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Student Perceptions of Community of Inquiry in Blended Developmental Courses During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Cynthia Harrison

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Student Perceptions of Community of Inquiry in Blended Developmental Courses During
the COVID-19 Pandemic

by

Cynthia Harrison

MA, Belhaven University, 2008

BA, University of Maryland University College, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education-Educational Technology

Walden University

January 2021

Abstract

The problem that was the focus of this qualitative case study was the lack of identification of college students' perceptions how participation in community of inquiry (CoI) influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify college students' perceptions how social, cognitive, and teaching presences build a sense of community and influence self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships as they participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The conceptual framework of this study was built upon the theoretical foundations of Dewey's cognitive learning and Bandura's social learning theories as outlined in the CoI model. The main research question and sub-questions of this study inquired about college students' perceptions, while participating in CoI in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these perceptions influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews from 12 participants who had completed developmental blended courses during COVID-19 pandemic and was analyzed by hand-coding. The results of the study indicated mostly positive perceptions of participants with six themes emerging from the data. The conclusions indicated positive relationships among CoI presences and self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships, with some relationships being more significant than others. Recommendations included studies focused on a larger participant sample, which could create social change by informing future course design, improving student learning, and further addressing the research gap.

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Dedication

This page is dedicated to Dr. C1 and to all the M's in my life, especially MLJ and MDR, who encouraged me when others did not and who supported me and believed that I could achieve something beyond what I could envision. Without all of you, I would not be writing this dedication.

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For anyone that I forgot to mention, please know I appreciate you for your contributions to my journey and if your name was not mentioned, it does not lessen my gratitude for your assistance in completing this goal. Thank you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify perceptions of community college students regarding how participation in community of inquiry (CoI) influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. During COVID-19 pandemic, higher education pivoted from traditional face-to-face and blended courses to fully online learning within a matter of days. This transition was due to mandated social distancing in many geographical areas to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 (Torres, et al., 2020). With more than 40% of college students enrolled in developmental courses, there was a need to gain insight into their perceptions of these courses while participating in social distancing during this crucial timeframe (McCann, 2017). The increasing enrollment percentages had caused colleges to look past instructional methods and consider student perceptions as they participated in these developmental courses (Smith, 2016). Although many factors had been studied, very little was known about student perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, student relationships, and building a sense of community through participation in CoI (McCann, 2017). Adding in the factor of social distancing and the transition to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic created a gap in the literature.

In the current research, studies for CoI have focused on the three presences—social, cognitive, and teaching—combined with student perceptions in a variety of collaborative learning environments. The themes found throughout the research for CoI included studies focusing on motivational factors, self-efficacy, course design, autonomy,

self-regulation, causal relationships, and academic performance (Almasi et al., 2018; Cooper & Scriven, 2017; Cutsinger et al., 2018; Garrison et al., 2010; Lam, 2015; Ojat, 2016; Vaughan et al., 2013; Zhiqiang et al., 2017). The individual presences of CoI had also been studied in various content areas, but findings had not been conclusive that one presence was more influential than another (Almasi et al., 2018; Hilliard & Stewart, 2019; Kozan & Caskurlu, 2018). Self-efficacy and motivation studies in the research focused on backgrounds, ethnicity, race, academic preparedness, performance, and retention (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018; Han et al., 2017; Pasha-Zaidi et al., 2018; Sass et al., 2018). Other findings indicated instructional strategies, technology skills, student success, and persistence were key factors in student motivation and self-efficacy (Bickerstaff et al., 2017; Phuong et al., 2017; Schwehm, 2017; Yilmaz, 2016). Studies in developmental education in the college setting focused on self-esteem or self-concept and student empowerment that led to increased self-efficacy (Barhoum, 2018; Martin et al., 2017; Perin et al., 2017). Other factors addressed were the increasing number of students enrolled in developmental education courses (Boerner, 2015). The design of developmental education was also linked to the success of students and the partnering of - year colleges with 4-year institutions (Edgecombe, 2016). Students in dual enrollment courses, gateway programs, and summer classes were also studied, indicating the need for more insight into the components that promoted positive experiences in developmental education (Eberly, 2018; Fong et al., 2015; Hawley & Chiang, 2017).

Overall, many components of my study had been addressed in the research, but the combined components of my study were limited or nonexistent in the literature. CoI

combined with the identification of college students' perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic provided further insight into the research. The content area focused in *college success skills* provided a new approach that could fill a gap in the research. Identifying student perceptions within this environment provided additional insight to inform future instruction and learning outcomes in college developmental education. Adding the component of the pivot from blended courses to online *synchronous* and *asynchronous* learning during the COVID-19 pandemic addressed a gap in the literature since this issue did not exist previously.

In the first chapter, I discuss the background to the literature, problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, and conceptual framework of this study. Following these sections are the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope of delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary reviewing the points of the chapter and providing a transition to the second chapter and a more complete review of the literature.

Background

One of the trends in instructional approaches for college students is blended learning courses. This may come in the form of a face-to-face course with an online component, though the percentage of online versus traditional classroom instruction varies among courses (Dziuban et al., 2018). For the purpose of this study, blended learning was defined as synchronous online learning with an asynchronous lab component. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic declared in March 2019, courses taught

in a traditional face-to-face modality were required to shift to a fully online, partially synchronous instructional delivery model. With the popularity of blended learning, the CoI model became more prevalent in the research indicating its three presences (i.e., social, cognitive, and teaching) could play a significant role in providing insights into student perceptions. However, no current study of these presences had been conclusive that one presence is more influential over another (Almasi et al., 2018; Cooper & Scriven, 2017; Cutsinger et al., 2018; Garrison et al., 2010; Lam, 2015; Ojat, 2016; Vaughan et al., 2013). Likewise, CoI in blended learning was in current research. Although evidence of CoI within blended learning college courses of varying content areas existed, studies found further research was needed to provide clarification to identify student perceptions (Hilliard & Stewart, 2019; Ojat, 2016). Many of the CoI studies have been online and focused on *self-regulated learning* environments (Cho et al., 2017; Tirado-Morueta et al., 2016). In these studies, outcomes varied, and results were contradictory, indicating that no clear conclusion could be drawn about the significance of the presences as factors influencing students' perceptions (Cutsinger et al., 2018).

When combining CoI presences with developmental education in the college environment, there was little to be found in the literature. For the purpose of this study, *developmental education* was defined as students who were taking remedial courses, or who had low grade point averages, or who were on academic probation, or who struggle in their coursework (McCann, 2017). When I added the term *blended courses* to *developmental education* in the search terms, the lack of search results revealed a nonexistent field of study. The literature search yielded studies focusing on self-efficacy,

motivation, and other related factors when paired with CoI and developmental education in the college setting, but without the blended course component. Many students enrolled in developmental courses had a lower self-concept and studies showed that encouragement through relationships with instructors and classmates led to student empowerment and increased self-efficacy (Barhoum, 2018; Martin et al., 2017; Perin et al., 2017). Overall, successful student completion rates were also much lower than the increasing enrollment percentages (Boerner, 2015). This indicated a problem with retention in higher education, especially in community colleges. Levels of student persistence in developmental education were also indicative of student success. Davidson and Petrosko (2015) found that persistence rates for developmental math courses were directly related to work and family relationships. These factors studied in a blended learning course showed that students who had positive relationships were more likely to persist in course completion (Davidson & Petrosko, 2015). Since my study included a course content of college success skills, this provided a new research focus, to help identify student perceptions in an area that currently had limited research. The added shift in blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the college success skills content area, took it a step further and provided new contributions to the research.

Problem Statement

The problem I focused on in this qualitative case study was the lack of identification of college students' perceptions regarding how participation in CoI influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Shea et al., 2014). Current research has

focused on CoI, blended learning, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships, but this combination of components had not been studied through the lens of college developmental education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Current research indicated that underprepared students enrolled in developmental courses showed a relationship between increased self-efficacy, through social and emotional mentoring, and positive student outcomes (Melzer & Grant, 2016). There was also a link in the research between students in developmental courses who had positive self-efficacy and motivation in instances where instruction was adjusted to meet their learning needs (Phuong et al., 2017). Self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships had been proven to influence positive student perceptions in various higher education learning environments. The fact that research had shown declining completion rates for these developmental students provided justification to take a closer look at factors leading to positive student outcomes (Boerner, 2015).

My study was important because it focused on college student perceptions combined with the developmental blended courses using the CoI model in an unprecedented time period. The pivotal transition from blended learning to synchronous and asynchronous online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic created a new area of study in the research. Exploring how CoI presences built a sense of community and influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships could improve online course delivery to better meet the needs of developmental students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify community college students' perceptions of how social, cognitive, and teaching presences built a sense of community and influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships as these students participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. As previously mentioned, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships were all factors that had been studied and could affect student learning outcomes. Self-efficacy had been shown to correlate with degree aspiration in college students (Chen & Starobin, 2018). Research also revealed that self-efficacy was linked to student performance and persistence (Bickerstaff et al., 2017). Motivational factors in the literature indicated a relationship between students and instructors, college resources, and retention (Bruck & Bruck, 2018; Dudley et al., 2015). The literature also provided insight into CoI, but mostly in the online learning environment, and the studies had not been conclusive as to the influence of any one of the three presences (Cutsinger et al., 2018). College students' perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships, and how they are experienced when participating in CoI in developmental blended courses addressed a gap in the literature. The additional component of the pivot from blended learning to online synchronous and asynchronous learning during the COVID-19 pandemic represented an additional gap in the literature. Addressing these gaps provided further guidance for more positive student learning outcomes in the field of college developmental education.

Research Questions

In order to gain insight into the identity of college students' perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships while participating in CoI in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic, I developed the following research questions and sub-questions:

- RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- SQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of self-efficacy when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- SQ2: What are the perceptions of college students of motivation when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- SQ3: What are the perceptions of college students of student relationships when participating in developmental blended courses?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The conceptual framework provided the foundation and support for this qualitative case study. The CoI theory (Garrison et al., 2000) founded upon Dewey's (1938) pragmatism and constructivism theories provided the structure to guide the interview questions and data collection method. Dewey also provided a basis for cognitive and teaching presences in the CoI model. Bandura's (1971) social learning

theory supports CoI cognitive presence and social presence for the study. Both Dewey's and Bandura's theories provided the setting for exploring students' perceptions in blended learning courses. Bandura's theories relating to self-efficacy supported motivation and student relationships which were influenced by students' perceptions. CoI provided social, cognitive, and teaching presences as a guide to identify students' perceptions while participating in blended learning courses. CoI model focuses on building community through collaborative learning, usually in blended or online environments. This is directly related to self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. Exploring these factors during the COVID-19 pandemic provided a new area of research that had been otherwise nonexistent in the literature. Together, these theories provided a firm foundation for the focus of this qualitative case study and will be outlined in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The qualitative case study design was selected to collect data through participant interviews that would answer the research questions and sub-questions in this study. In qualitative studies, there have been varying perspectives about the participant sample size. Researchers should focus on the goal of sufficiently addressing the research questions through observations of the phenomenon, which helps to achieve saturation within the study. Saturation, a goal suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967), has occurred when there are no new themes or information emerging in the analyzed data. According to Yin (2014), saturation in a case study may occur with up to 30 participants. Stake (2010) explained that one or more participants may be all that is needed to provide

saturation for a case study. The participant selection for this qualitative case study was based on a specific population. I selected the participants through social media platforms via posted invitations. The purposeful sampling only included participant selection from students who had successfully completed a college skills blended learning course from January-July 2020 of the 2019-2020 academic school year. The purposeful sampling began with 10 participants and continued until saturation was achieved. When several of the initial participants did not qualify for the study, I repeated the initial process of selecting and contacting additional participants, and additional interviews were conducted until saturation was achieved. The interview guide (see Appendix A) I developed for this study included warm-up questions, interview questions, and closing questions. I analyzed the interview data by hand-coding each interview for emerging themes, then cross-coding by interview questions and triangulating the data.

Definitions

The following definitions are for terms as they were used in this study:

Asynchronous learning: Asynchronous learning refers to learning that is self-paced and may be online or in a learning lab (Garrison et al., 2003).

Blended courses: Blended courses are those that originally had a traditional face-to-face component combined with an online component but had transitioned to a synchronous online component with an asynchronous lab component (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

Cognitive learning: Cognitive learning, based on Dewey's constructivism, was defined as using thought processes in the brain for learning (Dewey, 1938).

Cognitive presence: Cognitive presence was defined as one of the three components within the CoI framework. It was based on the idea that students would construct knowledge (Garrison et al., 2000).

College success course: College success course was defined as a course for college students focusing on life and/or study skills. The course could be traditional face-to-face, online, or blended learning (Hatch-Tocaimaza et al., 2019).

Community of inquiry framework: The CoI framework was based on the works of Dewey and Bandura and included cognitive, teaching, and social presences. It was defined as a model for collaboration and constructivism in the online and blended learning environments (Garrison et al., 2000).

COVID-19 pandemic: This term refers to the spread of a form of coronavirus that disrupted global society in 2019-2020 and created the need for social distancing forcing institutions of higher learning to transition to an online learning environment (Coen, 2020).

Developmental education: Developmental education referred to courses for students who had a low-grade point average, were on probation, or who were enrolled in a remedial course (McCann, 2017).

Extrinsic motivation: Extrinsic motivation was defined as those external factors that motivated college students to succeed in their coursework (Dudley et al., 2015).

Hybrid courses: Hybrid courses were defined as being the same as blended courses. They had both synchronous and asynchronous learning and may have originally

been face-to-face with an online component before the COVID-19 pandemic transitioning (Dziuban et al., 2018).

Intrinsic motivation: Intrinsic motivation was defined as the motivation inside the student that drove him to succeed in college coursework (Dudley et al., 2015).

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy was defined as the belief of the student that he could successfully complete the required coursework (Bandura, 1971).

Self-regulated learning: Self-regulated learning was defined as learning that was controlled by the learner usually an online component or module of a college course that was not moderated ((Dziuban et al., 2018).

Social presence: Social presence was defined as one of the three presences in the CoI framework. It was based on the concept that college students had personal feelings and how these feelings were affected through participation with classmates and/or instructor in the learning environment (Garrison et al., 2000).

Synchronous learning: Synchronous learning was defined as learning in real-time in the online environment (Garrison et al., 2003).

Teaching presence: Teaching presence, one of the three components of the CoI framework, was defined as the instructor and the structure of the college students' learning experiences (Garrison et al., 2000).

Assumptions

The leading assumption of this study was that college students' perceptions while participating in CoI during the COVID-19 pandemic would influence self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses. This could lead

to more positive learning experiences. The intention of this study was to explore college students' perceptions of participation in CoI in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these perceptions influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. I assumed that participants would answer the interview questions and that their responses would be honest, based on their individual perceptions. I assumed the participants would be able to identify the influences of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships from their perceptions when participating in CoI. I assumed this study would describe which of the CoI presences (social, cognitive, and teaching) may or may not influence participants' self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in college developmental blended courses. I assumed the interviews would provide the best method for collecting data and ensuring the study's reliability and validity. A final assumption of this study was that results would provide potential insight to guide future research in college developmental education, which would produce positive student learning outcomes.

Scope

The scope of this qualitative case study was based on a specific population. I selected participants via one or more social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube). A second recruiting option, through permission from the Walden Institutional Review Board, was the Walden Participant Pool, which I used after the initial recruitment resulted in very few participants. The participants had successfully completed a college skills blended learning course between January and July 2020. In order to provide more trustworthy research, I assigned pseudonyms to

participants in the order they responded to the invitation and returned the consent form. I interviewed all participants and then reviewed the transcript to confirm any discrepancies in qualifications. The final number of participants with confirmed consent was 27, but many of those did not meet the qualification guidelines. Out of these 27 interviewees, 12 qualifying participants were selected for data analysis. This number was sufficient for saturation to occur.

Delimitations

These participants were selected through purposeful sampling and were limited to those recruited through social media platforms and the Walden Participant Pool. The purposeful sampling included those participants who met the criteria of successfully completing a college skills blended learning course during January-July 2020. No personal data was reviewed to make the selections. I took measures to address my personal biases through reflective journaling, using prewritten dialogue in the interviews (see Appendix A), and not making interpretations in the data analysis. These components were important to minimizing limitations. Refraining from using body language or making comments outside the interview conversation and emails and recording all participant encounters helped decrease limitations due to bias.

Limitations

One limitation of the research design was the fact it was a single qualitative case study. Another limitation was the willingness of the participants to complete the interview process or the time involved in finding an adequate number of participants to achieve saturation of the data. Bias was another limitation that was of concern for the

research study. In order to limit bias, I refrained from using body language or making comments outside the interview conversation and recorded all participant encounters. Finding strategies that helped to achieve trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability was important in providing valid research results.

Significance

The significance of my study was that it addressed the lack of identification of college students' perceptions of CoI and the influence of these perceptions on self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Blended learning has become a popular instructional method in developmental college courses, and identifying student perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships directly related to positive learning outcomes (Ma'arop & Embi, 2016). Using the CoI model provided insight into factors that contributed to positive student experiences by building a sense of community (Shea et al., 2014). My study focused on the identification of college students' perceptions of participation in CoI and the influence on self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. This focus had not been addressed in previous studies. The results of the study could promote social change by providing further insight into factors directly related to online course delivery to better meet the needs of developmental students specifically during a time period when students were faced with a dangerous health issue.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify college students' perceptions of how social, cognitive, and teaching presences built a sense of community and influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships as they participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data collection process involved a purposeful random sampling of a selected population of participants through social media platforms and the Walden Participant Pool. Participants had successfully completed a college skills blended learning course between January and July 2020. Semi-structured interviews were the method of data collection. The research question and sub-questions along with the problem and purpose statement were aligned with the CoI conceptual framework and Dewey's and Bandura's cognitive and social learning theories, which will be explained in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify college students' perceptions of how participation in CoI influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the recent the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education pivoted from traditional face-to-face and blended courses to fully online learning within a matter of days (Gardner, 2020). This transition was due to mandated social distancing in many geographical areas to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Torres et al., 2020). With more than 40% of college students enrolled in developmental courses, there was a need to gain insight into their perceptions of these courses while they participated in social distancing during this crucial time (McCann, 2017). The increasing enrollment percentages had caused colleges to look past instructional methods and consider the perceptions of students participating in these developmental courses (Smith, 2016). Although many factors had been studied, little was known about student perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, student relationships, and building a sense of community through participation in CoI (McCann, 2017). Adding in the factor of social distancing and the transition to online learning due to COVID-19 created a gap in the literature since this situation did not exist previously.

In the literature review, I began by examining scholarly articles published within the last 5 years focusing on CoI framework, the original three presences, and college students. After exhausting the research focusing on CoI studies and college students, I extended the focus to other relevant components: developmental education and blended

learning. Then, I narrowed the focus to CoI studies within blended learning courses and/or developmental education courses. I added search terms for *college success skills*, *study skills*, and *life skills in blended learning* and found limited results. With these results, I focused on studies including college students in developmental blending learning courses and their perceptions of *self-efficacy*, *motivation*, and *student relationships* when participating in CoI. Finally, I searched for combinations of *COVID-19*, *blended learning*, and *college students*.

