EVANGELICAL FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF ONLINE LEARNING IN GRADUATE-LEVEL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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Kristen Ann Ferguson

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APPROVAL SHEET

EVANGELICAL FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF
ONLINE LEARNING IN GRADUATE-LEVEL
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Kristen Ann Ferguson

Read and Approved by:

_____
Anthony W. Foster (Chair)

_____
John David Trentham

Date _____

To Anthony:

I would have never begun, endured, or completed this work

without your constant love, care, and encouragement.

You are my best friend, partner in ministry, and loving husband.

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PREFACE

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grace and mercy of my loving Savior, Jesus Christ. It is for his glory and the strength of his Body that I complete this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Graduate-level theological education in the twenty-first century has the ability to expand its reach of influence and increase its gospel impact across the globe like never before through online learning. Many evangelical theological institutions, seminaries, or divinity schools across the United States share a common mission of equipping individuals for gospel service to the church of Jesus Christ and for the accomplishment of the Great Commission.[1] Prior to online learning, each of these institutions fulfilled its mission primarily through traditional education with the instructor and student in the same room at the same time.

As technological advances have enabled communication and access to information from a distance, "a new era of theological education" has begun.[2] Seminary training for gospel ministry is now available online so students can earn a degree from a distance. This convenience is now pervasive. Each of the six seminaries in the Southern Baptist Convention now offer fully online degrees created to train men and women for gospel service. Likewise, many other evangelical theological institutions in the United

[1]The six seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention: Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Dallas Theological Seminary; Moody Bible Institute; Regent University; Reformed Theological Seminary; Calvin Theological Seminary; Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

[2]Gavin Ortlund, "The New Era of Theological Education," The Gospel Coalition, accessed February 7, 2015, http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-new-era-of-theological-education1. Four out of seven seminary presidents reported that they believe technology, delivery methods, or access to be some of the greatest challenges facing theological education in the next twenty years.

States offer degrees that can be completed, entirely or in part, online.[3] This amount of access to evangelical theological education is unprecedented. Even so, subtle trends of suspicion and even antagonism toward online learning exist among faculty in theological education.[4]

Presentation of Research Problem

Online learning has grown steadily over the past twelve years in public, private for-profit, and private non-profit institutions of higher education.[5] A national survey indicated that online learning in the United States has become necessary for a large majority of institutions of higher education: "The proportion of schools saying that online education is critical for their institution's long-term strategy reached an all-time high of 70.8% in 2014."[6] More than ever before, academic leaders are convinced that their institution is dependent on online learning for growth and development and are therefore including it into their institutional plans.

Non-profit, private institutions of higher education, a category that would include graduate-level theological education, likewise see online learning as a key to their future. Students continue to flock to online learning at a higher growth rate than

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[3]These include Dallas Theological Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, Moody Bible Institute, Regent University, Reformed Theological Seminary, Calvin Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

[4]Paul House, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern: A Plea for Personal Theological Education," *Colloquy* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 4-6; idem, *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision: A Case for Costly Discipleship and Life Together* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015); Steve Delamarter, "Theological Educators and Their Concerns about Technology," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 8, no. 3 (July 2005): 131-43.

[5]I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, "Grade Level: Tracking Online Education in the United States," 9, February 2015, accessed February 6, 2015, http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/survey_report/grade-level-tracking-online-education-united-states-2014/. This report found that in 2002 the proportion of academic leaders including online learning in their strategic plan was 48.8 percent, but in 2014 is has grown to 70.8 percent.

[6]Ibid., 15. This report also found that those who reported a neutral opinion of including online learning in their strategic plan has decreased consistently, except for one year, over the past twelve years.

traditional education and even online programs at public institutions.[7] This increase in online enrollment demonstrates that non-profit, private institutions can expand into new markets through online learning.

Drawing from students all over the US and around the world is now entirely possible for even the smallest schools through online learning. This worldwide market of students is open and available for institutions of higher education, and competition for high quality programs is increasing. As competition grows, many institutions now boast adherence to certain quality metrics to legitimize their practice through quality assurance rubrics provided by organizations such as Quality Matters or Online Learning Consortium.[8]

The growth in a market of students is a key indicator that more and more students value the flexibility of time and location that the online medium offers.[9] Without needing to relocate or adjust their existing work (or ministry) schedule to earn a degree, students can learn online at their own convenience. Palloff and Pratt state, "The ability to work from the comfort of home or a dorm room, the elimination of traffic and parking problems, the elimination of child-care problems, and the ability to attend class at any time have been driving forces in its popularity."[10] This convenience-driven education has resulted in the steady increase in online enrollment for years.

The same growth and convenience is true for online learning in graduate-level theological education in the US, but with added theological and evangelistic purpose. Through online learning, these institutions can serve the church and the Great Commission of the church by providing biblical instruction and ministry training to pastors,

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[7]Allen and Seaman, "Grade Level," 13.

[8]Quality Matters, accessed February 7, 2015, https://www.qualitymatters.org/. Online Learning Consortium, "Quality Framework," accessed February 21, 2015, http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/about/quality-framework-five-pillars/. Both of these organizations support adherence to best practices backed by current research.

[9]Allen and Seaman, "Grade Level," 12-14.

[10]Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Assessing the Online Learner: Resources and Strategies for Faculty* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 3.

missionaries, and leaders where they are and when they need it. This means that while taking a course called "Introduction to Church Planting," the student may very well be planting a church somewhere in the world. Likewise, a missionary in a remote setting could be taking an "Intercultural Communications" course while actually establishing a written language for an unreached people group. This opportunity to learn at a distance enhances the immediacy of application of concepts from the classroom to the mission field, increasing learning and effectiveness of the education.[11]

In consideration of these extended benefits for all institutions, and in particular institutions offering theological education, a majority of academic leaders regard it a great advantage to include online learning in the strategic plan of the institution; however, the online learning aspect of this strategic plan has a static history of not being well-received by the faculty of those institutions. The same national report that indicated 70.8 percent of academic leaders include online learning in their strategic plan also found that those academic leaders view faculty as unsupportive of online education. The report summarizes,

> A continuing failure of online education has been its *inability to convince its most important audience—higher education faculty members—of its worth.* The lack of acceptance of online among faculty has not shown any significant change in over a decade—the results from reports five or ten years ago are virtually the same as current results. For all of this time there has not been a majority of any group of higher education institutions that report that their faculty accept the "value and legitimacy of online education." Current results, if anything, show that the problem is getting worse.[12]

Though the academic leaders in these institutions are making online learning an integral part of their strategic plan, the faculty who will teach those classes are not

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[11]Morris T. Keeton, Barry G. Sheckley, and Joan Krejci Griggs, *Effectiveness and Efficiency in Higher Education for Adults: A Guide for Fostering Learning* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt, 2002), 56-57. Keeton, Sheckley, and Griggs assert that broadening the experience base of the learner is "essential for optimum learning," and "experience yields explicit (narrative) knowledge only if actively reflected upon." Therefore, students in online theological education who are actively engaged in ministry bring their current experience to bear on their education, and bring their education to bear on their experience.

[12]Allen and Seaman, "Grade Level," 21, emphasis added.

convinced of its value. Without a supportive faculty, an institution may lack quality in online course design and development, have difficulty maintaining highly interactive delivery, and not be able to progress in their strategic plan to offer more online programs as quickly. While student retention is already more difficult in the online setting, student retention and satisfaction are likely to decrease even more producing a threat to the institution's health without an instructor who supports the method.[13]

Although this national survey provides information about the scope of perceptions generally held by faculty of higher education, it does not provide reasons for a lack of acceptance of online learning. Quantitative and qualitative research has been conducted to determine faculty perceptions of online learning in higher education, but little research has been accomplished to discern faculty perceptions about online learning in theological education. Some of the major reasons for concern found in the broader research include the need to maintain fluency in emerging technology, ability and time to interact with online students effectively, and suspicion of academic honesty of students in online learning.[14] Although literature continues to answer many of these specific concerns, academic leadership continue to perceive a lack of support among faculty each year.[15]

In graduate-level theological education, little work has been done to understand faculty perceptions of online learning. Reflecting on the quality of online learning in theological institutions, John Cartwright states, "Casual observations suggest that the decision to offer online programs may not always have been rooted in deep pedagogical

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[13]Allen and Seaman, "Grade Level," 24-25.

[14]Frances M. Dolloph, "Online Higher Education Faculty: Perceptions, Learning, and Changes in Teaching" (Ed.D. thesis, West Virginia University, 2007). This study found that faculty realized the need for keeping up with technology, but required support from administration to do so. This study also found that interaction was much needed between student and instructor for a healthy online course.

[15]Allen and Seaman, "Grade Level," 21.

or theological reflection."[16] This casual observation, especially among evangelical schools, has not been fully researched and is therefore needed.

In 2002, William Wilson sent a survey questionnaire to faculty in Southern Baptist-related educational institutions to determine their attitudes toward online learning.[17] Steven Yates also conducted a qualitative study in 2009 determining the practices of Christian faculty of higher education in finding and receiving support for teaching online.[18] Neither of these studies are extensive or recent enough to provide theological institutions with valid information about faculty perception in today's ever-expanding realm of online learning.

A qualitative study by Steven Delamarter provides important categories of concern in regard to online learning as described in interviews with faculty and administrators from 43 seminaries in North America. The findings of his study were published in 2004 followed by an article categorizing the findings published in 2005.[19] Delamarter found that faculty in theological institutions were concerned with hidden costs, new technology, loss of control of copyrighted information, plagiarism and cheating, pedagogical development for the online medium, and theological concerns about spiritual formation and Christian community.[20] While Delamarter's research is thorough and pertinent to the topic at hand, his study was conducted over a decade ago. Therefore, it cannot take into account how or if the recent growth of online learning in

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[16]John Beck Cartwright, "Best Practices for Online Theological Ministry Preparation: A Delphi Method Study" (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 1.

[17]William Michael Wilson, "Faculty and Administrator Attitudes and Perceptions toward Distance Learning in Southern Baptist-Related Educational Institutions" (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).

[18]Steven Lowell Yates, "Current Faculty Development Practices for Alternative Delivery Systems in Christian Higher Education Institutions: A Qualitative Study" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009).

[19]Delamarter, "Theological Educators"; Steve Delamarter, "A Typology of the Use of Technology in Theological Education," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 7, no. 3 (July 2004): 134-40.

[20]Delamarter, "Theological Educators," 131-43.

graduate-level theological education has potentially changed faculty's perceptions about online learning.

Thus, current faculty perceptions about online learning in graduate-level theological education remain to be determined. While there has been some research done in the past to understand what faculty believe about online learning, theological institutions now more than ever need to know where their faculty stand on the issue as online learning becomes increasingly universal. If these institutions forge ahead in the strategic plan, which depends critically on the success of online learning, but faculty are unsupportive, the repercussions or necessary adjustments could be substantial.

For theological institutions proceeding to incorporate online learning in their strategic plan without faculty support, foreseeable threats include diminished quality of course design and instruction, resistance to innovation and new worldwide student markets, as well as decreased job satisfaction. These major issues must be taken into account. The strategic plan of the institution, without faculty support, may be in jeopardy. One author writes, "In many respects, the buy-in process appears to be a 'pay now or pay later' approach," referring to acquiring the support of faculty in offering online courses.[21]

While this fact is cause enough to discover faculty perceptions of online learning, theological institutions must also consider biblical and theological concerns that may exist among faculty. One evangelical voice, Paul House, professor at Beeson Divinity School, in particular raises concerns about online learning rooted in pedagogical needs of personal community required by the biblical teaching.[22] Based on these convictions, Beeson Divinity School does not and will not offer online courses.[23] If faculty such as House can provide legitimate pedagogical or theological concerns against

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[21]Diana Oblinger, *Distributed Education and Its Challenges: An Overview* (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 2001), 26.

[22]House, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern."

[23]Beeson Divinity School, "Why Doesn't Beeson Offer Online Education?" accessed December 19, 2015, http://www.beesondivinity.com/abiblicalpatternfortheologicaleducation.

the inclusion of online learning, the theological institution may be advancing prematurely or without properly counting the cost.

In sum, resistance from faculty is cause for concern from multiple perspectives. Administratively, faculty are essential for accomplishing the goals and strategic plans of the institution. If they are unsupportive, these plans may be hindered. From a faculty perspective, if online learning is perceived as poor education or even as biblically unfaithful, then institutions that forge ahead without proper evaluation may be in error. For these reasons, a dire need exists for research to be conducted to determine faculty perceptions of online learning in graduate-level theological education. With this information, institutions can address concerns, maximize positive perceptions, and wisely prepare their strategic plans. Providing faculty perceptions in this context is the purpose and aim of the present study.

Current Status of Research Problem

Without current research of faculty perceptions toward online learning, theological institutions may be blind to possible threats to the strategic plan of the institution and to the Great Commission potential possible through online learning. Serious consideration of these threats is needed now because of the increasing growth of online learning in theological institutions across the country. While offering more online options to students may be possible for the institutions, without faculty support, the quality of online instruction and course design as well as continued use of the traditional faculty in online learning may be difficult.

As stated, evangelical seminaries throughout the US are embracing online learning. All six seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention, as well as many of the other evangelical seminaries, now offer fully online degrees.[24] When asked to share his

[24]Calvin Theological Seminary, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Moody Bible Institute, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, Regent University, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Southern

thoughts about the future of theological education, Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, stated,

> The most significant challenge seminaries will face in the next 20 years is changing educational delivery models. We must maintain academic standards while becoming much more church-centric in our training models. We must embrace technology but not equate technological advance with educational effectiveness.[25]

Iorg understands that technology in education is here to stay, but its inclusion in the theological institution must not be without pedagogical and missional inspection so that the mission of the seminary might be accomplished faithfully. Those who know most about the pedagogical relevance of the theological institution are the faculty who teach it to the future ministers of the gospel. Without their support, the pedagogical and missional quality of online theological education may suffer.

Little research has been completed to discern faculty perceptions of online learning in theological institutions or to understand their perceptions of the future of online learning. As indicated, previous research is too old to take into account the current development in the pervasiveness of online learning. Therefore, this study serves a vital need in understanding faculty perceptions about online learning in theological institutions.

Research Questions

In an effort to fill in the gap assessing faculty perceptions of online learning in theological institutions, this study reviewed faculty perceptions of online learning from existing literature, surveyed evangelical faculty perceptions in the current state of online learning in graduate-level theological education, and determined what evangelical faculty perceive about the future of online learning in graduate-level theological education. After understanding faculty perceptions generally in higher education through a literature review, three main research questions guided this study:

Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

[25]Ortlund, "The New Era of Theological Education."

1. What are evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning in graduate-level theological education?
2. What do evangelical faculty perceive of the future of online learning in graduate-level theological education?
3. How do the findings from this study compare to the existing perceptions found in the literature?

Current Perceptions

What are evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning in graduate-level theological education? This question includes the following subset of questions: Do evangelical faculty concerns today match concerns raised by faculty in higher education in general? What are the new concerns raised, if any? What, if any, are the positive perceptions about the possibilities of online learning in graduate-level theological education? The answers to these questions were determined in a survey and a volunteer focus group of full members of the Evangelical Theological Society.[26]

Future Perceptions

What do evangelical faculty perceive about the future of online learning in graduate-level theological education? This question includes the following subset of questions: What do faculty believe will be the role of online learning in theological education in the future? Is this a positive or negative perception? The answers to these questions were determined in a survey and a volunteer focus group of full members of the Evangelical Theological Society.

Comparison to the Literature

How do the findings from this study compare to the existing perceptions found in the literature? This question pulls together the new data found in the survey and focus group in order to compare and contrast evangelical perceptions with faculty of higher

[26]The Evangelical Theological Society, "About the ETS," accessed February 7, 2015, http://www.etsjets.org/about. Full members are members who hold a Th.M. degree or higher. The Evangelical Theological Society, "Membership Requirements," accessed December 12, 2015, http://www.etsjets.org/about/membership_requirements.

education perceptions. The literature review provided an overview of common perceptions found in prominent studies in higher education. Little research has been completed to assess evangelical faculty perceptions, so finding similarities and differences between the two groups of faculty may guide institutions and me toward helpful resources that already exist or highlight the need for further research.

Methodology

In chapter 2, I review the literature to discover past perceptions of online learning in theological institutions held by faculty. A brief overview of evangelical convictions and theological institution values will lay the foundation for understanding evangelical faculty perceptions. Then, faculty perceptions of online learning in higher education generally are determined. Finally, the very few existing studies of faculty perceptions of online learning in theological education as well as a research hypothesis are discussed.

Chapter 3 outlines the explanatory sequential, mixed methods study that seeks to answer the first and second research questions. The first phase of this mixed methods study is quantitative in nature. A survey will be distributed to the full members of the Evangelical Theological Society. These full members are likely to be faculty, but the survey instrument will delineate between faculty and non-faculty. Non-faculty will not be allowed to complete the survey. Each participant will be asked to provide contact information if he or she would like to take part in the second phase of this research.

Once the data from the survey has been coded and understood, I contacted the volunteer participants who indicated their willingness to take part in phase 2. The second phase of this research was a focus group that discusses the findings of the survey data as well as the perceptions of faculty about the future of online learning in graduate-level theological education. This focus group was recorded, transcribed, and coded to understand findings.

Chapters 4 describes in detail the findings from the survey and focus groups. The chapter is divided according to the research questions and each includes the relevant findings from the study. Finally, an evaluation of the research design including the strengths and weaknesses, is provided.

The final chapter of this thesis explains conclusions drawn from this research. Relevant implications are provided for each research question. Implications for practice and possible future studies make up the remainder of the chapter.

Conclusion

In acquiring the answers to these questions, administrators and institutional leaders can take into account faculty development methods in order to address the present and future concerns of faculty. They can be informed of the change in faculty perceptions that have occurred over the years and seek to advance the Great Commission opportunities by optimizing any positive faculty perceptions. The results found by this study can inform and aid theological institutions to plan wisely and take into account one of their most important constituencies—their faculty.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF PRECEDENT LITERATURE

The current state of online learning in graduate-level theological education is growing rapidly, but the research is lagging behind. Much work is needed to determine perceptions of faculty about online learning in graduate-level theological education, especially from an evangelical perspective. The following literature review describes evangelical values in theological education, online theological education, and faculty perspectives of online education. Finally, this literature review details the very few studies determining faculty perspectives about online theological education. Definitions and a research hypothesis conclude this chapter.

Evangelical Values in Theological Education

America's Christian landscape differs greatly in regard to denominational affiliation and convictions. Evangelicals find themselves estranged from much of the religious landscape for holding to several core theological commitments that direct the way they do all things, including theological education. While evangelicalism certainly stands as a term used to identify a group of Christians holding to certain convictions, there has been historic debate and lack of clarity as to a precise and thorough definition.[1]

David Clyde Jones et al. remind the reader that "the term 'evangelical' simply derives from the New Testament word for the gospel, meaning that all Christian believers are by definition evangelical in the primary sense," but the authors continue to state that with this being the case, there is a need for further clarification in what is meant by

[1]George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 1.

"evangelical."[2] Jones, et al., refers to Martin Marty's definition of evangelical to further delineate what is meant by the term: "By evangelical we mean those Protestants who stress the personal experience of conversion, the high authority of the Bible, and the mandate to evangelize others."[3]

From an academic standpoint, the Evangelical Theological Society, "a group of scholars, teachers, pastors, students, and others dedicated to the oral exchange and written expression of theological thought and research,"[4] requires its members to adhere to this minimum evangelical doctrinal conviction: "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs. God is a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each an uncreated person, one in essence, equal in power and glory."[5] This statement is a part of their constitution and solidifies their existence as self-identified "evangelicals," but perhaps does not satisfy a specific definition of what an "evangelical" is.[6]

A recent article from *The Courier*, a Baptist publication of South Carolina that seeks to inform and inspire the denomination, published research conducted by the National Association of Evangelicals and LifeWay Research about evangelical beliefs. Four common beliefs to which the sample population of 1,000 respondents (making a 95 percent confidence interval) stated in phone surveys about evangelical beliefs included

1. "The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe."

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[2]David Clyde Jones, Jeffrey P. Greenman, and Christine D. Pohl, "The Public Character of Theological Education: An Evangelical Perspective," *Theological Education* 37, no. 1 (2000): 1.

[3]Martin E. Marty, *The Public Church: Mainline, Evangelical, Catholic* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 13.

[4]The Evangelical Theological Society, "About the ETS," accessed December 12, 2015, http://www.etsjets.org/about.

[5]Ibid.

[6]The Evangelical Theological Society, "ETS Constitution," accessed January 16, 2016, http://www.etsjets.org/about/constitution.

2. "It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior."

3. "Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin."

4. "Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation."[7]

These findings confirm the same conclusions stated by Martin Marty, which include the authority of the Bible, conversion, and evangelism, but adds the exclusivity of Christ as the only way to salvation.

While these common beliefs provide a foundation for understanding the term "evangelical," perhaps the best description of the concept comes from evangelical historian George Marsden. In *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, Marsden confirms that "evangelicalism" is not a "religious organization," but is instead a "religious movement."[8] Within the evangelical movement, Marsden relays that "central to the evangelical gospel was proclamation of Christ's saving work through his death on the cross and the necessity of personally trusting him for eternal salvation."[9] This was the main conviction of Protestants until liberalism emerged between 1870 and 1920. At this time, evangelicalism separated itself from liberal thought that sought to erode the core convictions. Since then, Marsden states,

> Evangelicalism today includes any Christians traditional enough to affirm the basic beliefs of the old nineteenth-century evangelical consensus. The essential evangelical beliefs include: (1) the Reformation doctrine of the final authority of the Bible, (2) the real historical character of God's saving work recording in Scripture, (3) salvation to eternal life based on the redemptive work of Christ, (4) the importance of evangelism and missions, and (5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life.[10]

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[7]Lisa Cannon Green, "NAE, LifeWay Research Define 'Evangelical,'" *Baptist Courier*, accessed December 31, 2015, https://baptistcourier.com/2015/11/nae-lifeway-research-define-evangelical/.

[8]Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 1-2.

[9]Ibid., 2.

[10]Ibid., 5.

These unique emphases identified by Marsden reflect the same findings in the South Carolina *Baptist Courier* as well as Martin E. Marty's definition. Many different denominations, institutions, or individuals may identify as evangelical if they hold to these common beliefs. As this review moves into the specific implications that evangelical beliefs have on institutions of theological education, it can be summarized that these institutions and their faculty support a common theme of deriving authoritative truth from the Bible in order to evangelize the lost for their conversion to faith in Christ as well as seek to transform individuals' spiritually.

Within this category of "evangelical," Brian Edgar, in his article "The Theology of Theological Education," discusses four categories of theological schools and names them by the geographical locations that heavily influence the emphasis of the school. The first, attributed to David Kelsey, is called "Athens." Schools in this category have the "primary goal of . . . the transformation of the individual."[11] Spiritual formation is among the highest core values for these institutions as well as application of the biblical text to the life of the learner. The second category of theological schools is much further out of line with what would be considered "evangelical," but is still considered a type of school by Edgar. He calls these types of school "Berlin," in that their goal of theological education is "to train people in rigorous enquiry."[12] Third, attributed to Robert Banks, Edgar describes a more missional sense of theological education that he calls "Jerusalem."[13] These schools see theological education as a means for fueling and empowering the mission of the church (Matt 28:19-20). The last category attributed to Edgar himself, is

[11]Brian Edgar, "Editorial: The Theology of Theological Education," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29 (July 2005): 209.

[12]Ibid., 211.

[13]Ibid., 212.

"Geneva."[14] Schools in this category have the common goal "to know God through the use of the creeds and the confessions . . . utilized by a particular faith community."[15]

While many institutions may find themselves in one of these four categories, the core values of evangelical theological education seem to include emphases from all four categories.[16] In "Evangelical Theological Higher Education: Past Commitments, Present Realities, and Future Considerations," L. J. McKinney arrives at ten core values that he believes are or should be "characteristic of evangelical theological education": "(a) Cultural appropriateness, (b) church focus, (c) theological grounding, (d) servant leadership, (e) Christian worldview, (f) community life, (g) academic excellence, (h) educational creativity, (i) outcomes assessment, and (j) a cooperative spirit."[17] "Culture appropriateness" and "Christian worldview" could be considered values within the "Jerusalem" category, while "church focus" and "theological grounding" would be considered a "Geneva" type of value.

Similarly, R. Albert Mohler, Jr., of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary presented twenty-one core values that he believes to be at the very heart of their theological institution.[18] These core values could likewise be categorized in some degree in each of Edgar's four categories. While these core values communicate a well-rounded theological education that would seem to prepare a student to be relevant in "Athens," "Berlin," "Jerusalem," and "Geneva," many of the students are unaware of these values and tend to

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[14]Edgar, "Editorial," 212-13.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Even in the "Berlin" model, these schools find that academic rigor is one of the most important core values, but would not seek to undermine the authority of the Bible. Enquiry and research are commonly important to the "Berlin" model schools within the presupposition of biblical authority.

[17]Larry J. McKinney, "Evangelical Theological Higher Education: Past Commitments, Present Realities, and Future Considerations," *Christian Higher Education* 3, no. 2 (April 2004): 147-69.

[18]R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Mohler Lays Out 'Core Values' in Southern Seminary's Mission," *Baptist Press*, 2002, accessed September 6, 2015, http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=14479.

adopt some, but not all, of the intended core emphases.[19] Thus, while Edgar's categories may not be the ideal of the institution, they may provide a key insight into the tendencies and leanings of evangelical theological institutions.

Evangelical theological institutions face a common struggle in the ever-changing climate of higher education in the United States. Glenn Miller expresses his concerns about theological education in his article "Does a Secular Age Need the Seminary: Considerations on Alternate Forms of Ministerial Preparations." He suggests that due to financial constraints in a spiritually dry culture, formal theological education is becoming a luxury for a few rather than a commodity for many.[20] While seminaries have "evaded the economic consequences of this situation by expanding the means of delivery of seminary studies," Miller believes that alternative forms of theological training are necessary.[21]

Simon James Mainwaring likewise believes that a change is necessary, but unlike Miller, Mainwaring identifies global expansion as a key to the future success of theological institutions in his article "Place, Power, and People in Twenty-First Century Theological Education."[22] He articulates the need for a "realignment" of seminary education. Residential seminaries continue to face the pressures of a globalized society in which everything is accessible from a distance.[23] Likewise, a shift of Christianity into the

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[19]Homer Clayton Anthony, "The Twenty-One Core Values of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the Ministries of Graduates" (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 168-74.

[20]Glenn T. Miller, "Does a Secular Age Need the Seminary? Considerations on Alternative Forms of Ministerial Preparation," *Theological Education* 46, no. 2 (2011): 47.

[21]Ibid., 49.

[22]Simon James Mainwaring, "Place, Power, and People in Twenty-First Century Theological Education," *Anglican Theological Review* 97, no. 1 (2015): 92.

[23]Ibid.

Global South draws more geographically diverse people into theological education.[24] According to Mainwaring, these pressures and changes must be addressed if seminaries are to flourish in the future.[25]

In the midst of this changing climate, evangelical theological institutions are aware of the struggles and questions facing them as they seek to adhere to the Bible's precedent for training men and women for gospel service. When asked, "What do you think are the greatest challenges that seminaries in North America will face over the next 20 years," presidents and other key leaders of theological institutions were varied in their responses. Some believed that the moral fabric of the society would continue to decline causing a strain and potential legal issues for theological institutions. Others believed that student debt and accreditation issues are some of the biggest challenges for theological intuitions. Four out of the seven who answered, however, reported that they believe technology, delivery methods, or access to be some of the greatest challenges facing theological education in the next twenty years.[26]

Understanding the concerns of Miller to provide theological education that is accessible to many both financially and geographically, and the concerns of Mainwaring that theological institutions must be sensitive to the growing global need for theological education, the common concern among the leaders of theological institutions are rightly focused on the subject of delivery methods and technology. With a growing need for flexible education and a growing population of Christians outside of North America, online learning offers a unique opportunity for graduate-level theological education to expand its influence.

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[24]Mainwaring, "Place, Power, and People," 101.

[25]Ibid., 92.

[26]Gavin Ortlund, "The New Era of Theological Education," The Gospel Coalition, accessed February 7, 2015, http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-new-era-of-theological-education1.

In addition to individual institutions' core values, accrediting agencies such as the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) serve to set standards of educational quality for many schools. As the accrediting agency for over 270 graduate schools of theology in the United States and Canada, ATS provides a general sample of the standards by which many institutions are held.[27] Acknowledging that not all of these schools hold to evangelical values,[28] ATS does accredit many evangelical institutions. Specifically used for the training of pastors and ministers of the gospel, the master of divinity (M.Div.) is understood as the standard degree provided in graduate-level theological education. The M.Div. requirements, according to ATS standards, must minimally employ the following attributes for accreditation:

1. *Religious heritage:* The program shall provide structured opportunities to develop a comprehensive and discriminating understanding of the religious heritage.
2. *Personal and spiritual formation:* The program shall provide opportunities through which the student may grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity, and public witness. Ministerial preparation includes concern with the development of capacities—intellectual and affective, individual and corporate, ecclesial and public—that are requisite to a life of pastoral leadership.
3. *Cultural context:* The program shall provide opportunities to develop a critical under- standing of and creative engagement with the cultural realities and structures within which the church lives and carries out its mission.
4. *Capacity for ministerial and public leadership:* The program shall provide theological reflection on and education for the practice of ministry. These activities should cultivate the capacity for leadership in both ecclesial and public contexts.[29]

The M.Div. program requirements stated by ATS are clear that criteria must be met to qualify for accreditation. These standards will be used as the measure of the

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[27]The Association of Theological Schools, "About ATS," accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.ats.edu/about/overview.

[28]The Association of Theological Schools, "ATS Shared Values," accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.ats.edu/ats-shared-values. Shared values include four components: diversity, quality and improvement, collegiality, and leadership.

[29]The Association of Theological Schools, "Degree Program Standards," accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.ats.edu/uploads/accrediting/documents/degree-program-standards.pdf.

minimum educational outcomes required in theological education, including evangelical theological education.

Online Learning in Theological Education

While theological institutions are not always known for technological innovation, they have still integrated its use in educating ministers of the gospel. Steven Frye introduces his readers to the integration of technology in religious education throughout the years: "Three eras of distance education: The first was the print and correspondence era. The second was dominated by broadcast media (television and radio). The newest generation is the realm of information technology, of which the Web is king."[30] In this new generation, he notices that online learning is becoming more prevalent in theological education and defends its use by pointing back to use of epistles in the early church which were "originally letters written to fledgling congregations to educate the early followers of Christianity in the ways of the emerging faith."[31] With a drive to see the lost come to Christ and churches strengthened through theological education, many evangelical institutions have been motivated to pursue online education, but not without significant debate.

Motivations for Adopting Online Learning

The adoption of online learning in graduate-level theological education has come as a result of practical needs among theological institutions to serve their students and reach markets of students who are unwilling or unable to relocate residentially. In "The Tensile Core: Theological Pedagogy in a New Context," G. A. Riccuti explains that the modern seminary student is not only a student but is simultaneously a minister and

[30]Steven B. Frye, "Religious Distance Education Goes Online," *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education* 133 (Spring 2012): 14.

[31]Ibid., 13.

usually one who is in a more advanced season of life.[32] Riccuti urges the seminary to adopt not only alternative models of education, but also for "seamlessly integration of study, formation, and life" in theological pedagogy.[33] The theological institution feels the weight of the needs of the modern theological student and has sought ways in which to tap into the market of students unable to relocate to campus.

Matthew Ogilvie likewise offers one key motivating factor for theological institutions to offer online courses. He reviews various opinions about these motives, but states, "What unites effective online education programs has been an educational culture of 'access for all,' which may be facilitated by online education technologies."[34] Among the benefits of online learning providing access to all, he notes particularly the convenience of the online medium, the ability for disabled students to access the materials, and the international community to gain theological education anywhere in the world.[35]

Theological-Pedagogical Debate

While distance learning has its appeal for multiple reasons, the community of theological educators debate both the theological rationale for the use of online learning in theological education as well as the pedagogical practicalities of achieving the outcomes of theological education online. In 2005, Steve Delamarter conducted forty-three interviews from faculty and academic leaders about their concerns with online learning. The findings indicated that along with several expected reservations, such as technological skill and available resources, theological and pedagogical concerns were clearly evident.[36]

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[32]Gail A. Ricciuti, "The Tensile Core: Theological Pedagogy in a New Context," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 6, no. 3 (July 2003): 146-47.

[33]Ibid., 147.

[34]Matthew C. Ogilvie, "Teaching Theology Online," *Australasian eJournal of Theology* 13 (2009): 2-3, accessed July 28, 2015, http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=theo_article.

[35]Ibid., 3-4.

[36]Steve Delamarter, "Theological Educators and Their Concerns about Technology," *Teaching*

Delamarter noted that these concerns are of vital importance because they "go to the heart of their professions as teachers."[37] These concerns included uncertainty as to online learning's ability to accomplish the disciplines of theological education successfully, as well as relational aspects necessary within ministerial training.[38]

Prior to Delamarter's study, evidence of this debate between theology and pedagogy was present. In 1998, Benjamin E. Sasse expressed his concerns that theological institutions were adopting distance education without thinking first of the theological implications of such a transition.[39] He cautions that when debating technology and theology, extremes should often be avoided, but nonetheless, "theological thinking [should have] priority over every other sort of thinking—business and technological and utilitarian thinking included."[40] This priority of theology to drive pedagogy is typical of an evangelical educator, as seen in their commonly held belief that the Bible is authoritative over all areas of life.[41] Sasse articulates the explicit danger of adopting technological advances in theological education by warning, "Technology has made [distance learning] possible, but technology cannot tell us if this is actually a desirable thing. Unfortunately, many evangelical seminaries seem to be merely assuming that possibility equals desirability."[42]

Similarly, David Diekema and David Caddell, in "The Significance of Place: Sociological Reflections on Distance Learning and Christian Higher Education,"

Theology & Religion 8, no. 3 (July 2005): 135.

[37]Delamarter, "Theological Educators," 135.

[38]Ibid., 137.

[39]Benjamin E. Sasse, "Theologians and Utilitarians : Historical Context for the 'Distance Learning' Debate," *Modern Reformation,* May 1, 1998, 32-38.

[40]Ibid., 36.

[41]Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 1-2.

[42]Sasse, "Theologians and Utilitarians," 33.

articulate a deep suspicion of online education from a Christian perspective identifying the incarnation as evidence of God's dissatisfaction with distance education.[43] Seeing education, especially from a Christian perspective, as shaping both the mind and the life of a student, Diekema and Caddell caution institutions from employing distance education.

The concerns over the need for theological education to be "embodied" and "incarnational" in a community established by Sasse, Diekema and Caddell are echoed by Paul House:

> God sent his son, not just his Word. Moses, Elijah, Huldah, Jesus, Barnabas, Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla mentored future servants of God. They did so face-to-face in community settings. They did so individually and in groups. They ate together. They prayed and worshiped God together. They suffered and shared together.[44]

In a more recent publication, House explains that seminary must be a community where students are exposed to the cost of their sacrificial service and prepared for the battlefield of ministry together. As such, online learning does not offer this community nor can it be rationalized theologically. House debunks the argument that Frye and others make about the epistles being a form of distance education, and he proposes that residential education will become the elite form of education as many seminaries settle for the inferior method of educating student online.[45]

From an evangelical view of Scripture, Sasse, Diekema, Caddell, and House must be admired for prioritizing theological convictions above the utilitarian implementation of technology; however, their stance has not been unopposed. In subsequent issues of *Christian Scholar's Review*, where Diekema and Caddell's article was published, one can trace a gradual acceptance of online education as represented in response to Diekema and Caddell.

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[43]David Diekema and David Caddell, "The Significance of Place: Sociological Reflections on Distance Learning and Christian Higher Education," *Christian Scholar's Review* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 182.

[44]Paul House, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern: A Plea for Personal Theological Education," *Colloquy* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 4.

[45]Paul House, *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision: A Case for Costly Discipleship and Life Together* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), loc. 3014, Kindle.

In the same winter 2001 issue of *Christian Scholar's Review*, Samuel E. Ebersole and Robert Woods in their article, "Virtual Community: Koinonia or Compromise? Theological Implications of Community in Cyberspace," step back from the adamant opposition to online education expressed by Diekema and Caddell to inspect the nature of community itself. They find that community and communication are related in such a way that requires one to shift an emphasis on place to an emphasis on the nature of communication.[46] They conclude that while they "do not suggest that a traditional, organized communal experience can be replicated online," an authentic community might be mimicked through the emphasis on communication, intimacy, honesty, commitment, diversity, and safety.[47] This article represents a very small step toward an acceptance of online education on pedagogical conditions as later fleshed out in the *Christian Scholar's Review* 2004 issue.

In the introductory article of *Christian Scholar's Review* of summer 2004, just three years after Diekema and Caddell's article, Dan Klassen and Van B. Weigel indicate, "Hyperbolic fads that characterized so much of the thinking in the late 1990s about the place of technology in higher education have given way to more mature understanding of what can be expected from online interactions in distance learning."[48] This "more mature understanding" is fleshed out through the issue calling for "pedagogical responsibility" from a positive outlook on technology in Christian education.[49] For the authors of these articles, this responsibility includes using technology in Christian education to accomplish

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[46]Samuel E. Ebersole and Robert Woods, "Virtual Community: Koinonia or Compromise? Theological Implications of Community in Cyberspace," *Christian Scholar's Review* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 191.

[47]Ibid., 207-15.

[48]Dan Klassen and Van B. Weigel, "E-Learning and the Spiritual Gift of Discernment: Toward a Pedagogy of Responsibility-Introduction to the Theme Issue," *Christian Scholar's Review* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 429.

[49]Ibid.

Great Commission purposes,[50] community possibilities and significances in face-to-face and distance education,[51] and a debunking of misconceptions about proximic distance in education.[52] This issue of *Christian Scholar's Review* represents a shift toward general acceptance of online education in Christian education with a few caveats that protect particularly the community and spiritual development of the students.

