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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE WITH
VIRTUAL EYE CONTACT IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

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Approval of Dissertation

The undersigned certify that they have read the dissertation entitled

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VIRTUAL EYE CONTACT IN ASYNCHONOUS VIDEO**

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Abstract

The asynchronous teaching and learning process differs from a traditional face-to-face course in that instructors and students are not in the same place and are not in the learning environment at the same time. One common strategy to teach, engage, and communicate online as part of that learning environment is the use of pre-recorded videos. Short, edited videos are used to share content from the instructor to the student. However, students may still feel disconnected from their instructor and miss classroom interaction. Increasing meaningful instructor presence in instructor created video as a method of combatting student disconnect is the focus of this study. The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine student perceptions about the presence of their asynchronous online instructor, specifically through the use of video. The following questions will form the basis of this study:

1. How do students perceive the instructor's presence by means of the use of video in the asynchronous environment?
2. What impact, if any, does virtual eye contact have on student perception of instructor presence?

Identifying student perspectives can allow for a better alignment of instructor presence and student needs to make the teaching and learning process more efficient and effective. The study was a mixed methods study. A questionnaire was given to undergraduate students whose professors have used video with the instructor present in their asynchronous courses. The questionnaire included both objective, closed-ended questions which can be analyzed quantitatively, as well as open-ended questions which needed to be analyzed qualitatively.

Keywords: video, asynchronous, online learning, virtual eye contact, instructor presence

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Introduction

Students are requesting and expecting online courses more and more as part of their educational experience. The growth rate of online courses is more than tenfold the growth rate of the higher education student population (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Blankenship & Atkinson, 2010). The reasons for these demands include accommodations for special needs, scheduling issues, work conflicts, and other issues. As such, students are opting for online course options (Roberts-Grmela, 2023). Online courses allow for more freedom in scheduling, a more flexible learning environment, geographic flexibility, and provide more options for fulfilling graduation requirements.

Although students have various and valid reasons for wanting to take a course online, they can come to the course as novice online learners, not knowing what to expect. Often, students have very little or no experience with online learning. They believe the course will be easy and not much different from the face-to-face courses they have taken their whole academic career (Otter et al., 2013). However, upon beginning the course they may discover it is an asynchronous, scheduled course - they do not have to sit in a classroom (physical or virtual) and they are not taking a self-paced correspondence course. The expectations of the course designer and the school are that there will be interaction with the content, the instructor, and amongst students, but there will not be any course meetings that are at the same time in the same place. This is frequently a very different dynamic compared to the student's expectations and past experience. Gradually, the student begins to disengage and interacts with the content and the other students less and less. This pattern of behavior, arising from the disparity between what the student knows from previous learning experiences and what they expect to be the norm for online coursework, is all too common. The student lacks the connection to the other students and

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to the instructor, and so the student has little motivation to engage with the content and continue in the course.

The asynchronous teaching and learning process differs from a traditional face-to-face class in that instructors and students are not in the same place and most likely are not in the learning environment at the same time. Different strategies have to be used to teach, engage, and communicate. One common strategy for online teaching and learning as part of an asynchronous learning environment is the use of pre-recorded videos. Short, edited videos are used to share content from the instructor to the student. These types of videos are examples of learner to content interactions (Moore, 1989). However, students may still feel disconnected from their instructor and miss the classroom interaction. Increasing meaningful instructor presence in instructor created video as a method of combatting student disconnect is explored in this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine student perceptions about the presence of their asynchronous online instructor. Teaching presence has been identified as a “significant determinate of students satisfaction, perceived learning, and sense of community” (Garrison, 2007, p. 67). These qualities are a necessary and valued part of the teaching and learning process.

Beyond the actual practice of online asynchronous teaching, this study explores the use and style of video in the asynchronous online learning environment. By recognizing and acknowledging that students are viewing their instructors through different educational lenses, the practice of being present in asynchronous videos can improve the learning process.

The impetus for this type of study is based upon instructor need and student desires. As a faculty developer, instructors approach me to assist in implementing new technologies to engage

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their students. In one instance in particular, the use of video in their asynchronous course needed an improved way to show their math process as well as connect with their online students. The instructor wanted to demonstrate that they were not only a talking head, but desired to better emulate the classroom experience most students are accustomed to in a traditional classroom. The use of non-verbal cues such as hand gestures, tone of voice, facial expression, and other body language can increase the feeling of instructor presence and clue students in to important learning expectations. That request started this project and led to this study.

Significance of the Study

Exploring the methods instructors use in asynchronous videos to solidify their presence is the focus of this study. The results of this exploration can inform faculty development, pre-service teaching practice, and increase communication and clarity of expectations in the classroom, leading to better learning.

Once it is known how students feel regarding their instructor's level of presence in the classroom, courses can be designed and instructors can be taught strategies to facilitate the feeling of community and connectedness within their learning environments. Connection to all the participants in the process allows instructors to facilitate learning. Students are able to learn from people they perceive to be real and as a part of their learning process. Elements of the online environment such as virtual eye contact within asynchronous video can be effectively used to foster the sense of instructor presence for students.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations

This research is built upon the philosophical and conceptual foundations of Pragmatism and the Community of Inquiry, specifically as it relates to aspects of social presence and teacher presence.

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Pragmatism

Pragmatism focuses on “what works.” Pragmatic study is focused on trial and error, experimentation, and practitioner experiences. Pragmatism is action orientated, utility oriented, and problem centered. Being a pragmatic study, multiple views of the problem and the perceptions of the participants were used to investigate the problem. Observing the experiences-what was experienced and how it was experienced-before starting to interpret or attribute meaning is necessary (Creswell, 2013). The goal of pragmatic studies is action and problem solving. Therefore, the goal of this study is to explore the actual experiences that students and instructors have with presence and determine ways in which teaching practice can be influenced and ultimately improve the teaching and learning process.

Pragmatic studies can be quantitative, as well as qualitative. This study uses both forms of data for a mixed method exploration (Cohen et al., 2018).

Community of Inquiry

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework consists of three elements: Social Presence, Cognitive Presence, and Teaching Presence (Garrison et al., 2010). Each presence, in conjunction with the others, contributes to the educational experience for the students. By using the framework, it is possible to study the importance of the instructor’s perceived presence with regard to student satisfaction, perceived learning, and sense of community. Therefore, this study focuses on the student’s perception of the instructor’s presence. Garrison (2007, p. 61) uses the Community of Inquiry framework to ask “how we conceive of teaching presence (design, facilitation, direct instruction).” Using this framework, the elements around teaching presence can be used to explore the impact of design and the facilitation of specialized video in online learning. Using the CoI framework’s teaching and social presences, the perceptions students

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have regarding what makes their educational experience meaningful and worthwhile are explored.

Statement of the Problem

While the face-to-face classroom and an online asynchronous course are very different, the goals and the objectives of the course must be met regardless of modality. Instructors are not only tasked with presenting content and assessing student progress, but they are also responsible for engaging with students and creating an environment where students can interact with instructors, other students, and the course content.

Since, in an asynchronous course, instructors and students do not meet at the same time or in the same place, an alternate way of creating instructor presence needs to be designed. The creation of robust, engaging video to present content and create a simulated classroom is one of many tools to assist in the perception of teaching presence. The use of engaging video from the instructor can transform a course from mere presentation of content to actual teaching and learning (Bagarukayo et al., 2011; Salekhova et al., 2020; Singhasem et al., 2012).

Research Questions

Based upon the asynchronous online learning environment and the need for instructor presence, the following questions formed the basis of this study:

1. How do students perceive the instructor's presence by means of the use of video in the asynchronous environment?
2. What impact, if any, does virtual eye contact have on student perception of instructor presence?

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Limitations

Since this study was self-reported and collected through online questionnaires, the reported data are perceptions. The study was conducted at the course level, and therefore may not fully address expectations and requirements at a broader curriculum level.

Delimitations

The boundaries of this study were set to make the study manageable and relevant. The constraints of the study included the target population. The number of potential participants was small. The pool of students whose instructors have implemented specific strategies to increase presence, such as lightboard use in their asynchronous videos, is limited. The use of video in asynchronous courses is not a required element for teaching. Not all instructors make use of video; even fewer use the lightboard and other virtual eye contact methods. These factors limited the number of participants. However, the findings of this study can provide useful information for instructors wanting to make use of asynchronous video.

Additionally, this study was focused on student perception. Perception is inherently subjective. Collecting and aggregating those perceptions through a questionnaire, as well as probing and exploring identified themes through follow-up one-on-one interviews, can assist in making the results more objective and broadly applicable. Student perceptions may be colored by the variety in the video. The quality of the video will be impacted by the individual instructor creating them.

To control for these variations, videos that are made with lightboards and include the instructor as a present part of the video were explored. Time spent on editing, quality of video capture, equipment used, and the frequency of the videos will contribute to video quality and will factor into student perception. Some instructors are seasoned, some are new to the classroom,

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and some are teaching assistants—each of these individual constraints will be a factor in the end product. Some instructors may have received a great deal of specialized training on how to create effective video, while others may be adapting a face-to-face model they were taught under.

The assumption and standard procedure where the study took place is that the instructor creates and edits their video; instructional designers or other media creators were not used to create the end product, only to teach how and why to use video. Thus, the range of video quality and usage is variable. The study focused on students of instructors who use asynchronous video that employs virtual eye contact.

The scope of the study was limited to allow for completion and limited the extent to which the results will be generalizable. These choices were made to ensure the study remains focused and achievable.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are based on existing literature with some clarification for the purpose of this study.

Asynchronous Learning:

Learning that does not occur at the same time or same place though some digital technology such as the Internet or a Learning Management System (LMS). This type of learning is often referred to “online learning.” Historically, this type of learning could also be mediated through mail correspondence. For purposes of this study, it is intended to mean online, digitally mediated learning.

Blended or Hybrid Learning:

Learning that occurs with a mix of asynchronous and synchronous environments.

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Instructor:

Teacher or Professor.

Synchronous Learning:

Learning that occurs in the same time. This type of learning can be face-to-face, in a brick-and-mortar classroom environment or in a synchronous online environment, such as Zoom or other virtual classrooms. The focus is on real time interactions.

Summary

The perceptions students have around what makes their educational experience meaningful and worthwhile was explored in this study. By exploring the perceptions students have of teaching presence, online courses can be better designed to meet student needs. The use of video in asynchronous online courses, especially those that are designed to make use of virtual eye contact, could be shown to increase student satisfaction. Thus, the application of the findings of this study, particularly those with regard to instructor presence, can make the teaching and learning process more effective and efficient.

Literature Review

The review of the literature examines the online learning environment, the use of video in the various online learning modalities, instructor presence in online asynchronous video, and introduces the concept of virtual eye contact. This examination is woven into teaching presence and student perceptions.

First, a description of the online teaching and learning environment where video can be used to assist in the learner to content interaction, as well as increase the feeling of instructor presence will be presented. Next, the impact of video on students' perception of instructor presence and subsequent engagement will be discussed. Finally, virtual eye contact will be defined and described. The connection between virtual eye contact, instructor presence, and student engagement will be described.

Online Learning Environment

The environment in which the teaching and learning process takes place should be defined because it, by definition, does not take place exclusively within a classroom. Online instruction happens in various ways. The three general variations of online instruction are supplemental, synchronous, and asynchronous. These three approaches can be combined to create mixed, blended, or hybrid instruction as well. Regardless of the modality, Crosslin et al. (2020) urge designers and instructors to keep in mind that the “course design will need to keep the human element in your course” (p. 12). This applies to addressing the needs of the students as well as the presence of the instructor.

Use of Video as a Supplemental Method

Supplemental instruction is usually provided online to enhance a traditional place-based face-to-face course. This instruction can be in the form of videos, readings, practice activities,

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and other educational interventions. Video, in particular, can be used to review an especially difficult concept, to demonstrate a step-by-step practice, or to summarize a module.

Additionally, supplemental materials can be used to “flip the classroom,” where recorded lecture is provided online before a class meets so that the regularly arranged meeting time can be used to practice and reinforce the content from the online lecture (Lam et al., 2019).

Use of Video as a Synchronous Method

Instead of place-based instruction, which requires students to be in the physical learning environment at the same time (synchronously) with their instructor and the rest of the class, synchronous online instruction allows for instructors and students to meet online in a virtual classroom or other digital meeting space. In a synchronous environment, video is most often used live to virtually meet with students to replicate the face-to-face teaching classroom. Video can also be used to allow for instructors to meet with students individually or in small groups. Online office hours can also be facilitated with synchronous video. If the design of the course calls for group projects or team meetings, video can be used to mediate those meetings and even to record it for future review.

Use of Video as an Asynchronous Method

The asynchronous environment does not rely on engagement at the same time or in the same place. Most asynchronous environments, including the modality this study was predicated upon, are facilitated by a learning management system to guide a student through instructional interactions. As part of an asynchronous course, video is often used to replace the face-to-face lecture portion of a course or in similar ways as supplemental video, as described above. Online courses that are traditionally very text-centered can become more personalized and meaningful to students when they see and hear their instructor and other members of the class. Video also

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allows students to pause, view, and review the materials as many times as desired. This use of video can be used to replace lecture, demonstrate a process, and-most importantly for an asynchronous class-to create teaching presence in an environment which otherwise can feel very isolating for a student.

Additionally, asynchronous video can be used to demonstrate experiments or phenomena, particularly when the experiment is dangerous, costly, requires equipment that may not be readily available, complex, or which is prone to uncontrollable effects. The value added to these types of videos with the inclusion of an instructor is that the sharing of knowledge transforms from just transition of information to actual teaching and learning. Video that includes strong teaching presence aids in the design, facilitation, and direction of the learning process.

Students can also use asynchronous video for skills development, such as case studies, interpreting performances (drama, poetry, movies, music, etc.), and observing phenomena, such as classroom behavior or symptoms of mental illness (Bates, 2019). These types of interactions would be difficult and quite artificial to try to replicate in the classroom.

Video can be used in many different ways, but the end goal is to have the student interact and engage with the learning content, the instructor, and with their classmates. Video can be used to provide personalized feedback, motivate students, and to make connections amongst students. Video can improve how students receive information, share and interact with one another, and communicate with the instructor (West, 2021).

Self-Pace Video

Online learning can also occur in self-paced courses. These courses do not meet synchronously and the timing is completely under the control of the student-within course date parameters. There may be start and end dates, but the student determines the pace within those

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dates. These courses are usually referred to as facilitated or guided by a proctor. Content is made available to students and presented within the course. Usually, the content is static to allow for multiple starts and individual pacing. This content could be in the form of videos. Those videos which include their facilitator could allow for a connection or feeling of presence for the learner. However, because this sort of instruction is essentially a correspondence course re-imagined in a digital format and requires very little instructor presence, this type of instruction is outside the scope of this study.

Summary

Regardless of modality or the online learning environment, it is the charge of the instructor to engage with students, respond to their needs, and provide a well-designed course. Video is one way in which instructors can engage with students in the online environment.

Use of Video

Video is most often used to supplement in-class instruction, to flip the classroom, or as the primary medium for content transmission in an asynchronous course. Video can be used to authentically represent the participants in the video as real people--as the actual people who are teaching or learning in the class. Based on their 2019 study with regard to student satisfaction and video lectures (VL), Scagnoli et al. concluded, “students’ satisfaction with VL has a strong relationship with positive overall learning experience and perception of impact of video on learning” (2019, p. 399). Rose’s study reinforces this idea. The study surveyed students on their level of agreement with aspects of their online learning experience. Results indicated 100% of students had some level of agreement with statements around understanding material, making the course more interactive, and making them feel like they knew their instructors (Rose, 2009).

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Video can be used in a variety of ways in the online classroom. Instructors can use video to introduce themselves, similar to way in which students are asked to introduce themselves and make connections in the course. Instructors can also use video to orient students to the technological aspects of the course-the layout of the course, the tools, and the resources they are expected to use. The course syllabus, expectations, and due dates can be effectively communicated through video. Reminders and announcements can be sent to students in the form of video. Instructors can create personalized feedback on student work that is shared with the student in a more individualized way with a short feedback video on assignments.

