interplay of these elements with other data gathered in the interviewing process. As Peshkin (1988) suggested, “formal systematic monitoring” is needed and that “subjectivity audit” would help the researcher discover where the limits of my subjectivity lie (p. 20). Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) recommend using logs or journals to provide an audit trail, which Merriam (2002) contended should include specifics of the data collection process, the determination of categories, and the decision-making used throughout the study.

The logs serve another purpose in that my own development as a researcher can be explored. As a novice, I have much to learn about conducting a research study. I used
the researcher logs to document the process, document my ideas and concerns, capture and reflect on my thoughts, and identify and document the decisions I make in response to issues that arise. I used logs at each step of the process to keep a record of my activities and thoughts, and to capture the nuances of this research. Early in this process, the logs were used to track activities and document thoughts about those activities. It was also used to record changes made and the rational for those changes. My notations in the logs were also used to help me prepare for the next interview in the series and to facilitate reflection on the interview and the data collected after the event. Logs were particularly useful in the analysis of data to assist with recognizing and identifying concepts and themes and organizing and collecting practice specifics.

**Organization of Data**

Survey data, interview sessions, and researcher log notations comprise the sources of data for this study. All materials were logged electronically using a systematically developed listing. The survey data were collected between July 22 and September 19, though survey data for the individuals interviewed were collected between July 22 and August 12. Some faculty members chose to complete the survey weeks after the initial request for participation and after the follow up emails, thus the variation in the dates. The original survey data remain in the Qualtrics software server in a password protected account. Downloaded data spreadsheets are kept on the researcher’s computer in a password protected file and are backed up on an external hard drive that is stored in a locked storage space.
Participant interviews were conducted between September 24 and November 11, with most interviews conducted within 30 days; however, some needed to be rescheduled due to participant circumstances. An electronic file was created for each interview participant. These files contain a worksheet that was used to prepare for the interview, the completed consent forms, the audio file of the interview, and the transcript created from the interview recording. Both audio and electronic files were organized by a coded participant indicator or pseudonym to protect confidentiality and protect both the file and the identity of the participant. These files are also stored on the researcher’s computer in a password protected file and backed up on an external hard drive that is stored in a locked storage space.

TAMs qualitative data analysis software was used to analyze interview data. Files used in the data analysis were created and categorized by participant. Notes and memos used during the data analysis process were stored and accessed using the TAMs software. Notes and memos stored and accessed using the TAMs analyzer were used to assist the researcher in capturing decisions about processes, coding, and data analysis.

**Data Analysis**

Miles (1979) identified the complex, time-consuming process of data collection and analysis as one of the challenges of conducting qualitative research. Data analysis in this study involved both the survey questionnaire responses and the individual interviews. The primary purpose of the initial survey was to make contact with potential interview participants, but much background information was gathered through this process as well. Understanding the interviewee’s background and teaching experience informed my
interviewing and provided foundational information for both selecting the candidate and for beginning a discussion about their perceptions of teaching in an online environment. This initial survey was delivered and analyzed using the Qualtrics Survey Software available through the university. Throughout qualitative research, constructivism is foundational. The meaning for which one is searching is not discovered, but constructed (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative analysis allows the flexibility to see what the data will uncover in an open, meaningful, and constructive manner.

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) identified four steps in qualitative data analysis and interpretation but also stated that there is no “right way” in which to proceed with data analysis (p. 344). Step 1, the preparation of the data, involves interview audio transcription. A transcription service was used to create the interview transcript but each transcript was checked against the original audio recording to assure accuracy of transcription. This phase of the analysis involved entering and storing the transcribed data using the TAMs qualitative software. This initial process should not be perceived as a passive practice. The researcher worked to assure the accuracy of the transcription and to formulate a sense of the essence of the interview experience (Fain, 2004; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Speziale & Carpenter, 2003) including the impact of the researcher’s own presence on the process and on the data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

Transcription occurred as quickly as possible after the interview. A transcription service was used to transcribe the interviews. Files were delivered to the transcription service each week. Upon return receipt of the files, the verification process was undertaken. The accuracy of transcription and verification of transcription was
completed by the investigator and edits were made as necessary. The reviewing of the transcripts was an essential component of the process to both establish the accuracy of the transcription and to assist in the beginning of data analysis. Preliminary coding and notations in the researcher logs also took place to ensure integrity of process and to allow for initial analysis. When listing to the audio recording, though the primary focus was on accuracy, elements of the data began to emerge. These elements were noted in the researcher log.

**Coding of data.** Coding is the process that is used to help the researcher identify patterns or themes in the data. Creswell (2009) identified the coding process as involving the identification of ideas or topics from within the data, and categorizing these ideas into subsets for consideration. To manage these subsets, codes are created, defined, and applied as labels to the subsets (Creswell, 2009). The coding procedure needs to be exacting and rigorous to allow for informed interpretations of the data (Merriam, 2002). To assist with the coding process, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (TAMS Analyzer) was used. When using software, the data is tagged or labeled within the transcript text to allow for retrieving and categorizing, supporting data analysis and interpretation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

The thought of defining codes can be intimidating to the novice researcher. In this study, there was no clear point at which this process began. Codes began to emerge while listening to the interview recordings and checking the transcripts, as early as during the actual interview. As this occurred, possible codes were noted in the researcher log. Codes continued to be identified as the formal coding procedure began. New codes were
created as data were considered that did not clearly fit into the previously identified codes.

During the earliest phase of coding, as the transcripts were loaded into the TAMs Analyzer software and the first transcript was reviewed, codes previously identified were created, defined, and color-coded using the TAMs software. As the first interview transcript was coded, a total of 19 codes had been created: advice, beginning OLT, challenges, characteristics, class size, communication, courses, negative aspects, policy, positive aspects, programs, rewards, standards, stories, strategies, student feedback, support, values, and workload. Codes that were added during the coding include: effective online teaching, environment, changes (Needed or Recommended), peer support, preference, professional development, and student learning. Some universal and context codes were identified to be used in sorting the data. These codes included data type, date, participant, and role, indicating academic rank. During the initial coding, it was sometimes difficult to fit the data into only one category. For example, when participant one, Julia, spoke about the challenge of not seeing students face to face and being able to gauge understanding by student non-verbal communication, this data could fit into more than one category, including challenges, negative aspects, and even into communication and values. As the data analysis progressed, this challenge persisted; however, the categorizing of data did become clearer as themes emerged and context was clarified.

Steps 2 and 3 are the data exploration and data reduction phases. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) grouped these steps together because of the synergism that occurs, which
makes them difficult to separate. Processes such as coding the data and memoing about findings, questions, and other thoughts take place during this period of examination. A common problem identified by Fain (2004) is the researcher hurrying to complete the analysis and missing important details. To offset this potential hindrance, Fain recommended ongoing data analysis during the data collection process. In this study, some preliminary data analysis occurred during the data collection process in that interview transcripts for early interviews were reviewed during the time that later interviews were occurring, but the majority of data analysis occurred after the data collection concluded.

In the final step, interpretation occurs, though Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) cautioned that these steps are fluid rather than linear and that exploration, reduction, and interpretation are ongoing throughout the analysis process. Analysis of the data continues until the point in time at which no new material is discovered (Fain, 2004). In this study, analysis began during the interview phase of data collection and continued throughout the analysis process with interpretation beginning to occur fairly early in the analysis process. Inductive analysis was used and the categories, subcategories, and ideas were developed based on the actual data and themes that emerged during the research process.

Interview questions were structured to open a conversation about teaching in an online environment. Major themes anticipated included positive/rewards and negative/challenges. Categories and subcategories emerged from faculty members responses based on their unique experiences. An essential component in the analysis of
interview data is looking for concepts and themes that are mentioned by the interviewee, indirectly revealed via the interview process, or that emerge from comparing interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Through data analysis new concepts and themes can be anticipated to emerge (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007).

Interpreting the data is how the researcher represents the individuals being studied and communicates the data in the context of the existing literature (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

**Ethics**

Research that involves human subjects requires attention to the protection of individual rights within the research context. Research participants have the right to freedom from harm, the right to privacy and dignity, and the right to confidentiality, regardless of the type of research being conducted (Fain, 2004; Patton, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Ethical behavior within the research process is a core concept in the conduct of research studies. The nature of qualitative research provides a direct connection to individuals, thus the researcher must plan the study to avoid violations of person rights, anticipating ethical issues that could arise and assuring integrity in each step of the research process (Creswell, 2009).

Several steps were taken to assure this research was conducted in an ethical manner. The study was designed with the input of experienced faculty researchers who served as committee members on this dissertation study. The researcher completed training programs required for conducting research at the university and received approval from the Kent State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this
study. Faculty participants were sent a recruitment email explaining the research. The text of the recruitment email is found in Appendix A. Prior to completing the survey, participants were required to read and provide consent for the study. The survey consent form can be found in Appendix B. Participants who agreed to an individual interview also completed additional consent forms located in Appendix C and D. Consent forms fully delineated the details surrounding this study, including the risks and benefits of participation. Participants were not contacted until after IRB approval was obtained.

Since this study focused on experienced nursing faculty members, all participants were over 21 years of age, well educated, and familiar with research principles. As a result, it is doubtful that the participants would not understand the consent agreement or would be at risk for harm within this study. Participants volunteered for this study in response to the initial request and had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a significant component of qualitative research. To achieve trustworthiness, the researcher must convince the research consumer (including oneself) that what is being reported is worthy of consideration and that acceptable criteria for conducting this type of research as been followed (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1999). Throughout this study, measures were taken to assure acceptable criteria were followed to maintain the appropriate level of quality in this dissertation research.

Fain (2004) offered two questions that must be answered when establishing the trustworthiness of findings: “Can persons believe the results of this study?” and “Are the
data valid and reasonable?” (p. 198). In the eyes of critics of qualitative approaches to research, the validity of study conducted in the naturalistic paradigm is questioned. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness refers to a quality of inquiry that persuades researchers’ audiences that “the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of” (p. 290). The transferability of the research findings is an important consideration. According to Lincoln and Guba, transferability is the process that occurs when the reader is able to use the information provided in one study to recognize that the conclusion may be applicable in similar circumstances. In order for transferability to occur in this qualitative study, rich descriptions of faculty perceptions of teaching in online environments are included in the following chapters of this dissertation.

Trustworthiness was addressed through measures to establish credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (1994). To establish credibility, four strategies were used. These strategies included participant member checking, data saturation, expert peer debriefing and negative case analysis. During the interview process, nursing faculty participants were provided the opportunity to clarify or modify responses to survey and interview questions and elaborate on responses to help me deepen my understanding of their perceptions. Nursing faculty participants were asked if my capturing of what they said during the interview was correct. Participants were also offered access to the transcripts, if they were interested in reviewing the interview. All participants declined transcript review but each participated in member checking to assure accuracy of the data obtained from the
interview. In addition to being the most well-known credibility technique, member checks have an additional benefit of encouraging participants to be empowered to engage in a study and to feel more connected to the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data saturation was achieved with 10 interviews. At this point, no new data emerged in the discussions with nursing faculty about their perceptions of online teaching within the limits of the interview sessions. Negative case analysis was attempted however there were no negative cases or disconfirming evidence in this study. All participants spoke to all four major findings.

Keeves and Lakomski (1999) recommended using “peer debriefing” as a means of establishing credibility (p. 147). Faculty colleagues, experienced in qualitative research, participated in expert peer debriefing throughout the data collection and data analysis phases of this work. My advisor, members of my advising committee, and select nurse researcher colleagues provided support, council, and feedback on budding insights, personal feelings, anxieties, and concerns.

Peshkin (1988) stated, “ones subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed” (p. 17). My knowledge of and concerns with teaching and learning in web-based courses create somewhat of a dichotomy. I have significant expertise to be able to formulate questions and to shape my study, yet my creativity and objectivity can certainly be influenced by my personal and professional experiences. A potential danger that existed is that of my perspective leading me to overlook the details revealed or missing or misunderstanding the essence of my subjects’ experiences. Another potential problem is that of my asking leading questions seeking to “find the right answers” to the problems I
have encountered and identified. Strategies that assisted me in seeking out my subjectivity as a doctoral student researcher and establish trustworthiness of the findings included utilizing members of my advising and dissertation committee to help me develop my research process. The dissertation process and the IRB approval process are two procedures that provided support for assuring that questions were appropriate for this study. I also shared a brief summary of my background during the interview to be open and honest with participants and so participants were aware of my position in this study. Scripting my interview questions and identifying possible probe questions prior to the interview, combined with awareness of my own bias, allowed me to listen to participants’ story and engage in the interview process to further explore faculty perceptions. Keeping researcher logs or journals and memoing facilitated a more comprehensive perspective of the research processes and my own influence on both the process and on the data analysis and interpretation. Using the researcher’s log/journal, I wrote about my thoughts and ideas throughout the research process, during both data collection and data analysis. I used the researcher logs to document the process, document my ideas and concerns, capture and reflect on my thoughts, and identify and document the decisions I make in response to issues that arose. The log served as a record of changes made and the rationale for those changes. Logs were particularly useful in the analysis of data to assist with recognizing and identifying concepts and themes and organizing and collecting practice specifics.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This study explored full time nursing faculty members’ perceptions of teaching in an online environment through conversations with experienced faculty members about their teaching. In the previous chapters, the rationale for this study, a review of relevant literature, and the detailed methodology for this study were presented. In this chapter, the findings of this study are disclosed. The questions that guided this dissertation study were:

1. What are the perceptions of full time faculty members regarding their experiences of teaching nursing courses in baccalaureate and higher programs, using asynchronous teaching and learning strategies in web-based courses?
2. What do experienced nursing faculty members identify as the positive and negative aspects of online teaching?

This chapter is organized based on the findings of this study. Nursing faculty members perceive that student learning is the goal of online teaching and learning and that student engagement is essential for student learning to occur. Four themes emerged from the study data that support these general perceptions and answer both research questions one and two.

1. Nursing faculty members perceive that relationships with students are key to student engagement and thus student learning, and that these relationships are complex and can be difficult to establish in the online learning environment.
2. Nursing faculty members perceive that support comes in a variety of forms and is needed to make learning work well in the online environment.
3. Nursing faculty members express constraints and concerns that interfere with their ability to engage students and provide the best learning opportunities online for their students.

4. Nursing faculty members perceive that there are opportunities to improve online teaching and learning.

**Relationships With Students**

One of the themes that emerged most clearly from this study is nursing faculty perceptions of the importance of their relationships with students and how they connected their relationships with students to student engagement and learning. It was clear from talking with these nursing faculty members that student learning was seen as the goal of online teaching and learning. It was also clear that engagement was an important condition of student learning, but they perceived that it was their relationships with students that enhanced student engagement and student learning. In this study, it was evident that nursing faculty members frequently felt challenged to establish strong relationships in the online environment. Areas that emerged as important aspects of relationships include (a) student engagement and learning; (b) social presence, frequently described as “knowing students” by faculty participants; and (c) meeting students’ needs. The importance of these relationships was evident throughout the interviews across all participants.

**Student Engagement and Learning**

Student engagement was viewed by nursing faculty members as both the essence of learning and as one of the challenges of teaching in an online environment. Nursing
faculty members talked about a number of relational aspects of their teaching presence that foster student engagement and learning. Relational aspects described in this section include providing introductions and audio lectures so students can hear the faculty member’s voice, providing synchronous sessions for the opportunity to see both the instructor and the other students in the course, providing activities and information that is both educational and entertaining, and establishing community within the online environment. Faculty provided examples of their work in engaging students and feedback received from students who engaged in learning.

Most nursing faculty members talked about having a preference for some amount of face-to-face teaching and their comfort with being in the front of the classroom, engaging students in traditional methods. Faculty members who saw this face-to-face interaction as important identified the need to have this contact at the beginning of the course to connect with the student early in the learning experience and to serve as a foundation for the student teacher relationship. Some faculty members who mentioned this did choose “asynchronous” or “hybrid” as their preference in the demographic survey but clarified that although those were their preferences for teaching the majority of their courses, they still enjoyed the more traditional interaction with students.

Both Deborah and Abigail referenced the adage “sage on the stage” and spoke of “being an entertainer” in talking about their preference for traditional classroom teaching. Prior to teaching online, these faculty members saw the activity of teaching from the front of the classroom as the best way to connect with students in the student/instructor relationship. These faculty members, and others in this study, admitted that a change in
their thinking about student engagement and their relationships with students was necessitated by the online course delivery. Deborah and Abigail commented that even when the teacher is standing in front of the class, there is no assurance that students are engaged in learning. A similar comparison was made by faculty participants in terms of online teaching and student engagement; simply building the course and enrolling students is not enough.

Grace provided a description of being present in the online classroom to foster the student/instructor relationship. In doing so, she identified the need to be present to the student, making them aware that the teacher is participating in the students’ learning experiences, stating, “Be present to them and they will be present to you. It’s a two way street.” Grace also shared,

I always feel like I need to get the personality of the student and how they communicate on line. I feel like if I can do that, I can work to build the community in which students are supported. This makes it a good learning experience for people who are really afraid of taking classes that way.

Establishing these relationships through building community promotes student engagement in the learning process. Julia described the connections made between students and faculty members at the “on-site” orientations offered in her college of nursing as making a “huge difference when the students see us, knowing that we are real people. This makes a difference in their connecting in an online learning environment.”

Nursing faculty members identified the need to include a variety of teaching strategies to be employed in establishing teaching presence and promoting student
engagement in the online classroom. Deborah talked about “maximizing use of the features in the course management systems” and other compatible technologies for student engagement, student learning, and relationship building. Abigail compared a past face-to-face section of a course to the current online section of the same course stating that in the online section “everyone of them was interacting, and at the end of the term, the depth and breadth of knowledge for the entire class was deeper and broader than I believe I had achieved in my traditional classes.” Charlotte concurred that students who do the assigned work learn “better” in the online environment stating, “For that reason, I am a strong supporter of online education.”