In the counter-point article in *Colloquy* paired with Paul House's article, Meri MacLeod makes a pedagogical rather than theological defense of online learning: "Distance learning course design provides strategic opportunities for faculty to explore the distinctions between a learning-centered paradigm and an instructional paradigm."[53] She focuses on six practical benefits of online learning, but neglects to set these practical benefits in a theological context. Her focus is purely practical and pedagogical. Among these benefits she lists "smoother transition from academic study to full-time ministry," "greater student body diversity," and "graduates with greater capacities to lead in twenty-first century ministries."[54] She speaks past the concerns of Sasse, House, and those within Delamarter's study by assuming, or possibly ignoring, the theological rationale and prioritizing the pedagogical.

Other advocates of online learning have stated their pedagogical rationale with a hint of theological prioritization for the adoption of online learning in theological institutions. In *Engaging Technology in Theological Education: All That We Can't Leave*

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[50]Shirley J. Roels, "Global Discipleship and Online Learning: What Does Blackboard Have to Do with Jerusalem?" *Christian Scholar's Review* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 451-70.

[51]Alfred P. Rovai and Jason D. Baker, "Sense of Community: A Comparison of Students Attending Christian and Secular Universities in Traditional and Distance Education Programs," *Christian Scholar's Review* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 285-95.

[52]Alan C. Hueth, "E-Learning and Christian Higher Education: A War of the Worlds, or Lessons in Reductionism?" *Christian Scholar's Review* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 527-46.

[53]Meri MacLeod, "The Case for Distance Learning in Theological Education: Six Strategic Benefits of Interactive Web-Based Distance Learning," *Colloquy* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 5.

[54]Ibid., 7.

Behind, Mary E. Hess argues that a deeper understanding of education is the cause of such oppositions to online learning in theological education. She believes that a paradigm shift from simply informational transfer to a more holistic and adaptive understanding of theological and ministerial training must be considered.[55] Once a clear understanding of good pedagogical practices of theological education are understood, then the tool of online education can be correctly considered and adopted. Hess demonstrates that theological priority and pedagogical priority are not at odds. Rather than pairing theology against pedagogy, she explains that theology informs pedagogy, which then informs the use of technology.

By approaching online learning as a pedagogical question about how this education can be accomplished in this new medium, Hess, in her article "What Difference Does It Make? Digital Technology in the Theological Classroom," finds that the online medium actually offers multiple advantages over face-to-face theological education. Hess expounds on some of the particular advantages that can be found when theological educators apply their convictions to teaching in the online format. From the conviction of interaction, access to content, and a desire for an expanding audience, Hess lists "more opportunities for collaboration," "access to primary source materials," and "overcoming constraints of geography and time" among the advantages of the online classroom.[56] These factors are all theologically informed, but are seen through the lens of pedagogical theory and practice.

In support of Hess' conclusions of the advantages of online learning when seen from a proper pedagogical standpoint, Matthew Ogilvie believes that the online classroom

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[55]Mary E. Hess, *Engaging Technology in Theological Education: All That We Can't Leave Behind* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 2.

[56]Mary E. Hess, "What Difference Does It Make? Digital Technology in the Theological Classroom," *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (2005): 77.

calls for a unique pedagogy, not simply an exact replica of the face-to-face course.[57] He argues that "using different pedagogical methods, one can more insightfully and creatively approach the question of whether effective online theological formation is possible."[58] Instead of disregarding theological convictions as Sasse and House warn against, Ogilvie determines to discover how these convictions about the nature of theological education can be incorporated into the pedagogy of the online classroom.

While Sasse and House both believe that physical removal from the culture/ world to train for ministry is ideal,[59] Ogilvie proposes an alternative perspective:

> Wherein lies the "distance" in distance education? Is the "distance" between the student and the institution, or between the student and the community one serves or will serve? Such a question challenges our traditional educational paradigms. It would seem that onsite education creates distance between a student and his or her community, and that the opposite may also apply.[60]

This point reveals the power of perspective and the opinion of Sasse and House. On the one hand, if one believes that removal from the "real world," as in the monastic movement, will aid in theological education, then there would be no rationale for theological education to be accessible or available from a distance, as in online learning. From Ogilvie's alternative perspective, however, if theological education insists on training an individual for real world ministry and engagement, then online learning offers students the ability to apply their learning to the community and context in which they already exist. Both perspectives differ on how the minister ought to be trained. This is a primarily a pedagogical difference.

Marilyn Naidoo also sees this pedagogical divide in her article "Ministerial Formation of Theological Students through Distance Education." Concerning the

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[57]Ogilvie, "Teaching Theology Online," 9.

[58]Ibid., 11.

[59]Sasse, "Theologians and Utilitarians," 37; House, *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision*.

[60]Ogilvie, "Teaching Theology Online," 15.

personal relationship that some propose must be present in theological education, she writes, "The reliability of [a] mentor-student model exists in tension with models of distance education which stress learning as self-directed or of a cooperative venture."[61] Naidoo understands that the nature of the online medium poses specific challenges to the traditional theological education to which faculty are accustomed. Thus, without proper understanding of the unique nature of the online medium and an analysis of how it might accomplish theologically-derived purposes, the debate about online learning in theological education will continue.

Though the debate continues, one thing is sure: online learning is a force in theological education that has gained immense momentum with no sign of slowing or stopping. The pedagogical differences and theological apprehensions of many continue to appear in the literature, but those individuals who refuse to adopt online learning as an option for theological education.[62] While many articulate their concerns and others address those concerns, very few studies have been done to determine just how widespread the adoption or rejection of online learning is among many faculty within those theological institutions.

Spiritual Formation through Community in Online Learning

One of the most prominent core values of theological educators is to shape the student spiritually and form his or her character through personal interaction.[63] Spiritual development is one of the core standards for theological education as indicated in the

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[61]Marilyn Naidoo, "Ministerial Formation of Theological Students through Distance Education," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 68, no. 2 (June 2012): 3.

[62]Among those that refuse to offer theological education online is Beeson Divinity School, where Paul House teaches.

[63]Mohler, "Mohler Lays Out 'Core Values'"; McKinney, "Evangelical Theological Higher Education."

M.Div. program requirements according to ATS.[64] This requirement is a primary concern in the debate about online learning in theological education. The question of the creation of community to such a degree that accomplishes spiritual formation is a constant objection from those who do not support online learning.

While spiritual formation in literature can be considered a broad category that can be applied to all people's spiritual growth, regardless of whether or not they are Christians, it is used in Christian literature to describe the particular maturity that a Christian goes through as he or she is made more into the image of Christ.[65] As a future minister of the gospel, the seminary student must be engaged in the process of becoming more like Christ as he or she will be called to be an example to others of a godly life (1 Tim 3:1-13; Jas 3:1). Thus, a Christian understanding of spiritual formation must be present within theological education, but is this possible in online education?

One of the key venues for spiritual formation within theological education is a community where new ministers of the gospel can receive life-on-life discipleship from the seasoned and experienced professors on campus. In *A Curriculum Design Manual for Theological Education*, LeRoy Ford determines that "affective" learning outcomes are essential in theological education as the goal of the education is not simply for students to have cognitive growth, but to be transformed by the Word of God.[66] These affective learning outcomes are understood as the spiritual formation that is needed in all theological education.

Online learning spiritual formation in community. As mentioned, Sasse and House share common concerns about spiritual formation within a community context in

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[64]The Association of Theological Schools, "Degree Program Standards."

[65]James Riley Estep et al., *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 247.

[66]LeRoy Ford, *A Curriculum Design Manual for Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 111-14.

online learning. House and Sasse similarly identify activities such as sharing a meal together as a key aspect of community in the Bible. In this view, therefore, physical presence is necessary for community creation contributing spiritual formation in theological education.[67] This description of community requires physical presence in order to be accomplished, which is why Sasse and House are not advocates of online learning which necessarily removes this presence.

House articulates a thorough vision of theological education based on the writings on Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision*. House gleans Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*, *Life Together*, and other writings to formulate a vision for training ministers of the gospel.[68] Synthesizing the theological conclusions of these texts, House concludes that a seminary is a ministry of the church, which is the body of Christ, physically meeting together as a visible witness to the gospel.[69] Since the community is physical and demands being a witness to the world, House believes that online learning courses "bear no resemblance to the commitment Christ asks of persons he calls to ministry."[70] He adds later that when interaction is "shifted from communion to communication," the community required for ministerial training in the Bible is not met.[71] From these theological convictions and assumptions about theological education, House rejects online learning as a legitimate method of theological education. He defends this rejection against three common theological defenses of online learning in theological education.

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[67]Sasse, "Theologians and Utilitarians," 33; House, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern," 4.

[68]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1959); Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

[69]House, *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision*, loc. 1062.

[70]Ibid., loc. 1501.

[71]Ibid., loc. 1558.

According to House, the first defense commonly made to justify online learning in theological education is the argument that distance education is analogous to Paul sending letters to churches and individuals for theological edification.[72] He rejects this argument by stating that the epistles were not sent to isolated students, but to people in community through a personal carrier.[73] Likewise, the author and recipient of the letters presumably already had a deep friendship.[74]

The second argument that House addresses is his defense of using the term "body of Christ" for the seminary community. This concern relates to online learning in that whatever the Bible says about the body of Christ, for House, is directly and fully applicable to the seminary community. While he admits that the seminary community is not the church, he believes that as a ministry of the church, the seminary community must operate as the body of Christ: "One does not have to equate a seminary and a church, or a family and a church for that matter, to apply the principle of Christ's body to it."[75] With this rationale, he believes that the body of Christ must meet together face-to-face, not mediated through technology.

The final argument commonly given in favor of online learning is that online learning provides theological education to those on the mission field or those without access to a seminary.[76] Exposing this notion to potential folly, House observes that these far away places are also often without internet, making online learning impossible.[77] Additionally, "As for a theological basis for missions, I cannot help but return to God's

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[72]House, *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision*, loc. 3052.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid., loc. 3062.

[77]Ibid., loc. 3065.

model, He sent the prophets. He sent his Son, Jesus. His son spent much of his ministry training a small number of disciples in a face-to-face manner."[78]

Thus, House believes that online learning is deficient in community and does not accomplish the necessary purposes of theological education and especially spiritual formation. He believes that the face-to-face environment is needed for spiritual formation to exist as the Bible prescribes.

Support for online learning spiritual formation in community. No single response has been waged against House's complaints against online learning, but there is no lack of literature addressing the necessity and possibility of community in online theological education. In 2010, Stephen Lowe provided an analysis of community from the Scriptures: "Biblical notions of community, informed by Christian theology, highlight the spiritual quality of our relationships to one another. The bonds of unity that embrace us through the outstretched arms of our Lord are not restricted by time and place."[79] He goes on to describe the phenomenon of the gospel that breaks down all sorts of separation such as "ethnicity, gender, social status, and distance."[80]

Diane Hockridge conducted a detailed survey of seminary students in theological institutions in Australia to discover the concerns of spiritual formation in online or distance learning. Her study found that in theological education, spiritual formation is achieved by course content, mentoring, reflection, extracurricular activities, peer support, practical experiences, student support, teaching practice, and interaction.[81] While the majority of these items can be accomplished in distance education as well as

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[78]House, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern," 4.

[79]S. D. Lowe, "Building Community and Facilitating Formation in Seminary Distance Education," *Christian Perspectives in Education* 4, no. 1 (2010): 9.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Diane Hockridge, "Challenges for Educators Using Distance and Online Education to Prepare Students for Relational Professions," *Distance Education* 34, no. 2 (August 2013): 150-51.

depending on the church's role in mentoring and practical experiences, students felt that the on-campus extracurricular activities largely impacted almost every area of formation listed above.[82] Thus, she concludes that while online learning should be considered a legitimate option for theological training, combining online with on-campus in a hybrid or blended course would be ideal. Likewise, distance education should optimize the student's interaction in his own church context for greater spiritual development.[83]

Christopher Jackson, in his Ed.D. thesis from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, supports the conclusion that there is theological precedence for community that transcends distance. By understanding social presence in Paul's letters, Jackson makes several inferences about the use of letters in education and the use of online learning in education.[84] Against House's argument that the epistles cannot be compared to online learning, Jackson concludes that the two are sufficiently comparable because they are both educational tools that transcend distance.[85] While his inferences determine that traditional, face-to-face education should be primary,[86] "online learning formats may be legitimately used for theological education . . . in part on account of social presence, the sense of interacting with a real person through media."[87]

In addition to the theological counter arguments to the view of community as physical proposed by Sasse and House, some have argued from perspective. As mentioned

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[82]Hockridge, "Challenges for Educators," 155.

[83]Ibid., 156.

[84]Christopher Dwight Jackson, "The Phenomenon of Social Presence in the Pauline Epistles and Its Implication for Practices of Online Education" (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 59-68.

[85]Ibid., 44-46.

[86]Ibid., 69.

[87]Ibid., 71-72.

in the previous section, Matthew Ogilvie, in his article "Teaching Theology Online," proposed the following scenario:

> From another perspective, the community-engagement formation opportunities of online education raise a conceptual question. Wherein lies the "distance" in distance education? Is the "distance" between the student and the institution, or between the student and the community one serves or will serve? Such a question challenges our traditional educational paradigms. It would seem that onsite education creates distance between a student and his or her community, and that the opposite may also apply.[88]

In this perspective, Ogilvie exposes Sasse and House to possibly weakening the student's original community, the local church. In this perspective, online learning actually supports the church community by not only allowing the student to physically remain in that community, but by also providing that community with an increasingly equipped minister of the gospel.

Marilyn Naidoo adds another interesting perspective on community in the seminary today. She proposes that the re-development on community after the boom of social media created a generation of "internet-savvy" students who "place a high value on relationships and community. . . . They are naturally attracted to the combination of technology and the potential for learning in an online community."[89] From this perspective, students may find it easier and more natural to perceive genuine and meaningful community online.

Creating community online. Regardless of where one falls on the spectrum of adoption or rejection of online learning, online curriculum design plays a huge part of its success among students. Mark Maddix, James Estep, and Mary Lowe propose their take on Christian online education in *Best Practices of Online Education: A Guide for Christian Higher Education*. Familiar with the apprehensions about Christian formation through community in online learning, Maddix's chapter, entitled "Developing Online

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[88]Ogilvie, "Teaching Theology Online," 15.

[89]Naidoo, "Ministerial Formation," 6.

Learning Communities," provides a roadmap for designing curriculum that takes advantage of discussion boards, group activities, and faculty interaction.[90]

Mary Lowe takes this community creation one step further by emphasizing the spiritual formation aspect of the community in her chapter, "Spiritual Formation as Whole-Person Development in Online Education." She believes that "persons who are studying online have a common bond of connection that transcends physical time and space."[91] While pointing to studies that show that students believe the church to be their primary place of spiritual formation rather than the classroom, she concludes that online learning can indeed invoke spiritual formation in learners through online community interaction.[92]

In online learning literature, the term "Community of Inquiry" is used to identify an online learning environment that is designed to specifically foster an interactive learning community necessary for transformational learning. The concept of the "Community of Inquiry" was developed by D. Randy Garrison, Terry Anderson, and Walter Archer in their article, "Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education.[93] The Community of Inquiry is best represented by three overlapping circles of content presence, teaching presence, and social presence that impact both the design and delivery of an online course.[94]

In the first circle, "content presence" represents the idea that the online student is required to engage with content. The student may watch a video, read a book, or enter

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[90]Mark A. Maddix, "Developing Online Learning Communities," in *Best Practices for Online Education: A Guide for Christian Higher Education*, ed. Mark A. Maddix, James R. Estep, and Mary E. Lowe (Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2012), 36-37.

[91]Ibid., 58.

[92]Ibid.

[93]D. R. Garrison, T. Anderson, and W. Archer, "Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education Model," *The Internet and Higher Education* 2, nos. 2-3 (2000): 87-105.

[94]The community of inquiry model is not intended solely for online purposes, but can be used as a tool for creating a community within an on-campus classroom as well.

into a discussion over some specific idea. While a constructivist theory of education may propose truth as being built within community, the Christian educator understands that truth is objective and is found in the authoritative and inerrant Word of God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21). Therefore, the content within theological online courses is not being built, but rather being explored and understood within a community. Content presence in the Christian online course will find the firm foundation of the Scriptures as the starting point and ending point to every content interaction, but this does not negate the need for interaction.[95]

In the second circle, "social presence" is effected by a student's "communication context created through familiarity, skills, motivation, organizational commitment, activities, and length of time in using the media."[96] As an online student is equipped and given opportunities to engage with peers online, he or she will become more and more adept and skilled at creating a genuine, learning community. The key to making this peer engagement successful is "establishing a collaborative community of inquiry" where students are free and encouraged to ask difficult questions of one another and receive questions of the like.[97] Students should not simply comment on the content, but they should be required, by curriculum design, to critically engage the content and one another.[98]

In the third circle, "teaching presence" is "the binding element" that brings the content engagement and the social interaction among student to fruition.[99] The instructor

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[95]Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Assessing the Online Learner: Resources and Strategies for Faculty* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 19; Susan A. Ambrose et al., *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 126.

[96]Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, "Critical Inquiry," 95.

[97]Ibid.

[98]Shelly Cunningham, "Who Gets to Chew a Cracker? Engaging the Student in Learning in Higher Education," *Christian Education Journal* 2, no. 2 (September 1, 2005): 302-18.

[99]Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, "Critical Inquiry," 96.

is the agent that initiates, maintains, and directs the community of the course by bringing students as a group into the zone of proximal development.[100] The course lacks community without his involvement, and students quickly realize that they need not engage one another because the instructor is not engaging them.[101]

Understanding that online learning in theological education requires community in order to foster and encourage spiritual formation, the Community of Inquiry model provides a structure for the creation of this community. While this may seem possible from a design standpoint, the delivery of the course is just as important. Both the online curriculum designer and the online instructor must prioritize the creation of community in order to achieve some of the core values of theological education online.

Evidence of Successful Online Theological Education

The debate about online learning in theological education is present in the literature, but studies conclude online learning to be a successful means of theological education. From case studies of faculty who attempted to teach theological education online to a quantitative survey of graduates from ATS accredited schools, success is being reported.

In a case study called "Webbing the Common Good: Virtual Environment, Incarnated Community, and Education for the Reign of God," Helen Blier agrees that determining the acceptance of online learning is not "simply a matter of translating conventional classroom strategies into an online format. Rather, it requires confronting foundational questions about the content, methods, and desired outcomes of the teaching/learning experience."[102] After reviewing the literature and conducting a case

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[100]Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, "Critical Inquiry," 96.

[101]Rosemary M. Lehman and Simone C. O. Conceição, *Creating a Sense of Presence in Online Teaching: How to "Be There" for Distance Learners* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 5.

[102]Helen M. Blier, "Webbing the Common Good: Virtual Environment, Incarnated Community,

study in hybrid courses, Blier concludes, "Students can be cultivated in the practical and normative competencies expected of them as professionals."[103] This important conclusion about hybrid learning is followed by her conclusion that the online environment did allow students to "develop a strong sense of community," which is the primary concern of House, as well as Sasse.[104] Her case study led her to believe that the concerns about online learning or hybrid learning are not simply about technology, but about how to interact in any medium.

Naidoo builds on this argument to identify community as one of the non-negotiable aspects of traditional theological education. She points out, however, that these models assume

> that the residential community is a closely-knit one in which students live and share life together. There seems to be a fundamental link between face-to- face encounters and community building . . . [but] the reality is that most theological schools have no longer much control or even connection with the lives of students outside of their presence in class.[105]

As is the case, technology itself is becoming a meaningful tool for community building.[106] Naidoo's conclusion is that while more research needs to be done about how technology transforms whom the student becomes, the reality is that technology has more power to create genuine learning communities.

Mark Heinemann conducted a survey of students from ATS-accredited seminaries in 2002.[107] His main concern was to determine "the relationships between

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and Education for the Reign of God," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 11, no. 1 (February 2008): 25.

[103]Blier, "Webbing the Common Good," 31.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Naidoo, "Ministerial Formation," 4.

[106]Ibid., 6.

[107]Mark H. Heinemann, "Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning in On-Line Theological Education. Part III : Methodological Approach," *Christian Higher Education* 5 (April 2006): 162, accessed February 7, 2015, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=33h-9759D29B-40D7E43B&site=ehost-live.

three major types of teacher-student interaction (organizational, social, and intellectual) and two types of learning outcomes (cognitive and affective)."[108] Even in 2002, when online theological education was still relatively new, Heinemann found that "the survey participants, on average, agreed that their instructor adequately facilitated or promoted social, organizational, and intellectual interaction."[109] This finding supports the previous claims of those who argue that online learning can successfully produce a legitimate learning community even from a distance.

More recently, in an ATS webinar on September 18, 2015, called "Theological Education 2015: State of the Industry," Chris Olsztyn provided data from an ATS study surveying 2015 graduating students about their perception of the effectiveness of their theological education. The survey included both residential and online students and found no statistical difference between the perceptions of online or residential students about the successful achievement of outcomes in their education; instead, in every category online students indicated greater (not statistically, however) achievement of the outcomes. The outcomes included "enthusiasm for learning," "self-knowledge," and "trust in God."[110] While it cannot be determined if trends in online learning, such as older students taking online courses or educational experience, are to account for this data, the clear indication of such research suggests that online learning in theological education can successfully achieve desired cognitive and affective outcomes according to ATS standards.

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[108]Mark H. Heinemann, "Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning in On-Line Theological Education. Part 1: Concepts and Concerns," *Christian Higher Education* 4 (July 2005): 185, accessed February 7, 2015, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=33h-B9E7D769-1DF271E9&site=ehost-live.

[109]Mark H. Heinemann, "Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning in Online Theological Education, Part 4: Findings and Conclusions," *Christian Higher Education* 4 (May 2007): 186, accessed February 7, 2015, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=33h-1E3C8016-823ECAEE&site=ehost-live.

[110]Chris Olsztyn, "Theological Education 2015: State of the Industry," Association of Theological Schools, PowerPoint slide 32, accessed September 18, 2015, http://www.ats.edu/events/theological-education-2015-state-industry-webinar.

Faculty Perceptions of Online Learning

Even as studies find that online learning can be successful and that students are pleased with the outcomes of their online theological education, still many apprehensions from faculty must be addressed. The following section reviews literature to understand the role of faculty in online learning, the faculty perceptions of online learning in institutions of higher education generally, and then specifically the very few sources indicating the perceptions of evangelical faculty about online learning in graduate-level theological education.

The Role of the Faculty in Online Learning

Faculty have an essential role in online learning, just as they do in face-to-face instruction. The faculty's role in online learning, however, requires different skills and emphases when compared to face-to-face instruction. The following review identifies some of the important aspects of faculty who teach online.

Although some fear that online learning removes the need for the faculty member altogether, Zaid Baghdadi actually found that the role of faculty is essential in online learning.[111] In his article, "Best Practices in Online Education: Online Instructors, Courses, and Administrators," Baghdadi states that the faculty member needs to be able to handle technology well enough to use it as a tool for learning.[112] Likewise, the faculty member who teaches online must not only prepare a well-designed class, but must be heavily involved in it throughout the semester.[113] This requires time management skills and discipline as the semester continues and as the faculty member facilitates greater learning through feedback, discussion board interaction, and grading.[114]

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[111]Ziad D. Baghdadi, "Best Practices in Online Education: Online Instructors, Courses, and Administrators," *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education* 12, no. 3 (July 2011): 109.

[112]Ibid.

[113]Ibid., 110.

[114]Ibid., 111.

Affirming the importance of faculty in online learning, Michael Menchaca and Teklu Abate Bekele collected data for years from various sources to determine the most important aspects of online learning in their article "Learner and Instructor Identified Success Factors in Distance Education." One of the most significant factors of success was the faculty involvement in the course. "Prompt and reflective feedback" was among some of the most important types of interaction that students identified it as "crucial."[115] This study also found that faculty were critical for motivating students, including the use of appropriate technologies for student learning and overall course design and delivery.[116]

From a Christian perspective, Maddix, Estep, and Lowe edited a guide for online education in Christian higher education entitled, *Best Practices of Online Education*. No theological foundation for online education is discussed within this work, but the authors achieve a pedagogical overview of the needs and differences of online learning, especially for the faculty.[117]

From an understanding of the needs of online students, the role of the faculty member in online learning unfolds. The faculty member should prepare the course prior to the semester and manage it through the semester.[118] The faculty member is also responsible to develop online learning communities in which student can bridge transactional distance and establish a social presence for learning in community.[119] The

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[115]Michael P. Menchaca and Teklu Abate Bekele, "Learner and Instructor Identified Success Factors in Distance Education," *Distance Education* 29, no. 3 (October 2008): 246.

[116]Ibid., 248.

[117]The reader may review the theology-pedagogy debate in online Christian education for details on why this may be assumed.

[118]Maddix, Estep, and Lowe, *Best Practices for Online Education*, 82.

[119]Ibid., 35-37.

Christian faculty member must also be aware of the need to foster spiritual formation within the online classroom.[120]

The faculty member should take on more of a facilitator role as opposed to an authoritarian role. C. Damon Osborne's chapter in *Best Practices of Online Education* emphasizes more of a facilitation position rather than an authoritative position for the faculty member: "Instead of lecturing, the online instructor would be better served to help students make a connection to the course content, assisting them in constructing their own knowledge base from the materials present in the course."[121] Throughout *Best Practices of Online Education*, the writes provide practical ways in which the faculty member can best facilitate learning within the online environment.

Gabriel Etzel, in his doctoral thesis "Implications of Theological Anthropology for Online Pedagogy in Graduate-Level Ministerial Training," tempers *Best Practices of Online Education* with a critique of the faculty member's role as proposed by Osborne and others. Etzel believes that there is more to being an online faculty member than facilitating learning: "Ultimately, learning is not the goal of online graduate-level ministerial training . . . formation into the image of Christ should be the motivating factor within online graduate-level ministerial training."[122] He emphasizes the need for the faculty member to model spiritual formation to the student founded on a rich theological understanding of theological education, but perhaps misunderstands that formation itself is a type of learning. In regard to Maddix, Estep, and Lowe, he writes, "The educator within the context of online graduate-level ministerial training is left with an

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[120]Maddix, Estep, and Lowe, *Best Practices for Online Education*, 56.

[121]C. Damon Osborne, "Best Practices in Online Teaching," in *Best Practices for Online Education*, 85.

[122]Gabriel Benjamin Etzel, "Implications of Theological Anthropology for Online Pedagogy in Graduate-Level Ministerial Training" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 118.

understanding of *what* to teach, and *how* to teach, but there is little offered in way of a foundation as to *why* to teach."[123]

In an effort to produce this "why to teach," Etzel suggests that hiring the right faculty that have theological prowess over technological skills is of the utmost importance.[124] Second, Etzel proposes that special emphasis on the faculty member's spiritual development should not only be prioritized by the institution, but should also be evaluated by the institution.[125] Etzel claims that these two adjustments to the role of faculty, along with a host of other adjustments to course objectives and social presence, will produce a richer theological focus in online ministerial training.[126]

Etzel's critique of *Best Practices of Online Education* is not widely felt by others who articulate the role of faculty in online learning. In fact, on a broad scale of non-Christian and Christian descriptions of the role of faculty in online learning, the emphasis is typically on the practical role that they play as a facilitator of student learning, though their competency in the discipline is assumed because of accreditation standards for the qualifications of faculty.

This brief review of the role of the faculty in online learning suggests that the following skills and responsibilities are needed for a Christian, online faculty member: subject matter expertise, technological knowledge, online pedagogical knowledge, course preparation and design on semester by semester basis, facilitation of active learning throughout the semester, engaging social presence, interaction through feedback and grading, and spiritual formation through relationship-building.

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[123]Etzel, "Implications of Theological Anthropology," 119, emphasis original.

[124]Ibid., 137.

[125]Ibid., 141.

[126]Ibid., 137.

Perceptions of Online Learning

In 2003, Kyong-Jee Kim and Curtis J. Bonk surveyed 562 college instructors and administrators to discover their perceptions about online teaching and learning in the next 5 to 10 years.[127] They believed that monetary support, pedagogical competency of online instructors, and technical competency of online instructors would be the most significant factors affecting the success of online programs.[128] Though the majority of respondents believed that in 2003 online learning was of inferior quality to traditional education, most of the respondents expected that the quality of online learning when compared to traditional education would be of superior quality in ten years.[129] Over the thirteen years since this study was conducted, faculty perceptions have continued to be of great interest to educational researchers and administrators, but in contrast to Kim and Bonk's survey findings, a review of the literature suggests that many faculty still have concerns about online learning.

In 2012, almost ten years after Kim and Bonk's survey, Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman conducted a study by sending two surveys, one to faculty members of higher education and the other to the administrators. Their sample of faculty was 4,564 faculty from "two-year, four-year, all Carnegie classifications, and public, private nonprofit, and for-profit and included full and part-time, tenured or not, and all disciplines."[130] Their findings, reported in "Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012," indicated that overall, faculty "report being more pessimistic than optimistic about online learning."[131] Unlike the hopes of Kim and Bonk's respondents that online learning would be more

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[127]Kyong-Jee Kim and Curtis J. Bonk, "The Future of Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: The Survey Says . . ," *EDUCAUSE Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (January 2006): 24.

[128]Ibid., 26.

[129]Ibid., 27.

[130]I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, "Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012," Babson Survey Research Group, 2012, 4, accessed February 25, 2015, http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED535214.

[131]Ibid., 2.

widely accepted as high quality, Allen and Seaman found that two-thirds of faculty respondents believed that online learning objectives were inferior to face-to-face.[132] Thus, it remains that faculty concerns, as of 2012, have not been eased entirely.

In 2009, Doris Bolliger and Oksana Wasilik developed a survey instrument to assess faculty satisfaction about online learning. They reviewed the literature and found three main categories of concern among faculty: student-related, instructor-related, and institution-related.[133] This division of the literature related to faculty satisfaction with online learning is supported by others;[134] however, upon further review of the literature it seems that an additional category of course-related factors accounts for a part of faculty concern or acceptance of online learning. Therefore, this section of the literature review considers student-related, instructor-related, institution-related, and course-related factors contributing to the perception of faculty about online learning in higher education. Categorizing these perceptions in this way helps the reader to understand the concerns as listed, but requires referencing the same literature in multiple categorizes.

Student-Related Faculty Perceptions

Faculty perceptions of online students is likely the least researched area of faculty perceptions of online learning, though upon casual observation, faculty certainly have opinions about the abilities and readiness of online students in their respective courses. Four main categories of concern emerged from the literature about faculty perceptions of online students: technological ability, self-directed learning ability, cheating/accountability, and communication skill development.

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[132]Allen and Jeff Seaman, "Conflicted," 9.

[133]Doris U. Bolliger and Oksana Wasilik, "Factors Influencing Faculty Satisfaction with Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education," *Distance Education* 30, no. 1 (May 2009): 106-7.

[134]Michael J. Curran, "Institution-Related, Instructor-Related, and Student-Related Factors That Influence Satisfaction for Online Faculty at a For-Profit Institution" (D.Sc. diss., Robert Morris University, 2013).

Technological ability. Although it may take more technological ability to design an online course than to take an online course, students are still required to access the Learning Management System (LMS) in order to submit assignment, interact on discussion boards, and receive the course content. A 2010 study of faculty who took the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) found that faculty were concerned that students were not prepared in regard to technology.[135] To remedy this issue, faculty suggested that orientation opportunities be provided to students so that they would be better trained in accesses the school's LMS.

Self-directed learning ability. Online learning not only requires technological capabilities, but also requires the student to be disciplined in self-directed and often self-paced learning. Self-directed learning is one of the strengths of online learning for adult students who prefer to learn independent of intense classroom instruction,[136] but some faculty continue to be concerned that their students are not succeeding. In the same 2010 study by Wickersham and McElhany using the SoCQ, faculty stated that they believed that students did not have the "ability to be self-directed in learning, as many students perceive online learning to be 'easy.'"[137] As self-directed learning requires the student to take initiative in discovering new concepts and finding sources and content, faculty presumably suggested that students were not taking this initiative and concluded the course not be a challenge to them.

Cheating/accountability. Another serious issue raised by faculty in the Wickersham and McElhany study was the perception that students would have more

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[135]Leah E. Wickersham and Julie A. McElhany, "Bridging the Divide: Reconciling Administrator and Faculty Concerns Regarding Online Education," *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* 11, no. 1 (2010): 4-5.

[136]Morris T. Keeton, Barry G. Sheckley, and Joan Krejci Griggs, *Effectiveness and Efficiency in Higher Education for Adults: A Guide for Fostering Learning* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt, 2002), 56-57.

[137]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 4-5.

opportunity to cheat online than in the classroom since there was no accountability for them to remain honest.[138] They believed there was a need for enhanced security measures in their institution that monitored or proctored tests for online students to ensure academic honesty.[139]

Communication skill development. Diane Hockridge conducted a qualitative research study to discover educator concerns about online learning to prepare students for relational professions such as clergy, counseling, and others. She found that educators were concerned that online students lack the opportunity to develop communication skills necessary for these relational professions.[140] For many, the online environment is assumed to be a cold and distant page of information, but Hockridge found that online students can achieve a high amount of communication-oriented practice and training by their involvement in the online course designed for interactions, mentorship from a professor, teaching practice online, and more.[141] For students who were pursuing a religious profession, Hockridge also found that the student's involvement in the church compensated for much of the communication skill development.[142] With that said, faculty still perceived that online learning was inferior in this preparation.

Kathie Good and Kathie Peca found a similar conclusion in the report of their survey findings in "The Hidden Hypocrisy of University Faculty Regarding Online Instruction." This study found that while many faculty participated in online learning, they were apprehensive about recommending a student who completed a degree online

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[138]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 5.

[139]Ibid.

[140]Hockridge, "Challenges for Educators," 144.

[141]Ibid., 152.

[142]Ibid., 154.

for a faculty position.[143] Among the reasons for this apprehension was a "lack of interpersonal skills" assumed to be diminished due to online education.

Diversity. A positive perception of online learning from faculty in regard to online students was recorded by Alice Yick, Pam Patrick, and Amanda Costin in their study "Navigating Distance Education and Traditional Higher Education: Online Faculty Experiences." In a qualitative study in which twenty-eight faculty members engaged in a discussion board about online learning, these researchers found that online learning had the advantage of interacting with a wider diversity of students.[144] The diversity of "geographic areas, ethnicities, and . . . rich life experiences" of the students aided in faculty research and provided a good learning environment.[145]

Instructor-Related Faculty Perceptions

Faculty also had many perceptions about their own abilities, motivations, and apprehensions about online learning. This section focuses on the instructor-related perceptions that emerged from the literature. These perceptions are divided into five main categories: extrinsic motivators, intrinsic motivators, pedagogical understanding, technological ability, and time.

Inhibitors and motivators. Kristen Betts and Amy Heaston, in their 2014 study "Build It But Will They Teach? Strategies for Increasing Faculty Participation & Retention in Online & Blended Education," found that motivating factors for faculty who taught online were different from faculty who have not taught online. The top five

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[143]Kathie Good and Kathie Peca, "The Hidden Hypocrisy of University Faculty Regarding Online Instruction," *Curriculum & Teaching Dialogue* 9, nos. 1 and 2 (September 2007): 272.

[144]Alice G. Yick, Pam Patrick, and Amanda Costin, "Navigating Distance and Traditional Higher Education: Online Faculty Experiences," *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 6, no. 2 (July 2005): 9, accessed September 19, 2015, http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ846841.

[145]Ibid.

motivating factors for faculty who taught online (or blended) were personal motivation to use technology, greater course flexibility for students, greater course flexibility for faculty, ability to teach student who cannot come to campus, and overall job satisfaction.[146] For faculty who had not taught online, their top five motivations for possibly teaching online were financial compensation, released time from their teaching load, access to adequate equipment, increased access to students with disabilities, and technical support.[147]

In the same study, faculty indicated not only their motivators for teaching online, but also their inhibitions—why they would not want to teach online or what keeps them from teaching online. For faculty that taught online, the top five inhibitors were lack of adequate equipment, lack of technical support, concern about faculty workload, lack of release time from their teaching load, and concern about quality of courses.[148] Faculty who did not teach online indicated the following inhibiting factors: concern about course quality, concern about faculty workload, lack of adequate equipment, concern about the quality of students, lack of technical support.[149]

Pedagogical understanding. The understanding of online pedagogy is a major determining factor for faculty perceptions, good and bad, about online learning. In a study that included 913 faculty members who taught at 33 colleges in the 2003-2004 academic year, Peter Shea, Alexandra Pickett, and Chu Sau Li found that faculty believed that online learning was an opportunity to develop teaching skills and would "improve how they taught in the classroom."[150]

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[146]Kristen Betts and Amy Heaston, "Build It But Will They Teach? Strategies for Increasing Faculty Participation & Retention in Online & Blended Education," *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration* 17, no. 2 (June 2014): 5-6, accessed February 25, 2015, http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer172/betts_heaston172.html.

[147]Ibid.

[148]Ibid., 7-8.

[149]Ibid.

[150]Peter Shea, Alexandra Pickett, and Chun Sau Li, "Increasing Access to Higher Education:

A 2008 study conducted by Tabata and Johnsrud found that faculty who perceived their instructional skills to be higher had an increased likelihood of teaching online.[151] While this was the case, they also found that these skills should include the ability to "adjust their course materials and instructional delivery within the parameters established by the medium."[152] For faculty had little to no online teaching background, the authors suggested the need for instructional designers and faculty development to enable faculty who were new to online learning to develop these skills as they transition from the physical classroom medium to online.[153]

Wickersham and McElhany found that faculty were "concerned about quality [of online courses] and they desire to know more about how to achieve that quality."[154] This concern reveals a perception that faculty believe themselves to be less than prepared to teach online, which has an effect on the overall quality of the course. The faculty suggested workshops and one-on-one sessions provided to them by the institution to develop their pedagogical skills in online education.