Some of the advantages both instructors and students have experienced while using video in their courses include the ability to quickly post content. This works for students who want to use mobile devices to record a response compared to slower or cumbersome text-based discussions (Lowenthal et al., 2020). The advantage of time works in opposite ways in other situations as well. Those students who would normally not be very participatory in a synchronous session (either online or in a physical class) now have the ability to take the time to craft their responses.

Zhang and Taranikanti (2024) explore the convenience and benefits of video for students and state “students can watch them anytime, stop at any moment, and repeat at their wishes. The audio and video media significantly enrich the previously text-based online courses, making online learning more interesting, engaging, and satisfying” (2.1 Videos in asynchronous online learning, para. 3). The use of video in online courses makes instructional materials available to students who are not in the traditional classroom, thus making education more flexible and accessible.

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Video for communication of logistical or preliminary information

The purpose and use of video varies from instructor to instructor, as well as variability in the purpose of the video. Di Paolo et al. (2017) identify four purposes of educational video. The first is Introduce. This type of video can be used to introduce the instructor. An introductory video replicates the first few minutes of a face-to-face course where the instructor begins to connect with students tells the students about themselves. Introductions of students can also be facilitated by the use of video. Introductions to each unit or module of a course, the assignments in the course, or even the course overall is another use of video. Using video to do a walk through the syllabus and structure of the course can alleviate confusion and communicate expectations. Simple instructions that are often taken for granted such as how to use the online system, how to find due dates, how to submit files, and the communication of other expectations can be shared in video. Weekly announcements, opening and closing messages to prepare students for the upcoming instruction and a reiteration of the module goals are another way to use video.

The second and third purposes of education video in the De Paolo et al. framework are Model and Explain/Inform. Those purposes fall more into the Video as Content topics below.

The fourth purpose of video in their model is Feedback. Video in the form of feedback can be used to explain to students how they met expectations or how they can improve so that they may meet those expectations in the future. Using video can add a personal touch and avoid the dreaded red ink on assignments.

Video as Content

Video is often used as a replacement to traditional lecture. Without synchronous meeting times, the course content and learning materials still need to be conveyed to students. Recorded

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mini-lectures are one way of delivering course content. Additionally, video can be used to demonstrate processes or experiments—especially if experiments are costly, dangerous, or require specific equipment. Change and movement, as well as abstract principles can be demonstrated with video. Field trips can be substituted with video. Video can be used to record or archive events, to show processes, and to hypothesize how real-world events could be resolved. “When intentionally designed, produced, and curated, video amplifies what works and helps transform current practice to better address the unique expectations, abilities, and needs of today’s learners” (Grant, 2016, para. 9). Scagnoli et al. state, video lectures “...can enhance a feeling of engagement with content because of learners’ control of the media and instructors’ presence” (2019, p. 399).

To communicate their message, there are many techniques of video an instructor can employ. In trying to categorize video, Chorianopoulos (2018) identifies a variety of video styles. These include:

- Direct recordings of classroom teaching with a stationary camera
- Writing board screencasts with voice-over
- Post-production videos with picture-in-picture

Chorianopoulos goes on to further explore components that are included in some types of video. These include elements such as: people (an instructor, other students, or interviewee/co-presenter), talking heads, hands that are writing on a board, and even robots or animated figures.

Other researchers have also classified video into specific types. Santos-Espino et al. (2016) used many of the same categories (talking heads, live lecture, interview, screencast) but added slides, virtual whiteboards, documentary, animation, and demonstrations. They also differentiated the video styles as speaker-centric or board-centric. Video, even asynchronous

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video, can also be a way for students to connect with their instructor. Rehak (2022) goes as far as to say “one of the main benefits of using asynchronous videos in your online class is that the videos provide a sense of intimacy in the classroom which leads to increased instructor presence” (para. 2). The use of video can leverage many benefits including the allowance for reflection on the student’s part, creating more equitable opportunities to participate, and increased flexibility (Graham, 2005).

Video for Presence

When an instructor is present in a video, not only does a learner make a connection to that instructor as a real person, but the instructor can use common face-to-face strategies to guide the learner. For example, simply pointing towards relevant areas of a slide or image or writing on the board could signal students to attend to important content. Verbal cues can also be used to emphasize instruction (Henderson & Schroeder, 2021).

In the asynchronous online environment students may never have occasion to meet face-to-face with their instructor. There may be other interactions, specifically the use of video that replaces that person-to-person interaction. For this reason, the instructor needs to be featured in the video. Kim et al. conclude:

students would be more socially engaged and satisfied with their learning if they see ‘liveliness’ and ‘dynamics’ with the diverse media formats used by instructor. This may include opening asynchronous discussions, facilitating quality interaction, and putting useful resources in forms of images, graphics and even audio or video files. (2011, pp. 1518–1519)

Engaging video can also translate to the student’s positive perception of their learning and the use of well-developed video can compensate for the lack of real contact (Kim et al.,

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2011). “Establishing a meaningful instructor presence through the effective use of interactive technologies appears to be a particularly powerful strategy for enhancing student outcomes” (Community College Research Center, 2013, p. 5). Thus, the perception that students have of the video can impact their learning. This is reinforced by Scagnoli et al.: “video helps to bring instructors’ insights to the course, as an added value to the class” (2019, p. 408).

Students need to feel connected and have a way to engage within their learning environment. Students can feel more connected, more engaged, and often prefer the use of video, especially in the online classroom. According to student Amanda AlAziz when discussing her experience being back in the classroom after the COVID transition:

I love having lectures online. Pre-recorded videos are the best because you can watch it on your own time, at your own speed and if you miss something you can pause and rewind. I also prefer Zoom over in person because it’s easier to watch and interact with a lecture from the comfort of my own home where I can enjoy a cup of tea instead of having to rush to class every morning just to sit for two hours in a dark room surrounded by other tired students. (personal communication, August, 2021)

The use of video, specifically video that features the instructor, as a living, breathing, real person who talks to their students leads to increased satisfaction with the learning process. This idea was confirmed in Lowenthal’s 2022 study on student perceptions of video in online courses (Lowenthal, 2022). After examining student perceptions about video with regard to video announcements, instructional video, and video feedback, Lowenthal concludes that students:

...pointed out that they still like to see some instructor created videos and that they especially like it when an instructor created an instructional video on the fly, to improve their individual learning and/or the immediate needs of the class as a whole; they felt

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these videos sent the message that the instructor is engaged and cares about the class.
(2022, p. 379)

This is also supported in terms of student satisfaction from Henderson and Schroeder's (2021) review of instructor presence in instructional videos. Their process was a systematic review of the literature around the use of on-screen instructor in video to determine if the presence of the instructor provides any benefit to learners. The review included examining the design of video, primarily the comparison conducted between video where the instructor was either present or absent. The cognitive and social facets of the presence of the instructor were studied. Cognitive benefits found included physical signaling, such as pointing to relevant image or slides, and verbal cues to help learners focus in on important content. When reviewing the social perspective, Henderson and Schroeder determined that voice, speaking style, gestures, and other interactions can lead to increased engagement by the students. Their implications for practice include cases of student satisfaction with visually-present instructors (Henderson & Schroeder, 2021). Likewise, Rose stated students report "instructor-made videos not only help introduce course materials but add the personal and interactive component" (2009, p. 8).

Instructor Presence

Instructor presence is the collection of behaviors and actions instructors employ within their classrooms or learning environments to connect with their students. Instructor presence includes the actions, attributes, and behaviors that instructors use to show they care about their students and are responsive to their needs (Richardson et al., 2015). The feeling of instructor presence allows the students to believe there is a real person on the other side of the keyboard and screen who is invested in them and the course. Instructor presence is a contributing factor in the overall teaching and learning process. Teaching presence relies upon instructor presence.

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It reassures students that the instructor is present, and paying attention to their progress, even in a distributed learning context. Also, while many users may overtly ignore the on-screen instructor (especially when projected in a smaller window in front of a screencast type recording), they can still subconsciously pick up cues from the instructor's body language that can aid in engagement and overall learning. (Power, 2023, para. 15)

Since instructors are not physically present, and may not be synchronously present in many online learning environments, instructor presence has to be established in other ways. In order to mitigate geographical, physical and temporal distances, instructors need to make themselves present in alternative ways. One of the most common strategies for an instructor to be virtually present is through the use of video. Video makes the instructor visible and audible. Instructors are able to communicate their unique perspectives on the content, they are able to “express their enthusiasm for the subject on the screen, motivate learning by telling stories, and connect the learners’ emotions to what needs to be learned” (Zhang & Taranikanti, 2024, 2.1 Videos in asynchronous online learning, para. 5).

According to Anderson et al., “Teaching presence begins before the course commences as the teacher, acting as instructional designer, plans and prepares the course of studies, and it continues during the course, as the instructor facilitates the discourse and provides direct instruction when required” (2001, p. 5). Deliberate thought and planning must be taken at the design phase to include approaches that take advantage of the tools and media available (Garrison & Akyol, 2013).

Instructor presence in pre-recorded videos can be simulated with the addition of hand gestures, facial expressions, and other interactions (see Figure 1). Increased instructor presence can reduce the likelihood of a student feeling as if they are teaching themselves or just gathering

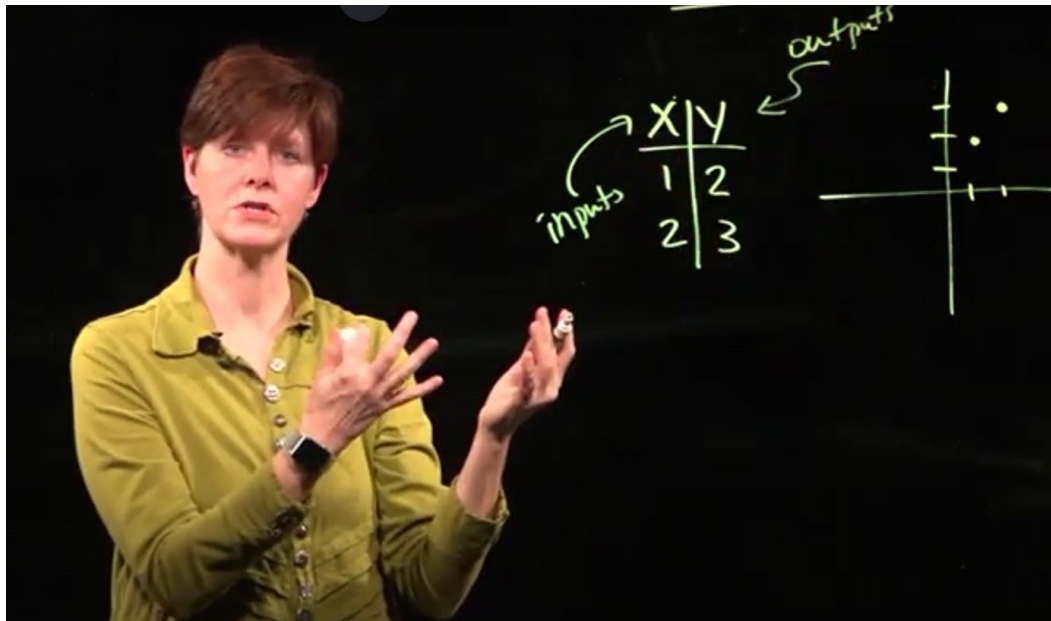
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information, and lead to an environment where the student is able to make a virtual connection with their professor and more efficiently synthesize the content. Moore suggests that transactional distance can be mediated with the use of video since:

a form of dialogue between teacher and learner occurs even in programmes that have no interaction, such as when the learner is studying through printed self-study materials, or by audiotapes or videotapes. Even in these media there is a form of learner-instructor dialogue because the learner does have an internal or silent interaction with the person who in some distant place and time organized a set of ideas or information for transmission for what might be thought of as a “virtual dialogue” with, an unknown distant reader, viewer, or listener. (1997, p. 23)

Figure 1

Hand Gestures and Facial Expression in Video



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Note: Math professor, Dr. Amy Barnsley using a lightboard, to show a process as well as employing facial expression and hand gestures to communicate asynchronously in video, maintaining virtual eye contact with students.

Additionally, according to the Community College Research Center, “infusing audio and video throughout lectures provides multiple ways for students to engage with content and creates a strong instructor presence” (2013, p. 6).

Guo et al. (2014) state that pre-made videos, like those made with the lightboard, are more engaging than lecture style videos. This makes students feel as if their instructors are talking to them – not at them – or just talking. These strategies lead to a more conversational style.

With the goal of connecting with students and making themselves known, instructors are using video to virtually put themselves in front of students in the asynchronous environment. This is confirmed by the findings of Borup et al., which state that “a large majority of students indicated feeling that the video-based communication made their instructors seem more real, present, and familiar, and that these relationships were similar to face-to-face instruction” (2012, p. 195).

Many studies have been conducted to examine student perception of presence in video, attention and engagement in video content, as well as performance based on video content. As might be expected, there are mixed results. Studies often claim students’ perception of video is positive and they feel connected to their instructor (Borup et al., 2012; Community College Research Center, 2013; Fiorella et al., 2018; Guo et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2011; Lowenthal, 2022), however, that is not always translated to improved engagement and performance.

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Borup et al. (2012) indicated that student feel as if their instructors are more real, present and familiar which improved the feeling of social presence. They even reported that the relationships were similar to face-to-face instruction. Categories that were examined included: emotional expression, such as expression of personality, verbal self-disclosure and visual self-disclosure; open communication, such as informational exchange, natural expression and fidelity; and cohesion, which includes connection, support, and similarities. Borup et al. concluded that:

video communication had a substantial impact on establishing the instructors' social presence. A large majority of students indicated feeling like they were talking to their instructor when they made video comments and that viewing the instructors' video communication helped them perceive the teacher as a real person. (2012, p. 201)

Similarly, Columbia University's Teachers College found "infusing audio and video throughout lectures provides multiple ways for students to engage with content and creates a strong instructor presence" (Community College Research Center, 2013, p. 6).

Lowenthal's (2022) study was conducted in part to discover why the dropout rate of online courses was higher than face-to-face courses. This study sought out student perceptions and found that it was important to online learners to perceive their fellow classmate and instructors as "real" and "there." Students preferred when instructor created their own videos and were present within them.

Guo et al. (2014) measured engagement in video by the length of time students watched the videos and whether they attempted to answer post-video assessments. Guo et al. found shorter videos are more engaging, instructor's talking head with slides are more engaging than slides alone, Khan-style drawing are even more engaging, videos with a personal feel and an

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instructor who speaks fairly fast and with high enthusiasm are more engaging. Fostering this engagement can positively impact student learning.

Studies have also been performed to examine the various types of video created by instructors and the impact of design choices (Chen & Wu, 2015; Wang & Antonenko, 2017). Video with picture-in-picture features (where a small recording of the instructor teaching is combined with screen recordings), video with voice-over, lecture capture, and Khan Academy videos have been compared and tested for student performance and student satisfaction. One result from these studies is that increasing instructor presence through the use of video, specifically video that features the actual instructor, can assist students to feel more connected and engaged with both the content and the instructor.

Virtual Eye Contact

Virtual eye contact is the illusion that the creator of the video is maintaining eye contact with the viewer of the video. According to Ramlatchan and Watson:

Virtual classroom and video conferencing technologies can be very effective approaches to bridge the psychological and geographic gaps between instructors and students. The use of high-definition telepresence video conferencing can now offer effective, virtual recreations of face-to-face and eye-to-eye learning environments. (Ramlatchan & Watson, 2020, p. 89)

Haneef et al. (2014) found that students have an easier time learning when the teachers use their body language, gesture, posture and eye contact. While actual eye contact cannot be experienced with an asynchronous video, using strategies such as lightboards, camera placement, focus, and other mechanisms for perceived eye contact can successfully create the illusion of eye

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contact – virtually. Griffiths and Graham (2009) contend that video can contain many of the verbal and non-verbal cues that exist in face-to-face interactions.