**Challenges.** Some nursing faculty participants appreciated the challenge of engaging students in the online learning environment. Julia and Mason are two examples of these participants. Julia shared that the challenge of engaging students in an online environment and the resulting student/instructor involvement is one of her favorite aspects of teaching online. Using recording programs to add audio to introductions and lectures are strategies Julia identified as being helpful in letting students know “you are a real-life person” enhancing the connection between the student and the course instructor by letting the student hear the voice of the instructor on a weekly basis. Mason described his ability to engage students using different technologies as one of the strengths of his teaching and commented, “I always try to make it the best possible experience for my students.” It is this concern for the student as a person, and the human connection that can be felt through the technology that was evident throughout the research data.
Rewards for faculty members and students. Sophie’s story about one of her “challenging” post licensure students demonstrated the importance of forming student/instructor relationships with the goal of helping the student learn. In the example shared, the student was upset with Sophie’s attention to detail in grading written assignments. Sophie said, “I think student writing is important and I look at those assignments very carefully” and talked about encouraging students to expand their writing skills and to consider submitting works for publication. Sophie talked about how exciting it was to see students become enthusiastic about their writing and about the possibility of submitting for publication and seeing the result of their work beyond an assignment for a course grade. The student/instructor relationship is a primary component in this process. The student in Sophie’s story found the writing assignments in her online course to be interesting but was “irritated” when he learned he was not meeting the standards appropriate for baccalaureate level writing. Sophie explained:

At the end of the class, he wrote me this really nice email that said “you’re the only one that has held me to a standard of writing and did not let me slide. Because of that, I feel like I’ve really learned how to be more aware of the little things, and I think it has made me a more professional writer.” So that was probably one of the nicest things that someone has said.

In this example, Sophie experienced feedback about her teaching directly from a student. This feedback provided insight into the success of her efforts to engage the student in learning.
Charlotte provided more evidence of the importance of establishing relationships with students in the online classroom as she talked about having RN students who struggled to engage when she was learning to use the technology in addition to learning the nursing content. While sharing her story about a post licensure student’s reflection on learning in the online environment, Charlotte talked about the need for the faculty member to be active in the learning process for students through the student/instructor relationship.

When students reflect and comment on their experiences in the online environment, they come up with such wonderful thoughts and comments. There was one student who commented about what a struggle it was to adapt to online education and to learn in this way but then they realized that it was like painting a masterpiece and seeing all of the colors come together in a process and being able to see the masterpiece that they were finally able to paint as the result of engaging with online education. Comments like these make me realize that we are doing the right thing. (Charlotte)

Charlotte’s example of student feedback about engagement and learning not only demonstrates that she was successful in her efforts to help the student engage but it also provides insight into the importance of this feedback to faculty. Helping a student who is struggling with an online course is a fairly common practice in online courses. In Charlotte’s story, the importance of this role is emphasized by the student’s comparison of online learning to “painting a masterpiece” and “seeing all of the colors come together.”
All nursing faculty members in this study felt online teaching and learning was effective for many students, especially those who were already registered nurses, but that effectiveness was predicated on establishing student/instructor relationships that help students engage in the learning process. These faculty members also saw online courses as appropriate for a wide range of nursing content. Abigail summed up her feelings by saying, “I believe that for my courses, that overall, learning is actually better for each of the students in the online courses.”

Several faculty members identified the level of student engagement as a strength of online teaching and learning. All faculty members stated that they thought the opportunity exists in the online classroom for deeper discussion with all students involved, unlike in the traditional classroom setting where a portion of the students would be more likely to listen than to contribute to the dialogue. Deborah described her experiences with discussion forums and added that students needed to be taught what is expected. “I had to announce quite a few times that ‘I agree’ statements are not acceptable responses.” Deborah added that once students understood her expectations, the students were active and engaged in the discussion forums.

Faculty members identified the ability to see student learning taking place in the online classroom as a positive aspect, noting that learning is more apparent because of the amount of writing required of students and the ability to look at the students’ work over the entire course using the course management system. When faculty members talked about this deeper level of engagement through discussions and having the opportunity to observe student learning over time, it was clear that they saw their efforts in connecting
with the student and their establishment of the student/instructor relationship as the primary contributing factor.

**Social Presence and Knowing Students**

The second aspect of relationships to emerge from this study is the social presence or what nursing faculty members referred to as “knowing the students.” In this section of findings, the concepts of social presence and the issue of knowing students are presented. There was agreement about the need for establishing social presence among nursing faculty members in this study, but disagreement emerged around the concept of knowing students. Thus, section headings of lesser knowing and greater knowing are also included. The final subsection presented provides strategies used by experienced nursing faculty to improve social presence in the online environment and address the issue of “knowing” their students.

**Social presence.** The concept of social presence is a familiar concept to many faculty members who teach online. Social presence refers to the establishment of a social connection in the online classroom (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, et al., 2010). As part of the Community of Inquiry Framework, social presence has appeared in the online teaching and learning literature for 15 years. In this study, relationships with students was a major theme. One aspect of those relationships is the social connection nursing faculty felt they needed to establish to help their students engage with them, and with peers, to be successful in the online course. Abigail talked about having students work in groups for discussions and projects so they felt connected to each other. In Abigail’s
courses, assignments that allowed students to connect socially with their group members are offered early in the course to help them establish rapport.

One of the predominant issues related to social presence in online teaching and learning that emerged in this study of nursing faculty is that of “seeing” the student and the student “seeing” the instructor and the other learners in the web classroom. Nursing faculty participants connected “seeing” other people in the course with making a social connection, and in some cases, with “knowing” the student.

Most faculty members saw the lack of face-to-face interaction with students as a negative consequence of teaching courses that are completely online, using asynchronous design. Several faculty members mentioned that hybrid or blended courses were an excellent way to allow for some face-to-face contact to establish relationships, but still offer students the convenience of online learning. In this study, three participants preferred hybrid courses (Abigail, Deborah, and Mason) and three preferred a combination of courses with both online and traditional teaching and learning environments (Charlotte, Lily, and Julia) to provide for some amount of face-to-face interactions with students. Ava, Chloe, and Sophie, who indicated their preference for teaching as asynchronous, also mentioned the lack of visual contact and seeing students as a negative aspect of teaching and learning online.

Ava and Sophie both pointed out that students also like to be able to control “seeing” the faculty member or others students and that some decline opportunities to be “seen” in synchronous interactions or through posted photos or images. Ava suggested
the ability to disconnect might be one of the reasons some students choose online courses. She explained,

They want to be able to get the knowledge and they want to be able to get the credit for the course, but they want to do it on their own time, and in their pajamas or underwear, if they want to! They don’t really want to be seen unless they really have an issue in the course.

From their perspective, being on camera in synchronous interaction may be less important to the student than it is to the instructor.

**Reduced “knowing” online.** In this study of nursing faculty perception, faculty members frequently referred to “knowing students” in their discussions about teaching in the online environment. Most nursing faculty participants expressed concerns that they did not know their students in online courses, comparing online courses to teaching in traditional classrooms. Nursing faculty saw this as a negative facet of teaching asynchronously in the online environment. Further, most faculty members identified “not seeing” or “meeting” their students face-to-face as a negative aspect of teaching asynchronous online courses. Several nursing faculty members commented that they did not have the opportunity to know their students beyond what is posted in their assignments for the course, making it difficult to establish a social connection.

Most faculty members perceived the online environment as an obstacle in the relationship and identified the lack of personal connection as a negative aspect of online teaching and learning. An example of this concern about connecting with students is
found in Grace’s comment: “It is a challenge to connect with students when you don’t see them face-to-face.” Grace shared the following anecdote about a student encounter.

I actually met a student one time that I had only known online and I met him in a hospital. He was taking care of my parents. I knew that he worked at the hospital and was like “Oh, I remember you.” You were in my class, and I told him all these things about his work that I remembered. He was surprised by what I remembered about his postings. It was strange to ‘know him’ by his work, but not know him by sight when I encountered him in his workplace. I used to be able to do this, but not any more; not with the number of students I have. (Grace)

Ava compared this lack of “knowing the students” to online dating, where one does not really know the person they are “dating” and can be misled by what is presented without having real-time, face-to-face interactions with the individual. As nursing faculty members teaching online, using asynchronous technologies, it is difficult to know who the students are or to know much about them as individuals without making an effort to establish a social connection. In addition, the other cues common in face-to-face communication are missing, creating a lack of familiarity inconsistent with a social presence. Ava elaborated adding,

I have a relationship with them, but I do not know them. I have a relationship with them because I’ve written letters of reference and I have read about what they have done in the course, but when I see them face-to-face, I do not know them and they do not know me. The relationship is a written one that is based on what little I do know about them.
Ava talked about requiring students to come to campus during the first week, in past classes, so faculty members and students could meet at the beginning of the course, and begin to establish the social connection and foundational relationship for the online courses. She added that she would like to see an on-campus “residency” as a requirement at her college of nursing but realizes this is not likely since it is increasingly difficult to bring students together and having such a requirement is not likely to be supported by students or administration.

Ava described the difficulty of not having familiar cues such as hearing the students’ verbal comments and seeing the students’ non-verbal expressions to get to know the student as a person and to gauge their comfort with the learning activities.

I don’t know the people. I mean, I know them—I know names, I know how they write, I know who has what writing style and who is a little quicker with assignments, and who is a little slower and less detailed in doing their postings, and things like that, but when they come to graduation, I don’t know who they are. I don’t like going to commencement and not being able to recognize the students who were in my classes. (Ava)

**Online environment provides other ways of “knowing” students.** The topic of “knowing” the students in the online classroom was a point of disagreement for nursing faculty members in this study. A few nursing faculty members stated that they actually knew their students better in the online courses. These faculty members saw online teaching and learning as an opportunity to get to know students better through their writing and participation in online discussions, stating that students must participate in
online forums to earn a passing grade. They framed this concept in contrast to face-to-face classes, where students are able to remain passive in their participation and appear to be engaged in learning.

Sophie supported this contrasting view, stating that she felt she actually “knows” her online students better than her face-to-face students because online students are required to post, which frequently results in students being more active in online learning environments than they are in a similar course that is offered in a face-to-face environment. She felt she gets to know her online students better because of the level of writing required, but identified that she, too, misses the social aspect and being able to recognize them at graduation or in the local hospital, since “knowing them through their assignments” does not help identify them at events. Grace also thought she knew her online students better, through their writing, than she knew students in her face-to-face classes.

Lilly talked about getting to know her students through their behaviors and writing styles. She added that she could provide more guidance to students if the course management system allowed for more delineated monitoring of student preparation and student work. Lily saw better monitoring as an opportunity to more carefully assess student work early in the process and to better assist students who are having difficulties. Lilly identified that this level of monitoring is not an option in the current course management system but added that having such capabilities would give her better insight as to how she could best help the students who are struggling with key concepts in her courses.
Strategies to improve social presence and knowing students. Though not being able to see students in the online classrooms was a concern, the nursing faculty participants had ideas for how to work with the situation. Several nursing faculty members talked about missing the face-to-face interaction with students throughout the interviews and offered suggestions to use in making social connections with students in the online environment. Chloe and Sophie suggested having each student post a photo of himself or herself and share information that would help others relate to that student as an individual. Abigail suggested group activities that allow students to connect socially such as posting introductions and question and answer activities that are not course content specific, such as favorite quotes, items, or events. Ava shared examples of using games and stories telling to help students get comfortable in the online classroom.

Chloe, Sophie, and Deborah preferred to incorporate synchronous communications at least one time a semester to meet synchronously with students as a class or in small groups. These three nursing faculty members shared strategies for “knowing students” through synchronous communication technology such as Skype, FaceTime, or BlackBoard Collaborate to allow for a social connection to the instructor and to other students in the session. Nursing faculty members also mentioned placing phone calls to individual students at least once a semester to let students know the instructor is “real” and cares about them as an individual. Julia identified using phone calls to touch base with students stating that students sometimes forget they can phone their instructor, even when the course is online. The nursing faculty members who talked about such communications with students stressed that it is important to connect with
each student individually and not wait until the student was having difficulty, but noted that the student who struggled in his or her courses would receive additional phone calls to check in and continue to offer support. Ava preferred an on campus residency program so she could meet the students and students could meet each other.

Helping students establish a social presence and getting to know students were important elements of the instructor/student relationships described by nursing faculty members throughout this study. The idea of “knowing students” emerged as being of great importance to nursing faculty participants who teach online courses. What was less clear was what it means to “know” students. The ideas presented in this study include recognizing students outside of the web learning environment, having insight into student personal and professional attributes and histories, and understanding student thinking processes, through their writing and online communications in the discussion forums.

Meeting Students’ Needs

The third aspect of relationships to emerge from this study is the concept of meeting students’ needs in the student/instructor relationship. Student needs were identified and described in the context of caring for the student as a person and providing a positive experience for the student as a learner. This section is organized with the subheadings of (a) Students’ Personal Needs, (b) Diversity Among Students, and (c) Communicating With Students. Nursing faculty members talked about student needs as a primary reason for teaching online and that even though there is a benefit to the faculty member, it is students’ needs that drives the availability of online courses at their respective universities.
**Students’ personal needs.** Ava talked about how “teaching online meets the students’ needs, you know, so that they can continue their education and not have to move near the university.” Grace shared a similar comment about student need:

Students are busy people, especially the registered nurses returning to school for their bachelors or masters. They are working and have families and do not have time to drive to campus and sit in a classroom like we did. They work 12-hour shifts and have more complex patients and higher patient loads and are juggling so many things. If the program wasn’t online, many nurses would not be able to accomplish it.

The availability of online courses was identified as being particularly useful to nurses who serve in the military who can continue their education even when their orders take them to a different location. Online programs also accommodate nurses who work travel assignments and move frequently as a result of their contracts. Charlotte talked about having students in Afghanistan and in Germany during her recent semesters. Abigail and Sophie provided examples of students enrolled in their online courses from across the United States.

These nursing faculty members, and others in this study, were very clear that meeting students’ needs was important to them. It was also clear that student need for online courses drove enrollment and course offerings at each institution included in this study.

**Diversity among students and the impact on relationships.** Diversity in enrollment was seen as a positive aspect of online teaching by nursing faculty
participants and was described as an opportunity to connect with more students and to connect students to each other. Online programs allow students to access post licensure nursing programs without consideration of geographic location. Chloe commented that online nursing courses allow her college to “capture a whole different group of people beyond those who live in the areas surrounding the university.” All faculty members talked about the richness of the educational experience for the students when enrollment included a wider variety of students.

Several faculty members mentioned broadening their own perspective as a result of having students enrolled from across the country, and in some cases, from around the world. Abigail shared,

It is very cool that I have students from different states around the country. In my student-to-student assignments, I do really capitalize on what is happening across the country and this offers the students a broader insight into those issues.

Charlotte described her experiences with having students deployed in Afghanistan and in Germany and the resulting impact on her online course. She explained that,

It does change the dynamic of the classroom, but it helps students see different perspectives. There are so many benefits to having these students enrolled in courses and sharing their experiences. We can be supportive and nurturing while learning from each other.

Nursing faculty members consistently agreed that online learning offers an opportunity to engage students from around the world, expanding personal and professional relationships and creating access to advanced degrees for nurses.
Communicating with students. Nursing faculty members saw communication with students as another key aspect of both meeting students’ needs in the online classroom and of the instructor/student relationships they sought to establish. Many faculty members talked about the “fun” they experience with online teaching. Having fun with teaching and using a variety of technology is viewed as a positive for the faculty members and for the student, primarily because it promotes communication, engagement, and student learning. Faculty members did point out that being creative in the web classroom does require clear communication to help the students understand the activities so they are not frustrated by the challenge of doing something differently in these courses than in other courses they have taken.

In conversation about their own experiences, nursing faculty members identified timely communications with students as being a key component of online teaching. Ava advised that students’ questions should not go unaddressed for more than 48 hours and that grading should be timely so students feel connected to their instructor and stayed engaged in their learning. Ava suggested having “virtual office hours” at times when students could contact the instructor and get a fairly quick response, knowing that the instructor was monitoring the forum at that time. Grace also talked about getting positive feedback from students about getting back to them quickly. Deborah stated, “I do think that there are some topics actually are more effectively taught in an online environment, providing I have the time to do that one-on-one interaction with the students.”

In addition to the timing of communication with students, the quality of the interaction is important to faculty members. An interesting comment by Deborah was
that it was not really about the grading. She shared, “Grading is easy. It is the interaction. If grading is taking a long time, it is taking away from interacting with students in other meaningful ways.” However, Deborah also pointed out that students see the grading as the most important part of the course, but faculty members see the interaction as being important, creating a divide that needs to be considered when teaching online. Sophie talked about her communications with RN students who have life and work experiences.

They may still question some of the things, but they do it very respectfully. They appreciate when you take the time to show them when they make common mistakes or when they could do better in their writing as far as what they are doing wrong and what they need to do to improve.

Sophie said she knows these students read the feedback she provides and endeavor to grow in their writing skills.

Using synchronous technologies was described in a prior section as a way to help the students and instructor feel a social connection. Using synchronous technologies was also mentioned as a tool to meet students’ needs in the form of asking questions of the instructor and getting a real time response to those questions. Deborah, Chloe, and Julia talked about using synchronous communication strategies to help both the student and the faculty members feel connected and to diminish the relationship disconnect identified by many in this study and in the literature.

Two nursing faculty members talked about their own comfort level with having time to use technology to their advantage by searching for additional information,
checking facts and statistics, and verifying data and taking time to “think before giving a response.” Mason and Grace both shared that they liked being able to craft a response to students rather than “just giving an opinion.” Teaching online allows time to “look up” data and resources to support faculty response. Thus, responses are clearer, more credible, and better developed. As a result of this additional time to search, think, and compose, the nursing faculty members believed their response could lead to more engaged students, and faculty members who are recognized as “experts” in the eyes of their students. Having time to explore information prior to responding also tends to increase the faculty member’s content knowledge, having a positive impact on both the instructor and the student. Mason and Grace talked about being more comfortable responding to students in online forums than being the “sage on the stage” or “entertainer” as described by Deborah and Abigail. Grace compared online teaching and student engagement to being “the Wizard of Oz” and working the technology to help students reach their goals while developing an understanding of the nursing content. Both Grace and Mason felt they were better teachers online than in a traditional classroom setting because of the tools that helped them communicate with students.

A comment made by Charlotte was helpful in keeping communication in perspective. Although it is important to check your course regularly and to let your students know you are present, it is also important to realize that there are “no life-threatening emergencies” in online teaching and learning. Since there are no emergencies, rapid responses to students are important, but not imperative. Charlotte elaborated on the pressure faculty members feel to be present in the online classrooms 24
hours a day, seven days a week; an unrealistic expectation that is fueled by student expectation, faculty dedication, and workload typical of nursing faculty members who teach full-time. Charlotte’s comments were supported by other nursing faculty members who identified the need for clear communication with students so there is less confusion about faculty members’ availability in online courses and so that faculty members are less frustrated by the unrealistic student expectations.