Literature Search Strategy

I obtained the information for this literature review through the following databases: Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Education Source, Complementary Index, PsycINFO, Academic Search Complete, Library Information Science & Technology Abstracts, Social Sciences Citation Index, Supplemental Index, Science Citation Index, Business Source Complete, ScienceDirect, Teacher Reference Center, Communication & Mass Media Complete, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Directory of Open Access Journals, ProjectMUSE, IEEE Xplore Digital Library, MEDLINE with Full Text, SocINDEX with Full Text, International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center, Psychiatry Online, LGBT Life with Full Text, Opposing Viewpoints in Context, Emerald Insight, SAGE journals, Dissertations and Theses @ Walden, Google, and Google Scholar. The public data sources used were United States Department of Education website, ACT.org, the National Center for Education Statistics website, and the Community College Research Center website. The keywords used in the searches were as follows, with multiple

combinations of the terms used to obtain results: *college students, community college students, student perceptions, developmental college students, blended courses, developmental blended courses, blended learning, remedial college courses, community college courses, college courses, college success courses, study skills, college skills, life skills, community of inquiry theory, self-efficacy, higher education, university, post-secondary education, self-regulated learning, motivation, community of inquiry participation, underprepared students, cognitive presence, teaching presence, social presence, motivation, motivational factors, student relationships, student engagement, autonomy presence, affordance theory, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, instructional approaches, self-regulated classrooms, and COVID-19.*

The exhaustive search of the literature focused on peer-reviewed articles published from 2015 through 2020. There were also some statistical data from public websites, reviews of dissertations with similar research study focuses, and some books or other articles that focused on the theorists. Upon concluding the literature review, I determined that there were numerous research studies focusing on mathematics. English was the second-highest content area studied and reading followed in third place. These studies included the CoI theory, student perceptions, self-efficacy, and/or motivation. There were also a variety of specialized content areas studied with similar focuses. Among those were a few that focused on study skills, life skills, or college success courses, but most were for specific populations or content areas. These studies consisted of a variety of formats; online, blended learning, and traditional courses. After reviewing the literature, I determined that none of these studies included all components in my

study: college student perceptions of CoI participation, in developmental blended college success skills courses, that influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships. There were few studies on COVID-19 pandemic and none of these studies included my study components. My study included college students enrolled in study and/or life skills college courses, CoI, developmental blended learning, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships within the COVID-19 pandemic time period. Saturation of the literature was achieved by searching peer-reviewed journals, educational websites, dissertations, non-peer-reviewed academic journal articles, and books listed in the previous paragraphs.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provided the foundation and support for this qualitative case study. The CoI theory (Garrison et al., 2000) founded on Dewey's (1938) pragmatism and constructivism theories provided the structure to guide the interview questions and data collection. Dewey also provided a basis for cognitive and teaching presences in the CoI model. Bandura's (1971) social learning theory supports CoI cognitive presence and social presence for the study. Both Dewey's and Bandura's theories provided the setting for exploring students' perceptions in blended learning courses. Bandura's theories relating to self-efficacy supported motivation and student relationships which are influenced by students' perceptions. CoI provided social, cognitive, and teaching presences as a guide to identify students' perceptions while participating in blended learning courses. The CoI model focused on building community through collaborative learning, usually in blended or online environments. This is directly

related to self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. Together these theories provided a firm foundation for the focus of this qualitative case study.

Dewey's Pragmatism and Constructivism

Although Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bruner are all constructivist theorists, John Dewey is considered the founder of constructivism and a primary theorist upon which the CoI has its foundation. While other theorists supported CoI in various environments, Dewey contributed most to these studies in education. Dewey (1938) believed in pragmatic philosophy where human beings adapt to their environment and their actions were a direct result of that adaptation. Therefore, the experiences of human beings within their environments were the basis of Dewey's pragmatic and constructivist theories. According to Dewey, human experiences within an environment can change the course of action and the effects of various factors within the environment which can directly influence outcomes. Human activities within an environment can bring about a reaction that is either favorable or unfavorable creating the theory that life goes on through interaction with the environment. In Dewey's constructivism, cognitive thought processes and environmental experiences created a basis for, and influence, learning outcomes. This theory directly reflected how students' perceptions while participating in CoI influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory/Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura (1971) established a social learning theory that connected cognitive thought with behavior. Bandura suggested that people learn through imitating each other or modeling themselves after others. Social learning theory had also been

referred to in later years as social cognitive theory. Intertwined in Bandura's theory was the concept of self-efficacy and motivation as two factors affecting the learning environment. Although cognitive thought processes are still key in learning, Bandura believed that other factors play a role in the balancing act of learning and directly affect outcomes. Self-efficacy reflected the internal factors that motivated student behavior through their personal beliefs of what they could achieve. Self-efficacy was directly linked to a student's self-concept and perceived ability to accomplish a task in varying situations. Motivation was linked to both internal and external factors, but extrinsic motivation was the influence that others had on the student's behavior and ability to succeed at a certain task. This may have been influenced by family, friends, academic support staff, the instructor, classmates, and others who are part of the student's daily lives. CoI was supported by Bandura's theory through the three presences, which provided interaction and purposeful discourse. Social presence mirrored extrinsic motivation. Cognitive presence mirrored the internal behavior that influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student's ability to learn and function in the classroom. Teaching presence is a combination of factors since the instructor is an external influence, but the instruction influenced internal motivation. Bandura's theory linked the components of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships by helping to identify student's perceptions when participating in CoI in developmental blended courses.

Bandura in Current Research

As stated previously, key components of Bandura's social learning theory focused on behavior and self-efficacy with influences by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Self-

efficacy and motivation in college students provided insight into student perceptions. These perceptions helped to inform instructional approaches and learning outcomes. Current research indicated that self-efficacy and a sense of community positively affected college students in a blended learning environment (Yilmaz, 2016). Positive relationships between self-efficacy and a sense of community had also been linked in studies of minority students, online learning, and self-directed learning (Tirado-Morueta et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2015; Wu, 2017). Even more specific to my study was the current research linking perceptions of self-efficacy among diverse learners and developmental college students. These studies indicated a relationship between the perceived self-efficacy of the students and motivation through, a sense of belonging, academic self-concept, behavior, and persistence (Luke et al., 2015; MacArthur et al., 2016; MacLeod et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2017; Melzer & Grant, 2016; Pasha-Zaidi et al., 2018; Perin et al., 2017). There were many studies in the current research that combined a sense of community with self-efficacy and motivation in developmental college courses. This reflected the components of the CoI model in which my study was focused and provided justification for using Bandura's theories of self-efficacy and motivation in combination with CoI presences.

CoI Theory

CoI theory ushered Dewey into the 21st century by addressing collaboration and constructivism in the online and blended learning environments. Garrison et al. (2000) expanded the CoI theory into a model through an initial study in online learning. Garrison and Vaughan (2008) applied the CoI model through their work with blended learning in

higher education. In these studies, social, cognitive, and teaching presences were established, and the existence and influence of these presences provided the basis for the current CoI model. This model centered around critical discourse through collaboration and construction to provide meaningful learning experiences (Garrison et al., 2000). The three presences of CoI guided the studies and provided a way to explore students' perceptions, especially in online and blended collaborative learning environments. Each presence had its role, and it has yet to be determined which presence, if any, is the most influential. The overall goal of CoI was to provide further knowledge of the influences of the three presences and their roles in building a sense of community.

Social Presence

Social presence provided the personal aspect of the CoI model. It related to the participants' feelings and personal experiences and how they were affected through participation in CoI. This meant simple communication between instructor and student or among classmates. It involved discourse among all participants. Social presence referred to how the participant was influenced on an individual level. Outside influences can contribute to social presence. One example would be the transition of blended learning courses to online synchronous and asynchronous learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. These outside influences mirror extrinsic motivation. Other influences of social presence could be varying levels of self-efficacy, which reflect intrinsic motivation. This presence involves emotions and feelings and includes the comfort level of the participants within their environment and how that comfort level may influence their perceptions (Garrison et al., 2000).

Cognitive Presence

Cognitive presence represented the construction of knowledge while participating in CoI. It was based on the idea that participants constructed knowledge and created learning. In CoI, constructing meaning through communication and collaboration was the focus to build a sense of community. Cognitive thought process was the basis for constructivism, and it was an active approach to learning. Cognitive presence was identified by exploring the knowledge acquired through interaction with classmates and the instructor within the learning environment. Cognitive presence worked with social and teaching presence to form the basis for the learning outcomes (Garrison et al., 2000).

Teaching Presence

Teaching presence represented the instructor and the structure of the participants' learning experiences. It was influenced by activities, interaction, outlines, and facilitation of the learning environment. Teaching presence also represented the learning environment design and guided the direction of cognitive and social presences. This presence influenced both cognitive and social presence of the participants depending on the type of structure and interaction within the learning environment (Garrison et al., 2000).

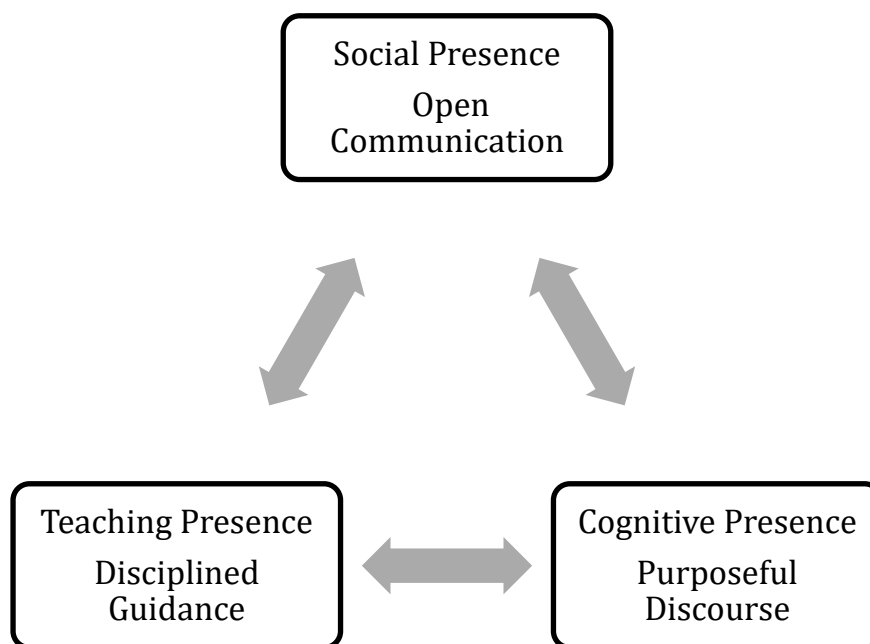
Representation of CoI Terms

In addition to social, cognitive, and teaching, three terms used by Garrison and Vaughan (2008) to describe the working model for CoI were: open, purposeful, and disciplined. These three terms were represented throughout the model but also represented more than one of the presences. Discourse must be purposeful to help the

participants explore and investigate to construct meaning. This was accomplished through communication which linked to relationships with other participants and connected the social and teaching presences. The communication between participants in CoI was open and encouraged exploration, but also required varying levels of interaction and relationship. These relationships must have guidance and that was where discipline fit into the model. Garrison and Vaughan (2008) described discipline within CoI as deep and meaningful relationships and interactions. This discipline was guided by teaching presence within the CoI framework. I created Figure 1 to show the connection between the three presences and the three terms and how they work together within the CoI model.

Figure 1

Community of Inquiry Model



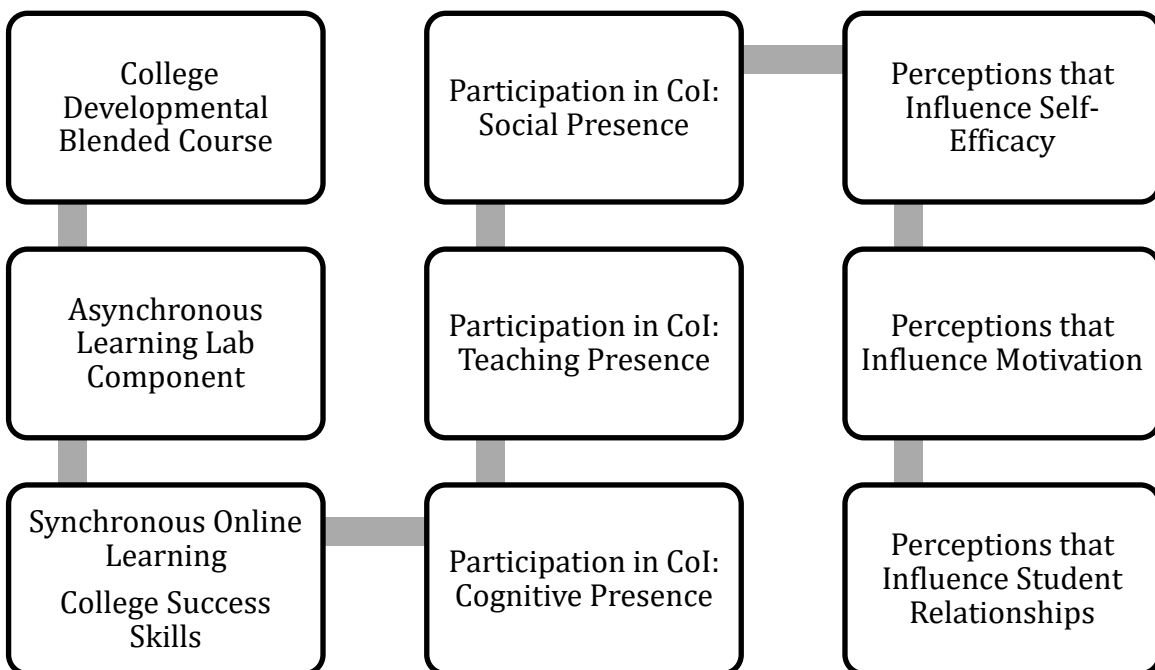
CoI in Current Research

The CoI model was still a relatively new theoretical approach to research compared to Dewey or Bandura. However, as it grew in popularity and college courses move towards more blended and online learning, there were several studies indicating the validity of this model. In the collaborative learning environment, the three presences of CoI played significant roles in providing insight into student perceptions. Current research focused on CoI presences and their influence on motivational factors, self-efficacy, course design, autonomy, self-regulation, causal relationships, and academic performance (Almasi et al., 2018; Cooper & Scriven, 2017; Cutsinger et al., 2018; Garrison et al., 2010; Lam, 2015; Ojat, 2016; Vaughan et al., 2013). The individual presences were studied with varying results and no study was conclusive that one presence was more influential than another. Research had taken many approaches through several content areas, but they have resulted in a variety of findings (Almasi et al., 2018; Hilliard & Stewart, 2019; Kozan & Caskurlu, 2018). My study was focused on a combination of student participation in CoI in a developmental blended college skills course during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the current research provided insight into one or more components of my study, all components had not been combined in the literature. Focusing on participation in CoI to identify perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in a college developmental blended course that focused on essential study and/or life skills provided research that had not been addressed previously. Figure 1 provides a flow chart of these college students, their perceptions of

self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships, and how their participation in CoI influenced them.

Figure 2

CoI and Study Focus Factors



CoI Summary

The CoI model provided the basis for this qualitative case study. While there are other frameworks and theorists that focus on collaboration, CoI was the framework that was most closely associated with the goals of this study. Through CoI participation in blended courses, college students’ perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships were explored. Participation in CoI combined with Bandura’s social learning theory provided a comprehensive foundation to help identify factors that

influenced students' perceptions while enrolled in college developmental blended courses.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

There were many studies focusing on college students, self-efficacy, motivation, student relationships, and/or building a sense of community. These studies approached the topics through various theoretical and conceptual frameworks and multiple focuses. I began the literature review with *college students* as a general search in combination with *self-efficacy, motivation, self-esteem, community, CoI, student success*, and other related terms. Once these were exhausted, I moved to studies specifically focused in CoI theory and from that point researched studies that examined online and blended courses and developmental education. From those studies, I narrowed the focus to *college students, self-efficacy, and motivation*. After I narrowed the research to college students, self-efficacy, and motivation, I continued to methodically research by including *CoI* in online and blended courses. I also searched specifically for courses in study, life, and *college success skills*. Then, I moved to *developmental education* and *self-efficacy* studies with other factors included to make sure that I had exhausted all possible aspects of the research. My final search category compiled all the factors of my study: *college students, CoI, self-efficacy, motivation, developmental education, and blended courses*. By this time, there were very few studies that included most of the factors in my study focus. None included *college success skills courses* combined with *CoI* framework, in a *blended learning* course. Since the research for colleges impacted by COVID-19 was still new, there were no studies that combined all these factors, although a few studies about

COVID-19 in higher education had been included in the research results. The following sections outline the results of the research that eventually led to the exhaustion of the literature and provided the gap in knowledge for my study.

College Students: Self-Efficacy and Motivational Factors

College students consist of individuals from multiple socioeconomic backgrounds, ages, groups, ethnicities, and special circumstances. The self-efficacy and motivation of these students may vary depending on extrinsic and intrinsic factors related to their individual circumstances and background. In reviewing the literature, the first emerging theme among studies focusing on college students was the actual meaning of the term *college student* combined with self-efficacy and motivation. There were many different categories that a person fits into when defined as a college student. These groups, ethnicities, backgrounds, and subcategories provided a broad beginning in which to start the research process. Studies focusing on the term *college student* combined with self-efficacy and motivational factors provided the themes for this section of the literature review. The following paragraphs provide research results for various types of college students relating to self-efficacy and motivational factors.

The first studies focused on black males in freshman year college and significantly associated self-efficacy with mathematics success combined with interactions with faculty, support services, and counseling support (Tirpak & Schlosser, 2015; Wood et al., 2015). Military veterans entering college provided another demographic and Smith et al. (2017) compared their transition to their civilian peers. They found that students suffering from traumatic events had more significant issues with

social adjustment overall with no discrepancy between a military veteran or civilian classification (Smith et al., 2017). Hispanic students participating in a self-efficacy study provided further results that psychosocial perspectives of socioeconomic backgrounds played a significant role in student retention and success (Sass et al., 2018; Villarreal & García, 2016). College students in the underprepared category who enter development courses indicated there is a relationship between increased self-efficacy through social and emotional mentoring support and positive student outcomes (Melzer & Grant, 2016). Self-efficacy was studied as a moderator of relationships among Chinese college students living in Taiwan with cognitive and affective identification and emotional and informational support to understand how students adjust (Liu & Hung, 2016). First-year college students in urban universities were examined for mindsets of self-efficacy and a relationship of positive student performance and retention was found (Han et al., 2017). This was also true among four colleges in India where a strong relationship between self-efficacy and self-esteem existed (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018). Online college students in the United States, Turkey, and United Arab Emirates were studied with strong relationships among self-efficacy, motivational beliefs, and task value, found with some variances per culture (Pasha-Zaidi et al., 2018). College student groups in developmental courses were studied and results indicated self-efficacy and student motivation were positive when instructional strategies were adjusted to meet their learning needs (Phuong et al., 2017). Students involved in social media and blended learning combined with academic self-efficacy and sense of community positively affected knowledge sharing behavior in the sub-categories of social, cognitive, and technology skills (Yilmaz, 2016).

Through these varied ethnicities, backgrounds, and groups deemed college students, studies provided a wide variety of results indicating a relationship between self-efficacy and motivational factors that influenced student experiences in their courses. From faculty support to student success, positive learning outcomes, overcoming personal trauma, meeting diverse needs, and motivation, research indicated the importance of self-efficacy relating to student experiences in college. This helped to lay the foundation for the CoI framework and the three presences and how they possibly influence self-efficacy and motivational factors. In the following paragraphs, I will concentrate on studies that included community college students relating to self-efficacy, and motivational factors. Since colleges focus more on developmental education in the first two years, community colleges have been divided into a separate section to discuss the research results.

Community College Students: Self-Efficacy and Motivational Factors

In the community college environment, the same groups, ethnicities, and backgrounds exist in the student population as in other higher education institutions. The difference in the defining terminology is the community college environment which is usually a two-year institutional program leading to an academic transfer to a four-year institution. A community college may also be defined as an institution providing a two-year academic, vocational, or technical degree program. The following paragraphs contain the studies outlining groups fitting the definition of community college students and research focused on self-efficacy and motivation for these populations.

Self-Efficacy

A community college study by Chen and Starobin (2018) focused on three factors measuring the relationship between self-efficacy and degree aspiration and found a correlation between the two. Another study focused on community college students transferring to a university and how their experiences impacted future university grade point averages with self-efficacy being an influencing factor (Schwehm, 2017). At this point, the research narrowed and concentrated on first-semester community college students, as studied by Bickerstaff et al. (2017), about self-efficacy, student performance, and persistence through understanding student perceptions of confidence levels. The findings of the study indicated these factors were related to overall student success and instructor roles in motivating students could be key in improving success rates (Bickerstaff et al., 2017).

Students with under-represented backgrounds were the focus of Peaslee (2018) and the importance of faculty member roles in the classroom in relating to the academic self-efficacy of students. The study findings indicated a significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and faculty relationships and brought in another subgroup of community college students: those without parental support and female students (Peaslee, 2018). Another study focusing on student persistence was conducted by Luke et al. (2015), who examined self-efficacy, career decision, career locus of control, education-employment connection, and intent to return. The findings indicated varying importance levels of self-efficacy, but all factors were related, and self-efficacy had some degree of significance and influence on each of the other factors (Luke et al., 2015).

Motivational Factors

From this point, the literature moved to the general community college population and investigated motivational factors. These student behaviors and perceptions of engagement were compared to instructor perceptions of student engagement and found the relationship between the two played an important role in student achievement. High expectations from instructors were welcomed by students, but extrinsic and intrinsic motivation sometimes challenged students to meet the expectations, and a lower level of engagement was observed (Dudley et al., 2015). The study suggested that social development combined with academic skills in first-year students would help students adjust to college life and instructor expectations (Dudley et al., 2015). Additional studies focusing on motivation included Bruck and Bruck (2018) which explored student attitudes toward community college resources, specifically on-campus tutoring centers for Chemistry, as motivation for students who utilize them. The use of these resources was related to recruitment and retention. Findings indicated there was a significant relationship between the resources and self-efficacy and further study in more content areas would be beneficial (Bruck & Bruck, 2018).