Traditionally, instructors make use of tools such as whiteboards or chalkboards to draw equations, concepts, connections, or other important illustrations to supplement their spoken words. “In capturing lecture on video however, these traditional props become liabilities: The presenter must turn away from the audience to write or draw on the board, and the presenter’s body often obscures the material” (Birdwell & Peshkin, 2015, p. 1). To combat this liability, instructors need to employ new tools.

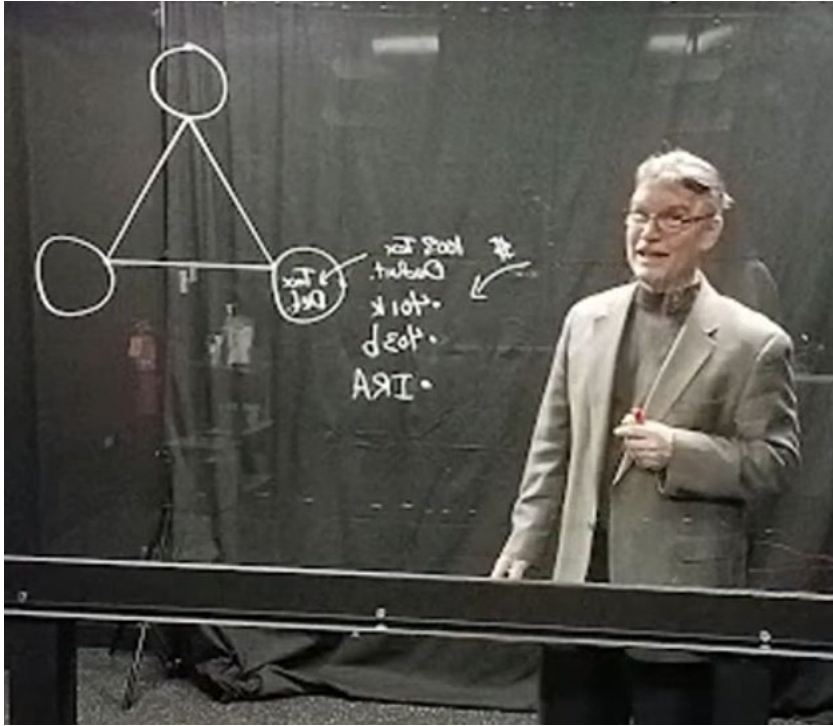
One such tool is a lightboard (see Figure 2). A lightboard is essentially a large piece of glass that short, engaging videos can be recorded through. The benefit of the lightboard is that the instructor is able to use the glass in place of a whiteboard or chalk/blackboard and remain facing their virtual audience at all times. Using digital technologies such as a lightboard, instructors are more easily able to show enthusiasm for their content and demonstrate an investment in their students while delivering course content. As an added improvement to basic video, the lightboard videos give students a feeling of eye contact as the instructor writes on a board while appearing to look at them through the glass. Fiorella et al. found that:

students learned better from an instructional video about the human kidney when they could see the illustrations being drawn by the instructor rather than seeing already drawn illustrations, and when they could see the instructor’s eyes looking at them rather than having the instructor not directly face the students. (2018, p. 1162)

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Figure 2

Lightboard



Note: Economics Instructor Dan Kill, demonstrating the use of the lightboard. He is using it in place of a chalk/white board to maintain presence while recording asynchronous video.

By using video, specifically video that employs virtual eye contact, instructors have more of a presence in the learning environment and students feel more connected to their instructor. The use of a lightboard changes the focus of the instructor from the whiteboard behind or to the side of them to the field of vision right in front of them and through the glass. This creates the illusion that eye contact is being made with the student as they watch the video. Stull et al. conducted a study around lightboards. As part of the study, eye movements of students watching the video were tracked using an eye-tracking device. It was observed that students tended to look at the instructor's face. This demonstrates the visual connection students established with the

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teacher increased their engagement with the course content. In addition, it was concluded that their learning performance was slightly higher than the control group (2018). Moreover, Erdogan and Gursel concluded “lightboard technology supports learning by increasing student interest in education, makes knowledge permanent and positively affects participation in lessons” (2024, p. 142).

Gaze

One of the ways eye contact is described is in terms of gaze. Gaze is the directed looking at any object, person, or direction (Bohannon et al., 2013). Bohannon et al. (2013) further state:

The impact of gaze, and more specifically eye contact, on our social interactions as humans is significant. While we rely on a number of nonverbal cues to communicate information to others, eye contact seems to stand out distinctly from the rest. (2013, p. 178)

Attention and memory are impacted by gaze and eye contact. Gaze influences the perception of likeability, attractiveness, social interaction, and trust.

While body language, tone, mannerisms, hand gestures, and facial expression are part of the overall message sent during video communication, eye contact is paramount. Bohannon et al. even go as far as to say, “Human communication is complex and based upon a combination of verbal and non-verbal cues to exchange information. Eye contact is arguably one of the most important non-verbal cues in communication...” (2013, p. 177).

Virtual eye contact can allow students to feel more connected to the instructor. The sense of isolation can be mitigated with this virtual connection that replicates the face-to-face environment they have previously experienced. This can lead to greater satisfaction and success in the online asynchronous learning environment.

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Summary

Instructors and students struggle with engagement, satisfaction, and connection in the online learning environment. Video is a common method to combat those issues. Specifically, video with strong instructor presence and virtual eye contact has been demonstrated to increase the ability of instructors to engage with their students. By exploring the online learning environment and the educational interventions that are most effectively used in those environments, decisions can be made that support the creation of video in the online learning environment. Video can bring content and the instructor to a student in an engaging way, increasing students' perception of instructor presence.

Research Design

Methodology

This exploratory study was designed to gather data on student perceptions of instructor presence in asynchronous video. According to Swedberg (2020), an exploratory study is a way to discover something new and interesting. Exploratory studies make a tentative analysis of a topic and can propose new ideas around that topic. Swedberg further states that “exploratory studies are an important part of a social scientist’s toolkit” (2020, p. 17). As an exploratory study, data was collected from students regarding their perceptions and satisfaction in their online course with regard to the use of asynchronous video, virtual eye contact, and instructor presence. The main factor explored is the virtual eye contact that a present instructor in asynchronous video contributes as part of the teaching and learning process.

The study was designed similarly to a field experiment. A true random selection and random assignment to control and experimental groups was not within the scope of this study. There was no control group. The limits of this design-minimal control over extraneous variables-matches the limits of a typical classroom setting. There are often numerous variables such as student background and experience, instructor background and experience, access to materials and technologies, and a host of other factors which contribute to the biases and expectations students have going into an online course. This type of design is often used to report on the value of a new teaching method or a curriculum innovation. Attitudes and perceptions can be measured initially, then the intervention or experimental manipulation is introduced. Following the treatment, the attitudes and perceptions are again measured. The differences can be accounted for in terms of the intervention. This type of field experiment is

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not intended to, nor can it, prove causality, but it is assumed that the intervention has some influence on the outcomes (Cohen et al., 2018).

The study employed a mixed methods approach to data collection. Mixed method studies combine both quantitative and qualitative research and methods (Creswell, 2009). The choice was made to use a mixed methods study to enable a more complete understanding of and build upon the results of the initial quantitative data. The design initially made use of quantitative procedures and followed up that data collection with qualitative procedures. Using both methods allows for a more comprehensive analysis.

The study collected previous online experience and perceptions regarding instructor presence within those experiences. This initial questionnaire-based data collection primarily included multiple-choice type questions alongside open-ended questions. Participants were invited to volunteer for one-on-one follow-up interviews.

Specific procedures

Initial data was collected with an online questionnaire near the beginning of the Fall 2025 semester, before the students had much experience with the use of video that includes instructor presence, lightboards, and virtual eye contact. This questionnaire served as a sort of pretest, establishing the baseline attitudes and perceptions of study participants regarding instructor presence.

Near the end of the semester, after students had been exposed to the educational intervention—the videos which include strategies that increase instructor presence and virtual eye contact—students were again be asked to complete the questionnaire. The second questionnaire supplied a sort of posttest data.

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These two sets of data were compared to identify differences in the attitudes and perceptions of the students and to measure the impact of the courses video on those perceptions.

The questionnaires included both objective, closed-ended questions which were analyzed quantitatively, as well as open-ended questions which needed to be analyzed qualitatively. The qualitative data was aggregated and reviewed for trends, topics, and items that need more explanation. Those elements that required a deeper understanding were the basis of the second phase of data collection.

According to the meta-analysis conducted by Wu et al., the survey response rate in education-related fields is 44.1% (2022, p. 9). Additionally, as discovered in Shih's meta-analysis, (as cited in Menon & Muraleedharan, 2020, p. 1) "college students were more responsive to web surveys." Since the intended participants are college students, the questionnaire was delivered online. In order to get a significant number of responses, the questionnaire was presented to approximately 100 students. Wu et al. (2022) also suggest that lotteries for tangible incentives have been shown to increase response rates for web-based surveys. Therefore, an incentive of a gift card in a nominal amount was offered in a lottery format to try to incentivize the capture of as many complete responses as possible.

Additionally, a section of the questionnaire solicited volunteers who would be willing to be interviewed as a follow-up to the survey. It was hoped that this would produce at least three to five viable respondents to conduct face-to-face interviews. Inclusion criteria were those who had completed the earlier questionnaire and indicated their willingness to meet face-to-face (either in person or on Zoom) to share their thoughts in greater detail. Since this study was exploratory, there were no currently identified exclusion criteria.

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Both of these data gathering tools-the lottery and willingness to be interviewed-were outside of the primary questionnaire as to retain anonymity for the primary questionnaire.

Based upon response rate of participants willing to be interviewed, a selection of participants was invited to take part in one-on-one interviews. These interviews were planned to further explore themes and unexpected results from the questionnaires. Interviews were designed to be conversational but guided to focus on earlier collected data to allow for the emergence of more descriptive responses and ideas. Interview questions were built based on the survey data, and intended to allow for respondents to further explain their perceptions, clarify any items that were not captured in the questionnaires, or allow for other comments.

Population

Students enrolled in courses where instructors are using asynchronous video which included elements that enhance instructor presence such as lightboards were asked to complete the questionnaire. Instructors had been trained on recording instructional video, the use of lightboards, and the importance of instructor presence. The videos had been recorded in a studio specifically designed for online media production or the creation of asynchronous video. For the purposes of this study, these videos could either function as the main delivery method in the form of mini-lectures, or as supplemental materials.

Participating students were enrolled at a Midwestern regional four-year public institution in a rural area. This university is a dynamic four-year, public, comprehensive university that has grown its reputation based on its award-winning leadership programs, cutting-edge technology initiatives, and nationally recognized academic programs. The university has a population of about 7,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

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Once the trained instructors and their courses had been identified, information was provided to explain the study, provide context for the study, as well as contact information to assist in answering any questions. Courses and students were identified by their instructor's inclusion of video that makes use of the instructor presence in the video.

Ethical concerns, details of the study including the nature and purpose, duration, risk and benefits, confidentiality, participation, and researcher's contact information as well as any other pertinent information were part of the consent statement in the online form and were available in a printable format. This information was available for downloading and printing. An electronic link to the questionnaire was provided to students through email as well as posted within the course learning management system. There were two reminders sent to prospective participants who had not already completed the questionnaire. The reminders for survey completion were sent one week and two weeks after the initial request.

Instrumentation

Most of the extant literature focuses on the instructor's perspective. Exploring the student perspective to elicit this point of view can allow for a better match of expectations and greater student satisfaction.

A questionnaire was used to explore the role of instructor presence from the perspective of the student. The questions addressed common issues experienced by instructors and students as identified in the literature study. Questions were also generated in response to the researcher's observations and anecdotal reporting.

The survey platform, Qualtrics, provides a predicted duration for a survey created with their tools. According to the Qualtrics website:

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surveys longer than 12 minutes (and 9 minutes on mobile) start to see substantial levels of respondent break-off. Sometimes long surveys are necessary, but in order to increase your survey completion rate, we'd suggest finding ways to make your survey shorter whenever possible. (2025, para. 2)

Thus, the questionnaire will be designed to fit within that window.

Based on the responses of the survey, a conversational interview was planned. Only three volunteers indicated they would participate in the interviews, and only one responded to multiple attempts to schedule interviews. A single follow-up interview based on the results of the questionnaire was conducted with a student respondent to gather a more in-depth look at the results and identify specific issues.

Data Analysis

After collecting the student perspectives, the descriptive data was aggregated. This was to ensure anonymity for each respondent and allow the researcher to analyze the dataset as a whole. Individual answers were used to identify further themes to explore or bring up unanticipated responses.

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe a phenomenon or condition. Therefore, the reliance was on descriptive statistics, as compared to inferential statistics. The intent of this study was not to generalize the entire data collected, but to describe the change in aggregate responses between the beginning and the end of one semester. The first dataset was used as a baseline to determine student perceptions before presenting the videos that include the deliberate presence of the instructor. The second dataset was presented after the use of video and asked many of the same questions to capture a change in the student's perceptions.

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To help understand student perceptions, each dataset was collected, aggregated, and analyzed using the tools within Qualtrics. Descriptive statistics such as count, percentages, averages, mean, median, mode, and frequencies were calculated and explored. The data is represented in various visualizations, such as charts and graphs, to present the data in easily digestible formats and to highlight points of interest.

Additionally, since the study made use of open-ended questions in the questionnaire, qualitative responses were analyzed. This analysis was performed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process. Their six-step data analysis process includes:

1. Familiarization of data.
2. Generation of codes.
3. Combining codes into themes.
4. Reviewing themes.
5. Determine significance of themes.
6. Reporting of findings.

Themes or significant statements within narrative results were identified and explored to explain the experiences of the participants. Initial coding was based on open coding or assigning large categories that capture key concepts or ideas. Patterns and redundancies were acknowledged. Those initial codes were refined and combined, as needed. This strategy is aligned with Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) which states "the researcher's reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the analytic process" (2019, p. 594). This process highlights the researcher's interpretations of patterns across the dataset. This iterative approach and familiarity with the collected data, moving through the six steps outlined above, allowed for the

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combination and recombination of responses to create general themes (Byrne, 2022). Based on the results of the questionnaire, interviews were attempted to be conducted that allow for a deeper exploration of the identified themes or identification of unique ideas.

The interviews were planned to be conversational, yet focused. Notes on the one interview that was conducted were kept that expand upon or explain items from the previously identified themes or open-ended answers from the questionnaire. These responses were used to expand upon the open-ended questions responses, added to their coded themes, and were used to explore, describe, and then allow for new ideas to emerge. The results of the quantitative and qualitative data were used to formulate a comprehensive description of student perceptions of instructor presence in an asynchronous online course. This description can be used to inform future instructional strategies to better match student experiences and instructor expectations.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data worked in conjunction. The questionnaire was completed first. It was presented twice so that results could be compared before the intervention of the videos. After the second questionnaire the results were compared for changes in perceptions. Additionally, the aggregate results of the questionnaire we intended to inform the direction and focus of the qualitative interviews. Before the interview was conducted the results of the questionnaires were analyzed for themes, common issues, and unique perspectives to form the questions to be discussed.

Treatment of Data

Data was collected through the online questionnaires and therefore the results are stored on external servers through the Qualtrics system. This system requires passwords and permissions to access data. These permissions will not be granted unless there is a demonstrated need for the raw data to be shared. Aggregate, unidentifiable data will be used to share results.

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The interview was recorded through handwritten notes. These notes were digitized and stored in a password protected, cloud-based repository.

Data will be stored for at least three years, barring technological, access, or other factors.

Ethical Concerns

As an international student, with the study coming out of my enrollment in the Distance Education program at Canada's Athabasca University, but the study participants attending a Michigan university, ethical concerns from both Universities were adopted. Training for each University was completed and adhered to. Standards for ethical research were addressed for Canadian institutions through Research Ethics Board (REB), as well as the United States Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Summary

In summary, the study was an exploratory, mixed method study with both quantitative and qualitative data collected. Data was collected from students in courses where the instructor uses asynchronous video and has been trained in the use of lightboards, instructor presence, and virtual eye contact. The data was collected in the form of two web-based questionnaires and a face-to-face follow-up interview. Data was aggregated and analyzed for themes. The data will be stored in password protected online management services for the time required according to REB and IRB regulation. The complete process adhered to ethical standards as defined through ethical review from Athabasca University, as well as from Northern Michigan University.

