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Teaching Online, Challenges and Motivations:
A Research Synthesis

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Abstract

Millions of students are enrolled in online classes, and while some faculty members are still concerned about the medium, other faculty members are excited about the possibilities of online learning. In order to gauge what hinders or motivates faculty members' online teaching, I conducted a research synthesis to examine the literature from 2002 to the present that addressed the motivations and concerns of instructors around the world. Although the time from 2002 until the present marks a little over 10 years of work related to online teaching, faculty members' concerns and motivations have not changed much during that time.

In 2011, 6,714,792 U.S. college students were taking at least one online class (Lederman, 2013). However, a 2012 Babson survey of 4,564 faculty members showed that 57.7 percent of professors stated they feared online learning (Allen, Seaman, Lederman, & Jaschik, 2012). Although many students take online courses, and online learning has been a part of higher education for several years, the Allen et al. (2012) study showed that many faculty members are still concerned about online learning. Institutions around the world offer online courses, so it would be helpful to the larger conversation about online learning to understand the gamut of instructors' motivations and challenges related to online learning and how those motivations and challenges have changed (or not) over time. Therefore, this research will synthesize the findings of qualitative studies from 2002 to the present that focus on faculty members' concerns about teaching online and faculty members' motivations for teaching online.

It is important to note that the history of online teaching is quite varied. Unlike other areas of education, even the broad area of technology integration in education, online teaching as we know it does not have 50 plus years of data. Even though personal computers have been around for quite some time now, the ubiquity of those devices did not occur until much later. Also, it could be argued that the advent of the learning management system (LMS) aided in conversations about "distance" education changing to conversations about "online" education, and according to Demiray, and Isman (2001), those types of systems were introduced in the 90's. Although it could be argued that the current work is a historiography, with characteristics that are similar to White and Selwyn's (2012) text on Internet use and learning from 2002-2010, I situate the work in the research synthesis tradition and emphasize the importance of the historical perspective in the work as it relates to motivations and challenges for teaching online.

Methods

For my research synthesis, I began with the following question: What are faculty members' concerns about and motivations for teaching online, and how have those motivations and concerns changed over time? Neither privileging the history over the synthesis nor privileging the synthesis over the history are goals for this work. Instead, the work seeks to show instructors' motivations and challenges related to online teaching over time. I conducted searches in several databases: Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Academic Search Premier, and Google Scholar. I included studies from 2002 to the present in order to provide a full look at faculty members' concerns about and motivations for teaching online over the past 10 years. I located studies using the following search terms: "teaching experiences in online courses," "motivations for teaching online," and "challenges with online teaching." I limited the search according to educational level and only selected articles from "higher education," "postsecondary education," and "two-year colleges." I selected studies based on the following criteria: qualitative study, clear methodology (selection of participants, participant group, qualitative approach), and specific quotes that highlight instructors' experiences.

Data sources

I found over 50 articles, but only 24 articles from the periods of 2002 to the present met the criteria for inclusion. Table 1 below lists the studies that were included and provides the year and location of each study:

Author(s)	Year	Location
Coppola, Hiltz, & Rotter	2002	United States
Kanuka, Collett, & Caswell	2002	Canada
Siedlaczek	2004	Canada
Shea, Pickett, & Li	2005	United States
Choi & Park	2006	United States
Conceição	2006	United States & Canada
Panda & Mishra	2007	India

Haber & Mills	2008	United States
Wisenberg & Stacey	2008	Canada & Australia
Fillion, Limayem, Laferriere, & Mantha	2009	Canada
Fish & Gill	2009	United States
Green, Alejandro, & Brown	2009	United States
Lui	2009	Hong Kong
Oomen-Early & Murphy	2009	United States
Smith, Passmore, & Faught	2009	United States
Wasilik & Bolliger	2009	United States
Hiltz, Shea, & Kim	2010	United States
Koenig	2010	United States
Schulte	2010	United States
Dolan	2011	United States
Ribeiro, De Oliveira, & Mill	2011	Brazil
Zare-Ee	2011	Iran
Huang & Hsiao	2012	United States
Sword	2012	United States