Faculty members concurred that a number of strategies can enhance communication with students, and ongoing communication is a key element of good online teaching. Among these faculty members, technology is viewed as a tool that can enhance communication. However, a few faculty members commented about the “depersonalized” and somewhat “disconnectedness” of reaching students only through technology. Julia, as an example, stated, “I miss the personal communication big time . . . big time!”

Sophie offered the admission that faculty members do make mistakes and faculty members new to online teaching need to realize that the first course will not be prefect. Sophie recommends being open to students’ questions and investigate their concerns. In addition, it is important to acknowledge those mistakes and correct them and communicate with students to minimize confusion. Staying present in the course will allow for an easier transition when those mistakes are discovered and provide the opportunity for a prompt response to intervene.
The way in which faculty members talked about student needs also supports the finding that relationships with (and between) students have a direct impact on student engagement and student learning.

**Support**

The second theme to emerge from this study of nursing faculty perceptions is that of the need for support for effective online teaching to support the goal of student learning. From interviews with 10 nursing faculty members from across the country, the need for support for online teaching was evident. The type of support needed fell into 4 categories. This section of the chapter is arranged by these 4 categories, identified as peer support, professional development, technical support, and administrative support.

**Peer Support**

A consistent sub-theme throughout this study is the value of peer support. Nursing faculty members talked about their relationships with colleagues and the importance of those relationships, particularly when teaching online, where faculty members may become somewhat isolated from others. Though faculty members’ descriptions of peer support varied slightly, the need for access to peers and the deep appreciation for the sharing that occurs among colleagues was made clear by all participants. Further, peer support was perceived to be valuable to faculty members regardless of their years of teaching experience.

Findings related to peer support fell into two categories identified as informal peer support and formal peer support. For the purpose of reporting, the findings are organized using these categories. In this study, nursing faculty members talked about peer support
differently than professional development; however, there was overlap in a few areas. Findings related to professional development are presented in a separate section, immediately following the sections pertaining to peer support.

**Informal peer support.** In this study, the concept of informal peer support refers to the relationship that forms as a result of commonalities and circumstances among faculty members rather than by formal structure. Examples of the commonalities and circumstances include teaching a similar course, having a specific skill set, or being in the same physical location. The focus of this section is on the informal peer support nursing faculty participants experienced and described.

Abigail and Lily described how helpful it is to be able to sit down with other faculty members who have been teaching online and recommended that such relationships be established and fostered. Another aspect of peers support was the availability of others’ courses to look at as exemplars to help faculty members develop their own formats and gain insight into effective course designs and ideals about teaching strategies (Abigail). Charlotte also talked about spending time with colleagues from her college, talking about their methods, and learning about their successes makes her a more effective teacher in the online environment. Charlotte described her nursing colleagues as engaged and supportive, and helpful, even when challenging her to think differently about her work. Julia commented that colleagues who are progressive in their own teaching who are willing to share their methods and strategies with peers make us “rise to the occasion” and improve our own teaching.
For Julia, the availability of peer support is changing. She reflected on the changes that have accompanied the increase in online teaching in learning in that more faculty members work remotely, from their home office or from other locations, rather than driving to campus. She described the connectedness of faculty members when they taught together and worked closely on teaching related work. The opportunity for impromptu discussion about teaching and learning are diminished by the physical distance between faculty members who teach online. Not only does this impact that peer support for online teaching, but Julia sees it as impacting other faculty members.

We used to teach on-campus, everybody was on-campus. We went to each other’s’ kids weddings or showers, graduations, you know. We were really cohesive as a faculty. I don’t know how to create that feeling when we have faculty members on-campus and faculty members who are distant. Julia added that she missed the cohesiveness and the “caring about each other” that was evident in the past.

**Formal peer support.** In this study, formal support is defined as support that is structured. Formal support structures include planned support departments, activities, and programs. Nursing faculty participants experienced formal peer support both within their colleges of nursing and at the university level, though this is an area in which there was overlap with professional development activities. Aspects of the formal peer support experienced by nursing faculty participants, excluding formal professional development activities, are described in this section.
Julia shared experiences from her work environment in which faculty members regularly meet to discuss online courses and share teaching strategies. She explained, “We do a curriculum review. We are able to recognize when something is not working very well. We share ideas and evaluate what worked and what didn’t, so I think we are proactive in our online education.” Charlotte described a similar forum in which faculty members teaching in one online program meet regularly to talk about curriculum, pedagogy, policies, program development, and accreditation. Both Charlotte and Julia saw these formal structures as forums in which peer support was accessible and where dialogue about issues and concerns. Mason described the formal peer review process used at his institution to provide faculty members input into online courses and identified the ability to select the peer reviewer as an opportunity to maintain the peer support relationship.

Though the primary purpose of the faculty forums and processes described in this section is not solely peer support, nursing faculty members saw these forums as creating additional space in which the support was occurring. These faculty members found this opportunity meaningful in their role as faculty members and helpful in expanding their skill set as nursing faculty members who teach online.

Professional Development

The topic of faculty professional development was a valuable area of support identified by many faculty members in this study. During some interviews, there seemed to be overlap between faculty perceptions of peer support and professional development with no clear division between the two. However, for most nursing faculty members,
professional development referred to a more formal process that was external to the college of nursing. A variety of strategies were described during the interviews including continuing education programs, workshops, and mentoring programs.

**Continuing education and workshops.** Most nursing faculty participants in this study were fairly early adopters of teaching technologies who were comfortable using technology or at least not fearful of using it. These facts seemed to influence their perceptions of professional development. Abigail talked about using technology in teaching as a focus in her own doctoral education and being one who volunteered to pilot courses on Blackboard when her university first implemented online courses. “I was very interested in technology and what technology could offer” (Abigail). For Abigail, the skill development began with a more formal introduction through her own doctoral education.

In contrast, Ava shared that she was directed to teach online and though she first resisted the idea, she became a regular and frequent participant in the professional development activities offered by her university to learn all she could about teaching in the online environment. Ava shared, “The first year I was there, I received an award for the most hours at the teaching academy.” Mason stated that he “grew up with technology” and had used it as a student during his own education so he incorporated technology and online components into his courses when he began teaching and gradually moved to teaching course online. Though not all faculty participants went as willingly as Abigail and Mason, there was agreement among these nursing faculty members that online teaching fills the needs many students have and offers specific
benefits for both faculty members and students and that professional development activities are important to assist faculty members in developing effective courses and in learning to teach in the online environment.

Charlotte described the challenge long faced by new faculty members who are asked to teach but are not always supported in their transition from nursing practice to teaching nursing.

Okay, you’ve been a good clinical nurse, so you can teach. You know, we do not always have the mentoring and development processes we need across the board. We lose some really good potential faculty members because they get thrown in, drowned, and decide teaching is not for them. (Charlotte)

She talked about the current and projected faculty shortage and the need to prevent faculty members from being “sacrificed” for the sake of staffing courses.

Charlotte pointed out that it is not just faculty members new to teaching, elaborating on the fact that newer faculty members who have a difficult experience with online teaching can be heard saying “I’m not ever going to teach online again,” because of being “thrown in and drowning.” The need for competent, well-prepared nursing faculty members who are comfortable teaching online is a requirement for nursing education, both now and in the future, and having strong faculty orientation and development programs were seen as a key component in ensuring that well-prepared nursing faculty workforce.

Several nursing faculty members talked about setting and achieving professional development goals. Faculty participants in this study talked about focusing on online teaching in many of their professional development efforts and how that focus helped
them develop their skills. Mason mentioned that he is “certified” in online teaching and
Lily and Abigail had completed the Quality Matters courses.

There is much support among nursing faculty members, for initial professional
development in online teaching, but nursing faculty participants stated that most of those
initial professional development activities focused on learning the platform, setting up the
course, and learning to use tools. Experienced faculty members chose their words
carefully in stating that they didn’t find much that was truly helpful to them at the
advanced level. Deborah stated, she does occasionally get courses or workshops, but she
finds they are “not really great” adding, “but once in a while you’ll go to one that actually
talks about how to be more effective as a teacher.”

Nursing faculty members in this study elaborated on being early adopters of
online teaching and learning both as individuals as well as in reference to their colleges
(Abigail, Charlotte, Chloe, Deborah, Grace, and Julia). Because they were early
adopters, these faculty members reported that they are frequently looked to by colleagues
in nursing, as well as in other departments, for assistance and support. According to
these faculty participants, when nursing faculty members are in the forefront of the
efforts, there is less support for them. Further they are challenged to find structured
professional development activities that produce significant growth opportunities for
them. They are frequently the professional development instructor, rather than the
professional development participant.

Mason and Sophie mentioned that online teaching is not for everyone. Mason
identified the comfort level of some faculty members with technology and learning new
ways to teach as an issue that he has seen. Sophie spoke about this more generally, stating that you really have to be self-directed since there are not specific times scheduled to be in class and because “no one will be looking over your shoulder.” These nursing faculty members felt professional development activities could help faculty members in making choices regarding their teaching.

A suggestion offered by a few nursing faculty members was to take a Quality Matters (QM) course to understand the elements of a good online course. Abigail suggested faculty members new to online teaching take this course early so they have the “big picture” about online learning and best practices in course structure. Other faculty participants, including Lily, Ava, and Chloe, thought a QM course would be most helpful to experienced faculty members. Since not all of the nursing faculty participants interviewed for this study were familiar with QM, it is understandable that this was not a universal recommendation. Julia advised that new faculty members should experience online teaching and learning from the student’s perspective by enrolling in an online course as part of their own professional development.

**Mentoring.** Many faculty members in this study offered the topic of mentor for faculty development. They recognized both the influence of mentoring on their own teaching practices and recommended that all universities have a mentoring process in place for faculty members new to online teaching. Half of the nursing faculty participants in this study identified mentoring as having a significant impact on their own professional development in the initial demographic survey. Stories shared about mentoring experiences involved both formal, structured mentoring programs at the
college or university levels and less formal mentoring relationship in which faculty members self-selected their mentors.

Several faculty members suggested that there is a need to establish a mentoring relationship. Among these faculty participants, this need was seen as greatest for the new faculty member, but those faculty members who were supportive of mentoring relationships felt they could also be helpful for experienced faculty members who are new to online teaching. Charlotte stated that if there is not a formal process for mentoring at the institution, her advice to the new faculty member would be to create your own process. Chloe talked about the mentoring program at her college of nursing that is a more formal process, but suggested that new faculty members find someone “they really click with” to be their mentor. During this conversation, Chloe shared that she was mentoring a new faculty member at the point of the interview for this study adding, “she is not totally responsible for anything related to a course, and that helps her not feel overwhelmed and helps her acclimate to teaching comfortably and more completely.”

Abigail described how helpful it is to be able to sit down with other faculty members who have been teaching online and recommended new faculty members do this as part of their orientation to online teaching and periodically throughout their first year to help them navigate the challenges they may encounter. Julia referenced mentoring as being “huge” in her transition to online teaching. Ava shared a similar experience,
My experience with mentoring was very helpful. My colleague helped me focus on what I needed to do, what strategies would work best, and what learning activities would be most appropriate. Being mentored by her was most helpful because we are so much alike in our thinking.

Nursing faculty members who most supported mentoring as a professional development strategy described the need to have a colleague to go to with questions who was open and willing to spend time in the mentoring relationship. Sophie shared her experiences with a mentor she described as a “friend who really helped me understand how to manage my online courses and how to work with the [course management] system.”

Another aspect of mentoring and professional development was the availability of others’ courses to look at as exemplars to help faculty members develop their own formats and gain insight into effective course designs and explore ideas about teaching strategies. Abigail and Charlotte suggested this opportunity be made available to all nursing faculty members who are new to online teaching along with information about other professional development activities offered at the university. Chloe, Mason, and Sophie recommended providing an opportunity for faculty debriefing after professional development activities to allow for sharing of how the new strategies have been or will be integrated.

Technical Support

In this study of faculty perception of online teaching, nursing faculty members recognized the value of support extending beyond that provided by faculty colleagues. The need for technical support was discussed throughout the interviews and was
identified as something that was necessary for both faculty members and students.

Abigail talked about the need to develop relationships with instructional designers (ID) and instructional technologists (IT), to understand the range of support that is available at the institution, and how that support is best accessed. In fact, all faculty participants mentioned the need to have good IT support for both students and faculty members, with online courses. Julia described her experiences with IT support as an early adopter of online teaching. Because nursing was one of the first colleges to offer online courses, her university provided one-to-one support for faculty members in the development of those courses. More recently, the support at Julia’s institution has continued, but is accomplished through one IT staff member being assigned to the college and having “mini retreats” with IT staff to improve online courses. In these “mini retreats” the focus is on working with faculty in small groups rather than one-to-one.

Ava talked about having reasonable expectations for yourself and for your IT support. She added her best advice would be to “be patient with yourself” since there will be a learning curve with online teaching. This learning curve may be quite steep for the novice faculty member who is both new to teaching nursing and new to teaching nursing in the online environment but that working with IT and ID support can help the new faculty member navigate the learning curves.

**Support roles.** Role confusion and lack of support for faculty members teaching online were seen as negative aspects of online teaching by some of the faculty participants. Neither of these negatives appears to be universal problems since a few faculty members felt well supported in their work environments. Role confusion relates
to the roles of ID, IT, adjunct or part-time faculty members, full time faculty members, and course coordinators. A few faculty members mentioned not being clear on how to use ID and IT support, so they just “do it themselves,” commenting that sometimes it is easier to figure things out on their own rather than spending time trying to determine who to contact, setting a meeting, and waiting until after the session to address the issue. Two faculty members shared concerns about having someone else set up your course because of the difficulty making changes. Abigail gave the example of some dates being added to her course. When she made a change, students reported that the dates were appearing in other places in her course resulting in confusion for the students and a challenge for the faculty member to find and change the conflicting information.

Most of the faculty members in this study admitted to teaching using a variety of systems and, despite differences in the systems, found it relatively easy to adapt. Charlotte, as one example, mentioned that she has taught using six different course management systems, finding some more “user friendly” than others and some requiring more faculty time to accomplish tasks because of the course navigation and the number of mouse clicks needed to complete the task. In general, nursing faculty participants saw having IT and ID support helpful in smoothing the transition for faculty members and in alerting faculty members to the degree of changes that existed in system updates. In some institutions, IT and ID staff prepared overview sheets or “FAQ” documents to help faculty members and students navigate effectively.

Deborah talked about the importance of having well-designed courses to help engage students, requiring them to apply their readings in both their discussion postings
and other work that is submitted for grading. She saw the design of the course assignments as integral to both student engagement and student learning. Course design, assignment creation, and course navigation were additional areas nursing faculty participants viewed as enhanced by IT and ID support. Grace also commented about how helpful IT and ID support is in balancing over all course design with “personalized courses” based on the instructor’s individual preferences.

**Administrative Support**

The fourth area of support identified by nursing faculty participants is that of administrative support. University and college level administration were seen as having authority to influence online teaching and learning through a few areas, including in the areas of policies and standards. One of the most important areas of administrative support is having an administrative structure that supports faculty members in their work and students in their learning in online environments. Faculty members in some institutions felt their workload was heavier because administrators did not have experience teaching online and were not aware of the nuances that can impact teaching and learning in online environments. In addition to understanding online teaching and learning, administrative awareness and commitment to providing other support for online teaching, including design and technical support, support for professional development, and input into policies that impact online teaching and learning were seen as very important.

Julia identified the need for a new faculty member to ask what type of support is available for them so they are aware of resources and opportunities to access those
resources. She cautioned that faculty members new to teaching online sometimes “just struggle through it” rather than seeking help, which she advised against.

**Policies.** One of the interview questions asked about policies needed at participants’ institutions that would support online teaching and learning. Many nursing faculty members struggled to answer that question with a specific policy. However, in discussions about their online teaching policy issues, topics and suggestions did arise. Three different perspectives emerged with regard to policies for online teaching. Two nursing faculty participants, Ava and Grace, commented that policies were restrictive and could interfere with online teaching rather than being helpful in assuring online learning meets the needs of both faculty members and students, but most faculty participants saw the need for policies for uniformity, clarity, and consistency. Ava expanded on her earlier comment about policies being restrictive and stated that having a “common understanding” about online teaching in her university would be helpful and gave the example of using QM as the standard. Chloe mentioned that there was no need for policies specific to online teaching and learning because the policies should be the same as for face-to-face classes.

The need to have clear workload policies was also part of this discussion. Though not identified by all faculty participants, several mentioned that how workload is determined was not always clear to them and that transparency about the process and the opportunity to have dialogue about workload could better support faculty members who teach online. Deborah stated, “there are categories for workload, but the joke here is that it all adds up to one,” indicating the lack of transparency in assigning workload. Lilly
also shared her thoughts about workload assignments stating, “so I’ll be on overload, however they figure that. They know I’ll do it. It is all I can handle but there is no one else to pick it up.”

Some faculty participants mentioned specific components of workload such as large class size, coordination load, consideration of teaching multiple sections, consideration of the total number of sections being taught, and consideration of the level of student and the amount of support students need in a particular course. All of these areas were seen as needing, but not consistently receiving, some consideration in workload. Sophie talked about receiving workload in the past for some of these aspects but no longer receiving that credit, stating, “they’ve taken that away.” Grace shared that workload for non-tenure track faculty was gradually increasing from 24 workload equivalents (WLE) to 30 and would eventually go to 33 WLE. Grace added that she has received load release for advising and for some committee work.

Some faculty members suggested the process for student evaluations of courses as a policy that needs changed at their institutions. Deborah mentioned that the course/instructor evaluation survey used at her institution needs to be revised to be appropriate for online courses/teaching. She shared that attempts were made to change the evaluation surveys with faculty members submitting questions for consideration, but that the process was never finalized, leaving faculty members without a course and instructor evaluation survey that pertains to online teaching. Chloe voiced her concerns that the course evaluations rarely provide useful feedback to faculty members and that many students use them to make inappropriate comments about faculty members. She
explained, “Some students write things like her nails were too long or we didn’t like her hair or she wore frumpy clothes and that’s just inappropriate. It has nothing to do with their teaching, and the comments are hurtful.” Faculty concerns about having course and instructor evaluation that are appropriate for online teaching would provide better feedback to faculty members about their teaching and about the course being evaluated.

Nursing faculty participants identified several opportunities to strengthen policies that have an impact on teaching and learning in the online environment. Though some faculty members voiced concerns that policies could be too restrictive, most faculty provided insight into policies that would be helpful in their work. Updated workload policies and student course evaluation policies and survey instruments were of greatest concern among this nursing faculty population.

