

Chapter 6. Conclusion

Throughout this book, we've applied the CoI framework—a social constructivist model of online learning that's comprised of *cognitive presence*, *social presence*, and *teaching presence*—to analyze peer-review workshops in hybrid and online FYW courses. Our findings illustrate that the framework is an appropriate and useful heuristic for designing and facilitating the kinds of collaborative work necessary for this foundational FYW activity. Our findings also illustrate that the potential goals and benefits of peer review are as myriad as the ways to design and facilitate it effectively. Consequently, instead of making specific peer review design recommendations, we advocate for all instructors, regardless of course modality, to use what we are calling the CoI Framework in Writing Studies as a heuristic for instructional design. As illustrated in our study, the components that contribute to the success of a peer-review workshop (and, we would argue, to any collaborative activity) include intentional and transparent design (*teaching presence*) that invites students to interact with the course content and with their peers (*social presence*) in order to co-construct knowledge (*cognitive presence*).

Teaching presence is crucial for a community of inquiry to be possible because it gives instructors a starting point for navigating their unique contexts to design hybrid, online, and face-to-face writing courses that have the potential to facilitate *social presence* and *cognitive presence*. Our findings underscore that the three distinct elements of *teaching presence*—*instructional design*, *direct instruction*, and *discourse facilitation*—are particularly helpful when navigating the complex and multidimensional process of course design.

Social presence is perhaps the most important component in a community of inquiry because it facilitates the student-student interaction that leads to community and collaborative learning. Our project differentiates between *social perceptions* and *social learning*, and it calls for more research on other aspects of *social presence*, including social “comfort” and student “attitudes” about hybrid/online learning.

Cognitive presence is the end goal of a community of inquiry: it is the knowledge co-construction that leads to learning. CoI scholars (e.g., Garrison et al, 1999) have described this knowledge co-construction in terms of Dewey's (1910) four phases of practical inquiry: *triggering event*, *exploration*, *integration*, and *resolution*. The observations and analyses from our study suggest that *cognitive presence* can be attained via peer review activities and feedback that incite triggering events, leading to exploration that creates opportunities for *integration* and *resolution* during revision. However, seeking observable evidence of student learning (such as seeing that revisions were made to a draft and that those revisions correlate to feedback received) doesn't provide the full picture—we also

need to understand the *social presence* that students did or did not experience. This includes understanding the relationship between *social perceptions* and *social learning* and the impact of other elements, like “comfort” and “attitudes,” on knowledge co-construction. This more nuanced understanding of collaborative learning will help instructors make instructional design choices and develop direct instruction strategies that more consistently facilitate discourse.

Our CoI Framework in Writing Studies, which is included in Chapter 1 of this book, is offered again in Figure 6.1. We hope FYW instructors will use this heuristic to inform their overall course designs as well as the design of specific collaborative activities like peer review. We hope writing program administrators and writing center professionals will use the heuristic to design teacher training and professional development opportunities for faculty and graduate students. Administrators might also employ the heuristic to design resources that support shared curricula in FYW. Finally, we hope OWI researchers will investigate the efficacy of the CoI Framework in Writing Studies. As we have stated throughout, there is a particular need for additional research on social presence.