Table 1: Selected Articles

Data analysis

I used Noblit and Hare's (1988) method of research synthesis. Although their method was originally designed for meta-ethnographic syntheses, the approach has been used for other types of syntheses (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). More specifically, I used the lines-of-argument synthesis approach (Noblit & Hare, 1988). According to Noblit and Hare (1988), "A lines-of-argument is essentially about inference: What can we say of the whole (organization, culture, etc.), based on selective studies of the parts?" (p. 62). For the purposes of my work, lines-of-argument synthesis allows for understanding aspects of the whole of online teaching by studying/synthesizing the "selective studies of the parts" of online teaching. Noblit and Hare (1988) went on to say:

> … [T]he goal of lines-of-argument synthesis is to discover a 'whole' among a set of parts…it is historical in that it uses time to give order and history-in-use to give context; it is comparative in that it constructs an analogy of the relationships among studies; and it is holistic in that it constructs an interpretation of all the studies, their interrelations, and contexts. (p. 63)

Because my work focuses on instructors' motivations and challenges related to online teaching over time, the lines-of-argument synthesis is a fitting approach.

The themes were created based on the 'grounded theorizing' that can often be a part of lines-of-argument research synthesis (Noblit & Hare, 1988, p. 64). I used the constant comparative method across the articles. I coded the data using open, axial, and selective coding in order to discern the themes. The authors' themes for those findings were not germane to my research synthesis, as the constant comparative method and coding process led to new themes, particularly because I compared studies across a 10-year period.

Results

The synthesized data are organized according to the themes that appeared in each study. If a study does not appear under a theme, then that particular theme was not evident in the study. The results begin with instructors' concerns about online teaching, followed by their motivations for online teaching. The chart below lists the studies and the themes:

Authors	Lack Of Admin Understanding (C)	Workload/Time Constraints (C)	Student Readiness (C)	Cheating (C)	Lack Of Face-To-Face Interaction (C)	Flexibility (M)	New Tech (M)	Org Benefit (M)	Improved Learning (M)
Coppola et al.		x			x			x	
Kanuka et al.					x				
Siedlaczek	x	x	x				x		x
Shea et al.								x	
Choi & Park		x							
Conceicão		x						x	
Panda & Mishra	x								
Haber & Mills	x	x							
Wisenberg & Stacey									x
Fillion et. al						x		x	x
Fish & Gill		x	x	x	x	x			x
Green et al.		x				x	x		
Oomen-Early & Murphy		x	x						
Lui	x	x			x				
Smith et al.			x	x					
Wasilik & Bolliger		x	x			x			
Hiltz et al.	x	x	x			x	x	x	
Koenig			x					x	
Schulte			x	x			x	x	
Dolan	x						x		
Ribeiro et al.		x							
Zare-Ee		x	x		x				
Huang & Hsiao		x				x			
Sword		x			x				x

Table 2: Studies and Themes   (*C= Concerns   M=Motivations)

Faculty Concerns About Online Teaching
Faculty members' concerns included lack of administrator understanding, workload/time constraints, student readiness, academic dishonesty, and lack of face-to-face interaction.
Lack of administrator understanding

In Siedlaczek's (2004) work, data from a focus group discussion with five full-time community college instructors in Ontario showed that faculty do not think administrators really understand what it takes to teach online. The faculty members in the study each had over 10 years of experience teaching face-to-face courses and involvement in developing at least one online course.

Panda and Mishra (2007) found that faculty members' online teaching experiences were negatively affected by lack of administrative support with instructional design. Eighty faculty from Indira Gandhi National Open University participated in the study, and like the participants in Siedlaczek's (2004) study, they had an average of over ten years of experience with distance education. Haber and Mills (2008) found that faculty were also concerned about administrators' perceptions of online learning. Their investigation included full-time online instructors from three of Florida's 28 community colleges, which were selected because the three colleges had a "large and diverse portion of the online teachers" (p. 270). Faculty members at the largest community college (LCC), which had 109 online faculty and 62,465 enrolled students, expressed concerns about administrators forcing duties on them and other administrative practices.