**Standards.** An additional element of administrative support that emerged from this study of nursing faculty members was the need for some level of standardization in online teaching. Using QM standards was the most frequently mentioned standard. In this study, 5 out of 10 faculty participants responded that they are familiar with QM. Of those 5, only two responded that they use QM standards when preparing their online courses. Some of the faculty participants who were familiar with QM made reference to standardization of online courses, using the QM principles. Lily talked about how valuable it was for her to take the QM classes, not only for developing her own courses, but to help newer faculty members with developing and modifying their courses. Abigail recommended new faculty members and faculty new to teaching online take a QM course to become familiar with the standards and develop an understanding of online course
development in the context of these standards. Not all faculty participants were familiar with QM standards and some who were did not use it when developing and updating their courses, but faculty participants in this study identified the need to have some standardization with their colleges of nursing for online teaching, especially in the area of overall course design so students were not spending time learning new course navigation in each course they entered.

Abigail identified the need for role clarity as in online teaching on learning. She suggested that the question, “What is the role of faculty in online teaching” be answered and that the role of other, such as instructional designers and instructional technologists, needs to be clearly delineated since these roles vary between institutions, departments, and even individuals. Abigail responded that the faculty member’s role as content expert seems widely accepted but the other roles are less clear. Having a model that delineates these roles would provide clarity for team members involved in online course creation and delivery and would decrease frustration that occurs when roles are ambiguous.

Lily shared her thoughts about the need to standardize online teaching and learning. Assuring quality throughout online courses was the emphasis of her comments. It was interesting to hear her speak of the need to standardize but in clarification, she talked about standardizing to hybrid delivery of courses/teaching because she thought the face-to-face interaction that occurred with blended learning was so important and that it should not be sacrificed for online course delivery.
Constraints and Concerns

A third finding in this study was that nursing faculty participants perceived constraints and identified concerns they have regarding online teaching. Concerns around nursing faculty workload and student behaviors are the two major categories of this theme. Findings supporting both categories are presented below.

Workload

The most prevalent concern among nursing faculty participants in this study was faculty workload. Workload was discussed by each faculty member participant during interviews and was presented as both a concern and a constraint in their teaching practices. Nursing faculty members saw workload as a challenge that was compounded by a number of factors. These factors include (a) the amount of time involved in teaching online courses, (b) the need for advanced planning with online teaching, (c) the methods used to determine workload, and (d) the size of the online course sections. Each of these categories of concerns are addressed in this section, along with nursing faculty perspective on maintaining balance and issues surrounding the flexibility online teaching provides. Two of the greatest concerns of faculty participants are (a) they want to “do a good job” in meeting student learning needs and (b) they would like to be able to maintain balance in their work and personal lives, both of which are challenged by teaching in online environments when certain conditions exist.

Time. All faculty participants talked about their workload throughout the interviews. In this study, faculty participants saw online teaching as taking longer than traditional face-to-face teaching. The amount of time, effort, and workload required to
teach online was seen as a negative by all nursing faculty participants, including those faculty who identified asynchronous teaching as their teaching preference in the demographic survey. Mason identified the amount of preparation time required to create explicit and clear directions to assignments for online courses and the length of time it can take to get students “up to speed” as negative aspects of online teaching. Lily mentioned that a negative aspect of teaching online is that it is difficult to know how much detail is needed in directions and clarifications because the familiar cues present in the traditional classroom are missing in the asynchronous environment. She explained, “Posting too many instructions in too many places can be more confusing for the students, and it is time consuming for the instructor.” Ava summed up the concerns about time and workload by saying, “I’m on the computer 7 days a week.”

**Planning.** Both Abigail and Julia expressed concerns about getting teaching assignments the week prior to the course starting and the challenges of getting the course ready, undermining the recommendation that the course be ready to go prior to the beginning of the course. Abigail specifically described the challenges of getting a teaching assignment the Friday before the course starts on the following Monday. She shared a past experience in which administrators did not see an issue with giving such short notice stating, “You know, you’ve got the PowerPoints; just put them online. Just take it and put it online. It’s no big deal.” She talked about how long it actually takes to redesign learning modules, rethink the learning activities, and develop opportunities to promote student engagement and plan for faculty interaction that is helpful to the student without being all-consuming to the faculty member.
Faculty participants talked about how others who do not teach online underestimate that amount of faculty time and effort spent in getting to know students, employing strategies to engage them, and working with students individually and collectively to help them adapt to the online learning environment and the expectations for successful course completion. Grace shared that she gets asked to do other things because she is “just sitting in her office” and is not in the classroom. “They don’t seem to remember that when I’m sitting in front of my computer, I am in the classroom.”

**Workload determination.** Some faculty participants spoke to how workload is determined while others seemed less certain. There were faculty members who stated in the demographic survey, “I don’t know what you mean by this,” when I asked about workload hours and release time. Deborah described the workload assignment process at her institution, in which tenths of points were assigned for different functions, adding up to 1.0 for a full load. In this system, faculty members were given more load for online and hybrid courses, and for large class sizes, though she indicated large class sizes were unusual in the graduate program. Julia stated workload determination was “union contracted” so the policy was clear at her institution.

Receiving workload credit, in one form or another, for course coordination is a common practice among the colleges and schools represented in this study though some faculty have noticed changes in this allocation. Providing varied load credit for large class size, for course revisions, and for online or hybrid sections was not consistent across the institutions represented. Most faculty participants identified that there is some possibility for getting load for these activities, but there was no clear policy or procedure
that assured this would be granted. Though not fully explored in this study, Deborah also talked about release time for professional clinical practice as an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). Ava talked about APRN professional practice as a “second” job, indicating release time for clinical practice is not afforded in workload at her institution.

Several nursing faculty participants identified the “workload pieces” as an area in which change was needed in the area of online teaching and learning. Elements of faculty workload, as it relates to online teaching and learning, were apparent throughout these discussions with faculty participants. One such element was the need to have adequate time to prepare to teach a course online. This preparation time is believed to be variable, based on factors such as individual teaching experience, if the course has been taught recently (by the same instructor), and the amount of changes that need to be made in the course (such as creating groups, uploading new syllabi and learning materials, creating or revising rubrics, etc.). Faculty participants agreed that having the course ready to go prior to the start of the course is a key aspect to managing the load of teaching online and to keeping up with both the routine and the unpredictable tasks that present as the course timing progresses.

Abigail shared her concerns that some of what we do as faculty members who teach online is not captured in the workload calculations; for example, providing support for faculty members from other departments in the university who are just beginning to teach online or who are expanding their online course delivery. Mentoring, presenting at formal and informal faculty development activities, and providing peer support is rarely
quantified for workload consideration but is a part of professional teaching responsibility and collegiality.

**Class size.** The topic of class size was another theme that emerged during this study. The size of sections in online courses was discussed as both a concern and, in some cases, a constraint. All faculty participants saw class size as a factor that affects faculty workload and teaching in online courses. Having consistent group sizes between sections and having class sizes that support faculty presence in online courses was commonly discussed. Deborah mentioned that appropriate class size really depends on what is being taught, and offered pathophysiology as an example of a course that can work well with higher student enrollment. Deborah stated that content in this course can be delivered using online lecture formats, and student learning is evaluated with testing, so teaching a large number of students is more manageable.

Some nursing faculty participants were not aware of whether or not there were enrollment maximums in online course sections in their college of nursing. Those with maximum numbers on course enrollment stated the number of students enrolled was frequently based on the number of students who “needed” the course rather than a true maximum enrollment number set ahead of time. Chloe talked about the variability in her graduate courses in which enrollment ranged from 7 to 24 students. Program size, the number of faculty members available to teach, and the rapid program growth and program expansion many colleges of nursing are currently experiencing seem to be factors that influence class size, as well.
A few nursing faculty participants talked about the need to have pedagogy drive course size rather than course size driving pedagogy. Sophie shared that she has had to adjust writing assignments to be able to accommodate the increased amount of grading that occurs when class size increases. Some faculty participants described eliminating writing assignments and having the students do summaries on PowerPoint slides to produce gradable work, admitting that their preference would be to have the students write full papers, but they did not see that as an option with the larger class size.

Nursing faculty participants described how even small increases in class sizes impact teaching and learning in online courses. Charlotte commented that even a small increase in section size in an online course can affect workload and pedagogy but that more research was needed to provide data about this impact. She shared that group size and configuration in online learning activities is directly impacted by increased enrollment.

I do know that when you go from 20 to 24, it impacts the workload. You wouldn’t think a few more students would be an issue but it is! And the amount of engagement that you can have with those students is impacted and we need more research to know by how much. (Charlotte)

Some nursing faculty participants were able to identify the number of students they preferred in their course sections. Chloe offered that she teaches a course in which she prefers 35–36 students to have a good level of activity within the course, but most faculty participants saw 35 as too high of a number for online courses even though many
are teaching larger numbers at the undergraduate level and a few are teaching that number or more at the graduate level. Abigail stated,

> It is easier to manage 180 students when your evaluation primary evaluation strategy is testing than when you are having students post in discussion forums and write paper. Assessment strategies are different for different courses and for different enrollments. But regardless of the number, you still have to manage the students you have.

Though some faculty participants in this study could not identify a specific number when asked about the “ideal” class size, most faculty participants responded that they were teaching more students than they thought was ideal. Faculty members who stated this added that adjustment needed to be made to manage the larger number and to be present in the course as they thought they should be. Chloe was able to give a specific number, stating that 12 students was the ideal number for an online course. Ava and Grace stated online courses should not have more than 20 students and Charlotte suggested 24 as a maximum number of students. Some faculty participants were able to give ranges of students that would be more towards an ideal class size. Abigail stated 20–25 would be better than the 35 students per section she typically has. Julia offered 25–30 as manageable if the course was not writing intensive. Mason offered the range of 20–30 students commenting that this range is not ideal but that more than 30 would be very difficult to manage. Sophie offered less than 30 as “ideal” and added, “If I have less than 30 in my 6 hour course, I would be really happy.” In contrast, a few faculty members cautioned that sometimes small graduate sections could be too small for
effective online discussion, creating a different challenge than the complexities of large online courses.

Faculty participants recognized that student learning was not the only factor in administrative decisions. They seemed very much aware of the fiscal constraints the institution might face. A number of factors influence what actual class sizes need to be to meet financial requirements. Mason stated, “Smaller is obviously better, but then you know everything is about money.” Beyond this, though, several faculty members expressed their thoughts that there is room for compromise between the ideal class size and the current class size, that would help find a balance between doing what is best for the student and what is financially possible. Sophie suggested the sharing of a large enrollment course between faculty members as a strategy to help manage larger class sizes.

A few of the faculty participants regularly teach writing intensive courses (WIC). These faculty members talked about the challenges of class size for faculty members who teach these courses online and the conflict they experience in trying to give the students the amount of help they need in the limited amount of time they are given per student within their workload. Though most universities offer recommendations about the size of WIC courses, none of the faculty participants in this study were aware of a modified recommendation for WIC courses in the online environment. Julia stated 20 students should be the maximum number of students in an online WIC course adding, “It’s doable [with 20 students]. You know, we would always like smaller class sizes but the big picture is that we just simply cannot afford it. It’s doable and we are used to it.” Sophie
talked about students not being well prepared for the writing requirements, increasing the load of the faculty member in helping the students develop writing skills. In Sophie’s situation, with 50 students in a WIC course, students not well prepared for college level writing increases faculty workload, and impedes faculty presence and student engagement.

Some faculty participants approached the topic of online class size with a sense of disappointment because the decision-making process was not transparent and the size of course enrollment appeared to be arbitrary. Abigail stated class size was an issue at her institution so a task force has been working to determine ideal enrollment numbers, but she admits that she is not optimistic about the outcome because of the variability in class size and the differences in enrollment in undergraduate courses compared to enrollment in graduate courses. Sophie described being unclear on class size numbers and having asked the question without receiving an answer. She has 50–75 in a writing intensive (WIC) class and later discovered (from a university colleague) that undergraduate WIC sections should have no more than 17 students, per university policy.

Although not an area explored in this study, Deborah introduced the subject of massive open online courses (MOOCs). The context of this discussion was within her talk of what she found challenging about online teaching. She talked about class size being an issues and mention MOOCs as beginning at her university, but not yet in her college. During this discussion, Deborah mentioned, “I would outlaw those. I don’t know what they are doing, but they aren’t teaching.” She went on to say that she would keep class size reasonable and “recognize the amount of time it takes [to teach online],
and provide really good education about some research on what really matters [in nursing education].”

Class size was clearly a concern among nursing faculty members teaching online courses. Nursing faculty members perceive that class sizes are increasing and they frequently receive short notice of the increases. The short notice of increasing class size results in faculty not having sufficient time to redesign courses to meet the increased load. Faculty participants admit to working 6–7 days per week, and working well into the evening hours. When asked about advice to new faculty members, they talked about limiting the time you are online, but admitted it is necessary to be online daily.

Most faculty participants had difficulty identifying a specific number for the ideal class size, though all could identify a range or number that was “too large.” Some had difficulty identifying specific numbers that determine class sizes and workload in their academic settings, which raises questions about the need for policies in these areas versus the need to increase awareness of faculty members about existing policies. Some faculty participants joked about the numbers not really mattering because course maximums are somewhat arbitrary and are frequently exceeded. All faculty participants in this study agreed that smaller class sizes were better for both teaching and learning but that a number of variables needed to be considered in determining ideal class sizes.

**Maintaining balance.** Nursing faculty participants shared stories about their challenges in maintaining balance with the workload of online teaching. The topic of maintaining balance was met with chuckles from faculty participants who, when asked about their own ability to do so, admitted to working weekends and evenings to meet
student needs and to keep up with the amount of grading and communications that they see as “typical” in an online course. Mason talked about the need to set aside specific, uninterrupted times to work in online courses. In his case, two hours each morning are dedicated to teaching online. This is time when “the cell phone is turned off; everything is turned off and that’s what I am doing for those two hours.”

Ava identified the heavy amount of reading as one of the most challenging aspects of teaching online and the impact the increased amount of reading has on balance in her life. She talked about it being “harder” to teach online because of the need to read everything without common short cuts or cues that are otherwise familiar. There is no opportunity to get immediate feedback from students when teaching asynchronously as there is in the classroom when student behavior, expression, and comments provide indications of student understanding and clarity. This adds to the workload of faculty members in a number of ways. First, directions must be clearly delineated from the start; otherwise, the workload of clarification and the possibility of students missing communication are amplified. Ava said she feels pressured to be online everyday in each class she teaches online, adding, “I get some of my best work done on Sunday.”

Faculty participants recommended new faculty members work at maintaining balance to avoid becoming frustrated with online teaching. Strategies suggested included closing one’s office door, posting a sign on the door that you are “in conference,” and setting limits with regard to intrusions and interruptions. Grace chooses to work from home, when she can, so she can “get a lot done” by controlling her interruptions and managing the tasks of teaching. Julia sets office hours and posts those specific hours so
students are aware of the ideal times to reach her. In addition to scheduling office hours and making this information available to students, Julia described how each course syllabi should contain language about instructor response time to students. Her recommendation was 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) as a reasonable response time for student emails and questions posted in forums. Sophie described “scaled and condensed” assignments from papers to PowerPoint slides as a strategy to maintain balance, stating the slides are easier to grade.

Several faculty participants shared that it is important to not get behind in your grading. This was offered as advice to new faculty members and an important aspect of maintaining balance. Some faculty members used descriptors such as “depressing,” “overwhelming,” and “getting buried” when talking about the importance of keeping up with online grading. Most faculty participants admit that it is very difficult to predict grading time for experienced faculty members, so being a novice will make planning even more problematic. Sophie suggested,

Being on top of assignments, having a schedule and know when everything is due, and don’t let surprises come up. Keep a good schedule and stay on top of it; don’t let it pile up because you will really hate it.

Lily offered advice for faculty members new to teaching in the online environment to help them maintain balance, stating,

The best advice is to just go slowly, get support when you need it, take classes to learn how to use the course management system and to learn the basics of online teaching, and try to keep everything very clean, concise, and easy to navigate
through for yourself and for the students. If it is a course you will be teaching again, you can always add to it the next time. The first time, just get the structure solid.

There was agreement among nursing faculty participants that maintaining balance was important, especially for faculty members teaching online courses. There was also agreement that maintaining balance was a difficult task to accomplish because of the workload involved with online teaching and learning.

**Flexibility.** The subject of flexibility fits awkwardly into this discussion of constraints and concerns because nursing faculty members unanimously named flexibility as the most positive aspect of online teaching. Many faculty participants elaborated on the opportunities to work from remote locations to manage family situations, capitalize on professional development opportunities, and balance their own needs and responsibilities with the demands of academic life. Faculty participants seemed to appreciate the convenience of being able to access course materials from any location that affords Internet access and to interact with students and grade student work at convenient times. However, most also commented on the fact that they were grading assignments and responding to students in the evenings and on weekends identifying the flexibility as both a positive and a negative aspect of teaching online. Grading on weekends seemed a common characteristic of faculty members teaching online. Ava saw having access to the grading from home as a benefit but admitted that most of her grading has occurred outside of traditional work hours. Sophie commented that she has typically
done her grading on the weekend so she can be flexible in accomplishing the week’s
tasks, adding that it is “depressing” to fall behind.

Faculty participants frequently mentioned the need to set limits with work hours
in online teaching, just as we do in other employment situations. Charlotte talked about
faculty members needing to let students know they are not available 24 hours a day, 7
days a week and that “killing yourself” being online all hours of the day and night really
is not helpful to anyone. Chloe shared,

I would find myself working until 9:00 or 10:00 at night and this was just up until
probably last year when I finally decided I cannot keep doing this. You know,
there is always going to be another posting or another email to read, so I have to
be realistic about when to cut things off.

**Student Behaviors**

The second set of concerns that emerged from this study of nursing faculty
members is that of student behaviors exhibited in the online learning environment.
Though not unique to online learning, student plagiarism and cheating topped the list of
members’ concerns in this area. There were also behavioral concerns related to students’
lack of preparation for the online learning environment. These included inappropriate
communications in the online classroom and not understanding expectations.