After an exhaustive review of the categories defining college and community college students, self-efficacy, and motivation, two studies indicated no significant relationship between self-efficacy and motivation. In a study of non-first generational community college men of color, Palacios and Alvarez (2016) found academic self-efficacy levels showed no significance relating to grade point average. When comparing white males and men of color, the second group of participants always underperformed in

grade point average despite their perceptions of high academic self-efficacy (Palacios & Alvarez, 2016). Another study by Wu (2017) focused on media multi-tasking self-efficacy among university students in a self-regulated learning environment and found poor learning performance. Although this was a negative impact result for self-efficacy, the study was isolated to examining multitasking as the only variable. In the final study by MacLeod et al. (2018), five technology factors were associated with a connected classroom climate in a cloud classroom. While the other four technology factors indicated significant relationships, one being advanced computer self-efficacy, basic computer self-efficacy did not show significance.

These studies represented the literature relating to college and community college students, backgrounds, and ethnicities at all levels of higher education in combination with self-efficacy and motivational factors. There was significance within these studies indicating self-efficacy among college students was directly related to motivation, and only in isolated incidents was it an influence on those factors.

CoI: Blended and Online Courses

As stated previously, one of the trends in instructional approaches for college students has been blended learning courses. This comes in the form of a face-to-face course with an online component but the percentage of online versus traditional classroom instruction varies from course-to-course (Dziuban et al., 2018). Some of the blended learning courses incorporated *self-regulated learning* modules where students work at their own pace, or as part of their assignments within the classroom. Another term for these courses is *hybrid*. When reviewing the literature, blended learning in

college courses provided limited research studies; however, blended learning combined with self-efficacy and motivation usually included CoI within the results. The following sections will review CoI model in blended and online courses.

CoI in Blended Courses

For the purpose of this study, the term blended course was defined as synchronous online learning with an asynchronous learning lab component. Traditionally, blended courses were those that have a face-to-face class meeting with an online or lab component that required online task completion. They were also referred to as hybrid courses (Hrastinski, 2019). Online learning courses provided both asynchronous and synchronous components, as do the blended courses, but according to Hrastinski, the difference was that blended courses still required a traditional face-to-face meeting. The online and face-to-face components may vary in the percentage of time spent on each segment of blended learning. However, the overall goal was to support a more flexible classroom experience through traditional instruction blended with self-regulated learning. Due to the pivotal shift in college instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional definition of blended courses was nonexistent when this study was conducted. Therefore, the following literature results were based upon the traditional definition of blended courses.

The literature had limited studies related to CoI in blended courses since it was still a relatively new concept at the time of this study. Some studies will be addressed here and some in the review of studies closely related to my study focus. This section will include the few studies in CoI of blended courses that did not have additional components

with the same focus as in my study. These insignificant or negative research findings regarding CoI will be included at the end of the section.

The focus on blended courses and the three presences of CoI narrowed the literature results and provided limited findings. Some studies indicated additional presences of CoI, but these findings did not agree or duplicate the same additional presences and were only suggestions of possible future expansions of CoI (Lam, 2015). While these additional presences were not substantiated, they were taken into consideration as possible emerging patterns in the data collection for my study. Other studies found evidence of CoI within blended learning college courses of varying content areas but found further research was needed to provide clarification about student perceptions (Hilliard & Stewart, 2019; Ojat, 2016). Overall, the narrowed search revealed limited results that focused on CoI in blended courses that paralleled the components within my study.

The following studies focused on CoI in online courses also included other factors directly related to self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships and will be addressed in the following paragraphs. The final paragraphs will provide information regarding the literature which held little or no significance of CoI, or studies that found negative factors regarding CoI participation or students' perceptions.

CoI in Online Courses

CoI in online courses had been studied through several different lenses. The core of many studies was within self-regulated online courses focused on the CoI presences in discussions. The regulation level of these students and the requirements of the tasks

directly affected social and cognitive presences and achieved affected outcomes within the courses (Cho et al., 2017; Tirado-Morueta et al., 2016). Another focus of the research for CoI in online courses centered on the structure of the online courses, the changing role of instructor to tutor, and student connectivity and loneliness (Ozaydin-Ozkara & Cakir, 2018). Results indicated loneliness and student connectivity directly affected social presence and students who worked closely with others tended to have better-perceived relationship experiences than those who worked alone (Ozaydin-Ozkara & Cakir, 2018). Studies found changing the role of the instructor to tutor increased student responsibility and the variables of CoI would need to be adjusted to adapt to a more self-regulated classroom (Peacock & Cowan, 2018).

Other research studies focused on the three presences of CoI and how they interacted within the learning environment (Hilliard & Stewart, 2019). Both synchronous and asynchronous online courses were the focus of CoI studies with interests varying from student discussion responses to language proficiency and confidence as the key topics. The results of these studies were contradictory because they found social and cognitive presences directly related to student discussions and teaching presence a strength according to students' perceptions of course discussion satisfaction (Khalid & Quick, 2016; Liu & Yang, 2015; Mo & Lee, 2017). Instructor or teaching presence also influenced course satisfaction and course outcome in some online and hybrid course studies, but in others showed no significant difference in student experiences (Cutsinger et al., 2018).

Overall, most studies found that one or the other of the CoI presences played a role in the perceptions of the students. In these studies, outcomes varied, and results were contradictory indicating no clear conclusion could be drawn about the significance of the presences as factors influencing students' perceptions (Cutsinger et al., 2018). Some study results indicated CoI impacted the environment more as a communication and design heuristic instead of being a universal model influencing student experiences (Cooper & Scriven, 2017). Other studies questioned CoI as an educational model or found minimal contributions to academic achievement or student relationships while other findings revealed digital competency had a greater effect on student outcomes (Almasi et al., 2018; Blayone et al., 2018; Lee & Huang, 2018; Maddrell et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2016).

College Success Courses

Since my study focused specifically on college success courses combined with CoI participation, blended learning, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships, it was important to search the literature for studies related to college success courses. There were many studies about college success, but most of them focused on a specific content area in conjunction with skills taught rather than a separate course (Howard et al., 2018). Those studies that included a college success course had a variety of focuses. Since most of the college skills courses were offered in the first two years of college learning, there were several studies focusing on first-year college students and community colleges (Coleman et al., 2018; Vander-Zee et al., 2016). Another focus of these studies centered on specific populations and ethnicities combined with retention, persistence, and self-

efficacy (Claybrooks & Taylor, 2016; Keith et al., 2017). Course design, time management, and student perceptions of what makes a successful college student were also study focuses (Hatch, 2017; Hatch-Tocaimaza et al., 2019; Hensley et al., 2018; Hoops & Artrip, 2016). A study focusing on using iPads and course engagement was the closest to combining the blended learning component of my study, but it did not incorporate CoI participation, self-efficacy, and motivation (Bluestein & Kim, 2017). The final study that most closely matched the components in my study focused on the implementation of learning modules in an online environment (McLeod, 2019). The use of learning modules correlates to the learning lab component of my study, but McLeod (2019) focused on student retention in the college success course. There was no mention of self-efficacy, motivation, or CoI.

Developmental Education

Once the literature had been exhausted for the main components of college students, self-efficacy, CoI, blended and online courses, self-regulated learning, and college success courses, the focus changed. Since my study was focused in CoI in college developmental blended courses, the next step was to search within these terms for developmental education. This section focuses on the previously mentioned search terms with the addition of developmental education. Once those factors were outlined, other factors in developmental education were considered. Finally, there were study findings regarding developmental education design or redesign that influenced instructional strategies and methodologies. As the focus became narrow and specific search terms

were added, the number of studies decreased, and this section reflects the limited number of studies found with all relevant terms.

Related Factors

As stated previously, more than 40% of college students were enrolled in one or more developmental courses and that percentage was continuing to increase (McCann, 2017). The perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships as they participated in developmental courses were important to provide insight into their experiences. The following studies focusing on college students in developmental education and their self-efficacy did not include those participating in CoI. However, the research results provided insight into the importance of the perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships which helped identify gaps in the research.

When considering students in developmental education college courses, the literature indicated that many of these students had a lower self-concept than their cohorts who were enrolled in college-level courses (Martin et al., 2017). This low self-concept may have been due to students who were entering college at the developmental level were already behind on their degree program. Since most developmental classes did not provide transferrable credits or progress towards degree completion, completing them might have delayed student progress. Research results indicated students in developmental reading and writing courses were encouraged through relationships with instructors, classmates, and in addition, evidence also indicated that improved pedagogy led to student empowerment and increased self-efficacy (Barhoum, 2018; Perin et al., 2017). Students with diverse backgrounds enrolled in developmental college courses

found interpersonal relationships and shared learning increased persistence, student engagement, and their resulting grade point averages (Holman, 2017; Pichon, 2016; Villarreal & García, 2016). This indicated that higher self-efficacy and a sense of belonging may be related to motivation and that relationships within developmental college courses that predicted persistence and integration (Pichon, 2016)

COVID-19 as a Factor

The spread of COVID-19 during the 2019-2020 academic school year greatly impacted our world. Higher education was not exempt from this pandemic and the changes in the daily functioning of our society. Since most countries around the world mandated a social distancing requirement during this period, college education as we know it began to change. My study was focused on this time period and although there were few research studies available about COVID-19, the literature revealed a sparse collection of results related to colleges and universities.

Some of the concerns addressed in the literature were the closing of campuses, health concerns, financial health, and the pending future enrollment challenges facing colleges and universities due to COVID-19 (Coen, 2020; Ruf, 2020). Other related studies focused on the actual switch from on-campus and blended courses to the online learning environment and how this pivotal transition required the use of more technology tools (Hechinger & Lorin, 2020; Torres et al., 2020). Additionally, around 70% of higher education instructors in the United States had never taught online courses before the COVID-19 pandemic (Hechinger & Lorin, 2020). This lack of experience teaching online, the pivotal transition during the COVID-19 pandemic from traditional face-to-

face to the online environment, and changes in the definition of blended learning provided a setting that had not previously been addressed in the research. This may provide insight into student perceptions and more positive outcomes to guide future studies.

Other Factors

Since the number of students within developmental education was persistently increasing at the time of this study, reviewing factors that influenced these students, provided insight into gaps in the research. The literature provided findings related to self-efficacy and motivation, but other influences were also studied. Successful completion rates for developmental students were much lower than the increasing enrollment percentages (Boerner, 2015). This indicated a problem with retention in higher education, especially community colleges. Levels of student persistence in developmental education were also indicative of student success. Davidson and Petrosko (2015) found that persistence rates for developmental math courses were directly related to work and family relationships. These factors studied in a blended learning course showed that students who had positive relationships were more likely to persist in course completion (Davidson & Petrosko, 2015).

The design of developmental education courses also played a role in the success of students. Edgecombe (2016) found that implementation of course design and assessments helped accelerate course completion and transfer of students. Providing a fast track approach to developmental coursework completion promoted self-efficacy and gave students a sense of accomplishment over a shorter time frame. Another method for

addressing this readiness gap had been for community colleges to partner with four-year institutions to offer college readiness courses. These courses had taken the form of dual enrollment classes offered to high school students but were also provided through gateway programs offered during the summer months at community colleges (Wilson & Lowry, 2017). The courses provide a stepping-stone for students to move forward into college credit courses by transferring high school dual enrollment courses or completing accelerated developmental college classes offered. This was especially true for specific populations such as Spanish-speaking students, adult students, and low socioeconomic students who had differing needs and challenges or who struggled with extenuating factors that hindered their educational goals (Eberly, 2018; Fong et al., 2015; Hawley & Chiang, 2017).

Summary and Conclusions

Many studies throughout the literature focused on blended learning, college developmental education, self-efficacy, motivation, and/or student relationships. However, few studies combined these components and included the CoI model as the focus. Some studies focused on CoI and students' perceptions, but these studies did not include the other components of my study. After reviewing the individual and combined results in the literature there were a limited number of studies that addressed all components. Since my study included a course content of college success skills in a blended learning environment taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic, this provided a new research focus in an area that was currently limited to nonexistent. Focusing on participation in CoI to identify students' perceptions of self-efficacy,

motivation, and student relationships provided research that had only partially been addressed. Defining developmental blended courses as synchronous online learning combined with an asynchronous learning lab component due to the pivotal shift of college instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic created a new field for research and a gap in the literature.

The current research for CoI provided studies that focused on the three presences combined with student perceptions in a variety of collaborative learning environments. The themes found throughout the research for CoI included studies focusing on motivation, self-efficacy, course design, autonomy, self-regulation, causal relationships, and academic performance (Almasi et al., 2018; Cooper & Scriven, 2017; Cutsinger et al., 2018; Garrison et al., 2010; Lam, 2015; Lee, 2017; Ojat, 2016; Vaughan et al., 2013). The individual presences of CoI had also been studied in various content areas, but findings had not been conclusive that one presence was more influential than another (Almasi et al., 2018; Hilliard & Stewart, 2019; Kozan & Caskurlu, 2018). These studies focused on CoI and the three presences but only on the influence of the presences and student perceptions and not in the setting of a developmental education blended course.

After reviewing the literature for CoI, self-efficacy, and motivation in college learning environments were studied. Findings included studies focusing on backgrounds, ethnicity, race, academic preparedness, performance, and retention (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018; Han et al., 2017; Pasha-Zaidi et al., 2018; Pruett & Absher, 2015; Sass et al., 2018). Studies also indicated instructional strategies, technology skills, student success, and persistence were key factors in student motivation and self-efficacy (Bickerstaff et

al., 2017; Phuong et al., 2017; Schwehm, 2017; Thompson et al., 2017; Yilmaz, 2016). However, these studies did not address CoI and some were not in a blended course, nor were they developmental education-related courses. There were a limited number of studies that combined CoI with self-efficacy, motivation, and blended learning. These studies focused on the possible existence of additional presences and varying content areas in blended courses, but further research was needed to provide clarification about student experiences (Hilliard & Stewart, 2019; Ojat, 2016). There was also very little found in the research about college success skills courses and the combined components of my study.

The final literature review included developmental education and other factors relating to the research. At this point in the review, very few studies incorporated more than one component of my study. The only new information not already addressed about developmental education were studies that focused on self-concept and student empowerment that led to increased self-efficacy (Barhoum, 2018; Martin et al., 2017; Perin et al., 2017). Other factors addressed were the increasing number of students enrolled in developmental education courses which lent credibility to the need for my study (Boerner, 2015). The design of developmental education is also linked to the success of students and the partnering of 2-year colleges with 4-year institutions (Edgecombe, 2016). Students in high school dual enrollment courses, gateway programs, and summer classes were also the focus of studies indicating the need for more insight into the components that promoted positive experiences in developmental education

(Eberly, 2018; Fong et al., 2015; Hawley & Chiang, 2017). COVID-19 as a topic in the literature was still emerging and provided little related to my research study.

Overall, many of the components of my study had been addressed throughout the literature review, but the compilation of these components had been limited to non-existent. CoI model combined with the identification of student perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships within a developmental college blended course focused in college success skills provided insight to further the research. The addition of the definition of blended learning as a synchronous online course with an asynchronous learning lab component due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting transition of colleges and universities to online instruction created a new research approach. My study filled a gap by providing further insight into the identification of student perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships through participation in CoI in college developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CoI provided a framework to guide the qualitative case study through interviews and provided several perspectives to the study that help add to the literature.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify college students' perceptions of how social, cognitive, and teaching presences built a sense of community and influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships as they participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. I selected a qualitative case study to collect data through participant interviews that would answer the research questions and sub-questions that were the focus of this study. In this chapter, I review and discuss the research questions, present the concepts of the study, and provide a rationale for choosing my approach to the study. I also explain my role as a researcher and outline any relationships, biases, and ethical issues that needed to be managed for the study. An explanation of the participant selection, instrumentation, and data analysis is provided. I also visit the issues of trustworthiness and address any ethical procedures necessary to protect participants.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were developed to gain insight into college students' perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships as they participate in CoI in developmental blended courses. The specific time frame for these research questions was January through July 2020, and the 2019-2020 academic school year during the COVID-19 pandemic, when not only the United States but the entire

world was faced with a health crisis. The main research question and sub-questions were as follows:

- RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- SQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of self-efficacy when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- SQ2: What are the perceptions of college students of motivation when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- SQ3: What are the perceptions of college students of student relationships when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?

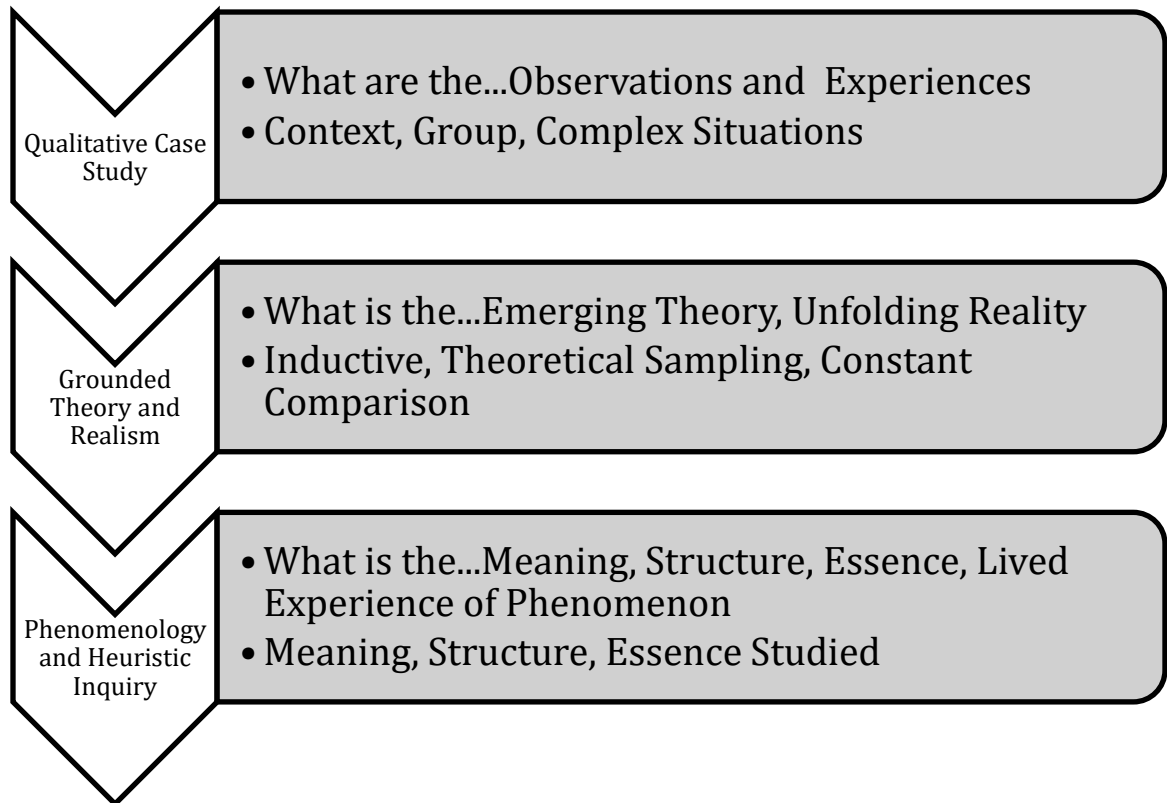
Research Design

The research questions and sub-questions were designed to gain insight and identify college students' perceptions of CoI participation and how these perceptions influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 crisis time frame. The conceptual framework for this qualitative case study was based on the CoI model, which had its foundation in Dewey's (1938) constructivism theory. The study was also based on Bandura's (1971) social learning theory. The three presences of the CoI model provided the framework to observe

the participants' perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships while participating in developmental blended courses. Through interview questions developed from the CoI survey instrument, I sought to gain insight into the perceptions of the participants.