Several faculty members were concerned that college or university administrators did not understand the time it took faculty members to prepare for online courses. For example, in Oomen-Early and Murphy's (2009) study, out of 101 full and part-time faculty participants, 87 percent of faculty members indicated that administrators do not understand the work faculty put into preparing online courses. The faculty members in the study had taught online for at least two semesters and were from nonprofit and for profit schools. Eighty-four percent of faculty members were from four-year institutions, 13 percent were affiliated with two-year schools, and two percent were from virtual campuses. Hiltz,et al.'s (2010) study indicated that online faculty did not feel that their institutions supported them administratively or technologically. The participants were faculty members from a technological university and a small community college. Both groups had experience with online teaching. Similarly, in Dolan's (2011) study of 28 online adjunct faculty, instructors noted that not only do they feel that administrators do not appreciate faculty members' expertise, but also administrators do not value the time and effort faculty put into online courses, a concern noted also in Oomen-Early and Murphy's study two years earlier.

Workload/Time Constraints
The workload and time involved in online teaching was a major concern for several faculty members. According to Coppola et al.'s (2002) study, which included semi-structured interviews with 20 professors from the School of Management, computer and information science, humanities and social science, and electrical and computer engineering,

respectively, the text-based communication involved in online courses is concerning. A humanities and social sciences professor from the study noted:

> With 30-40 students, to give them each individual feedback on everything they write, every week, becomes sort of daunting...Even to write little interlinear comments on each student's journal every week, it really adds up. (Coppola et al., 2002, p. 181)

Two years later, faculty members in Siedlaczek's (2004) study also expressed concern that the text-based nature of online courses created more work---faculty had to write out comments they would usually provide verbally.

In Conceicão's (2006) phenomenological study, participants indicated being concerned about the time involved with online courses. The participants were 10 professors from U.S. and Canadian four-year institutions. They were from various academic disciplines and had a total of 2-16 years of online teaching experience. One participant, Barbara, stated:

> ...[I]f you're trying to write lectures or prepare PowerPoints or activities, and keep up with the dialogue, you can't do it. I learned that early enough; you can't do both. You have to really prepare your materials whether or not they are in exact final format. (p. 37)

Another participant mentioned similar difficulties with the workload in online courses versus the workload in face-to-face courses. Mary said:

> You don't have the 2.5-hour class that meets that week, but instead you're sitting back reading everything every [learner] does and reflecting on it and providing feedback... In a traditional class, we want participation as well, but you don't sit there in a classroom and record: [Learner] A made three comments tonight and [Learner] B was silent the whole night. You don't do that. You have other ways of trying to gauge how they're developing knowledge and applying it. But in this kind of a course, participation is critical. Everybody's getting something out of it...because these discussions, again, are to facilitate the dialogue. (Conceicão, 2006, p. 37)

As noted in the preceding quotes, both Barbara and Mary associated online learning with an increased workload. Also, they both noted the challenges involved with monitoring dialogue and discussion posts. Likewise, Kate, another professor from Conceicão's (2006) study, said: "[Learners] were reading their own team comments. But I read everybody's comments" (p. 38). The author supported Kate's comments and indicated that reading the posts required much of Kate's time.

Pat, also a professor from Conceicão's (2006) study, discussed the difference between preparing for online courses and preparing for traditional courses. He said, "For every course that I teach online, the amount of work--not just to develop it, but delivery of it--it's

at least 50% more than the campus course" (p. 38). Pat added, "[For on-campus classes], I go to class and deliver my lecture and I don't hear [from] or see… the [learners] till next week" (Conceição, 2006, p. 38). In Choi and Park's (2006) case study, an online professor at a midwestern university in the United States said that online learning increased her workload because she wanted to compensate for missing face-to-face time with online students.