**Plagiarism.** Nursing faculty participants shared their concerns about student
plagiarism in assignments submitted through the online classroom. The ease of copying
and pasting information from websites and electronic documents, the availability of
assignments for purchase, and the ever-evolving technological tools that can be used for
deceptions are viewed by faculty participants as an increasing threat to the integrity of their teaching and to nursing education. There was a general sense among participants that plagiarism is easier for the student to commit in online courses, but perhaps harder for faculty members to prove, unless the plagiarism is blatant. Sophie expressed her concerns about plagiarism being “rampant in online courses” and the fact that it is not always addressed by individual faculty members or by college or university administration. Deborah’s comments were similar. She said the instructor should expect that students in online courses are very likely to plagiarize. Deborah contended that many students plagiarized unintentionally, but thought this was not always the case. Other faculty participants in this study were less direct with their comments and grouped “cheating and plagiarism” together.

Nursing faculty participants had the greatest concerns about cheating and plagiarism in asynchronous learning environments where there is no process for assuring students are doing the work that is being submitted for grading. Although cheating and plagiarizing is possible in face-to-face courses, faculty participants felt the chances of a student cheating or plagiarizing were increased in online courses where students are less connected to the instructor.

Nursing faculty opinions varied widely about “cheating.” Faculty participants talked about strategies that can be employed for testing such as testing software, external proctoring services, and test controls in the online course. Nursing faculty members who use testing as an evaluation method identified exam integrity as a concern. Some faculty participants talked about the need to “allow” open book, since students are likely to use
their resources when completing exams in un-proctored environments. Others talked about using services such as “ProctorU” to monitor students and software to make it difficult to cheat on an exam but expressed varying levels of satisfaction with these options and varying levels of confidence in the success of preventing cheating. Deborah recommended being realistic about exams. She explained,

If you are giving a test in an online class that is not in a mandated proctored environment, you must presume all students will have their books open. If you tell them it is a closed book test, you will likely just cheat your honor students because the rest of them are probably going to have their books open.

Deborah also stressed the need to be very clear about consequences of cheating.

**Inappropriate communication.** Another behavior noted by a few faculty participants as disturbing is the tendency for a growing number of students to communicate unprofessionally and even inappropriately in online courses. Ava, Chloe, and Julia talked about situations where students were inappropriate with peers by posting comments or criticisms that were concerning to the faculty members. Chloe attributed this behavior to students seeing this communication as somewhat anonymous since the students do not have the same type of relationship as they have in face-to-face classes. Ava shared her strategy for dealing with inappropriate communications in the online classroom.

One of the criteria that they are graded on is that they speak professionally to each other. There is an expectation that they are civil and respectful of each other. And if they are not, I do not tolerate that behavior at all. I send them a private
email saying you need to back off a bit. I’m not going to embarrass them in front of the other people in the class. I am not going to make an example of them. I am going to let them know that their post was unprofessional and that the behavior is unacceptable.

Nursing faculty participants were not only concerned that the behavior was occurring but they also felt faculty members were not well prepared to deal with the behavior when it did occur. Sophie elaborated, “In the classroom, if you are giving a test you have some control over cheating. Online, you don’t know who is at the computer. You can hope it is the student doing their own work, but you don’t know.” Deborah described the need to be very clear with students about the consequences of cheating and plagiarism and that new faculty members need to be given the tools to do so. Charlotte shared an example of measures she uses to prevent cheating and plagiarism.

Well, the primary negative aspect of online teaching is the cheating and plagiarism. I try to make sure that I connect with the students enough that I know who they are and I feel comfortable with making comments about professionalism and expectations. I hope to really instill the belief and understanding and commitment to professionalism. They need to understand the expectations of professional behavior as they move to the baccalaureate level or the graduate level as an advanced practice nurse.

In addition, faculty participants acknowledged that a further concern is the ability to intervene in a timely manner as class sizes and teaching loads increase.
Another area of inappropriate communication seen by nursing faculty participants in this study is that of communication around faculty availability and what faculty members saw as the student perception that faculty members are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during an online course. Each faculty member had a story about students trying to contact them on weekends, holidays, or during evening hours despite having information about faculty availability in both the online classroom and the course syllabus. Nursing faculty participants saw this issue as supporting unrealistic expectations that can interfere with student learning when students do not plan their work carefully. Unrealistic expectations can also have a negative impact on faculty reappointment and promotion since student evaluations of instructors are heavily weighted at many universities. All faculty participants in this study mentioned working evenings and weekends to keep up with the work of teaching online, recognizing that this trend by faculty members lends support to the student perception of continuous availability.

**Lack of preparation.** Several faculty participants raised the issue that students are not well prepared to online learning as we expect. Nursing faculty perceive, as Charlotte stated,

Computer literacy is a starting point, but is not enough, because many students only know how to use technology that is familiar. They do not necessarily know how to adapt those skills to the online learning environment. The technology learning curve experienced by some students can interfere with their engagement, academic achievement, and overall success in online courses if they are not able
to quickly adapt to online learning and accomplishing required tasks using technology. (Charlotte)

The idea of taking courses online is appealing to most students. The lure of not driving to campus to attend class and to work as the schedule permits is great. Julia, Deborah, Grace, and Chloe identified the trend that students frequently underestimate the amount of time and effort that is needed to be successful in online courses. Chloe described how students tend to “fit education in” to their already full schedules, not recognizing the need to make changes to be successful in their educational efforts. Julia described her frustration with the fact that online leaning is “not for everyone” though the trend in nursing, and in higher education more broadly, is to offer more courses online, and in many cases, offer those courses exclusively online. Abigail’s perspective is that not all students learn well in the online environment. Abigail remarked, “I think overall, the students are very pleased with online instruction, but there are students who really struggle with it.” A concern Sophie raised is that students are not well prepared for the online learning environment. But as the number of online courses and programs increases, the opportunities for students to opt out of online learning becomes more obscure. For some students, the transition to online learning can be facilitated by requiring students to have strong computer skills; however this can be difficult to monitor.

Deborah sees the student as having a primary role in engagement and learning, stating,
A lot of students think they are going to learn online because they can sit on the couch or in bed, and log in to the class when they want, but you can’t learn that way. Students need to have a dedicated workspace, room to open their books, scheduled times to log in, and time away from other distractions. They have to be phenomenally well organized, phenomenally independent and they have to realize it is their job to learn!

Charlotte talked about the “technology generation” not really knowing how to use technology for college-level learning. Collectively, nursing faculty participants identified that it is a challenge to faculty members to teach the course, orient students, troubleshoot technology, and handle other issues that arise, especially when it is a low load course (i.e., 2 credit), high enrollment, and/or a short semester course (i.e., 7 week course).

**Technical Problems**

In addition to the workload and student behavior concerns, nursing faculty participants identified technology problems or issues as the third topic of constraint or concern in online teaching. Despite the length of time web based teaching has been used, faculty members are still challenged by a range of issues with technology, from course management system issues, to incompatibility and integration issues, to support and hardware issues. Faculty participants in this study identified technology issues as one of the frustrating aspects of teaching online. Several faculty members mentioned that there are times when the technical issues are related to incompatibilities. Mason and Deborah admitted that sometimes the technology do not work together. Incompatibilities such as
those with browsers, mobile devices, computer operating systems, and the course
management systems create greater challenges for both faculty members and students.

Planning synchronous activities was a strategy mentioned by several nursing
faculty participants as a method of engaging students but several faculty members
discussed their “fear” of trying such activities. In talking about their “fears” they referred
to the technology “not working as planned” referring to a broad range of problems
involving hardware, software, and Internet speed. A few nursing faculty members
mentioned that they would wait for others to try the technology first, so they had a peer
resource to help them when they were ready to try it. Chloe talked about her experience
using synchronous activities and commented that it is difficult to do some of these
activities with large class sizes. Coordinating schedules, and finding technology that
supports the number of simultaneous users can be an insurmountable challenge. The
convenience of connecting to learning from anywhere in the world at any time adds to the
complexity of attempting to have synchronous activities.

Regardless of the course management system (Angel, Blackboard, Canvas,
Desire2Learn, Moodle, Sakai, Web CT, WebEx), faculty participants identified issues
with uploading course content, uploading and organizing publisher test banks,
downloading student work for grading, experiencing incompatibility issues when
browsers and software updates occur, and experiencing several other problems that
impact teaching and learning in the online environment. Deborah gave the example of
losing the ability to post on the discussion board during one of her courses as an example
of one of the unexplainable problems that occurred while using a course management
system. Though many of these issues are easily fixed, there is generally a time delay in diagnosing the problem and finding the appropriate resolution, all of which takes time away from the time faculty members can spend interacting with students and providing timely feedback. Troubleshooting technology issues and problem-solving solutions further increases faculty work time and are difficult to predict or schedule to ensure time for other teaching activities. Even faculty members who are very comfortable with online teaching commented about being challenged by technology issues when they arise.

Additional frustration was voiced with the process for selecting course management systems. Nursing faculty participants saw themselves as not being invited into the conversation about course management systems and how they use them to teach nursing courses. There was agreement that nursing faculty members are rarely involved in the decision making process in selecting a new course management system. Ava talked about “nursing” being “relatively small compared to the university” and that nursing’s voice is not always considered in determining the selection of a course management system. Ava added that she found this interesting considering nursing’s size, revenue generation, and the number of courses offered partially or completely online.

Opportunities to Improve Online Teaching and Learning

Discussions with experienced nursing faculty members revealed several opportunities to improve online teaching and learning, at the course level and at the college and university levels of the institution. In this study, the nursing faculty members interviewed spoke passionately about their online teaching experiences. They were
excited to share what they knew and were optimistic that opportunities exist to strengthen online teaching and learning. Many of the nursing faculty participants in this study described online teaching as “fun.”

**Course Level**

At the course level, nursing faculty members offered a variety of strategies to improve student engagement and communication with students. Among the variety of strategies described were discussions about instructions and grading rubrics, assignments, and course navigation.

**Instructions and expectations.** Several faculty members suggested providing clear directions for students, and making those directions clean, concise, easy to access. Examples of where clear directions are needed include assignment guidelines, grading criteria, general information about the course, and in the course syllabi. Consistently using rubrics to clearly communicate faculty expectations of student work was seen by several faculty participants as a way to improve courses by communication with the students.

Ava recommended checking the online course for student messages daily and letting students know that you will be doing so. Ava offered similar advice about grading student assignment: “don’t drag it out. It really is annoying to the student. If you were the student, wouldn’t you want to know” where you stand in the course? Deborah suggested that discussion questions and other assignments be designed to require student participation and use of readings and course materials in their responses and that the discussion grading rubric clearly indicate this criteria. Mason recommended having other
faculty members read over the assignment guidelines and rubrics to check for clarity and accuracy for faculty members who are new to teaching.

Grace shared a story about her early online teaching experience in which she was less structured with student directions and “rules.”

Early on, I was always afraid to have rules in my online courses. I was very liberal with how students submitted assignments. It did not work. I found I had no control over anything. Students were in the sixth week of the course and were posting week one assignments. With 100 students in the class, it was just chaos! I could not keep anything straight, so over time, I have developed more strict roles for my class. I help students understand the rules and assignment deadlines so they understand what I am looking for from them. I do still consider late work because I recognize that sometimes things happen, but I found that I just could not keep going back to grade late assignments. Having clear rules works better for both the students and for me.

Assignments. Being realistic about assignments is another suggestion frequently mentioned by nursing faculty members who admit that as novices, it is easy to be over ambitious. Having a reasonable number of assignments with reasonable expectations as to student outcomes that can be achieved within the timeframe of the course and the skill level of the student is not unique to online teaching and learning, but nursing faculty members saw this as particularly important since students in online courses who become overwhelmed can be quick to disengage and be unsuccessful in the course. Having unreasonable assignments can also result in more emails to the course instructor,
increasing the amount of time spent working with one student, taking away from other
teaching responsibilities. In addition, if the student workload is heavy, the grading load
for the faculty members is likely to be high, as well. Keeping assignments manageable
can result in positive experiences for both students and faculty members. Charlotte
offered her thoughts about the importance of keeping assignments reasonable for students
in the course.

Ninety-eight percent of our RN to BSN students are working full time, have families, and are going to school full time. They do not have time for busy work. They need everything to be practical, clear and timely. So those are the criteria I try to always keep in mind as I do any work with them. It is important to not overwhelm them. (Charlotte)

Course navigation. Another subcategory of this theme is that of course navigation. Many faculty participants mentioned the importance of having an online course set up so navigation is clear and logical to the student. Lily recommends faculty work in modules so the assignments and course materials are well organized for both the students and the instructor. This will help the instructor stay organized and on task while developing the course and will provide the necessary structure for teaching the course. It allows the students to quickly locate the materials for the learning module and easily access past assignments and resources, if desired.

Administrative Levels

At the college and university levels, nursing faculty participants identified policies and standards that could be strengthened at most institutions. Among these
recommendations, nursing faculty members saw having clear policies for workload assignments, including consideration of all aspects of online teaching, and providing teaching assignments early enough to allow for effective course planning as opportunities to improve online teaching. In addition to having clear policies to clarify and strengthen online education, nursing faculty participants identified their own knowledge deficits with regard to policies and saw another opportunity in strong communication between administration and faculty members.

Working towards more standardization in online courses, within the college, was also seen as an important opportunity to improve the quality of online teaching and learning and to give new faculty members a clear structure for their teaching. QM was the most commonly mentioned set of standards in this study, but even faculty participants who were not familiar with QM identified the need for some standardization in online courses within their colleges.

Orienting faculty members to online teaching, providing technical, administrative support, and mentoring consistently were also identified as opportunities to improve online teaching and learning. Both Chloe and Lily discussed having a teaching assignment that allows for co-teaching online courses the first time, if possible. Chloe and Lily felt co-teaching would provide for an easier transition to online teaching and to provide an immediate resource for questions about the specific course. Lily cautions that developing an entire course for the first time can be very stressful and is complicated by not having experience in online teaching and web course development to rely upon. Sophie added to this recommendation with the suggestion that the first online class taught
should be a small, rather than a large class since class size can add to the complexity of teaching online.

Having course evaluations that provide meaningful feedback to faculty members about their online teaching and the course structure is another opportunity to improve online teaching. Most nursing faculty participants interviewed in this study felt the course evaluation instruments used at their institutions did not capture important information that could be used to improve their courses. Chloe commented,

I do not see them to be of great use; there is no science to them. If students like you, your class wasn’t hard and they earned an A, they will give you a good evaluation. If you made them follow the rules or challenged their work, you are going to get some negative comments and probably a poor evaluation.

Several nursing faculty members shared that their course evaluation instruments for online courses were the same as for face-to-face courses and were not modified based to reflect the evidence of good online courses and strong teaching in the online environment.

The perceived value of peer support was obvious in this study of nursing faculty members. Though nursing faculty participants were creative in finding their own connections, it was evident that nursing faculty members who worked in colleges of nursing that provide an environment where peer support flourishes were appreciative of that environment. Nursing members who had peer support were adamant that the opportunity for peer support must be a priority, especially for new nursing faculty members and to experienced faculty members making the transition to online teaching.
Faculty participants saw the need for college administration to create space for peer support and dialogue about online teaching and learning. Abigail commented on this, stating, “Creating an environment of support and collaboration is important since online teaching will only improve in such an environment.”

Nursing faculty members perceived that offering online programs has allowed for a tremendous increase in nursing program enrollment, especially in post licensure programs. The increased access to programs with less disruption of student work and home activities is seen as a positive aspect of online teaching and learning for the student, the colleges of nursing, and for the profession as a whole.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the analysis of data gathered in this research study of nursing faculty perceptions of teaching in an online environment. The data answer the research questions: what are the perceptions of full time faculty members regarding their experiences of teaching nursing courses in baccalaureate and higher programs, using asynchronous teaching and learning strategies in web-based courses and what can be learned from faculty experiences with regard to both positive and negative aspects of online teaching, workload distribution for faculty members who teach online, and efforts and initiatives that best support faculty members who teach online? The data presented were obtained through a demographic survey and transcripts of participant interviews. A discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Online learning continues to grow in popularity (Allen & Seaman, 2011; AACN, 2012; Straumsheim, 2014). The flexibility offered by this course delivery method extends benefits to both the faculty members who teach the courses and the students who enroll in the courses (Huang & Hsiao, 2012; Lindsay et al., 2009). The popularity of the courses, combined with the availability of technology to support online teaching and learning, has resulted in a proliferation of online course and program offerings within many disciplines. Nursing education is one discipline that has embraced online education, using online course delivery throughout all levels of curriculum. Talking with nursing faculty participants about their experiences teaching in online environments provides an opportunity to learn more about their experiences and to gain insight into methods to enhance both the teaching and the learning aspects of online education.

In chapter 1, I presented the rationale for this study and identified the purpose of this dissertation research. The rationale is based on the current popularity of online teaching and learning and the issues raised in published sources and through my own teaching experience.

With the focus on understanding the literature related to online teaching and learning, chapter 2 contained a review of the pertinent literature exploring empirical, conceptual, and theoretical writing related to faculty perceptions of teaching, strengths and weaknesses of online teaching, support needs for online teaching, and professional
development for online teaching. I identified gaps in the literature around faculty perceptions of online teaching, lack of clarity regarding the workload of teaching online, and limited evidence of faculty preference for teaching. The depth of inquiry into faculty perceptions was limited with fewer qualitative studies published and many authors recommending additional qualitative study in these areas. The literature related to professional development of nursing faculty members who teach online was extremely limited. To address these gaps and guide this dissertation study, the following research questions were developed:

- What are the perceptions of full time faculty members regarding their experiences of teaching nursing courses in baccalaureate and higher programs, using asynchronous teaching and learning strategies in web-based courses?
- What do experienced nursing faculty members identify as the positive and negative aspects of online teaching?

In chapter 3, I presented the methodology used to conduct this study. The methodology was based on the rationale and literature described in the prior two chapters. The research questions used to guide this study were well suited to qualitative methodology and the design of this study. In chapter 4, I shared the findings from this study of nursing faculty perceptions of teaching in an online environment. The four major findings were:

- Nursing faculty members perceive that relationships with students are key to student engagement and thus student learning, and that these relationships are complex and can be difficult to establish in the online learning environment.
• Nursing faculty members perceive that support comes in a variety of forms and is needed to make learning work well in the online environment.

• Nursing faculty members express constraints and concerns that interfere with their ability to engage students and provide the best learning.

• Nursing faculty members perceive that there are opportunities to improve online teaching and learning.

In the following sections of this chapter, I discuss the major findings of this study. The sections are arranged in the order of the findings listed above encompassing the categories of relationships, support, constraints and concerns, and opportunities. The implications of this research for nursing education and recommendations for future research are identified and discussed in the remaining sections of this chapter.