Rationale

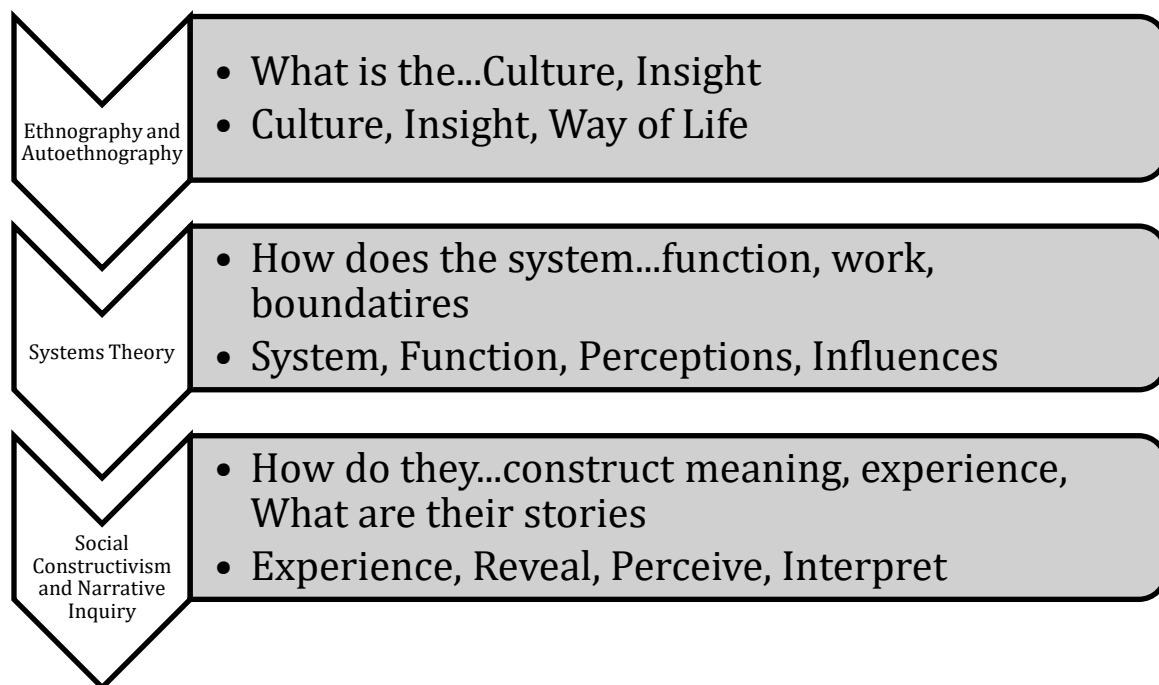
Whereas quantitative studies are focused on hypotheses, statistics, and numerical data, qualitative studies focus on the phenomenon and seek to interpret meaning from it. For my study, I chose a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative study because the study focused on the perceptions of the participants. Qualitative case studies focus on specific groups, events, or phenomena within a given context and in-depth interviews seek to provide insight into these specific participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Patton, 2015). Since I focused on the perceptions of the participants in a specific environment, the single qualitative case study provided the most fitting approach to the research. Conducting in-depth interviews provided a layered approach to data collection and allowed me to dig deeper and enrich the study through the process. Figures 3 and 4 show the comparison of various approaches to the study. In the following paragraphs, I described the process of elimination used to justify my selection of the qualitative single case study.

Figure 3*Comparison of Qualitative Approaches: Part One*

Note. Adapted from *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*, by M. Q. Patton, 2015, SAGE.

Figure 4

Comparison of Qualitative Approaches: Part Two



Note. Adapted from *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*, by M. Q. Patton, 2015, SAGE.

Researchers use grounded theory and realism to explore the unfolding theory or reality of the phenomenon and use comparative analysis through interviews, surveys, and sometimes combining statistical data with qualitative data within the study (Barello et al., 2015; Charmaz, 2014; Patton, 2015). In the phenomenological approach, researchers seek to derive meaning from the explored phenomenon, and the heuristic inquiry includes the researcher's perspective and meaning derived from the phenomenon. Both use in-depth interviews to dig deep into the research to explore the layers of data and emerging themes (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Ethnography is used to to study the culture of the

phenomenon; autoethnography explores the researcher's perceptions of the culture of the phenomenon or event through group discussions, collaboration, and personal stories (Hernandez et al., 2015; Patton, 2015). Systems theory is concerned with the function of the system within the event or phenomenon and focuses on studying data within those boundaries seeking to gain a big picture perspective of the data (Patton, 2015). Social constructionism focuses on how the participants experience the phenomenon and narrative inquiry tells the participants' stories using a variety of data collection methods to find emerging themes (Patton, 2015; Walker, 2015).

After researching these approaches, among others, I determined that the qualitative single case study was the best fit for the nature of my study. Because I used the CoI framework for my study, this approach, based on constructivism from the works of Dewey and Bandura's theory of social learning, provided the best foundation for my study. The justification for using this approach was that I sought to understand student perceptions as they experienced participation in CoI in blended learning courses.

Role of the Researcher

In my role as the researcher-observer and interviewer, it was important to remain ethical and unbiased and to provide a safe and protective environment for my participants. As the researcher, I needed to collect and analyze the data and synthesize it in an unbiased and accurate way. Another role I had as a researcher and interviewer was to provide the participants with a safe and confidential environment. Protecting confidentiality and addressing the needs of protected populations, if included, were essential. Being authentic and honest and providing consent forms to the participants was

another role in the research process. Establishing valid communication and rapport with the participants and verifying their willingness to participate was also vital to the study (Patton, 2015). This meant being respectful and setting aside any biases that I had as a researcher.

Since I previously taught courses similar to those focused on in this study, it was important for me to separate myself from my experiences within the courses. Students that I taught were excluded from the study to help reduce bias and keep the validity and credibility of the study intact. It was also important to assure participants that their responses in the interviews would not have any effect on other aspects of their college experience.

Since my dedicated instructional path focused on developmental education, and I taught several courses similar to those in my study within the college environment, it was important to control my biases. Therefore, in addition to excluding any students I previously taught, I reflectively journaled my experiences, recorded interviews and conversations, and minimized discussions of the study, which helped to reduce the opportunities for bias and identified situations where bias may have been present. My perspective on the experiences of these students was also addressed and journaling my thoughts and feelings after interviews provided an outlet. I kept my expressions, tone of voice, and body language neutral during the interviews so that I would not influence responses. I made sure any discussion or interview prompts were scripted to prevent asking leading questions that would compromise the validity of the data.

I originally did not anticipate using incentives for the study, but after the initial recruiting process yielded few participants, I requested permission from the institutional review board to add a \$10 gift card incentive for participants. The information about this incentive was provided to participants before the interviews and was also reviewed during the interview sessions and email correspondence. This voluntary approach to creating a safe and comfortable environment did not promote bias or favoritism towards the participants.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

In qualitative studies, there have been varying perspectives about the participant sample size. Researchers should focus on the goal of sufficiently addressing the research questions through observations of the phenomenon and this helps to achieve saturation within the study. Saturation is a goal suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The idea that saturation has occurred is when there are no new themes or information emerging as the data is analyzed. According to Yin (2014), saturation may occur in a case study with up to 30 participants. The participant selection for this qualitative case study was based on a specific population. The participants were recruited via social media platforms and Walden Participant Pool through posted invitations. The selected participants were chosen based on having successfully completed a college success skills course during the 2019-2020 academic school year within a blended learning environment. I selected participants for the initial interviews based on the first 10 eligible participants to respond to the invitation. The recruiting process continued until there were 12 qualifying

participants recruited. This correlates to Patton (2015), who suggested that saturation can occur between six and 12 participants. Participants responding to the social media invitation were verified through the following set of questions to determine eligibility:

1. Are you 18 years of age or older?
2. Have you been enrolled or are you currently enrolled in college?
3. What are the dates of your enrollment?
4. Have you completed a college success skills course during the 2019-2020 academic school year?
5. Was this course a traditional face-to-face class, a blended learning class, or an online class?

Participants met all criteria previously stated and completed a signed consent form. The interviews began with the first 10 participants whose consent forms had been received. Through the interview process, it became apparent that some of the participants did not meet the qualifications for the study. Since saturation had not occurred at this point, 10 more participants from a waitlist were interviewed. The process was repeated until 27 participants had been recruited and 12 of those participants made up the final qualifying set of individual data collected to achieve saturation.

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument for my study was semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were directly related to the research questions and were researcher created questions. The CoI interview questions were based on the open-source CoI survey document found at <https://coi.athabascau.ca/coi-model/coi-survey/> which was

a collaborative website and was sponsored by Dr. Randy Garrison, leading author and researcher in CoI model. The CoI survey document addressed the three presences (social, cognitive, and teaching) of CoI model in my study, and the interview questions for each of those presences were based on the statements outlined in the original CoI survey. This survey document was created by a collaborative research team that includes the leading authors in CoI model and had been validated through several studies (Swan et al., 2008). The remaining interview questions were researcher created and based on student perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships as outlined by Bandura and Dewey. Appendix A provides the warm-up, background, and interview questions, along with the opening and closing remarks and comments. Appendix A also provides an outline of each interview question and its corresponding research question and the conceptual framework it reflects. The following is a summary of the interview questions and how they connected to each research question.

1. Interview questions 1-9 correlate to RQ1 (CoI presences)
2. Interview questions 10-11 correlate to SQ1 (self-efficacy)
3. Interview questions 12-13 correlate to SQ2 (motivation)
4. Interview questions 14-15 correlate to SQ3 (student relationships)

The background and summary questions included in Appendix A were used to introduce and conclude the interviews. They were general inquiry questions to introduce the study and to help the participants feel more comfortable. The questions on self-efficacy and motivation were designed from readings about the theorists, Bandura and Dewey, and were derived to gain insight into the perceptions of the participants. They

were not copied from any one source but were created by the researcher from a culmination of readings and research. They were general inquiry questions and were used in conjunction with the CoI questions to create a more in-depth data collection experience. The interview process provided an opportunity for conversational questioning and helped to probe more deeply into the participants' perceptions. Rubin and Rubin (2012) indicated that conducting interviews can provide a deeper understanding and shared meaning about a topic. Patton (2015) also suggested that face-to-face interviews provide opportunities to build a better rapport with the participants. When possible, an online platform with a face-to-face video component was used to help create a more comfortable environment for participants and build opportunities for a more in-depth interview. However, the ending result of the final 12 participants found the majority of participants preferred email interviews and only one of the qualifying participants chose a video conferencing (Zoom)/phone platform. The close correlation of each interview question with the conceptual framework and wording of the corresponding research question helped to ensure the sufficiency of the data collection instrument.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the perceptions of college students regarding how social, cognitive, and teaching presences built a sense of community and influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships as they participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. To fulfill this purpose, I collected my data, using social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram to recruit participants. I also submitted a

request to the institutional review board to post an invitation to the Walden Participant Pool for recruiting participants. I composed and posted an invitation with a conversational tone to attract college students who had completed a college success skills course in a blended learning environment within the 2019-2020 academic school year, specifically between January and July 2020. Additional criteria included in the invitation were that participants must be 18 years of age or older. Participation was voluntary and a \$10 gift card was provided to all participants who completed the interview process. Once participants were recruited and had a signed consent form interviews were conducted via Zoom/phone, or email. Each Zoom/phone interview was recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Depending on the open-ended responses to the initial interview questions, the researcher probed for a more in-depth response and asked for clarification from the participants.

The research question and sub-questions for this study were:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?

SQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of self-efficacy when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?

SQ2: What are the perceptions of college students of motivation when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?

SQ3: What are the perceptions of college students of student relationships when participating in developmental blended courses?

In order to find the answers to the research question and sub-questions, I recruited participants via invitations posted on social media platforms and the Walden Participant Pool, verified potential participant's eligibility through purposeful sampling, and conducted semi-structured interviews via Zoom/phone, or email. The data collection followed these guidelines:

1. A consent letter and invitation were created and submitted for approval.
2. Institutional review board approval (IRB Approval Number **07-10-20-0138151**) for conducting ethical research was obtained and permission granted to post an invitation on the Walden Participant Pool.
3. Invitations for participant recruiting were posted to various social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.
4. Once participants respond to the invitation, I responded via email with the consent form and answered any questions participants had about the study and data collection process.
5. When potential participants agreed to move forward with the interview process, I arranged a time to conduct the interview for Zoom/phone participants or emailed the interview transcript for email participants.
6. Before any scheduled interviews, I verified that participants had a signed consent form on file. The consent form included a statement about the Zoom/phone interviews being recorded for data collection.

7. At the beginning of each scheduled interview, I reassured participants that the process was voluntary and could be stopped at any time. I also reassured them of their privacy and confidentiality of the video and/or audio recording.
8. The data was collected as frequently as I could schedule the interviews and as frequently as participants responded to the invitation. The goal was to conduct one interview per day until the initial 10 interviews had been completed.
9. For the email participants, I created a scripted dialogue that introduced the background questions, provided dialogue to ask if participants were comfortable continuing, and then proceeded into the interview and summary questions. This scripted template was also used in the Zoom/phone interviews and was emailed with the transcribed responses for these participants.
10. The interviews began with conversational questions to help participants be more comfortable. Any initial questions were addressed. Participants were reminded of the recording during the interview. They were also reminded the process was voluntary and they could stop at any time. This took from 5 to 10 minutes of the interview depending on questions or concerns of participants.
11. The interview questions and responses took approximately 30-45 minutes. The duration depended on the depth of the responses to the questions.
12. The closing remarks, debriefing, and comments took an additional 5 to 10 minutes creating a total time of approximately one hour.
13. The Zoom/phone participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at this point and were also informed that a transcript would be emailed

to them of the interview. If after reviewing the transcript, they had the opportunity to withdraw at that time.

14. I reminded participants of my contact information and asked them to contact me with any questions or concerns.
15. The participants were informed that if further clarification of responses or questions occurred from the interview responses, I would follow up with additional questions.
16. Once the interview responses were reviewed and verified, the \$10 gift card was emailed to the participant at their designated email address.
17. The participants had the opportunity to read the findings of the study once the dissertation process had been completed and the study had been approved.
18. After the final 12 qualifying interviews were completed, the data was transcribed, organized, hand-coded by participant, cross-coded by interview questions into patterns and categories, and triangulated for emerging themes.

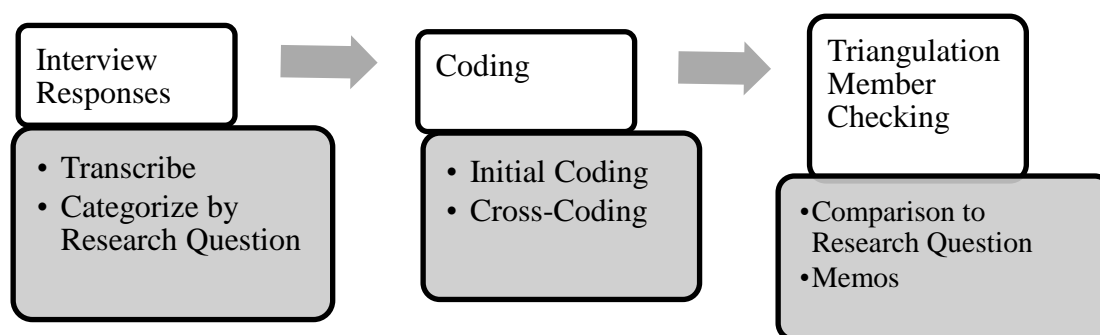
Data Analysis Plan

The qualitative approach for analyzing the data was based in Patton (2015) and Saldaña (2016) where the data is defined as the responses of the participant interviews and coding is what is seen or experienced rather than my interpretations. The initial research question focused on the CoI three presences (teaching, cognitive, and social), Dewey's pragmatism and constructivism, and Bandura's social learning theory. The first nine interview questions inquired about student perceptions of elements of the blended course that reflected the three presences of CoI as outlined in the statements from the CoI

survey previously mentioned. These included the design and organization of the coursework, instructor facilitation, direct instruction, affective expression, communication, group cohesion, openness to communication, triggering events, exploration, and resolution. The first research sub-question correlated with the next two interview questions and made inquiries about student perceptions of self-efficacy in the online, blended, and face-to-face learning environments. This was a combination of Bandura's self-efficacy and social learning theory and CoI perceptions. In the next two interview questions, the second research sub-question was represented through inquiries about motivation. This also aligned with Bandura and CoI perceptions. The final interview questions represented research sub-question three focused in student relationships. These questions reflected Bandura and CoI in the data collection process. The process for analyzing the interview response data is outlined in Figure 5, and Table 1 shows the alignment of research questions to the data expected.

Figure 5

Data Analysis and Coding Process



The responses to these interview questions were transcribed and then I organized the data into categories by interview question responses as listed below:

1. Interview Questions 1-3 Responses: Teaching Presence
2. Interview Questions 4-6 Responses: Social Presence
3. Interview Questions 7-9 Responses: Cognitive Presence
4. Interview Questions 10-11 Responses: Self-Efficacy
5. Interview Questions 12-13 Responses: Motivation
6. Interview Question 14-15 Responses: Student Relationships

The preliminary coding was determined based on hand-coding of each interview. Next, I coded across participants for each interview question. Then, I triangulated the data by looking at the analysis for each interview response and comparing them to the research question and sub-question categories for recurring patterns and emerging themes.

Triangulation and member checking were achieved through memos as I worked through the data analysis process to note any areas where personal bias appeared so that I could bracket it out. The second purpose that writing memos served was to provide a place to note insights and outliers as they emerged in the data.

Table 1*Research Questions, Interview Questions, and Data Analysis Alignment*

Research Question	Conceptual Framework/Theorists	Interview Question (IQ)/Data Needs	Data Sources	Data Analysis Expected Themes
RQ 1: Perceptions of CoI participation (teaching, cognitive, social presences)	CoI-Teaching Presence Dewey-Pragmatism Constructivism	IQ1. Examples of how the instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities IQ2. Examples of participant engagement and productive dialogue IQ3. Examples of timely instructor feedback	Interview and Probing Question Responses	1. Perceived design and organization of coursework 2. Perceived facilitation of instructor 3. Perceived direct instruction of the instructor
RQ 1: Perceptions of CoI participation (teaching, cognitive, social presences)	CoI-Social Presence Bandura-Social Learning Theory	IQ 4. Examples of sense of belonging IQ 5. Examples of feeling comfortable participating in online discussion IQ 6. Examples of acknowledgment of point of view by other course participants	Interview and Probing Question Responses	4. Perceived affective expression (overlaps with student relationships in IQ 14-15) 5. Perceived open communication student-to-student and instructor-to-student 6. Perceived group cohesion student-to-student (Overlaps with student relationship IQ 14-15)
RQ 1: Perceptions of CoI participation (teaching, cognitive, social presences)	CoI-Cognitive Presence Bandura Social Learning Theory Dewey-Constructivism	IQ7. Examples of piqued curiosity when participating in course activities and using course materials IQ8. Examples of a variety of sources within the course that were used to explore problems IQ9. Examples of applying knowledge learned within the course to non-class related activities or employment	Interview and Probing Question Responses	7. Perceived triggering event 8. Perceived exploration 9. Perceived resolution
SQ1: Perceptions of self-efficacy	Bandura-Self-efficacy	IQ10. Examples of self-efficacy levels when achieving goals within the online component of the course IQ11. Examples of self-efficacy levels when achieving goals within the face-to-face component of the course	Interview and Probing Question Responses	10. Perceived levels of self-efficacy within the online component of the course 11. Perceived levels of self-efficacy within the face-to-face component of the course
SQ2: Perceptions of motivation	Bandura-Social Learning Theory	IQ12. Examples of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in completing the course IQ13. Examples of a specific person or factor that influenced motivation of course work	Interview and Probing Question Responses	12. Perceived motivation in completing the course 13. Perceived specific influences on motivation in course work
SQ 3: Perceptions of student relationships	Bandura-Social Learning Theory Also, CoI Social Presence	IQ14. Examples of student-to-student relationships during the course IQ15. Examples of student-to-instructor relationships during the course	Interview and Probing Question Responses	14. Perceived student-to-student relationships 14. Perceived student-to-instructor relationships Also ties in with Social Presence in CoI

The duration of the data collection and analysis process continued as needed and saturation was achieved when there were no new emerging themes or patterns in the participant responses for each category and interview question. Discrepancies in the data collection and analysis were not anticipated and did not occur except as noted in Chapter 4.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Issues of trustworthiness in the forms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are important in providing valid research. Excluding bias is a major concern in qualitative research because the data is not limited to numbers and calculations as in quantitative approaches (Patton, 2015). The following paragraphs address each of the four components of trustworthiness in research and provide the specific guidelines this study followed to provide valid research.

Credibility

When conducting qualitative research one of the main components of credibility is using triangulation (Patton, 2015). To provide credibility to this study, I used reflective journaling for my thoughts and comments during the research process (Patton, 2015). I used interviews to collect data from the selected participants. Each interview was conducted in a password-protected platform and Zoom/phone interviews were recorded and transcribed for accuracy in data analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I received feedback throughout the process from my committee and colleagues within the dissertation forums. I used the guidelines of the research questions and the purpose of the study to target emerging themes and refrained from using my interpretation of the data in the analysis

process (Saldaña, 2016). I made sure the saturation of the data occurred before concluding the study by analyzing the data for new information (Saldaña, 2016).