Ultimately, the goal in performing this study would be to be able to turn the results into recommendations for effective and efficient use of video in the online classroom. The data could lead to focused instructional strategies and training programs for online faculty. The connections

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between student perceptions and actual practice could be used to refine teaching to better meet the needs of students.

Research Data and Findings

Purpose of Study

This exploratory study was designed to gather data on student perceptions of instructor presence in asynchronous video. As an exploratory study, data was collected from students regarding their perceptions and satisfaction in their online course with regard to the use of asynchronous video, instructor presence, and virtual eye contact. The main factor explored is the virtual eye contact that a present instructor in asynchronous video contributes as part of the teaching and learning process. The following questions formed the basis of the study:

1. How do students perceive the instructor's presence by means of the use of video in the asynchronous environment?
2. What impact, if any, does virtual eye contact have on student perception of instructor presence?

The study used a mixed methods approach to data collection. The choice was made to use a mixed methods study to enable a more complete understanding of and build upon the results of the initial quantitative data. The use of both methods will allow for a more comprehensive analysis.

Instrumentation

The study consisted of two online questionnaires. The first was used to gather existing thoughts on video in the asynchronous environment, to introduce the idea of instructor presence, and get an initial sense of the connection students feel with their online instructor. The second questionnaire builds upon their experience in an online course where instructors have received training and make use of specific video strategies to enhance presence. These two sets of data

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were compared to identify differences in the attitudes and perceptions of the students and to measure the impact of the course video on those perceptions.

The questions were created to address the issues around instructor presence and the use of strategies to increase that feeling, as well as questions to determine how students perceive presence. After reviewing the literature, questions were written. In consultation with the dissertation committee, refinements were made. The next step was to talk to instructors who had the training for enhanced presence strategies in order to confirm the questions would provide insight to further practice. Finally, a small group of students were asked to complete the questionnaire before it was deployed to get any additional feedback.

The questionnaires primarily included multiple-choice type questions alongside open-ended questions. Most multiple-choice questions were written using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”, with internal levels of “Somewhat Agree/Disagree” and a middle option to “Neither Agree nor Disagree”. In order to avoid fatigue of response, the scale was altered for some questions to range from “A great deal”, “A lot”, “A moderate amount”, “A little” to “None at all”. Both scales were constructed to show the positive option first and to show that order consistently throughout.

The questionnaires were organized into sections to enhance readability. For the first questionnaire the sections included:

- Consent, which included all the survey information and was structured to require students select to consent before being presented any additional questions
- Background, which asked about previous online experience

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- Video, which was only presented if the student indicated video was used in previous online courses. This section asked about video in their online courses and its impact on the student, as well as how much of the video they watched
- Instructor Presence, which asked the student to provide key words around their thoughts on presence, provided the definition used for the questionnaire, and questions about their instructor's presence through the use of video.
- Closing, which asked for any other thoughts on video or presence.

The second questionnaire was similarly organized and revisited some of the same concepts to gauge if and how thoughts on presence changed. The sections for the second questionnaire included:

- Consent
- Video, which asked about the experience of video use in this particular online course
- Instructor Presence, which reminded the participant about the definition of presence and asked for any changes in perception of instructor presence
- Lightboard, which explained the specific technology used to allow for presence and elicited perceptions around that strategy
- Post Intervention, which asked for closing thoughts around video and presence and gave respondents the chance to place to share any other thoughts or comments.

At the conclusion of each questionnaire was the chance to enter into a drawing to win a gift card as an incentive and thank you for completing the questionnaire, as well as the opportunity to sign up to take part in a follow up interview.

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The questionnaires included both objective, closed-ended questions which have been analyzed quantitatively, as well as open-ended questions which were analyzed qualitatively. The qualitative data has been aggregated and reviewed for trends, topics, and items that need more explanation. Those elements that required a deeper understanding were the basis of the second phase of data collection.

This more in-depth exploration was planned to be conducted by use of a follow-up interview. Respondents were invited to volunteer for one-on-one follow-up interviews. Interviews were conversational but guided to focus on earlier collected data to allow for the emergence of more descriptive responses and ideas.

Population

Students enrolled in online courses where instructors are using asynchronous video, which include elements that enhance instructor presence such as lightboards, were asked to complete the questionnaire. Instructors had been trained on recording instructional video, the use of lightboards, and the importance of instructor presence. The videos had been recorded in a studio specifically designed for online media production or the creation of asynchronous video. For the purposes of this study, these videos can either function as the main delivery method in the form of mini-lectures, or as supplemental materials.

During the Fall 2025 semester, two instructors who taught three courses, fit these criteria. Instructor A taught two courses – an entry level math course for undergraduates, as well as a developmental math course that only met the second half of the semester. Instructor B taught a 200-level economics course. Between the three courses there were 108 students. As the questionnaires were anonymous, there was no way to determine which students, which course, or which instructor each response was from.

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Response Rates

Of the 108 students presented the first questionnaire, 37 responded. The first question posed to the students was a quite lengthy explanation of the questionnaire, the risks, benefits, and other questionnaire specific information (see Appendix A for full questionnaire). The question concluded with the option to consent or choose “No, thank you” to the consent statement. Three of the 37 respondents declined to consent. No further data was collected from them.

The questionnaire also tracked percentage completed. Nine responses were not completed. Those have been eliminated from the questionnaire analysis.

Therefore, between not consenting and not completing the questionnaire the response rate for the first questionnaire response rate moved from 37 responses to 25 consented and complete questionnaire responses.

The same procedure was used on the second questionnaire (see Appendix B for full questionnaire). The second questionnaire received fewer responses, only 28. However, everyone who responded consented. Similar to the first questionnaire, the incomplete questionnaires numbered 10. That brought the total to 18 consented and completed responses.

The last part of each questionnaire redirected the respondent to a completely separate questionnaire which allowed for respondents to volunteer for face-to-face interviews to follow up on any themes, unanswered questions, or clarification from the two questionnaires. Three respondents responded to that call for volunteers.

Results

Questionnaires

The first questionnaire consisted of 25 complete responses. The questionnaire was presented in five sections. It started with questionnaire information and consent, then asked

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questions about background information, video, instructor presence, and concluded with a section to provide a place for any additional thoughts. The final question provided the opportunity to redirect the respondents to another questionnaire to collect drawing and volunteer information.

The second questionnaire consisted of 18 complete responses. This questionnaire was presented near the end of the semester. Students in the same classes were asked to complete the questionnaire after they had the chance to experience the types of video that included elements of presence that their instructors had been trained to employ.

The second questionnaire was also presented in five sections. It started with questionnaire information and consent, very similar to the previous questionnaire. The next section asked questions about video, some were repeated from the first questionnaire to allow for direct comparison and others were more specific and tailored to the current experience. The third section focused on instructor presence, again repeating some questions for direct comparison and some specifically tailored questions. The next section explained one of the strategies and tools used, a lightboard, and elicited responses on its use. The final section included some concluding questions and ended with a section to redirect the respondents to another questionnaire to collect drawing and volunteer information.

Consent. The introduction and information regarding the questionnaire including the title, REB (Research Ethics Board) and IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval, invitation, purpose, participant expectations, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and contact information were presented to the students. The informed consent statement ended with a request to indicate agreement to participate with “I consent” or “No thank you”. Any responses of “No thank you” were skipped to the end of the questionnaire and the respondents did not see any further

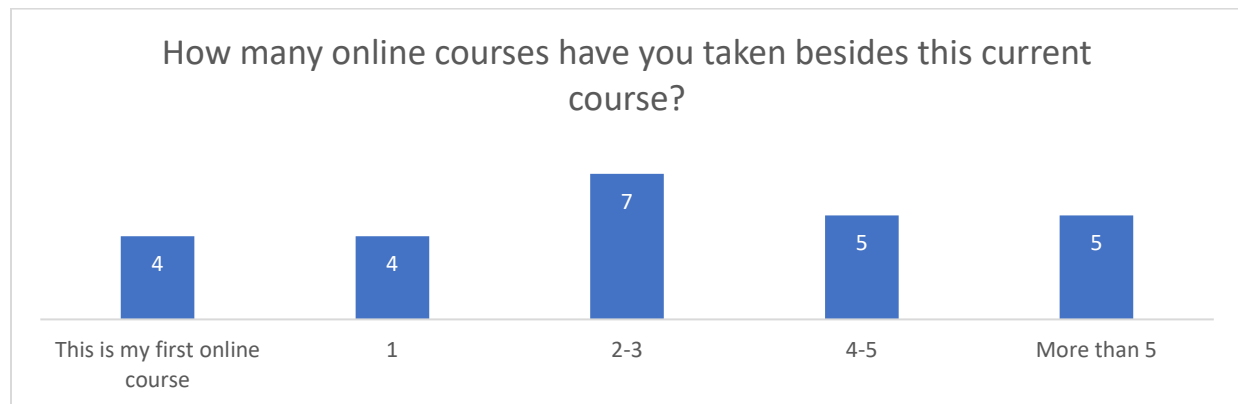
INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

questions. A response of “I consent” allowed the respondents to continue through the questionnaire.

Background. The first survey contained questions to determine respondent experience with online courses. Number of past online courses, use of video in those courses, and types of strategies experienced in those courses were solicited. In this section it was revealed that the previous experience in online courses were quite varied. Four respondents indicated this course was their first online course. Four additional respondents only had one other online course. The largest subset of the 25 full responses contained seven respondents that had 2-3 online courses before this course. Five respondents had 4-5 online courses and five respondents had more than 5 online courses (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Number of online courses taken by students



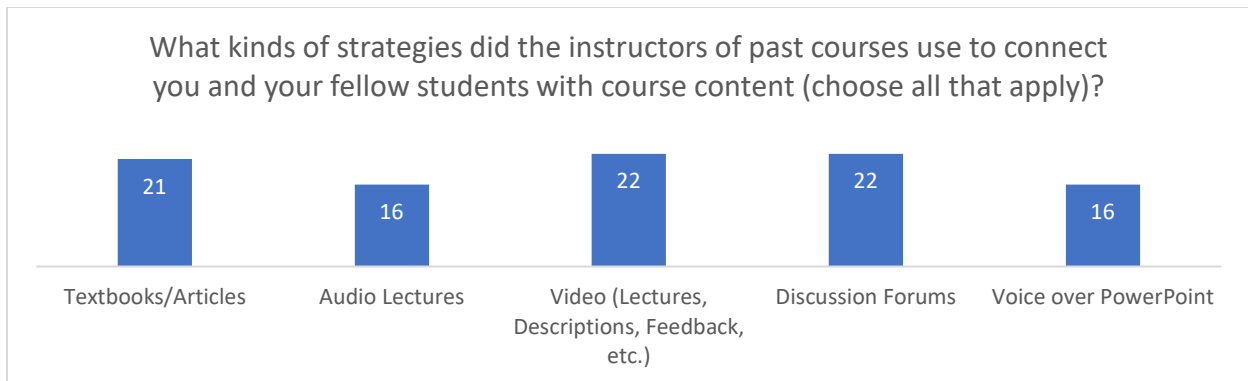
Next, a multiple answer question where respondents could choose all that apply, asked for the types of strategies that were used to connect students with course content. Respondents were presented with choices that included textbooks/articles, audio lectures, video, discussion

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forums, and voice over PowerPoint (see Figure 4). Respondents replied that each of these were used in varying degrees. Respondents were able to choose all that applied; thus, the count is larger than the 25 responses.

Figure 4

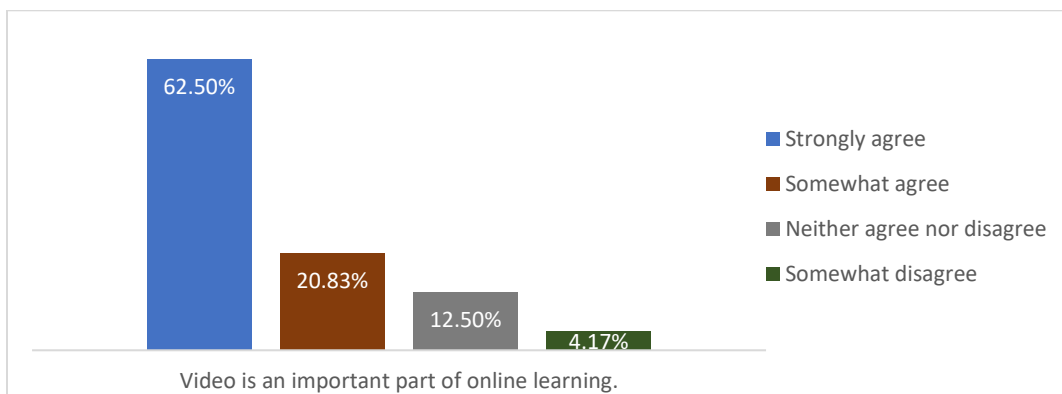
Strategies used by online instructors



Since video and specific aspects of video are the focus of this study, respondents were asked about their thoughts on the importance of video (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Student perception of value of videos in online courses



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Video. The next set of questions asked about use of video. These were used to determine the students' experience with video prior to this course, as well as use the results to streamline the questionnaire for the user. If they had no experience with video in online courses, they were not presented with subsequent questions about video. During the first survey, twenty of the respondents shared that their previous online courses made use of video that included their instructor and 22 indicated that some sort of video was used.

Based on those indicators, only respondents who indicated that their previous class made use of video were presented the set of questions about use of video. According to their answers to previous questions, these video questions were presented to 24 of the 25 respondents. Only one respondent indicated that no use of video was used at all. Respondents were asked how much they agreed with statements regarding the use of video in their previous courses.

For the second survey, many of the questions were similar to the first questionnaire, but asked for responses to refer to this course directly. These questions were posed after the student had time to interact and experience the videos in this course. The first few questions directly mirror the questions asked previously about the respondent's past experience with online courses and video and are presented together (see Table 1).