**Relationships With Students**

The first major finding in this study was nursing faculty perception of the importance of relationships with students. The evidence of this perception was pervasive throughout the interviews with nursing faculty members. Palmer (2007) described the need for faculty members to form relationships with students in order to be good teachers. Establishing the relationship described by Palmer involves the faculty member revealing a part of himself or herself to students to engage them. As he explained, “Good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life” (Palmer, 2007, p. 11). Nursing faculty participants saw relationships as that which “joins” them with “subject and students” and as being necessary for engaging students in learning.
Online Relationships Are Different

Nursing faculty members viewed their relationships with students as different in online courses. This was also evident throughout the discussions. Several nursing faculty members saw the technology as placing a barrier between themselves and their students, making establishing relationships with students more challenging. Ava, Chloe, Charlotte, and Sophie described how difficult it was to establish relationships with people they never saw. Sophie compared this aspect of the relationship to having a “pen pal” who you write to but never actually meet face to face. Julia talked about the need to let students know “you are a real-life person” when teaching online courses, a requirement that is not found in face-to-face teaching environments.

Locsin and Purnell (2013) raised the concern of losing the person in the technology in online environments, stating, “coming to know the person is critical” (p. 260). Though the difficulty of establishing relationships and the possibility of “losing the person in the technology” was a concern of many faculty participants, a few nursing faculty members found deeper relationships with their students in the online classroom. These faculty participants believed the richness of relationships and interactions with students were enhanced by technology in online courses because all students were required to interact with peers and the instructor to be present in the classroom. Regardless of the position held, there is agreement between nursing faculty members in this study that their relationships with students are different as a result of the online environment.
There was a clear divergence of opinion regarding “knowing students” among nursing faculty members in this study. Locsin and Purnell (2013) offered an explanation of “knowing” the person.

In knowing persons, the imperative is for nurses to focus on the objective composite of persons and, more important, on the subjective nature of being human. In a nursing encounter, this particular view includes the moral imperative to know “who” is the person rather than the objectifying “what” is a person. (Locsin & Purnell, 2013, p. 260)

Most faculty participants expressed disappointment and concern that they did not “know” the students in their online courses. These faculty members seemed to struggle with knowing “who” their students are as human beings. Some nursing faculty participants offered a contrasting perspective when they described “knowing” their students better through their writing. Grace, Mason, Sophie, and Lily viewed teaching online courses as an opportunity to know students by their work and through their discussions in online forums. These two distinct differences draw attention to the questions about knowing students. What does it mean to “know” students? How can “knowing” students be accomplished in online environments? How does “knowing” students influence student success in online course? Exploring these questions would provide additional insight into the issue of knowing students.

Nursing faculty participants identified differently with the change in relationships necessitated by the online environment. The opposite ends of the continuum, as presented in the study findings, were the “Sage on the Stage” versus the “Wizard of Oz.”
Those nursing faculty participants who saw themselves as the “Sage on the Stage” self-identified as being very comfortable in front of the students in a traditional classroom and very much missed the live interactions. These faculty participants saw their relationships with students as less strong in the online classroom. Nursing faculty participants that identified with the “Wizard of Oz” saw themselves as being better online teachers because they were more comfortable with using technology to teach than they were with standing in front of students in a traditional classroom environment. These nursing faculty saw their relationships with students as stronger in the online environment.

A few personal characteristics emerged that gave some insight into faculty members who fit into these categories. Mason shared his perspective about new faculty needing to be sure online teaching is a good fit for them. Additional study could provide more insight into characteristics that help faculty members better assess their “fit” for online teaching and provide insight into online teaching strategies and learning activities that are more compatible with faculty member characteristics and teaching styles. Doing so could help diminish faculty member frustration, ease the transition to online teaching, and help faculty members establish relationships with students. Developing an understanding of personal characteristics of faculty members, combined with the knowledge of online pedagogy, could move online teaching away from a model of faculty members fitting into the web classroom and towards a model of faculty members constructing learning environments that allow them to make decisions about the best methods of connecting with students.
Online Relationships Are More Difficult to Establish

At times, nursing faculty participants seemed challenged to redefine these relationships to feel comfortable, though faculty participants in this study had clear experience in doing so. Nursing faculty participants articulated strategies to help them bridge the relationship gap created by technology and offered advice to new faculty members to make the transition easier for them. Lily talked about the need for clear communications and Julia suggested making phone calls at least once a semester to establish relationships with students. Chloe, Sophie, and Deborah talked about using synchronous technologies, including Skype, FaceTime, and BlackBoard Collaborate to establish relationships with students. Nursing faculty participants conceded that using synchronous technology does help bridge the relationship gap in online courses, but it is still not quite the same as seeing the students face-to-face. Nursing faculty members found it difficult to establish relationships, despite the improvements in synchronous technologies.

Most faculty members in this study seem to struggle with the lack of traditional relationships with students and the non-recognition of students at university events or at local clinical facilities. Nursing faculty participants identified barriers to this enhanced relationship in large class sizes, shifting teaching assignments, and student expectations of online course being easier or less work than learning in traditional classrooms. Though it was not clear how relationships are defined by nursing faculty participants in this study, it was clear that faculty members were keenly aware of a disconnect in their
relationships with students because they were not able to see them or connect with them in the same space at the same time.

**Online Relationships Are Key to Student Engagement**

Student engagement and learning is the essence of the faculty role. Without student engagement, learning cannot occur. Faculty presence is the connection that is needed for student engagement. Palmer (2007) captured this idea, asserting:

> Teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions, and good teaching requires that we understand the inner sources of both the intent and the act. (p. 7)

In this study, the expertise of nursing faculty participants in understanding the need for student engagement was supported. Forming strong relationships with students was seen as the foundation of student engagement and learning.

Students need to engage with faculty members and with peers to engage in learning (Garrison, Anderson, et al., 2010; Reingold, Rimor, & Kalay, 2008; Sitzman, 2010). The need for engagement was echoed in the conversations with nursing faculty participants. Grace elaborated on the need to be present to students in the online classroom to foster the student/instructor relationship, stating, “Be present to them and they will be present to you. It’s a two way street.” Mason shared examples of connecting with students through technology to engage students in learning sharing that he tries to “make it the best possible experience for my students.” The degree of engagement needed and how engagement was defined was not clear and was not the
focus in this study. Further, the concept of student engagement and the degree to which it must occur does not appear to be consistent across faculty members, programs, or the literature. Nursing faculty members did differentiate between courses that are less constructivist in design that are well suited to lecture as the primary content delivery method and testing as the primary method of evaluating student learning. Nursing faculty participants who teach online saw the rewards of teaching resulting from student engagement in the success of their students in the online environment.

Relationships were very important to nursing faculty members. Nursing faculty participants saw relationships with students as intricately linked to student engagement and student success in online courses. Nursing faculty sought to adapt their relationships but there seemed to be a fear, among the majority of nursing faculty participants in this study, of losing the personal connections in the technology. Nursing faculty members were willing to teach in a way that meets students’ needs but they needed to be able to decrease transactional distance, maintain teaching presence, and feel connected to students in their teaching. Faculty participants agreed on the need to establish teaching presence and cited the increased time it takes to do this online as something that must be considered in course planning and in faculty assignments.

**Support for Online Teaching**

The second major finding was faculty perception of the need for support when teaching online. The four areas of support that emerged as important to nursing faculty participants were peer support, professional development support, technical support, and administrative support. Though four areas emerged as important, it was clear that peer
support was highly valued across all nursing faculty participants. It was also clear that the other three types of support were seen as functional roles, in that they were needed under certain circumstances and provided some support for online teaching and learning but they were not perceived as being at the same level of significance as peer support.

**Peer Support**

Lackey (2011) found that regardless of experience, faculty members unanimously agreed that one-to-one assistance by colleagues and university staff was the most helpful in their own online teaching. In this study, I arrived at a similar finding. Nursing faculty members value learning from the experiences of peers, receiving collegial support for teaching online, and having the opportunity to dialogue with peers about online teaching and learning, curriculum, and pedagogy. Charlotte shared, “I do value knowing what has worked, or has not worked, for others and I think that that makes the courses and the teaching stronger.” Nursing faculty members identified their teaching peers as the best resource for finding solutions to problems in the online learning environment. As an example of this, Deborah stated,

> It really does help when you can go and talk to someone and learn how they are handling something and you realize they have a more efficient way to do it. That process is something we really need to have.

Dorner and Karpati (2010) found teachers who came together to discuss teaching and philosophical concerns, learn about technological innovations, and formed a social connection to peers, experienced professional growth, and were inspired to incorporate new ideas into existing pedagogies. Julia and Charlotte shared their experiences with

180
more structured peer support processes and described how the opportunities to dialogue with peers about curriculum and pedagogy helped them expand their understanding of online teaching. These faculty saw value in experienced faculty engaging in dialogue about online teaching and learning and recognized that there was an opportunity to learn from their peers regardless of the years of teaching experience.

The way in which faculty participants talked about peer support made it difficult to clearly distinguish between faculty professional development and peer support from nursing colleagues, but the importance of peer support was evident. Ava talked about peer support generally and grouped both nursing colleagues and support found at the professional development center together, finding both valuable. When nursing faculty talked about peer support, some faculty spoke specifically about the support they experienced from their nursing faculty colleagues and the importance of having faculty “experts” within the building. This is consistent with peer support as described in the literature (Billings, 2000). Billings described nursing peer support as interactions with peers that are “rich and rapid” (p. 63).

Other faculty talked about seeking “peer support” outside their nursing colleagues. An example of this was in the suggestion offered by Abigail of seeing exemplars of well-designed courses that employ a variety of teaching strategies. In conversations, Abigail talked about seeing different examples from other disciplines. Lily described her experiences with peer support at the university’s professional development center. Charlotte referenced going to conferences and talking with peers about online teaching and learning, stating “listening to them and valuing their stories and
challenges helps me be better at what I do.” The term “peer support” is used in the literature to describe support received from faculty members from other disciplines, which adds to the challenge of differentiating between peer support and professional development. Professional development activities frequently involve interacting with peers in communities to sharing ideas and practices (deNoyelles et al., 2012). Henning (2012) recommended professional development activities for faculty should acknowledge the value of peer collaboration and include peer interaction in the activities. The variations in perceptions of peer support could be related to the availability of more formalized structures in some institutions and more blended support roles in other organizations.

**Mentoring**

Mentoring was seen as the most valuable component of faculty professional development and was linked closely to peer support in these conversations with nursing faculty members. Nursing faculty participants described their personal experiences with mentoring. Julia used the word “huge” in describing the important role mentoring played in her transition to online teaching. Some faculty reflected on the role of mentoring throughout their teaching careers. Abigail shared stories about the mentoring she received in her doctoral program and in her first teaching position and how those relationships with colleagues shaped her teaching practice. Chloe talked about having a 12-year relationship with her mentor when she began teaching. It was clear that nursing faculty members recognized the value of the mentoring relationships and the impact of these relationships on their teaching practices.
Several faculty members talked about mentoring other faculty members who are new to teaching to help their peers have a smooth transition to online teaching. Chloe mentioned that she was in the process of mentoring a new faculty member at the time of my interview with her. Abigail, Julia, and Charlotte offered, “finding a mentoring with experience teaching online courses” as part of their advice to faculty members new to online teaching. Charlotte added, “finding a mentor they feel comfortable with is probably the first piece of advice I would give them” underscoring nursing faculty perception of the significance of mentoring relationships for faculty new to the online teaching environment.

Other aspects of faculty professional development were seen as most helpful to faculty members new to online teaching and learning but mentoring, like peer support, was seen as being beneficial to faculty members at various levels of experience and to both the mentor and the faculty member being mentored. Barczyk et al. (2011) found using mentoring programs in the development of faculty members teaching in an online environment provided a connection to focusing on course quality and ongoing quality improvement. Additional findings from the Barczyk et al. study indicate faculty perceptions of teaching improvement were positively impacted by participation in the mentoring program and that faculty members felt less isolated by the online teaching environment and the disconnection from traditional instructor/student relationships experienced. The psychosocial contributions of the mentoring program were rated higher, indicating more valued, than the career support contributions (Barczyk et al., 2011). Faculty who teach online can feel isolated and disconnected from both students
and peers (Haber & Mills, 2008; Hogan & McKnight, 2007). Providing a mentor offers support through a formal connection to a peer with experience teaching online.

**Technical Support**

Throughout the literature, the need for technical support is clearly present (LeBlanc et al., 2007; Lion & Stark, 2010; Orr et al., 2009; Rockwell et al., 2000; Sitzman, 2010). The nursing faculty participants in this study offered congruence with the literature on this topic. They, too, agreed with the importance of having “good” technical support available to both faculty members and students in online courses. What is different from the literature is that nursing faculty members saw technical support to be most critical during specific periods of time or under specific circumstances rather than something as a constant need.

Nursing faculty members perceive that having technical support from IT or ID is most important when new to online teaching and learning to diminish the challenges of transitioning to online teaching. The other times experienced nursing faculty members found it helpful to access technical support were (a) when the university changed the course management system used to deliver online courses; (b) when the faculty members wanted to expand their teaching strategies or modify course structure; or (c) when technology-related problems occurred. This finding differs from the older literature in which technical support was frequently mentioned as one of the most important aspects of support needed for online teaching.

The perception of support and when it was needed seemed to be influenced by four circumstances in this study. First, nursing faculty members saw themselves as
skillful with technology and felt they relied less and less on technical support as their experience grew. Second, several nursing faculty participants identified themselves as “early adopters” of online teaching and learning. As a result, these faculty members have been using web-based technologies for teaching over the past decade. These faculty members saw themselves as adapting well to changes in technology and skillful at troubleshooting technology issues. Third, two faculty identified their love of technology as a significant factor in their limited need for technical support. Mason talked about being “part of the technology generation” and “growing up with technology.” Fourth, role confusion and limited availability of technical support for faculty members at some institutions seemed to influence faculty perception. Nursing faculty members talked about how it was sometime easier to fix problems themselves than to take time to find others to resolve the issue. The experience level of these nursing faculty participants may provide a rationale for this difference in faculty perception of technical support importance.

**Administrative Support**

The fourth area of support that emerged from this study of experienced nursing faculty members is that of administrative support. Nursing faculty participants saw administrative support as important in the areas of setting policies and implementing standardization in online teaching. Most nursing faculty members saw the need for some standardization for clarity and consistency in online teaching and learning within their programs. Policies clarification was identified as a need in the area of workload policies, including the process for workload assignment and variables considered in that
assignment, including class size, new courses assigned, level of the course, and pedagogy.

Nursing faculty participants saw the need for redesigned course evaluations that provide student feedback about online courses, including teaching presence. Several participants identified that their institutions used the same course evaluations for online courses as were used for other types of courses. In addition to the survey items being inappropriate for online teaching and learning, nursing faculty expressed concerns that the surveys were focused on the wrong outcomes for their online courses. Worthen (2013) stated online instruction is “well suited” to the “black box” method of evaluation which measures input and output but not what goes on in the class. Nursing faculty participants raised concerns similar to those presented by Worthen.

The need for role clarification of faculty members and instructional support staff was raised as another area in which administrative support could positively impact online teaching and learning. Both student evaluations of courses and role clarification were identified as areas that would enhance online teaching and learning but were outside the purview of nursing faculty members. Faculty participants looked to college and university administration to address these areas of concern.

Oomen-Early and Murphy (2009) found a lack of understanding from administrators was the most recurrent theme in their study of faculty perceptions of factors that inhibit online teaching. Although not the predominant theme in this study, concerns were raised that faculty members’ teaching loads were heavier in some institutions because administrators did not have experience teaching online and were not
aware of the nuances of doing so. Nursing faculty participants saw increased awareness among administrators as a central component of administrative support.

Administrative support was perceived by nursing faculty members as having some influence on online teaching and learning. However, in the course of discussions with faculty participants, the necessity of administrative support was obvious. Having an administrative structure, including a vision for online teaching and learning in the institution, provides a framework for administrative support. Having administrative structure in place creates an environment in which support for online teaching and learning can flourish. Further, administrative support was the area into which most of the opportunities to improve online teaching and learning could be grouped.

Creating Community

The findings related to relationships and support and faculty professional development indicate the importance of community in the online teaching community in nursing. Nursing faculty members perceive the following to be most important in their teaching: (a) The relationships with students needed to foster engagement and learning; (b) the need to connect with peers to enhance teaching presence; and (c) the desire for professional development activities that connect nursing faculty members to their peers and provide exemplars of good teaching in the online environment. Creating community among students, between students and the instructor, and among instructors have different purposes but share the common linkage of forming relationships with others and supporting teaching and learning in the online environment.
The Community of Inquiry (COI) framework was identified as a theoretical influence in this work but the terminology used in this framework was not included in the survey questions or in the interview questions because of concern about faculty members being unfamiliar with this framework. One faculty member demonstrated familiarity through use of the terminology in referring to faculty members being “present” to the student, which she saw as being a determining factor in the student being “present” in the course (Grace). Though only one nursing faculty participant used the language, discussions with nursing faculty members in the interview process reveal consistency with this framework. Nursing faculty participants addressed each of the presences in the framework, offering examples of how they establish teaching presence and how they connect with their students and help the students connect with each other, establishing social presence. Nursing faculty commented about the need to interact with students in the discussion forums, respond to emails promptly, and post grades in a timely manner so students know the faculty member is present in the classroom. Faculty members talked about student learning and how their teaching practice supports student learning in the online environment, aligning with the concept of cognitive presence. Faculty shared stories about the feedback they received from students about what they learned in the online course.

**Constraints and Concerns**

The third finding in this study of nursing faculty members was that participants expressed concerns and constraints that impact online teaching and learning. The
primary constraint identified was that of workload for online courses. The primary concern identified were student behaviors, including cheating and plagiarism.

**Workload**

There has been some debate in the literature as to the perception that online teaching takes more time than teaching in the traditional classroom. A few authors have conducted studies of their own time and found teaching online did not take more time than other teaching (DiBiase, 2004; Lazarus, 2003; Thompson, 2004), but most authors contend teaching courses online does increase workload because more time is needed to teach these courses (K. M. Anderson & Avery, 2008; Ascough, 2002; Boerema, Stanley, & Westhorp, 2007; Huang & Hsiao, 2012; Reilly et al., 2012). Ascough (2002) stated teaching online courses take 50–300% more time, depending on the course and the instructor. Tomei (2006) found online teaching took a minimum of 14% more time than teaching traditional classes. All nursing faculty participants in this study referenced workload when talking about their online teaching experiences. Participants identified the time needed to teach online courses as a negative aspect of online teaching and the increased workload as a significant challenge. Nursing faculty members perceive teaching online takes more time. As a result, the findings from this study fall into the category of work that advises online teaching increases the time and work of teaching.