Transferability

To continue conducting trustworthy research, the participants were selected by invitation via social media platforms and the Walden Participant Pool. This random purposeful sampling criteria were outlined in the invitation. No personal data was reviewed to make the selections. Thick descriptions of the interview responses were provided through the transcribing process and the recordings (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Participants were prompted to provide in-depth responses that went beyond a simple positive or negative answer. Descriptions of experiences were encouraged (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Dependability

Dependability in a qualitative case study is parallel to credibility (Patton, 2015). Steps were taken to ensure the participants were selected from an eligible list. Interviews were conducted in a password protected online platform and recorded and transcribed for accuracy (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Descriptions and detailed responses were encouraged (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Data collection continued until saturation and triangulation were achieved through hand-coding, cross-coding, analytic memos, and triangulation of the data (Patton, 2015). The data analysis followed the guidelines to look for emerging themes that aligned with the research questions and purpose of the study. The researcher's interpretation of the data was not considered (Patton, 2015). Reflective

journaling and member check through peer reviews of the components of the study lent additional dependability and credibility to the study (Patton, 2015).

Confirmability

The confirmability followed the other three components, and the same procedures were used to provide an unbiased, confirmed research study (Patton, 2015). The selection of participants was conducted through the ethical guidelines of the institutional review board. The interviews followed the outline of the proposed interview questions and reflected the research question and purpose of the study. The collected data was hand-coded. Triangulation of the data occurred through multiple cycles of coding, analytic memos, and clarification of participants' interview responses. The emerging themes that paralleled the components of the study were analyzed. The researcher's interpretations were not taken into consideration and through reflective journaling and accountability to the dissertation committee and colleagues, the study was protected from bias (Patton, 2015).

Ethical Procedures

Several ethical procedures were followed for this study. The first procedure was to compose an invitation and post it on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube) and to the Walden Participant Pool. The guidelines for each of these platforms were adhered to when posting the invitations. Once the participants respond to the invitation, the ethical procedure of providing a consent form was required. Time was given to the participants between the consent for participation and the interview. Once the participant was ready to interview a password-protected online

platform that provided a safe environment was used (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This consent form was presented and explained to the participants in detail and all questions were answered to ensure clarification (Patton, 2015). Since the initial 10 participants recruited did not all qualify for the study, the researcher continued to recruit participants to achieve saturation. Adverse events like withdrawal from participants were addressed on a case-by-case scenario. The plan to continue the study over a maximum of 16 weeks was not a concern. Data saturation was reached within that time frame, so a plan was not necessary to continue the research for the future.

The protection of the data was maintained throughout the study. The interviews took place in a password protected online platform. I used my personal computer to archive and store all the recordings, email correspondence and participant responses, data analysis, and transcriptions. These will be maintained in a separate folder and will be kept for five years. Once that time frame has expired, the folder will be permanently deleted. The folder will be maintained in a dropbox environment so that it can be accessed should my personal computer require an upgrade or change during that time. No one will have access to the data except for the researcher unless a copy of it is required by the college (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Summary

During the recent the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education pivoted from traditional face-to-face and blended courses to fully online learning within a matter of days. This transition had been due to mandated social distancing in many geographical areas to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Torres et al., 2020). With almost half of

college students in the United States enrolled in developmental courses, there was a need to identify these students' perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships (McCann, 2017). Colleges had begun to look past instructional strategies to consider student experiences as factors that influenced success in developmental courses (Smith, 2016). Although many influencing factors had been addressed in the research, there was little in the literature that addressed the combination of components in my study. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the perceptions of college students regarding how social, cognitive, and teaching presences built a sense of community and influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships as they participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The conceptual framework chosen for this study had its foundation in Dewey's and Bandura's theories of cognitive and social learning. While some other frameworks and theorists focused on collaboration, CoI was the framework that was most closely associated with the goals of this study. Through CoI participation in blended courses, college students' perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships were explored. Participation in CoI combined with Bandura's social learning theory provided a comprehensive foundation to help identify factors that influenced students' perceptions while enrolled in college developmental blended courses. The methodology chosen for my study was the qualitative case study. After analyzing several qualitative approaches and ruling out quantitative research as not applying to this study focus-to identify student perceptions-I justified choosing the qualitative case study. This approach allowed me to collect data through semi-structured interviews. The purposeful sampling of these

participants who had successfully completed college success skills courses during the COVID-19 pandemic provided an avenue for collecting in-depth, rich descriptions of perceptions to help further the research. Ethical considerations were addressed and provisions were made to prevent bias and issues with trustworthiness. My study focused on the identification of college students' perceptions of participation in CoI and the influence on self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic had not been addressed in previous studies. The results of the study could promote social change by providing further insight into factors directly related to improving online course delivery to better meet the needs of developmental students in these courses during this time period.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify college students' perceptions of how social, cognitive, and teaching presences built a sense of community and influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships as they participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main research question in this study was: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic? The study also focused on the following sub-questions:

- What are the perceptions of college students of self-efficacy when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the perceptions of college students of motivation when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the perceptions of college students of student relationships when participating in developmental blended courses?

Data were collected from 12 qualifying participants, out of the original 27 participants recruited, through semi-structured email, phone, and/or video conference interviews. Once the data had been collected, hand-coding, cross-coding, and triangulation of the data helped to identify emerging patterns, categories, and themes in the participant responses.

In this chapter, I discuss the research setting, demographics, and data collection. I then explain the data analysis process and show evidence of trustworthiness. I also provide a detailed analysis of the college students' responses regarding their perceptions of the three presences of CoI, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships as they participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Setting

The recruitment of participants began with the posting of invitations on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube from July 12th until August 7th, 2020. During the first 2 weeks of posting invitations, I had few responses from participants, so I submitted a request to the institutional review board to offer a \$10 gift certificate as a thank-you incentive for those who participated in the study. At that time, I also asked permission to post an invitation to recruit participants from the Walden Participant Pool.

By August 7th, I had recruited 27 participants. From those 27 participants, 25 completed the interview process. After reviewing the first 10 participant interviews, I had to continue to recruit more participants as it was revealed that some of the candidates did not meet the inclusion criteria for the study. I returned to the participant waitlist and repeated the process. The final number of qualified participants who completed the interview process was 12. Of those 12, all but one participant chose to complete an email interview. For the total participant count of 27, there were four Zoom/phone interviews and 21 email interviews.

All participants contacted me through my password-protected designated email address and ongoing correspondence took place via that email account. The initial

consent form was emailed to each participant. When the participants responded confirming consent, I sent another email asking them which interview format they preferred. If the participants chose Zoom or phone for their interview, another email was sent requesting dates and times that would be convenient. Emails continued until a date and time had been scheduled. The phone and Zoom interviews were scheduled with no more than one interview per day and within 7 days of the participant's confirmed consent period.

For the phone and Zoom interviews, I emailed a copy of the interview questions, including warm-up and summary questions with notations stating they would not be used for the study. Each participant had a minimum of 3 days to review the interview questions and to respond with any questions or concerns before the scheduled interview. For the email interviews, I typed out the transcript verbatim. I explained the study and reviewed the qualifications and consent form and asked if the participant was comfortable moving forward. I used the email transcript during the phone and Zoom interviews and as a template for the transcription. I emailed the template to the participants along with their responses and any additional conversation that took place.

I used my home office to conduct the Zoom and phone interviews and to review and transcribe all formats of interview responses. The interviews averaged approximately 45 minutes in length. There were technical difficulties with two of the phone and/or video conferencing interviews, and one of the participants chose to end the interview and complete the process via email. Each interview began with a review of the consent form and study requirements. Then, I asked warm-up questions to build rapport and

background knowledge. After that, I proceeded with the interview questions once the participant had affirmed that they felt comfortable continuing. At the end of each interview, I thanked the participant for their participation and asked permission to contact them if I needed clarification on any of their responses as I was analyzing the data. For those interviewing via Zoom and phone, I explained that I would email a copy of the transcript of the interview for them to review. I also explained that I would ask for them to respond with an acknowledgment and confirmation stating their interview transcript was accurate or making any necessary changes and then confirming accuracy. Finally, I explained that I would email a copy of the findings once the study was published. I encouraged participants to contact me if they had any further questions or concerns. I stated that the \$10 gift card would be emailed once the interview transcript had been reviewed and approved. I followed up with each participant and provided the stated information and gift card incentive within 3 days of the confirmed interview responses. The entire data collection process, with changes submitted to the institutional review board, took approximately 27 days.

The gift card incentive accelerated the recruiting process significantly. Once participants were aware of the gift card incentive, they told their friends and I had several inquiries from the same college. I had a waitlist throughout the data collection and analysis process and have continued to receive inquiries about the possibility of another study. The participants were enthusiastic to contribute to the study and many thanked me for allowing them to be part of the process. Most of the participants were excited because of the gift card, but they all willingly answered the questions and continued to respond

with clarifications as needed. Most preferred email mode due to time constraints and schedule conflicts. COVID-19 possibly contributed to this shift to email interviews due to changes in class schedules and overall social distancing requirements. I addressed challenges as they became known and all participants received the gift card incentive once they completed the interview.

Demographics

Because all the participants were recruited through social media, (there were no responses from the Walden Participant Pool) there was limited demographic information to provide. The qualifications outlined that participants needed to be 18 years of age or older, currently enrolled in a college skills course during the time frame between January to July 2020, in the 2019-2020 academic year. No other identifying information was required, and anonymity was encouraged. There were four male and eight female participants. Eight of the participants responded to the study invitation on Facebook. Four of the participants heard about the study from a friend. Approximately nine states were represented in the study, based on the information voluntarily provided by participants about their current college or university. Table 2 displays the information for the 12 qualifying participants during the data collection process.

Table 2*Demographics*

Pseudonym	Gender	State of college	College type	Source of referral
P3	Male	California	University	Friend
P5	Female	Indiana	University	Facebook
P7	Female	New York	College	Facebook
P8	Female	South Carolina	College	Facebook
P9	Female	Massachusetts	University	Facebook
P10	Male	Florida	University	Friend
P15	Female	Pennsylvania	College	Friend
P16	Female	Florida	University	Friend
P17	Female	Ohio	University	Friend
P19	Male	California	University	Facebook
P20	Male	Hawaii	College	Facebook
P27	Female	South Carolina	University	Facebook

Data Collection

Twelve college students enrolled in developmental courses during the COVID-19 pandemic were recruited to participate in this study. The recruitment criteria for this study included students who were 18 years of age or older and who were enrolled in a developmental blended college course during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of data collection, the time frame for participants' enrollment was listed as January to July 2020 or the 2019-2020 academic year. I initially recruited participants through posting an invitation via social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter). Recruitment expanded to include the Walden Participant Pool after I received permission to do so from the institutional review board. However, none of the participants identified the pool as the originating source of their recruitment. In the posted

invitation, a \$10 gift card was offered as a thank-you incentive for participating in a phone, Zoom, or email interview. I corresponded with all participants via email to obtain consent and schedule the interviews. I answered all questions and explained the process for each participant. All the qualifying participants agreed to the emailed consent form and specified their preferred type of interview. Out of the qualifying 12, only one participant chose to interview via Zoom. The remaining 11 participants chose email interviews. All participants responded in a timely manner and interviews were scheduled within a week of the initial inquiry. Due to several unqualified participants, and the need for repeating the recruitment process, the time frame taken to complete the interviews was approximately 27 days.

For the phone and/or Zoom interviews, I reviewed the consent form and explained that the participants could stop the process at any time if they felt uncomfortable. I built rapport through warm-up questions. I paused at each step to ask if they would like to continue. For the email interviews, I provided a transcript identical to the one used for the phone and/or Zoom interviews. When sending the responses from the recorded interviews for approval, I provided both the template questions and transcript with the participant responses and any additional conversation. In both the email and the phone and/or Zoom interviews, I worked to build a connection with the participants through warm-up and summary questions. I assured the participants these responses would not be used in the study except for voluntary information regarding the source of recruitment, their gender, and the state of their college or university. I reminded the phone and/or Zoom participants their interviews were being recorded and asked permission to proceed with

the recording process. I used the private, password-protected Zoom application and a personal iPhone for all the audio and video recordings. I asked the warm-up questions, paused to ask the participants if they felt comfortable proceeding, then I asked the 14 interview questions. I paused to allow participants to answer fully and to give them opportunities to respond or insert additional comments. For the email interviews, I reviewed the responses to the interview questions thoroughly and if any clarification was needed, I asked for it via email. I also encouraged participants to contact me via email if there was any confusion or clarification needed in answering the questions.

During the interview, I asked 14 open-ended questions (see Appendix B) about the participants' perceptions of the three presences of CoI, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships while they were enrolled in developmental courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. I also asked for further clarification if the participant answered "Yes" or "No." After transcribing the phone and/or Zoom interviews, I asked the participants to review and check for accuracy and confirm their responses.

I transcribed the phone and/or Zoom interviews within 3 days of completing the interview process. I only contacted two participants for clarification on the email interviews. One participant corrected responses in the transcript from the phone and/or Zoom interview and then confirmed the corrections. I sent transcripts to all participants who had not had email interviews. For email participants, the exchanged email interview document served as their copy of the transcript. When I received the email participants' responses, I checked for clarification issues, and after confirming, I issued their gift cards and thanked them for their participation. Once the phone and/or Zoom transcripts were

confirmed, I issued their gift cards and thanked them for their participation. I also reminded all participants that I would contact them with the findings of the study once they had been published. Once I completed the interview process with the 12 qualifying participants, I began the data analysis phase of the study.

All participant names were removed, and pseudonyms/participant identification numbers were assigned to protect confidentiality. I used an alphanumeric system with the letter “P” as the initial identification, abbreviated for “participant”, and I assigned a number. The participant pseudonyms range from P1-P27. The qualifying 12 participants were taken from the original list of 27 participants who completed the interview process, and the participant numbers were assigned in the order participants were recruited. Participants who did not qualify were removed, but their pseudonyms were not reassigned. Therefore, the qualifying 12 participants have numbers that do not follow sequential numeric order.

There were no unusual circumstances surrounding the data collection phase of the study. The only issue was that several participants did not meet the qualifications for the study, and this was not immediately identifiable. Only after reviewing the interview responses were some of the participants found to be unqualified. As described in Chapter 3, the variations from the originally planned data collection process were that I submitted a request to the institutional review board for permission to post on the Walden Participant Pool and to provide a \$10 gift card as a thank you incentive for participants. The institutional review board also stated that verifying eligibility before interviewing was repetitive, since participants were privy to that information in the posted invitation,

so that step was removed. I also placed invitation ads and paid Facebook for these after not acquiring the desired participant response during the first few days of this phase. These additions and the total number of participants recruited varied from the initial discussion in Chapter 3. The total number of participants recruited during the data collection time frame was 27. After reviewing the first 12 interview responses, some participants were eliminated due to not meeting all the requirements of the study. This process was repeated until data saturation had been reached, at which time there was a total of 12 qualifying participants. This final number of qualifying participants was within the original boundaries proposed for the study.

Data Analysis

In this qualitative case study, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The data analysis was completed through initial coding and cross-coding for categories, patterns, and emerging themes in the data based on Saldana's (2016) suggestion that coding should take place during data collection and analysis of the participants' responses. Some descriptive coding was embedded in the interview questions due to the terminology used (i.e., self-efficacy, relationships, motivation) and was present in the participant responses to these questions. As I reviewed the interview responses, there were initial terms that were present in each of the transcripts. From the participant transcripts, I searched the responses for descriptive codes and patterns. I worked through each interview response to find recurring words. Words that appeared at least twice were recorded as recurring patterns (see Saldana, 2016). After listing these initial codes, I cross-coded the interview responses categorized by the interview question.

I created a table with all the participants' responses organized by the interview question and compared the initial codes across the 12 participants searching for patterns. Once I established the patterns, I used the categories embedded in the CoI interview questions and self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships as the final three categories. After dividing the recurring words into categories, I looked for emerging themes that aligned with the research question and sub-questions. Table 3 shows the initial coding and recurring word counts.

Table 3

Initial Code Counts

Recurring Words and Phrases and Frequency of Occurrences			
		Sharing	4
Understanding	26	Comfortable	8
Clear	4	Presentations	5
Encouraged/Encouraging/Encouragement	11	Acknowledged	3
Precise	2	Determination	2
Guided/Guiding/Guidance	7	Readily	3
Helpful	2	Internet	5
Explained	2	Library	3
Explanations	4	Books	5
Provided Examples	6	Journals	2
Simple	11	Career	10
Engaged or Engagement	11	Increased Self-	
Relationships	2	confidence	5
Interesting	13	Parents	4
Asked Questions/Questioning	11	Children	3
Positive	7	Husband	2
Timely	4	Business	6
Immediate	5	Strong	3
Available	3	Positive Self-	
Concerns addressed	5	Efficacy	10
Supportive	5	Sense of	
Easily		Belonging	24
		Awesome	2

Patterns and Categories

After I established the recurring word patterns from the initial coding, I organized the codes by category and checked for alignment with the research question and sub-questions. I organized the patterns by teaching, social, and cognitive presences, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. These categories reflected the research questions and conceptual framework and by combining the initial and cross-codes I was able to identify patterns that aligned with each category (see Table 4).

Table 4*Patterns Aligned with Research Question and Sub-Questions*

Research Question Focus	Patterns
CoI-Teaching Presence	Understanding Clear Encouraging Precise Guiding Helpful Explanations Examples Simple Engaging Interesting Positive Relationship Immediate Feedback Concerns Addressed Supportive
CoI-Social Presence	Sense of Belonging Sharing Supportive Comfortable Shared Presentations Acknowledged
CoI-Cognitive Presence	Determination Readily Available Resources Internet Library Books Journals
Self-Efficacy	Increased Self-Confidence Strong Sense of Belonging Positive Self-Efficacy
Motivation	Career Parents Children Spouse Business
Student Relationships	Awesome Sense of Belonging Sharing Friendliness Available Acknowledged

The patterns that align with the research question and sub-questions emerged from the interview responses for each corresponding interview question focused within that category (i.e. teaching presence, social presence, cognitive presence, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships). The interview questions for the CoI were derived from a CoI survey and intended to gain insight into perceptions of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence and how participation in these presences built a sense of community. The remaining researcher created questions focused on self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. Each category had two or three questions relating to it. Some of the emerging patterns appeared in more than one of the interview question categories. The patterns in Table 4 emerged from the comparison of all 12 participants' responses. The responses in each category reflect their perceptions of the CoI presences, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships as they participated in developmental blended college courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following breakdown of each category identifies how the patterns correlate and sometimes crossover.

Teaching Presence

The responses discussed in the following paragraphs are for the final 12 qualifying participants (see Table 5). The 12 participant numbers range from 1-27 since the original participant number allocated was retained. As outlined in Appendix A, the first category of interview questions focused on CoI teaching presence, specifically, the design and organization of coursework, the facilitation of the instructor, and the direct instruction of the instructor.

Table 5*Participant Numbers Allocated to the Final 12 Participants in the Study*

Pseudonym	Gender
P3	Male
P5	Female
P7	Female
P8	Female
P9	Female
P10	Male
P15	Female
P16	Female
P17	Female
P19	Male
P20	Male
P27	Female

Eleven out of the 12 participants provided similar perceptions. Their instructors provided easy, clear, simple instructions and examples to support increased understanding. Their perceptions recognized encouragement, engaging, and interesting rapport with the instructional experience, both online and face-to-face. They perceived their instructors as being supportive, helpful, and as addressing concerns and providing feedback in a timely manner. P3 stated that the instructor was “easily understood and provided clear instructions and was understanding and accommodating.” P7 and P19 said the instructor asked them to evaluate themselves and involved them in an engaging classroom by building foundations and being constructive. P20 also mentioned the student roles and discussions and added the instructor used “humor” to enliven the discussions and class activities. P8 spoke about lively discussions, engagement, good case scenarios, and “not ambiguous” when referring to the instructor. P9 said the instructor “addressed concerns and repeated the instructions to check for understanding

and also broke the activities down into manageable chunks.” P10 highlighted helpful resources and opportunities for “idea exchanges through discussion.” P15 and P16 both mentioned the guidance and interaction with the instructor through discussions, presentations, and critical thinking activities. P27 reiterated the instructor’s use of simple, clear instructions, but added “kindness” to the perceptions and said, “the instructor interrogated them to determine understanding.” Only one of the 12 participants had a negative experience with the instructor. P5 mentioned the instructor’s expectations were “difficult and unclear” and would not continue to discuss the instructor in the next two interview questions, but relayed information about another class where a positive experience occurred. While 11 of the participants provided positive comments concerning instructor feedback, with “timely” and “immediate” being key words, P5 indicated “minimal feedback”, but said it was “timely” when given.