The text-based nature of some online courses continued to trouble instructors years later. For example, in Haber and Mills' (2008) study, faculty members were concerned about the workload involved in online courses because of the numerous emails and discussion board posts. One faculty member stated:

> Ten years ago, say, I taught a class in statistics. I walked in, I lectured and I left---three days a week. Maybe two or three people came to my office…Now if you have e-mail, if you don't check into your class on a daily basis, it is an onslaught. (p. 276)

In Fish and Gill's (2009) study of 87 professors from a public university in the southwestern United States, they found that some faculty members compared preparing to teach online courses to writing a textbook to explain the textbook. One faculty member in Oomen-Early and Murphy's (2009) study stated, "There is just not enough time to do it all: answer all of my emails, design a course or courses, teach them, manage them, grade, research, advise, and so on" (p. 229). Lui's (2009) work, which included feedback from 15 participants at a Hong Kong institution, also showed that faculty spent a lot of time managing students' assignments in an online course.

Time constraints were also an issue for participants in Green et al.'s (2009) study, which included responses from 135 participants who have taught or currently teach at East Carolina University and California State University, Fullerton. More than 50 percent of participants noted that the time commitment involved in online learning could discourage them from teaching online (Green et al., 2009). Similarly, faculty workload was also viewed as a potential barrier for professors from Wasilik and Bolliger's (2009) study, which included feedback from 102 online instructors at a U. S. land-grant institution.

Faculty from Hiltz et al.'s (2010) study mentioned the time it took to make sure that the phrases and tones of their online messages were correct. One professor expressed concerns that an online course was taking time away from a face-to-face course:

> I have a face-to-face class that's three hours a night and I feel I'm short-changing them very badly because maybe I read their papers for eight hours, and I'm there for three hours so that's eleven hours; but with the online course, I'm off and on and reading their papers and responding to them for maybe twenty hours for one course, and that doesn't count developing the course either. (Hiltz et al., 2010, p. 30)

In a survey of 115 faculty members from social sciences, the arts, engineering, and the sciences at three universities in Iran, Zare-ee (2011) found that over 20 percent of participants noted that lack of preparation time presented problems for them with online courses. Likewise, Ribeiro et al.'s (2011) study, which included responses from 59 teachers at two universities in Brazil, indicated that online learning courses required more preparation time than face-to-face courses. Both of the 2011 studies echo the concerns expressed by the Hiltz et al. (2010) participant.

Instructors from Huang and Hsiao's (2012) study also emphasized the workload challenges associated with online teaching. Study participants were faculty members at a Midwest university; they had each taught at least one fully online course. One teacher stated:

> Teaching this way [online] ... is actually more labor-intensive than teaching on campus cause this sheer amount of typing that you deal with, you know, back and forth on papers rather than just sitting down and talking to students, I mean it just takes so much time. (p.19)

These aforementioned concerns are also similar to those noted in the Hiltz et al. (2010) study. Another faculty member in Huang and Hsiao's study made a similar observation, stating that an online course is "a lot of work...before the class even starts, a lot of preparation" (Huang & Hsiao, 2012, p. 19). Further, in Sword's (2012) study of nurse educators who teach online, one of the 20 midwestern university faculty members stated, "Online equals double my time" (p. 269).

Student readiness
Student readiness for online courses was a major concern for many professors. For example, in Siedlaczek's (2004) study, faculty indicated that students had trouble adapting to the online environment and submitting assignments. Professors in Panda and Mishra's (2007) study noted that some students do not have access to the Internet, which makes online learning an impossibility. Other faculty members stated that students were not prepared for the time it takes to provide feedback, noting that students have unrealistic expectations regarding professors' response times (Panda & Mishra, 2007).