Nursing faculty participants in this study were most concerned with (a) putting forth their best to educate students and to help students reach their educational goals; and (b) balancing teaching workload with other professional responsibilities and personal commitments and self-care. Boerema et al. (2007) concluded, “ongoing tension exists
between aspiring to provide high quality, pedagogically sound, interesting and collaborative online learning opportunities and the workload and time demand realities” (p. 758). Findings from this study of nursing faculty perceptions are congruent with those of Boerema et al. Nursing faculty members valued their relationships with students and saw these relationships as being integral to student engagement and learning. The desire to establish and foster strong relationships with students and provide the level of communication that is important in online courses, while maintaining balance between teaching, professional, and personal responsibilities offers tremendous challenges to nursing faculty members. Nursing faculty participants admit to working six to seven days per week, and working well into the evening hours. When asked about advice to new faculty members, they talked about limiting the time one is online, but conceded it was necessary to be online daily, making it difficult to achieve balance.

Factors that contribute to workload in online courses, identified by experienced nursing faculty members, include (a) the amount and type of communication needed to keep students engaged in online courses, (b) class size, (c) number of sections assigned, and (d) receiving assignments early enough to complete course planning and set up. Each of these factors should be included in workload planning and assignment.

The number of students enrolled in the section and the type of communication needed in online courses have the most direct impact on faculty workload. Communication is important to nursing faculty members. Most will agree that it is important in our teaching in online environments (Dabbagh, 2007; Dorner & Karpati, 2010; Gabbert, 2008; Henderson & Bradey, 2009; Sitzman & Leners, 2006; Stewart,
Nursing faculty members value having time to respond to and interact with students in the online environment. Students seem to value this communication and feedback, too, since it is a common topic in the student feedback mechanisms including course evaluations.

Workload assignments varied among colleges of nursing in this study. Nursing faculty participants described the complexity of the assignment in their discussions about workload. Many nursing faculty members taught at different levels in their colleges offering some balance in workload with larger undergraduate sections but small graduate and doctoral course sections. Some nursing faculty members elaborated on strategies that helped balance workload such as getting release time for other duties, having additional load for larger sections, and teaching courses that do not fill to capacity. Though not consistent across universities, these nuances seem to make faculty workload more manageable in organizations in which they are applied.

Taft, Perkowski, and Martin (2011) identified pedagogical aspects of courses that should be considered when assigning class size. In my study, faculty participants felt that, frequently, class size drives pedagogy, rather than pedagogy driving class size. Though some nursing faculty participants saw teaching online as an “opportunity,” others used words like “forced,” “really had not choice,” “the course went online, so if I was going to teach the course, I had to do it online,” and “I was told I had to do an online class.” Taft et al. (2011) failed to consider other variables in their determination of class size. Large class sizes are more manageable when a faculty member has fewer sections
to teach or when there are teaching assistants or “facilitators” to assist the faculty member with course management.

The size of the college did impact requirements for faculty members to participate in other activities. Programs with smaller faculties appear to have more stability in their teaching loads and better communication about online teaching. This increased communication was attributed to all faculty members attending faculty meeting and curriculum meetings. Another consideration was that communication occurred in a face-to-face (or synchronous) forum, which nursing faculty members saw as increasing communication.

Two elements of workload that were difficult to capture and categorize are the planning and “thinking time” that needs to occur in online teaching and the “margin of unpredictability” that can occur in online teaching. Nursing faculty participants alluded to both throughout the interview conversations. Though not specific to communication, technology, or teaching, these concepts seem to permeate all categories and create challenges when both workload and class size are high. Nursing faculty members agree that everything in an online course needs to be well planned, designed, and orchestrated for the best results in online teaching but that even with well-planned courses, problems arise. Faculty workload does not take into consideration the “thinking” and that needs to occur to create the best opportunity for student engagement and learning and the “unpredictability” that is inherent in online environments.
Student Behaviors

The major concern of nursing faculty participants was that of student behaviors in the online environment. Within this category, cheating, plagiarism, inappropriate communication, and lack of preparation for online learning emerged. In addition, nursing faculty members felt they were not well-prepared to deal with some of these issues.

Cheating and plagiarism. Some faculty participants discussed cheating and plagiarism as a concerning student behavior. Those who raised the issue did have deep concerns about both and saw this behavior and the ease with which it can occur as a negative of online teaching and learning. The advances in technology that improve online teaching and learning are seen as making it easier to cheat and to copy materials from other sources. Some faculty participants were comfortable with the measures available to prevent cheating on tests and to check for plagiarism, but a few faculty members were not and shared their concerns that cheating and plagiarism were widespread in online courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Though not all nursing faculty members were in agreement, this finding is consistent with a finding from Oomen-Early and Murphy (2009) in which 65% of faculty members surveyed identified plagiarism as an obstacle in online teaching and learning.

Other student issues. The other areas of concerning student behaviors center around communication and preparation. Nursing faculty participants raised concerns about the inappropriate communication from students they experienced in online courses. Concerns centered on the students posting inappropriate or unprofessional comments and responses to peers in public forums. Nursing faculty identified the relative anonymity the
online environment provides as a contributing factor in the issue of inappropriate student communications. Inappropriate communication was viewed by nursing faculty members as a trend that is on the rise. Faculty participants also raised issue with student communication and expectation that faculty members are available 24/7 in the online environment and the challenges presented by the expectation that questions will be answered and assignments will be graded immediately. Locsin and Purnell (2013) described “the tension of technological assessing of people as objects” as a negative aspect of working with technology (p. 258) capturing the essence of this study findings.

Despite the public perception that today’s students are technologically savvy “digital natives,” nursing faculty members perceived students as not well prepared for learning in the online environment. Students who are ill prepared have unrealistic expectations about workload, technology, and faculty role in their learning. Because they are seen as having higher technical skills than previous students, there are minimal support services in place to ease students’ transition to online learning. However, when technical challenges arise, many of the students are unable to problem solve and expect an immediate intervention from the course faculty member. This creates additional burden for the faculty members teaching the course.

Student lack of preparation extends beyond their familiarity and use of technology. Nursing faculty members perceive that many students are not prepared for learning in the online environment. Students frequently underestimate the amount of reading and writing in online courses and the amount of time that must be allocated to their learning. Chloe identified student characteristics she saw as being important to
student success included being motivated to succeed, being self-directed in their learning activities, and being consistent in their scheduling of time to complete course assignments. Abigail and Sophie also identified the need for students to understand their responsibilities as students in an online course. Dabbagh (2007) identified characteristics of online learners that are important for student success. In addition to those mentioned by Chloe, Abigail, and Sophie, a strong academic self-concept, fluency in use of online technologies, strong interpersonal and communication skills, and an understanding and value of interaction and collaborative learning were offered as ideal characteristics for online learners to possess (Dabbagh, 2007).

Nursing faculty participants elaborated on their concerns that many faculty members were not well prepared to deal with any of these issues because there are limited resources available to assist the faculty member and what some believe as denial about the existence of these issues. Nursing faculty participants believe these are areas in which faculty professional development could be helpful for both faculty members new to online teaching and for experienced faculty members who are challenged by these issues.

**Opportunities**

Nursing faculty participants identified many opportunities to improve online teaching and learning. Two areas of opportunities emerged: orienting and mentoring new faculty members to create outstanding online learning environments and in administrative support for online teaching and learning.
New Faculty Members

Nursing faculty members perceive strong orientation and mentoring programs are needed to help new faculty members develop both an understanding of teaching in the online environment and the skill set to be successful. Nursing faculty participants saw these programs as essential to creating a strong nursing faculty member and providing quality nursing education. Orienting and supporting new faculty members was seen as the way to avoid overwhelming new faculty members and from discouraging them from continuing to teach. Nursing faculty participants recommended providing assignments that allow for sharing courses and that support peer mentoring. Learning the course management system was seen as an important early step but nursing faculty participants saw new faculty members needing ongoing professional developing and mentoring.

Another topic for faculty professional development was that of dealing with student behaviors and expectations. Nursing faculty members perceive that there are a lack of resources that are helpful in dealing with student behaviors and expectations in the online courses and saw addressing this issue through professional development as an opportunity to improve online teaching.

Administrative Level

Discussions with nursing faculty members yielded perceptions of a number of opportunities to improve online teaching and learning at the administrative level. Most of the issues raised as constraints and concerns were seen as chances to create policies and processes that support faculty members in their work and ultimately improve online teaching and learning.
All faculty participants referenced workload in this study of online teaching. Some faculty participants were able to speak to how workload is determined while others seemed less certain. There were faculty members who stated in the demographic survey, “I don’t know what you mean by this,” when I asked about load hours and release time. It does seem that assigning workload and understanding the process is a basic policy or at minimum a procedure that should be understood by all who are affected. To have faculty members unaware of that process may give clues to the communication and transparency in that environment. Nursing faculty members saw a need for clear workload policies with good flow of communication around workload assignments and transparency in the resulting process.

Nursing faculty participants mentioned specific components of workload such as large class size, coordination load, consideration of teaching multiple sections, consideration of the total number of sections being taught, and consideration of the level of student and the amount of support students need in a particular course. All of these areas were seen as needing, but not consistently receiving some consideration in workload. An additional area of workload concern is allowing for mentoring of new faculty members and providing time for the mentoring process. Having workload consideration was seen as an important aspect of supporting mentoring relationships.

Nursing faculty participants would like a voice in the online workload. There is understanding of the financial drivers in higher education among nursing faculty participants but there is also a desire to have input into policies that impact teaching and learning. Being involved in the discussions and informed as to the policy is helpful in
faculty members making pedagogic determinations and being comfortable with how they are teaching rather than feeling “forced” to conform in order to “survive.” Being able to plan ahead and having time to work through such details allows the faculty member to design teaching strategies, learning activities, and evaluative processes that are the best fit for the course and for the students enrolled. Some faculty members prefer a constructivist approach to online learning, using discussion forums as both a learning activity and a means of evaluating student performance in the course. However, discussion forums require more time in grading, thus many faculty members choose to insert quizzes or tests as evaluation measures that require more preparation time but far less grading time. Of course, not all content is well suited for multiple choice and true false questions. These opportunities for improving online teaching and learning arise from both a concern for our students and the quality of teaching and learning and for the quality of nursing faculty academic lives.

Limitations of This Study

The goal of this research was to explore the perceptions of full time nursing faculty members regarding their experiences of teaching courses in undergraduate and graduate nursing programs, using asynchronous teaching and learning strategies in web-based courses. The study findings presented in Chapter 4 and the discussion presented in this chapter were influenced by the limitations identified in this section.

The first limitation is in the timing of the participant interviews. The study was planned so the demographic survey would be distributed in the early summer months so faculty members could be contacted for interviews during the summer break. The process
of collecting email addresses for faculty members was more time consuming than planned, altering the timeline for data collection. Survey participants were asked to indicate if they were willing to be interviewed. Fifty-nine percent (256 participants) responded “yes” to this question. When potential participants were contacted about possible interview times, many declined, despite their appreciation for the work being done, because the academic semester had begun and other commitments took priority.

The second limitation is in the sample of participants. Though every attempt was made to include a variety of teaching experiences, this sample included a large number of self-identified “early adopters” of online teaching among the 10 nursing faculty members interviewed. The relatively small sample size combined with the disproportionate number of self-identified “early adopters” may also be viewed as limitations in this study. One example is in the area of technical support. The literature review revealed technical support as a need for faculty who teach online. Findings from this study indicate technical support was important, but that many faculty access technical support on a limited basis because of their extensive experience with teaching technologies. Perhaps different findings would have resulted from conversations with more faculty members who were not the first to teach online in their institutions.

Originally in this study, I intended to get a broader representation of nursing faculty to include different levels of experience with online teaching and learning. One criterion for selection was 2 years of experience teaching online. All participants exceeded that minimum. The range of years of online teaching experience is from 3–13 years. Based on the data contained in Table 2 (located in chapter 3 of this dissertation),
faculty participants appear to have a variety of years of experience. It was clear, however, that many of the faculty were what is often termed “early adopters” of online teaching. This had not been intentional but this quite likely influenced the findings. Adding more participants to the sample and seeking a broader representation could produce different findings in a study of nursing faculty perceptions.

**Implications for Nursing Education**

As the popularity of online courses continues to grow, the need to understand factors that impact teaching and learning in an online environment has become increasingly important. This study of the perceptions of experienced nursing faculty members, teaching in asynchronous online environments, provided some additional insights into those factors. The findings of this study have implications for nursing education in three areas: (a) preparing nursing educators for the work of teaching in online environments; (b) creating environments that foster teaching and learning through faculty members support, rich discussions of teaching, including explorations of curriculum and pedagogy; and (c) enriching both faculty member and student experiences in online teaching and learning.

**Preparing Nursing Educators**

Nursing faculty study participants shared their personal experiences from teaching online courses. All faculty participants had a minimum of three years of experience teaching online; the range of online teaching experience was 3–13 years. Total teaching experience ranged from 4–35 years. These ranges of teaching experience yielded multiple perspectives on online teaching. Experienced faculty members offered advice
for new faculty members in the interviews and shared suggestions on best practices. Nursing faculty participants reaffirmed the need to orient and mentor new faculty members to assist them in making the transition to online teaching and to provide ongoing peer, professional development, technology, and administrative support.

The demand for nurses at both entry level into practice and at the advanced practice level continues to increase, driving a high enrollment in nursing programs. Relatively high salaries, a wide variety of employment settings, and the flexibility a nursing career offers make nursing an appealing choice for many people, spurring enrollment increases in undergraduate programs. Recent attempts at reforming health care, including the Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act of 2010 (PPACA, 2010) and the Institute of Medicine’s report on The Future of Nursing (IOM, 2011) have placed a national focus on the benefits of having more nurses prepared to practice at the advanced level and have added to the increased demand and subsequent increased enrollment in graduate level nursing programs. The increased enrollment into post licensure programs has been met by putting more programs and courses online. According to the AACN, these factors, combined with an aging faculty workforce and a significant nursing faculty shortage (AACN, “Nursing Faculty Shortage,” 2014a) add urgency to the need to prepare faculty members to teach in online environments and support them in doing so.

The findings of this study add to our understanding of how to prepare faculty through orientation, peer support, and mentorship to meet the challenges of increased demand for nurses, record enrollments in pre and post licensure nursing programs, and
rapid proliferation of online courses and programs in nursing. The predicted expansion of the current nursing faculty shortage creates urgency for addressing the faculty concerns raised in this study of faculty perception.

Creating Environments

Nursing faculty members provided a number of recommendations for support that would be helpful in creating an environment that fosters online teaching and learning. Important components for supportive environments include policy clarification and transparency around workload and teaching assignments, both formal and informal peer support, professional development in select area of online teaching and learning, and forums for rich discussions of teaching, including explorations of curriculum and pedagogy. Marek (2009) recommended the need for a system-wide approach to supporting faculty who teach online. Having a system-wide approach would create an environment where support for online teaching and learning is seen as a priority.

Policy clarification and transparency. One of the most obvious concerns in this study was the issue of faculty workload for online teaching and for other roles associated with academic nursing positions, including maintaining clinical skills. Study findings demonstrate the need for revision of policies on faculty workload to consider the work of online teaching and to reconsider work that warrants workload credit, such as course coordination, release time for major course revision, and teaching large classes. Since some faculty were unclear on how workload is determined in their colleges of nursing, the need for transparency in processes is also supported.
A second policy recommendation was the need to have student evaluations of online courses and online teaching that are relevant to online teaching and learning. Based on these study findings, many institutions continue to use the same course evaluation policy and survey for face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses, not recognizing that the evaluation process needs to change. Designing student evaluation processes that are appropriate for online teaching and learning would provide better feedback to faculty members about their teaching and about the course being evaluated.

Moving towards more standardization in online course delivery provides an opportunity to improve online teaching and learning. Faculty participants saw using QM standards as being beneficial to them in their teaching and recommended adoption of the standards across their institutions. Though not all faculty participants were familiar with QM standards, the need for consistency in course formats and developing a common understanding of online teaching and learning was evident. Standardizing online courses across programs and, perhaps across colleges and universities, could be helpful to both nursing faculty members and nursing students.

Peer support. The need for both formal and informal peer support emerged as a theme in this study. It was clear, from discussions with experienced nursing faculty, that peer support plays a key role in helping faculty develop expertise in online teaching. One of the challenges of online teaching is the possibility of social isolation. Social isolation can occur when faculty teach online and are no longer required to come to campus to fulfill their teaching responsibilities (Haber & Mills, 2008; Hogan & McKnight, 2007). Nursing faculty participants described the changes they experienced as a result of
teaching more courses online. Among these changes, having less regular contact with peers was of significant concern. All faculty participants talked about the importance of peer support and the need to foster the connection with colleagues when teaching online. Through peer support faculty are less likely to experience social isolation (Haber & Mills, 2008; Hogan & McKnight, 2007).

Consistent with the findings of this study, many studies identify peer support as significant. Nursing education environments must continue to recognize the value of peer support and ensure opportunities for both formal and informal peer support are plentiful.

**Professional development.** This study provides support for professional development activities for nursing faculty teaching in online environments. Professional development activities such as orientations to online teaching, sessions providing hands on experiences with the course management system, and assistance with setting up a new course were seen by nursing faculty participants as valuable sessions for a faculty member new to online teaching. The challenge of providing faculty professional development activities for nursing faculty members with a variety of skill levels was acknowledged by faculty participants. What is lacking in many environments are professional development activities that focus on online pedagogy for the experienced online educator. Experienced nursing faculty members appreciate professional development activities that focus on “how to be more effective as a teacher” (Deborah) in the online environment.
Enrich Experiences

This study provides insight into faculty perceptions of the importance of relationships with their students. O’Neal (2015) contended online teaching and learning must be of high quality because of the significant role of online courses and programs in nursing education. Maintaining the integrity of the learning environment and the experience for students is important to nursing faculty members involved in this study. Establishing strong relationships with students to engage students and to promote learning is viewed by nursing faculty members as part of the integrity that needs to be maintained.