Table 1

Student perception of videos in the learning process

	The videos presented were easy to watch and understand		Instructor-created videos have impacted my learning experience		I am satisfied with the use of instructor-created video in online learning	
	Previous	Current	Previous	Current	Previous	Current
Strongly Agree	46%	72%	54%	72%	54%	67%

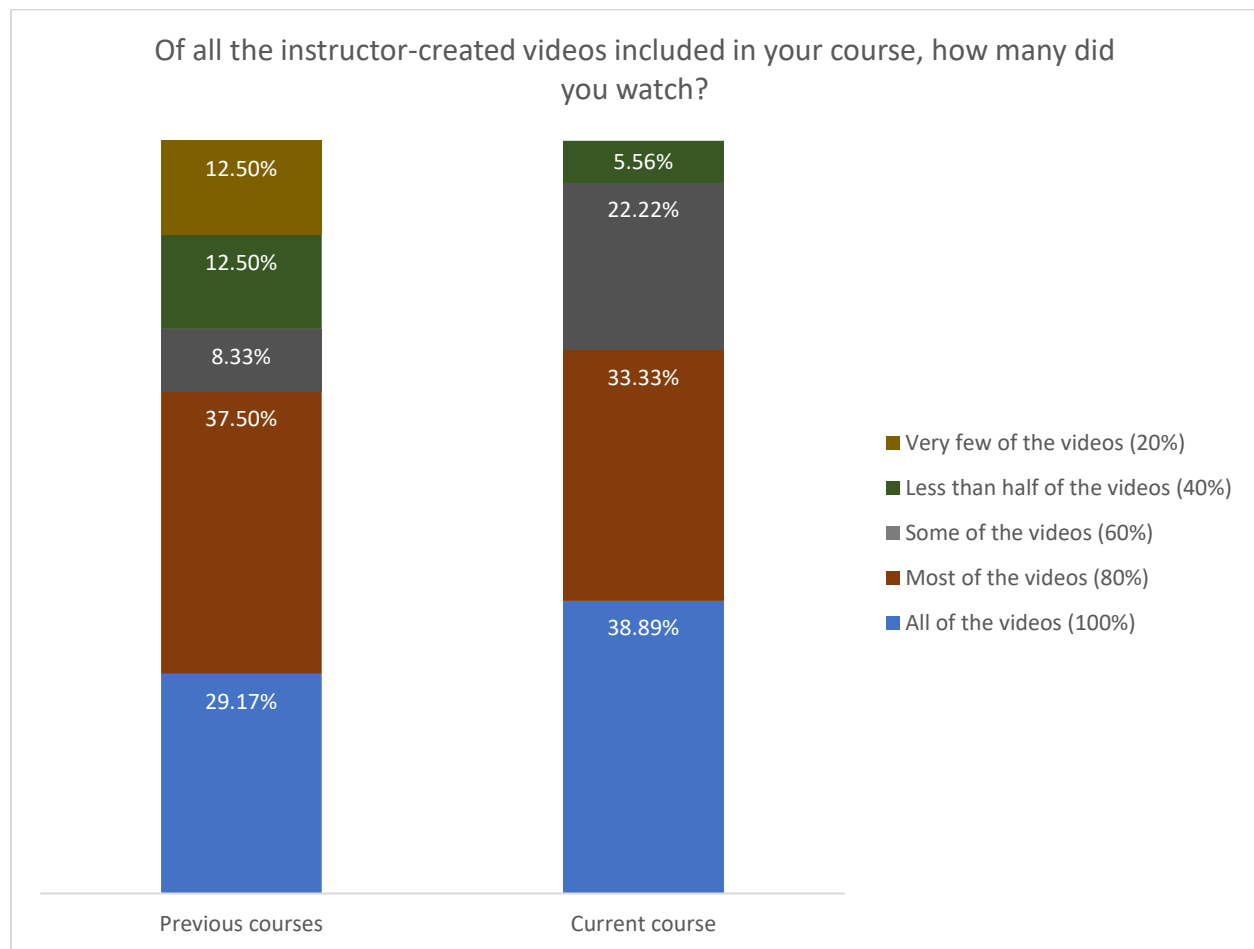
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Somewhat Agree	46%	17%	33%	22%	25%	22%
Neither Agree or Disagree	8%	11%	13%	6%	21%	11%

Since video is an integral part of this study, the question of how many of the instructor created videos watched by the respondent was posed. They were presented with choices ranged from “All of videos” to “None of videos” with corresponding percentages to aid in their estimation of viewing (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Student report on amount of video watched

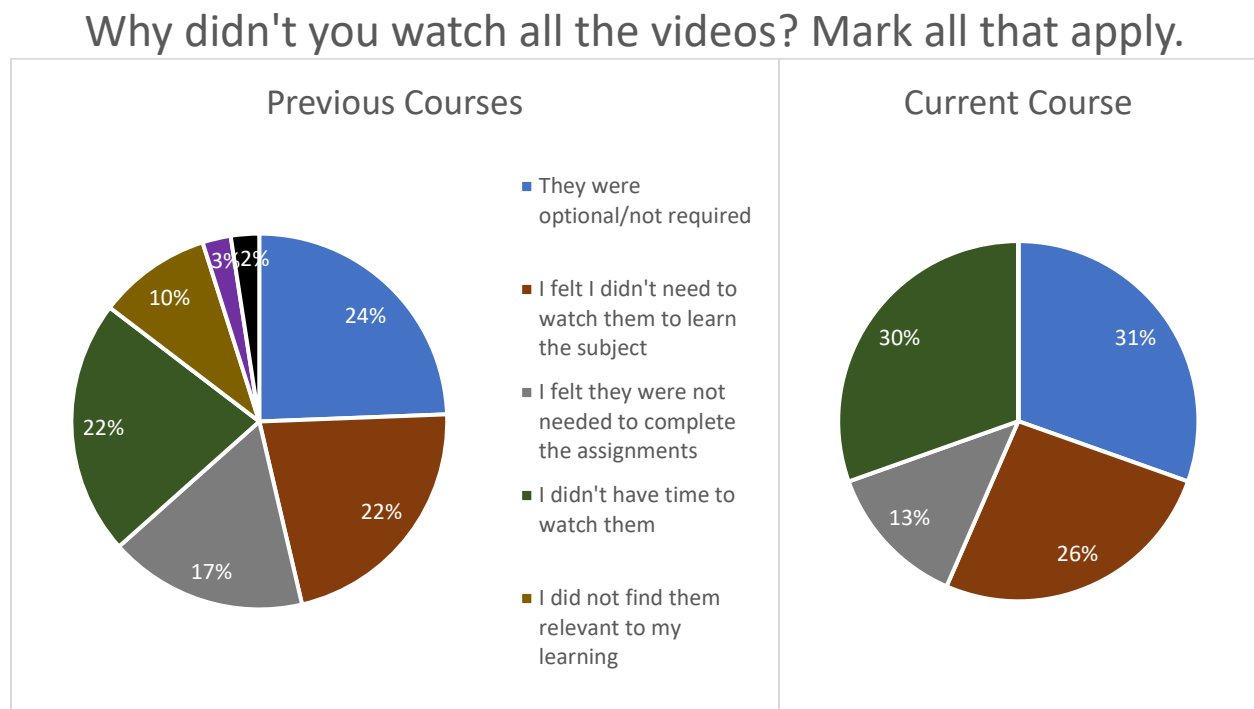


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If respondents indicated they watched less than 100% or all of the videos, they were presented with reasons to explain. They were able to choose all that applied. If none of those reasons seemed plausible to respondents, they were able to write in their own reason. Only one respondent wrote in another answer – “Balancing my other classes”, which could have been included in the choice “I didn’t have time to watch them” (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Student reasons for not watching 100% of videos

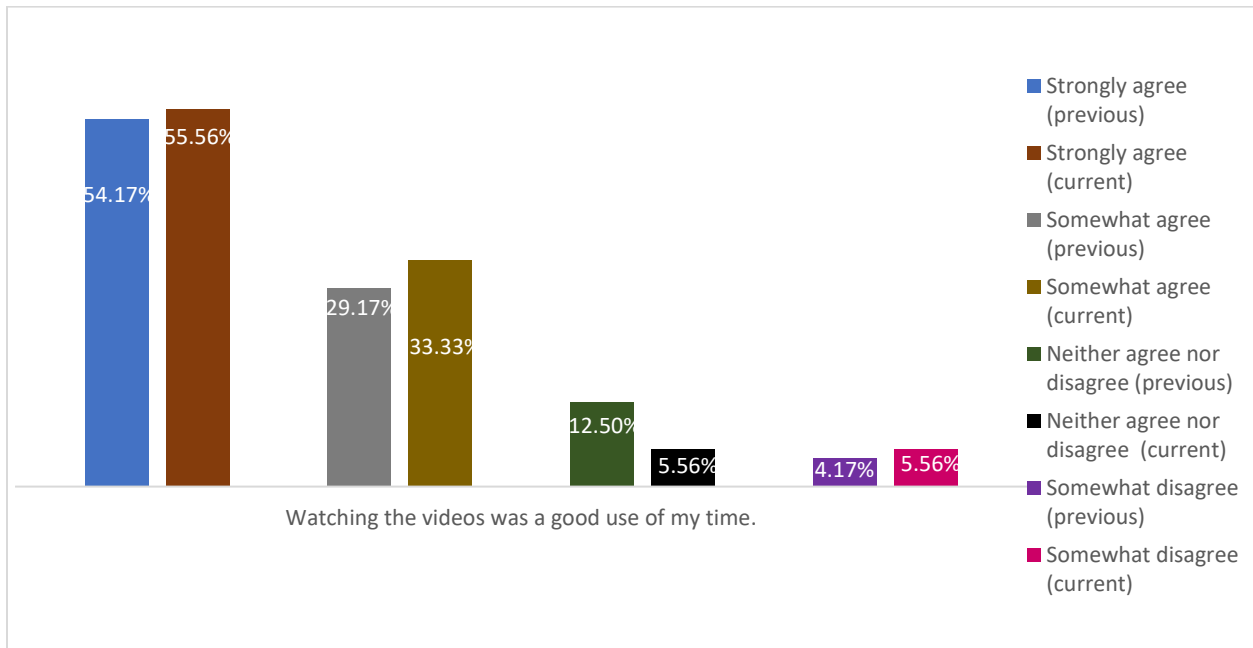


The next questions about video in online learning asked for their perceptions on the importance, the value in terms of time (see Figure 8).

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Figure 8

Student satisfaction with videos in online courses



The final two questions specifically regarding video were open-ended questions asking the aspects that were most beneficial and the aspects that were least helpful or problematic in the videos. These answers were varied, but could be generally categorized into the themes shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Those same final two questions were asked again in the second questionnaire to allow for a direct comparison from the earlier questionnaire. New elements are recorded in Table 2. For the impact of video, the answers were varied, but could be generally categorized into the themes shown in Tables 2 and 3. The only specific improvements suggested were length and pacing.

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Table 2

Aspects of instructor-created videos found to be most beneficial by theme

Benefits		
	Questionnaire 1	Questionnaire 2
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter problems • Visual learning • Ability to rewatch specific parts over and over • Explanation, step by step, walk throughs • Drawings • Review homework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the process for doing problems
Content Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tie information together • Connecting ideas versus just reading • Application of problems • More in-depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve understanding • Communication of the content basics
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning faster • Learn more completely/Clarity • Interesting/Engaging • Interactive • Option to listen instead of just read • Less reliance on email or textbook alone, seeing a human • Know how the professor teaches • Connect with professor • Supports learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The feeling of having class time with the instructor • Inflection/tone/emphasis on important concepts • Motivating • Engaging

Table 3

Aspects of instructor-created videos found to be least helpful by theme

Least Helpful or Problematic	
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus – need to order the videos with other content • Length (too long)
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No visual representation, just talking • Voice over PowerPoint, reading slides • Low quality • Repetitive

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Instructor Presence. When introducing the concept of Presence, respondents were first asked to share keywords that they would use to define “Instructor Presence.” See Table 4 for those clustered keywords. The question following the solicitation of those important concepts shares the formal definition that is used for the purposes of this study – “Instructor presence refers to the way in which your instructor establishes visibility, engagement, and influence in the learning environment. The instructor cultivates a sense that makes you feel as if your instructor is ‘there’ – that they are a real person behind the keyboard and monitor.” Then, based on that definition, respondents were asked how they feel instructor presence in their online courses. See those perceptions by theme in Table 5.

When re-introducing the concept of presence in the second questionnaire, respondents were reminded of the definition from the previous questionnaire. Based on that definition, respondents were asked how their perception of presence changed this semester (see Table 5).

Table 4

Keywords describing instructor presence

Respondent Keywords to Define Instructor Presence	
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Office hours• Timely email response• Check-ins
Traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to work with students• Understanding/Encouraging/Caring/Accommodating• Authentic• Passionate• Showing up• Welcoming• Personable/Social• Responsive• Consistent/Reliable• Motivating• Attentive

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved • Able to make connections with students • Confident • Helpful • Direct
Teaching Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active/Interactive • Informative • Engaging/Exciting • Organized • Communicate expectations • Available • Provides multiple sources for learning • Puts in effort/Intentional

Table 5

Ways in which students feel instructor presence in their online courses by theme

Other Thoughts on Video or Presence		
	Questionnaire 1	Questionnaire 2
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office hours • Response time • Responsive in Discussion Forums • Consistent communication (email/announcements) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wanted someone there, so it wasn't like teaching self • Video strengthened presence
Traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged • Passionate • Provides clear explanations • Communicative • Flexible/Accommodating/Supportive • Fun • Helpful • Easy to reach out to/Available • Makes an effort to connect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to 'in person' experience • More comfortable/felt at home • Available • Involved • Communicative • Connected • Good eye contact

Working from that definition and the students' perception of presence, the next few questions were asked to determine how much they felt that presence and a connection to their

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instructor (see Table 6). Respondents were only asked about their connection and presence of the instructor if they strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they had a connection.

Table 6

Student perception of connection to instructor

	I feel connected to my instructor		Based on that connection, I feel like the presence of my instructor has helped me learn the content		Online video that contains my instructor visually makes me feel more invested in the course	
	Previous	Current	Previous	Current	Previous	Current
Strongly Agree	20%	61%	69%	71%	54%	78%
Somewhat Agree	44%	33%	19%	24%	25%	22%
Neither Agree or Disagree	28%	6%	13%	6%	17%	0%
Somewhat Disagree	8%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%

Based on that connection, a general question about the overall feeling of their instructor as a real person was posed. Additionally, respondents were asked if they preferred videos that feature the instructor as a person, not just a voice (see Table 7). Seeing their actual instructor in the video is a way in which respondents connect their instructor with presence. If they can see their instructor, it can reinforce the perception that the instruction is a real person.

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Table 7

Student perception of instructor visually

	I prefer videos that feature my instructor as a person, not just a voice		I feel as if my instructor is a real person	
	Previous	Current	Previous	Current
Strongly Agree	50%	83%	76%	83%
Somewhat Agree	25%	6%	16%	6%
Neither Agree or Disagree	25%	11%	8%	11%

As a real person shown in video, the respondents were then asked how much they noticed body language features such as smile, facial expressions, or gestures as well as eye gaze or eye contact. Since the visual elements of the instructor in the video were major factors in establishing presence, questions about how much respondents noticed eye gaze or eye contact, as well as smile, facial expression and gestures were presented (see Table 8).

Table 8

Student perception of presence with regard to instructor smile, facial expression or gestures and eye gaze or eye contact

	How much do you notice your instructor's smile, facial expressions, or gestures in the video		How much do you notice your instructor's eye gaze or eye contact in the videos	
	Previous	Current	Previous	Current
A great deal	38%	72%	33%	61%
A lot	13%	22%	13%	28%
A moderate amount	46%	6%	42%	0%
A little	4%	0%	13%	11%

Online presentations and discussion forums are often used in online courses.

Respondents often say they become formulaic and not at all like a true classroom experience

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with lecture or discussions. One main factor missing is the human element, or the presence.

Respondents were asked to identify if they experienced that feeling of presence. The next questions are about the elements of presence that respondents may experience in the videos.

Those elements include factors like place and time, as well as eye contact, facial expression and body language that influence the feeling of presence (see Table 9).

Table 9

Student perception of presence in terms of video elements such as time, place, eye contact, and forward-facing video

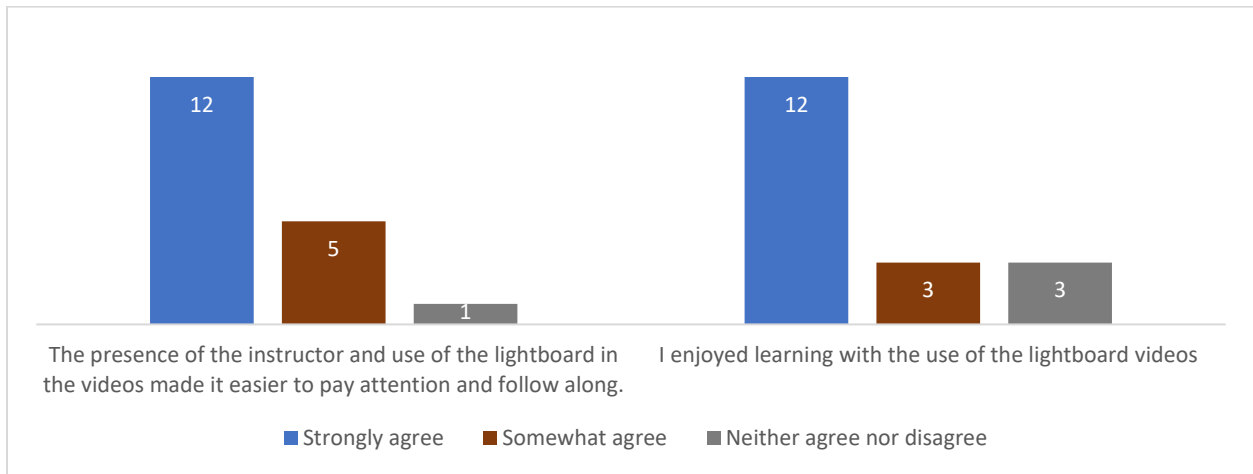
	How much do you feel the instructor's eye contact, facial expressions, and forward-facing presentations in the video have contributed to the feeling that they are more present		Even though you are not in the same place or meeting at the same time, how present do you feel your instructor is through the use of video	
	Previous	Current	Previous	Current
A great deal	33%	72%	38%	61%
A lot	25%	17%	29%	17%
A moderate amount	29%	11%	29%	17%
A little	13%	0%	4%	6%

Lightboard. This set of questions, which were only presented in the second questionnaire, dealt with the use of the lightboard. Instructors were trained on the use of the lightboard as a strategy for creating presence in the classroom. Respondents were asked how the use of lightboard made them feel with regard to attention and enjoyment of seeing videos that included instructors using a lightboard (see Figure 9).