The responses to these first three interview questions reflected the categories of CoI teaching presence more fully in the facilitation and direct instruction of the instructor. There is also a relationship to the next set of interview questions focusing on social presence. Several crossovers of recurring word patterns were woven throughout the participant responses. These will be acknowledged as each category is explained.

For the teaching presence focused interview questions, it appeared the design and organization of the coursework were only addressed in the instructions provided by the facilitator through communication with the participants within the classroom. It should be noted the design of the coursework varied due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and these participants dealt with multiple platforms in both face-to-face and online experiences.

The pivot to online learning due to COVID-19 changed the course design of many of these courses sometimes mid-semester and the interaction between college students and their instructors was commented upon more in the responses than actual course design or organization components. However, there was a possible relationship to course design in the participant responses for cognitive presence. These will be addressed following social presence and I will discuss these in Chapter 5 with the findings of the study.

Social Presence

For Interview questions 4-6, participants responded about their perceptions of CoI social presence within their courses. The questions focused on open communication from student-to-student and between students and the instructor, group cohesion, and triggering events. As could be seen, the focus of student-to-instructor communication has been partially addressed in the previous section. There will also be overlapping in the responses in the following sections for self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. However, in this section, I will address the specific responses for the designated interview questions focused on social presence.

The first question focusing on social presence asked participants about their perceptions of a sense of belonging through interaction with other course participants. All 12 participants answered “Yes” in response to this question. There were varying explanations to support the affirmative responses. Several of the participants, including P3, P8, P19, and P27 noted an “increased understanding of concepts” through interaction with classmates. P5 differentiated between the face-to-face and online aspects of the course and said the face-to-face was more “supportive”, but Zoom meetings made the

online component more “comfortable.” P8 shared P5’s views about the online component of the course stating the Zoom meetings made it more “interactive.” P7 shared perceptions of a sense of belonging through conversation with classmates about “differences and similarities” and “sharing” these with each other. P9 and P17 affirmed a sense of belonging and explained that interaction with classmates was “exciting” and “piqued interest in the course.” P15 perceived a sense of belonging as helping to “identify with others” in the course. P16 found the perception of a sense of belonging provided courage and that interaction equals learning through a sharing of views. Another phrase of P19 mentioned healthy “competition” between course mates that led to increased understanding. P27 linked a sense of belonging and interaction to decreased boredom and increased aggressiveness when participating in class activities.

The next interview question regarding social presence focused on online discussions and the comfort level when participating. P5 began the response with an initial sense of discomfort that later declined as the familiarity with the online platform increased. P20 had several technical difficulties with the online platform that increased discomfort but said the discomfort had declined as technical issues were resolved. P8 attributed being an extrovert to perceptions of feeling comfortable and admitted enjoying discussions and feedback from peers in the online format. The other nine participants all mentioned the discussions were engaging and the interaction helped to increase knowledge and understanding.

The final social presence interview question focused on a time when the participant’s point of view was acknowledged by other course mates and what feelings

this acknowledgment initiated. P5 had no contributions to this interview question and said there was only general discussion within the course. The other 11 participants all affirmed positive perceptions of acknowledgment and many of them referred to presentations as their examples. P3 shared that critique was received from course mates due to mispronunciation of words, but quickly followed the response by saying it was received as constructive criticism and a challenge that motivated improvement. Several participants expressed positive support from course mates during and after their presentations with P19 responding that course mates stayed “attentive” and “focused.”

Cognitive Presence

The final CoI presence reflected in the interview questions is cognitive presence. As mentioned previously, there were overlapping terms among teaching presence and cognitive presence regarding course resources and course design. Interview Question 7 began the section on cognitive presence by asking about course activities and materials piquing the participants’ curiosity. Out of all the interview questions, I believe this one might have been the least understood. Nine out of 12 participants responded “No” and provided no additional information, although I asked for clarification in follow up emails. One participant initially asked me to explain what I meant by the phrase “piqued my curiosity.” This led me to believe the phrase might have been confusing or misunderstood by participants. P5 did respond with the explanation the course was repetitive and then used an example of another course that was enjoyed as a comparison. P7, P9, and P17 all affirmed their curiosity was piqued and referenced the course content as factors they desired to further research.

The second cognitive presence interview question focused on the resources within the course and additional resources used. P5, P8, and P9 responded they only used information resources provided within the course such as rubrics, modules, and textbooks in both the online and face-to-face components of the course. The remaining participants (P3, P7, P10, P15, P16, P17, P19, P20, and P27) all referenced the Internet. P10, P16, and P19 referenced the library as an additional information source. These responses also provide insight into the course design and organization with most of the participants' information sources being within the course and general use of the Internet to support their coursework.

The final cognitive presence interview question focused on asking participants for a scenario where they could apply the knowledge in the course to a real-life situation. All 12 participants responded "Yes" to being able to apply the knowledge to scenarios outside the course. One general response from P27 was that "you can apply the knowledge in any situation where you are required to use study skills." Several participants referenced their career and work environments. P20 used critical thinking skills as applied to a future career in purchasing, investing, and accounting. P19 applied the knowledge to analyzing a business report. P17 discussed using skills acquired to "express my views in daily life" and for assertiveness in "making decisions on saving and spending." The "smooth running" of work or business was mentioned by P10, P15, and P3 referenced conferences and customer service in business. P8 discussed a future writing career and P9 provided a reference to household budgeting and money management. P5 and P7 spoke about applied research and problem resolution in real-life

experiences. Overall, the responses for cognitive presence explored triggering events, exploration, and resolution.

Self-Efficacy

The self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationship interview questions consisted of two questions for each category. These aligned with the three sub-questions in the research question. The first one I addressed was the participants' perceptions of self-efficacy in the course. This interview question differentiated between the online and face-to-face components of the course. Since the participants were enrolled in the college skills courses during the COVID-19 pandemic, the pivot from face-to-face to online courses affected most of them. The two self-efficacy questions asked about the participants' levels of self-efficacy in each component of the course, face-to-face and online. Interview Question 10 asked about the online component of the course and the level of self-efficacy of participants during this time. All 12 participants responded positively for a high level of self-efficacy. There were recurring phrases of "increased self-confidence" and the responses varied very little in origin with most referencing a sense of belonging and strong self-efficacy levels. Interview Question 11 focused on the face-to-face component of the course. Eleven out of the 12 participants responded with P15 commenting 'not applicable'. All the responses were positive with P5 mentioning that face-to-face self-efficacy increased more than in the online component. The reasons behind the positive responses for face-to-face self-efficacy varied in detail. P3 discussed the ability to see body language and make eye contact as improving self-efficacy. P20 echoed the sentiments of P3 regarding being able to maintain eye contact with the

instructor. The remaining participants discussed working in groups and interest in the activities provided and skills acquired that helped to increase self-efficacy.

Motivation

Interview Questions 12 and 13 focused on motivation with Question 12 asking what motivated participants to successfully complete the course. Question 13 focused on the specific motivational factor or person that influenced the participants' work in the course. All 12 participants referenced career or business as a motivational factor for succeeding in the course. In addition to the general response of career or business, P7, P20, and P27 referenced parents as motivational factors influencing the desire for success in the course. P5, P9, and P17 referred to either children, spouses, or both as specific influential factors that motivated them. P3 and P8 listed their instructors as motivational factors and encouragement to practice and improve as influential to their success in the course. P7 stated "I am my motivation. I am eager to reach my goals, to achieve self-actualization and a better understanding." P10 and P16 listed Ben Carson and Tony Robbins as motivational speakers that inspired them to achieve success in the course.

Student Relationships

The final two interview questions, (Questions 14 and 15), centered around student relationships. These questions overlapped several of the other categories like teaching presence, social presence, and self-efficacy. Question 14 asked participants about their relationships with other classmates within the course. The student-to-student relationships varied from very little collaboration to participants forming close relationships. P5 did not have a negative experience but responded that only mandatory collaboration was

experienced and there were not any outside or voluntary friendships throughout the course. The perceptions of P3, who experienced the previous issue with laughter from classmates about the mispronunciation of words, restated other than that isolated incident, all other relationships were supportive. P15 spoke about differences among classmates but said that “interaction was friendly and supportive.” Being able to assist each other through discussions of missed concepts was the perception of P19, while P20 perceived student relationships among classmates as “mutually beneficial.” Group work and team collaboration were the focus of P8, P9, P16, and P17 and outside of these parameters, they did not provide any perceptions of individual relationships. P10 confirmed a good relationship with classmates and P27 perceived closeness and good competition through teamwork and discussion. The perceptions of P7 were “awesome” and “memorable” exchanges of ideas with fellow course mates.

The final interview question was Question 15 which focused on the perceptions of the relationship between the participant and the instructor. Participant 5 had negative perceptions of teaching presence and some neutral or negative perceptions in social presence. This also proved to be true with the perceptions of the student-to-instructor relationship. The instructor was said to have been “disinterested” and provided minimal feedback and responses. This appeared to worsen in the online component of the course. The other eleven participants all confirmed positive perceptions of their relationships with their instructors. Either the word ‘understanding’ or ‘encouraging’ appeared in these 11 responses. Words describing the instructor were “friendly” (P3, P9, P15, and P27),

“strong” (P10), “awesome” (P27), “humble and eloquent” (P19), and “readily available” (P15).

Emerging Themes

After reviewing the recurring word patterns, aligning them with the categories in the research question and sub-questions, and analyzing the overlapping responses between the CoI presences, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships, I pieced together an emerging theme for each of the six categories. The theme for the first CoI presence, teaching presence, is *increased understanding through guiding, encouraging, and timely feedback*. The second CoI presence, social presence, was reflected in the interview responses as *an increased sense of belonging through sharing, supporting, and acknowledging*. The final CoI presence, cognitive presence, embodied *increased knowledge through the application of skills and exploration of resources*. The cognitive presence was not represented as well as the other two presences due to so many participants not responding to one of the interview questions, or minimally responding without further clarification. The fourth theme for self-efficacy was *increased self-confidence through a sense of belonging*. Although the interview question did not mention a sense of belonging in correlation with self-efficacy, there were many responses using this phrase whether it was from hearing it in the previous interview question regarding social presence, or a general perception was not distinguishable. The fifth theme, motivation, can be stated as *career goals, family, and friends contributed to increased motivation*. The final theme for student relationships was difficult because so many of the recurring words had already been represented in the previous themes.

However, student relationships can be reflected as *increased relationships through interaction, friendliness, and availability*. These emerging themes will be discussed in further detail in the results of the study and the alignment to the research questions and conceptual framework and will continue to be discussed in the findings of the study in Chapter 5.

Discrepant Cases

While there were no significant discrepant cases within the study, there were several negative perceptions expressed by P5 in the categories of teaching presence and student-to-instructor relationships. The remaining interview responses for this participant were either neutral or positive. When a negative perception emerged from a response to one of the interview questions, P5 quickly followed it with a positive example from another course experience. It should be noted the timing of the course and the COVID-19 pandemic could have affected the perceptions of this participant when previous experiences in a similar environment were positive. The purpose of the study was focused in identifying the perceptions of college students as they participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The perceptions, whether negative or positive, were relevant to the findings of the study and a broader sampling of participants might indicate more negative perceptions than positive during this time frame. This will be discussed further in suggestions for future research in Chapter 5.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

As previously stated in Chapter 3, I used reflective journaling for my thoughts and comments during the research process (Patton, 2015). I used semi-structured interviews to collect data from the selected participants. Each interview has been stored in a password protected online environment and all recordings were transcribed for accuracy (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I received feedback throughout the process from my dissertation committee and my colleagues within the dissertation forums. I used the guidelines of the research questions and the purpose of the study to target emerging themes and I refrained from using my personal interpretation of the data in the analysis process (Saldaña, 2016). I ensured the saturation of the data occurred before concluding the study. I did this by analyzing the data for new information until saturation was achieved (Saldaña, 2016).

Transferability

In conducting trustworthy research, participants were selected via invitations posted on social media platforms and through the Walden Participant Pool. The random purposeful sampling criteria as outlined in the invitation and verified after each participant's response. No personal data was reviewed when making selections. Thick descriptions of the interview responses were provided through the transcribing process and recordings (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Participants were prompted to provide in-depth responses that went beyond a simple positive or negative answer. Descriptions of experiences were encouraged (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Dependability

Dependability in a qualitative case study is parallel to credibility (Patton, 2015). Steps were taken to ensure the participants were selected from an eligible list. Interviews were conducted in a password protected online platform and recorded and transcribed for accuracy (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Descriptions and detailed responses were encouraged (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Data collection continued until saturation and triangulation were achieved through hand-coding, cross-coding, and analytic memos (Patton, 2015). The data analysis followed the guidelines to look for emerging themes that aligned with the research questions and purpose of the study. The researcher's interpretation of the data was not considered (Patton, 2015). Reflective journaling and member checking through peer reviews of the components of the study provided additional dependability and credibility to the study (Patton, 2015).

Confirmability

The confirmability followed the other three components and the same procedures were used to provide an unbiased, confirmed research study (Patton, 2015). The selection of participants was conducted through the ethical guidelines of the institutional review board. The interviews followed the outline of the proposed interview questions and reflected the research question and purpose of the study. The collected data was hand-coded. Triangulation of the data occurred through multiple cycles of coding, analytic memos, and follow-up questions for clarification of interview responses. The emerging themes which paralleled with the components of the study were analyzed. The researcher's interpretations were not taken into consideration and through reflective

journaling and accountability to the dissertation committee and colleagues, the study was protected from bias (Patton, 2015).

Results

In this qualitative case study, I had one research question and three sub-questions. When analyzing the participant interview data, I kept a copy of the research question and sub-questions close at hand to ensure alignment throughout the data analysis process. The interview questions for the CoI presences were adapted from the CoI survey and had embedded categories for each presence. The self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships interview questions were researcher created but needed to align with the research question and corresponding sub-questions and reflect influences of the CoI. As I worked through the data analysis process, I checked and rechecked to ensure all codes, categories, and themes aligned with the research question and sub-questions while also reflecting the participants' perceptions, thoughts, and opinions. From the initial coding, and cross-coding I divided the recurring words into categories for analysis. The first three emerging themes outlined in Table 6 are taken from the recurring words and patterns and reflect the three presences of CoI represented in the research question. The remaining three emerging themes from the categories of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships reflect the topics of the three research sub-questions.

Table 6*Connections Among Research Questions, Categories, and Themes*

Research Question	Categories	Themes
RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Teaching Presence -Design and Organization of Coursework -Facilitation of Instructor -Direct Instruction of Instructor	Increased Understanding Through Guiding, Encouraging, and Timely Feedback
RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Social Presence -Affective Expression -Open Communication -Group Cohesion	Increased Sense of Belonging Through Sharing, Supporting, and Acknowledging
RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Cognitive Presence -Triggering Event -Exploration -Resolution	Increased Knowledge Through Application of Skills and Exploration of Resources
SQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of self-efficacy when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Self-Efficacy	Increased Self-Confidence Through a Sense of Belonging
SQ2: What are the perceptions of college students of motivation when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Motivation	Career Goals, Family and Friends Contributed to Increased Motivation
SQ3: What are the perceptions of college students of student relationships when participating in developmental blended courses?	Student Relationships	Increased Relationships Through Interaction, Friendliness, and Availability

Theme One: Increased Understanding Through Guiding, Encouraging, and Timely Feedback

The themes began with the first nine interview question codes, patterns, and categories that represented the CoI framework. In this study, CoI provided a way to explore college student perceptions of collaboration and constructivism in the developmental blended course. The first of the CoI presences represented in the categories was teaching presence with sub-categories of design and organization of coursework, facilitation of the instructor, and direct instruction of the instructor. The three interview questions related to this category correlated with an emerging theme of *increased understanding through guiding, encouraging, and timely feedback*. The initial codes and categories aligned with research question one reflecting CoI teaching, social, and cognitive presences. Research question one asked, what are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic? Teaching presence reflected the perceptions of the college students regarding their instructor and course design for this study. Most of the participants described their perceptions of the instructor in the context of increased understanding through varying factors within the course. P3 stated the instructor was “easily understood and provided clear instructions and was understanding and accommodating.” P8 said, “The instructor encouraged asking questions for clarity. He provided easy to understand instructions that were not ambiguous.” P20 said, “He provided specific student roles in the online platform and outlined the course for us. He engaged us in group discussions to help us with clarity.” P9 said the instructor “addressed

concerns and repeated the instructions to check for understanding and also broke the activities down into manageable chunks.” P15 mentioned guidance and said, “He gave us clear instructions and opportunities and choices.” P27 said, “The instructor outlined every task and explained the purpose. He also used simple words.” There was one participant perception of the instructor that outlined difficult, unclear, and minimal feedback as characteristics of a negative experience (P5). Even this negative perception provided insight into what a perceived positive experience of teaching presence would be: easy or simple, clear instruction, and timely feedback. These perceptions reflected two of the three instructor focused interview questions with course design and organization being the other component of teaching presence.

It appeared the design and organization of the coursework were only addressed in the instructions provided by the instructor through communication with the participants throughout the course. The perceptions of the participants regarding course design and organization were not fully represented in the interview responses for teaching presence. It should be noted the design of the coursework varied due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and these participants dealt with multiple platforms in both face-to-face and online learning. The pivot to online learning due to COVID-19 changed the course design of many of these courses sometimes mid-semester and the interaction between college students and the instructor was more remarked upon than actual course design or organization. However, there was a possible relationship to course design in the participant responses for cognitive presence which indicated a possible CoI influence.

The overall goal of this study was to provide further knowledge regarding college student perceptions of CoI and how the three presences interacted and influenced. The emerging theme of *increased understanding through guiding, encouraging, and timely feedback* aligns with the characteristics of positive perceptions of teaching presence within the study.

Theme Two: Increased Sense of Belonging Through Sharing, Supporting, and Acknowledging

The second emerging theme continued with research questions one and three interview questions regarding social presence. The sub-categories embedded within social presence were affective expression, open communication, and group cohesion as adapted from the CoI survey for the interview questions. Social presence provided the personal aspect of the CoI model. It related to the participants' feelings and personal experiences and how they were affected through participation in CoI. This overlapped with teaching presence in the communication, class discussions, and other triangulated activities that included both student-to-student and student-to-instructor interactions. These perceptions were reflected through influences in self-efficacy and student relationships which will be discussed later in the chapter. All participants stated they perceived positive social presence through a sense of belonging. This phrase, sense of belonging, was part of one of the social presence interview questions, and one of the most repeated phrases used by participants in several categories of their interviews. It seemed to resonate with them. The participants varied in how they described the sense of belonging but mentioned interaction with classmates through sharing, identifying with

others, being supported, and healthy competition. Participant 5 said, “the face-to-face part was easier and more supportive. Zoom helped make the online more comfortable.” P10 said that “increased learning came through interaction and the interaction increased my self-confidence.” P15 felt “the interaction helped me to identify with others.” P16 associated the interaction with others as “having courage” and said, “interaction was sharing of views and helped with learning.” P27 said the interaction with classmates “increased my understanding and helped develop my confidence.” The final interview question regarding social presence focused on point of view and the most recurring word was ‘acknowledged.’ The word referenced classmate interaction and feedback after sharing or presenting within the course. P7 said, “I received constructive feedback from my peers, and this gave me a sense of understanding.” P8 said, “I took the lead and taught concepts to classmates about test prep and received applause from classmates.” P20 said, “I interacted with my classmates about the content matter. My classmates acknowledge my contributions.” Several participants mentioned presentations, including P10 who specifically said that presenting was a “positive experience and I shared with my classmates.” These patterns and categories led to the emerging theme referencing the participant perceptions of *an increased sense of belonging through sharing, supporting, and acknowledging*. This provided the second theme of CoI and as the coding progressed was reflected in the overlapping perceptions of teaching presence, self-efficacy, and student relationships.