Oomen-Early and Murphy's (2009) study showed that over 76 percent of faculty participants believed that colleges and universities should assess students' online learning readiness. A professor from that study stated, "Some students expect instructor feedback to be as instantaneous as clicking a button, so when it's not, they get upset. They don't realize that it takes time for the instructor to review and respond to what's been posted" (Oomen-Early & Murphy, 2009, p. 231). Likewise, faculty from Wasilik and Bolliger's (2009) study expressed that students' expectations of online professors were "unrealistic" because many students wanted instantaneous responses from faculty. Participants in that study also expressed frustration because students seemed unprepared for online learning and displayed poor communication skills (Wasilik & Bolliger, 2009). In Smith et al.'s (2009) study, which included feedback from seven nursing teachers and two instructional designers at research universities in New York and Florida, faculty were concerned that the

technology would be a problem for students. Faculty from Fish and Gill's (2009) study pointed out that online learning can be difficult for students who are not as motivated or self-directed, but can work well for motivated learners.

The idea of students' unrealistic expectations appeared again in Schulte's (2010) study. A professor stated, "I started having students that thought they could contact me 24/7 [24 hours a day, 7 days a week]. And I know why they think they have one-on-one contact, because they do!" (Schulte, 2010, p. 17). In Hiltz et al.'s (2010) study, professors expressed that online learning may not be for all students, and one faculty member noted that students with very little (or no) technology experience have trouble with online courses, two points noted in Fish and Gill (2009) and Smith et al. (2009), respectively. Koenig's (2010) study showed that online course delivery allowed good students to learn more but did not provide much opportunity for average or poor students, which could speak to the preparation for the online environment. The study included feedback from 160 faculty members at a technical institute in a mid-atlantic state. Likewise, faculty from Schulte's (2010) study indicated that several students lack the computer skills they need to be successful in online courses. The issue of students' expectations came up again, as a professor from Hiltz et al. (2010) stated, "I had to log in a couple of times a day, or sometimes more than that. I had to respond to [students] immediately, otherwise they wouldn't have done their assignments, they would have said, 'Oh, you didn't answer my emails'" (p. 31).

It seems that student readiness as it relates to the technology continued to be a concern for instructors, as expressed by a professor from Zare-ee's (2011) study. When investigated from the vantage point of online students, some of the data may seem related to instructor immediacy; however, when explored from the online instructors' perspectives, the data clearly indicate instructors' concerns about students being ready for online courses or programs.

Cheating
Several professors were concerned about the risks online learning posed for cheating, particularly plagiarism. Although the Cheating theme did not appear in as many works as other themes, cheating/academic dishonesty is an important issue to address for the online classroom. Many institutions have policies related to cheating and provide examples of what constitutes cheating in the classroom, particularly the face-to-face classroom. With the move to online learning, however, those lines related to cheating may be blurred for some students, and could include ways of cheating that instructors have not considered. Therefore, the Cheating theme was included in this work, as it is a facet of online learning that colleges, universities, and companies are still grappling with. A professor from Fish and Gill's (2009) study stated that many students admitted they cheated online: "Everyone can cheat and have someone help them with their work. Who really knows who is doing the work? All students tell me that they have had someone do some or most of their work for an online course." In Smith et al.'s (2009) study, professors were worried that students would cheat on online tests. Faculty members were still concerned about cheating when students could use books and notes for exams; they were worried that students would

work in groups, which was not allowed (Smith et al., 2009). While students have yet to access test answers, faculty members are concerned about that possibility (Smith et al., 2009). Schulte's (2010) study also found that faculty members were concerned about cheating. One professor noted:

> And I'll use the digital copy [of the paper] to do a plagiarism check, basically....And I make sure that students understand that I'm going to be doing just exactly that...just so they know that they are going to be checked I think is absolutely a deterrent. (Schulte, 2010, p. 25)

Lack of face-to-face interaction
Loss of face-to-face interaction was another major concern for many instructors. In Kanuka et al.'s (2002) study on professors' perceptions of the online environment, particularly asynchronous, text-based discussion, they found that professors missed face-to-face interaction when teaching online courses. The study included data provided in semi-structured interviews by 12 professors from the University of Alberta. One professor from Kanuka et al.'s (2002) study noted:

> It's more difficult to build up those kind of personal relationships. I would classify myself as a teacher not the content expert. Teaching is where my interest is. I miss not having that face-to-face time, that relationship building opportunity. I know that it will be different. I like seeing people. I like seeing how they change throughout the term. Their hair grows longer. They dye their hair. They pierce their nose. I like seeing those changes in people, you know. I like being able to have that personal time, which is different in a distance educational environment. So I miss it. But maybe it's different and equally rich, but different. (p. 161)

Another professor from Kanuka et al.'s (2002) study emphasized the need for face-to-face interaction in courses:

> As I explored with ways to model thinking skills and the application of theory to practice, I wanted feedback from my students to be sure that I was communicating these ideas effectively. In face-to-face I can 'see' if they are 'getting it,' whereas online, I can't. (162)

Likewise, Coppola et al. (2002) showed that professors missed the "facial expressions, eye contact, voice qualities and body movement" traditional courses provided (p. 179).

In Fish and Gill's (2009) study, faculty members with no online teaching experience as well as those with positive online teaching experiences noted lack of physical co-presence was a negative component of online learning. Faculty members from Lui's (2009) study were concerned that lack of face-to-face interaction would hinder their rapport with students. In Zare-ee's (2011) study, faculty members expressed that while information communication technologies (ICT) are great resources, a part of the interaction is lost because of the lack of

face-to-face communication. A faculty member from Sword's (2012) study made a similar comment that she could not "see the ah-ha moment in [students'] eyes" (p. 270).

Faculty members' concerns about online teaching ran the gamut. Some were concerned about losing connections with students, while others were worried that students would take advantage of the environment and cheat. While student preparedness was a concern, faculty members also seemed equally concerned about their own ability to adapt to new communication styles in the online environment. Despite the many concerns about online teaching, some faculty members still seemed motivated to teach online.

Motivations to Teach Online

Although the online classroom has its challenges, several faculty members are motivated to teach in the online environment because it allows flexibility, the opportunity to work with new technology, organizational benefits, and improved learning for students.

Flexibility

Faculty members appreciated the flexibility of the online environment. For example, Green et al. (2009) found that more than 80 percent of faculty participants cited "flexible working conditions" as a motivator for online teaching. In Wasilik and Bolliger's (2009) study, 97 percent of participants said that online teaching flexibility is important to faculty. Some instructors highlighted a different type of flexibility that online learning provides: the flexibility to access underserved student populations (Wasilik & Bolliger, 2009).

In the Fillion et al. (2009) study, which included data from 18 professors from a large Canadian university, professors appreciated the flexibility to access information in online courses. One faculty member stated:

> ...Students have a lot of possibilities in this course to access information, to discuss about it, and to have a doubt about it when they think it is necessary, as well as to be placed in front of numerous 'real life' examples that make such students...establish links between theory and practice. All these elements can only have the effect, I think, to increase the level of understanding of students of the course material. (p. 30)

In Fish & Gill's (2009) study, one faculty member had a negative experience with online teaching, but stated that the online classroom "provides a flexible forum for individuals who work and cannot meet in a regular classroom environment." Hiltz et al.'s (2010) study showed that flexibility was the leading reason faculty wanted to teach online courses. A faculty member and administrator noted:

> [Online teaching] enables me to teach and I think that really goes under self scheduling because my calendar is so full and needs to be so flexible that if I were to teach a face [to face] course or more than one face [to face] course, it

would be impossible for me to schedule other things that need to be scheduled. (Hiltz et al., 2010, pp. 27-28)

Faculty members were able to take a few weeks to care for a sick relative, live abroad, and balance their work/life schedules because of the flexible nature of online teaching (Hiltz et al., 2010). A faculty member in Huang and Hsiao's (2012) study stated:

…[online teaching] is convenient. It is flexible. From my point of view, it is so good to me. It fits me, because I want to do anytime anywhere to communicate with my students, to post my instruction, learning materials, teaching materials, whatever I want to do I can do anytime even during midnight…so it doesn't limit anything, the place, the time, and it is so good. It fits me well. (p. 18)

The flexibility of online teaching can be beneficial to both professors and students.