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Figure 9

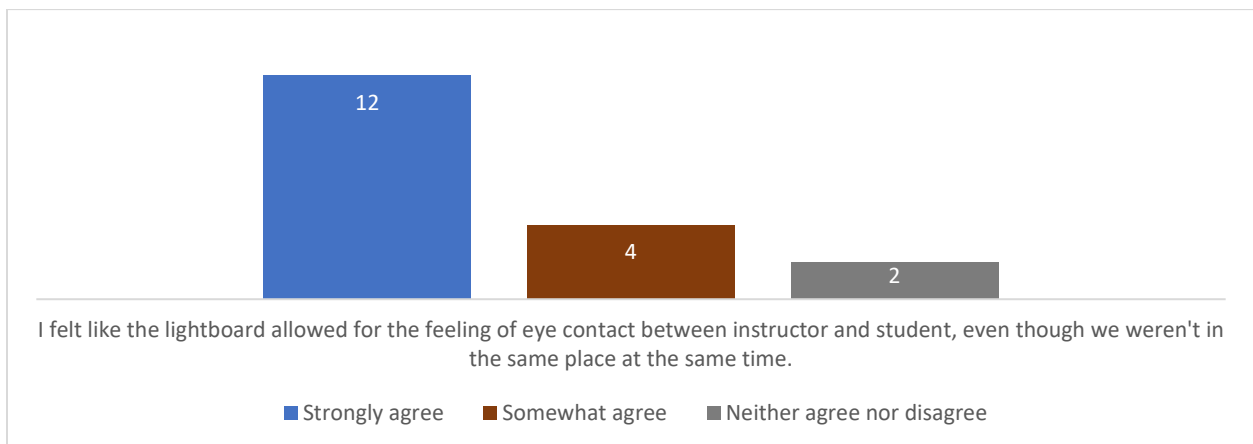
Student perception of lightboard use



Part of the training that instructors received upon using lightboard videos was the idea of virtual eye contact. Virtual eye contact is simulated where it appears that the instructor is making eye contact with their students through the glass. Thus, improving the sense of presence. Respondents were asked about that perception (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Student perception of lightboard and eye contact

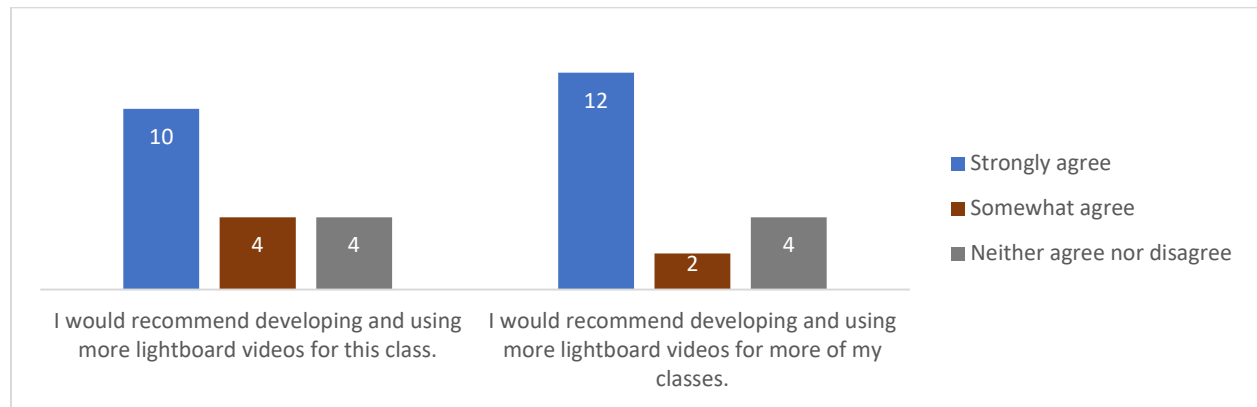


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Since the use of lightboard video is fairly novel in this setting, respondents were asked about continuing its use (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Student thoughts on continued use of lightboards



When respondents were asked about the video production quality, the comments centered about statements of higher quality makes it easier to attend to the video. Comments about the style of the video and the use of the lightboard made mention of improved connection, focus, and the presence of the instructor making the video more engaging.

Final Section. This final section of each questionnaire asked for any other thoughts on video or presence. The results of this open-ended question are highlighted below (see Table 10).

The questionnaire ended with a link to redirect respondents to the drawing and volunteer collection (see Appendix C). This is purposefully separate from the questionnaire to maintain anonymity.

Table 10

Additional thoughts on video or presence

Other Thoughts on Video or Presence	
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He seems like a great person and an amazing teacher! The video lectures are super interactive. Guiding on how to do graphs, short video clips explaining things a slightly different way, practice questions and self-checks. It really shows the effort he puts into the course for the students and I really appreciate it.” • “Having video lectures available is a huge asset to my class.” • “Dr. [A] has been one of the most engaging virtual instructors I have had, and coming from a student who was in high school over the pandemic and has never enjoyed virtual learning, her efforts have really made a difference in my learning.” • “Having that physical presence on camera or video I feel is strongly important to showing us who you are. Even seeing background and environment helps relate us to who you are and not just your voice and mannerisms.” • “Presence is an integral part of an online course and makes me feel supported as a student.”

Conclusion. The final section in the second questionnaire asked about presence and success in the course (see Figures 12 and 13). To end the questionnaire, respondents were asked to share any other thoughts. There were very few answers that were not addressed through the earlier questions or the opportunity to volunteer for the more in-depth interview. Although one respondent did mention that they “enjoyed the class and the use of the light board! It was very helpful!”

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Figure 12

Final thoughts on presence and course success

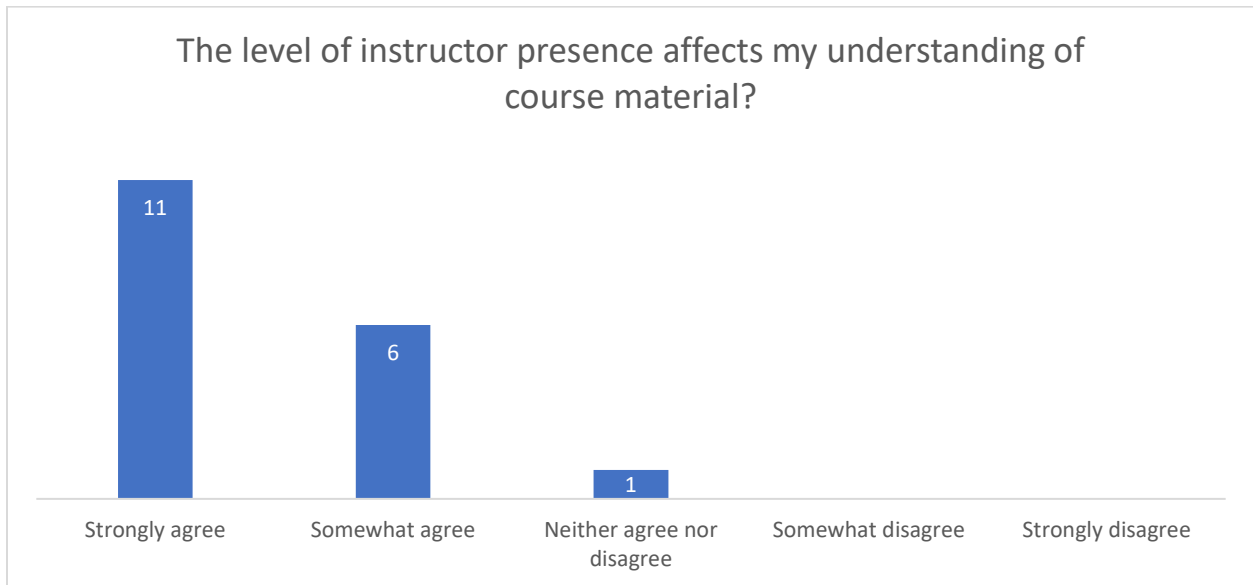
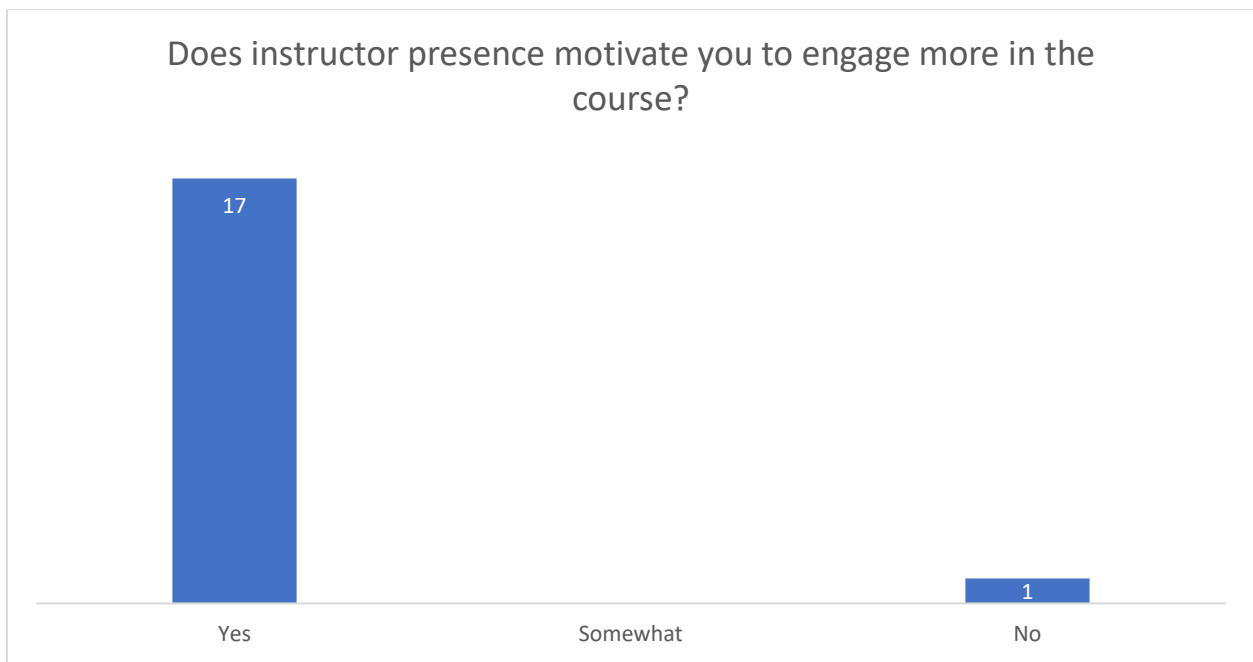


Figure 13

Final thoughts on presence and engagement



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Interviews

Students were given the opportunity to volunteer to be part of a face-to-face interview. The purpose of the interviews was to explore themes that were discovered through the questionnaires. The interviews were also a mechanism to get more in-depth perceptions and allow students to express their ideas that may not have been clear or specifically elicited through the questionnaires. At the conclusion of each of the first two questionnaires, students were able to sign up to participate in the interview. Three students indicated they would like to volunteer for interviews.

Interview questions were created based on the answers from the questionnaire questions. The open-ended questions allowed for answers that were not prescribed. These answers were analyzed and categorized into themes. Themes included the effectiveness of the videos in relation to content or learning, traits that the professor exemplified that encouraged them to watch the videos, and teaching practice that engaged students.

Interviews were intended to be conversational and open to exploration. A rough list of conversation starters was created based on the themes identified in the question analysis (see Appendix E for complete list of starter questions).

Of the three respondents who volunteered to be interviewed only one replied to the invitation to meet and share their thoughts.

Analysis and Discussion

Framework/Lens

This study was conducted using pragmatism as a framework. This study set out to be utility oriented. By discovering what is, or what students perceive what is, instructors, designers, and educators can respond to that perception to create a better learning environment.

This study is also focused on the social presence aspect of the Community of Inquiry. This is predicated on the idea that students feel a sense of “realness” and connection within their learning environment (Garrison et al., 2010).

Interpretation of Findings

After collecting, categorizing, and determining themes, an interpretation of the data is presented in the follow sections.

Quantitative Analysis

The data was collected using Qualtrics software. Therefore, many of the robust built-in tools within Qualtrics were used to analyze the data. Qualtrics tools, such as visualizations that include charts and graphs, allow for the analysis of the aggregate data collected. Other metrics such as count, min, max, standard deviation, and variance are presented. These tools were employed along with the use of Excel to display consistent charts and calculate percentages. The choice to use these tools was made to easily share the data in simple charts and graphs that represent the small sample of responses accurately. Since the respondent pool was small and the results were not generalizable, the use of the features built into Qualtrics, such as count and percentage made these tools the best choice. The perceptions of this small group were most clearly described with the use of graphs and charts the represented the limited range of responses to the open-ended questions.

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Video. Initially respondents were asked about the use of video in their previous online courses. All but one response indicated that video had been used in some capacity as part of their online courses. Because video is such an integral part of online learning (Griffiths & Graham, 2009), respondents were asked about how many of the videos they watched. In the initial questionnaire, two-thirds of the respondents indicated they watched most (80%) or all of the videos. Over 70% indicated that same watch rate in the follow-up questionnaire. In both questionnaires the major reasons for not watching the videos were that the videos were optional or not required and that they did not have time to watch them all. However, they overwhelmingly stated, with almost 90% agreeing, that watching the videos was a good use of their time.

Just having video available is not enough. As Lowenthal (2022, p. 380) reported, “students generally like video and that they think it helps establish not only their instructor’s social presence but also their perceived learning.” Students need to feel as if it is worthwhile, especially if they are asked to continue watching video over time. This is especially true with more and more online options. When asked about their satisfaction with video in online learning not a single respondent disagreed with high levels of satisfaction with the use of video; they were satisfied with the video presented. The rate of satisfaction increased from 79% when thinking back to previous courses to 88% in the current course using the strategies that promoted presence in the video. This, coupled with the 83% of respondents believing that video is an important part of online learning, indicates that this method of teaching is reaching students. Additionally, 88% of respondents reported they prefer videos that include the instructor as a person, not just a voice. Seventy-eight percent of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that seeing their instructors makes them feel more invested in the course.

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Instructor Presence. Respondents were asked about their understanding of presence and were given a chance to define and identify the important aspects of presence. They were also supplied with a formal definition of instructor presence. Based on that information, they were asked about their feeling of instructor presence, even though they were not in the same time and place. Respondents reported that felt their instructor was present “a great deal” or “a lot” at a 78% rate. The use of eye contact, facial expression, and forward-facing presentation also influenced the feeling of presence, with 89% indicating those elements contributed “a great deal” or “a lot” to instructor presence. Only one respondent somewhat disagreed with the feeling of connectedness to their instructor, all others either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they feel connected to their instructor.