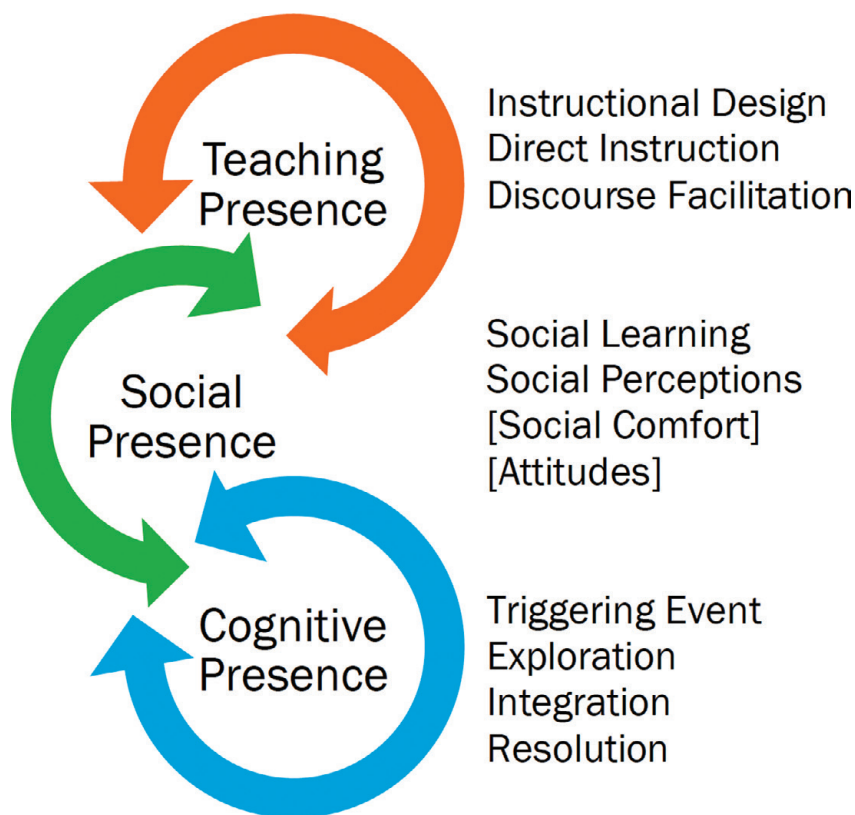


Figure 6.1. CoI Framework in Writing Studies. Repeated from Figure 1.2.

In addition to our heuristic, we offer the following summaries of what each of the three presences looks like in writing studies and how writing instructors, tutors, and researchers might approach the three presences in their writing classrooms, writing centers, and/or research study designs.

Cognitive Presence

Our study of *cognitive presence* confirmed the potential for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge co-construction because all students *did* revise their essays in response to peer feedback. However, additional *triggering events* (e.g., instructor feedback) could have initiated some of those *resolutions*, and our findings reinforce that learning is nuanced and that *cognitive presence* must be understood in context with *teaching presence* and *social presence*. Consequently, peer-review workshops must be intentionally designed to include *triggering events* (e.g., prompts, questions, opportunities for seeing classmates' writing, etc.), and instructors must clearly define and articulate the goals of peer-review workshops so that students understand the purpose of each part of the activity and the workshop overall. This overt *instructional design* will create *triggering events* that have more potential to encourage the collaboration that leads to *exploration* and *integration*.

While our study, like so many others, demonstrates how difficult it is to measure learning in college writing classrooms (and elsewhere), Dewey's (1910) four phases of practical inquiry provide a useful vocabulary for differentiating between aspects of the learning process, which is useful during course design. The version of *cognitive presence* that we recommend for writing studies additionally emphasizes identifying key goals or purposes of the collaborative activity. The work of identifying goals should occur *before* instructors begin to design materials and activities that guide students through the phases of practical inquiry. While the students and instructors in our study named three goals for peer review (i.e., *learn from seeing peers' writing*, *improve text*, and *gain fresh perspective*), those goals will be different for students and instructors/tutors in other contexts and activities.

Social Presence

Our conceptualization of *social presence* for writing studies varies from other CoI research because we differentiate between "social perceptions" and "social learning." One contribution of this study is to question the relationship between those two aspects of *social presence*. Through interviews, students self-reported that they experienced *social learning* and believed that having *social perceptions* of classmates facilitated a positive experience in FYW. However, they also stated that they didn't want or need to develop a "relationship" with their peers. This pushes against an assumption in most CoI scholarship that *social perceptions* (i.e.,

feeling real, developing a sense of trust and belonging) are a prerequisite to *social learning*. We encourage writing instructors and tutors to similarly question what kinds of interactions and relationships are assumed to be necessary or expected in order to facilitate collaborative learning. We also encourage OWI researchers to either define what is meant by the term “relationships” or work with students during a validation study to develop survey and/or interview questions related to this concept.