Technological ability. In addition to pedagogical skill development in the online classroom, one major concern about technological skill development is found throughout the literature. In that same study by Tabata and Johnsrud, faculty were less likely to participate in online learning if they believed that their skill in technology was

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A Study of the Diffusion of Online Teaching among 913 College Faculty," *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 6, no. 2 (July 2005): 15, accessed September 7, 2015, http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ846839.

[151]Lynn N. Tabata and Linda K. Johnsrud, "The Impact of Faculty Attitudes toward Technology, Distance Education, and Innovation," *Research in Higher Education* 49, no. 7 (November 2008): 642.

[152]Ibid., 643.

[153]Ibid., 642.

[154]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 4-5.

sub-par.[155] As will be discussed in the institution-related factors, these doubts about technology skill are not stagnant, but can be addressed in technology support and faculty development. Shea, Pickett, and Sau Li also found similar results in that faculty were more likely to be satisfied with online learning when they had less technological difficulties.[156]

Rya Amirault, in his article "Distance Learning in the 21st Century University: Key Issues for Leaders and Faculty," suggests that faculty will have a hard time keeping up with the ever-changing landscape of technological development.[157] In a similar vein, Jomon Paul and Justin Cochran found that "without a desire for some experimentation with technology and a willingness to tinker, faculty commonly have difficulty improving the quality of their online courses."[158]

Similarly, Shanan Gibson, Michael Harris, and Susan Colaric surveyed online faculty using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to discover faculty adjustment to using technology in online courses. This study found that "perceived ease of use did not play a significant role in predicting technology acceptance."[159] This conclusion means that even if the technology seemed easy to comprehend and use, these faculty would not be influenced toward or against online learning.

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[155]Tabata and Johnsrud, "The Impact of Faculty Attitudes," 635.

[156]Shea, Pickett, and Li, "Increasing Access to Higher Education," 15.

[157]Ray J. Amirault, "Distance Learning in the 21st Century University: Key Issues for Leaders and Faculty," *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* 13, no. 4 (January 2012): 253.

[158]Jomon Aliyas Paul and Justin Daniel Cochran, "Key Interactions for Online Programs Between Faculty, Students, Technologies, and Educational Institutions a Holistic Framework," *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 55.

[159]Shanan G. Gibson, Michael L. Harris, and Susan M. Colaric, "Technology Acceptance in an Academic Context: Faculty Acceptance of Online Education," *Journal of Education for Business* 83, no. 6 (August 2008): 358.

Time. Another common perception among faculty about teaching online is that it will take far more time to teach an online course than a face-to-face course. An early study of online faculty by Zane Berge reveals that faculty believed that they generally lacked "an adequate time-frame to implement an online course."[160] These faculty believed that the development of an online course was too time-consuming for them. Not only was the development of the course, but also the delivery of the course indicated as a time-consuming factor among faculty. Berger also summarizes that faculty believed that online learning would require "increased time . . . for both online contacts and preparation of materials and activities."[161]

Using the SoCQ to survey faculty about online learning, Wickersham and McElhany also found that time consumption was a perception of online faculty: "The same issue surrounding the amount of time it takes to design, develop, and then teach a course online was a common response seen throughout the data."[162] To remedy these issues, the faculty in their study suggest that institutions provide release time and support for developing online courses.[163] Additionally, enrollment caps on classes played a factor in faculty perceptions about the time it takes to teach online.[164] By placing a cap on online courses, faculty may have more time to teach online in their full potential.

Diane Hockridge noted in her study, "Challenges for Educators Using Distance and Online Education to Prepare Students for Relational Professions," that online interaction is difficult due to the amount of time required for "preparation and effort for

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[160]Zane L. Berge, "Barriers to Online Teaching in Post-Secondary Institutions: Can Policy Changes Fix It?" *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration* 1, no. 2 (June 1998): 2, accessed May 5, 2015, http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer12/berge12.html.

[161]Ibid.

[162]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 4-5.

[163]Ibid., 5.

[164]Ibid.

both lecturer and student."[165] Likewise, Bolliger and Wasilik found that faculty "expect to spend more time on online course development and teaching," and that they were more satisfied with online learning when "the institution provided release time."[166] Shea, Pickett, and Sau Li found that when faculty are given time to develop their online courses, they are generally more satisfied with teaching online.[167]

As seen in the literature, the time factor is of great concern to faculty. With this being the case, Rebecca Van de Vord and Korolyn Pogue conducted a study of tracking faculty time spent in online and face-to-face courses throughout a fifteen-week semester.[168] While online courses required more of the faculty's time evaluating students' work, the overall time spent on the course was actually less than the face-to-face course, largely due to the time it takes to lecture.[169]

Institution-Related Faculty Perceptions

While faculty had mixed reviews of the online students and about themselves as online instructors, they also had many perceptions of their educational institution in offering online courses. The literature indicated five categories of faculty perceptions: administrative support, technical support, workload, compensation, and course evaluations.

Administrative support. Jomon Paul and Justin Cochran in their article, "Key Interactions for Online Programs Between Faculty, Students, Technologies, and

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[165]Hockridge, "Challenges for Educators," 156.

[166]Bolliger and Wasilik, "Factors Influencing Faculty Satisfaction," 106-7.

[167]Shea, Pickett, and Li, "Increasing Access to Higher Education," 16.

[168]Rebecca Van de Vord and Korolyn Pogue, "Teaching Time Investment: Does Online Really Take More Time than Face-to-Face?" *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 13, no. 3 (June 2012): 132.

[169]Ibid., 139.

Educational Institutions a Holistic Framework" determine that "beyond technology-specific support for faculty, institutions can assist individual faculty efforts in online education by providing an umbrella of services at a broader level."[170] They indicate that faculty often feel isolated and abandoned as they attempt to teach online, but by providing these services to support their teaching in this new arena, faculty can feel confident and gain competency in their skill.

Pedagogical support. Paul and Cochran likewise indicate that faculty are in need of institutional support in developing online courses. This pedagogical support can include online instructional designers who "focus . . . on virtual delivery of content, assessment, and assignments."[171] This will help apprehensive faculty to be guided through the development process to ensure that their content is being delivered to the student accurately and effectively.

According to R. J. Novark, one of the benchmarks of online learning best practices is the quality of the course development that includes "student engagement in the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the course materials."[172] Faculty who are unsure of their technological skill and the differences of online instruction will need support from their institution to ensure that their course is of high quality. Without that support, faculty may continue to feel that their time is wasted on a low-quality product.

Technical support. In addition to administrative and pedagogical support, faculty perceive a need for technical support provided by the institution. They generally perceive the need for the institution to provide this support along with various forms of

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[170]Paul and Cochran, "Key Interactions," 56.

[171]Ibid.

[172]Richard J. Novak, "Benchmarking Distance Education," *New Directions for Higher Education*, no. 118 (Summer 2002): 82.

equipment and software to accomplish the task of teaching online.[173] Wickersham and McElany found that faculty desired to learn about incorporating new technologies into their online courses.[174] As technological difficulties were related to faculty dissatisfaction with online learning, faculty would perceive help desk access to the campus technology offices a support system for them as they teach online.[175]

Workload. According to Heaston and Betts, faculty, both who taught online or not, had concerns about the workload involved with online learning.[176] Paired with the general concerns about time indicated in the last section, it can be determined that the institution plays a large role in faculty perceptions about online learning as it allows or does not allow for adequate time to develop and teach online. Similarly, Bolliger and Wasilik found that workload and release time for the workload were among the highest concerns of faculty.[177]

Compensation. Fair pay for online teaching was one of the several issues raised by Paul House in his article "Hewing to Scriptures Pattern." He claimed that faculty who teach online are severely underpaid for the amount of work that is required of them.[178] Others express this same perception indicating that the compensation in

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[173]Betts and Heaston, "Build It But Will They Teach?"

[174]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 5.

[175]Menchaca and Bekele, "Learner and Instructor Identified Success Factors," 235.

[176]Betts and Heaston, "Build It But Will They Teach?," 7-8.

[177]Bolliger and Wasilik, "Factors Influencing Faculty Satisfaction," 106-7.

[178]House, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern."

relation to workload is not fair or equal.[179] Tabata and Johnsrud suggest creating a reward structure that will offset the time required to develop and deliver an online course.[180]

Course evaluations. Faculty also relay their perceptions about the evaluation of the online courses performed by the institution. According to the survey conducted by Lesley Hathorn and John Hathorn, faculty articulated a desire to be evaluated not by the institutions only, but by those who had knowledge of their course content.[181] They found that while faculty generally "expressed interest in improvement as instructors," they wanted "to be evaluated by those with content-specific knowledge rather than teaching expertise in the online environment."[182]

Course-Related Faculty Perceptions

Although Bolliger and Wasilik did not include course-related perceptions of faculty in online learning, the literature did reveal that course design had a major part to play in faculty perceptions about the quality of online education as a whole. Major areas of consistent concern among faculty about online learning courses were the achievement of learning outcomes, interaction/community, and involvement in development.

Quality/achievement of learning outcomes. According to the study conducted by Allen and Seaman, faculty generally believed that achievement of online course outcomes were inferior to that of face-face.[183] They have conflicted opinions (either agree or disagree) about online education's potential to be as effective in "helping students

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[179]Tabata and Johnsrud, "The Impact of Faculty Attitudes," 643.

[180]Ibid.

[181]Lesley Hathorn and John Hathorn, "Evaluation of Online Course Websites: Is Teaching Online a Tug-of-War?" *Journal of Educational Computing Research* 42, no. 2 (January 2010): 197-217.

[182]Ibid.

[183]Allen and Seaman, "Conflicted," 9.

learn."[184] Quality was also a major issue for the faculty in Wickersham and McElhany's study. They found that faculty are generally concerned about the quality of their online courses.[185] Likewise, Heaston and Betts found that quality of the course design was an inhibitor to faculty involvement in online learning.[186]

Interaction/community. Shea, Pickett, and Sau Li indicated, "The most frequently cited variable in discussions of quality in online learning environments is interaction."[187] R. J. Novak agrees that interaction is an essential benchmark for a quality online course.[188] While this is a common conclusion drawn from both the literature and observation within the online course, how do faculty perceive online interaction and community?

Wickersham and McElhany found that faculty "perceived lack of interaction in an online course versus that of a traditional course," but the authors quickly note that this lack of interaction "may be tied to poor design."[189] As mentioned earlier in this literature review, designing for a community of inquiry requires a threefold emphasis: teaching presence, content presence, and social presence.[190] Without a course designed for interaction, neither student nor teacher has the opportunity to engage with one another leading to a perception of failure on the part of the online medium rather than the online course design.

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[184]Allen and Seaman, "Conflicted," 13.

[185]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 4-5.

[186]Betts and Heaston, "Build It But Will They Teach?," 7-8.

[187]Shea, Pickett, and Li, "Increasing Access to Higher Education," 14.

[188]Novak, "Benchmarking Distance Education," 82.

[189]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 4-5.

[190]Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, "Critical Inquiry."

Hockridge likewise found that interaction was key to faculty perceiving an online course to be successful.[191] Her prescription for alleviating some of the lack of interaction is to incorporate technologies within the online course design that allow for and "enhance interaction."[192] With that said, she also emphasizes the need for face-to-face learning to be the standard, finding that a relational model of learning cannot be replicated online.[193]

Evangelical Faculty Perceptions of Online Learning in Theological Education

The very few studies that have been done to assess faculty perceptions about online learning graduate-level theological education are included next. Some of the studies include faculty who would claim to be evangelical, but some studies may also include faculty who are not. These studies provide a glimpse of the insights one might find when determining evangelical faculty perceptions, but the studies do not isolate evangelical faculty in particular. These studies likewise do not account for recent developments in online learning into the fully online M.Div. and other fully online degrees now offered at many seminaries. Studies in this section are presented in chronological order.

In 2002, William Wilson, a doctoral student of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, produced a thesis entitled "Faculty and Administrator Attitudes and Perceptions toward Distance Learning in Southern Baptist-Related Educational Institutions." This study focused on a single evangelical denominational affiliation—Southern Baptist—rather than on evangelicals at large. It also focused on distance learning, which could include extension centers as well as online. Nonetheless, the survey

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[191]Hockridge, "Challenges for Educators," 144.

[192]Ibid., 156.

[193]Ibid.

of 240 faculty and administrators of Southern Baptist schools produced some interesting findings.

The survey revealed that 74.4 percent of the respondents were "very positive" to "somewhat positive" about distance education in general.[194] Further they responded that 92.3 percent were generally "very positive" to "somewhat positive" about distance education at their own institutions.[195] When excluding administrators and focusing on faculty, the same question revealed that 58.9 percent of faculty were between "neutral" and "very negative."[196] This indicates that faculty have a less optimistic view of distance education than their administrators do. This same conclusion is confirmed in Allen and Seaman's work "Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012" among a much broader sample size.[197]

Other findings of this survey indicated similar themes of the non-evangelical faculty perceptions listed. Faculty were motivated by "the ability to reach new audiences" and a "desire to keep up with new technologies."[198] The biggest inhibitors for participating in distance education were "lack of technical support" and "lack of time to develop courses."[199] These themes are very common among faculty as seen in the literature.

In 2003, Steve Delamarter interviewed faculty, administrators, and IT personnel from 43 ATS accredited schools in North America to discover their perceptions of

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[194]William Michael Wilson, "Faculty and Administrator Attitudes and Perceptions toward Distance Learning in Southern Baptist-Related Educational Institutions" (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), 54.

[195]Ibid., 55.

[196]Ibid., 57.

[197]Allen and Seaman, "Conflicted," 2.

[198]Wilson, "Faculty and Administrator Attitudes and Perceptions," 88.

[199]Ibid., 107.

technology as used in theological education.[200] Because of these interviews, Delamarter published two articles conveying the findings of this research. The first article, "A Typology of the Use of Technology in Theological Education," describes the concerns of theological educators about using technology inside the face-to-face classroom.[201] The second article, "Theological Educators and their Concerns about Technology," adding two more seminaries to the results, lists twenty-six concerns that theological educators had about distance education.[202] Although Delamarter included a broader range of respondents than just evangelicals, and his study was done over ten years ago, this article will prove helpful to inform the present study.

The following is a list of the concerns expressed by these theological educators about distance education:

1. There are a lot of costs associated with technology and many of them are hidden.
2. Technology requires a lot of time and much of it ends up being open-ended and ongoing.
3. Technology will take time away from what I need to do to get tenured.
4. Technology hype can breed a hysteria that make priorities very difficult to manage.
5. Faculty members are overloaded and seminary communities have a hard time even making time to talk about new uses of technology.
6. Faculty would lose copyright control of their original materials.
7. People who have spent a lot of years working out one way of teaching can't or don't' want to do it all over again with technology.
8. We have more than enough students already.
9. We're not sure we have a distance market.
10. If it succeeded too much, we would end up closing our physical campus!
11. Will there be an increase in student cheating?
12. Will students develop false online personae and fake it?
13. Will the online environment breed irresponsible behavior?
14. Will the online environment lose the spontaneity of the live classroom?
15. Will technology initiatives end up being driven by adjuncts?
16. Is it even possible to teach certain courses in other then residential, face-to-face classrooms?
17. Are there certain disciplines that do not lend themselves to the electronic teaching and learning environment?

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[200]Steve Delamarter, "A Typology of the Use of Technology in Theological Education," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 7, no. 3 (July 2004): 134.

[201]Ibid., 136.

[202]Delamarter, "Theological Educators."

18. Will this prevent students from experiencing the wonders of the library?
19. Is it even possible to teach higher-order learning in these environments?
20. In short, can we ensure the same academic quality in a virtual environment?
21. You can't do mentoring and character development and spiritual formation online.
22. It has to be face-to-face.
23. Online education cannot capture our sociology.
24. It would thwart our moves to be intentionally cross-cultural.
25. We want to preserve the social location of theological education.
26. We're opposed to online course and limit the number that can be transferred into our program.[203]

Many of these concerns fit into the categories in the previous section: student-related, instructor-related, institution-related, and course-related. Among the student-related concerns, these faculty echo Wickersham and McElhany's findings that faculty were concerned about student cheating and academic integrity.[204] Within the instructor-related concerns, these faculty mimic many of the same concerns found within the literature about time, use of technology, and a lack of pedagogical understanding of how certain disciplines could be taught online.[205] Institutional concerns were also present and similarities to the literature reviewed included cost, time, and workload distribution.[206] Finally, concerns about the courses were also similar to the literature explained previously, including concerns about quality in general and interaction.[207]

According to Delamarter's study, some of the concerns listed among theological educators were unique to these respondents and not found elsewhere in the literature. A concern about spiritual mentorship and formation was listed as can be expected when taking into consideration the values of graduate-level theological

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[203]Delamarter, "Theological Educators," 132-39.

[204]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 4-5.

[205]Berge, "Barriers to Online Teaching," 2; Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 4-5; Tabata and Johnsrud, "The Impact of Faculty Attitudes," 635; Amirault, "Distance Learning," 253.

[206]Betts and Heaston, "Build It But Will They Teach?," 7-8; Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 5.

[207] Allen and Seaman, "Conflicted," 9; Betts and Heaston, "Build It But Will They Teach?," 7-8; Shea, Pickett, and Li, "Increasing Access to Higher Education," 14.

education.[208] Additionally, a concern for the sociology of the school—the community generated in the physical location—was also unique to this study. This may be related to the spiritual and character development concern as Hockridge found that the schools' extracurricular activities played a major part in shaping the student's formation.[209]

One surprising concern that stands contrary to the literature above was the concern that by adopting distance learning, the school may not be "cross-cultural." By this, Delamarter explains that the faculty were concerned that the isolation of the student from the classroom would lend itself to a lack of engagement in multicultural and cross-cultural social change discussions. In contrast, Yick, Patrick, and Costin found that faculty were generally excited to teach a diversity of students and greater diversity would occur by bringing these students together online.[210]

Delamarter's study reveals both the similarities and the differences that Christian faculty had about distance education. Many concerns were no different from the literature reviewed previously, but some unique concerns, especially about formation of the person, were revealed. Though relevant, this study is now dated as theological institutions have made strides to provide fully online degrees and now access students from around the globe. Likewise, this study gleans from Christian respondents, both evangelical and non-evangelical. For these reasons, further study is warranted.

Finally, a study conducted by Elmer Shelby, Tony Sanchez, and Judy Lambert in 2010 used the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) and the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) to survey faculty in ATS accredited schools about their perceptions and concerns with internet-based theological education. The result showed that the majority of concerns dealt with educational issues such as "loss of classroom

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[208]Hockridge, "Challenges for Educators"; Jackson, "The Phenomenon of Social Presence"; House, *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision*.

[209]Hockridge, "Challenges for Educators."

[210]Yick, Patrick, and Costin, "Navigating Distance and Traditional Higher Education," 9.

interaction," "loss of community," and "loss of real-time feedback."[211] The respondents felt that quality of education would suffer in their institutions with internet-based theological education[212]

Another familiar concern found among theological faculty in this study were institution-related issues such as workload, compensation, time, and training.[213] Respondents felt that they did not understand their role in the online classroom nor did they understand the technology needed to deliver the education online.[214] These respondents displayed a grim reality of the state of online theological education from the perspective of the faculty who are essential to the success of quality education.

These studies show mixed perceptions among faculty of theological institutions. While these studies indicate many similarities to the literature presented, special concern and emphasis on community and spiritual formation are also present. None of these studies account for recent developments within online theological education that now offer fully online degrees, including the M.Div. There continues to be a need for a recent study that takes into account these recent developments and advances in online theological education.

Additionally, these studies do not isolate evangelical faculty perceptions, which by nature of being evangelical would presumably base perceptions on biblical authority as well as a desire to see conversion among the lost. Perceptions held by evangelical faculty, such as Paul House and Benjamin Sasse, have been grouped with non-evangelical faculty perceptions. Therefore, these perceptions are potentially skewed by perceptions that are based on practical emphasis rather than theological. Therefore, this study will isolate evangelical faculty perceptions to account for these unique convictions.

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[211]Elmer Shelby, Tony Sanchez, and Judy Lambert, "Theological Faculty and the Use of Internet-Based Education: Perceptions and Concerns," *Journal of Liberal Arts and Sciences* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 21.

[212]Ibid.

[213]Ibid.

[214]Ibid.

Terminology

Online learning. Due to the introduction of the personal computer and then invention of the internet, online learning offers the possibility of not only retrieving information stored online, but actually engaging with others around the world in an educational setting. As this advancement has been wielded for educational purposes by universities and colleges across the United States, the philosophy of online learning continues to be discussed among Christian and non-Christian educators alike.[215] By understanding the basic philosophical foundation of online learning, distance, the Christian educator can then examine its legitimacy for use in theological education.

Online learning is a subcategory of "distance education." ATS defines distance education in the following way:

> Distance education is a mode of education in which a course is offered without students and instructors being in the same location. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous and employs the use of technology. Distance education courses may consist of exclusively online or other technologically assisted instruction or a blend of intensive classroom and online instruction. In all cases, distance education courses shall ensure regular and substantive interaction of faculty with students.[216]

In this definition, "distance education" includes all types of educational methods that take place with some amount of geographic distance between student and instructor. The national study, "Grade Level," defines "online learning" as a course that has "at least 80% of the course content . . . delivered online."[217] According to this definition, online learning as a subcategory of distance learning, and specifies that the heavy majority, if not all, of the instruction in online learning is done with student and instructor being separated by geographic space.

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[215]Edward H. Perry and Michelle L. Pilati, "Online Learning," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 128 (January 2011): 95-104.

[216]The Association of Theological Schools, "Educational Standards," accessed September 1, 2015, http://www.ats.edu/uploads/accrediting/documents/educational-standard.pdf .

[217]I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, "Grade Level: Tracking Online Education in the United States," 7, February 2015, accessed February 6, 2015, http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/survey_ report/grade-level-tracking-online-education-united-states-2014/.

Graduate-level theological education. For this study, the term "graduate-level theological education" will be used to identify any higher education institution that offers graduate-level training for ministry. Justo Gonzalez defines "theological education" in *The History of Theological Education*. He rejects the understanding of theological education as a professional school attended by those who want to be ordained for ministry; but instead proposes that theological education be aimed at loving God with all of one's mind and proclaiming God's love for the world, especially in the church.[218] Thus, "theological education" must include academic understanding of theology and related disciplines, but must also include formation—"formation if discipline, of habits, and of character."[219] The goal of this education is typically for ministerial training, although Gonzalez also firmly believes that theological education must extend into and be intimately connected to the life of the church itself and the congregation therein.[220]

Faculty. In *Assessing Faculty Work*, Larry A. Braskamp and John C. Ory identify faculty in recent history as those individuals in an institution who "adopted a professional role in which service and applied research joined teaching as part of their work."[221] While there may be great diversity in the responsibilities of faculty depending on the type of institution and personal interest, Braskamp and Ory note four categories of work that are often done by faculty: teaching, research and creative activity, practice and professional service, and citizenship.[222] For this study, "faculty" refers to full-time or part-time, tenured or non-tenured, instructors at an institution of higher education. This

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[218]Justo L. González, *The History of Theological Education* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), xi, 118-19.

[219]Ibid., 123.

[220]Ibid., 127.

[221]Larry A. Braskamp and John C. Ory, *Assessing Faculty Work: Enhancing Individual and Institutional Performance* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 33.

[222]Ibid., 35.

study will also consider adjunct instructors as part of the faculty of an institution as they partake of the same type of responsibilities identified by Braskamp and Ory.

Faculty Development. In an effort to define the somewhat vague term of "faculty development," Mathew L. Ouellett examines the history of training faculty to teach in his chapter "Overview of Faculty Development: History and Choice" in *A Guide to Faculty Development.*[223] After summarizing the revolution of faculty rewards from being based on research achievement to the faculty's success in student learning, Ouellett then describes the evolution of the term "faculty development" from an individualistic effort to a community of faculty learning together.[224] He then identified that "faculty development" can be understood as "professional development, organizational development and the scholarship of teaching and learning interchangeably."[225]

For the purposes of this thesis, "faculty development" is used to refer to the training and support faculty receive from their institution to teach students. This may encompass formal training sessions, but may also include informal mentoring relationships between faculty established to aid newer faculty in their professional development. Faculty development likely includes pedagogy strategies as well as classroom management skill development.

Evangelical. Evangelical is a sub-category of Christianity within Protestantism. In *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, evangelical historian George Marsden provides the best definitions of the term "evangelicalism." He relays that it is not a "religious organization," but is instead a "religious movement":

> Evangelicalism today includes any Christians traditional enough to affirm the basic beliefs of the old nineteenth-century evangelical consensus. The essential

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[223]Mathew L. Ouellett, "Overview of Faculty Development: History and Choices," in *A Guide to Faculty Development*, ed. Kay J. Gillespie and Douglas L. Robertson (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 20.

[224]Ibid., 8-9.

[225]Ibid., 8.

> evangelical beliefs include: (1) the Reformation doctrine of the final authority of the Bible, (2) the real historical character of God's saving work recording in Scripture, (3) salvation to eternal life based on the redemptive work of Christ, (4) the importance of evangelism and missions, and (5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life.[226]

Research Hypothesis

Based on the literature reviewed in this chapter, evangelical faculty in this research may likely have many of the same student-based, instructor-based, institution-based, and course-based perceptions as faculty in higher education. There may, however, be a heightened concern for community and spiritual formation in online learning as indicated by the studies of faculty in theological institutions. These perceptions, though similar to the literature, may be increased due to the convictions of biblical authority held by evangelicals.

[226]Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 5.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Despite the spread of online learning throughout theological education,[1] evangelical faculty perceptions of it have not been adequately assessed, in distinction from faculty perceptions in broader fields of higher education.[2] Some evangelical faculty have expressed their concerns about online learning and its ability to successfully train ministers of the gospel in theological institutions, but little research has been done to collect faculty perceptions particularly from an evangelical perspective.

Chapter 1 explained that many theological institutions are advancing in their offerings of online courses and degrees, but a trend among faculty may indicate resistance to this advancement. Paul House articulates some of these hesitations from an evangelical perspective by stating that the kind of community required for biblical teaching and discipleship cannot be replicated online, thus online learning dehumanizes education in such a way that is unacceptable to Christian educators.[3] If evangelical faculty generally have similar or other hesitations about online learning, the administrative leaders of these

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[1]Gavin Ortlund, "The New Era of Theological Education," The Gospel Coalition, accessed February 7, 2015, http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-new-era-of-theological-education1.

[2]The most recent studies include the following but inadequately account for the major developments in online learning in recent years, including the fully online M.Div. offered at many evangelical theological institutions: Steve Delamarter, "Theological Educators and Their Concerns about Technology," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 8, no. 3 (July 2005): 131-43; Elmer Shelby, Tony Sanchez, and Judy Lambert, "Theological Faculty and the Use of Internet-Based Education: Perceptions and Concerns," *Journal of Liberal Arts and Sciences* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 15-24; William Michael Wilson, "Faculty and Administrator Attitudes and Perceptions toward Distance Learning in Southern Baptist-Related Educational Institutions" (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).

[3]Paul House, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern: A Plea for Personal Theological Education," *Colloquy* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 4-6; idem, *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision: A Case for Costly Discipleship and Life Together* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

institutions may be frustrated in their strategic plans for advancement. As of 2016, very few studies seek to understand evangelical faculty perceptions about online learning. This current study, therefore, endeavored to fill that void through a mixed methods research design.

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature in four main categories: evangelical values in theological education, online learning in theological education, the role of the faculty in online learning, and faculty perceptions of online learning. The chapter sought to understand existing studies as well as conclude what past perceptions evangelical faculty, in particular, were about online learning. Very few studies on evangelical faculty were found, but they indicated similar hesitations about online learning as faculty in higher education in general indicated.

In this chapter, the methodology for this current study is described in detail, including an overview of the research design, description of the population and sample group, delimitations of the research, limitations of generalizations, instrumentation, and procedures.

Purpose Statement

The intent of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study is to determine evangelical faculty perceptions about online learning in graduate-level theological education. The first phase was a quantitative survey by collecting perceptions and opinions from ETS full members. Findings from this quantitative phase were then used to shape the questions and inquiries proposed to ETS full members who volunteered for the second phase focus groups.

Research Question Synopsis

In an effort to fill in the gap in the existing literature assessing evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning in graduate-level theological education, this study has reviewed faculty perceptions of online learning from existing literature, surveyed

faculty perceptions in the current state of online learning in theological institutions, and determined what faculty perceive about the future of online learning in theological institutions. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning in graduate-level theological education?
2. What do evangelical faculty perceive of the future of online learning in graduate-level theological education?
3. How do the findings from this study compare to the existing perceptions found in the literature?

Design Overview

This research was a mixed method study. John W. Creswell defines mixed method studies as "combining or integration of qualitative and quantitative research and data in a research study."[4] The data collected from each type of research, qualitative and quantitative, must be integrated in such a way that allows for a stronger and more informative study than if one type of research was conducted alone.[5] This current study utilized an explanatory sequential method in which the quantitative data, collected first, was explained by the qualitative data, collected second.[6]

The research design for this explanatory sequential study consisted of two phases of research.[7] Phase 1 was a survey designed to gather data from evangelical faculty about their perceptions of online learning. Phase 2 was two focus groups comprised of participants who indicated on the survey interest in volunteering for further explanation

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[4]John W. Creswell, *Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2013), 14.

[5]Ibid., 217.

[6]John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 82-83.

[7]Creswell, *Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 224.

about the findings of the survey. The findings of the data gleaned from these two phases was analyzed using descriptive statistics, as described in chapter 4.

Phase 1: Survey (Quantitative Research)

To collect quantitative data on the perceptions of evangelical faculty about online learning in theological institutions, I first distributed a survey to the ETS full members. Creswell states, "A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population."[8] According to this definition, a survey is an appropriate tool for collecting quantitative data on the perceptions of evangelical faculty about online learning in theological institutions.

The survey was distributed to participants electronically through SurveyGizmo (app.surveygizmo.com). SurveyGizmo provides multiple analytic tools that can be utilized for understanding the data gained from this survey. Further, this software is easily accessible to the population as it generates a link to the survey that can be accessed on the internet at any time.

Phase 2: Focus Group (Qualitative Research)

Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey state, "A focus group study is a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment."[9] The benefit of a focus group as opposed to separate interviews is that the participants will be allowed to engage in a discussion of each question. This type of research provides the opportunity for consensus,

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[8]Creswell, *Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 155.

[9]Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015), 1-2.

opposition, and critical analysis of each participant's response, which was ideal for the qualitative phase of this study.

As an explanatory sequential study, the focus group design was emergent as the data was collected and analyzed from the survey findings.[10] After the survey closed, I generated a summary report of the data, coded the two open-ended question responses, and cross tabulated the survey responses with the demographic survey responses. These findings informed the questions which were asked in the focus group.

Population

The population for this research study was the full members of the Evangelical Theological Society. ETS provides a description of its purpose on its website:

> Founded in 1949, the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) is a group of scholars, teachers, pastors, students, and others dedicated to the oral exchange and written expression of theological thought and research. The ETS is devoted to the inerrancy and inspiration of the Scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Society publishes a quarterly journal, the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS), an academic periodical featuring peer reviewed articles, as well as extended book reviews, in the biblical and theological disciplines. ETS also holds national and regional meetings across the United States and in Canada.[11]

As a group of individuals who identify as "evangelical," it is assumed that each ETS member holds to the basic doctrinal beliefs required in membership. These beliefs are summarized in the statement, "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs. God is a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each an uncreated person, one in essence, equal in power and glory."[12]

This doctrinal conviction is relevant to the purpose of this study because the belief that the Bible is inerrant may impact an individual's acceptance or rejection of a certain mode of education. As indicated previously, Paul House, an "At-Large Member"

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[10]Creswell, *Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 186.

[11]The Evangelical Theological Society, "About the ETS," accessed December 12, 2015, http://www.etsjets.org/about.

[12]Ibid.

of ETS, believes that the Bible's teaching has a major effect on his perception of online learning.[13] Thus, particular inquiry into the perceptions of faculty who hold to the Bible's inerrancy may provide unique findings.

Membership of ETS is divided into three main groups: full members, associate members, and student members.[14] Full members have a Th.M. degree or higher (as in a Ph.D.), or qualify due to exemplary contribution or publication in the evangelical fields of study. Associate members do not hold these degrees, but should agree to the evangelical perspective set forth in the doctrinal beliefs. Associate members usually do not present papers at the ETS meetings. Finally, student members are enrolled in undergraduate or graduate study. Doctoral students may present papers at the ETS meetings.[15]

For the purpose of the current study, only full members of ETS were considered participants because they are the most likely of the ETS members to be faculty as they hold advanced degrees per the requirements indicated by the ETS membership policy. They qualify for this study in that they are both required to hold to evangelical beliefs, as indicated, and they a hold post-graduate degree qualifying them to teach on faculty at an institution of higher education. Though not all full members may be faculty, the survey instrument used in this study eliminates any participants who indicated that they were not faculty.

As of December 2015, there were 2,650 full members of ETS; however, this number fluctuates as memberships renew and expire monthly. These members will be sent an email by ETS containing directions for the survey and a link to the survey in SurveyGizmo. Michael Thigpen, Director of ETS, has given permission for this research to access this population.

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[13]The Evangelical Theological Society, "Paul R. House, At-Large Member," accessed December 12, 2015, http://www.etsjets.org/node/2090.

[14]The Evangelical Theological Society, "Membership Requirements," accessed December 12, 2015, http://www.etsjets.org/about/membership_requirements.

[15]Ibid.

Sample

According to the size of the population of 2,650, this survey needed 336 participants for a 95 percent confidence level and a +/- 5 percent confidence interval. The total number of the population that participated in the survey was 459, which met the requirements for a +/- 5 percent confidence interval.

One question of the survey asked participants to provide an email address if they would like to participate in the voluntary focus group after the close of the survey. All participants who provided an email in this field were invited to participate in the focus group through email. Confirmation was gained, and the final number of participants was based on actual attendance in the focus groups. The ideal size of a focus group consists of 5 to 12 individuals.[16] Two separate focus groups were conducted where respondents were asked the same set of questions. The first focus group had 5 participants, and the second focus group had 10 participants. These two data sets will be combined into one as an explanation of the survey findings in chapter 4.

Delimitations

The conclusions of this study are limited to the evangelical faculty of ETS. It does not account for the many faculty members holding to evangelical convictions who are not currently members of ETS. This study likewise does not account for Christian faculty members generally, but specifically addresses evangelical faculty.

Additionally, this study was limited to the perceptions and opinions of the faculty who participate in the study. This research does not make any conclusions based on factual evidence for or against the learning outcomes or educational effectiveness of

[16]Duke University, "Guidelines for Conducting a Focus Group," accessed December 31, 2015, https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/documents/How_to_Conduct_a_Focus_Group.pdf; Krueger and Casey, *Focus Groups*, 2. Duke University recommends 8 to12 participants, but Krueger and Casey recommend between 5 and 10. For a virtual focus group, technological considerations and time delays had to be taken into account. Therefore, I aimed for a minimum of 5 people in the focus group.

online education. It seeks to understand what the evangelical faculty perceive about the effectiveness of online learning in general and in graduate-level theological education.

Limitations of Generalization

This study is limited in generalizing to the entire population of ETS members (full, affiliate, and student). Only full members were considered the population of this research; therefore, affiliate and student members of ETS are excluded.

This study is also limited in generalizing to make conclusions about the quality of online learning in graduate-level theological institutions. This study seeks only to understand the perceptions of the faculty, not the actual quality of the online programs or courses offered and the many institutions represented by the faculty who participate in this study.

Instrumentation

Phase 1: Survey

The survey instrument used for phase 1 of this research was a combination of two separate surveys, both with modifications. Permissions to use and make modifications to each survey instrument were gained from the respective creators of each survey.[17] The complete survey instrument used for this current study as well as the two original survey instruments can be found in the appendix section of this thesis.[18]

The instrument used and modified for this study is the basis of the research conducted by Jeff Seaman and Elaine Allen in "Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012."[19] This instrument was provided by Jeff Seaman as well as permission

[17]See appendices 1 and 3 for permissions.

[18]See appendices 2 and 4 for original instruments. See appendix 5 for final survey instrument.

[19]I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, "Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012," Babson Survey Research Group, 2012, accessed February 25, 2015, http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED535214.

to use and modify according to the needs of this current study.[20] The aim of Seaman and Allen's research was to compare faculty and administer "attitudes and practices related to all aspects of online education."[21] Many aspects of technology integration with education, as well as blended/hybrid education, were present within this survey instrument, but were not necessarily relevant for faculty perceptions about online learning in particular. I removed those questions and attempted to focus the survey on specifically online teaching and education perceptions. The questions used and modified from this instrument serve as the foundation to gather data on evangelical faculty perceptions of institution-related, course-related, and instructor-related factors.

The second survey instrument included twenty-eight statements for the participants to rate on a five-point Likert scale. This instrument was the basis of the research conducted by Doris Bolliger and Oksana Wasilik in their study, "Faculty Satisfaction in the Online Environment: An Institutional Study."[22] Doris Bolliger gave permission for this survey instrument to be used and modified for this current study.[23] The statements to be rated by the participants within question 10 were coded according to the following categories corresponding to the main areas of concern found in the literature by Bolliger and Wasilik: student-related, instructor-related, and institution related.[24] The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for these items and its reliability was reported to be 0.85.[25]

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[20]Permissions and original survey instrument in appendices 1 and 2.

[21]Allen and Seaman, "Conflicted," 2.

[22]Doris U. Bolliger and Oksana Wasilik, "Factors Influencing Faculty Satisfaction with Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education," *Distance Education* 30, no. 1 (May 2009): 106-7.

[23]Permissions and original survey in appendices 3 and 4.

[24]Bolliger and Wasilik, "Factors Influencing Faculty Satisfaction," 107.

[25]Ibid., 112.

In order to maintain an appropriate time length for the combined instrument, I included only statements from Bolliger's survey that pertained to student-related factors so as to not overlap with Seaman's instrument.