Working with new technology
The ability to work with new technology motivated several faculty members to teach online. For example, Siedlaczek (2004) noted that faculty in her study were "actively interested" in learning new technology and wanted opportunities to integrate new technology into their classrooms. Several years later, Green et al. (2009) found that over 70 percent of study participants wanted to teach online so they could have the opportunity to work with the technology. A professor from Schulte's (2010) study saw the use of online learning technology as an opportunity for growth, stating, "I look at what I've learned technology wise here and I know that I am a much more marketable person because of what I know and what I've done" (p. 14). A professor from Hiltz et al.'s (2010) study appreciated the new technology and noted "the challenge of the technology" (Hiltz et al., 2010). Dolan's (2011) study of online adjunct faculty and isolation showed that many of the adjuncts wanted to stay with the institution because of the school's "state-of-the-art course platform" (p. 70). For these faculty, the benefits of working with new technology outweighed the challenges of isolation.

Organizational benefits
The organizational benefits of technology often led to increased interactions and motivated several faculty to teach or continue teaching online. Some instructors saw pedagogical benefits with the organizational tools of online learning. For example, a school of management professor stated:

It has gotten me to rethink pedagogical objectives, pedagogical techniques. It has exposed me to new ideas and new means of delivery that I hadn't paid any attention to at all. It has gotten me to think about the fact that class does not revolve around me which is what every new teacher thinks. They are more concerned about themselves and what they are doing. We speak about a community of scholars; it's about time that we had a community of learners. (Coppola et al., 2001, p. 180)

Another faculty member from Coppola et al.'s (2001) study mentioned increased interaction because of online teaching. A humanities and social sciences professor said:

> Even though the richness of exchange is reduced, there is a possibility for more intimacy online than in the regular classroom. That's definitely a plus. It's hard to get that, to have that happen. I like that very much. (p. 179)

The idea of increased instructor-student interaction in online courses also appeared in later studies. For example, Shea et al.'s (2005) study of 913 faculty members from 33 colleges in New York found that online courses helped facilitate more student-faculty interaction and more student-student interaction.

Mary, an online professor from Conceição's (2006) study, also emphasized the interaction between faculty and students online, stating:

> There's a tremendous gratification in [online teaching] because of how well I get to know the [learners], and I believe the opportunities I have to assess their application of the knowledge and skills that we're talking about during the semester…You're sitting back reading everything every [learner] does and reflecting on it and providing feedback… The way I do it is more time consuming, but it's also much more gratifying. I feel like I can have a greater impact on each individual [learner]. (p. 41)

Three years later, instructors were still highlighting the benefits online learning provided for interaction. For example, an online teacher from Fillion et al.'s (2009) study stated, "Students are more open to ask questions [online] than in face-to-face" (p. 31). Another professor from that study noted that because the medium allows students to "communicate electronically anytime with [the] professor and their peers," the level of interaction helps students feel more secure in online courses (Fillion et al., 2009, p. 38).

In Hiltz et al.'s (2010) study, faculty members stated that the ability to easily manage online courses motivated them to teach online courses. One professor stated that course management systems provided "easier record-keeping for the class" (Hiltz et al., 2010, p. 29). The professor added, "Tracking students' participations and having all their assignments in one place, it's easier for them too because they can see their grades when they're posted and they can keep track of the teacher's comments" (Hiltz et al., 2010, p. 29). In Koenig's (2010) study, a faculty member stated that the technology for online courses was "a wonderful way to ensure organized content, as well as learning objectives" (p. 22). Similarly, professors from Schulte's (2010) study expressed that the paperless part of online learning helped with organization of course submissions. The aforementioned thoughts are similar to those expressed by participants in Coppola et al.'s (2001) study nine years earlier.