Lightboard. The lightboard was the very visual strategy used to increase the feeling of instructor presence. Erdogdu and Gursel’s results showed the use of lightboard technology “increases students' interest in class, makes knowledge more permanent, and has a positive impact on class participation” (2024, p. 133). When asked about the lightboard, 83% strongly or somewhat agreed they enjoyed learning with the lightboard. Seventeen of the 18 respondents said it made it easier to pay attention and follow along. None of the respondents disagreed with the idea of increased lightboard use in this course or in other courses.

Eye Contact. One of the aspects to be measured was virtual eye contact -- the idea that the instructor is making eye contact with the student, while in reality they are not. The video is asynchronous, it is recorded and not live, so there is no true eye contact, just the appearance or perception of that eye contact. Eye contact is one feature that ties in with presence. Students felt eye contact increased with the use of lightboards and instructors who were trained in strategies that increased presence. Just noticing eye contact from their instructor more than doubled when

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those strategies were employed – from 44% to 89%. Students’ notice of smile, facial expressions, and gestures also increased from 50% to over 90%. Nearly 90% of respondents felt the lightboard increased the feeling of eye contact.

Test for Internal Validity. Due to the small sample size and inability to make generalizations or causality statements, a test for internal validity using Ordinal Alpha was conducted (Gadermann, Anne M. et al., 2012). This test was run for each category of the questionnaire in both the initial and follow-up surveys. The scale consisted of five Likert-type items rated from 1 (strongly agree or a great deal) to 5 (strongly disagree or none at all). When conducting Ordinal Alpha calculations to test for internal validity the following results emerged:

Table 11

Internal Consistency Reliability - Ordinal Alpha

Questionnaire	Items	Ordinal α
Video - Initial	6	.93 (excellent)
Video - Follow Up	5	.96 (excellent)
Instructor Presence - Initial	13	.93 (excellent)
Instructor Presence – Follow up	14	.90 (excellent)
Lightboard – Follow up	5	.93 (excellent)

Summary. Students were positive with regard to the use of video in their online courses, as reported in the initial survey. The level of satisfaction only increased when surveyed again at the end of the semester after being exposed to more engaging video. The use of video that contains the instructor and makes use of tools like lightboards that include the instructor as a person greatly increases the feeling of connectedness, presence, and satisfaction with the course. Ninety-four percent of respondents agreed that the level of instructor presence affects their

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understanding of course material. Instructor presence also motivates 94% of respondents to engage more in the course.

Qualitative Analysis

Open-Ended Questionnaire Questions. In addition to the objective questions on Likert-type scales, students were asked to provide their perceptions in their own words. These were reviewed, analyzed, and organized into themes based on the questions.

The choice to use the themes outlined were based on the use of Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis. The data was reviewed numerous times to become familiar with the data, then coded and recoded to ensure themes were consistent.

The open-ended questions were centered around two main topics, the most impactful and least beneficial aspects of video and the sense of instructor presence.

Most impactful and least beneficial aspects of video. When asked about the aspects that were most beneficial, the themes that emerged had to do with process, content connection, effectiveness, and style.

Process refers to how the video was used, both in terms of instructor intent and actual student use. Instructors used video to show the steps for solving math problems. Explanations, emphasis, and additional insight were shared when instructors were able to walk through each part of an example problem. Drawings added clarity to the mathematical processes being taught and learned. Students used video to rewatch specific parts over and over. Students were able to review concepts before tests. The use of video made the learning process more engaging for students. One respondent commented, "The video lectures are super interactive. Guiding on how to do graphs, short video clips explaining things a slightly different way, practice questions and self-checks."

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Respondents also made comments about the benefits of the video enabling them to connect to content, such as improved understanding, seeing a process, tying information together, and application of the content. Respondents reported how effective the videos were – they stated they learned faster, more in-depth, and that the presentations were interesting and engaging. The video added elements they would have not experienced if only reading or reviewing written math problems. They felt supported and connected with their instructor. The style of the video also increased the feeling of presence. They stated it felt like having class time with their instructor, they were not just teaching themselves. Based on the tone and inflection of the instructor, important concepts were emphasized.

Respondents had comments around the effectiveness of the teaching and learning with video. Responses centered around clarity of learning, quicker learning, and more supported learning. They appreciated options. They did not just read a text or reply to a discussion forum. They were not reliant on email or textbooks, they got to know how the instructor teaches and the best way to learn from them. Respondents were able to feel as if they were part of a class, they knew the instructor who was teaching them, and they saw a human. The tone and inflection of the instructor in the video made it possible to hone in on important concepts.

Conversely, there were a few aspects that were found to be problematic with video. These centered around the themes of process and style.

Process was again referring to the way in which the video was intended to be used. It was not clear to some students whether the videos were required or optional. Some respondents expressed confusion on how the video fit with the other content in the course – were the videos in place of readings, were they supplemental, were they to be watched before other content or

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just as review. Additionally, there was also mention of the length of some videos – they wanted shorter, more succinct presentations.

The elements of style students thought were problematic were in reference to video that were included in previous courses. Those included issues around presence – the inclusion of the instructor compared to just a voice over or reading slides. Low quality videos were an issue as well. Those are important issues to address moving forward in the making of video.

Instructor Presence Comments. When asked about video and instructor presence in general, the themes that were identified were around tasks, traits, and teaching practice.

Presence was perceived by students in terms of some of the tasks instructors perform such as having office hours, timely responses to email and discussions, announcements, and periodic check-ins with students. These tasks are very communication based.

Another theme that emerged were the traits that instructors who are present exemplified. Traits such as passion, authenticity, being welcoming, helpful, and able to make connections with students. Students perceived their instructors as present if they seemed engaged, supportive, helpful, connected, and responsive. A lot of these traits were communicated and perceived through the use of video in the online courses.

As part of their teaching practice, instructors were perceived to be present if they were seen as being active in the course, communicating expectations, being available, putting in effort, and being intentional with the resources provided for students.

Respondents were then asked for specifics that they personally felt their instructor's presence in the current course. They added comments around resources and traits.

Resources refers to the actions the instructor takes to make themselves known in the course. Strategies such as online office hours, where students and instructors could meet face-to-

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face in a synchronous video, such as Zoom. Response time was also indicated by students as a valuable resource. Having a policy or expectation for response time alleviates a lot of the isolating feelings that could be experienced by online students. This includes email responses, discussion board replies, and other communication. Respondents did not want to feel alone and they certainly did not want to feel as if they were teaching themselves. Having the instructor present in the video strengthened the feeling of connectedness.

Respondents were looking for the connection to instructors and felt it through video. They believed their instructor to be engaged and passionate. Some even compared it favorably to an “in person” classroom.

Interviews. When asked to talk about her course, the video and the instructor, Interviewee 1 responded by referring to the instructor by first name and indicating he used video for all his lectures. She consistently mentioned how helpful the videos were. She was very nervous to take this course since she had previous online courses, but there was no use of video. She was concerned about the math concepts which would be a large part of the class. She was very relieved when she heard Instructor B talking through the step-by-step processes and using the lightboard to demonstrate those steps.

She was taking two online classes this semester, and was she was further relieved that the video in this course allowed her to rewind, review, pause, and watch the video multiple times. This is not a feature she has in a live course. She stated the use of video supplanted her attendance in a face-to-face course. Her schedule and life situation would not have allowed her to take a traditional in-person or even a synchronous course at this point. She was able to take and succeed in the course because the use of time was under her control. The video allowed her

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to review the content before exams and there was no cap on the number of times she watched the video.

Interviewee 1 felt like she knew Instructor B as a real person. He shared aspects of his personal life, his experience, and told stories – just as she would expect a face-to-face instructor would in class. She even went so far as to say “I felt like I had known him all semester” when she met him face-to-face for office hours.

She stated she felt as if she could relate to him and understood the way he explained the content. His use of, and her ability to see his facial expressions, body language, and other non-verbal cues made it easy to pay attention. The inflection in speech really communicated his passion for the topic. She even got a sense of his humor.

This was her sixth online class and one of the first to use video. She was extremely happy to see an actual human being in the course and looked forward to class. And even though they were not in a classroom, she felt she was “in school” – there was a strong learning environment that was created with the use of video. She expressed that Instructor B was more than just someone grading her assignments. She enjoyed being able to hear and see the actual person she was learning from. It was very motivating.

She said she would take an online course from Instructor B again, without hesitation. The value of this course had nothing to do with actually being on a college campus. That bias was erased with the use of video.

Summary. Respondents indicated the use of video, especially those that include the instructor, were beneficial to their learning. The element of presence, as demonstrated in the tasks, traits, and teaching practice the instructor employed has a positive impact on student perceptions.

Conclusions

The results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses of this study complemented each other and added a rich, descriptive understanding of how video can be used in the online classroom to create a more efficient and effective environment. The combination of the quantitative and qualitative findings revealed similarities between the results, provided answers to the research questions, and yielded the conclusions described.

Students do perceive video, especially those videos that make use of intentional strategies to include instructor presence to be helpful in the learning process.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Teaching Application and Instructional Design

This exploratory study was designed to gather data on student perceptions of instructor presence in asynchronous video. Based on the student perceptions, the use of video is impactful for their learning and can be used to improve teaching practice. The instructors in this study were trained on strategies for enhancing their presence in the course. They also had access to a recording studio and support from the Center for Teaching and Learning. This support not only included the technology and hardware, but also sound instructional design, scaffolding, and other resources. Confirming student perceptions and engagement strategies within online courses and sharing those perceptions can only strengthen teaching practice. Future faculty development and teacher training can be tailored to match student expectations with instructor abilities. Using the idea of social presence describe by Garrison (2007) could enhance training to not only include the technological aspects of making video, but also the social aspects of teaching.

While the courses in this study were asynchronous and used video as a delivery mechanism for introductions (for both instructor and student, as well as module or content introduction), lecture, and feedback, the strategies and skills can be applied to any teaching environment. Good design is good design and good teaching is good teaching, regardless of modality. Video can be used to connect to students, to connect content, and to allow students to connect to each other, as described by Moore (1989). Students are exposed to video in many ways and are expecting higher and higher quality. Using the feedback supplied can improve the quality and use of video to meet student expectations.

Future Research

The world a current student learns within is different that it was five years ago, 10 years ago, and especially the world in which their instructors learned in. A better understanding of those environments could include issues around evolving technology, the landscape of distance education, and changes in student needs. Further examination of the use of video in the asynchronous classroom could address issues such as these.

One aspect to be further examined are the expectations and the perceptions of students specifically with regard to presence. The gap in the perception of presence from both the instructor and student perspective should be studied. To take that further, does the modality of the engagement impact perceptions? Are messages more credible or helpful if they include the instructor, the voice, the image, a video, or a specific type of video? Other factors that could compound that issue are the modality of the course, do different modalities impact student expectations, and therefore their perceptions? Does attending an online course or face-to-face course change the expectations with regard to the videos? Within the Community of Inquiry model, as Emotional Presence becomes more developed, it can be a lens to view student perceptions and use of video (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012).

Other areas that need more research center around instructor preparedness. How are instructors taught to be present? Does the experience of the instructor change the presence dynamic?

Presence issues lead to questions of best ways to invest time. Time issues should be studied. How much time is spent on creating video to simulate presence? How much time do students spend using and interacting with the video? How much time and training do instructors need to prepare those videos? How much editing is expected? How polished should a video be?

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How conversational and off the cuff should a video be? Do different styles of video match with different purposes? For example, should mini-lectures be polished, but do students prefer casual video for feedback?

Technological issues also arise and are constantly changing. If video contains the instructor, a focused study on gaze, virtual eye contact, and body language to connect that to presence and engagement could be conducted. Other technological advances should also be explored as they evolve. The use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) issues such as avatars, responsive video, and other visual issues will need to be studied as they arise. Where is the balance between knowledge and information? AI can supply a lot of information, but the stories and experiences that instructors have can often make the learning meaningful.

Exploring the use of various types of video also needs more research. Based on the intended use of video what student needs are being met? For example, do students need a focus on instructor presence with more introductory and conversational video. Are mini-lectures doing the job they are purported? Do individualized feedback style videos engage and connect students?

Limitations and Significance of Findings

This study was conducted with a small group of online students. There was not a lot of homogeneity in their backgrounds or their expectations for an online course. For some students this was their first online course and had no idea what to expect or had any basis of comparison. For other students this was their fourth, fifth, or even more online course. Additionally, because of the variety of strategies, skill, and training each of their online instructors possess, there are too many factors to claim this study could be generalizable. While there are lessons that can be learned and teaching practices that can be improved upon, there is no single magic strategy with

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regard to the use of video in online teaching. The teaching and learning process is not a formula, it is more of an art. Using video is more than transmitting information. With the use of the right training, knowing expectations, and adequate support, it can be used to meet student needs and expectations.

Revisiting the Research Questions

Based upon the asynchronous online learning environment and the need for instructor presence, the following questions formed the basis of this study:

1. How do students perceive the instructor's presence by means of the use of video in the asynchronous environment?
2. What impact, if any, does virtual eye contact have on student perception of instructor presence?

After analyzing the perceptions from the students, the idea is supported that students do find the use of video in the asynchronous teaching and learning environment as a way to connect to their instructor and feel their presence. Video allows students to see their instructor as a real person, a person who is compassionate, passionate, and engaging. Students report the use of video is preferable to voice only and to no use of multimedia. When asked about presence, one respondent even went as far to say "I believe it is essential in order to learn form[sic] what is being taught in an online course, online makes it harder to connect with a professor."

With regard to virtual eye contact, one respondent said, "I think my instructor was very present. He even had good eye contact with his camera." Engagement, connection, and focus were increased with the use of the lightboard and the instructor using strategies to appear to be making eye contact with their students. The presence the instructor simulated made students feel

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as if the instructor was there with them, more personalized, and more like the traditional classroom setting they were accustomed to.

Using video effectively to mediate geographic, physical, and temporal distances can bring learning to larger audiences without losing the personal touch. This study indicated that students perceive presence despite those conditions. As one respondent commented, “presence is an integral part of an online course and makes me feel supported as a student.”

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Appendix A: Pretest Questionnaire

Pretest Questionnaire (as created in Qualtrics)

Virtual Eye Contact - Pre

Project Title: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE WITH VIRTUAL EYE CONTACT IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Northern Michigan University and Athabasca University

IRB APPROVAL NUMBER HS-25-229

You are invited to participate in a research study about pre-recorded videos in online courses.

I am conducting this study as a requirement to complete my doctorate in Distance Education. As a participant, you are asked to participate in this study by completing a short online questionnaire about your perceptions regarding online video use and your instructor at the beginning of the semester and another near the end of the semester.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine student perceptions about the presence of their asynchronous online instructor. Beyond the actual practice of online asynchronous teaching, this study explores the use and style of video in the asynchronous online learning environment. By recognizing and acknowledging that students are viewing their instructors through different educational lenses, the practice of being present in asynchronous videos can improve the learning process.

What will I do in this study?: For this study, you will be asked to complete two questionnaires regarding your perceptions of online courses that make use of video, specifically video with the instructor present. You will also have the opportunity to volunteer for a follow up one on one interview if you are interested

How long will it take to participate in the study?: The questionnaire is estimated to take less than 15 minutes each time. The voluntary follow up interview will be approximately 30 minutes.

Risk, Benefits, Incentive, and Compensation: There are no costs associated with participating in the study. The risks are minimal. The potential benefits of the study include informing the practice of online learning to allow students to perceive their instructor's presence and feel better connected to the learning process.

Confidentiality: Your part in this study is anonymous. That means that your answers to all questions are private. No one else can know if you participated in this study and no one else can find out what your answers were. Involvement in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions or to share information that you are not comfortable with. You will not be asked to provide any personal or identifiable information or data. Reports will be based on group data and will not identify you or any individual as being in this project. Your participation and individual results will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Data will be kept for 5 years and used in aggregate form. Interview notes will be de-identified by making use of an assigned code number. The researcher(s) acknowledge that the host of the online survey (i.e. Qualtrics) may automatically collect participant data without their knowledge (i.e., IP addresses.) Although this information may be provided or made accessible to the researcher(s), it will not be used or saved without participant's consent on the researcher(s) system. Further, because this project employs e-based collection techniques, data may be subject to access by third parties as a result of various security legislation now in place in many countries and thus the confidentiality and privacy of data cannot be guaranteed during web-based transmission.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence or penalty. You have the right to omit any questions or decline any procedures. Once you submit your completed survey, however, data cannot be withdrawn as the survey is completely anonymous.