Demographic questions were added to the combined survey for analysis purposes, including age, denomination affiliation, and administrative responsibilities. Questions 18-22 were also added to specifically obtain evangelical faculty perceptions regarding online education's effectiveness in accomplishing the goals of theological education as found in ATS's M.Div. program requirements, including spiritual development, cultural engagement, and leadership characteristics.[26] Finally, participants were asked to voluntarily provide their email address if they were willing to participate in the follow-up focus group and if they would like to receive the results of the study.[27]

Table 1 identifies the survey question according to category, the source from which it came, and any modifications made to the question to fit the purposes of the current study.

[26]Commission on Accrediting, "Degree Program Standards," accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.ats.edu/uploads/accrediting/documents/degree-program-standards.pdf.

[27]See appendix 5 for the completed survey instrument to be used in this study.

Table 1. Survey combination and modifications

Category	Q #	Original Instrument	Modification Explanation
Demographic	1	Seaman	None
Demographic	2	New	Research indicates that younger faculty may be more receptive to online teaching than their older counterparts.
Demographic	3	New	Evangelical is a broader category, but certain denomination trends may be apparent
Demographic	4	Seaman	The addition of "adjunct instructor" is needed as online education continues to employ many adjuncts. The addition of "none" allows for non-faculty members to be escorted out of the survey.
Demographic	5-6	Seaman	Adjustment of the year brackets. Addition of both "online" and "face-to-face" allows for comparison to research indicating that experience teaching online tends to make faculty more favorable to online education.[28]
Demographic	7	Seaman	Disciplines were changed to reflect the many disciplines with theological education. The addition of a blank "other" text box allows a variety of responses.
Demographic	8	New	As suggested by the expert panel, this question allows for analysis of data to see if administrators are more or less favorable than the non-administrative faculty counterparts.
RQ 1	9	Seaman	Removed technology and hybrid related questions to focus on online learning.
RQ 2	10	New	To partially answer RQ3
RQ 1	11	Seaman	None
RQ 1	12	Seaman	Removed hybrid and added "faculty development" to question description for clarity.
RQ 1	13	Seaman	Changed wording of a. for clarity. Removed overlapping sub-questions.
RQ 1	14	Seaman	Removed hybrid
RQ 1	15	Seaman	Removed overlapping and technology in education related sub-questions. Clarified question to focus on online education instead of digital communication.
RQ 1	16	Seaman	Removed technology related questions that did not pertain to online education.
RQ 1	17	Bolliger	Specified online students in questions. Removed all statements except student-related factors. Removed overlapping statements.
RQ 1 and 2	18-22	New	None
Focus Group	23	New	None
Incentive	24	New	None

[28]Kristen Betts and Amy Heaston, "Build It But Will They Teach? Strategies for Increasing Faculty Participation & Retention in Online & Blended Education," *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration* 17, no. 2 (June 2014): 2, accessed February 25, 2015, http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer172/betts_heaston172.html.

Expert panel. An expert panel reviewed and critiqued the survey used for this current study. Members of the expert panel included Anthony Foster, Timothy Paul Jones, Ryan Baltrip, and Michael Thigpen. Anthony Foster is qualified to review this survey instrument not only as the supervisor of this thesis, but also as an online instructional designer and curriculum developer for McGraw-Hill Higher Education. Timothy Paul Jones is currently the Associate Vice President for the Global Campus of Southern Seminary where he oversees and administers the online, hybrid, and extension programs offered by Southern Seminary. Ryan Baltrip is currently the Director of Online Learning at Southern Seminary where he oversees and coordinates the online program of Southern Seminary. Michael Thigpen is the Director of the Evangelical Theological Society. In this position, he has the most accurate knowledge of the population used for this current study.

These qualified individuals reviewed the survey according to a rubric provided by the researcher. Changes were made according to their suggestions, and the final version of the survey instrument distributed to the participants is provided in the appendix.[29]

Pilot test of survey instrument. Once the survey instrument was approved by the Ethics Committee at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the survey was distributed to 6 participants who are members of ETS so as to test for validity and reliability.

The first step in the pilot test was to determine content validity. According to Mark Litwin in *How to Measure Reliability and Validity*, "content validity is a subjective measure of how appropriate the items seem to a set of reviewers who have some knowledge of the subject matter."[30] In order to test the content validity of this survey instrument, the pilot test was administered through SurveyGizmo to the 6 participants along with a pilot test questionnaire. Pilot test participants from the intended population

[29]See appendix 5.

[30]Mark Litwin, *How to Measure Reliability and Validity* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1995), loc. 543, Kindle.

took the survey and then responded to eight questions regarding the clarity of the purpose, questions, and answers of the survey as well as one question asking how long the survey took to complete.

Results from the pilot test indicated that the survey worked accurately. The questionnaire revealed that participants understood the purpose of the survey and the overall clarity of the questions. Minor changes to the wording of questions were suggested in the questionnaire. These changes were made, but the changes suggested did not indicate any confusion on how to respond or the meaning of the questions.

To determine the reliability of the survey instrument, I tested the original survey and retested the survey in an alternate form with 6 ETS members. As indicated by Litwin, alternate-form reliability requires that "questions and responses are reworded or their order changed to produce two items that are similar but not identical."[31] I sent the survey in its original form to 6 participants, and then sent the survey with minor changes to the response orders to the same 6 participants one week later. In comparing the test and alternate-form retest, there were no significant differences between the responses in the first test and the alternate form test. This indicates that the participants understood the questions accurately providing reliability to the instrument.

Phase 2: Focus Group

Once the survey was completed by the sample population, I reviewed the findings to determine what needed further explanation by the focus group participants. During the focus group, I asked the eight questions regarding the findings of the survey:

1. Are you divided or decided in your opinions of online learning? Why do you feel that way?
2. Why do you think that those with more online teaching experience view online learning as having a greater ability to achieve the goals of theological education than those with less experience?

[31]Litwin, *How to Measure Reliability and Validity*, loc. 289.

3. Why do faculty perceive that faculty development for teaching online is of lesser quality in their institutions? Is it the institution? Is it that faculty are not attending?

4. What role does community play in the spiritual development of a theological student? How does online learning promote or hinder that development through community?

5. Why do faculty who believe online learning will not improve in achieving the goals of theological education still think it will grow in the future

6. Why do you think there a relationship between one's view of teaching style and one's view of online learning's ability to achieve the goals of theological education?

7. Do you think faculty perceptions will improve in the future? Why or why not?

8. Is there anything else that you would like to add to this discussion that has not been covered already?

Procedures

Phase 1: Survey

Due to the need to combine two survey instruments, an expert panel was needed to review the instrument for validity. Next, the survey instrument endured a pilot test to ensure validity and reliability. Once these two steps were completed, the survey was ready for distribution to the population.

Upon approval from the ethics committee, I provided ETS with an email that included directions and a link to the survey located on SurveyGizmo.[32] Participants were offered access to the results of the study as an incentive for participation. According to trends identified by ETS, full members typically have a higher rate of response to emails sent by ETS between February 15 and March 15 on both Monday and Friday mornings. Therefore, the first email was sent on Friday, February 19, 2016. A follow-up email to remind participants of the survey was sent on Friday, February 26, 2016, and again on March 4, 2016. The survey closed on March 11, 2016.

Once the survey closed, data was analyzed for patterns and themes in addition to any statistically significant relationships revealed in the cross-tabulations. Responses to the open-ended questions were coded to find common themes among participants.

[32]See appendix 6 for email.

After the data was analyzed, the focus group interview questions were determined based on the data of the survey and on this study's research questions. Both an explanation of the survey findings and a description of what the focus group participants perceive about the present and future state of online learning in graduate-level theological education were assessed.

Phase 2: Focus Group

Participants of the survey who indicated interest in volunteering for the focus group were contacted for confirmation of their continued interest and were provided two date and time options.[33] Volunteers were notified that their participation was confidential and their identity would not be reported. Volunteers were also told the nature of the focus group as well as the necessary hardware and software needed for the virtual meeting in Adobe Connect. Upon confirmation, I provided the volunteers with a link to the meeting room and further details of their involvement.

The focus group was conducted through Adobe Connect software. This software allowed the meeting to be recorded. Confirmed participants received a link to the Adobe Connect meeting room and were guided on how to set up their audio and microphone at the beginning of the session. I recruited a technician to assist in the focus groups to help turn on and off microphones, pull up chat boxes, run polls, and assist with any technical issues throughout the meeting.

At the beginning of the focus group meeting time, I provided a simple introduction to the meeting time as well as instructions for how the participants could respond to the questions posed. Participants were given the option to respond in the chat provided or audibly. During the focus group, eight questions were asked regarding the findings of the survey. It was semi-structured, allowing for participants and the moderator to follow-up on comments or statements to encourage further explanation. Questions as

[33]See appendix 7 for email.

well as relevant tables and data, were provided on screen for the participants. Each focus group lasted for one hour.[34]

Once recorded, the focus group meetings were transcribed and coded according to the themes that emerged. I first looked for key words used frequently throughout the transcription. These words were analyzed according to how the participants used them in context. Next, I identified themes within the focus group transcription that fit into the categories identified within the literature: student-related perceptions, instructor-related perceptions, institution-related perceptions, and course-related perceptions about online learning. Themes that emerge from the focus group, but do not fit into these categories, were included as emergent data. Definitions of each category and theme, as well as examples directly from the transcription of the focus group, are included in the content analysis of chapter 4.[35]

[34]Duke University, "Guidelines for Conducting a Focus Group."

[35]Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (November 2005): 1277-88.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Research pertaining to evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning in graduate-level theological education has been neglected in the existing literature. These perceptions are valuable as institutions continue to press forward in expanding online courses and degrees. Therefore, an explanatory sequential study was conducted to determine evangelical faculty perceptions about online learning in graduate-level theological education. A survey and follow-up focus group were the primary means of collecting the necessary data. The following chapter provides a summary compilation of protocols, a summary of the findings according to the research questions, and an evaluation of the research design.

Compilation of Protocols

Phase 1: Survey

Once the survey was approved by the ethics committee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and pilot tested for both validity and reliability, the Evangelical Theological Society emailed the full members inviting them to take the survey.[1] Subsequent emails were sent each Friday until the survey was closed. SurveyGizmo was set so that respondents could not take the survey more than once based on the IP address from which the respondent originally took the survey, which ruled out any duplicate responses. Partial responses were identified and were not be used in this data.

The sample size required in order to obtain a 95 percent confidence interval was 336 based on the population size of 2,650 full ETS members. That number was

[1]See appendix 6 for email contents.

reached and exceeded. The survey was open for three weeks, and when the survey closed, the final count of participants was 459.

Once this data set was complete, SurveyGizmo produced a summary report of the findings from which I derived the questions for the focus group. SurveyGizmo also was used to create cross-tabulations between demographic information and the responses for the survey in order to observe any trends or patterns among sub-groups within the population. I found the mean and the standard deviation for each question in an effort to understand further the significance of the responses within the survey. The mean score for each Likert scale was derived from attributing a score of 5 for "strongly agree" responses, 4 for "agree," 3 for "neutral," 2 for "disagree," and 1 for "strongly disagree." Therefore, a score higher than 3 indicated a more agreeable response while a score lower than 3 indicated a more disagreeable response. The findings of these protocols appear later in this chapter.

Phase 2: Focus Group

Over 100 survey participants volunteered for the follow-up focus group. Upon receiving their contact information, I sent an email containing two optional meeting times for the virtual focus group. In the first focus group, 5 participants were present and discussed the questions. In the second focus group, 10 participants were present and discussed the questions. The recommended number for focus groups was between 5 and 10 participants; therefore, each focus group achieved the recommended number of participants.[2]

Once the focus group recordings were transcribed, including both the chat responses and the audio responses from all participants, the data was entered on an Excel spreadsheet. Each question was analyzed according to major themes found in the

[2]Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015), 1-2.

responses. A summary was created based on the general consensus of the responses, and representative remarks and comments were noted for inclusion in the data.

Synthesis of Data from Phase 1 and 2

In this explanatory sequential study, the quantitative data gained from the survey were the primary data source in answering the research questions. The focus group findings were used as a means to explain the quantitative data further. Therefore, the summary of findings is structured according to the research questions and includes both the survey data and focus group data where appropriate to identify the answers to the research questions.

Summary of Findings

In the following summary of findings, the data from both the survey and focus groups are divided according to their relevance to answering the research questions. First, a summary of the demographics of the sample population is articulated. Then a summary of the findings for each research question is provided below. Table 2 identifies which questions within the survey and focus groups are used to answer each research question. The summary of findings is divided according to the categories listed in the table. Within each category, the findings from each instrument, survey and focus groups are explained.

Table 2. Research questions and instrumentation division

Category	Question
Demographics	Survey: #1-8, 11
RQ 1: Current State	Survey: #9, 12-18, 20-22 Focus Group: #1-4
RQ 2: Future State	Survey: #10, 19 Focus Group: #5-7
RQ 3: Comparison to Literature	Summaries as relevant

Demographic Findings of Sample Population

Survey question 1. Survey question 1 was "Identify your gender." Out of the 459 respondents, 438, or 95.4 percent, were male and 21, or 4.6 percent, were female. While this may seem like a polarized demographic, this is representative of the population. The Evangelical Theological Society does not track gender demographics for full members only, but does for all members, including full, associate, and student. In the general membership, males comprise 93 percent and female comprise 7 percent of the population. With this understanding, gender will not play a major statistical role in the findings, but it is appropriate to state that the survey sample size is representative of the population with regard to gender.

Survey question 2. The next demographic questions asked, "What is your age?" The responses were divided into age brackets of 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. For the sample population, the following table presents the age bracket representation.

Table 3. Age demographic findings

Age Bracket	Count	Percentage
25-34	35	7.6
35-44	95	20.7
45-54	95	20.7
55-64	172	37.5
65+	62	13.5

As shown in the table, the age bracket of 55-64 contained the largest number of respondents. Age brackets 35-44 and 45-54, however, combined to be a total of 190 respondents. Therefore, the average respondent was 47.9 years of age with a standard deviation of +/- 11.6. Age was an influential factor in several of the survey questions and was identified within each question as relevant.

Survey question 3. Survey question 3 asked respondents, "What is your denomination affiliation?" Respondents were given the ability to write in their individual response. By far, the most common response to this question was Baptist (with its variations including Southern Baptist, Independent, and General). Of the total 228 Baptist respondents, 117 were Southern Baptist, 79 indicated simply "Baptist," and 70 were a variety of responses including Independent, American, General Conference, and others.

Survey question 4. Question 4 on the survey asked, "What is your faculty status?" Responses for this question were limited to "part-time (or adjunct instructor)," "full-time," or "none." Participants who chose "none" as their response were excluded from the survey so that only faculty responses were recorded. The sample of 459 respondents indicated either "part-time" or "full-time" as their response. Of the respondents, 132, or 28.8 percent, were part-time, and 327, or 71.2 percent, were full-time. This indicates that the majority of the total respondents were full-time faculty. Faculty status made a statistically significant difference in some of the findings within the survey and will be identified within each question as relevant.

Survey question 5. Survey question 5 asked the respondents to "identify the number of years you have taught online." Respondents were given six choices: 0, Less than 1, 1-4, 5-9, 10-14, and 15+. Table 4 indicates the distribution of responses to this question:

As seen in table 4, the average number of years taught online was between 1-4 and 5-9. The 78 respondents who indicated never teaching online will prove to have a significant impact on several questions within the survey. In those questions, the mean for the total responses as well as the mean for the responses minus these 78 respondents is calculated. The years of experience a respondent had teaching online was statistically significant in some of the survey questions. The impact of this demographic question is included within the analysis of these questions.

Table 4. Years taught online

Years	Count	Percentage
0	78	17.0
Less than 1	35	7.6
1-4	124	27.0
5-9	126	27.5
10-14	68	14.8
15+	28	6.1

Survey question 6. The next survey question was similar to question 5, but asked respondents to identify the number of years they have taught face-to-face. Respondents were given six choices to this question also: 0, Less than 1, 1-4, 5-9, 10-14, and 15+. Table 5 indicates the distribution of responses to this question:

Table 5. Years taught face-to-face

Years	Count	Percentage
0	8	1.7
Less than 1	9	2.0
1-4	56	12.2
5-9	86	18.7
10-14	77	16.8
15+	223	48.6

As seen in table 5, the sample population has more experience teaching face-to-face than online as indicated by the most common response being over 15 years of face-to-face experience. Of the total respondents, 48.6 percent indicated having 15 or more years of experience. The next largest group of responses was 18.7 percent in the 5-9 year span, closely followed by 16.8 percent within the 10-14 year span.

Survey question 7. Survey question 7 asked respondents, “What disciplines do you teach?” They were able to check multiple responses as many faculty teach multiple

disciplines. Among the highest recorded responses, 50.5 percent taught New Testament, 47.9 percent taught Theology, 38.6 percent taught Old Testament, and 35.7 percent taught Greek/Hebrew/Other Language. Participants were also able to write in a response if their discipline did not appear in the predetermined response list. Commonly written-in responses included Hermeneutics (10 responses), Apologetics (13 responses), and Ethics/Christian Ethics (9 responses).

Survey question 8. The next survey question was "In addition to a faculty role, do you also hold an administrative role at your institution?" This question was suggested by the expert panel and is relevant to the literature about faculty perceptions. In some of the higher education studies on faculty perceptions, administrator perceptions were also gathered for a comparison.[3] Likewise, "Grade Level" by Allen and Seaman also compared faculty and administrative responses to discover if there were conflicting opinions between those leading the institution and those teaching the courses in the institution.[4]

In the present study, 55.8 percent of respondents did not hold an administrative role in addition to the faculty role, but 44.2 percent of respondents did in fact hold an administrative role. This demographic question proved to be statistically significant for many of the questions within the survey.

Survey question 11. The final demographic question was included in a later section of the survey to provide the respondents with an immediate context of application for their responses. The question asked participants to indicate if their institution offered (a) Online courses and online programs, (b) Individual online courses, but no degree programs consisting of entirely online courses, or (c) None. As indicated in the responses,

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[3]William Michael Wilson, "Faculty and Administrator Attitudes and Perceptions toward Distance Learning in Southern Baptist-Related Educational Institutions" (Ed.D. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).

[4]I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, "Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012," Babson Survey Research Group, 2012, accessed February 25, 2015, http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED535214.

69.1 percent indicated that their institution had both online courses and online programs, 24.6 percent indicated their institution only had individual online courses, but no degree programs consisting of entirely online courses, and 6.3 percent of respondents indicated that their school had no online courses or online degree programs.

Statistically significant findings. When the demographics questions were cross-tabulated with the entire survey, multiple findings were statistically significant. Appendix 9 provides a summary of these findings for reference according to the p-value calculated in each cross-tabulation. Additionally, these findings are mentioned in the analysis of each survey question as it is relevant. As is shown in the table, teaching online and holding an administrative position had the largest impact on the participants' responses.

Research Question 1: Current Perceptions

The first research question guiding this study was, "What are evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning in graduate-level theological education?" To answer this question, the survey instrument asked questions concerning the current state of online learning, operations of the faculty member's institution regarding online learning, faculty-related issues, course-related issues, and student-related issues. Additionally, questions were asked based on the potential for online learning to achieve the objectives set by the Association of Theological Schools regarding the master of divinity degree. Furthermore, focus group questions 1 to 4 sought to explain some of this data. The following summary of findings address research question 1.

General Perceptions of the Current State of Online Learning

Survey question 9a. Survey question 9 asked respondents to indicate their opinions about the current state of online learning. Under this question were six statements in which participants were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale. The statement for

question 9a reads, “Online education can be as effective in helping students learn as face-to-face education.” On the 5-point Likert scale, 12.0 percent strongly agreed, 26.8 percent agreed, 8.5 percent were neutral, 34.4 percent disagreed, and 18.3 percent strongly disagreed. The responses are illustrated in the figure 1.

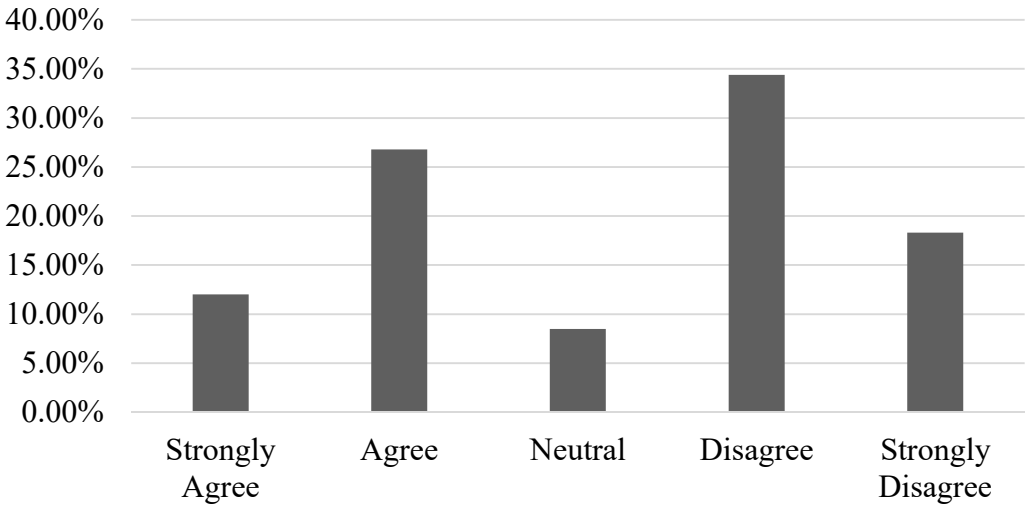

Figure 1. Online education effectiveness

As seen in figure 1, respondents were divided on whether or not online education was equal in effectiveness to face-to-face education, but a larger percentage of respondents had a negative view of online education’s effectiveness than those who had a positive view. The mean score for 9a was 2.80 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.34.[5] It should also be noted that there were very few neutral responses to this question, indicating that most evangelical faculty had some opinion on this matter.

When this data is cross-tabulated with demographic independent variables, the number of years taught online ($p = 0.0088$), the number of years teaching face-to-face ($p = 0.0435$), and holding an administrative role ($p = 0.0061$) were all statistically significant factors in the response indicated by participants. Faculty who had fewer years

[5]As discussed earlier in this chap., a mean score lower than 3 indicates a more disagreeable response.

teaching online, had more years teaching face-to-face, and did not hold an administrative role tended to indicate a disagreeable response to this question.

Survey question 16a. Another general question about faculty's perceptions of the current state of online education is survey question 16a. When asked, "Do the following developments fill you with more fear than excitement," participants were required to indicate if they were more excited or more fearful when provided with the statement, "The growth of online education." Findings for this question indicate that 42.5 percent of evangelical faculty were more excited than fearful, while 57.5 percent were more fearful than excited.

When this data is cross-tabulated with demographic independent variables, faculty status ($p = 0.0264$), experience teaching online ($p = 0.0005$), and holding an administrative role ($p = 0.0014$) were statistically significant factors in evangelical faculty responses to this question. In sum, full-time faculty who had less online teaching experience and did not hold an administrative role tended to have more fear than excitement about the growth of online education. Those who were part-time faculty, had more online teaching experience, and held an administrative role were more evenly divided between fear and excitement about the growth of online education.

Focus group question 1. Focus group participants responded to a poll that asked, "Are you divided or decided in your opinions of online learning?" In focus group 1, respondents were 20 percent divided and 80 percent decided on their opinion of online learning. In focus group 2, respondents were 40 percent divided and 60 percent decided of online learning.

Once their responses were polled, participants were then asked to explain why they felt that way about online education. Themes emerging from the discussion on this topic included: Relationship Building, Student Engagement, and the Inevitability of Online

Education. The following provides a simple description and representative responses of each themes:

1. Relationship Building: Online education has the potential to limit relationships built between students and between student and faculty.
    a. "Now I am a believer in online education] that it is going to be a long-term effective way of learning. My only drawback is that one aspect about it—the personal interaction and relationship that is developed is limited in the online."

2. Student Engagement: Students were perceived as more engaged or less engaged.
    a. "Many students don't give it the same time/effort because they perceive that it should be 'easy.'"
    b. "From a knowledge transfer perspective in the online environment, I have the ability to participate 100% in discussion environment in discussion chat questions with the students."

3. Inevitability of Online Education: Online learning is going to be a part of theological education, so faculty should accept it.
    a. "It's here to stay. That is why I am decided. We just have to get better at it and so it's just a matter of trying to figure out how to plug our students into discipleship scenarios wherever they are located around the world and make sure they are a part of a good local church or wherever they can get that good discipleship."

Institution-Related Perceptions

Findings categorized as "institution-related perceptions" pertain to evangelical faculty beliefs and opinions about how institutions (either their own or other institutions) are approaching, advocating, or equipping faculty for online education. The following summaries indicate both the findings of the survey and focus group when applicable.

Survey question 9b. Participants were asked to respond to the statement "Online education at my institution is of high quality" on a 5-point Likert scale. Findings for this question indicated 18.3 percent of respondents strongly agreed, 37.5 percent agreed, 25.9 percent were neutral, 14.8 percent disagreed, and 3.5 percent strongly disagreed. The mean score for this question was 3.52 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.06. Thus, evangelical faculty generally indicated that they believed online learning at their institution to be of high quality. This data is represented in figure 2.

The age of the respondent proved to be a statistically significant factor for the responses to question 9b (p = 0.0302). Respondents who were between the age of 25-44 indicated a more neutral stance on this question, while respondents who were 45 years and older indicated to strongly agree (32.1 percent) or agree (50 percent) with this statement.

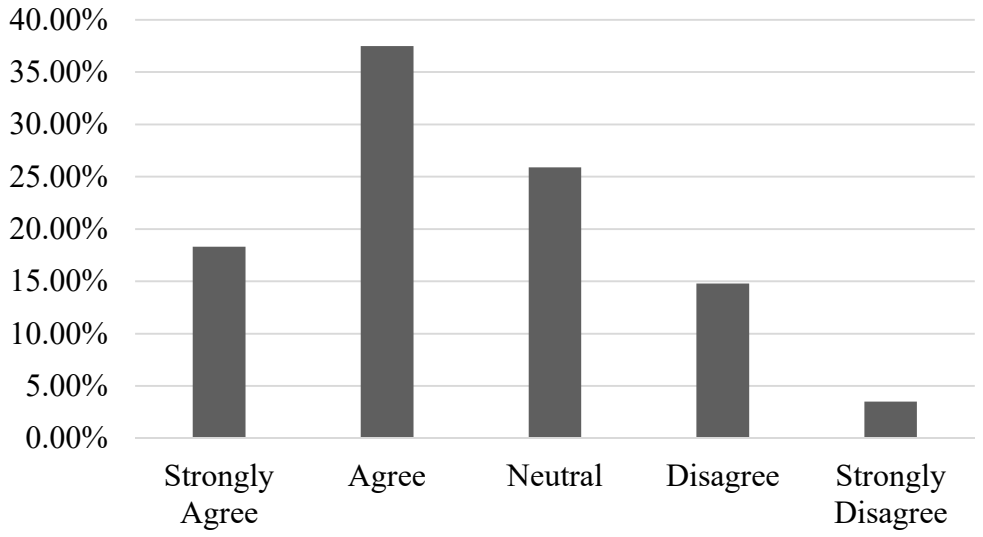

Figure 2. Online education at my institution is of high quality

Survey question 9c. Participants were asked to respond to the statement "I am skeptical of the quality of online courses at other institutions" on a 5-point Likert scale. Findings for this question indicated 15.7 percent of respondents strongly agreed, 42.5 percent agreed, 29.2 percent were neutral, 10.2 percent disagreed, and 2.4 percent strongly disagreed. The mean score for this question was 3.59 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.95.

When this data is cross-tabulated with demographic independent variables, age of the respondents (p = 0.0001), experience teaching online (p = 0.0068), and holding an administrative role (p = 0.011) were statistically significant factors for the responses to question 9c. Younger respondents tended to be more ready to agree or strongly agree that they were skeptical of online courses at other institutions. Respondents with no online

teaching experience were more likely to agree, but those who had fifteen years or more online teaching experience tended to be more neutral. Administrative faculty were more neutral in their responses than non-administrative faculty, but all respondents tended toward a more agreeable response as indicated in the overall response data.

Survey question 9d. Participants were asked to respond to the statement "My institution is pushing too much instruction online" on a 5-point Likert scale. Findings for this question indicated 8.1 percent strongly agreed, 25.7 percent agreed, 22.4 percent were neutral, 32.5 percent disagreed, and 11.3 percent strongly disagreed. The mean score for this question was 2.87 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.16.

Holding an administrative role had a statistically significant influence on the responses provided ($p = 0.0099$). Administrative faculty do not think that their institutions were pushing too much online instruction (13.8 percent strongly disagree and 38.8 percent disagree). Non-administrative faculty were divided on their agreement (30.9 percent) or disagreement (27.3 percent) with the statement.

Survey question 9e. Participants were asked to respond to the statement "My institution has a clear process for evaluating the quality of online instruction" on a 5-point Likert scale. Findings for this question indicated 15.0 percent of respondents strongly agreed, 31.6 percent agreed, 23.3 percent were neutral, 22.4 percent disagreed, and 7.6 percent strongly disagreed. The mean score for this question was 3.24 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.18.

The number of years that a faculty member had taught online had a statistically significant influence on the responses indicated for question 9e ($p = 0.0024$). Evangelical faculty with zero or less than one year teaching online were more neutral in their opinion of the evaluation quality of online instruction at their institution. Respondents with one or more years teaching online tended to agree or strongly agree with this statement.

Survey question 9f. Participants were asked to respond to the statement "My institution has a clear process for evaluating the quality of face-to-face instruction" on a 5-point Likert scale. Findings for this question indicated 28.1 percent of respondents strongly agreed, 46.6 percent agreed, 23.3 percent were neutral, 22.4 percent disagreed, and 7.6 percent strongly disagreed. The mean score for this question was 3.90 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.98.

Years teaching face-to-face and holding an administrative role both proved to have a statistically significant influence on the responses for 9f ($p = 0.0212$). Faculty with zero face-to-face teaching experience were more neutral on this statement (50 percent) while those with less than one year to over fifteen years of face-to-face teaching experience were largely in agreement with this statement. Administrative faculty more strongly agreed (34.5 percent) with this statement than their non-administrative counterparts (23 percent strongly agreed).

Survey question 12a. Questions 12 asks respondents to rate two statements on a 5-point Likert scale. The first statement (12a) was "My institution has high-quality faculty development, training, and support for teaching face-to-face courses." Responses for this statement indicated that 22.0 percent of evangelical faculty strongly agree, 42.3 percent agree, 20.3 percent were neutral, 12.2 percent disagree, and 3.3 percent strongly disagree. The mean score for question 12a was 3.68 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.05.

Survey question 12b. The second statement for question 12 (12b) was "My institution has high-quality faculty development, training, and support for teaching online courses." Responses for this statement indicated that 13.1 percent of evangelical faculty strongly agree, 33.1 percent agree, 24.8 percent were neutral, 20.7 percent disagree, and 8.3 percent strongly disagree. The mean score for question 12a was 3.22 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.16.

Faculty status ($p = 0.0117$), experience teaching online ($p = 0.0054$), and holding an administrative role ($p = 0.0281$) proved to have a statistically significant influence on the responses in 12b. Part-time faculty tended to indicate either neutrality (29.5 percent) or agreement (39.4 percent) with the faculty development at their institution being of high quality, while full-time faculty were split between disagreement (24.5 percent), neutrality (22.9 percent), and agreement (30.6 percent). While those who held an administrative role were widely distributed in their responses (15.8 percent strongly agree, 29.6 percent agree, 21.2 percent neutral, 26.1 percent disagree, and 7.4 percent strongly disagree), respondents who did not hold an administrative role tended to be more positive about the quality of faculty development for teaching online (10.9 percent strongly agree, 35.9 percent agree, 27.7 percent neutral, 16.4 percent disagree, and 9.0 percent strongly disagree). When survey question 12b was cross tabulated with survey question 9a, the data revealed a statistically significant relationship ($p = 0.001$) between the respondent's perceptions of faculty development for teaching online and their perception of the effectiveness of online education for student learning.

Focus group question 3. Participants in the focus group explained the findings for survey question 9a and 9b. They were asked, "Why do faculty perceive that faculty development for teaching online is of lesser quality in their institutions? Is it the institution? Is it that faculty are not attending?" Themes emerging from this discussion included: Institutional Underestimation and Greater Skill Needed in Online Teaching.

Participants in the focus group agreed that many institutions underestimate the shift that is necessary for a face-to-face instructor to teach online. This underestimation causes institutions to underinvest in online faculty development at all or to provide inadequate online faculty development. From some of the comments, it was surmised that these participants would appreciate more faculty development, especially in the form of group discussions and peer-to-peer training, for teaching online. Representative comments for this theme included, "One thing I have noticed is there seems to be really an

underestimation of the difficulty of transitioning from classroom to an online environment." And "I do think sometimes administrations are not aware of how big the shift is to online."

The second theme found in the focus group discussion centered on the participants' belief that online learning requires additional skills that are not necessarily needed in face-to-face instruction. Some of the skills mentioned in the discussion were technological ability and pedagogical adaptations. This theme was illustrated in the following representative comments: "I am sure that the lack of technical skills could play a part in this." And "The range of diversity in theoretical online classroom may mean that teaching strategies are not as universal in the training sessions."

Survey question 13a. Question 13 asked respondents to rate three statements on a 5-point Likert scale. The first statement (13a) was "My institution has a fair system of rewarding (either financially or with other incentives) those who develop online course curriculum." Responses for this statement indicated that 9.2 percent of evangelical faculty strongly agree, 29.8 percent agree, 31.4 percent were neutral, 22.0 percent disagree, and 7.6 percent strongly disagree. The mean score for question 13a was 3.11 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.09.

Faculty experience teaching online proved to be a statistically significant factor in the responses to 13a ($p = 0.0089$). Faculty with no online teaching experience were more neutral on this statement (55.1 percent), faculty with less than one year of online teaching experience were divided (28.6 percent disagree, 37.1 percent neutral, and 20 percent agree), and those with over fifteen years of experience were more in agreement (42.9 percent).

Survey question 13b. The second statement (13b) was "My institution has a fair system of paying those who teach an online course." Responses for this statement indicated that 11.3 percent of evangelical faculty strongly agree, 37.3 percent agree, 24.8

percent were neutral, 20.3 percent disagree, and 6.3 percent strongly disagree. The mean score for question 13b was 3.27 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.10.

Faculty experience teaching online proved to be a statistically significant factor in the responses to 13a ($p = 0$). Faculty who had never taught online were 52.6 percent neutral on this statement. Faculty who had taught between one and fourteen years online indicated more disagreement or neutrality than agreement on this statement. Faculty with fifteen or more years of online teaching experience indicated more agreement and less neutrality than any other group (25 percent strongly agree, 32.1 percent agree, 10.7 percent neutral, 28.6 percent disagree, and 3.6 percent strongly disagree).

Survey question 13c. The third statement (13c) was "My institution has strong policies to protect your intellectual property rights." Responses for this statement indicated that 10.0 percent of evangelical faculty strongly agree, 22.7 percent agree, 32.7 percent were neutral, 26.6 percent disagree, and 8.1 percent strongly disagree. The mean score for question 13c was 3.00 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.1.

Online teaching experience ($p = 0.0185$), face-to-face teaching experience ($p = 0.0001$), and holding an administrative role ($p = 0.0128$) made a statistically significant difference in the responses to 13c. Of those respondents who had no online teaching experience, 52.6 percent indicated a neutral stance when compared to the 32.7 percent of overall respondents who indicated neutral. Those who have fifteen or more years of online teaching experience were the least neutral on the subject, but more ready to strongly agree with the statement (3.6 percent strongly disagree, 28.6 percent disagree, 10.7 percent neutral, 32.1 percent agree, 25 percent strongly agree). Non-administrators (38.7 percent were more neutral than administrative faculty (25 percent).

Survey question 16e. When asked, "Do the following developments fill you with more fear than excitement," participants were required to indicate if they were more excited or more fearful when provided with the statement, "Policies regarding plagiarism

in online education." Findings for this question indicate that 43.1 percent of evangelical faculty were more excited than fearful, while 56.9 percent were more fearful than excited.

Holding an administrative role proved to have a statistically significant impact on the responses for 16c ($p = 0.0034$). Administrative faculty indicated a very even split of opinion between excitement (50.7 percent) and fear (49.3 percent). Non-administrative faculty indicated more fear (62.9 percent) than excitement (37.1 percent) about policies regarding plagiarism in online education.

Course-Related Perceptions

The following findings pertain to evangelical faculty perceptions of course-related issues, such as achievement of learning objective, development of online curriculum, and the evaluation of online courses.

Survey question 14. Addressing perceptions regarding online courses, participants were asked to identify their beliefs about the following statement: "I believe that learning outcomes in online courses are superior to learning outcomes in face-to-face courses." Responses were heavily in disagreement with this statement. Evangelical faculty responded to this statement with 0.9 percent in strong agreement, 5.9 percent in agreement, 19.4 percent neutral, 40.3 percent in disagreement, and 33.6 percent in strong disagreement.

Survey question 16c. When asked, "Do the following developments fill you with more fear than excitement," participants were required to indicate if they were more excited or more fearful when provided with the statement "The increasing collection and analysis of data on teaching and learning, on a course-by-course basis." Findings for this question indicate that 61.9 percent of evangelical faculty were more excited than fearful, while 38.1 percent were more fearful than excited. The mean score for responses to this question was 2.00 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.92 indicating a more negative consensus among respondents.

Holding an administrative role proved to have a statistically significant impact on the responses for 16c ($p = 0.0095$). Administrative faculty indicated more excitement (68.5 percent) than fear (31.5 percent). Non-administrative faculty indicated a more even distribution between excitement (56.6 percent) and fear (43.4 percent) of the increasing analysis of data on teaching and learning, on a course-by-course basis.

Survey question 16d. When asked, "Do the following developments fill you with more fear than excitement," participants were required to indicate if they were more excited or more fearful when provided with the statement "Other teachers teaching an online course you have designed." Findings for this question indicate that 48.6 percent of evangelical faculty were more excited than fearful, while 51.4 percent were more fearful than excited.