Like the studies from preceding years, the idea of increased interaction online also appeared in Schulte's (2010) study. For example, a professor stated that the online

environment "probably opens up some students and they communicate their feelings more and their opinions more because they're not face-to-face with you" (Schulte, 2010, p. 16). Some faculty members learned more about students' work habits as a result of the increased interaction facilitated by online learning. A professor from Hiltz et al.'s (2010) study said:

> You begin to learn about the work habits of your students very quickly and I think you get to know them, because you're dealing with them in a verbal way as opposed to a visual way...You don't have these interactions in the classrooms, where mostly I'm doing the talking in front of the classroom and (only) some students will raise their hands, but I won't get to know them better. (p. 28)

Professors also noted that the online environment provides a space where students who would be too shy to participate in a face-to-face course feel at liberty to participate in the course (Hiltz et al., 2010).

Professors may miss the social cues that are a part of the traditional face-to-face classroom, but the way the online environment was organized often provided many opportunities for interaction between students and instructors and students and each other.

Improves learning
Several faculty members noticed improved learning outcomes for students in online courses. For example, faculty from Siedlaczack's (2004) study thought that online learning supported a variety of learning styles and were motivated to use the medium for that reason; the supported learning could lead to improved learning. In Wiesenberg and Stacey's (2008) study, which included 10 Canadian and 12 Australian instructors experienced in online education, participants noted that in addition to being more efficient, online learning is better for in-depth conceptual learning (Wiesenberg & Stacey, 2008). One professor from the Fillion et al. (2009) study emphasized improved student learning as a result of online courses and stated:

> Some students are certainly more capable [than] others to use this type of material on the Web. But I think that ICT [information communication technology] provide[s] students with an advantage at the level of learning. Using ICT in this course, students provide much more pronounced search of information. There is an interaction on the Internet which was not there before in conventional courses. Yes, assuredly, ICT improve[s] learning. (Fillion et al., 2009, p. 30)

Fish and Gill (2009) found that professors with positive online teaching experiences indicated that online learning positively impacted students' learning. The faculty also noted that students benefited from online learning and had their learning enhanced because of online learning (Fish & Gill, 2009). Faculty with positive online experiences also said that online teaching helps them promote higher order thinking in students, and one

professor indicated that "one advantage [of online teaching] includes facilitating higher order thinking among students and the application of adult learning theory" (Fish & Gill, 2009).

Conclusion

As the data indicate, from 2002 to the present, faculty members share some of the same concerns and motivations when it comes to the online classroom. Although the types of online environments are changing (three dimensional virtual worlds, the integration of voice and video options, etc.), these advances strike both fear and joy for faculty members. As the current study indicates, these advances have not changed the concerns and motivations instructors have related to online teaching. Voice and video capabilities may not reduce the amount of data faculty receive via online platforms, but these capabilities will reduce the amount of typing/text-based communications for online courses. The interaction between faculty and students is lost for some instructors in the online environment and enhanced for others. There are many tools within online classrooms to help increase interaction and tools to help faculty (and students) understand the social cues available in the online classroom. However, it takes time to learn these tools and prepare to use them effectively.

There is still work to be done related to online teaching. Many instructors continue to experience challenges related to workload/time constraints when teaching online courses, and the types of online courses are changing (MOOCs and variations of those courses). Additional data could help instructors, administrators, and others understand whether these new types of courses alleviate or exacerbate instructors' concerns. Also, full-time and part-time instructors must continue to balance issues of professional development to prepare for online courses and student readiness challenges related to technology and the online environment in general, particularly with the continued growth of technology and various types of online classrooms. Although some of the learning platforms have been used in higher education for several years, researchers should continue to pursue conversations about what it means to teach online and the best ways to achieve the best outcomes for faculty and students. As additional studies about online teaching and learning are completed, it is also important to continue to engage in research synthesis, as the current study provided, to understand these best practices and outcomes across studies and throughout the years.

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