Theme Three: Increased Knowledge Through Application of Skills and Exploration of Resources

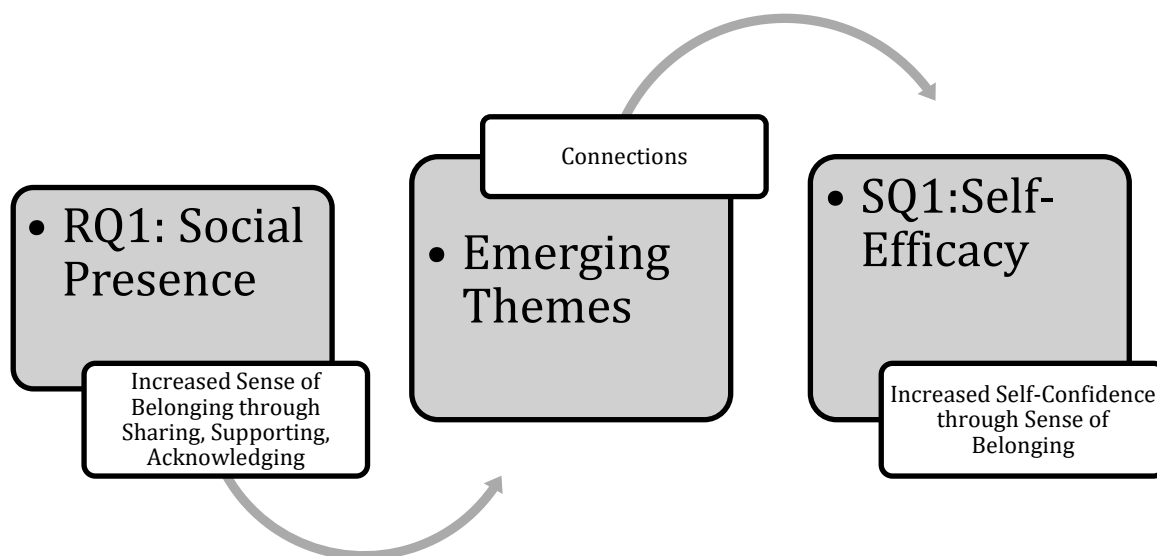
The final emerging theme for CoI focused in RQ1 was identified in the patterns and categories of cognitive presence. The data patterns aligned with the sub-categories of triggering events, exploration, and resolution as outlined in the interview questions. The first interview question focusing on cognitive presence asked about course activities and materials piquing the participants' curiosity. Out of all the interview questions, I believe this one might have been the least understood. Nine out of 12 participants responded "No" when asked for an example of a course activity or course material that piqued their curiosity. Several participants provided no additional information, although I asked for clarification in follow up emails. One participant initially asked me to explain what I meant by 'piqued my curiosity.' P9 stated, "the content about stress management promoted further study into signs and symptoms of depression and future interest in psychology." P17 also said that content about "finances and accounting in the course cause an interest in further research." Other participants, like P27, said "No, both the online and the face-to-face formats of the course had all materials readily available." This led me to believe the phrase might have been confusing for participants. There was one negative response about repetition in the course and aligned with the sub-category of triggering events. It should also be noted that COVID-19 could be considered a triggering event and as such all participants were affected by it. However, the interview questions did not provide for elaboration on these circumstances and the subject was broached only in the summary questions and wrap up which were not used in the data analysis.

Exploration was the second sub-category addressed in the participant responses and included any resources used outside of the course-provided materials. All, but two participants used the Internet to support their course materials, and several used the library. P5 said that she “explored reports and databases that were recommended and also journal articles.” P15 said, “I watched video tutorials on YouTube and Google.” P19 said, “I used sources from the library, handouts, and the Internet.” These responses also provided insight into the course design and organization which reflected teaching presence categories. Once the triggering events and the exploration categories were addressed, the final interview question asked participants’ perceptions about applying the skills learned in real-world situations outside the boundaries of the course. This led to the sub-category of resolution and all participants responded with positive perceptions to this interview question. Several scenarios were listed for career and study skills applications. Critical thinking skills were mentioned as useful in future careers. P3 provided examples of “business conferences note-taking skills and providing customer service in business” as the application to the real world. P7 related the information to the “safe and orderly work environment.” P5 stated an encompassing perception through the comment “these skills can be applied outside the classroom through breaking down of problems to find a solution. They are applicable in real-world situations.” The overall perceptions of the participants positively listed various scenarios where cognitive skills learned within the course would lead to *increased knowledge through the application of skills and exploration of resources* which provided the emerging theme for cognitive presence.

Theme Four: Increased Self-Confidence Through a Sense of Belonging

The fourth theme for the study began with interview questions designated for perceptions of self-efficacy. These questions were followed by those focused on motivation and student relationships. Each category was represented by two interview questions. The two interview questions for self-efficacy focused on both the online and the face-to-face components of the course. The questions aligned with the research sub-question one which asked, “what are the perceptions of college students of self-efficacy when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?” The category for self-efficacy was simply ‘self-efficacy.’ Since the participants were enrolled in the college skills courses during the COVID-19 pandemic, the pivot from face-to-face to online courses affected most of them. All 12 participants responded positively to the first interview question reflecting a high level of self-efficacy. There were recurring phrases of “increased self-confidence” and the responses varied very little in origin with most referencing a sense of belonging and strong self-confidence. Sense of belonging connected self-efficacy to social presence in CoI. This confirmed the positive perception of the influential connection among the participants. P5 said the “skills learned in this class helped to boost confidence in other classes.” P9 said, “The class helped me build a wider range of skills to better deal with stress effectively.” In the second interview question for self-efficacy, the face-to-face component of the course was addressed. Once again, most of the participant perceptions were positive. P5 mentioned that face-to-face self-efficacy increased more than the online component. P9 said, “I became proficient in providing examples and working in groups.” P10 said, “having

access to the resources helped to increase self-confidence.” P17 said that “stress management was taught face-to-face and helped me to understand the components very well.” Once again, it should be noted these participants were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the pivot to online from the traditional face-to-face experience during their course. The physical qualities perceived and experienced through body language, eye contact with classmates and the instructor, and group projects provided increased confidence. There were not significant recurring qualities. Each participant cited a different aspect of the learning environment, but overall, the general perceptions were positive in both online and face-to-face settings. These perceptions provided support for the emerging theme that positive self-efficacy leads to *increased self-confidence through a sense of belonging*. The connections between self-efficacy and social presence are noted (see Figure 6).

Figure 6*Connections Between Social Presence and Self-Efficacy****Theme Five: Career Goals, Family, and Friends Contributed to Increased Motivation***

The next two interview questions were focused on the motivational factors of the participants. The patterns of the initial codes and category correlated with research sub-question two regarding perceptions of motivation throughout the course and were not limited between internal and external motivational factors. All twelve participants indicated career or business as motivation to succeed. P7, P20, and P27 referenced parents as motivational factors influencing desired success in the course. P7 said, “By fulfilling the goals my parents have for me, that will make them proud and it gives me the determination to succeed.” P10 said, “I have a desire to change my family background,

and my passion to own a business gives me motivation for the future.” P19 said that having an “active role in society through better study skills increased my motivation.” P5, P9, and P17 referred to either children, spouses, or both as specific influential factors that motivated them. P3 and P8 listed their instructor as a motivational factor and encouragement to practice and improve as influential to their success in the course. P10 and P16 listed Ben Carson and Tony Robbins as motivational speakers that inspired them to achieve success in the course. P15 stated, “I am motivated by the role models in my future career path.” The commonality among the motivational factors was identified as a career or business, and a special person, usually a relative whose opinion mattered. These factors contributed to the motivation to succeed for the participants. They support the emerging theme that *career goals, family, and friends contributed to increased motivation* throughout the course. Motivation to succeed related to increased self-efficacy in the participants. Their desire to succeed and gain the approval of their loved ones connects to increased self-confidence. This lends credibility to the influences of CoI social presence and self-efficacy. In the final emerging theme regarding student relationships, the patterns provided insight to support the influences of CoI and intertwine self-efficacy and motivation to further triangulate the data.

Theme Six: Increased Relationships Through Interaction, Friendliness, and Availability

The final emerging theme from the initial coding, patterns, and categories involved in student relationships. The research sub-question three reflected participant perceptions of student relationships throughout the course. This category and the last two

interview questions inquired about participants' perceptions of their relationships with other classmates and with their instructor. The student-to-instructor relationship question reflected similar patterns of recurring words to teaching presence in the CoI which focused on instructor facilitation and direct instruction. The student-to-student question identified patterns mirroring social presence in the CoI and, self-efficacy. The student relationship perceptions were a wide range of experiences from casual interaction throughout the course to close personal relationships. The commonality among the participants was group work, collaboration, and presentations. P20 perceived student relationships among classmates as "mutually beneficial." P7 said, "This was an awesome, engaged, memorable idea exchange" when referring to the course and the relationships with classmates. P17 said, "This was a cordial interaction of great friends sharing learning skills in a group." In the second interview question focusing on the student-to-instructor relationship, 11 of the participants experienced positive perceptions of their relationships with the instructor. P3 said, "He was a positive, friendly, understanding mentor." P7 liked the "word-for-word examples provided to increase understanding." P17 said the instructor was at my "beck and call and assisted with challenges." P20 said, "he assigns tasks that I can pass easily." The one negative perception was from P5.

Participant 5 also reflected the negative perceptions from previous responses to teaching presence and said the instructor was "disinterested" and "provided minimal feedback and responses." This appeared to "worsen in the online component of the course." The other eleven participants all confirmed positive perceptions of their relationships with their instructors. Either the word 'understanding' or 'encouraging' appeared in these 11

responses. This analysis led to the emerging theme of *increased relationships through interaction, friendliness, and availability*.

Summary

In the previous sections of this chapter, I analyzed the data for patterns, categories, and emerging themes. The purpose of the qualitative case study was to identify the perceptions of college students regarding how social, cognitive, and teaching presences build a sense of community and influence self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships as they participate in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research question and three sub-questions were focused in the purpose of the study. After analyzing the participant interview responses, initial hand-coding, cross-coding for patterns, and dividing the data into categories, I identified six emerging themes. The first three themes, 1) increased understanding through guiding, encouraging, and timely feedback, 2) increased sense of belonging through sharing, supporting, and acknowledging 3) increased knowledge through the application of skills and exploration of sources identified the perceptions of college students regarding teaching, social, and cognitive presences. The remaining three themes, 4) increased self-confidence through a sense of belonging, 5) career goals, family and friends contributed to increased motivation, and 6) increased relationships through interaction, friendliness, and availability, identified the influences of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships as reflected in participation in CoI. In the general results of the study, the perceptions of college students enrolled in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic were identified as positive. These perceptions of participation in

CoI also positively influenced the college students' self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships during this time frame. Significant connections were identified between social presence and self-efficacy that mutually shared a perceived sense of belonging. Teaching presence and relationships had some overlapping themes and cycled back to interaction through social presence and a sense of belonging through self-efficacy. Cognitive presence provided the least identification into participants' perceptions, but it should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic could have affected the data collection through the interview question responses. Participants experienced a pivot to online learning that created changes in course design and organization and could have influenced overall cognitive perceptions and experiences.

In Chapter 5, I will compare the study findings with the relevant bodies of literature from the analysis and review in Chapter 2. I will explain how the findings correlate to the conceptual framework of the study. I will consider the limitations and implications of the study for further research opportunities. Finally, I will explain the social change implications of the study and how the findings of the study may help to initiate positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify college students' perceptions of how social, cognitive, and teaching presences built a sense of community and influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships as they participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The qualitative case study was selected to collect data through participant interviews that answered the research questions and sub-questions focused on in this study. In qualitative studies, there have been varying perspectives about the participant sample size. Researchers should focus on the goal of sufficiently addressing the research questions through observations of the phenomenon and this helps to achieve saturation within the study. Saturation is a goal suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The idea that saturation has occurred is when there are no new themes or information emerging in the analyzed data. According to Yin (2014), saturation in a case study may occur with up to 30 participants. Stake (2010) stated that one or more participants may be all that is needed to provide saturation for a case study. The participant selection for this qualitative case study was based on a specific population. The participants were selected through social media platforms via posted invitations. The purposeful sampling only included participant selection from students who had successfully completed a college skills blended learning course during January-July 2020 of the 2019-2020 academic school year. The purposeful sampling began with P1 and continued until saturation was achieved. When several of the initial participants did not qualify for the study, the initial process of selecting and contacting additional participants was repeated, and additional interviews were conducted until

saturation was achieved. The warm-up questions, interview questions, and closing questions are all provided in Appendix A. I analyzed the interview data by hand-coding each interview for emerging themes, then cross-coding by interview questions, and then triangulating the data.

The significance of my study was that it addressed the lack of identification of college students' perceptions of CoI and the influence of these perceptions on self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Blended learning has become a popular instructional method in developmental college courses, and identifying student perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships directly related to positive learning outcomes (Ma'arop & Embi, 2016). Using the CoI model provided insight into factors that contributed to positive student experiences by building a sense of community (Shea et al., 2014). My study focused on the identification of college students' perceptions of participation in CoI and the influence on self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. This focus had not been addressed in previous studies. The results of the study could promote social change by providing further insight into factors directly related to online course delivery to better meet the needs of developmental students specifically during a time period when students were faced with a dangerous health issue.

The key findings of the study indicated that most participants had positive perceptions of teaching, cognitive, and social presences while participating in CoI. These positive perceptions were reflected in the influences of CoI on self-efficacy, motivation,

and student relationships. The summary of the findings is outlined in the following paragraphs beginning with teaching presence and ending with student relationships. The connections between the components of the study are also reviewed.

Out of the 12 participants' responses to the three interview questions for teaching presence, only one participant had a negative perception of teaching presence in the findings. Eleven participants indicated positive perceptions of the instructor through facilitation and direct instruction. P5 had negative perceptions of teaching presence, specifically instructor facilitation and direct instruction. The data for course design and organization were not fully represented for teaching presence. Participants responded with more about interactions with the instructor. This might have been due to COVID-19 and the pivot from face-to-face to the online platform and the change in course design. The emerging theme for teaching presence indicated increased understanding through guiding, encouraging, and timely feedback from instructors. The findings for the three social presence interview questions indicated positive perceptions from all 12 participants. These perceptions were responses to affective expression, open communication, and group cohesion. The key phrase that participants reflected was a sense of belonging and the emerging theme was an increased sense of belonging through sharing, supporting, and acknowledging. Cognitive presence findings were in the areas of triggering events, exploration, and resolution within the college course. The 12 participants expressed positive perceptions of exploration and resolution, but not triggering events. There were mixed results from the triggering events question that indicated a possible discrepancy in the wording of the question or the clarity of the

meaning of 'piqued your curiosity.' Most of the participants did not elaborate on the triggering events question and many stated the course did not pique their curiosity.

Teaching presence findings indicated an emerging theme of increased knowledge through the application of skills and exploration of resources.

The key findings surrounding the influence of CoI on self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships were reflected in the last six interview question responses. There was a unanimously positive perception of self-efficacy within the courses and most participants used the phrase 'sense of belonging' in their responses. With this phrase, the connections to the three presences began to emerge. Self-efficacy and social presence had the most significant connection through the data analysis. The emerging theme from the self-efficacy data was identified as increased self-confidence through a sense of belonging. Motivation centered around the factors that motivated and the person or persons who provided motivation for the participants. The responses provided positive perceptions of motivation with many repetitive phrases. The people who motivated began with family and friends and extended to motivational speakers and the course instructor. The factors that influenced motivation were related to mostly being centered on successful future careers. There were both internal and external motivational factors represented. The emerging theme concluded that career goals, family, and friends contributed to increased motivation throughout the course. The findings for student relationships were the last category and were represented in the last two interview question responses. These responses were mostly positive, but the same participant who had a negative perception of teaching presence also had a negative perception in the

student-to-instructor relationship component of the responses. The other participant responses indicated positive perceptions while the range of intimacy of student-to-student and student-to-instructor relationships varied. The relationships indicated collaboration within the course through direct communication with the instructor, feedback, group work, and discussions. The emerging themes for student relationships indicated increased relationships through interaction, friendliness, and availability.

Overall, the identification of the perceptions of participants reflected positive experiences regarding CoI presences and how they influence self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships in this study except for teaching presence and student-to-instructor relationships. Cognitive presence was not sufficiently represented in the area for triggering events, even though COVID-19 was possibly a triggering event that caused discrepancies in the interview responses. The key findings indicated the most significant connection between social presence and self-efficacy with the phrase “sense of belonging” being repeated frequently. There were other connections between the CoI presences and their influence on self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships, which indicate a need for further research and will be addressed in the recommendations for future study.

Interpretation of the Findings

Interpretation of the Findings in Relevance to the Literature

The COVID-19 pandemic created a pivot in higher education from traditional face-to-face and blended courses to fully online learning within a matter of days (Gardner, 2020). From January to July 2020 and up to the present, college students have been

affected by social distancing and changes in instructional platforms. Although many studies have previously focused on blended learning, college developmental education, self-efficacy, motivation, and/or student relationships, few have combined these components, and no studies addressed these components during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study extended beyond previous literature in the field. The findings also focused on components that aligned with, extended, and diverged from previous literature in the field. In this study, most participants reflected positive perceptions of the three CoI presences within the developmental blended course despite the pivot due to COVID-19. Only one participant's perception of teaching presence was negative, but overall perceptions of the other two presences were related as positive. Overall, the participants identified positive perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships, and many provided overlapping perceptions that indicated the influence of CoI participation on these three factors.

The current literature provided studies of CoI that focused on the three presences combined with student perceptions in a variety of collaborative learning environments. The themes found throughout the research for CoI included studies focusing on motivation, self-efficacy, course design, autonomy, self-regulation, causal relationships, and academic performance (Almasi et al., 2018; Cooper & Scriven, 2017; Cutsinger et al., 2018; Garrison et al., 2010; Lam, 2015; Lee, 2017; Ojat, 2016; Vaughan et al., 2013). However, few studies focused on CoI in a blended learning environment. The findings of those studies focused on a blended learning environment, concentrated on other content areas rather than college skills. In those findings, further research was needed to provided

clarification about student perceptions (Hilliard & Stewart, 2019; Ojat, 2016). The key findings in my study also indicated the need for further research since there are still gaps in the research. In previous studies of CoI in the online environment, results indicated loneliness and student connectivity directly affected social presence, and students who worked closely with others tended to have better-perceived relationship experiences than those who worked alone (Ozaydin-Ozkara & Cakir, 2018). The findings in my study identified an emerging theme for social presence of an increased sense of belonging through sharing, supporting, and acknowledging, and for student relationships, the theme of increased relationships through interaction, friendliness, and availability. Also, in previous studies, instructor or teaching presence influenced course satisfaction and course outcome in some online and hybrid course studies, but in others showed no significant difference in student experiences (Cutsinger et al., 2018). In this study, there was a direct relationship to teaching presence and positive perceptions with the emerging theme of increased understanding through guiding, encouraging, and timely feedback. The one participant in this study who had negative perceptions of teaching presence also had fewer interactions with classmates and more neutral and negative perceptions throughout the course. The variance in these previous studies aligns with the variance in the influence of teaching presence in my study. However, more participants had positive perceptions, and the perceptions overlapped into other categories of the study. Other studies in the literature questioned CoI as an educational model or found minimal contributions to academic achievement or student relationships (Almasi et al., 2018; Blayone et al., 2018; Lee & Huang, 2018; Maddrell, Morrison, & Watson, 2017; Zhu,

Au, & Yates, 2016). The findings in this study identified positive perceptions of interaction among the three CoI presences, self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. The fact this study was conducted during COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced the contributions to academic achievement or student relationships and further study would be needed to confirm this.

Another aspect of the findings of this study is somewhat reflected in the current literature centers on COVID-19 and the fact that around 70% of higher education instructors in the United States had never taught online courses before the COVID-19 pandemic (Hechinger & Lorin, 2020). The findings in this study indicated most of the participants had positive perceptions of teaching presence with only one participant stating negative perceptions. These findings extended the literature beyond what had been previously studied and provided further insight for areas of future research. Also, in developmental education, Davidson and Petrosko (2015) found that persistence rates for developmental math courses were directly related to work and family relationships. The findings in this study indicated a theme of increased student relationships through *interaction, friendliness, and availability*. These findings extended the previous study by identifying possible factors that motivated students and would increase persistence.

Interpretation of the Findings in Relevance to the Conceptual Framework

The CoI theory (Garrison et al., 2000) founded upon Dewey's (1938) pragmatism and constructivism theories provided the structure to guide the interview questions, data collection, and data analysis for this study. Dewey also provided a basis for cognitive and teaching presences in the CoI model. Bandura's (1971) social learning theory supported

CoI cognitive presence and social presence for the study. Both Dewey's and Bandura's theories provided the setting for exploring students' perceptions in blended learning courses. Bandura's theories relating to self-efficacy supported motivation and student relationships which were influenced by students' perceptions. CoI provided social, cognitive, and teaching presences as a guide to identify students' perceptions while participating in blended learning courses. CoI model focused on building community through collaborative learning, usually in blended or online environments. This is directly related to self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. Together these theories provided a firm foundation for the focus of this qualitative case study.