Faculty status proved to have a statistically significant influence on the responses to 16d ($p = 0$). Part-time or adjunct faculty responded 65.2 percent more excitement than fear and 34.4 percent more fear than excitement. Full-time faculty, on the other hand, responded 41.9 percent more excitement than fear and 58.1 percent more fear than excitement.

Faculty-Related Perceptions

While faculty certainly have opinions about online learning in regard to institutional and course-related matters, another category of concern for faculty is their own ability as online instructors or how they perceive online education impacting them. The following findings address these issues.

Survey question 15. Question 15 asked respondents to indicate how their involvement in online education has impacted various aspects of their own skill or life. Respondents were provided with six different statements and asked to rate their level of impact on a 5-point Likert scale that was labeled "strongly increased," "increased," "no impact," "decreased," and "strongly decreased."

In each of the sub-items for survey question 15, years teaching online proved to have a statistically significant influence on the responses. In particular, those who had no online teaching experience, as would be guessed, felt largely no impact on their personal skills of life. Therefore, a new mean and standard deviation for each sub-item was calculated that excludes respondents who indicated no online teaching experience.

Survey Question 15a. In the first statement, respondents were asked to rate the amount of impact online education had on their level of stress. Respondents indicated either an increase (41.8 percent) or no impact (45.1 percent) on their level of stress due to their involvement with online education. Very few respondents indicated a strong increase (6.1 percent), a decrease (6.3 percent), or a strong decrease (0.7 percent). The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 3.46 with a standard deviation of +/- .073.

When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 3.5 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.77. Of those who had no online teaching experience, 82.1 percent indicated no impact to their level of stress, as would be expected. For those who had online teaching experience, figure 3 displays the responses that fall between no impact and an increase to their level of stress.

Faculty holding an administrative role also had a statistically significant impact on question 15a ($p = 0.0423$). More non-administrators indicated no impact to their stress level (46.5 percent) than their administrative counterparts (43.3 percent). Likewise, non-administrators had less of an increase in stress (39.1 percent) when compared to their administrative counterparts (45.3 percent).

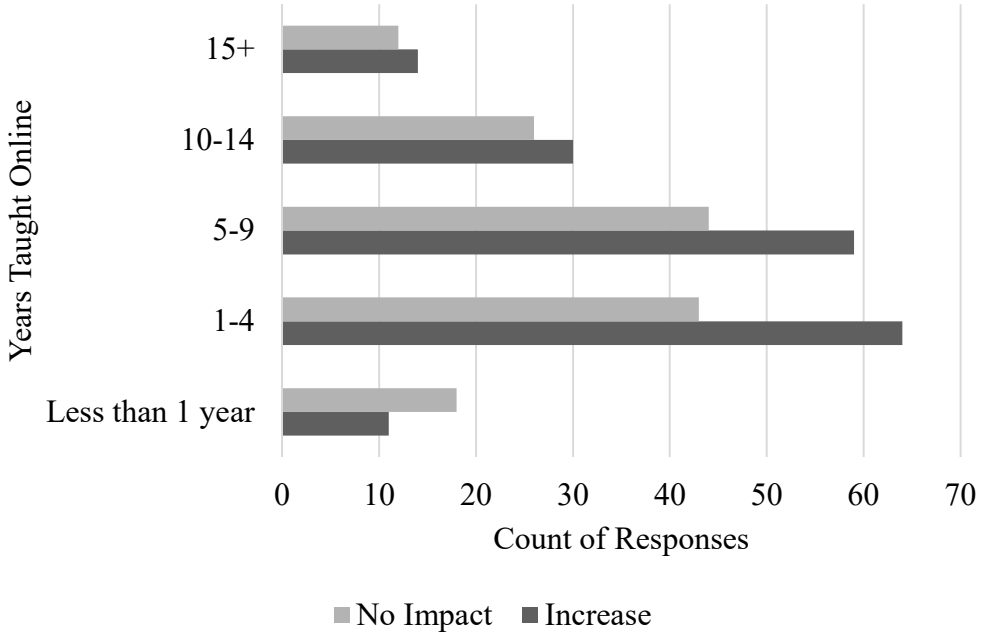

Figure 3. Level of stress and years taught online

Survey question 15b. In second statement, respondents were asked to rate the amount of impact online education had on the number of hours they work. Respondents indicated either an increase (48.8 percent) or no impact (33.8 percent) on their number of hours worked due to their involvement with online education. Few respondents indicated a strong increase of hours worked (9.8 percent), a decrease (7.2 percent), or a strong decrease (0.4 percent). The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 3.47 with a standard deviation of +/- .078.

When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 3.7 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.79. Of those who had no online teaching experience, 84.6 percent indicated no impact on the number of hours worked, as would be expected. For those who had online teaching experience, figure 4 displays responses that fall between no impact and an increase to the number of hours worked.

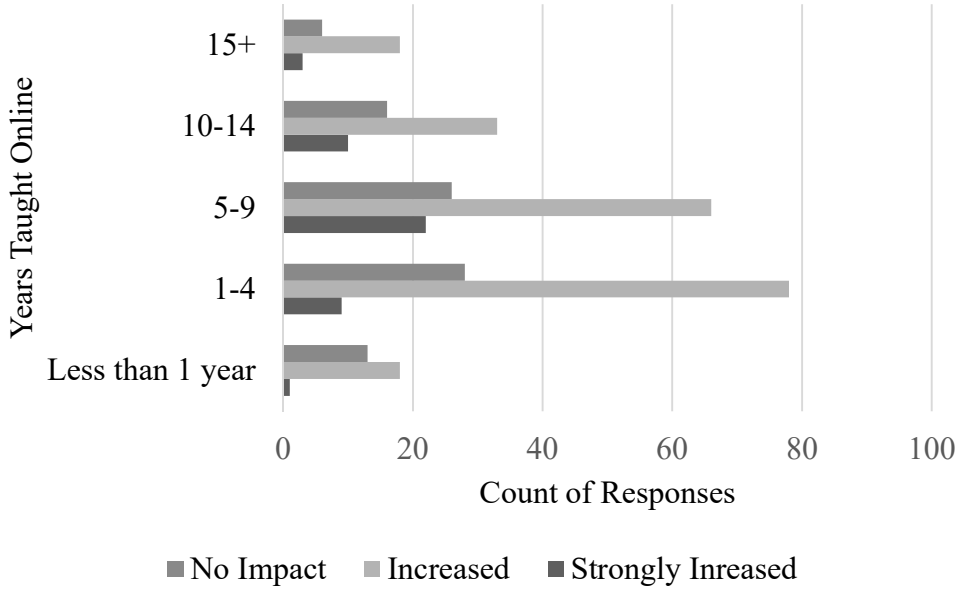

Figure 4. Number of hours worked and years taught online

Survey question 15c. In the third statement, respondents were asked to rate the amount of impact online education had on their productivity. Respondents indicated either an increase (20.5 percent), no impact (43.6 percent), or a decrease (30.3 percent) in their productivity due to their involvement with online education. Very few respondents indicated a strong increase (2.4 percent) or a strong decrease (3.3 percent). The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 2.88 with a standard deviation of +/- .85.

When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 2.86 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.92. Of those who had no online teaching experience, 85.9 percent indicated no impact to their productivity, as would be expected. For those who had online teaching experience, figure 5 displays responses of increase, no impact, or decrease in productivity.

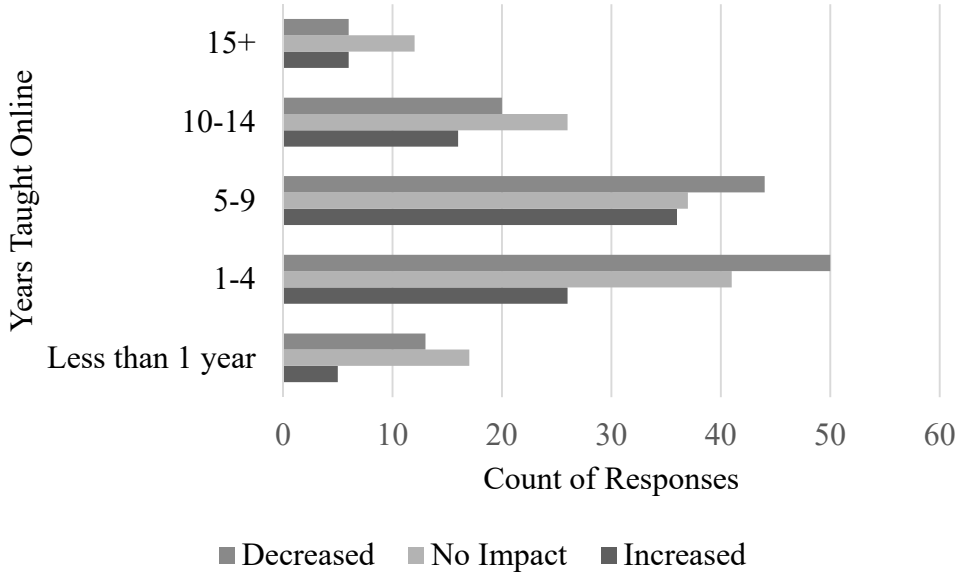

Figure 5. Productivity and years taught online

Survey question 15d. The fourth statement that respondents were asked to rate was the amount of impact online education had on their interaction with students. Respondents indicated either no impact (34.6 percent) or a decrease (36.6 percent) in their interaction with students. Very few respondents indicated a strong increase (1.3 percent). Only some respondents indicated an increase (15.3 percent) or a strong decrease (12.2 percent). The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 2.57 with a standard deviation of +/- .94.

When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 2.5 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.99. Of those who had no online teaching experience, 79.5 percent indicated no impact to the interaction that they have with students, as would be expected. For those who had online teaching experience, figure 6 displays responses about the degree of impact online education had on their interaction with students.

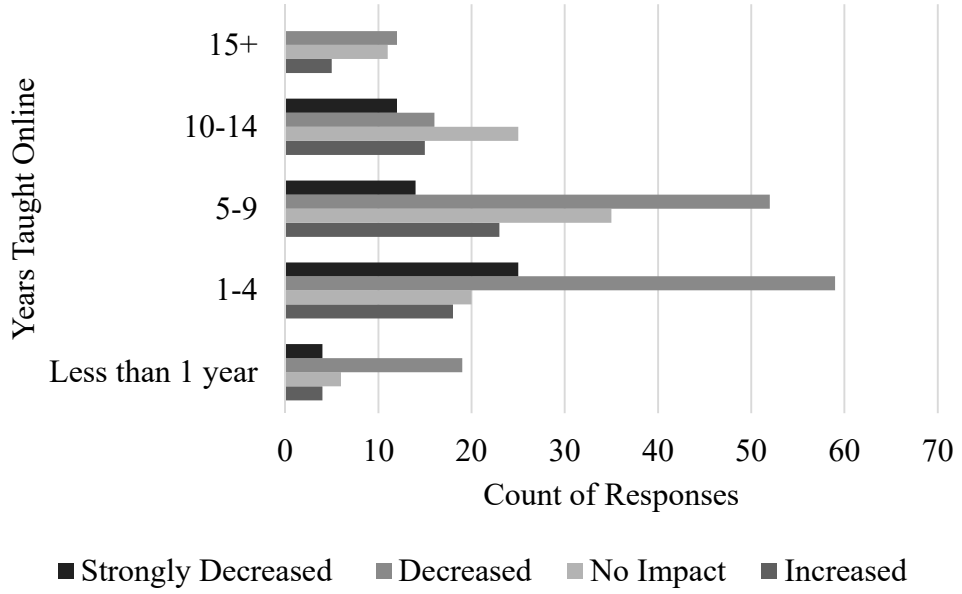

Figure 6. Interaction with students and years taught online

Survey question 15e. The fifth statement that respondents were asked to rate was the amount of impact online education had on their skill in using technology. Respondents indicated either an increase (56.2 percent) or no impact (31.2 percent) on their skill in using technology due to their involvement with online education. Very few respondents indicated a strong increase (11.8 percent), a decrease (0.2 percent), or a strong decrease (0.7 percent). The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 3.78 with a standard deviation of +/- .67.

When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 3.89 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.65. Of those who had no online teaching experience, 74.4 percent indicated no impact to their skill in using technology, as would be expected. Those who had some online teaching experience perceived that their skill in using technology had increased due to their involvement with online education.

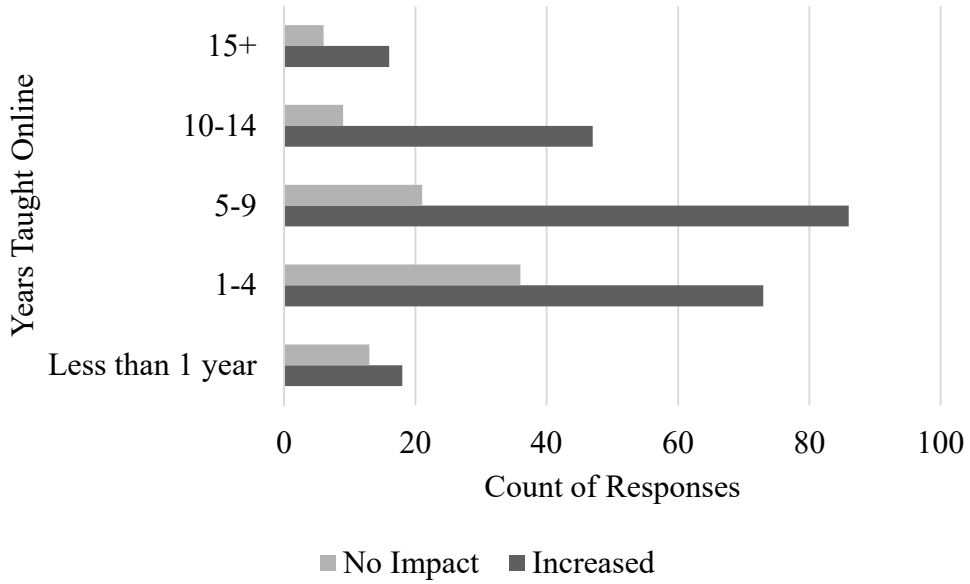

Figure 7. Technology skill and years taught online

Holding an administrative role had a statistically significant impact on the responses in 15e ($p = 0.0256$). While the mode for both administrators and non-administrators indicated an increase in technology skill, a greater percentage of administrative faculty indicated a strong increase (16.7 percent) than non-administrative faculty (7.8 percent). Likewise, a greater percentage of non-administrative faculty indicated a decrease (34.4 percent) than administrative faculty (27.1 percent).

Survey question 15f. The final statement that respondents were asked to rate was the amount of impact online education had on their overall satisfaction with teaching. Respondents largely indicated either no impact (42.7 percent) or a decrease (30.9 percent) in their satisfaction with teaching due to their involvement with online education. Some respondents indicated an increase in their satisfaction (17.4 percent). Very few respondents indicated a strong increase (3.1 percent) or a strong decrease (5.9 percent). The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 2.81 with a standard deviation of +/- .9.

When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 2.79 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.96. Of those who

had no online teaching experience, 82.1 percent indicated no impact to satisfaction with teaching, as would be expected. For those who had online teaching experience, figure 8 displays responses showing that respondents had a decrease of satisfaction if they taught online for less than a year to 14 years. If they had been a teacher for 15 years or more, an increase in satisfaction was indicated.

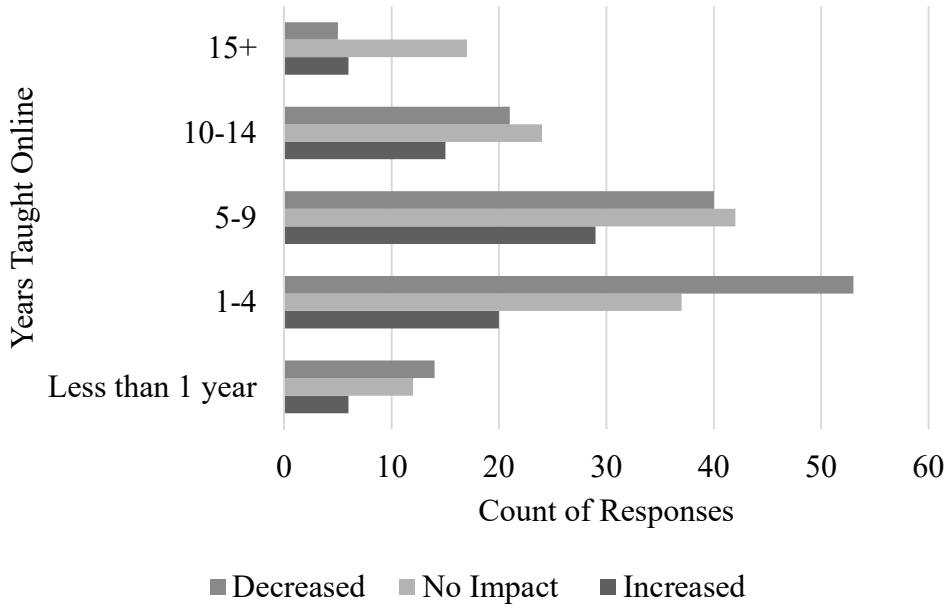

Figure 8. Satisfaction with teaching and years taught online

Survey question 16b. When asked, "Do the following developments fill you with more fear than excitement," participants were required to indicate if they were more excited or more fearful when provided with the statement, "Changing the faculty role to spend less time lecturing and more time coaching students." Findings for this question indicate that 50.8 % percent of evangelical faculty were more excited than fearful, while 49.2 percent were more fearful than excited.

Faculty status proved to be statistically significant in the responses for question 16b ($p = .0276$). Part-time faculty indicated more excitement (60.6 percent) than fear (39.4 percent) about an increase in coaching over lecturing. Full-time faculty indicated slightly

more fear (53.2 percent) than excitement (46.8 percent) about an increase in coaching over lecturing.

Student-Related Perceptions

Faculty indicated their perceptions of online students in their responses to question 17. This question asked respondents to rate six statements on a 5-point Likert scale about online students according to their own opinions. The summary below reveals the findings for evangelical faculty perceptions of online students.

In each of the sub-items for survey question 17, years teaching online proved to have a statistically significant influence on the responses. In particular, those who had no online teaching experience, as would be guessed, were largely neutral regarding their perceptions of online students. Therefore, a new mean and standard deviation for each sub-item was calculated that excludes respondents who indicated no online teaching experience.

Survey question 17a. The first statement evangelical faculty were asked to rate regarding online students was "I interact more with students in my online course than in my face-to-face course." Responses for this statement tended to be more disagreeable. Of the total responses, 2.2 percent strongly agreed, 8.5 percent agreed, 25.3 were neutral, 34.9 percent disagreed, and 29.2 percent strongly disagreed. The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 2.2 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.02.

The majority (70.5 percent) of respondents who had no online teaching experience indicated a neutral stance in response to question 17a, as would be expected. When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 2.11 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.05. Of the respondents who had any online teaching experience, a general disagreement with the statement "I interact more with students in my online course than in my face-to-face course" was found, as indicated in figure 9.

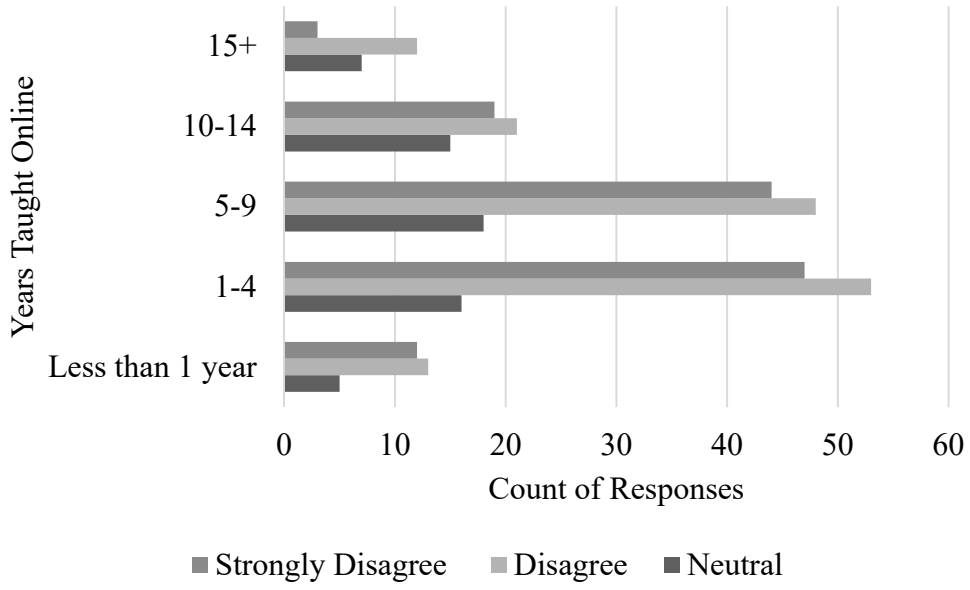

Figure 9. Interaction with students and years taught online

Survey question 17b. The second statement evangelical faculty were asked to rate regarding online students was "My online students actively participate in their learning." Responses for this statement tended to be somewhat neutral (29.4 percent) or largely agreeable (41.6 percent). The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 3.34 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.97.

The majority (73.1 percent) of respondents who had no online teaching experience indicated a neutral stance in response to question 17b, as would be expected. When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 3.4 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.01. Of the respondents who had any online teaching experience, a general agreement with the statement "My online students actively participate in their learning" was found, as indicated in figure 10.

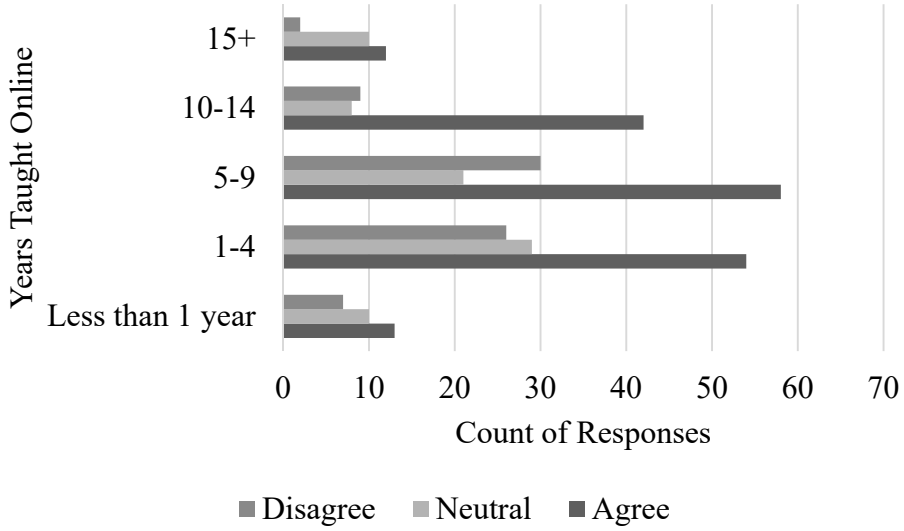

Figure 10. Student active participation and years taught online

Age ($p = 0.0068$) and holding an administrative role ($p = 0.0198$) also were statistically significant in the responses for 17b. Younger respondents tended to be divided between disagree, neutral, and agree with agree being more common as age increased. Those who were 65 and older indicated largely either neutral (43.5 percent) or agree (48.4 percent). Respondents with an administrative role were more willing to strongly agree (12.3 percent) or agree (44.3 percent) than their non-administrative counterparts (5.1 percent strongly agree and 39.5 percent agree).

Survey question 17c. The third statement evangelical faculty were asked to rate regarding online students was "Students in my online course are more enthusiastic about their learning than students in my face-to-face course." Responses for this statement tended to be neutral or disagreed with this statement. Of the total responses, 2.0 percent strongly agreed, 7.8 percent agreed, 41.4 percent were neutral, 33.8 percent disagreed, and 17 percent strongly disagreed. The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 2.48 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.91.

The majority (79.5 percent) of respondents who had no online teaching experience indicated a neutral stance in response to question 17c, as would be expected.

When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 2.43 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.95. Of the respondents who had any online teaching experience, a general disagreement with the statement "Students in my online course are more enthusiastic about their learning than students in my face-to-face course" was found, as indicated in figure 11.

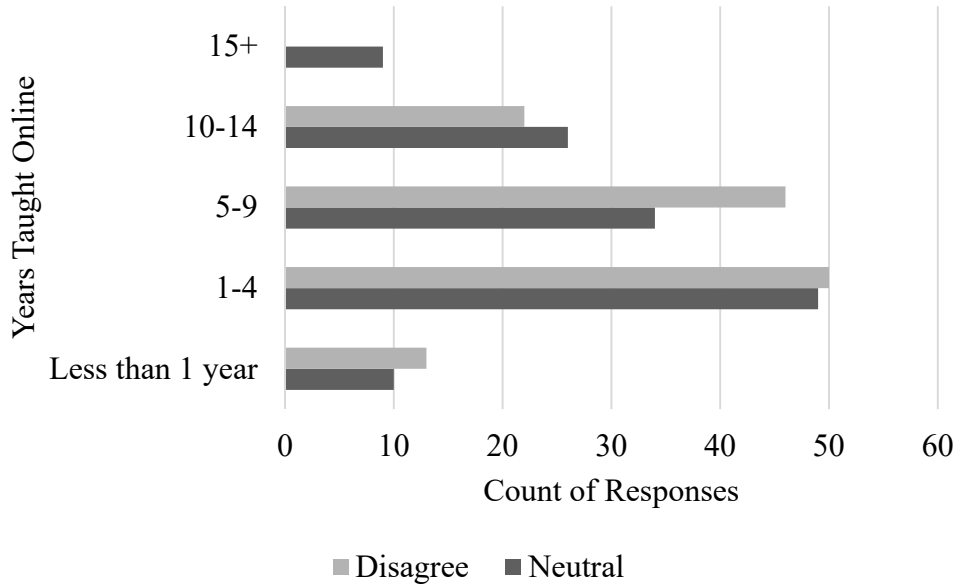

Figure 11. Enthusiasm of students and years taught online

Survey question 17d. The fourth statement evangelical faculty were asked to rate regarding online students was "I am able to provide better feedback to students in my online course than my face-to-face course." Responses for this statement tended to be more disagreeable. Of the total responses, 1.5 percent strongly agreed, 13.3 percent agreed, 29.4 percent were neutral, 38.8 percent disagreed, and 17 percent strongly disagreed. The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 2.44 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.97.

The majority (67.9 percent) of respondents who had no online teaching experience indicated a neutral stance in response to question 17d, as would be expected.

When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 2.39 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.02. Of the respondents who had any online teaching experience, a general tendency of disagreement with the statement "I interact more with students in my online course than in my face-to-face course" was found, as indicated in figure 12.

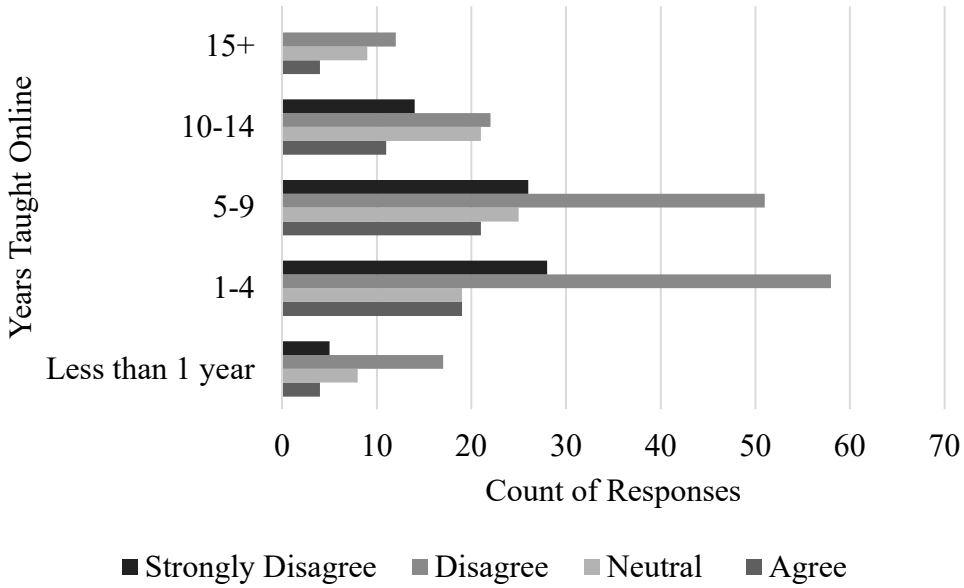

Figure 12. Feedback to students and years taught online

Survey question 17e. The fifth statement evangelical faculty were asked to rate regarding online students was "It is valuable to me that my students can access my online course from any place in the world." Responses for this statement tended to be more agreeable. Of the total responses, 32.0 percent strongly agreed, 44.7 percent agreed, 20.5 percent were neutral, 2.2 percent disagreed, and 0.7 percent strongly disagreed. The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 4.05 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.82.

The majority (65.4 percent) of respondents who had no online teaching experience indicated a neutral stance in response to question 17e, as would be expected.

When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 4.19 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.75. Of the respondents who had any online teaching experience, a general disagreement with the statement "It is valuable to me that my students can access my online course from any place in the world" was found, as indicated in figure 13.

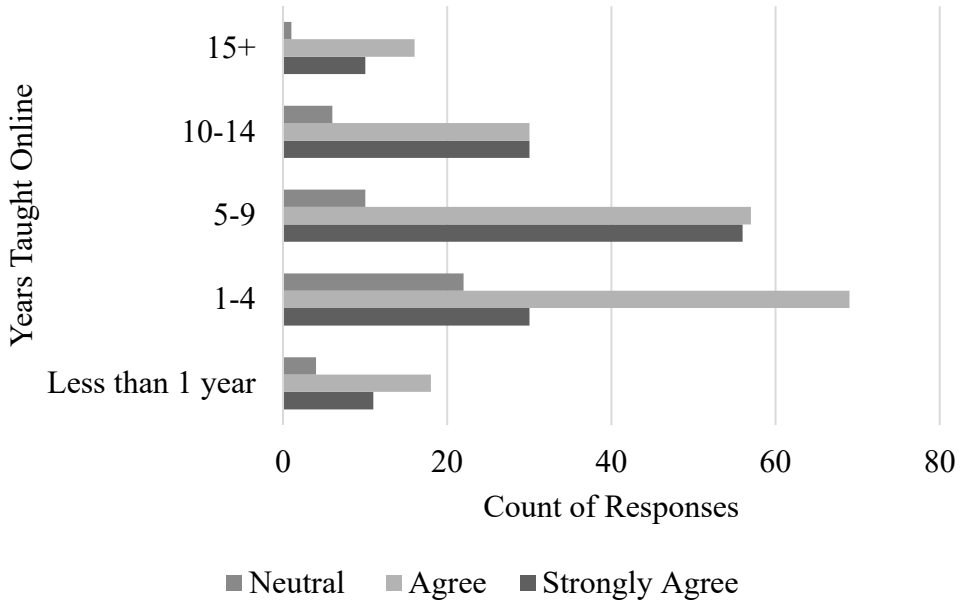

Figure 13. Student access and years taught online

Survey question 17f. The final statement evangelical faculty were asked to rate regarding online students was "I appreciate the ability of online education to extend my reach to students who otherwise would not be able to take my courses." Responses for this statement tended to be largely agreeable. Of the total responses, 36.6 percent strongly agreed, 42.3 percent agreed, 17.4 percent were neutral, 2.8 percent disagreed, and 0.9 percent strongly disagreed. The mean (including those who taught zero years online) was 4.11 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.85.

The majority (61.5 percent) of respondents who had no online teaching experience indicated a neutral stance in response to question 17f, as would be expected.

When the respondents who had no online teaching experience were removed from the data set, the mean was 4.25 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.78. Of the respondents who had any online teaching experience, a general disagreement with the statement "I appreciate the ability of online education to extend my reach to students who otherwise would not be able to take my courses" was found, as indicated in Figure 14.

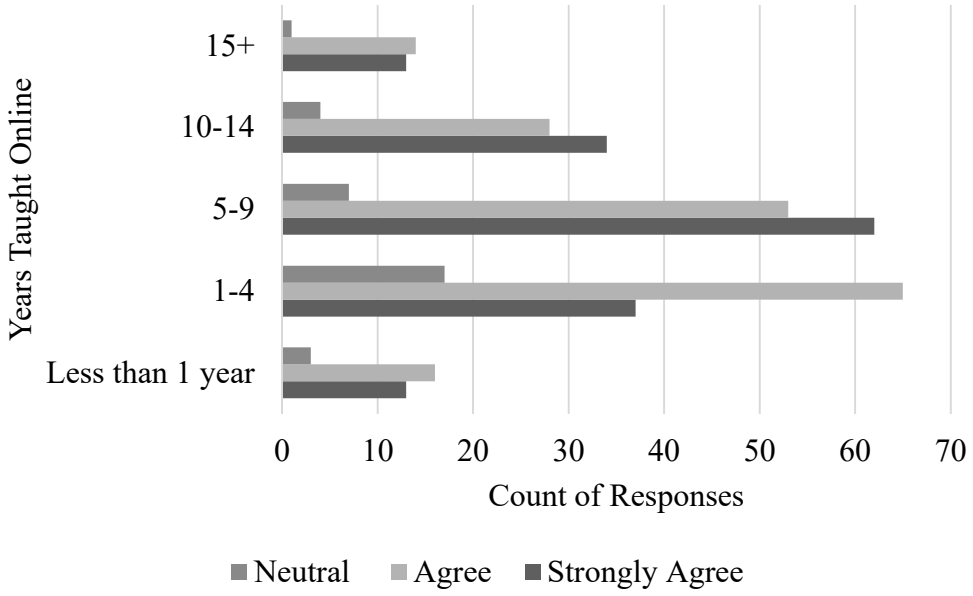

Figure 14. Extend reach and years taught online

Theological Education and Online Learning

The following questions identify evangelical faculty current perceptions about online learning in theological education. In particular, question 18 addresses the core requirements for the master of divinity degree according to the Association of Theological Schools.[6] Question 21 asks evangelical faculty if they believe online

[6]The Association of Theological Schools, "Degree Program Standards," accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.ats.edu/uploads/accrediting/documents/degree-program-standards.pdf.

education is a benefit to theological education, and question 22 allows respondents to explain their response to question 21.

Survey question 18. Participants were asked to provide their opinions about the ability of online education to accomplish the goals of theological education (18a). They were then asked to identify their opinions about the ability of online education to achieve specific goals of theological education including the requirements for the master of divinity degree according to the Association of Theological Schools.[7] These specific goals included equipping students to be pastors/ministers, fostering spiritual development, creating community, equipping students to engage culture, and preparing students' character and ability as leaders. All statements in question 18 were rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

Survey question 18a. When asked to respond to the statement "Online education can achieve the goals of theological education," evangelical faculty were largely divided with a slight tendency to agree. The mean score for 18a was 3.25 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.25. Figure 15 indicates the response pattern for this statement.

Online teaching experience ($p = 0.0167$) and holding an administrative role ($p = 0.0036$) were both statistically significant in the responses to question 18a. Those with less online teaching experience (0-4 years) tended to respond either agree or disagree, but those with more online teaching experience (5-15+ years) tended to respond agree or strongly agree. Respondents holding an administrative role more readily agreed (43.8 percent) or strongly agreed (19.2 percent) when compared to their non-administrative counterparts (34.0 percent agree and 11.3 percent strongly agree).

[7]The Association of Theological Schools, "Degree Program Standards."

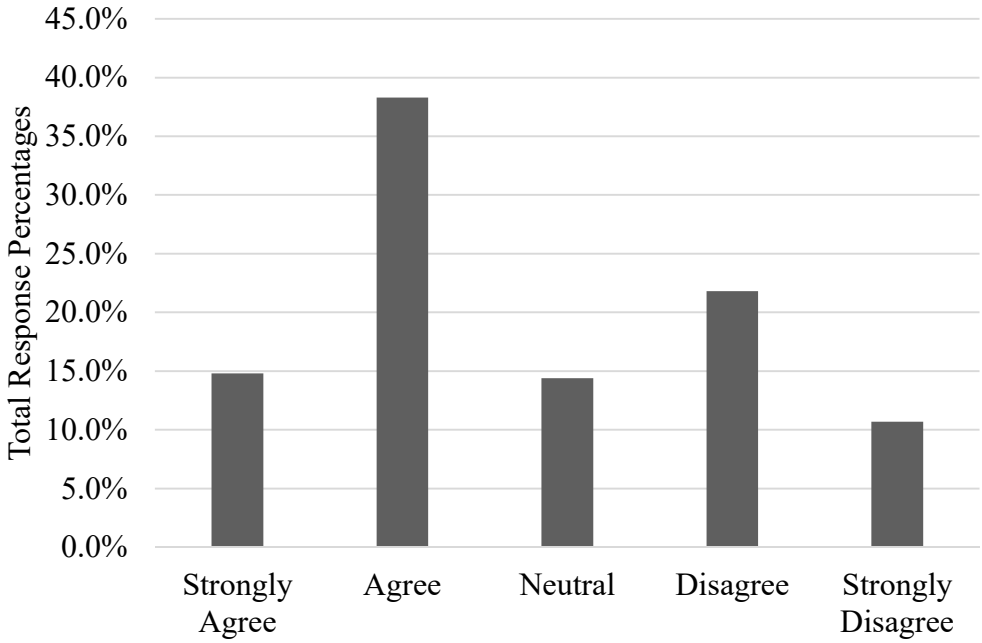

Figure 15. Online learning and the goals of theological education

Focus group question 2. In the focus group, participants were asked a follow-up question to survey question 18a. In light of online teaching experience having an impact on the responses to survey question 18a, I asked the focus group, "Why do you think that those with more online teaching experience view online learning as having a greater ability to achieve the goals of theological education than those with less experience?"