Results: Results of this study may be presented at conference and made available in aggregate format to interested participants. As an AU graduate program student, the principal research and the research is a final research project, thus existence of the research will be listed in an abstract posted online at the Athabasca University Library's Digital Thesis and Project Room

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and the final research paper will be publicly available.

If you have any further questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project you may contact Dr. Lisa Schade Eckert of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee of Northern Michigan University (906-227-2300) leckert@nmu.edu. Any questions you have regarding the nature of this research project will be answered by the principal researcher who can be contacted as follows: Stacey Marie (906-227-1860) smarie@nmu.edu. This study has been reviewed by the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board. Should you have any comments or concerns about your treatment as a participant, the research, or ethical review processes, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at 780.213.2033 or by e-mail to rebsec@athabascau.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project.

I have read the above "Informed Consent Statement." The nature, risks, demands, and benefits of the project have been explained to me. I understand that I may ask questions and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without incurring ill will or negative consequences. Clicking on 'I Consent' below indicates your agreement to participate.

- I consent
- No thank you

Background

How many online courses have you taken besides this current course?

This is my first online course

1

2-3

4-5

More than 5

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What kinds of strategies did the instructors use to connect you and your fellow students with course content (choose all that apply)?

Textbooks/Articles
Discussion Forums
Audio Lectures
Voice over PowerPoint
Video Lectures

Did the instructors of your previous courses make use videos that included themselves presenting content or otherwise engaging with students within the course?

Yes
No

Video Questions

This set of questions will ask you about video in your previous courses. Please indicate how much you agree with each statement.

The videos presented in previous courses were easy to watch and understand.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

The videos helped me visualize the concepts being taught.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

Instructor created videos have impacted my learning experience in the course?

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

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Of all the instructor created videos included in your courses, how many did you watch?

- All of the videos (100%)
- Most of the videos (80%)
- Some of the videos (60%)
- Less than half of the videos (40%)
- Very few of the videos (20%)
- None of the videos (0%)

Why didn't you watch all the videos? Mark all that apply.

- They were optional/not required
- I felt I didn't need to watch them to learn the subject
- I felt they were not needed to complete the assignments
- I didn't have time to watch them
- I did not find them relevant to my learning
- I don't know
- Other

Video is an important part of online learning.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Watching the videos was a good use of my time.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I am satisfied with the use of video in online learning.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

What aspects of instructor-created videos do you find most beneficial to your learning?

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

What aspects of instructor-created videos have you found least helpful or problematic in past online courses?

Instructor Presence Questions

This section of the survey is to gather your thoughts on instructor presence.

Before formally defining it, what are some key words you would use to define "Instructor Presence"?

For the purposes of this study we will use the following definition:

Instructor presence refers to the way in which your instructor establishes visibility, engagement, and influence in the learning environment. The instructor cultivates a sense that makes you feel as if your instructor is 'there' – that they are a real person behind the keyboard and monitor. Based on that definition and the thoughts you already shared about instructor presence --how do you feel instructor presence in your online courses?

Instructor Presence Video

Within the course videos, the instructor clearly communicated important course goals.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

The instructor clearly communicated important course topics.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

The instructor was helpful in guiding the class towards understanding course topics in a way that helped me clarify my thinking.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

I feel as if my instructor is a real person.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

How much do you notice your instructor's eye gaze or eye contact in the videos?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

How much do you notice your instructor's smile, facial expressions, or gestures in the videos?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

I have a connection to my instructor.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Based on that connection to my instructor, I feel like the presence of the instructor has helped me learn the content

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

I felt like the instructor was working with me to help me understand the material.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Online video that contains my instructor visually makes me feel more invested in the course.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I prefer videos that feature my instructor as a person, not just voice.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Even though you are not in the same place or meeting at the same time, how present do you feel your instructor is through the use of video?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

How much do you feel the instructor's eye contact, facial expression, and forward-facing presentations in the video have contributed to the feeling that they are more present?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

The instructor demonstrated emotion in online presentations and/or discussions.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please share any other thoughts on video or presence.

Drawing

Thank you for completing the survey. If you would like to be entered into the drawing for a \$10 gift card, please follow the link and enter your email address.

Powered by Qualtrics

Appendix B: Posttest Questionnaire

Posttest Questionnaire (as created in Qualtrics)

Virtual Eye Contact - Post

Project Title: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE WITH VIRTUAL EYE CONTACT IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Northern Michigan University and Athabasca University

IRB APPROVAL NUMBER HS-25-229

You are invited to participate in a research study about pre-recorded videos in online courses.

I am conducting this study as a requirement to complete my doctorate in Distance Education. As a participant, you are asked to participate in this study by completing a short online questionnaire about your perceptions regarding online video use and your instructor at the beginning of the semester and another near the end of the semester.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine student perceptions about the presence of their asynchronous online instructor. Beyond the actual practice of online asynchronous teaching, this study explores the use and style of video in the asynchronous online learning environment. By recognizing and acknowledging that students are viewing their instructors through different educational lenses, the practice of being present in asynchronous videos can improve the learning process.

What will I do in this study?: For this study, you will be asked to complete two questionnaires regarding your perceptions of online courses that make use of video, specifically video with the instructor present. You will also have the opportunity to volunteer for a follow up one on one interview if you are interested

How long will it take to participate in the study?: The questionnaire is estimated to take less than 15 minutes each time. The voluntary follow up interview will be approximately 30 minutes.

Risk, Benefits, Incentive, and Compensation: There are no costs associated with participating in the study. The risks are minimal. The potential benefits of the study include informing the practice of online learning to allow students to perceive their instructor's presence and feel better connected to the learning process.

Confidentiality: Your part in this study is anonymous. That means that your answers to all questions are private. No one else can know if you participated in this study and no one else can find out what your answers were.

Involvement in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions or to share information that you are not comfortable with. You will not be asked to provide any personal or identifiable information or data. Reports will be based on group data and will not identify you or any individual as being in this project. Your participation and individual results will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Data will be kept for 5 years and used in aggregate form. Interview notes will be de-identified by making use of an assigned code number. The researcher(s) acknowledge that the host of the online survey (i.e. Qualtrics) may automatically collect participant data without their knowledge (i.e., IP addresses.) Although this information may be provided or made accessible to the researcher(s), it will not be used or saved without participant's consent on the researcher(s) system. Further, because this project employs e-based collection techniques, data may be subject to access by third parties as a result of various security legislation now in place in many countries and thus the confidentiality and privacy of data cannot be guaranteed during web-based transmission.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence or penalty. You have the right to omit any questions or decline any procedures. Once you submit your completed survey, however, data cannot be withdrawn as the survey is completely anonymous.

Results: Results of this study may be presented at conference and made available in aggregate format to interested participants. As an AU graduate program student, the principal research and the research is a final research project, thus existence of the research will be listed in an abstract posted online at the Athabasca University Library's Digital Thesis and Project Room

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

and the final research paper will be publicly available.

If you have any further questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project you may contact Dr. Lisa Schade Eckert of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee of Northern Michigan University (906-227-2300) leckert@nmu.edu. Any questions you have regarding the nature of this research project will be answered by the principal researcher who can be contacted as follows: Stacey Marie (906-227-1860) smarie@nmu.edu. This study has been reviewed by the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board. Should you have any comments or concerns about your treatment as a participant, the research, or ethical review processes, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at 780.213.2033 or by e-mail to rebsec@athabascau.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project.

I have read the above “Informed Consent Statement.” The nature, risks, demands, and benefits of the project have been explained to me. I understand that I may ask questions and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without incurring ill will or negative consequences. Clicking on ‘I Consent’ below indicates your agreement to participate.

- I consent
- No thank you

Video Questions

You have been selected to participate and chosen to complete the earlier survey. As a follow up, we would like to see how your perceptions have changed based on the use of video in this course. This set of questions will ask you about video in your current online course. Please indicate how much you agree with each statement.

The videos presented in this course were easy to watch and understand.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

The videos helped me visualize the concepts being taught.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Instructor created videos have impacted my learning experience in this course?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Watching the videos was a good use of my time.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I am satisfied with the use of video in online learning.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Of all the instructor created videos included in your course, how many did you watch?

- All of the videos (100%)
- Most of the videos (80%)
- Some of the videos (60%)
- Less than half of the videos (40%)
- Very few of the videos (20%)
- None of the videos (0%)

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Why didn't you watch all the videos (Mark all that apply)?

- They were optional/not required
- I felt I didn't need to watch them to learn the subject
- I felt they were not needed to complete the assignments
- I didn't have time to watch them
- I did not find them relevant to my learning
- I don't know
- Other

What aspects of the instructor created videos this semester were most impactful for your learning and why?

Were there elements of the instructor created videos this semester that you feel could be improved? Please explain.

Instructor Presence Questions

This section of the survey is to gather your thoughts on instructor presence.

This section of the survey is to gather your thoughts on instructor presence. As a reminder, for the purposes of this study we will use the following definition:

Instructor presence refers to the way in which your instructor establishes visibility, engagement, and influence in the learning environment. The instructor cultivates a sense that makes you feel as if your instructor is 'there' – that they are a real person behind the keyboard and monitor.

Based on that definition and the thoughts you already shared about instructor presence --has your perception of instructor presence in your online courses changed this semester?

The instructor clearly communicated important course topics.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

The instructor was helpful in guiding the class towards understanding course topics in a way that helped me clarify my thinking.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Within the course videos, the instructor clearly communicated important course goals.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

I feel as if my instructor is a real person.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

How much do you notice your instructor's eye gaze or eye contact in the videos?

A great deal
A lot
A moderate amount
A little
None at all

How much do you notice your instructor's smile, facial expressions, or gestures in the videos?

A great deal
A lot
A moderate amount
A little
None at all

I feel connected to my instructor.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Based on that connection to my instructor, I feel like the presence of the instructor has helped me learn the content

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

I felt like the instructor was working with me to help me understand the material.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

Online video that contains my instructor visually makes me feel more invested in the course.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

I prefer videos that feature my instructor as a person, not just voice.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

Even though you are not in the same place or meeting at the same time, how present do you feel you instructor is through the use of video?

A great deal
A lot
A moderate amount
A little
None at all

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

How much do you feel the instructor's eye contact, facial expression, and forward-facing presentations in the video have contributed to the feeling that they are more present?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

The instructor demonstrated emotion in online presentations and/or discussions.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Lightboard

One of the uses of video included the use of the lightboard. This is a glass board that allows your instructor to use in place of a whiteboard in front of them. They are able to write on it while looking through the glass to connect with you. The next few questions will be about the use of video and lightboards.

The presence of the instructor and use of the lightboard in the videos made it easier to pay attention and follow along.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I enjoyed learning with the use of the lightboard videos

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

I would recommend developing and using more lightboard videos for this class.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

I would recommend developing and using more lightboard videos for more of my classes.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

How did video production quality (clarity, audio, visual quality) impact your perception of instructor presence?

Did the style of video (lightboard, as compared to voice over PowerPoint for example) impact your perception of instructor presence? Please explain.

Compared to typical instructional videos you've experienced previously, how did the use of the lightboard influence your attention and understanding of course content?"

Post Intervention

The level of instructor presence affects my understanding of course material?

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

Does instructor presence motivate you to engage more in the course?

Yes
Somewhat
No

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Please share any other thoughts.

Drawing

Thank you for completing the survey. If you would like to be [entered into the drawing](#) for a \$10 gift card, please follow the link and enter your email address.

Powered by Qualtrics

Appendix C: Post Survey Questionnaire

Post Survey Questionnaire (as created in Qualtrics) to collect email for drawing and follow up interviews.

This survey leaves the primary survey to maintain anonymity.

Thank you for completing the survey. If you would like to be entered into the drawing for a \$10 gift card, please enter your email address below.

If you would be willing to share your thoughts in a one on one interview, please enter your email address below to be contacted.

Appendix D: Photographic Release Form for Dissertation Use

Photographic Release Form for Dissertation Use

Title of Dissertation: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE WITH VIRTUAL EYE CONTACT IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Author: Stacey Marie
Institution: Athabasca University

I hereby grant permission to Stacey Marie, a student at Athabasca University, to use photographs in which I am identifiable for inclusion in their dissertation titled "Student Perceptions of Instructor Presence with Virtual Eye Contact in Asynchronous Video."

I understand that:

- The photograph(s) may be reproduced in print and electronic formats as part of the dissertation.
- The dissertation may be submitted to Athabasca University's Repository or Publisher and may be accessible to the public.
- My image will not be used for commercial purposes.
- I will not receive financial compensation for the use of my image.

I understand and agree to the use of my image as described above.

Name (Printed): Amy Barnsley

Signature: Amy Barnsley

Digitally signed by Amy Barnsley
Date: 2025.05.27 09:23:53 -04'00'

Date: 5/27/25

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Photographic Release Form for Dissertation Use

Title of Dissertation: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE WITH VIRTUAL EYE CONTACT IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Author: Stacey Marie

Institution: Athabasca University

I hereby grant permission to Stacey Marie, a student at Athabasca University, to use photographs in which I am identifiable for inclusion in their dissertation titled "Student Perceptions of Instructor Presence with Virtual Eye Contact in Asynchronous Video."

I understand that:

- The photograph(s) may be reproduced in print and electronic formats as part of the dissertation.
- The dissertation may be submitted to Athabasca University's Repository or Publisher and may be accessible to the public.
- My image will not be used for commercial purposes.
- I will not receive financial compensation for the use of my image.

I understand and agree to the use of my image as described above.

Name (Printed): Daniel V. Kill

Signature:  _____

Date: 6/3/2025

Appendix E: Interview Question

- Tell me about your instructor.
- Do you know anything about your instructor as a person- school, pets, family, free time?
- Tell me about other online courses you've had.
- Do you feel like your instructor was present/was a real person teaching the course?
- How do video-based courses compare to face-to-face courses?
- Knowing your instructor's style in an online course, would you take another from them if you had to choose between multiple instructors?
- How do you connect with your face-to-face instructors? How do you connect with online instructors?
- What sets the video lectures apart from just reading or watching a YouTube example?
- Did you have any 'real time' interactions with your instructor -- tell me about it (more comfortable/prepared)?
- Did you feel like you could go to your instructor with questions?
- Did you appreciate being able to see your instructor?
- Was it important to see your instructor -- facial expressions, talking to you?
- How did the video make you feel like your instructor was present? What if they had used voice over PowerPoint, or email, or chat?
- Tell me about their presence?
- Tell me about your experience with eye contact or forward-facing video.
- Tell me about engagement in your course?
- What else? Any other comments, questions, insight?

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Appendix F: Research Ethics Approval



Certification of Ethical Approval

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (AUREB) has reviewed and approved the research project noted below. The REB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2) and Athabasca University Policy and Procedures.

ETHICS PURE ID: 15485960

Principal Investigator/Faculty: Stacey Marie, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences

Supervisor: Marti Cleveland-Innes, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences

Project Title: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE WITH VIRTUAL EYE CONTACT IN ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO

Effective Date: 10/27/2025 Expiry Date: 10/26/2026

Restrictions:

Any modification to the approved research activities must be submitted to the AUREB for approval prior to proceeding. Any adverse event or incidental findings must be reported to the AUREB as soon as possible, for review.

Ethical approval is valid *for a period of one year*. A request for renewal must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date if a project is ongoing beyond one year.

An Ethics Final Report must be submitted when the research is complete (*i.e. all participant contact and data collection is concluded, no follow-up with participants is anticipated and findings have been made available/provided to participants (if applicable)*) or the research is terminated.

Approved by:

Date: 10/27/2025

Eloy Rivas Sanchez, Chair
Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences Departmental Ethics Review Committee
Athabasca University Research Ethics Board