Dewey's Pragmatism and Constructivism

Dewey (1938) believed in pragmatic philosophy where human beings adapt to their environment and their actions are a direct result of that adaptation. Therefore, the experiences of human beings within their environments were the basis of Dewey's pragmatic and constructivist theories. According to Dewey, human experiences within an environment can change the course of action and the effects of various factors within the environment which can directly influence outcomes. Human activities within an environment can bring about a reaction that is either favorable or unfavorable creating the theory that life goes on through interaction with the environment. In Dewey's constructivism, cognitive thought processes and environmental experiences create a basis for, and influence, learning outcomes. This theory directly reflected how students' perceptions while participating in CoI influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. The emerging themes in the findings for this study all reflected an increase

in understanding, sense of belonging, knowledge, motivation, and relationships for all participants.

Bandura's Self-Efficacy

Intertwined in Bandura's theory is the concept of self-efficacy and motivation as two factors affecting the learning environment. While cognitive thought processes are still key in learning, Bandura believes that other factors play a role in the balancing act of learning and directly affect outcomes. The findings of this study reflect Bandura's beliefs and cognitive presence provided the most limited data analysis results within the study. The reasoning for this is still unknown, but it was significant to the findings. Self-efficacy reflects the internal factors that motivate student behavior through their personal beliefs of what they can achieve. It is directly linked to a students' self-concept and perceived ability to accomplish a task in varying situations. Motivation is linked to both internal and external factors, but extrinsic motivation is the influence that others have on the students' behavior and ability to succeed at a certain task. This may be influenced by family, friends, academic support staff, the instructor, classmates, and others who are part of the students' daily lives. CoI is supported by Bandura's theory through the three presences which provide interaction and purposeful discourse. Social presence mirrors extrinsic motivation. Cognitive presence mirrors the internal behavior that influences self-efficacy, motivation, and students' ability to learn and function in the classroom. Teaching presence is a combination of factors since the instructor is an external influence, but the instruction influences internal motivation. Perceptions of motivation in this study also mirror the external factors in Bandura's theory with family and friends

being the most verbalized responses from the participants regarding motivation. The findings of this study found the strongest link between the CoI social presence and self-efficacy which would support current research connecting perceived self-efficacy of the students and motivation through, a sense of belonging, academic self-concept, behavior, and persistence (Luke, Redekop, & Burgin, 2015; MacArthur, Philippakos, & Graham, 2016; MacLeod, Yang, Zhu, & Shi, 2018; Martin et al., 2017; Melzer & Grant, 2016; Pasha-Zaidi et al., 2018; Perin et al., 2017).

CoI Model

Garrison and Vaughan (2008) applied the CoI model through their work with blended learning in higher education. In these studies, social, cognitive, and teaching presences were established, and the existence and influence of these presences provided the basis for the current CoI model. This model centers around critical discourse through collaboration and construction to provide meaningful learning experiences (Garrison et al., 2000). The three presences of CoI guide the studies and provide a way to explore students' perceptions, especially in online and blended collaborative learning environments. Each presence has its role and it has yet to be determined which presence, if any, is the most influential. The overall goal of CoI is to provide further knowledge of the influences of the three presences and their roles in building a sense of community.

Teaching Presence

Teaching presence represents the instructor and the structure of the participants' learning experiences. It is influenced by activities, interaction, outlines, and facilitation of the learning environment. Teaching presence also represents the learning environment

design and guides the direction of cognitive and social presences. This presence influences both cognitive and social presence of the participants depending on the type of structure and interaction within the learning environment (Garrison et al., 2000). The findings of this study indicated that teaching presence was the only presence of CoI where a participant had negative perceptions. Most of the participants had positive perceptions of the instructors, interactions, and facilitation of the blended courses. The importance of teaching presence within the courses due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing pivot of the instructional platform may benefit from further study. The one negative perception indicated a lack of teaching presence, minimal effort, and feedback, and the influence of these perceptions carried over into other factors of the course.

Social Presence

Social presence provides the personal aspect of the CoI model. It relates to the participants' feelings and personal experiences and how they are affected through participation in CoI. This may mean simple communication between instructor and student or among classmates. It can involve discourse among all participants. Social presence refers to how the participant is influenced on an individual level. Outside influences can contribute to social presence. This presence involves emotions, feelings, and includes the comfort level of the participants within their environment and how that comfort level may influence their perceptions (Garrison et al., 2000). As mentioned previously, the connection between social presence and self-efficacy emerged as the strongest theme within this study. The recurring phrase 'sense of belonging' occurred in

data for both categories. This supports Garrison's outline of how social presence interacts with other factors.

Cognitive Presence

Cognitive presence represents the construction of knowledge while participating in CoI. It is based on the idea that participants will construct knowledge and create learning. In CoI, constructing meaning through communication and collaboration is the focus to build a sense of community. Cognitive thought process is the basis for constructivism, and it is an active approach to learning. Cognitive presence works with social and teaching presence to form the basis for the learning outcomes (Garrison et al., 2000). In the findings of this study, only one component of cognitive presence provided insight into knowledge construction and learning. The identification of this presence was the weakest link. This could have been attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the varying design and upheaval of pivoting from face-to-face to online instruction. It could have been from unclear phrasing within the interview questions regarding this presence. There may have been several contributing factors. The findings of this study do indicate that perceptions of cognitive presence regarding the application of skills and exploration of resources were relevant to the overall sense of community within the course.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations of this study. The first limitation became apparent due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the difficulty in recruiting participants. This caused a change in recruiting guidelines and the gift card incentive was added to encourage participants. This was a basic qualitative case study and although several states were

represented, out of 27 participant responses, only 12 met the qualifications for the study. There was also a variety of college skills courses due to having to broaden the terms in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and recruiting issues. Since this was a single case study, the findings of this study should be applied to the general population and may not accurately reflect a larger sampling of participants (Patton, 2015). This study had 12 participants which is all that is required to achieve saturation; however, there was not a balance of genders within the study. Female participants outnumbered males. Since the term 'college skills course' was broad, there were several disciplines represented and consistency among those disciplines was sporadic.

Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the perceptions of college students regarding how social, cognitive, and teaching presences built a sense of community and influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships as they participated in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Twelve qualifying participants participated in this study. There are some recommendations to be considered from the findings within the scope of this study. One of those recommendations would be to conduct another in-depth quantitative or qualitative research study with a larger population of participants. A recommendation to eliminate the option of email interview responses for future studies would help to enrich the data. Due to COVID-19 and social distancing, email interview options were necessary for participants. There is still very little information regarding which, if any, of the CoI presences is more significant in influencing student perceptions (Cutsinger et al., 2018).

The findings of this study identified a strong link between social presence and self-efficacy, but cognitive presence was indicated as the weakest influence. Further study would be necessary to identify the factors positively influencing cognitive presence. Another recommendation for future studies would be to recruit through a partner organization rather than social media for consistency and accuracy in establishing qualified participants. The final recommendation would be to focus on first-year college students or other at-risk populations who may be more severely affected by changes in the learning environment.

Implications

This qualitative case study focused on the perceptions of college students of CoI while participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic and how those perceptions influenced self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. The findings of this study can help educators improve course design and identify connections that will help build a sense of community to increase student self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships. The unprecedented changes to course design and these students' perceptions experienced in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic can help to improve measures in higher education to address student learning needs.

Positive Social Change

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of society, including all levels of education. Those who already struggled with succeeding in college courses are being placed at greater risk due to the continuing change within instructional design and learning platforms to adapt to the global pandemic. Continued research into

identifying student perceptions that help build a sense of community, increase self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships would provide additional guidance for course design and help to create a better educational experience. This, in turn, would help to increase student persistence and success. Working to understand how the internal and external factors influence students' perceptions provides insight into the best way to create engaging instructional opportunities to meet students' needs. Meeting students' needs through building a sense of community and increasing self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships help to keep the glue of our society in place. A sense of belonging is an inert desire for all human beings. Helping to foster this sense of belonging through meaningful engagement in learning will help to create positive social change in our society.

Conclusion

During the time frame of this study, the world experienced an unprecedented pandemic in the form of COVID-19. Societal norms changed and education in all forms pivoted from traditional face-to-face courses to fully online learning environments. The repercussions of these changes were still being realized as this study concluded. In a normal non-pandemic world, developmental college student percentages were increasing at a steady rate, and insight into perceptions of these students became a focus for research. The CoI model became a lens through which to view student perceptions and studies focused on self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships added insight to the current literature. Dewey and Bandura made appearances in various research studies with their pragmatic, constructive, and social learning theories prevalent as contributing

to the findings of many positive learning experiences. However, there was still a lack of identification of student perceptions framed through the lens of CoI participation and the possible influences on self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. This study proposed to address the gap in the literature through research into these students' perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This provided the opportunity to extend the literature and explore previously unexplored areas of the research. This study sought to identify college student perceptions of CoI three presences while participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings of this qualitative case study revealed that overall, participants had positive perceptions of CoI participation while enrolled in their courses. The findings also indicated links to increased self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships through influences from participation in CoI. The strongest links were between CoI social presence and self-efficacy. There was limited representation in perceptions of cognitive presence and one negative perception of teaching presence. The findings of the study should not be generalized as the norm since the participant population was small and may not provide an accurate representation of a larger population with the same criteria. Further research is necessary to gain insight into a larger population and to identify further influences of CoI presences on self-efficacy, motivation, and student relationships. It would be especially important to further research the significance of the individual presences and the level of influence in building a sense of community.

Although our society may not continue to experience unprecedented circumstances that have global implications, it is important to continue to improve course

design and student experiences at all levels of education. Continued research into factors beyond instructional practices is necessary to help meet the needs of our students and to contribute to positive social change. Understanding how students perceive their levels of self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships is key in helping future generations to achieve their desired career and educational goals and to continue to promote a sense of belonging in our world.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Research Question	Interview Questions	Conceptual Framework
<p>RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>(CoI presences=Teaching Presence, Social Presence, Cognitive Presence)</p>	<p>Introductory statement to lead into interview questions: Now let's talk about your time in your college success skills course...</p> <p>Can you provide any examples of how the instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities?</p>	<p>John Dewey-Pragmatism and Constructivism within Community of Inquiry</p> <p>Teaching Presence</p> <p>Design and Organization of coursework</p>
<p>RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>(CoI presences=Teaching Presence, Social Presence, Cognitive Presence)</p>	<p>Can you think of any examples to support that the instructor helped to keep the course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue?</p>	<p>John Dewey-Pragmatism and Constructivism within Community of Inquiry</p> <p>Teaching Presence</p> <p>Facilitation of instructor</p>
<p>RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>(CoI presences=Teaching Presence, Social Presence, Cognitive Presence)</p>	<p>Do you believe the instructor provided feedback in a timely fashion? What can you say about the feedback provided by the instructor? If the instructor did not provide feedback do you think there was a reason why they did not?</p>	<p>John Dewey-Pragmatism and Constructivism within Community of Inquiry</p> <p>Teaching Presence</p> <p>Direct Instruction of instructor</p>

<p>RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>(CoI presences=Teaching Presence, Social Presence, Cognitive Presence)</p>	<p>Do you believe that getting to know the other course participants gave you a sense of belonging in the course? If so, can you give me an example of when you felt a sense of belonging?</p>	<p>Bandura-Social Learning Theory within Community of Inquiry</p> <p>Social Presence</p> <p>Affective Expression-also overlaps with relationships (see below)</p>
<p>RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>(CoI presences=Teaching Presence, Social Presence, Cognitive Presence)</p>	<p>When you were required to participate in online discussion through the course did you feel comfortable? If you felt comfortable can you tell me what helped you to feel that way? If you didn't feel comfortable can you give me an example of how the participation made you feel?</p>	<p>Bandura-Social Learning Theory</p> <p>Community of Inquiry</p> <p>Social Presence</p> <p>Open Communication-student-to-student and student-to-instructor</p>
<p>RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>(CoI presences=Teaching Presence, Social Presence, Cognitive Presence)</p>	<p>Can you give me an example of a time when your point of view was acknowledged by other course participants? If you feel your point of view was not acknowledged by other course participants how did that make you feel?</p>	<p>Bandura-Social Learning Theory</p> <p>Community of Inquiry</p> <p>Social Presence</p> <p>Group Cohesion-student-to-student-also overlaps into relationships (see below)</p>

<p>RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>(CoI presences=Teaching Presence, Social Presence, Cognitive Presence)</p>	<p>Can you tell me about a time when participating in course activities and using course materials piqued your curiosity? If you were not curious or did not find the course materials or participation appealing can you tell me a little more about why these components did not make you curious?</p>	<p>Dewey-Constructivism</p> <p>Bandura-Social Learning Theory within Community of Inquiry</p> <p>Cognitive Presence</p> <p>Triggering Event</p>
<p>RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>(CoI presences=Teaching Presence, Social Presence, Cognitive Presence)</p>	<p>Did you use a variety of information sources to explore problems in this course? If you did, can you give me an example of a time when you used one of these sources? If not, can you tell me why you believe you did not use a variety of sources?</p>	<p>Dewey-Constructivism</p> <p>Bandura-Social Learning Theory within Community of Inquiry</p> <p>Cognitive Presence</p> <p>Exploration</p>
<p>RQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of the CoI presences when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>(CoI presences=Teaching Presence, Social Presence, Cognitive Presence)</p>	<p>Can you provide me with a scenario where you believe you could apply the knowledge created in this course to your work or other non-class related activities?</p>	<p>Dewey-Constructivism</p> <p>Bandura-Social Learning Theory within Community of Inquiry</p> <p>Cognitive Presence</p> <p>Resolution</p>
<p>SQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of self-efficacy when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p>	<p>Can you tell me about your level of self-efficacy in achieving the goals in the online component of this course?</p>	<p>Bandura-Self-efficacy and student perceptions within CoI</p>

SQ1: What are the perceptions of college students of self-efficacy when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Can you tell me about your level of self-efficacy in achieving the goals in the traditional face-to-face component of this course?	Bandura-Self-efficacy and student perceptions within CoI
SQ2: What are the perceptions of college students of motivation when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Can you tell me about the things in your life that motivated you to successfully complete this course?	Bandura-student perceptions related to motivational factors within CoI
SQ2: What are the perceptions of college students of motivation when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Can you tell me if there was a specific motivational factor or person that you believe influenced your work in this course?	Bandura-student perceptions related to motivational factors within CoI
SQ3: What are the perceptions of college students of relationships when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Can you tell me about any relationships with your classmates throughout this course?	Bandura-student perceptions related to relationships within CoI
SQ3: What are the perceptions of college students of relationships when participating in developmental blended courses during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Can you describe your relationship with your instructor during this course?	Bandura-student perceptions related to relationships within CoI
The following contains the opening remarks, warm-up, and closing questions for the interview process:		

Introduction to interview opening remarks:

Hello, (Participant name).

I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today and for your participation in this interview process and research study. Your participation in a college success skills course has made it possible for you to be part of this study and ongoing research into college education programs. As the percentage of students enrolled in college success skills courses continues to increase, it is important for us to provide the best possible educational opportunities for these students. Since many colleges are moving to online or blended learning opportunities, it is even more important for us to understand student perceptions of these courses. This interview will help to better understand your perceptions of the time you spent in your college success skills course and how your perceptions may have influenced your self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships with other students.

Your privacy will be protected throughout this interview and research process. No names will be used in the research study. Your interview responses and our conversation will be privacy protected by using an independent recording device. Files of these interviews will be stored privately on my computer or within a password protected cloud and will be deleted after the appropriate time frame has passed. This research study is part of my dissertation requirements to obtain my doctoral degree in educational technology. Please let me know at any time in the interview process if you feel uncomfortable or you would like to stop. Please also let me know if you have something to add to a response as we go through the questions.

Not related to the interview questions. Warm-up question for the participant.	Can you tell me a little bit about your college experiences? How long have you been attending college? What is your favorite class so far? Why?	Not related to the conceptual framework.
Not related to the interview questions. Warm-up question for the participant.	Do you have specific goals that you would like to achieve during your time at this college? How many classes have you taken so far that have an online component or are specifically online?	Not related to the conceptual framework.

Not related to the interview questions. Warm-up question for the participant.	Do you have any questions for me about the research study or interview process? Have I addressed any concerns you may have about your participation? Do you wish to continue?	Not related to the conceptual framework.
Not related to research questions. Introductory question.	Do you feel comfortable answering a few questions about your experiences in your college success skills course?	Background Question leading into a first interview question.
Not related to research questions. Closing interview question.	Is there anything you would like to say about your experiences in your college success skills course?	Summary Question
Not specifically related to one research question. General closing question and last thoughts. Overall participant perceptions.	What is your belief concerning the overall effectiveness and relationship of college success skills course activities to your success in your current college courses?	General Statement about course effectiveness and importance
Not related to research questions. Closing interview question.	Do you have any questions for me before we conclude the interview?	Summary Question
<p>Debrief: Thank you for participating in this interview process. I appreciate your responses and will provide you with a transcript of this interview for your review. Please confirm your preferred method of contact, your email, and other information to be sure they are accurate. I will provide you with a summary of the dissertation once the study has been completed. I would also like to contact you should I have any follow-up questions or need additional clarification after reviewing the information you and other participants have provided. Thank you, again for your participation.</p>		

Appendix B: Email Interview Template

Hello!

Thank you for agreeing to be part of my study by interviewing with me. Your participation in a skills class has made it possible for you to be part of this study and ongoing research into college educational programs. As the percentage of students enrolled in college courses continues to increase, it is important for us to provide the best possible educational opportunities for these students. Since many colleges are moving to online or blended learning opportunities due to COVID-19, it is even more important for us to understand student perceptions of these courses.

This interview will help to better understand your perceptions of the time you spent in your skills course and how your perceptions may have influenced your self-efficacy, motivation, and relationships.

Your privacy will be protected throughout this interview and research process. No names will be used within the research study. Your interview responses and our conversation will be privacy protected by using an independent recording device if you are interviewing via Zoom or phone. Files of these interviews will be stored privately on my computer or within a password protected cloud and will be deleted after the appropriate time frame has passed.

This research study is part of my dissertation requirements to obtain my doctoral degree in education with a specialization in educational technology. Please let me know at any time in the interview process if you feel uncomfortable or you would like to stop. Please also let me know if you have something to add to a response as we go through the questions.

Background Questions-For Personal Information Only Not Used in Study

1. Would you tell me a little bit about your college experiences?
2. How long have you been attending college?
3. What is your favorite class so far? Why is it your favorite?
4. Do you have specific goals that you would like to achieve during your time at this college?
5. How many classes have you taken so far that have an online component or are specifically online?
6. Do you have any questions for me about the research study or interview process? Have I addressed any concerns you may have about your participation? Do you wish to continue?
7. Do you feel comfortable answering a few questions about your experiences in your skills class?

Interview Questions That Will Be Used in the Study

1. Will you provide an example of how the instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities?
2. Will you provide an example of how the instructor helped to keep the course participants engaged and participating in a productive dialogue?
3. Do you believe the instructor provided feedback in a timely fashion? Why or why not?
4. Do you believe that getting to know the other course participants gave you a sense of belonging in the course? Why, or why not?
5. When you were required to participate in online discussion through the course did you feel comfortable? Why, or why not?
6. Would you provide an example of a time when your point of view was acknowledged by other course participants?
7. When participating in the course activities, was there a time when they piqued your curiosity?
8. Did you use a variety of information sources to explore problems in this course? If so, provide an example of a time when you used one of these sources. If not, tell me why you believe you did not use a variety of sources.
9. Would you be able to provide a scenario where you could apply the knowledge created in this course to your work or other non-class related activities?
10. Please tell me about your level of self-efficacy in achieving the goals in the online component of this course.
11. Please tell me about your level of self-efficacy in achieving the goals in the traditional face-to-face component of this course.
12. Would you be able to tell me about one or more things in your life that motivated you to successfully complete this course?
13. Would you be able to tell me if there was a specific motivational factor or person that you believe influenced your work in this course?
14. Tell me about your relationships with your classmates throughout this course.
15. How would you describe your relationships with your instructor during this course?

Summary Questions for Clarification

1. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences in the skills class during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What is your belief concerning the overall effectiveness and relationship in your skills course activities as they relate to your success in your current college courses?
3. Do you have any additional questions for me before we conclude the interview?

Thank you for participating in this interview process. I appreciate your responses and will provide you with a transcript of this interview for your review. Please confirm your preferred method of contact, your email, and other information to be sure they are accurate. I will provide you with a summary of the dissertation once the study has been completed. There may be additional questions I have after reviewing the information you and other participants have provided. Once I have clarified all communication and you have reviewed your transcript of the interview, I will arrange with you to receive your \$10 gift card for your participation. If at any time you feel you would like to withdraw from the study, please know that you may do so without hesitation or hard feelings.

Thank you, again for your participation. You are helping to create social change in Education!

Best Regards,

Cynthia Harrison