General response themes emerged from the focus group discussion, including Fear of the Learning Curve and Pedagogical Adaptations. In the first theme, participant discussed in consensus that online learning has an intimidation factor for someone who has never done it before. Whether that intimidation is a result of technology skill, pedagogical skill, or interaction skill from a distance, faculty who have less online teaching experience may fear the medium due to the amount of skill they lack and need to gain to be an effective teacher. Representative comments in regard to this first theme include

1. "People are afraid of something they haven't done before so they have apprehensions about it"

2. “There is an intimidating learning curve, but those who learn to facilitate well online also see the benefits of it.”

Second, the focus group participants discussed the fact that those who have taught more online have learned how to adapt their pedagogy to make theological education more effective through the online medium. Though the goals of theological education remain the same, these participants believed that those who taught more online were probably better able to change the methods of assessment and instruction for online education. These comments represent what was discussed: (

1. “I think you have to overcome a pedagogical issue and that is how you teach in the classroom is not how you can teach online”
2. “Switching formats you may not change your particular objectives, but it may change how you accomplish those objective.”

Survey question 18b. Participants were asked to respond to the statement “Online education can equip students to be successful pastors/ministers.” Evangelical faculty were largely divided in their responses to this specific statement regarding the goals of theological education. The mean score for 18b was 2.98 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.24. While the largest percentage of responses were agreeing, the mean score of 2.98 indicates that participants slightly tended toward disagreement with the statement. Figure 16 illustrates these divided findings.

Survey question 18c. Faculty were more agreeable to the statement “Online education can foster students' spiritual development.” While not many respondents felt strongly about this statement (8.9 percent strongly agreed and 10.7 percent strongly disagreed), 41.2 percent of respondents agreed, 22.0 percent were neutral, and 17.2 percent disagreed. The mean score for the responses to this statement was 3.2 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.15. Responses to this question are indicated in figure 17.

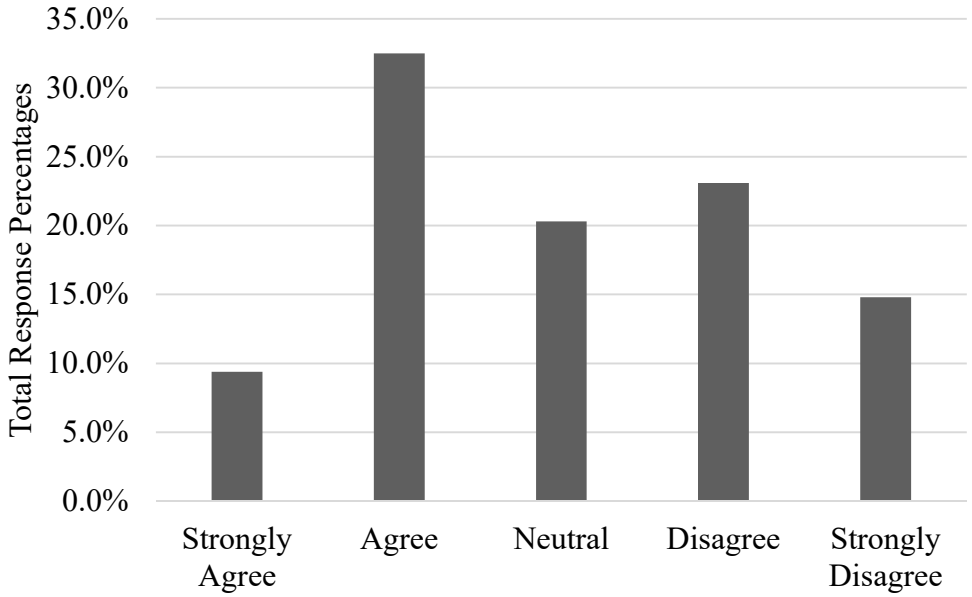

Figure 16. Online education can equip students to be pastors/ministers

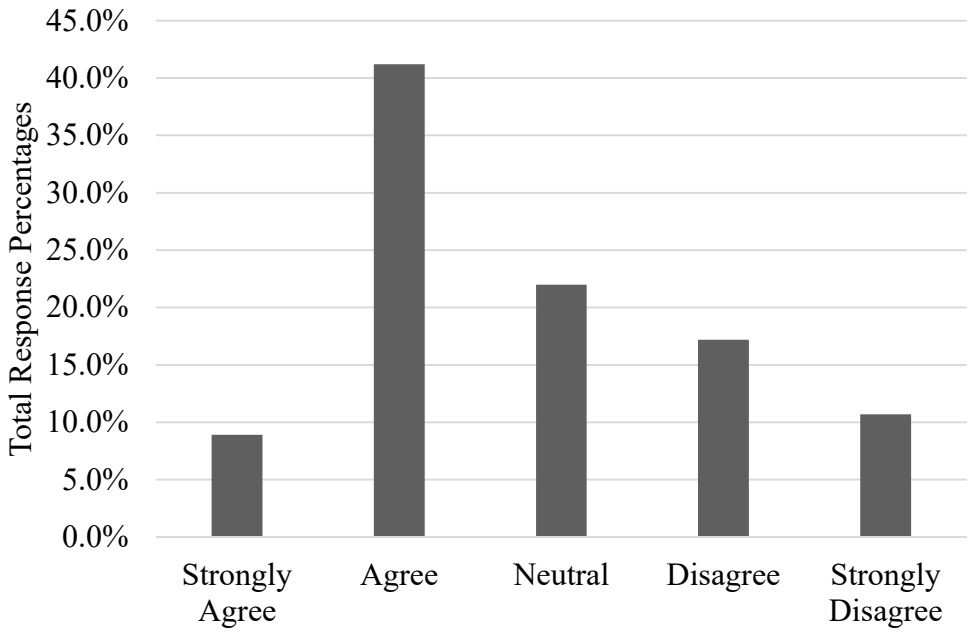

Figure 17. Online education can foster spiritual development

Holding an administrative role proved to have a statistically significant influence on the responses ($p = 0.0141$). Those holding an administrative role in addition

to a faculty role tended to be slightly more agreeable with this statement (10.8 percent strongly agree, 47.3 percent agree, 19.2 percent neutral, 16.3 percent disagree, and 6.4 percent strongly disagree). Non-administrative faculty were slightly less agreeable (7.4 percent strongly agree, 36.3 percent agree, 24.2 percent neutral, 18 percent disagree, and 14.1 percent strongly disagree).

Survey question 18d. When asked to respond to the statement "Online education can create a genuine community for students," evangelical faculty indicated more disagreement. The mean score for 18d was 2.65 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.26. Figure 18 indicates the response pattern for this statement:

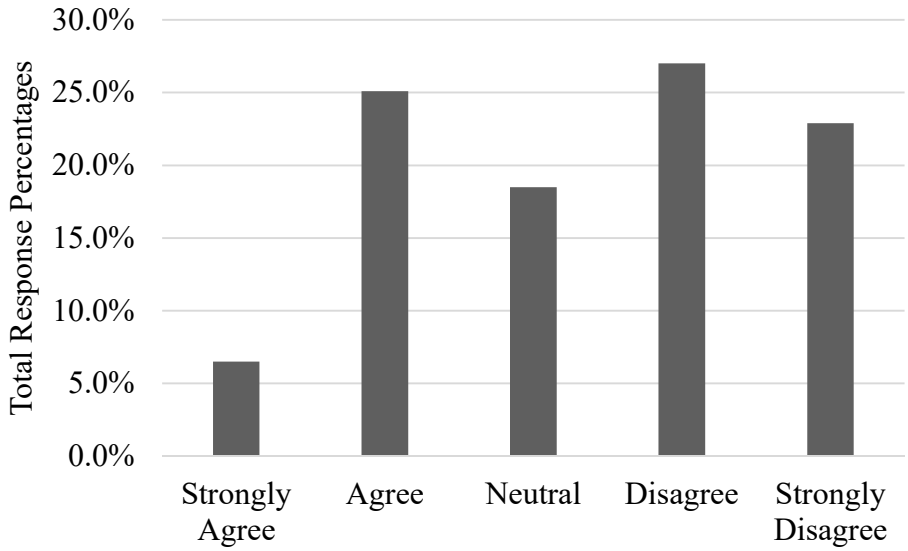

Figure 18. Online education can create community

Holding an administrative role proved to have a statistically significant influence on the responses ($p = 0.0123$). Those holding an administrative role in addition to a faculty role tended to be slightly in less disagreement with this statement (9.4 percent strongly agree, 29.6 percent agree, 19.2 percent neutral, 24.1 percent disagree, and 17.1 percent strongly disagree) than their non-administrative counterparts (4.3 percent strongly

agree, 21.5 percent agree, 18 percent neutral, 29.3 percent disagree, and 27 percent strongly disagree).

Focus group question 4. Focus group participants engaged in discussion to explain survey questions 18c and 18d. They were asked, "What role does community play in the spiritual development of a theological student? How does online learning promote or hinder that development through community?" The discussion on the topic of community and spiritual development resulted in three major themes: Community is Essential, Discussion Boards and Community, and Debate about "Community."

The participants in the focus groups believed that community was essential to learning and to theological education. Statements that revealed this consensus included

1. "Community must be developed in each course,"
2. "Community is vital. Online learning can create a degree and a type of community; it can be a great blessing for students who are at a significant distance from each other."

Participants believed largely that community could take place in the discussion board feature of many online courses, but that it does not take place automatically. Intentionality from the professor was a commonly noted need in the discussion. Comments that represent this opinion include

1. "Of you are going to have this interaction on a deeper level to set up a community among the students you really have to use that discussion board in depth."
2. "I would agree with others that the discussion is the key for community building."

Finally, many participants called into question the definition of "community" as it was being used and referenced in the study and in the discussion. Some believed that true community needed to take place in the physical presence of another person. Further, there was a desire to see a certain type of community that was distinctly Christian evident in the online courses. These remarks represent this theme:

1. "I think it is also important to identify the rubric by which we are measuring 'community.'"

2. “It seems that as we reframe pedagogy, we are also continuing to reframe what "community" and "Christian community" should mean.”

Survey question 18e. Faculty were more agreeable to the statement “Online education can equip students to critically engage the culture.” Responses to this statement were somewhat neutral (24.8 percent) or largely in agreement (44.7 percent). The mean score for the responses to this statement was 3.43 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.06. Responses to this question are indicated in figure 19.

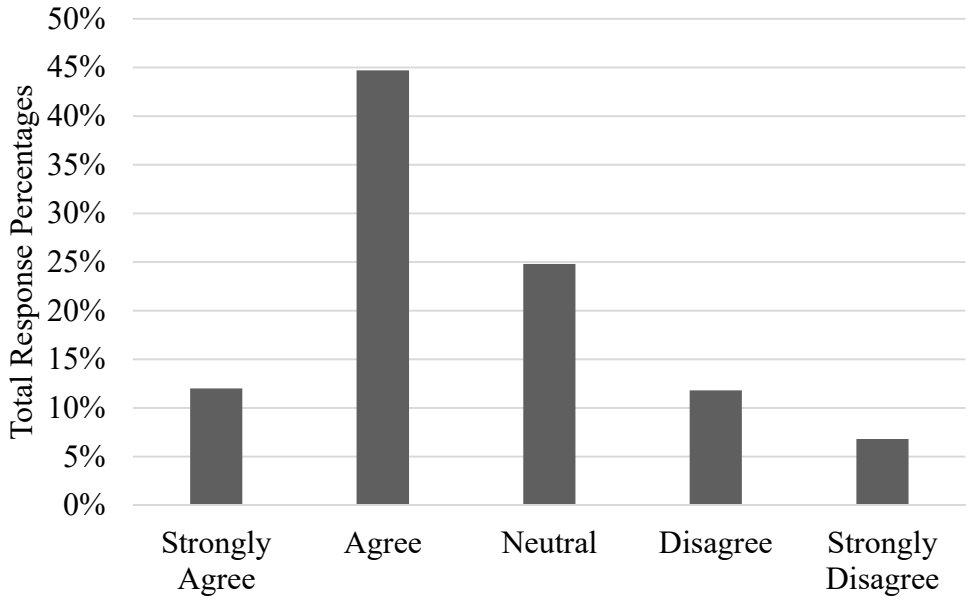

Figure 19. Online education can equip students to engage culture

Holding an administrative role proved to have a statistically significant influence on the responses ($p = 0.002$). Those holding an administrative role in addition to a faculty role tended to be slightly more agreeable with this statement (17.7 percent strongly agree, 47.3 percent agree, 19.7 percent neutral, 10.3 percent disagree, and 4.9 percent strongly disagree). Non-administrative faculty were slightly less agreeable (7.4 percent strongly agree, 42.6 percent agree, 28.9 percent neutral, 12.9 percent disagree, and 8.2 percent strongly disagree).

Survey question 18f. Participants were asked to respond to the statement "Online education can prepare students' character and ability as leaders." Evangelical faculty were more in disagreement with this specific statement regarding the goals of theological education. The mean score for 18f was 2.80 with a standard deviation of +/- 1.89. While the largest percentage of responses were agreeing, the mean score of 2.98 indicates that participants slightly tended toward disagreement with the statement. Figure 20 illustrates these divided findings.

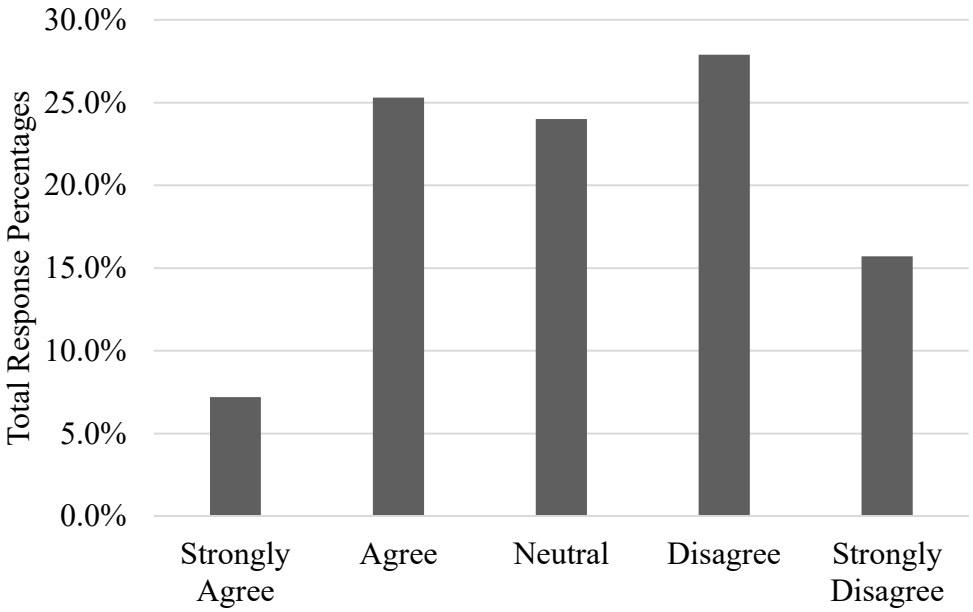

Figure 20. Online education can prepare students as leaders

Holding an administrative role proved to have a statistically significant influence on the responses ($p = 0.0075$). Those holding an administrative role in addition to a faculty role tended to be slightly more agreeable with this statement (10.8 percent strongly agree, 29.6 percent agree, 23.2 percent neutral, 24.1 percent disagree, and 12.3 percent strongly disagree) than their non-administrative counterparts (4.3 percent strongly agree, 21.9 percent agree, 24.6 percent neutral, 30.9 percent disagree, and 18.4 percent strongly disagree).

Survey question 20 (open-ended). The survey then asked respondents an open-ended question that sought to discover "What forms the foundations of your beliefs and perceptions about online education?" From the written responses, twelve general themes emerged: Experience, Interaction/Community, Student-Related, Mentor/ Discipleship/Character Shaping, Theology/Philosophy, Technology-Related, Faculty-Related, Research, Course-Related, Institution-Related, Cost vs. Quality, and Online Learning as Supplemental to Face-to-Face. Responses were coded according to these themes with the possibility that one response could be marked with more than one theme present. The results for these themes are indicated in figure 21. Following the figure are representative comments from the top five response themes.

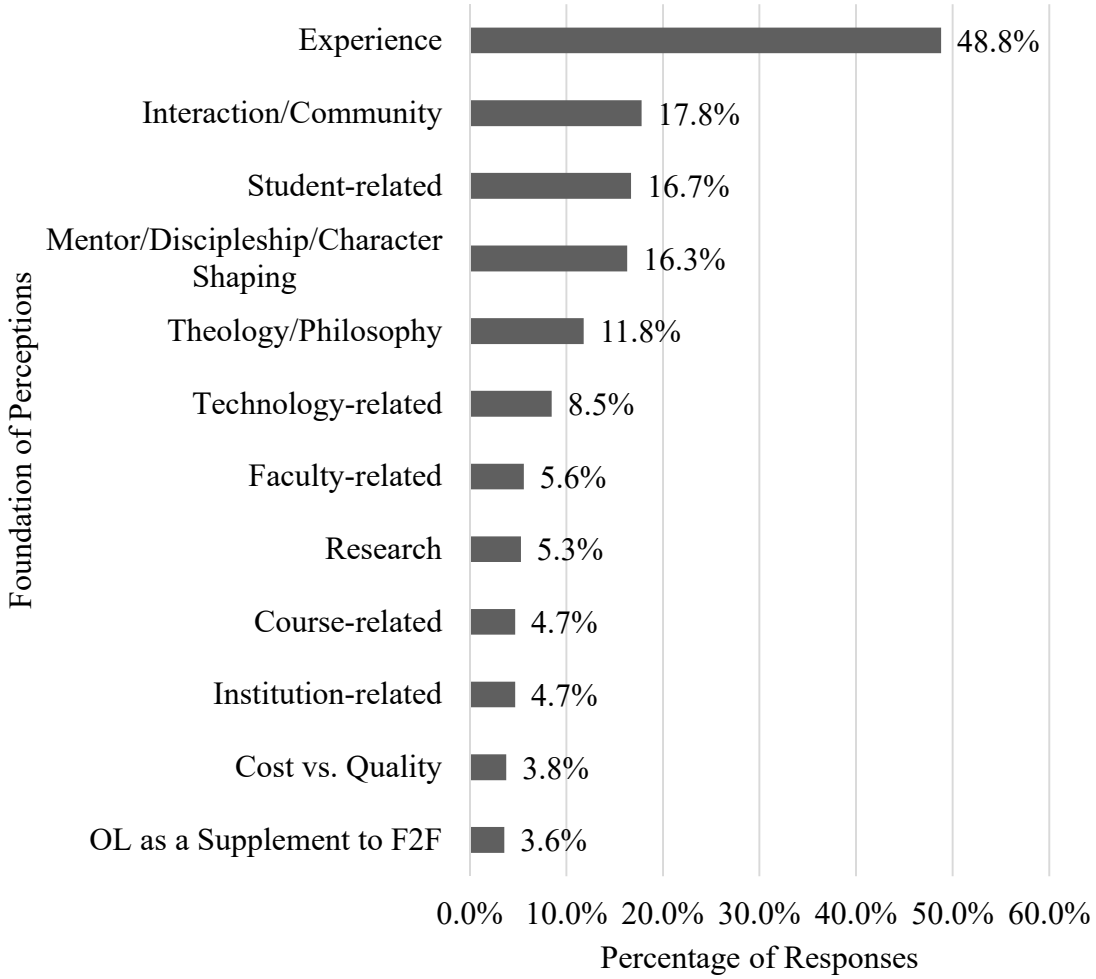

Figure 21. Foundation of respondent's beliefs about online education

By far, the most common response among evangelical faculty about what forms their beliefs and perceptions about online learning was their experience with it (48.8 percent). Representative responses illustrate that experience was the foundation of their beliefs.

1. I was an opponent of online theological education until I actually tried it. I was able to parallel what I did the classroom using new teaching methods online. In fact, I'd say teaching online, having to become more innovative in delivery and engagement with students, improved my face-to-face classes, e.g. use of videos, more informed discussions, creative assignments, etc. rather than depending strongly on lecture. I've seen it work. I'm a convert. HOWEVER, this all depends on the professor, student, and the tech platform (the program); which is somewhat the case for face-to-face classes as well. I see no danger to online education that we don't face in a residential class.
2. "As one who has been part of both online and residential theological education, both as student and professor, personal experience forms the basis for my responses."
3. "I've experimented with online educational components since the 1990s, and have taught online courses in multiple formats. These experiences have strongly shaped my perceptions of the capabilities of the medium."

Respondents also indicated that the amount of interaction or community that the online medium allows formed the foundation of their beliefs. This particular response, as well as the theme of mentor/discipleship/character shaping, indicate a pedagogical assumption that these elements should be present for successful education. Representative responses indicating that interaction/community formed the foundations of their opinions about online learning include the following:

1. "There is nothing like a community in the classroom for true theological and pastoral education. On-line education is a highly secondary option for the convenience of students."
2. "I taught online courses at the previous school I was at. While it was an effective modality for communicating content, I found that it was less than satisfactory when it came to the domains of interpersonal skill development, personal formation, spiritual formation, being able to reflect on the lives of those they minister to, and creating community—all domains that are critical to my teaching fields. My experience with online courses and blended courses is that students do not know how to "defer to each other" and wait to see how the discussion develops. Rather there is always a student who has to be publically taken to task (not the best teaching technique) for giving an encyclopedic answer that reveals everything they do (and do not) understand but which has the chilling effect of limiting input from other students."
3. "The inability to form a truly meaningful community is a hindrance. This could be mitigated by increased use of a hybrid model that requires some level of on-campus involvement."

Respondents indicated some student-related comments that shaped the foundation of the beliefs and perceptions about online education. This included both negative and positive student-related comments. The following are representative responses that were coded in this theme:

1. "Technology and the need to reach students and train them. Many will never be able to come to a campus for training due to financial constraints. Near our seminaries, there are not enough church positions for all students. When they are currently on the field, many are reluctant to come to a new place, uproot family and suffer the financial strain for 3-6 years of traditional training. Also, the cyber classroom offers no cost for brick and mortar. There are many advantages but also disadvantages. Finally, most students learn in the FTF environment more readily than online."

2. "Online students are generally do not put the same amount of effort into an online classroom, are not held to the same standards as on campus students, and cannot get sufficient feed back."

3. "I have seen human nature at work in students (myself included) ... very difficult to find the strongly motivated ones that would persevere through an online course of study that would prepare them very well for the work of the ministry."

Respondents also indicated that the theme of mentor/discipleship/character shaping, another pedagogical assumption of theological education, formed the foundations of their perceptions of online education. This theme was closely related to interaction/community, but emphasized more of the ability for the instructor to have personal involvement in shaping the student, rather than just simply interacting with the student. Representative responses include the following:

1. "I teach toward pastoral formation. Online education can effectively teach content. It cannot form pastors, whose life will be ministering to people not computer screens. It also does not build a collegial ministeria."

2. "Theological Education is not just information transference, it is discipleship and discipleship cannot be done at a distance."

3. "Community, mentoring and relationships are foundational components for ministry -- those are hard to shape without interaction and relationship. Of greater concern to me, though, is that learning is active and my teaching style is more dialogical. I need to read students to be able to teach them -- my objectives are firm, but my presentation adjusts to meet the student where they are."

As evangelical faculty, respondents did include some responses which indicated that their theology or philosophy formed the foundation of their beliefs and

perceptions about online education. The following are representative responses illustrating this theme:

1. "Pedagogical and theological convictions form the foundation of my perspective regarding online education. Pedagogically, there are dynamics available to classroom instruction that are impossible to replicate in the online environment (e.g., sensory experiences, issues that arise spontaneously in classroom discussion, connecting subject material to contemporary events). I believe that on-line education subverts the essentially incarnational and sacramental nature of the Christian Gospel, which includes the transmission of the Gospel itself."
2. "The incarnation of God in Jesus, the Christ. Presence matters."

Survey question 21. Survey respondents were asked, "Do you believe that online education is a benefit to graduate-level theological education?" Response choices for this question were limited to either "yes" or "no." Findings from this question reveal that 75.6 percent of faculty believe online education to be a benefit, and only 24.4 percent indicate that it is not a benefit. From the open-ended text responses in survey question 22, however, it was clear that many respondents qualified their response to this binary question indicating that there were many limitations to online education though it is still a benefit.

Survey question 22 (open-ended). Participants were asked to explain their response to survey question 21 indicating why they did or why they did not believe online education to be a benefit to theological education. In this open-ended question, the following themes were found after being analyzed: Accessibility, Supplemental to Face-to-Face, Inferior to Face-to-Face, and Institutional-related considerations.

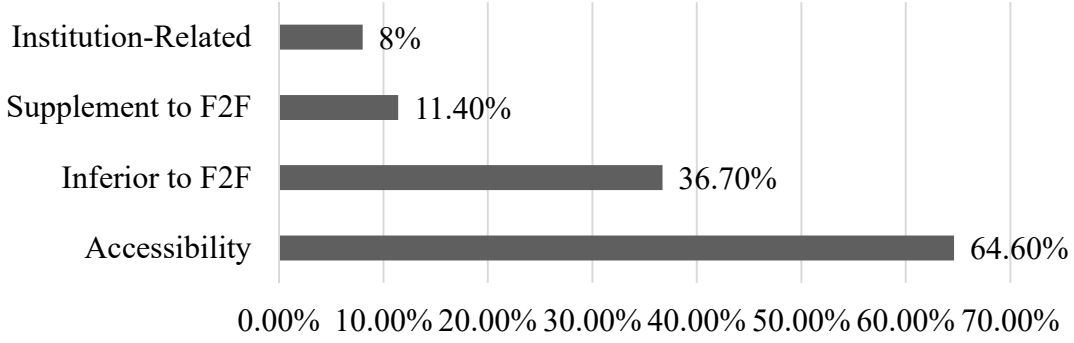

Figure 22. Benefit to theological education: Explanation themes

Overwhelmingly, the standard response to this follow-up question (regardless of the respondent's response to survey question 21) was that online education can provide access to those who could not otherwise receive it, but all things considered, it has more limitations than face-to-face education. Many participants felt the need to indicate that they did not want to select either "yes" or "no" to this question because they had serious qualifications to make about online education. The following comments represent this divided response:

1. "I wanted to say yes and no. It is a benefit in extending the reach of theological education to those who could not otherwise access it. It is a detriment in allowing those who could access face to face education to take a more convenient but less beneficial route."

2. "Unfortunately, question #21 cannot really be answered so simply as "yes" or "no." I think it can be of benefit to those who cannot get theological education locally (to their ministry area). However, I think that online education, overall, detracts from ministerial development as it feeds a culture that tries to connect virtually and has difficulty with true interpersonal relations."

3. "It is difficult to answer this question. Yes, of course it is of benefit in that more students have access to graduate-level theological education. But I think it has the potential to do more damage than good in that students who would benefit from a face-to-face education take the path of least resistance and receive a sub-par theological education."

4. I wish you had offered an option for "Not sure." What kind of "benefit" did you have in mind? Convenience, yes. Quality, good but not the best.

While the divided response was the most common, themes within these responses can be parsed into these topics: (1) accessibility for students who could not relocate to campus, (2) the opinion that online education should only supplement, not replace, face-to-face education, (3) the perception that online education is of less quality than face-to-face education, and (4) an institutional-related issue either causes or prohibits the benefit of online education for theological education. The following experts provide examples of each theme found in the responses.

Evangelical faculty noted the importance of accessibility for students who could not relocate to campus.

1. "I sat in a Starbucks in Beijing, China and taught my class back in the US online. It frees my schedule, it frees the student's schedule; and my institution is already

designing programs to be offered in China via online delivery, supporting the church on the other side of the planet. I believe in online education."

2. "What the online mode does is allow people to be actively engaged in their faith community, being mentored rather than ripping them out and putting them in a foreign context without any such support."

3. "We can reach students that otherwise could not receive such a training. In this way, we can impact churches all around the globe."

4. "It allows graduate education to occur in the context of the student's life, rather than the student reordering life to accommodate education."

Evangelical faculty desired to supplement online education with face-to-face.

1. "It is a good augmentation; but there are elements of classical education that it can never replace. Online only degrees should be clearly distinguished from residential degrees."

2. "Yes, but face to face is still preferable. Online education is better than nothing but can never match in person education."

3. "Certainly, as a collateral means of education, online courses (and, perhaps, programs) could contribute to graduate-level theological education by means of supplementing it with the unique online learning opportunities that it affords. Still, it seems to me that "stand-alone" online programs can only degrade graduate-level theological education."

Evangelical faculty tended to indicate that online courses were inferior to face-to-face.

1. "Does not model the discipleship model. A lot of communication is transmitted in non-verbal forms, we miss this. A call in counseling program is great for someone considering suicide, but it is not a format to counsel someone and change their lives. An on-line learning model should supplement or be an entry to in person learning."

2. "It may disseminate more knowledge, more broadly, but theological education is about the formation of the whole person. There is nothing like face to face encounter with students."

3. "Because pastors will pastor real people in real places. Congregations will be present in time and space. So, to pastor people, it's best to actually be with people, face-to-face, eye-to-eye."

Evangelical faculty also had institution-related considerations.

1. "It is of benefit in that it provides much needed finances for on campus programs."

2. "It is a culturally shaped form of education. If we do not do it, we will not have students."

3. "As noted above, without an online component, you shut yourself off from the student base. Admins, however, look at online as a "cash cow" and often do not understand the financial and personnel commitment to start up the program. Faculty

also need better training in "learner centered" education and how it differs from the traditional "teacher centered" model."

Research Question 2: Perceptions of the Future of Online Learning

What do evangelical faculty perceive about the future of online learning in graduate-level theological education? Evangelical faculty responded to survey questions related to the future of online education in order to answer this research question. Additionally, evangelical faculty participated in a focus group that addressed the same topic. The findings explained in this section reveal their perceptions of the future of online education in theological education.

Findings of Future Perceptions

Survey question 10a. Respondents were asked to respond to the following question, "What are your opinions about the future of online education?" Specifically, they were to rate on a 5-point Likert scale their agreement with two statements. The first statement was "Online education will continue to grow in theological education." Responses from participants indicated a large majority of agreement of strong agreement with this statement. In fact, 46.2 percent of respondents strongly agreed and 48.4 percent of respondents agreed. This left only 3.9 percent who responded neutral, 1.1 percent who responded disagree, and 0.4 percent who responded strongly disagree. Thus, a mean of 4.38 with a standard deviation of +/- 0.66, which indicates general agreement that online education will continue to grow in theological education.

Survey question 10b. Less of a strong consensus was found in the responses to question 10b, which asked respondents to rate on a 5-point Likert scale their agreement with the statement, "Online courses will increase in quality." Evangelical faculty were generally agreeable with this statement, but with less enthusiasm as indicated in their response to question 10a. The findings indicate that 25.7 percent strongly agreed, 39.7

percent agreed, 20.3 percent were neutral, 12.2 percent disagreed, and only 2.2 percent strongly disagreed.

Survey question 19. Participants were also asked, "In 10 years, do you think online education will be better at achieving the goals of theological education?" Narrowing from the general course quality in question 10b, this question specifically inquired into the goals of theological education. Response choices for this question were limited to either "yes" or "no." Findings from this question reveal that 70.5 percent of faculty believe online education will be better at achieving the goals of theological education, and only 29.5 percent indicate that it will not get better.

Age ($p = 0.0146$) and holding an administrative role ($p = 0.0025$) both had a statistically significant influence on responses to this question. Respondents in age brackets 25-34 and 55+ tended more toward 80 percent yes and 20 percent no. Respondents in the age bracket 35-54 tended towards 60 percent yes and 40 percent no. Administrative faculty were more inclined to have a positive response (77.7 percent yes and 22.3 percent no) than the non-administrative faculty (64.7 percent yes and 35.5 percent no).

Focus group question 5. Focus group participants were given the data from survey question 10a and 19 and were asked, "Why do faculty who believe online learning will not improve in achieving the goals of theological education still think it will grow in the future?" The discussion resulting from this question had three common themes in the responses: Technological Advancements, Financial Motives, and Missional Motives. The following provides a description of each theme as well as representative comments from the focus group participants.

1. Technological Advancements: Participants answered that these faculty may be optimistic about growth regardless of online learning's ability to achieve the goals of theological education due to the fact the technology will advance.
    a. "Online learning will growth because of technological advancements."
    b. "I was going to add that its because generally and globally technology is growing."

2. Financial Motives: Participants answered that these faculty may be optimistic about growth regardless of online learning's ability to achieve the goals of theological education due to the fact that institutions are financially motivated to continue with online education.
    a. "I think some of them have a little bit of pessimism that it will not improve but at the same time say it is going to keep growing because a lot of school starting in OL thinking it would be a cash cow."
    b. "I don't want to sound cynical, but I agree... It is seen as a money maker, a way to increase revenue."

3. Missional Motives: Participants answered that these faculty may be optimistic about growth regardless of online learning's ability to achieve the goals of theological education due to the missional motive of institutions to reach people with theological education who would not otherwise be able to receive it.
    a. "In theological education will improve and the impact it makes in society through the online opportunities that it offers us."
    b. "The fact is that missionally it allows you to spread you tent a lot further and have a much greater reach into places where people simply do not have [it]."

Focus group question 6. Focus group participants were provided with data cross tabulated from survey question 17b and 19. The data illustrated that those who were more optimistic about online education in the future were also more excited about the changing role of faculty from lecturing to coaching. They were then asked, "Why do you think there a relationship between one's view of teaching style and one's view of online learning's ability to achieve the goals of theological education?"

Participants in the focus groups discussed this question together and came to a consensus that faculty generally perceive the relationship of teaching style to the perception of online learning to be due to the demands of online pedagogy. The idea that online pedagogy requires a different skill set than face-to-face learning, according to these participants, means that faculty need to adapt and learn, which can prove difficult if they have been teaching for a while. As discussed in the focus group, this idea is best represented by the following statement by one of the participants,

> Those who see themselves as guides at the side, facilitators—they are more apt for online education; those who are more sage on the stage—lecturers—they don't feel they can "perform" as well (no insult, there's a difference between listening or reading a sermon and being there for it).

Focus group question 7. Participants were asked a poll question, "Do you think faculty perceptions will improve in the future?" In the first focus group, 100 percent

of participants indicated "yes," while in the second focus group, 88 percent indicated "yes" and 11.1 percent indicated "no." Participants were then asked to follow up their poll response in a discussion of why they did or did not think faculty perception will improve.

Among the participants that indicated "yes" as their poll response, two main themes developed to explain why faculty perceptions would improve: familiarity and results. First, focus group participants believed that faculty would become increasingly familiar with both the technology and pedagogy required to teach online. With the familiarity, they believed, would also come an increased favorability toward online education in general. One participant stated, "As people become more comfortable and familiar with technology, and as they incorporate it into their courses (via LMS platforms, etc.), morale concerning online tools and education will improve."

Second, participants who indicated "yes" also believed that faculty will become more favorable as they see the results of the education in the lives and ministries of the students. One participant indicated, "It is going to improve because more faculty will see the impact on the product of the online learning." This same theme, however, was a point of departure for those who indicated "no" to the initial poll question. These participants believed that the students would not prove to have received a high quality education and therefore faculty perceptions would not increase. One participant articulated this opinion by stating, "I see my students in the classroom now with some skepticism—actually a large degree of skepticism about online education—as students they realize its expedient."

Additionally, those who indicated "no" to the poll question in focus group question 7 explained that theological goals would not be met and therefore faculty perceptions would not improve. One participant said, "I confess that this is maybe my own hope for the future that faculty will stand up and say that this doesn't meet the proper theological goals or maybe we need to revisit what our theological goals are."

Research Question 3: Comparison to Literature

Research question 3 of this study asks, "How do the findings from this study compare to the existing perceptions found in the literature?" The following section summarizes the major themes that answer this question. Themes of comparison roughly follow the literature review major themes: Theological Considerations, Student-Related Issues, Instructor-Related Issues, Institution-Related Issues, and Course-Related Issues.

Theological Considerations

The first topic for comparison between the existing literature on faculty perception of online learning revolves around the opinion of Paul House in *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision* and his article in *Colloquy*, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern."[8] In these works he articulates a strong disdain for online education due to his belief that it does not model the biblical example of discipleship in-person.[9]

To compare evangelical faculty who participated in this research with House's stated beliefs about online education, the survey asked participants to rate theological goals accomplished by online education as well as determine if online education was beneficial to theological education. Additionally, comments gleaned from the focus group allow for further comparison.

Respondents in this research study indicated that they generally believe that the goals of theological education can be achieved in online education, contrary to House's beliefs (see survey question 18). While this is so, respondents do not believe that community can sufficiently be achieved online as House clearly agrees. Again, contrary to House, almost 75 percent of respondents believe theological education to be benefited due to online learning, even if that is with qualification (see survey questions 21 and 22). When asked why they indicated so, 65 percent of participants identified accessibility for

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[8]Paul House, *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision: A Case for Costly Discipleship and Life Together* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), Kindle; Paul House, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern: A Plea for Personal Theological Education," *Colloquy* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 4-6.

[9]Ibid., loc. 1558.

the student as their reason. House clearly believes that this accessibility is not a legitimate reason for offering online education. Within the focus group, one participant stated theological reasons for outright rejection of online education, but his opinion was not the majority belief. Finally, the foundation for the beliefs among these evangelical faculty was more related to experience (48.8 percent) than to theological concerns (11.8 percent), but a biblically-shaped understanding that education should include mentorship and discipleship, which can be difficult online, was also present (16.3 percent).

Therefore, while there are certainly some concerns with online learning among evangelical faculty, namely community leading to mentoring and discipleship, the majority of the respondents still believe that online education is a benefit to theological education due to its ability to give this education to those who would not otherwise receive it.

Student-Related Issues

The next topic of comparison between the existing literature and this current study is in regard to issues related to students. When juxtaposed to the existing literature on both higher education faculty perceptions as well as theologically-minded perceptions, several overlapping ideas can be gleaned: mentoring/character development concerns, interaction/community concerns, and spiritual formation concerns. Each topic is compared to this study's findings.