The importance of “knowing” students was evident in this study and has implications for nursing. However, “knowing” the student appears to be a complex process that is not easily articulated and is perhaps not well understood. Understanding what it means to “know” nursing students and how that “knowing” is accomplished would most likely enhance the experiences for both faculty and students. Lindquist (2009) identified that there are distinct differences between knowing the students and “knowing them in a meaningful way” (p. 175). Nursing faculty participants seemed to recognize that knowing students could have different meaning though their understanding of those meanings was not deeply explored in this study.

The need for competent, well-prepared nursing faculty members who are comfortable teaching online is a requirement for nursing education, both now and in the future. Relationships are significant aspect of nursing and of education. It is interesting that the convergence of these two professions has resulted in faculty members who feel
disconnected from their students when they teach in online environments and exert much effort to reconnect with their students, bridging the gap in the relationship that results in asynchronous learning environments.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This research was intended to explore perceptions of full time faculty members regarding their experiences of teaching nursing courses in baccalaureate and higher programs, using asynchronous teaching and learning strategies in web-based courses. In this section, I present recommendations for future research studies based on the findings from this study.

**Relationships**

The first topic for future research is in the area of relationships in online courses. What is not clear from this study or from the literature is if the perception of the importance of relationships with students is unique to nursing faculties, to nursing and other health related professions, or if this is a factor for faculty members who teach in other disciplines. Exploring instructor/student relationships more deeply, comparing relationships formed in the discipline of nursing to instructor/student relationships in other fields, and looking at student perceptions of relationships in online courses would provide additional insight into this phenomenon.

Although the intent of this research was not to explore theories, the finding indicating the significance of the relationship between the instructor and the students in an online environment is one that seems to have support in both relationship theory and in caring theory. Exploring nursing faculty relationships with students within the
framework of caring or relationship theory could yield additional insights into relationships in online teaching and learning. Exploring instructor/student relationship in the online environment provides the potential for additional artifact in the form of discussion posts, responses to students, and in other activities and communications in the online environment.

A subtheme of relationships that emerged was the topic of “knowing” students. Whether faculty knew students in online courses to a greater or lesser extent was a point of disagreement in this study. Many nursing faculty participants seemed to relate “knowing” the student more to the social connection that is difficult to make when there is no opportunity to “see” students or to meet with students at the beginning of the course. However, a few faculty participants seemed to relate “knowing” the student to what Woollacott, Booth, and Cameron (2014) identified as “pedagogically meaningful ways” (p. 747). “Knowing” the student in this manner focuses more on student work and student learning than on the social aspect of “knowing” the student. The discipline of nursing could benefit from further study of what it means to “know” students in the online environment and how faculty accomplish the “knowing.” Studying the students’ perspective of what it means to know their instructor or to be known to the instructor would add to the body of knowledge on this subject and help nurse educators develop a deeper understanding of relationships with students in online environments. Understanding how “knowing” students influences student success in online course would provide additional insight into the issue of knowing students.
Student Behaviors

The second area of future research is student behaviors in online courses. Student behaviors in online courses was a subtheme of faculty members’ concerns in this study. There were differing opinions about this topic. This is another area where additional study could provide insight into student behaviors and how these behaviors impact teaching and learning. Looking more closely at cheating and plagiarism, student preparation for learning and student expectations from both the student and the faculty perspective would contribute to expanded professional development and best practices for faculty members and to creating a better learning experience for students. Nursing faculty study participants had differing opinions about the frequency with which cheating and plagiarism occurs in online courses. Further exploration into this topic would provide more information about their concerns and experiences.

Policies

A third topic for future research is that of policies related to online teaching and learning. This was another area in which disagreement among nursing faculty participants was evident. Some faculty participants saw policies as restrictive; one faculty members stated that policies should be the same for online learning as they are for other types of courses, but most faculty participants did identify policies that could be helpful in adding clarity and consistency. Some faculty members responded to questions about policies with statements about not really knowing of any policies specific to online teaching and learning. One faculty participant told a story about “stumbling” on a relevant policy related to class size that she did not know existed. Policies related to
faculty workload determination, class size in online course sections, and support for online teaching and learning are topics of particular interest.

These findings present the opportunity to consider a study that explores the existence of policies and policy related concerns more thoroughly. Since many institutions have policies and handbooks available online, these documents would be accessible as artifacts for such a study. Talking with faculty members and with administrators would give insight into perceptions of policies and would provide an opportunity for comparison of those perspectives. Collecting data about policies could allow for analysis of policies across institutions.

**Faculty Workload**

A fourth area of future research is faculty workload in online courses. This topic is one that has produced disagreement in the literature and in practice. Some attempts to measure workload have failed to answer the question of workload being greater in online courses. Findings in this study support the perception that workload is greater in online courses but additional study of this issue is warranted. Nursing faculty study participants identified that they work on weekends grading assignments, responding to students, and “checking in” to answer emails. Opportunities for further study would consider total hours per week spent in teaching related responsibilities for online courses and compare these hours to those spent teaching face-to-face courses. One aspect of workload that emerged in this study is the “margin of unpredictability” that occurs in teaching online courses. Further study into capturing, tracking, and communicating the “margin of
unpredictability” would be beneficial and would deepen our understanding of workload issues in online teaching.

**Conclusion**

The lure of online courses is attractive to both faculty members and students for convenience and flexibility in teaching and learning. Web-based education allows us to move beyond restrictions imposed by traditional classroom learning environments but creates issues unique to online teaching and learning. Throughout the literature, faculty members question the resulting paradox of reaching more students but potentially compromising teaching and learning as technology drives pedagogy.

The purpose of this study was to understand perceptions of faculty members regarding their experiences of teaching nursing in undergraduate baccalaureate and graduate programs, using asynchronous, web-based courses. Through a demographic survey and semi-structured interviews with 10 experienced nursing faculty members, four major themes and several subthemes emerged. Nursing faculty perceptions revealed (a) the importance of faculty members’ relationships with students in online learning environments, (b) the significance of support structures, (c) several constraints and concerns surrounding online teaching and learning, and (d) opportunities to enhance faculty members and student experiences in online courses.

Much information gained in this study is important to nursing education, providing support for both nursing faculty members and for nursing education administrators who are involved in online teaching and learning. The findings from this study of nursing faculty members build on the results of previous studies and offer insights into ways to support
faculty members in their work and to prepare new faculty members to teach online.

Opportunities for additional research in the areas of instructor/student relationships, student behaviors, policies, and workload in online teaching and learning also evolved from these findings.

I was honored to have the opportunity to talk with expert nursing faculty members about their experiences teaching online courses. It was a pleasure to speak with them and to hear their stories about teaching. I am humbled to be entrusted with their knowledge to weave an understanding that will add to the body of knowledge about online teaching and learning.
APPENDIX A

INITIAL EMAIL SEEKING STUDY PARTICIPANTS
Appendix A

Initial Email Seeking Study Participants

Dear Colleague,

My name is Yvonne Smith and I am looking for participants for my dissertation study. The work is focused on exploring nursing faculty perceptions of teaching in an online environment. I am seeking full time faculty who teach using online course delivery methods to answer a 30 item online survey. The survey can be accessed using the following link:

Participants who complete the survey will be asked if they are willing to participate in an interview about their experiences. Participants who teach 50% of their teaching load online are preferred for the interview. The interview will last approximately sixty minutes and will occur using face-to-face electronic communication (for example Skype or Google Hangout) and will be arranged at mutually agreeable times during August through September 2013.

If you have questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at the phone number or email address listed below.

Thank you for considering this request,

Yvonne Smith MSN RN CNS
Doctoral Candidate at Kent State University
330 972-7796
ysmith@kent.edu

KSU IRB Approval #13-266
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY (SURVEY)
Appendix B

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Study (Survey)

Before taking part in this study, please read the statement below and click on the “next” button at the bottom of the page if you understand the statements and freely consent to participate in the study.

You are invited to participate in a study that will provide researchers with information to explore faculty perceptions of teaching in an online environment. This study has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board.

Answering the survey questions will take approximately 20 minutes and is anonymous if you choose to not provide your contact information. If you do provide your contact information, this information will be kept confidential throughout all phases of the research study, including the dissemination of study findings. Study findings will be presented and published in aggregate form.

In this study, no deception is involved, and you will not have any more risk than you would in a normal day of life. Although there is no direct benefit to you as a participant in this study, what we learn from this study will help us develop a deeper understanding of teaching in online environments. Participation is voluntary; refusal to participate involves no penalty or loss of benefit. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefit.

If you have further questions about this study or your rights, or if you wish to lodge a complaint or concern, you may contact Yvonne Smith at 330-672-7796 or ysmith@kent.edu, or the Kent State University IRB, at 330-672-2704.

If you understand the statements above, and freely consent to participate in this study, click the “next” button below to begin the survey.

Thank you for your participation!

KSU IRB PROTOCOL #13-266
Date of KSU IRB APPROVAL: May 30, 2013
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

(INTERVIEW)
Appendix C

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Study (Interview)

Dissertation Research Title: Using a Qualitative Approach to Explore Nursing Faculty Perceptions of Teaching Online

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with an overview of the research project, what you will be asked to do as a participant, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Please read this form carefully and ask questions regarding any information that is not clear to you. It is important that you fully understand this research to make an informed decision.

Purpose
This research study is a qualitative study of nursing faculty perceptions of teaching in an online environment. As an experienced nursing educator with a background that includes teaching web-based courses, I am interested in developing a deeper understanding of the experiences of other nursing faculty.

Procedures
You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. I may ask if you would be willing to participate in a follow up communication to clarify or extend any answers from the first interview. Interviews will be audio recorded and the recordings transcribed. All data collected and transcribed will be kept in a locked drawer in the possession of the primary investigator. With your permission the individual interviews will be audio recorded with a digital recorder. These files will be transcribed and transcripts will be kept with other data in a locked drawer in the researcher’s office or in password protected electronic files. After transcription the audio file will be deleted. The comments you make will be used as data and may appear under participant’s chosen pseudonym, in the final report, and in proposals for conference presentations or scholarly articles for publication.

Benefits
The potential benefits of participating in this study may include and opportunity to improve or enhance your teaching through reflection and discussion of your practice.

There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life. The only anticipated inconvenience will be taking time to participate in interviews, and providing me feedback about my interpretation of our discussion.
Confidentiality
All efforts will be made to keep your participation confidential. Your signed consent will be kept in a separate file from your study data and responses and will not be linked to you. A pseudonym will be used in all data and reports of this research. Before conducting any interviews all participants/interviewees names and identifying characteristics will be changed or removed so as not to appear in any of the data, documents, or final report or publications. All materials will be kept in locked drawers or password protected electronic storage.

Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose to discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Yvonne Smith at 330.672.7796 or by email at ysmith@kent.edu, or Alicia R. Crowe, Ph.D. at 330.672.2580 or acrowe@kent.edu. The Kent State University Institutional Review Board has approved this project. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

Consent Statement and Signature
I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

__________________________  ____________________________
Participant Signature          Date

_____________________________
Participant’s Printed Name
APPENDIX D

AUDIO RECORDING CONSENT FORM (INTERVIEW)
Appendix D

Audio Recording Consent Form (Interview)

Dissertation Research Title: Using a Qualitative Approach to Explore Faculty Perceptions of Teaching Online

Yvonne M. Smith

I agree to participate in an audio-recorded interview about faculty perceptions of teaching in an online environment, as part of this project and for the purposes of data analysis. I agree that Yvonne M. Smith may audio-record this interview. The date and time of the interview will be mutually agreed upon.

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature  Date

I have been told that I have the right to listen to the recording of the interview before it is used. I have decided that I:

_____want to listen to the recording  _____do not want to listen to the recording

Sign below if you do not want to listen to the recording. If you want to listen to the recording, you will be asked to sign after you have listened to them.

Yvonne M. Smith may / may not (circle one) use the audio-recording made of the interview. The original recording may be used for:

_____this research project  _____publication  _____presentation at professional meeting

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature  Date

Address:
APPENDIX E

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
## Appendix E

### Survey Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Demographic   | Employment status *                                                      | Full time faculty  
Part-time faculty                                    |
| Demographic   | Academic Classification *                                                | Tenured  
Tenure Track  
Non-Tenure Track                                      |
| Demographic   | Gender                                                                   | Female  
Male                                               |
| Experience    | How many years have you been a nurse?                                    | Fill in                                                              |
| Experience    | How many years have you been teaching? *                                  | Fill in                                                              |
| Experience    | How many years have you been teaching online? *                          | Fill in                                                              |
| Experience    | In which type of program do you teach? (Select all that apply)            | Pre-licensure undergraduate (BSN)  
Post-licensure undergraduate (RN/BSN)  
Accelerated BSN  
Graduate (MSN)  
Doctoral (Ph.D.)  
Clinical doctorate (DNP)  
other                                       |
| Workload      | In the past academic year (fall and spring semesters), how many total load hours did you teach? * | Fill in                                                              |
| Workload      | Did you receive release time for administration or research? If so, how many load hours? * | Fill in                                                              |
| Workload      | How much release time (in load hours) did you receive for administration or research? | Fill in                                                              |
| Workload      | What percentage of your teaching load was online? *                       | Fill in                                                              |
| Workload      | Does this workload assignment represent a typical assignment? If not, please describe what is different. | Fill in                                                              |

* indicates questions used for initial screening of participants
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>How many credit hours of web courses do you typically teach per academic year? (If this number is variable, please focus on the past academic year.)</td>
<td>Fill in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>If there is variability in the number of credit hours of web courses you typically teach, what is the range?</td>
<td>Fill in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Do you teach these courses alone or do you co-teach with another faculty member? (Please identify which courses are taught with another faculty member.) *</td>
<td>Fill in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>How many students do you have in each section you teach? (List each course and the number of students per semester.) *</td>
<td>Fill in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Does your institution have a cap on enrollment in online courses?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>If so, what is that cap?</td>
<td>Fill in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>If the cap is variable, what is the basis for determining that cap?</td>
<td>Fill in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>What learning management system is used for online teaching at your institution?</td>
<td>Fill in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Is a third party involved in managing online program or course delivery at your institution?</td>
<td>Fill in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Which outside provider is used at your institution?</td>
<td>Fill in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates questions used for initial screening of participants
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Which of the following services are offered by the outside provider?</td>
<td>Marketing&lt;br&gt;Student recruitment&lt;br&gt;Student retention&lt;br&gt;Curriculum model design&lt;br&gt;Course design&lt;br&gt;Course development&lt;br&gt;Faculty support&lt;br&gt;Faculty training&lt;br&gt;Help desk and technical support&lt;br&gt;Other – Please specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference</td>
<td>Which type of learning environment do you prefer when teaching students? (Select one response)</td>
<td>Asynchronous online, Synchronous online, Hybrid web, Traditional face-to-face classroom, A combination of two or more environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>What initial preparation have you received to assist you in teaching students? (Indicate all that apply.)</td>
<td>Coursework in pre-licensure program&lt;br&gt;Coursework in graduate nursing program&lt;br&gt;Coursework in a post graduate certificate program&lt;br&gt;None&lt;br&gt;Other – Please specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Are you familiar with Quality Matters Standards?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Do you use Quality Matters Standards in preparing your online courses?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>What initial training did you receive to prepare you to teach online? (Indicate all that apply.)</td>
<td>Orientation to delivery platform&lt;br&gt;Orientation to pedagogy for online courses&lt;br&gt;Individual session with faculty trainer&lt;br&gt;Individual session with instructional designer&lt;br&gt;Sought assistance outside the university&lt;br&gt;No initial training&lt;br&gt;Other – Please specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response Choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Professional        | What preparation have you received since teaching online? (Indicate all that apply.) | Formal coursework  
Face-to-face seminar training  
Webinar training  
Individual (one-to-one) training  
Self-paced learning activities  
Other (please specify) |
| Development         | Which activities do you find most helpful in developing your online teaching? (Rank all that apply, with 1 being most helpful.) | Mentoring program  
Peer mentoring (self-sought)  
Workshops  
Conferences  
Webinars  
Self-paced learning modules  
Faculty communities  
Peer Collaboration |
| Professional        | Does your institution offer professional development activities that focus on web-based teaching? | Yes/No |
| Development         | Do you participate in faculty professional development activities that focus on web-based teaching at your institution? | Frequently  
Occasionally  
Rarely  
Never |
| Follow up           | Are you willing to be interviewed to provide additional data about your perceptions of teaching in an online environment? | Yes/No |
| Follow up           | Please provide the following contact information. | Name  
Preferred email address  
Preferred phone number  
Preferred method of initial contact (Cell phone, Home phone, Office phone, Work email, Personal email)  
Additional method of contact |
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Appendix F

Interview Questions

Interview

1. Follow up on demographic information provided in the survey.

2. What brought you to online teaching?

3. Tell me about your online teaching experiences.

4. What do you see as positive or rewarding aspects of teaching courses online?

5. What do you see as negative/challenging aspects of teaching courses online?

6. What would you change about teaching online, if you could?

7. Tell me a story about teaching online that holds significance for you.

8. What has helped you be effective in using a web-based platform to teach?

9. What has best prepared you for teaching in a web-based environment?

10. What does student feedback tell you about your online teaching?

11. What advice would you offer to someone who is preparing to teach online for the first time?

12. Is there anything additional you would like to share with me about teaching online?
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


230


v=onepage&q&f=false (Original work published 1916)


Gholami, K., & Sayadi, Y. (2012). The faculty’s perception of web-based instruction application in Iran’s higher education. *International Education Studies, 5*(5), 204-211. doi: 10.5539/ies.v5n5p204


Herman, J. H. (2012). Faculty development programs: The frequency and variety of professional development programs available to online instructors. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 16*(5), 87-106.


(2004). Personality interactions and scaffolding in on-line discussions. *Journal of 
Educational Computing Research, 30*(1), 113-137.


investigation of university faculty’s perceived needs for effective online 
instruction. *International Journal on E-Learning, 8*(2), 223-240.

Distance Education, 7*(3), 229-248.

Orr, R., Williams, M. R., & Pennington, K. (2009). Institutional efforts to support faculty 
in online teaching. *Innovative Higher Education, 34*, 257-268. doi: 
10.1007/s10755-009-9111-6

Palmer, P. J. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher’s 

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). (2010). The law. Retrieved from 
http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/rights/

Glendale, CA: Pyrczak.

Researcher, 17*-21.


Reingold, R., Rimor, R., & Kalay, A. (2008). Instructor's scaffolding in support of student's metacognition through a teacher education online course. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 7*(2), 139-151.


Sullivan, P. (2002). “It’s easier to be yourself when you are invisible”: Female college students discuss their online classroom experiences. *Innovative Higher Education, 27*(2), 129-144.