We further encourage writing instructors, tutors, and researchers to critically examine the role of social “comfort” and of student “attitudes” in establishing and maintaining social presence. The interviews and case studies we have presented in this book demonstrate that social presence is much more complicated than “feeling real” and that there isn’t one “right” way to be present online. Furthermore, *social presence* isn’t a zero-sum game. Students in our study simultaneously experienced positive and negative *social perceptions* that both supported and hindered *social learning*. A clear direction for future research is to consider *social presence* in light of the conversations in writing studies related to racial, linguistic, and gender identity, as well as (dis)ability, and other forms of intersectionality (e.g., Inoue, 2014; Martinez, 2020; Matsuda, 2006; West-Puckett et al., 2023).

Teaching Presence

Just as there isn’t one right or best way for students to be present online, the case studies we have presented in this book reveal that there isn’t one right or best way for instructors to create meaningful peer-review workshops (or other collaborative activities). Many teacher-scholars in writing studies have offered specific examples of how to effectively facilitate these kinds of activities (e.g., Das & Faris, 2024), and we do the same by sharing the strategies our instructor participants employed. However, the nature of teaching means that instructors and tutors must consider how to adapt recommendations to their students and contexts (Cicchino & Hicks, 2024). This is why we favor the CoI framework as a heuristic that can help instructors, tutors, and researchers think through the design process.

Unlike most CoI scholarship that focuses on online learning (which typically means asynchronous online learning), we argue that the CoI framework is applicable to any course modality. Our hope is to shift the ways those in the field of writing studies discuss modality. It isn’t the case that peer review (or any activity) can *only* work online or face-to-face or synchronously or asynchronously. Given thoughtful and intentional course design (and given appropriate resources, which we fully realize institutions don’t always provide), peer review and other collaborative learning activities can work in any of those environments. The task for instructors and tutors is to create an *instructional design* plan that offers both *direct instruction* and *discourse facilitation*, drawing on the modality best suited for achieving the instructional goals. When the goal is creating and maintaining

a community of inquiry, we encourage instructors and researchers to pay particularly close attention to *discourse facilitation*.

Our CoI Framework in Writing Studies presents the three presences as a sequence, where *teaching presence* creates opportunities for the types of *social presence* that have the potential to facilitate *cognitive presence*. However, we want to close this book by reiterating that teaching isn't a linear activity, hence the multidirectional arrows in Figure 6.1. As we show in Chapter 5, *teaching presence* can be used to analyze past practices, question how existing designs do or do not create spaces for *social* and *cognitive presence*, and examine the ways that instructional materials reinforce or contradict the intended goals for a learning activity. This work can happen before the start of a semester and can also happen mid-semester as instructors pivot in response to student feedback. We recommend creating a timeline that includes *instructional design* (which often happens before the course begins), *direct instruction* (which occurs as instructors and tutors guide students to interact with materials and activities) and *discourse facilitation* (which instructors employ to guide student interaction).

In Sum

The case studies in this book illuminate that all aspects of the CoI framework necessitate instructors communicating with students about their pedagogy—from learning goals to instructional design to collaborative activities. As we hope we've demonstrated, the CoI Framework in Writing Studies is a useful heuristic that applies directly to peer-review workshops and can apply to many other collaborative writing activities. We hope that instructors, tutors, writing program administrators, and other writing studies researchers will find the framework useful for designing, instructing, facilitating, administrating, and/or researching additional aspects of writing pedagogy in all modalities. We recognize that our work is only the beginning of what might be possible for the CoI Framework in Writing Studies and look forward to future extensions of this work.