Mentoring/character development. Existing literature deems mentoring and character development to be difficult in the online medium. In "Ministerial Formation of Theological Students through Distance Education," Marilyn Naidoo is concerned that "the reliability of [a] mentor-student model exists in tension with models of distance education which stress learning as self-directed or of a cooperative venture."[10] Likewise, Steve Delamarter's study of faculty, administrators, and IT personnel from forty-three

[10]Marilyn Naidoo, "Ministerial Formation of Theological Students through Distance Education," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 68, no. 2 (June 2012): 3.

ATS accredited schools indicated that there was likewise concern that mentoring and character development was difficult and maybe even impossible in online education.[11]

Along these lines, survey question 18f asked participants to rate their agreement with the statement, "Online education can prepare students' character and ability as leaders." Evangelical faculty were generally in disagreement with this specific statement. Further, in survey question 22, "What forms the foundations of your beliefs and perceptions about online education?" 16.3 percent of respondents indicated "mentor/ discipleship/character shaping" comments as some of their foundational beliefs. Therefore, it is of great concern to the participants of the study, but as seen in survey question 18f, they are generally pessimistic of the ability to mentor through online education. These findings confirm the concerns about successful mentoring as illustrated in the existing literature.

Interaction/community. Christian educators and secular educators alike recognize that community and interaction impact learning in the online classroom. In *Best Practices of Online Education: A Guide for Christian Higher Education*, community and interaction are seen as necessities for a successful online course.[12] It is also seen as the primary means of instigating spiritual formation for students. [13] Mark Heinemann's study concluded that students from ATS-accredited seminaries believed to have received sufficient interaction from their instructors.[14] Finally, a study conducted by Elmer Shelby, Tony Sanchez, and Judy Lambert concluded that the majority of concerns for online faculty

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[11]Steve Delamarter, "Theological Educators and Their Concerns about Technology," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 8, no. 3 (July 2005): 137.

[12]Mark A. Maddix, "Developing Online Learning Communities," in *Best Practices for Online Education: A Guide for Christian Higher Education*, ed. Mark A. Maddix, James R. Estep, and Mary E. Lowe (Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2012), 36-37.

[13]Ibid., 58.

[14]Mark H. Heinemann, "Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning in Online Theological Education, Part 4: Findings and Conclusions," *Christian Higher Education* 4 (May 2007): 186.

in ATS schools dealt with educational issues, such as "loss of classroom interaction," "loss of community," and "loss of real-time feedback."[15]

From the secular view of community, R. J. Novak confirms what Maddix et al., propose that interaction is an essential benchmark for a quality online course.[16] Wickersham and McElhany, however, found that faculty "perceived lack of interaction in an online course versus that of a traditional course," though course design may be to blame. Thus, the study from Heinnemann and the study from Wickersham and McElhany seem to be contradictory or, at the minimum, inconclusive as to online learning's ability to achieve quality interaction.

In the present study, evangelical faculty view interaction and community online as debatably possible, but not ideal. Faculty were asked the impact that online education had on their interaction with students. Their response indicated either no impact or a decrease in interaction. Survey question 18d revealed that almost 50 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that online learning could create genuine community for students. When the focus group was asked a follow-up question regarding community, it was clear that the participants believed community to be essential. There was disagreement about what "community" truly meant and whether or not it could be sufficiently achieved in activities such as discussion boards. This divided response to community and interaction online is similar to the contradictory findings in the literature.

Spiritual formation. Closely related to the idea of mentoring and interaction is spiritual formation in theological education. Whereas mentoring and interaction are modes of spiritual formation, spiritual formation in Christian literature is the particular

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[15]Elmer Shelby, Tony Sanchez, and Judy Lambert, "Theological Faculty and the Use of Internet-Based Education: Perceptions and Concerns," *Journal of Liberal Arts and Sciences* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 21.

[16]Richard J. Novak, "Benchmarking Distance Education," *New Directions for Higher Education*, no. 118 (Summer 2002): 82.

maturity that a Christian goes through as he or she is made more into the image of Christ.[17] While there is difficulty perceived by faculty in the literature and in the current study in regard to mentoring and interaction, their perception of a student's ability to be spiritually formed in online education is more optimistic.

Spiritual formation is clearly of great importance in theological education according. ATS criteria for an accredited M.Div. must include spiritual formation.[18] In "The Theology of Theological Education," Brian Edgar discusses four categories of theological schools, the first, attributed to David Kelsey, having the "primary goal of . . . the transformation of the individual."[19] Further, Leroy Ford identifies the affective learning goals as the means by setting out to achieve spiritual formation within the classroom. [20]

According to this present study, evangelical faculty were generally in agreement with the statement, "Online education can foster students' spiritual development." This is surprising given the lack of confidence in online learning's ability to produce mentoring relationships and character development, as seen previously. Likewise, as seen previously, spiritual development is considered possible in spite of the lack of confidence in community creation. This leads me to speculate the possibility that spiritual development and the professors' involvement in that process are not necessarily related. Respondents believe that spiritual development, perhaps through the online resources, can still happen, even if community and mentoring are not of great abundance.

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[17]James Riley Estep et al., *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 247.

[18]The Association of Theological Schools, "Degree Program Standards."

[19]Brian Edgar, "Editorial: The Theology of Theological Education," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29 (July 2005): 209.

[20]LeRoy Ford, *A Curriculum Design Manual for Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 111-14.

Self-directed learning ability. Wickersham and McElhany found that faculty did not believe their online students to have "ability to be self-directed in learning, as many students perceive online learning to be 'easy.'"[21] This skill was understood to be essential since online students are not under the direct eye of the professor, but must rely on their own time-management and motivation to accomplish the work of an online course. While this present study did not directly ask this question of evangelical faculty, survey question 17a found that evangelical faculty perceived less interaction with students. This could lend itself to less motivation on the part of the student to accomplish work to the highest quality possible. Survey question 17b found that evangelical faculty perceived their online students to be as active as their face-to-face students, which would stand contrary to Wickersham and McElhany's study, but in survey question 17c, evangelical faculty perceived online students to be less enthusiastic than face-to-face students.

Instructor-Related Issues

The literature and the present study is compared next regarding instructor-related issues of time/workload and compensation. Each issue was found in the literature as a concern of faculty and was addressed in the survey for this study.

Time/Workload. From developing an online course to answering emails from online students, literature reveals that faculty generally perceive that the workload for an online course takes more time and effort than a face-to-face course. Studies conducted by Wickersham and McElhany as well as Diane Hockridge likewise agree that faculty perceive online education to take more time. Steve Delamarter further notes that faculty believed learning and using technology would take time away from what they considered

[21]Leah E. Wickersham and Julie A. McElhany, "Bridging the Divide: Reconciling Administrator and Faculty Concerns Regarding Online Education," *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* 11, no. 1 (2010): 4-5.

more important. [22] According to the study conducted by Kristen Betts and Amy Heaston, faculty workload was found to have an impact on motivation in online education.[23]

Evangelical faculty were asked to indicate the impact that online education had on their stress level, the number of hours they worked, and their level of productivity. When removing faculty respondents who had no involvement with online learning, the results of these question indicate that faculty believed there to be an increase in stress, an increase in the number of hours worked, and a decrease in productivity. With these findings in consideration—stress, time, and productivity—the faculty in this study seem to fall into the same opinions as found in the existing literature.

Compensation. As seen in the literature, faculty have expressed concern with the compensation provided for teaching online (especially when the increase in time, stress, and a decrease in productivity are perceived). House claims that faculty who teach online are severely underpaid for the amount of work that is required of them.[24] Others express this same perception, indicating that the compensation in relation to workload is not fair or equal.[25] Tabata and Johnsrud also note that developing the online course in addition to delivering an online course adds to the need for higher compensation or alternative incentive.[26]

The evangelical faculty who participated in this research were asked to rate their perception of the statement, "My institution has a fair system of rewarding (either

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[22]Delamarter, "Theological Educators," 132-39.

[23]Kristen Betts and Amy Heaston, "Build It But Will They Teach? Strategies for Increasing Faculty Participation & Retention in Online & Blended Education," *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration* 17, no. 2 (June 2014): 7-8, accessed February 25, 2015, http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer172/betts_heaston172.html.

[24]House, "Hewing to Scripture's Pattern."

[25]Lynn N. Tabata and Linda K. Johnsrud, "The Impact of Faculty Attitudes toward Technology, Distance Education, and Innovation," *Research in Higher Education* 49, no. 7 (November 2008): 643.

[26]Ibid.

financially or with other incentives) those who develop online course curriculum." The responses were highly neutral, indicating no strong opinion on this matter. Respondents were also asked to rate their opinion of the statement, "My institution has a fair system of paying those who teach an online course." The responses were more agreeable than not, which indicates that the faculty who participated in this study had little complaint about the compensation related to online learning at their institution, unlike the opinions shown in literature.

Institution Related Issues

Administration versus Faculty Opinions. Two studies in the existing literature compared administrator perceptions to faculty perceptions, Allen and Seaman in "Conflicted"[27] and Wilson's "Faculty and Administrator Attitudes and Perceptions."[28] Both studies revealed that administrators tended to be more optimistic about online education than faculty.

In this study about evangelical faculty, a demographic question allowed for cross tabulation amongst faculty who held administrative roles in addition to their faculty role and those who did not. While this demographic does not assess purely administrators who did not have faculty roles, it can indicate some point of comparison with the literature. In general, faculty who also held administrative positions were more optimistic about online education than their non-administrative counterparts.[29] This confirms the two earlier studies listed.

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[27]Allen and Seaman, "Conflicted."

[28]Wilson, "Faculty and Administrator Attitudes and Perceptions," 54.

[29]See survey questions 9a, 9b, 9d, 9f, 12b, 13c, 14a, 15a, 15e, 16a, 16c, 16e, 17b, 18a, 18c, 18d, 18e, and 18f findings.

Support for Faculty. The literature review divided support for faculty into three categories: administrative support, pedagogical support, and technological support. The literature concerning these three categories is summarized in this section and then compared to the findings of the present research.

Multiple studies[30] found that faculty perceived a gap in their understanding and ability to accomplish what was expected of them in their online courses. Wickersham and McElhany found that faculty were "concerned about quality [of online courses] and they desire to know more about how to achieve that quality."[31] This study indicates that faculty were not intentionally aloof in relation to their online course, but rather, ill-prepared to accomplish this instruction with high quality. This point can be evaluated by examining the faculty development specifically for online education.

Evangelical faculty in this study were asked to rate their perception of statements regarding online faculty development and face-to-face faculty development. The clear response trend indicated that these faculty were more confident about the training they received for face-to-face instruction than the training they received for online instruction. In the focus groups, participants were asked, "Why do faculty perceive that faculty development for teaching online is of lesser quality in their institutions? Is it the institution? Is it that faculty are not attending?" Themes emerging from this discussion included (1) institutional underestimate the need for faculty development specifically for online instruction and (2) online instruction takes greater skill than face-to-face instruction and therefore may need even more faculty development than face-to-face instruction. Thus, the faculty in this study found commonality with the existing literature in regard to faculty development.

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[30]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 4-5; Jomon Aliyas Paul and Justin Daniel Cochran, "Key Interactions for Online Programs Between Faculty, Students, Technologies, and Educational Institutions a Holistic Framework," *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 56.

[31]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 4-5.

Lack of Clarity on Evaluations. The literature further revealed a dissatisfaction about the evaluation of the online courses performed by the institution. According to the survey conducted by Lesley Hathorn and John Hathorn, faculty were discontent with the standards of evaluation and believed that more content-related standards ought to be in place.[32]

Participants in the present research were asked to respond to the statement "My institution has a clear process for evaluating the quality of online instruction," and the findings revealed a general, but not strong, agreement with the statement. They were further asked to respond to the statement "My institution has a clear process for evaluating the quality of face-to-face instruction," and findings revealed a stronger agreement than the previous statement. Thus, evangelical faculty in this study perceived online course evaluations to be less clear than the evaluations of face-to-face courses. These results find some agreement with the literature in that institutions offering online courses and programs can seek improvements to the evaluation of online courses.

Course-Related Issues

Quality/Learning Outcomes. In their study, Allen and Seaman found that faculty generally believed achievement of online course outcomes were inferior to those of face-face course outcomes.[33] They have conflicted opinions (either agree or disagree) about online education's potential to be as effective in "helping students learn."[34] Wickersham and McElhany's found that faculty were not pleased with the quality of their online courses.[35] Likewise, Heaston and Betts found that quality of the course design was

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[32]Lesley Hathorn and John Hathorn, "Evaluation of Online Course Websites: Is Teaching Online a Tug-of-War?" *Journal of Educational Computing Research* 42, no. 2 (January 2010): 197-217.

[33]Allen and Seaman, "Conflicted," 9.

[34]Ibid., 13.

[35]Wickersham and McElhany, "Bridging the Divide," 4-5.

an inhibitor to faculty involvement in online learning.[36]

Addressing perceptions regarding quality of online courses, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, "Online education can be as effective in helping students learn as face-to-face education." Although divided, the results of this survey question indicate faculty were more in disagreement with this statement than agreement. Faculty were further asked to identify their beliefs about the following statement: "I believe that learning outcomes in online courses are superior to learning outcomes in face-to-face courses." Responses were heavily in disagreement. In survey question 22, participants were asked to explain their response to survey question 21 (Do you believe that online education is a benefit to graduate-level theological education?). While almost 75 percent of participants indicated "yes" to survey question 21, 36.7 percent of participants qualified their answer indicating that they perceived online courses to be inferior to face-to-face courses. Therefore, when compared to the existing literature, this present research found that similar hesitations about the quality of online education exist among evangelical faculty.

Studies with Faculty in Theological Education

In addition to the many studies of higher education faculty perceptions of online learning, the literature review in this thesis also found relevant studies of the perceptions of faculty who taught at theological institutions about online learning. While these studies were not evangelical faculty in particular, the trends found in these studies prove comparable to those in the present research.

Delamarter. In the summary of his study, "Theological Educators and their Concerns about Technology," Steven Delamarter lists multiple concerns that theological educators (both faculty and administrators) had about distance education. Many of the

[36]Betts and Heaston, "Build It But Will They Teach?," 7-8.

concerns still resonate with evangelical faculty today. Table 6 summarizes the comparison between Delamarter's study and this present study:

Table 6. Summary of comparison between Delamarter and Ferguson

Delamarter	Ferguson	Summary of Comparison
Technology requires a lot of time and much of it ends up being open-ended and ongoing.[37]	Survey Question 15b	Evangelical faculty similarly perceive that teaching online increases that number of hours worked.
Faculty would lose copyright control of their original materials.[38]	Survey Question 13c	Evangelical faculty are neutral on the issue of the protection of intellectual property.
People who have spent a lot of years working out one way of teaching can't or don't' want to do it all over again with technology.[39]	Focus Group Question 2	Participants indicated a fear of the "learning curve" required to transition from face-to-face instruction to online instruction.
Is it even possible to teach certain courses in other then residential, face-to-face classrooms?[40]	Focus Group Question 1 Survey Question 22	Many evangelical faculty wanted to qualify their answers to say some courses might not work online.
You can't do mentoring and character development and spiritual formation online.[41]	Survey Question 18c Survey Question 20	Evangelical faculty had high concerns about the ability of online education to allow for mentoring and character development, but they were more confident in it's ability to allow for spiritual formation.

[37]Delamarter, "Theological Educators," 132.

[38]Ibid., 134.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., 136.

[41]Ibid., 137.

Shelby, Sanchez, and Lambert. Elmer Shelby, Tony Sanchez, and Judy Lambert's study, "Theological Faculty and the Use of Internet-Based Education: Perceptions and Concerns," found that the majority of concerns dealt with educational issues such as "loss of classroom interaction," "loss of community," and "loss of real-time feedback."[42] It further found that among theological faculty in this study were institution-related issues such as workload, compensation, time, and training.[43]

Many of these concerns still exist for the evangelical faculty in this present study. Survey question 17a indicates that faculty perceive less interaction from their online students. Survey question 18d shows that evangelical faculty are not persuaded that community can be fostered online. Survey question 17d similarly discovers that evangelical faculty do not feel they can provide the quality of feedback online as they can in face-to-face courses. Further, evangelical faculty, similar to the faculty in the Shelby, Sanchez, and Lambert study, believed online learning to take more time and need more training (survey questions 12b and 15b). They did not feel unfairly compensated (survey question 13a and b), but certainly had many of the same concerns as the faculty in the Shelby, Sanchez, and Lambert study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings in this chapter represent the opinions and perceptions of the evangelical faculty in the Evangelical Theological Society. The perceptions about the current state of online education, the future state of online education, and a comparison to the literature was detailed. The following chapter provides implications and conclusions drawn from the findings of this explanatory sequential study.

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[42]Shelby, Sanchez, and Lambert, "Theological Faculty," 21.

[43]Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Existing literature demonstrates the need for faculty perceptions to be researched and understood in regard to online education. Until now, studies have not adequately revealed evangelical faculty perceptions about online learning in theological education. This mixed methods study was conducted to fulfill this need. A survey and follow-up focus group were the primary means of collecting the necessary data. After analyzing the findings in chapter 4, this chapter provides the reader with the implications of the findings, a summary of how this research contributes to the existing literature, recommendations for practice, and suggestions for future research.

Research Questions

The intent of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to determine evangelical faculty perceptions about online learning in graduate-level theological education. The following questions guided the research:

1. What are evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning in graduate-level theological education?
2. What do evangelical faculty perceive of the future of online learning in graduate-level theological education?
3. How do the findings from this study compare to the existing perceptions found in the literature?

Research Implications

The data gained from this research study resulted in the following implications with regard to evangelical faculty perceptions of online education:

1. Evangelical faculty are generally satisfied with their institutions' involvement with online education, but feel underdeveloped by their institution to teach online.

2. Evangelical faculty believe that their own involvement with online education has made their job more difficult, though they still believe online education to be a benefit to theological education.

3. Evangelical faculty feel disconnected from their online students, but still want students to be able to access theological education online.

4. Evangelical faculty believe their online courses to be inferior to their face-to-face courses.

5. Evangelical faculty believe that online theological education meets the goals of theological education, but theological education online is weak in community and character development.

6. Evangelical faculty with administrative roles are more supportive of online education than evangelical faculty without administrative roles.

7. Evangelical faculty are sure that online theological education will continue to grow in the future.

8. Evangelical faculty believe that online education will be better at achieving the goals of theological education in 10 years.

9. Evangelical faculty had many of the same concerns as faculty in higher education, but distinctly articulated a passion to provide theological education to students who otherwise could not access this education.

10. Evangelical faculty had many of the same concerns as faculty in higher education, but distinctly stressed the importance of a faculty member's ability to have meaningful personal interaction with the students.

Research Question 1: Current Perceptions

Research Implication 1: Evangelical faculty are generally supportive of their institutions' involvement with online education, but feel underdeveloped in teaching online. Participants in this study indicated that they believed online education to be of high quality at their own institutions (survey question 9a) and affirmed that their institution was not pushing too much instruction online (survey question 9c). These perceptions highlight the faculty's general support of online instruction. While these findings are the case, participants in this study also indicated that the training and faculty development that they received for teaching online (survey question 12b) was not as high quality as training received for teaching face-to-face (survey question 12a). In the follow-up focus group, participants explained that this lack of training may be caused by the institution's underestimation of the difficulty and skills needed to teach online.

As discovered in the cross tabulation between survey question 12b and survey question 9a, the data reveals faculty who believed that their institution had high quality online instruction also tended to agree that online education can be as effective in helping students learn as face-to-face education. This may be indicative of the potential effectiveness that high quality faculty development may have on student learning and faculty perception of effective teaching.

Therefore, this study reveals that faculty are generally supportive of the online instruction at their institution in the quality and the quantity in which it is offered. This perception, however, does not mean that faculty believe themselves to be excelling in their online instruction. These findings combine to suggest that institutions do not necessarily need to scale back on their online education involvement, but perhaps increase the amount of training and development that faculty receive to teach online. Doing so, as seen in the cross tabulation, may result in a higher satisfaction among faculty in the effectiveness of online education in helping students learn.

Research Implication 2: Evangelical faculty believe that their own involvement with online education has made their job more difficult, though they still believe online education to be a benefit to theological education. Responses in the survey and in the focus group revealed a general frustration among faculty about their online instruction. These frustrations centered around lack of interaction with students (survey questions 15d and 22), not having the pedagogical or technological skills proficient enough for online instruction (focus group question 3), and a sense that online instruction raises stress, takes longer, and results in less productivity (survey questions 15a, 15b, and 15c). Participants, however, still firmly indicated that online education is a benefit to theological education (survey question 21). Their reasons for this belief, regardless of their own frustrations, is due to the ability of online education to equip students who would otherwise not have access to theological education (survey question 22).

Therefore, online education ought not be disregarded or dismantled even though there are legitimate frustrations for the faculty. The motive to provide theological education to students who would not be able to come to campus is stronger than the frustrations faculty have with teaching online. The answer to this quandary does not seem to be to abolish online education, but to assist faculty with online education to minimize their frustrations as much as possible.

Research Implication 3: Evangelical faculty feel disconnected from their online students, but still want students to be able to access theological education online. "Interaction," "community," and "mentorship opportunities" were common weaknesses of online education found by the participants of this study. In regard to the online students, faculty expressed a common feeling of disconnection to their online students. Survey question 17 asked faculty to rate several statements about their online students. The findings indicated that evangelical faculty interacted less with online students than face-to-face students, perceived their online students to be less enthusiastic than their face-to-face students, and believed that they could not provide the quality of feedback that they could to face-to-face students. Additionally, the open-text complaints about interacting with and mentoring students online further confirmed this feeling of disconnect (survey question 20 and 22).

Although they feel disconnected, evangelical faculty also believed that online education was of value to students as they could access this education "from any place in the world" (survey question 17e). When asked why faculty believed online education to be a benefit to theological education, "access" was by far the most frequent reason listed (survey question 22).

Therefore, evangelical faculty are generally dissatisfied with the amount of interaction and connection that they have with their online students, especially when compared to their face-to-face courses. This fault, however, is not enough to override the benefit that faculty believe online education brings to students who cannot otherwise

receive the education. Thus, helping faculty find new and better ways to interact with their online students must be of utmost importance in online theological education.

Research Implication 4: Evangelical faculty believe their online courses to be inferior to their face-to-face courses. Participants believed that online education was not as effective in helping students learn as face-to-face education (survey question 9a). They certainly do not believe that online learning outcomes are superior to face-to-face course learning objectives (survey question 14a). Rather, in the open-text responses to survey question 22, many participants indicated that they believed that the online courses were inferior to face-to-face courses.

Among other possible reasons for this frustration, a lack of interaction and ability to mentor was expressed by the faculty as indicated in research implication 3. Focus group participants believed that a lack of understanding about online pedagogy and a lack of help from the institution in developing the courses contributed to this opinion. Therefore, both the distance between faculty and student as well as insufficient help and skill may contribute to this opinion.

Research Implication 5: Evangelical faculty believe that online theological education can achieve the goals of theological education, but theological education online is weak in community and character development. Survey question 18a reveals that participants generally agreed with the opinion that online education can achieve the goals of theological education. Although they believed that it achieves the goals in general, survey questions 18b through 18f asked participants to rate their opinions about the specific goals of theological education as indicated in ATS standards for the M.Div. Responses to these questions were divided. Spiritual formation and engaging culture were perceived as strengths in online education, while community and character development were perceived as weaknesses.

Therefore, evangelical faculty had a general support for online theological education, but found weaknesses particularly in the interactive aspects of online

education. These interactive aspects, they believe, are vitally important to theological education, but did not deter them from generally believing online learning can achieve the goals of theological education.

Research Implication 6: Evangelical faculty with administrative roles are more supportive of online education than evangelical faculty without administrative roles. In this study, 55.8 percent of respondents did not hold an administrative role in addition to the faculty role, while 44.2 percent of respondents did in fact hold an administrative role. This demographic proved to be statistically significant for multiple questions. Faculty holding an administrative position were in stronger agreement (15.8 percent "strongly agree" and only 11.8 percent "strongly disagree") that online education can be as effective in helping students learn as face-to-face education than their non-administrative counterparts (9 percent "strongly agree," but 23.4 "strongly disagree"). Non-administrative faculty were more skeptical of other institutions' involvement with online learning (21.1 percent of non-administrative faculty "strongly agree," but only 8.9 percent of administrative faculty "strongly agree"). More non-administrative faculty felt that their institution was pushing too much online education (30.9 percent "agree" and 27.3 percent "disagree") than administrative faculty (19.2 percent "agree" and 38.9 percent "disagree").

When rating perception of online learning in theological education, administrative faculty tended to be more optimistic about the ability of online education to meet the goals of theological education. Survey question 18 indicates this optimism. Administrative faculty were more agreeable that the goals of theological education were met online (43.8 percent "agree") than their non-administrative counterparts (34 percent "agree"). Administrative faculty were in fact more agreeable with every specific goal of theological education listed in survey question 18b-f than their non-administrative counterparts. Furthermore, administrative faculty more readily believe that online theological education will improve in ten years and is a benefit to theological education in general.

Therefore, administrative faculty in this study statistically tended to perceive online theological education with greater support and optimism than their non-administrative counterparts. Given that there were almost as many administrative faculty as non-administrative faculty, these findings hold firm. As indicated in chapter 1 of this thesis, other studies likewise find that administrators tend to be more supportive of online education.[1] Evangelical faculty holding administrative roles confirm this finding from the literature as indicated in this study.

RQ 2: Future Perceptions

Research Implication 7: Evangelical faculty are sure that online theological education will continue to grow in the future, but have divided feelings about that growth. Respondents believed that online education will certainly grow in theological education. Survey question 10a indicates a definite belief that online education will continue to grow in theological education exists among evangelical faculty. All participants, however, do not perceive this growth as positive. Survey question 16a reveals that slightly more evangelical faculty view this growth with more fear than excitement. Therefore, faculty expectations are that online education will grow, but many are apprehensive about that growth.

Research Implication 8: Evangelical faculty believe that online education will be better at achieving the goals of theological education in 10 years. Survey question 19 reveals that over 70 percent of the respondents affirm that online education will be better at achieving the goals of theological education in 10 years. This opinion is further supported by survey question 10b, which indicates that faculty believe that online courses will increase in quality. The focus group participants also indicated that this increase in

[1]I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, "Grade Level: Tracking Online Education in the United States," 9, February 2015, accessed February 6, 2015, http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/survey_report/grade-level-tracking-online-education-united-states-2014/. I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, "Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012," Babson Survey Research Group, 2012, 4, accessed February 25, 2015, http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED535214.

quality of online education may be due to technological advancement and faculty's greater familiarity with the online pedagogy.

RQ 3: Comparison to Literature

Research Implication 9: Evangelical faculty had many of the same concerns as faculty in higher education, but distinctly articulated a passion to provide theological education to students who otherwise could not access this education. The motivation to support online education regardless of the many frustrations that faculty indicated was revealed in survey question 21. Although many faculty felt the need to qualify their answer to survey question 21, still over 75 percent of participants indicated that they believed online education to be a benefit to theological education. The repeated reason for their support of online theological education, despite those qualifications, was due to the access it provided to students who would not otherwise receive this education. This was a distinctly prominent reason of support unique to this study.

Research Implication 10: Evangelical faculty had many of the same concerns as faculty in higher education, but distinctly stressed the importance of a faculty member's ability to have meaningful personal interaction with the students. The findings of this study reveal the importance of interaction in theological education. It is through the interaction of student and professor that many faculty believe character development occurs. To shape students' character and interact with them in a personal manner is of great importance to the faculty in this study as revealed in survey questions 15d, 17a, 18d, and 20. While interaction is perceived to be important in other studies,[2] this study reveals a unique importance tied to the personal development of the student's character as tied to discipleship and mentoring.

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[2]Jomon Aliyas Paul and Justin Daniel Cochran, "Key Interactions for Online Programs between Faculty, Students, Technologies, and Educational Institutions a Holistic Framework," *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* 14, no. 1 (2013): 55; Mark H. Heinemann, "Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning in On-Line Theological Education, Part 3: Methodological Approach," *Christian Higher Education* 5 (April 2006): 162.

Contribution of Research to the Precedent Literature

This research fills a void in the existing literature by taking into account the perceptions of evangelical faculty about online learning in graduate-level theological education. Prior to this study, very few empirical studies have been conducted to assess perceptions from even a broadly Christian perspective about online learning in graduate-level theological education. This study now adds to the existing literature data concerning evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning with regard to theological concerns, institution-related concerns, faculty-related concerns, student-related concerns, and course-related concerns.

Further, this research provides future researchers with a survey instrument and effective research method that can be used to discover faculty perceptions about online theological education. As mentioned in the further research section next, a replicated study or adapted studies may utilize this instrument and methodology to acquire new data for an ever-changing educational landscape.

Finally, the conclusions drawn from this research provide Christian (specifically evangelical, as applicable) institutions of theological education with empirical evidence for implementing or adapting online education. Rather than basing all practice on theoretical evidence or text-based research, administrators may refer to this study as a basis for crafting faculty development efforts and evaluation.

Recommendations for Practice

In keeping with the existing literature on administrative and faculty perceptions, this study found that faculty with administrative roles tended to view online education with greater optimism than their non-administrative counterparts (RI6). The potential consequence of this finding is that administrators, who provide the support structures and evaluation methods for faculty, may not have an accurate understanding of their faculty's beliefs, frustrations, and motivators in teaching online. Therefore, institutions and their administrators should seek to discover and respect faculty perceptions about online

learning in order to provide the support and structure needed to teach online. Based on the perceptions of evangelical faculty who participated in this study, the implications of this research, therefore, result in the following recommendations for practice in online theological education.

Perceived Difficulty of Workload

First, this study revealed that faculty believe online education to add stress and hours worked while simultaneously reducing productivity (see survey question 15). While one study revealed that it may not actually take longer to teach online than face-to-face,[3] the findings of this study confirm, however, that faculty *perceive* it to take longer and be more difficult. Faculty in the focus group likewise confirm that the learning curve, technology usage, and interaction methods needed for quality online instruction are laborious. Institutions who want their faculty to feel prepared, supported, and encouraged in their online instruction must respect and account for these perceptions.

Although faculty in this study were largely neutral to their compensation for teaching online, one way to account for the perceived difficulty of online education is to provide a level of compensation that gives faculty incentive to spend the time and effort needed to teach online. If the faculty member perceives online instruction to be more difficult than face-to-face, as this study indicates, but are paid the same or even less for the online instruction, it may be demotivating for faculty to give the extra effort to interact with students. In turn, this may cause lower levels of student learning, online community building, and student spiritual formation. Providing higher compensation to account for the difficulty of teaching online may motivate faculty to lessen this interaction gap and provide higher quality online instruction.

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[3]Rebecca Van de Vord and Korolyn Pogue, "Teaching Time Investment: Does Online Really Take More Time than Face-to-Face?" *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 13, no. 3 (June 2012): 139.

In addition to compensation, providing faculty with the hours needed to teach online is another step toward respecting faculty perceptions about the difficulty of teaching online. Considering online instruction as a part of the faculty load instead of contract or overload will further help faculty devote the appropriate amount of time required to teach online. With more time dedicated to online instruction, faculty can attempt to provide higher quality instruction that accounts for the use of technology to mediate such instruction.

Further, faculty should be aware of and held accountable for quality standards that will promote student learning in online theological education. The difficulty of the medium should not result in a lower quality learning experience for students. Therefore, by helping faculty understand what their particular responsibilities are in teaching online, while also holding them accountable for those responsibilities through evaluation methods, institutions can enable faculty to approach the task of online education confidently.

Theologically Informed Pedagogy

In chapter 2, the debate between those who have theological rationale for opposing online learning and those who provide pedagogical reasoning for supporting online learning continued to speak past one another. Thus, a recommendation for practice when considering evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning in theological education is that theological educators think carefully and biblically about the modern learning environments provided by today's technological capabilities.

Stephen Lowe comments that the gospel breaks down all sorts of separation such as "ethnicity, gender, social status, and distance."[4] If this can be defended biblically, as Lowe attempts, what implications might the gospel have on the pedagogy of a theological institution? Can online education accommodate the needed affective learning

[4]S. D. Lowe, "Building Community and Facilitating Formation in Seminary Distance Education," *Christian Perspectives in Education* 4, no. 1 (2010): 9.

outcomes that LeRoy Ford asserts are essential in theological education?[5] Further, can an online program at a theological institution provide both curricular and extracurricular activities that are sufficient for the preparation of pastors and ministers according to biblical standards, as Diane Hockridge challenges?[6] These considerations and more ought to be engaged by theological educators as they endeavor to excel in offering theological education and ministry preparation to students at a distance.

Motivation to Teach Online

Participants in this study revealed a powerful motivation for providing online education—access for students to theological education. The ability for students to receive theological education, despite the difficulties it is perceived to bring, identifies the high value that faculty attach to theological education. They believe it to be so highly beneficial that it should be accessed in every way possible, even if that means there will be frustrations and less personal interaction with students.

In chapter 2, I reviewed an article from Matthew Ogilvie entitled "Teaching Theology Online." In this article, he redefines what the reader might understand as "distance" and proposes that the unfortunate distance may be the distance between the student and their community of service created when that student leaves to attend class on campus.[7] Institutions can remind faculty that by allowing students to remain in their ministry context, these students can immediately use all that is being learned and apply it in context. Truly considering which "distance" is most costly may be one way to help motivate faculty to invest in their online courses and students.

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[5]LeRoy Ford, *A Curriculum Design Manual for Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 111-14.

[6]Diane Hockridge, "Challenges for Educators Using Distance and Online Education to Prepare Students for Relational Professions," *Distance Education* 34, no. 2 (August 2013): 150-51.

[7]Matthew C. Ogilvie, "Teaching Theology Online," *Australasian eJournal of Theology* 13 (2009): 2-3, accessed July 28, 2015, http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=theo_article. 15.

Institutions can bring this benefit of online education—access—to the forefront of faculty development and training as motivation for excellence. Highlighting student stories, praying for distance students, and allowing students to share ministry experiences will continue to provide encouragement to faculty in their online instruction as they continue to see the impact this education can have worldwide.

Online Faculty Development

Faculty development for online instruction is of great importance, as revealed in this study. Faculty believed their training to be of less quality than that of face-to-face training, but also expressed that they became more stressed and less productive because of their involvement with online education. Further, faculty expressed frustration with their ability to interact with students. These findings all reveal the need for high quality faculty development that not only trains faculty on the technological aspects of online instruction, but equips them pedagogically.

Online pedagogies. Faculty in the focus group acknowledged that online education requires them to reshape and rethink their curriculum in light of the online medium. Therefore, institutions must consider online-specific pedagogical training as vitally important to the success of their online courses. Faculty need not only learn about using the learning management system, but how to minimize the transactional distance between student and professor.

Key changes to the curriculum to accommodate for this transactional distance can lessen the gap between student and professor. Faculty in the focus group mentioned utilizing discussion boards and live class sessions as some of those curriculum changes. Some of these faculty actually believed that with the inclusion of discussion boards in their curriculum some students were more open and transparent with what they would share than their face-to-face students. Changes such as this demonstrate that when the

curriculum considers the online medium, faculty may potentially perceive a more successful learning environment.

Therefore, online-specific faculty development that includes help with developing faculty to understand how to accommodate for the online medium is ideal. Course development assistance and training will help faculty understand the various elements to include in an online course that might otherwise be unnecessary or unplanned in a face-to-face course. With this help, faculty will likely experience greater success in their online teaching.

Technological training. While there is more to online teaching than technology, training faculty in the technology necessary for education to be online cannot be neglected. If faculty do not understand how to use the tool of technology, they cannot be skilled in teaching online. Institutions must not underestimate the difficulty that comes when a traditional, face-to-face faculty member who is used to walking into a physical classroom makes the transition to online instruction. Online faculty need not only to understand the technological basics, but also be at a level of skill in which they are able to reach the student through the technology.

As revealed in the survey and focus group, online instruction comes with many frustrations to faculty due to the foreign nature of the online medium and the transactional distance between student and professor. Many of these frustrations can be alleviated or at least eased by high quality and on-going technological training for online instruction. Proficiency in education technology is an essential aspect of being an online teacher.

Interaction as a Priority

Interaction must be a priority for online theological education. If faculty do not have the motivation, time, or ability to interact with online students regularly and meaningfully, they may not be qualified for teaching online. As indicated in this study,

faculty believe interaction with students to be key to their development and a vital component to theological education.

Mark Heinemann's study on teacher-student interaction may need to be further explored as online theological education continues to grow. His study indicates that "the survey participants, on average, agreed that their instructor adequately facilitated or promoted social, organizational, and intellectual interaction."[8] With this successful finding in consideration, evangelical faculty and their institutions may do well to assess in what areas their own teaching and requirements for teaching compare.

Institutions may aid and encourage faculty in interaction by setting clear expectations for regular interaction. They would also be wise to provide faculty with enough time for that interaction. Training faculty to use the many tools available to them for interacting with students will enhance the various means of communication between faculty and students.

Developing "Community"

Community is of vital importance to theological education in any form, online or face-to-face. Evangelical faculty, however, were divided about whether or not community was successfully created online. As recommended in the focus group, further definition of "community" in theological institutions is needed. In fact, as online faculty attempt to create community amongst their students in an online environment, the essential aspects of community perceived by some, such as physical presence, may be challenged.

With a somewhat undefined notion of "community" in mind, faculty in the focus group found that community could be generated through online discussions. As noted, some believed that their students were more open and transparent in an online environment than they were in a face-to-face environment. Admittedly, online learning

[8]Mark H. Heinemann, "Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning in Online Theological Education, Part 4: Findings and Conclusions," *Christian Higher Education* 4 (May 2007): 186, accessed February 7, 2015, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=33h-1E3C8016-823ECAEE&site=ehost-live.

lacks spontaneous community which can be found in the hallways of any brick and mortar institution; however, through planned activities and extra-curricular activities, online students may be able to foster community online.

One challenge resulting from this study would be to encourage educators and theologians to work jointly to develop a theory of community for theological education that takes account of the modern education delivery systems. Similar to the "Community of Inquiry" designed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer.[9] From this theologically-grounded theory of community, online course designers and instructors could aim at a biblical model for community in every course.

Further, by considering the role the church community plays in the discipleship and education of every minister of the gospel, the community theory of online learning may also include the extracurricular assumption of church involvement and curricular engagement through activities and assessments. As noted, Ogilvie's "Teaching Theology Online" challenges the reader to examine an alternate perspective where lessening the distance between student and his or her ministry context is more important than lessening the distance between student and institution. Thus, if online educators can build a biblical community of education while also allowing students to invest further in their existing ministry community, online education can provide for the needs of not only students, but also the churches and community in which they serve.

Evaluation of Research Design

This section describes the evaluation of the research design, including any improvements or changes that would need to be made for future studies. Generally, this research design was highly successful in discovering the proposed research questions. With that in mind, key strengths and weaknesses to the research design are discussed next.

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[9]D. R. Garrison, T. Anderson, and W. Archer, "Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education Model," *The Internet and Higher Education* 2, nos. 2-3 (2000): 87-105.

Strengths of Research Design

The immense amount of data that this research design yielded was by far its greatest strength. The survey alone covered multiple topics in multiple questions allowing respondents to give well-rounded opinions for each category. Further, the follow-up focus groups allowed for even more data as participants discussed the findings together. As seen in this chapter, the findings for each section could only be summarized due to the vast amount of information received. Multiple sub-studies derived from this existing data could be further analyzed and prove beneficial to this topic.

Another strength of this research design was the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative aspects. While the survey alone would have yielded enormous results, the follow-up focus group allowed for more detailed explanation of some of the trends found within the survey results. This analysis was highly beneficial as the perceptions found in the survey could have been interpreted according to surface-level data rather than understanding a deeper explanation of the trends.

Finally, the ease of using the online survey was another added strength of this design. In choosing an online survey, the population was able to access the survey easily from any device. Further, in choosing to use the analytic services provided by SurveyGizmo, the data was automatically summarized in both tables and charts. It is highly recommended to use an online survey like this if the research is to be replicated in the future.

Weaknesses of Research Design

The potential weakness of this design is found in the virtual focus group. Although the execution of this phase was successful, future researchers must be aware of the potential challenges of this method. First, the technology for both the researcher and participant could pose a potential drain on time. The technology assistant helped with technological questions from participants during the study as well as turned microphones on and off as each participant was called. His involvement cut down on the amount of

time I spent dealing with these issues and allowed me to concentrate on the content at hand. Second, the mere mechanics of voice chatting with delays could also prove to take too much time away from the intended discussion. I utilized both the voice and text chat features within Adobe Connect enabling all participants to add to the discussion without taking up too much time with exclusively voice chats. Using both features also allowed for easy transcription as much of the discussion was already in text form. Finally, the amount of bandwidth needed to show video for all participants could have slowed the connection causing even more delay in discussion. I evaded this problem by cutting off all video except for my own. Participants were able to view the questions, data charts, text chats, participant name list, and my video feed. These features gave them plenty to engage with visually without causing delay.

Another weakness of this research design was its breadth. As noted in the strengths, this research design provided an immense amount of data covering multiple aspects of faculty perceptions. Due to this vast coverage, I was prohibited from diving deeply into single categories at length within the topic. While a well-rounded overview of faculty perceptions was certainly gained, further understanding of the specifics within those perceptions would prove to be beneficial.

Further, it would have been beneficial to have a question for faculty to indicate what level of education they taught: undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate. This demographic question would have enabled a cross-tabulations to understand any significant differences between teaching in different levels of education. It is recommended that this question be added by future researchers desiring to replicate this study.

Finally, a weakness of this study was the inability to determine best practices within the scope of the research. The data gained from this study could contribute to such an endeavor, but a best practice synthesis was not one of the research questions within this thesis. For future studies, it is suggested that the data be synthesized to determine best practices regarding faculty preparation, training, expectations, and compensation.

Further Research

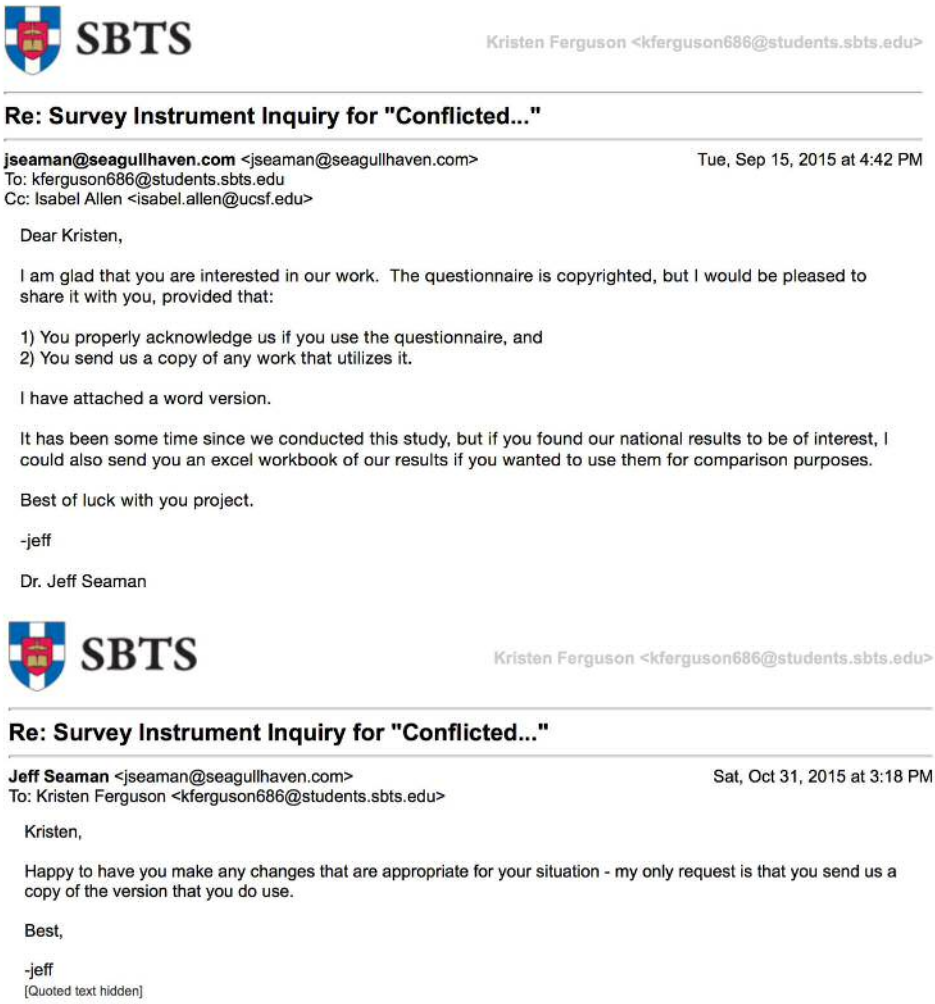
This research only begins to explore the possible topics related to online education in theological institutions. The following list provides possible research opportunities that would not only further this present study, but also aid the effective advancement of theological education through online learning:

1. Replicate study in five years to accommodate for any changes and advancements in technology and online learning
2. Replicated study to faculty within a denomination-specific group of schools to determine unique perceptions in comparison with evangelical faculty
3. Adapted study to administrators of evangelical institutions offering graduate-level theological education to compare with faculty perceptions
4. Text-based study about the relationship between community and spiritual development in theological education with implications for online education.
5. Longitudinal study of faculty development implementation and faculty perception changes over time.
6. Case study about the impact that course design has on faculty perceptions
7. Case study or interviews about the impact that evangelical faculty theological perceptions about online education have on both on-campus and online students
8. Calculate significant correlations of the data received in this study.
9. Discover the place of intentional extracurricular activities in online theological education and its effect on community and spiritual development.
10. Define community for online learning as needed in theological education.
11. Determine the differences of perception of online learning in theological education between faculty who were required to teach online to faculty who volunteered to teach online.
12. Develop best practices for faculty based on these perceptions.

APPENDIX 1

PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY INSTRUMENT:
2012 ED TECHNOLOGY FACULTY

The following email indicates permission to use the survey instrument from "Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012."[1]



SBTS

Kristen Ferguson <kferguson686@students.sbts.edu>

Re: Survey Instrument Inquiry for "Conflicted..."

jseaman@seagullhaven.com <jseaman@seagullhaven.com> Tue, Sep 15, 2015 at 4:42 PM
To: kferguson686@students.sbts.edu
Cc: Isabel Allen <isabel.allen@ucsf.edu>

Dear Kristen,

I am glad that you are interested in our work. The questionnaire is copyrighted, but I would be pleased to share it with you, provided that:

1) You properly acknowledge us if you use the questionnaire, and
2) You send us a copy of any work that utilizes it.

I have attached a word version.

It has been some time since we conducted this study, but if you found our national results to be of interest, I could also send you an excel workbook of our results if you wanted to use them for comparison purposes.

Best of luck with you project.

-jeff

Dr. Jeff Seaman

SBTS

Kristen Ferguson <kferguson686@students.sbts.edu>

Re: Survey Instrument Inquiry for "Conflicted..."

Jeff Seaman <jseaman@seagullhaven.com> Sat, Oct 31, 2015 at 3:18 PM
To: Kristen Ferguson <kferguson686@students.sbts.edu>

Kristen,

Happy to have you make any changes that are appropriate for your situation - my only request is that you send us a copy of the version that you do use.

Best,

-jeff
[Quoted text hidden]

[1]I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, "Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012," Babson Survey Research Group, 2012, 4, accessed February 25, 2015, http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED535214.

APPENDIX 2

ORIGINAL SURVEY INSTRUMENT:
2012 ED TECHNOLOGY FACULTY

Quahog Research Group – not to be used without permission.
2012 ed technology - faculty
Welcome.
Thank you for participating in the Inside Higher Ed Study of Attitudes on Technology-Enabled Education. The survey is being conducted in collaboration with Babson Survey Research Group (BSRG) at Babson College. Only BSRG will have access to individual-level data.
Only aggregated data will be reported - individual responses are not shared with Inside Higher Ed or any of our advertisers.
Scott Jaschik and Doug Lederman
Editors
INSIDE HIGHER ED

Please tell us a bit about yourself. *Note: This information is used only to classify the survey responses. No individual-level data will be released. Information provided in this survey will not be used to target you for any specific marketing.*

Your status:

	Gender		Status		Number of Years Teaching
	Male	Female	Part-time	Full-time	*DROPDOWN LIST:* Less than 1 1 to 3 4 to 5 6 to 9 10 to 15 16 to 20 More than 20
Your Status					

	Tenure Status	Your primary discipline
Your Status	*DROPDOWN LIST:* N/A Tenured Tenure track, not tenured Not tenure track	*DROPDOWN LIST:* Arts and Literature Business Administration Computer and Information Science Economics Education Engineering Humanities Law Linguistics / Language Mathematics Medicine Natural Sciences Philosophy Psychology Social Sciences Other

Which of the following have you taught during the most recent academic year?

Please use the following definitions:

- **Face-to-face course:** A course where all meetings are face-to-face, may use a learning management system (LMS) or web pages to post the syllabus and assignments.
- **Blended/hybrid course:** A course where sufficient content is delivered online to create a reduction in the number of face-to-face class meetings.
- **Online course:** A course in which all, or virtually all, the content is delivered online. Typically have no face-to-face class meetings.

Please check all that apply.

	Face-to-face course	Blended/Hybrid course	Online Course
Graduate level			
Undergraduate level			
Other			

My institution offers:

	Online Offerings			Blended/Hybrid offerings		
	None	Individual online courses, but no degree programs consisting of entirely online courses	Online courses and online programs	None	Individual blended/hybrid courses, but no degree programs consisting of entirely blended/hybrid courses	Blended/hybrid courses and blended/hybrid programs
My institution offers:						

How often have you done each of the following?

	Never / NA	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly
Used digital materials, such as simulations and videos, in course presentations.				
Assigned material available only in eTextbook format.				
Assigned books for which eTextbooks and traditional formats are available.				
Published digital scholarship (beyond publishing an online version of a traditional scholarly paper).				
Used social media to interact with students.				
Used social media to interact with colleagues.				
Used lecture capture to record or stream in-room instruction.				
Created digital teaching materials/open educational resources or captured lectures.				

How often have you used your institution's Learning Management System (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle, WebCT, Desire2Learn, etc.) to engage in the following activities?

	Never / NA	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly
Share syllabus information with students.				
Track student attendance.				
Record grades.				
Provide eTextbooks and related material.				
Integrate lecture capture.				
Communicate with students.				
Identify students who may need extra help.				

What impact do you think digital communication has had on . . .

	Decreased	No Impact	Increased
Your level of stress.			
Your creativity level.			
The number of hours you work.			
Your productivity.			
Your connection to the scholarly community.			
The amount of communication with students.			
Your ability to discover new ideas or find collaborators.			

On a typical work day, what number of email messages are . . .

	0 to 10	11 to 25	26 to 50	51 to 100	Over 100
Work-related emails received from all sources.					
Number of these that are from students.					

What percent of student emails do you typically respond to within 24 hours?

_____ Percent responded within 24 hours

What is your opinion of the following aspects of online-only scholarly publications?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The quality of articles in online-only journals can be equal to work published in print.					
Online-only scholarship IS GIVEN the same respect in tenure/promotion decisions.					
Online-only scholarship SHOULD BE GIVEN the same respect in tenure/promotion decisions.					
I am more likely to read digital versions of journals, even if a print version exists.					

What is your opinion about the quality of training and support that you have received? Does your institution offer excellent training and support for . . .

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Does Not Apply
Using digital tools in the classroom.						
Teaching online courses.						
The use of lecture capture.						

What is your opinion about the quality of services and support that you have received from your institution? My institution . . .

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Does Not Apply
Has a fair system of rewarding contributions made to digital pedagogy.						
Has a fair system of paying for online instruction.						
Respects teaching with technology (in person or online) in tenure and promotion decisions.						
Has strong policies to protect intellectual property rights for digital work.						

What steps is your institution taking with regard to course materials?

	Is Doing	Is Not Doing	Does Not Apply
Encouraging faculty members to assign eTextbooks.			
Encouraging faculty members to use less expensive alternatives to traditional text books.			
Negotiating with publishers for discounts on selected e-books and materials.			

What are your opinions about the current state of online education?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Does Not Apply
Online education can be as effective in helping students learn as in-person instruction.						
Online education at my institution is of high quality, but I'm dubious of quality elsewhere.						
I have concerns about the quality of online instruction offered by for-profit institutions.						
My institution is pushing too much instruction online.						
My institution has good tools in place to assess the quality of online instruction.						
My institution has good tools in place to assess the quality of in-person instruction.						

In your judgment, compared to a comparable face-to-face course, the learning outcomes in these types of courses are . . .

	Inferior to face-to-face	Somewhat inferior to face-to-face	Same as face-to-face	Somewhat superior to face-to-face	Superior to face-to-face
Learning outcomes in an online course compared to face-to-face					
Learning outcomes in a blended/hybrid course compared to face-to-face					

Have you ever recommended one of these types of courses to a student or advisee?

	Yes	No
Online course		
Blended/hybrid course		

Do the following developments fill you more with excitement or fear?

	More Fear than Excitement	More Excitement than Fear
The growth of online education.		
The growth of blended/hybrid education.		
The growth of for-profit education.		
The growth of free online educational content, such as that offered by the Khan Academy.		
Libraries focusing on digital instead of print collections.		
eTextbooks and eResources replacing traditional print textbooks.		
Outlets for scholarship that do not use a traditional peer review model.		
Changing the faculty role to spend less time lecturing and more time coaching students.		
The increasing collection and analysis of data on teaching and learning, on a course-by-course basis.		

We welcome your comments. Please let us know you thoughts on any of the issues covered in this survey.

Thank you.
This is the end of the survey - pressing the ">>" button below will record your responses. Once your survey has been recorded you will not be able to go back and edit any responses.

APPENDIX 3

PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY INSTRUMENT:
ONLINE FACULTY SATISFACTION SURVEY

The following email indicates permission to use and modify the survey instrument from "Factors Influencing Faculty Satisfaction with Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education."[1]

SBTS

Kristen Ferguson <kferguson686@students.sbts.edu>

Factors Influencing Faculty Satisfaction - Survey Instrument

Doris U Bolliger <dorisbolliger@gmail.com> Mon, Nov 2, 2015 at 5:18 PM
To: Kristen Ferguson <kferguson686@students.sbts.edu>

Dear Kristen Ferguson,

Thank you for contacting me and interest in our work. You have my permission to use and modify our instrument for your research.

Good luck!

Dr. Bolliger

--
Doris U. Bolliger, Ed.D.
Associate Professor of Instructional Technology
College of Education
Department of Professional Studies
University of Wyoming
1000 E. University Avenue, ED 322
Laramie, WY 82071
Ph. 307-766-2167 dorisbolliger@gmail.com
[Quoted text hidden]

[1]Doris U. Bolliger and Oksana Wasilik, "Factors Influencing Faculty Satisfaction with Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education," *Distance Education* 30, no. 1 (May 2009): 103-16.

APPENDIX 4

ORIGINAL SURVEY INSTRUMENT:
ONLINE FACULTY SATISFACTION SURVEY

Faculty Satisfaction in the Online Environment

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements by checking one of the responses for each question.

		SA	A	D	SD	N/A
1	The level of my interactions with students in the online course is higher than in a traditional face-to-face class. (S)					
2	The flexibility provided by the online environment is important to me. (T)					
3	My online students are actively involved in their learning. (S)					
4 (R)	I incorporate fewer resources when teaching an online course as compared to traditional teaching. (T)					
5	The technology I use for online teaching is reliable. (T)					
6 (R)	I have a higher workload when teaching an online course as compared to the traditional one. (I)					
7 (R)	I miss face-to face contact with students when teaching online. (S)					
8	I do not have any problems controlling my students in the online environment. (S)					
9	I look forward to teaching my next online course. (General)					
10	My students are very active in communicating with me regarding online course matters. (S)					
11	I appreciate that I can access my online course any time it is convenient to me. (T)					
12	My online students are more enthusiastic about their learning than their traditional counterparts. (S)					
13 (R)	I have to be more creative in terms of the resources used for the online course. (T)					
14 (R)	Online teaching is often frustrating because of technical problems. (T)					
15 (R)	It takes me longer to prepare for an online course on a weekly basis than for a face-to-face course. (I)					

		SA	A	D	SD	N/A
16	I am satisfied with the use of communication tools in the online environment (e.g., chat rooms, threaded discussions, etc.). (T)					
17	I am able to provide better feedback to my online students on their performance in the course. (S)					
18	I am more satisfied with teaching online as compared to other delivery methods. (General)					
19 (R)	My online students are somewhat passive when it comes to contacting the instructor regarding course related matters. (S)					
20	It is valuable to me that my students can access my online course from any place in the world. (S)					
21 (R)	The participation level of my students in the class discussions in the online setting is lower than in the traditional one. (S)					
22	My students use a wider range of resources in the online setting than in the traditional one. (S)					
23	Technical problems do not discourage me from teaching online. (T)					
24	I receive fair compensation for online teaching. (I)					
25 (R)	Not meeting my online students face-to-face prevents me from knowing them as well as my on-site students. (S)					
26 (R)	I am concerned about receiving lower course evaluations in the online course as compared to the traditional one. (I)					
27	Online teaching is gratifying because it provides me with an opportunity to reach students who otherwise would not be able to take courses. (S)					
28 (R)	It is more difficult for me to motivate my students in online environment than in the traditional setting. (S)					

Note. (R) = recoded item

Instructions: Please fill in your responses to the following questions.

What are your major frustrations about teaching online?

_____

_____

What do you like the most about teaching online?

_____

_____

Do you have any suggestions as to how the [Distance Center] could better support your online teaching?

_____
_____

Is there anything else you wish to share?

_____
_____

Please tell us a little about yourself.

How many years you taught courses online?
____ (years)

What is your age?
____ (years)

What is your gender?
___ Female
___ Male

Is English your native language?
___ Yes
___ No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We appreciate it very much!

APPENDIX 5

EVANGELICAL FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF ONLINE LEARNING: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this survey. Please read the directions and agreement to participate below before taking this survey.

Overview:
Theological institutions continue to broaden their flexible learning options through online learning, but little research has been done to determine what evangelical faculty think about online learning. Therefore, this survey seeks to understand evangelical faculty perceptions about online learning in graduate-level theological education.

Directions
The following survey should take approximately 10-12 minutes. Please read each question carefully and respond according to your own beliefs and opinions. The survey will be broken up into the following categories:

1. Demographic Information
2. Online Learning: Current and Future Perceptions
3. Institution-Related Perceptions
4. Course and Instructor-Related Perceptions
5. Student-Related Perceptions
6. Theological Education and Online Learning Perceptions
7. Volunteer Focus Group Option

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to discover evangelical faculty perception of online learning in graduate-level theological education. This research is being conducted by Kristen Ferguson for purposes of research contributing towards a thesis for the doctor of education at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will be asked to provide your personal perceptions, opinions, and attitude towards online learning especially in regards to its use in graduate-level theological education. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By clicking next, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Demographic Information

1. Identify your gender.*
   ( ) Male
   ( ) Female

2. What is your age?*
   ( ) 25-34
   ( ) 35-44
   ( ) 45-54
   ( ) 55-64
   ( ) 65+

3. What is your denomination affiliation?*_____

4. What is your faculty status?*
   ( ) Part-time (or adjunct instructor)
   ( ) Full-time
   ( ) None

5. Identify the number of years you have taught online.*
   ( ) 0
   ( ) Less than 1
   ( ) 1-4
   ( ) 5-9
   ( ) 10-14
   ( ) 15+

6. Identify the number of years you have taught face-to-face.*
   ( ) 0
   ( ) Less than 1
   ( ) 1-4
   ( ) 5-9
   ( ) 10-14
   ( ) 15+

7. What discipline(s) do you teach? Check all that apply. *
   ( ) New Testament
   ( ) Old Testament
   ( ) Evangelism
   ( ) Missions
   ( ) Church History
   ( ) Preaching
   ( ) Education
   ( ) Greek/Hebrew/Other language
   ( ) Theology
   ( ) Spirituality
   ( ) Counseling
   ( ) Other - Write In: _____

8. In addition to a faculty role, do you also hold an administrative role at your institution?*
   ( ) Yes
   ( ) No

ONLINE LEARNING: CURRENT
AND FUTURE PERCEPTIONS

9. What are your opinions about the current state of online education?*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Online education can be as effective in helping students learn as face-to-face education.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Online education at my institution is of high quality.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. I'm skeptical of the quality of online courses at other institutions.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. My institution is pushing too much instruction online.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. My institution has a clear process for evaluating the quality of online instruction.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
f. My institution has a clear process for evaluating the quality of face-to-face instruction.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

10. What are your opinions about the future of online education?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Online education will continue to grow in theological education.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Online courses will increase in quality.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

INSTITUTION-RELATED PERCEPTIONS

11. My institution offers the following:*
    ( ) Online courses and online programs
    ( ) Individual online courses, but no degree programs consisting of entirely online courses.
    ( ) None

12. Rate the following statements: My institution has high-quality faculty development, training, and support for... *

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Teaching face-to-face courses	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Teaching online courses	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

13. What is your opinion about the quality of services and support that you have received from your institutions?
    Rate the following statements: My institution... *

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Has a fair system of rewarding (either financially or with other incentives) those who develop online course curriculum.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Has a fair system of paying those who teach an online course.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Has strong policies to protect your intellectual property rights.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

COURSE AND INSTRUCTOR-RELATED PERCEPTIONS

14. Identify your beliefs about the following statement.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I believe that learning outcomes in online courses are superior to learning outcomes in face-to-face courses.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

15. How has your involvement in online education impacted... *

	Strongly Increased	Increased	No Impact	Decreased	Strongly Decreased
a. Your level of stress	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. The number of hours you work	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Your productivity	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Your interaction with students	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. Your skill in using technology	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
f. Your overall satisfaction with teaching	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

16. Do the following developments fill you more with excitement or with fear?*

	More excitement than fear	More fear than excitement
a. The growth of online education	( )	( )
b. Changing the faculty role to spend less time lecturing and more time coaching students	( )	( )
c. The increasing collection and analysis of data on teaching and learning, on a course-by-course basis	( )	( )
d. Other teachers teaching an online course you have designed	( )	( )
e. Policies regarding plagiarism in online education	( )	( )

STUDENT-RELATED PERCEPTIONS

17. Please rate the following statements about online students according to your own opinion.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I interact more with students in my online course than in my face-to-face course.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. My online students actively participate in their learning.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Students in my online course are more enthusiastic about their learning than students in my face-to-face course.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. I am able to provide better feedback to students in my online course than my face-to-face course.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. It is valuable to me that my students can access my online course from any place in the world.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
f. I appreciate the ability of online education to extend my reach to students who otherwise would not be able to take my courses.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

18. Identify your opinions about the ability of online education to accomplish the following:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Online education can achieve the goals of theological education.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Online education can equip students to be successful pastors/ministers	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Online education can foster students' spiritual development	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Online education can create a genuine community for students	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. Online education can equip students to critically engage the culture	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
f. Online education can prepare students' character and ability as leaders	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

19. In 10 years, do you think online education will be better at achieving the goals of theological education?
( ) Yes
( ) No

20. What forms the foundations of your beliefs and perceptions about online education? Please explain briefly.

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. Do you believe that online education is a benefit to graduate-level theological education?
( ) Yes
( ) No

22. Why or why not? Please briefly explain your answer to the previous question.
_____
_____
_____
_____

VOLUNTARY FOCUS GROUP OPTION

23. There will be a voluntary focus group to discuss this survey's findings. If you would like to participate in this follow-up focus group, please enter your email address below. If you choose to submit your email address below, you will be contacted in the next few weeks for further details.
_____

24. If you would like to receive a copy of the findings of this research, please provide your email address below:
_____

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses are valuable to this research.

APPENDIX 6

SURVEY DISTRIBUTION: EMAIL TO ETS FULL MEMBERS

Dear ETS member,

Theological institutions continue to broaden their flexible learning options through online learning, but little research has been done to determine what evangelical faculty think about online learning. Therefore, this survey seeks to understand evangelical faculty perceptions about online learning in graduate-level theological education.

Survey Directions:
The survey should take approximately 10-12 minutes to complete. Simply click the link below and answer each question according to your own beliefs and opinions about online learning.

Link to Survey: http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2590861/Evangelical-Faculty-Perceptions-of-Online-Learning

If you would like to receive a copy of the findings of this research, please indicate so on the final question of the survey instrument.

Deadline: This survey will close on March 11, 2016. Please submit your responses before that time to be included in this research.

Agreement to Participate:
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to discover evangelical faculty perception of online learning in graduate-level theological education. This research is being conducted by Kristen Ferguson for purposes of research contributing towards a thesis for the doctor of education at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will be asked to provide your personal perceptions, opinions, and attitude towards online learning especially in regards to its use in graduate-level theological education. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Thank you for your time and participation,

Kristen Ferguson
EdD Candidate
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280

APPENDIX 7

EMAIL TO FOCUS GROUP VOLUNTEERS

Greetings ETS Faculty Member,

You are receiving this email because you volunteered for a focus group regarding evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning in theological education. Thank you for your participation in this research and your willingness to partake in the focus group phase.

Please review the below details about the focus group and RSVP by March 14, 2016, indicating your willingness to attend and on which date listed below.

Survey Results

The results of the survey continue to accumulate until March 11, 2016, but the data from the 457 respondents generally indicates that ETS faculty are divided in their opinions about online learning. The survey findings should make for a highly interactive and informative focus group.

Focus Group Details

The purpose of this focus group is to gain further insight into the data revealed in the survey. This focus group will be held online through Adobe Connect. You will be given a link to the focus group online meeting room prior to your meeting time and date as well as further details of the focus group protocol upon your RSVP.

Date Options
Please RSVP by March 14, 2016, indicating which of the following dates you will attend.

Option 1: Friday, March 18, 2016, from 11am-12pm EST

Option 2: Monday, March 21, 2016, from 4pm-5pm EST

A technician will be present to assist you with microphone set up in Adobe Connect 15 minutes prior to the start of the focus group.

Please note that I will select a number of participants who RSVP by March 14. If you are not selected for this round of focus groups, you may be contacted later for an additional round.

You will need:
Headphones
Microphone
Internet (preferably Google Chrome)
Confidentiality
Upon entering the focus group, you will be prompted to enter your name, which will be visible to participants within the online meeting room. Regardless of what you indicate in

this name-entry field, your identity will be kept confidential in the thesis and any further use of this data.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this important research. I look forward to hearing your thoughts in the focus group.

APPENDIX 8

SUMMARY REPORT OF FINDINGS

Report for Evangelical Faculty Perceptions of Online Learning

Table A1. Response statistics

	Count	Percent
Complete	459	76.4
Partial	101	16.8
Disqualified	41	6.8
Total	601	

The following figures and tables depict the findings from only the completed surveys.

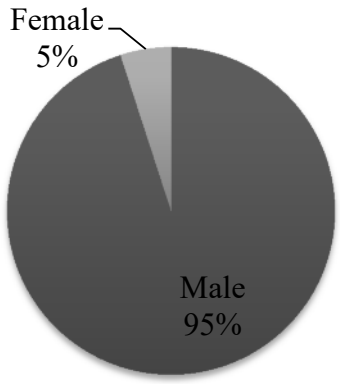


Figure A1. Gender

Table A2. Participant age

Value	Percent	Count
25-34	7.6	35
35-44	20.7	95
45-54	20.7	95
55-64	37.5	172
65+	13.5	62
	Total	459

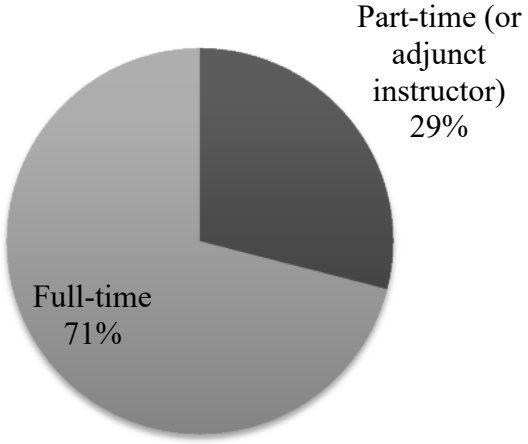


Figure A2. Faculty status

Table A3. Number of years taught online

Value	Percent	Count
0	17	78
Less than 1	7.6	35
1-4	27	124
5-9	27.5	126
10-14	14.8	68
15+	6.1	28
	Total	459

Table A4. Number of years taught face-to-face

Value	Percent	Count
0	1.7	8
Less than 1	2	9
1-4	12.2	56
5-9	18.7	86
10-14	16.8	77
15+	48.6	223
	Total	459

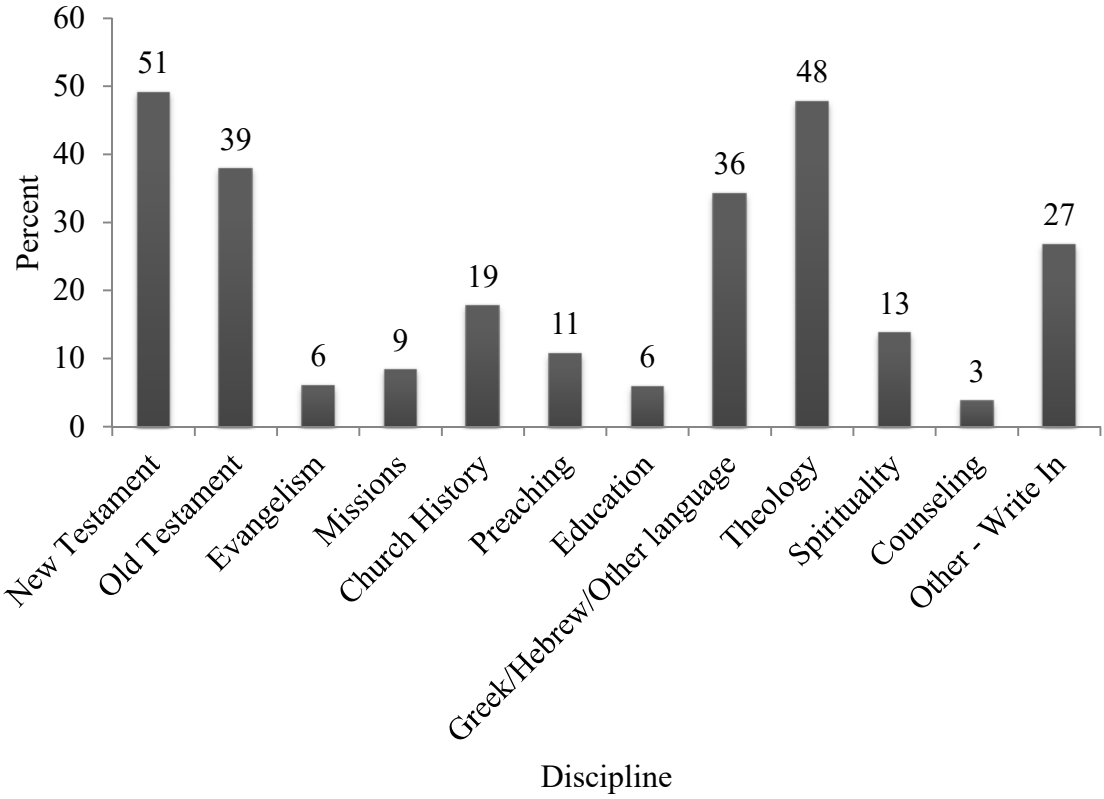


Figure A3. Teaching disciple (check all that apply)

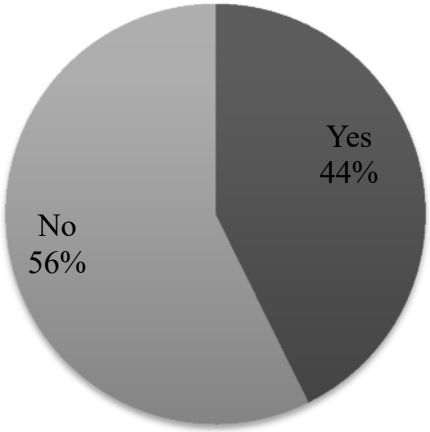


Figure A4. Participants that hold a faculty and administrative role

Table A5. Opinions about the current state of online education

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
a. Online education can be as effective in helping students learn as face-to-face education.	12	55	26.8	123	8.5	39	34.4	158	18.3	84
b. Online education at my institution is of high quality.	18.3	84	37.5	172	25.9	119	14.8	68	3.5	16
c. I'm skeptical of the quality of online courses at other institutions.	15.7	72	42.5	195	29.2	134	10.2	47	2.4	11
d. My institution is pushing too much instruction online.	8.1	37	25.7	118	22.4	103	32.5	149	11.3	52
e. My institution has a clear process for evaluating the quality of online instruction.	15	69	31.6	145	23.3	107	22.4	103	7.6	35
f. My institution has a clear process for evaluating the quality of face-to-face instruction.	28.1	129	46.6	214	13.9	64	9.6	44	1.7	8

Table A6. Opinions about the future of online education

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
a. Online education will continue to grow in theological education.	46.2	212	48.4	222	3.9	18	1.1	5	0.4	2
b. Online courses will increase in quality.	25.7	118	39.7	182	20.3	93	12.2	56	2.2	10

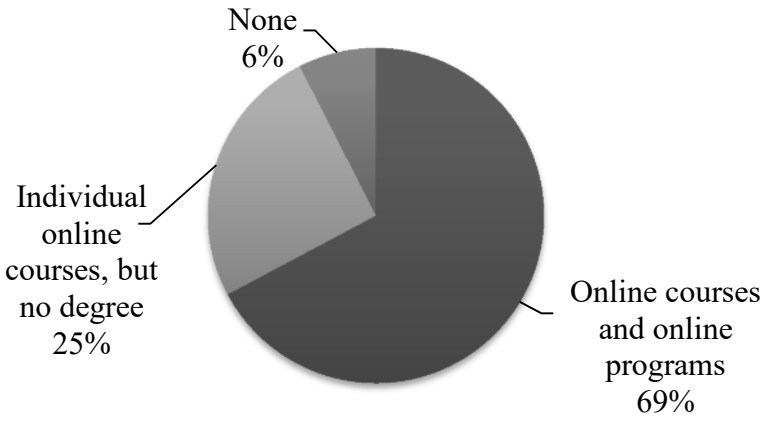


Figure A5. Online offerings at my institution

Table A7. My institution has high-quality faculty development, training, and support for . . .

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
a. Teaching face-to-face courses	22.0	101	42.3	194	20.3	93	12.2	56	3.3	15
b. Teaching online courses	13.1	60	33.1	152	24.8	114	20.7	95	8.3	38

Table A8. Opinion about the quality of services and support received from your institution

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
a. Has a fair system of rewarding (either financially or with other incentives) those who develop online course curriculum.	9.2	42	29.8	137	31.4	144	22	101	7.6	35
b. Has a fair system of paying those who teach an online course.	11.3	52	37.3	171	24.8	114	20.3	93	6.3	29
c. Has strong policies to protect your intellectual property rights.	10	46	22.7	104	32.7	150	26.6	122	8.1	37

Table A9. Opinion on the learning outcome of online versus face-to face courses

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
I believe that learning outcomes in online courses are superior to learning outcomes in face-to-face courses.	0.9	4	5.9	27	19.4	89	40.3	185	33.6	154

Table A10. How involvement in online education has impacted certain areas

	Strongly Increased		Increased		No Impact		Decreased		Strongly Decreased	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
a. Your level of stress	6.1	28	41.8	192	45.1	207	6.3	29	0.7	3
b. The number of hours you work	9.8	45	48.8	224	33.8	155	7.2	33	0.4	2
c. Your productivity	2.4	11	20.5	94	43.6	200	30.3	139	3.3	15
d. Your interaction with students	1.3	6	15.3	70	34.6	159	36.6	168	12.2	56
e. Your skill in using technology	11.8	54	56.2	258	31.2	143	0.2	1	0.7	3
f. Your overall satisfaction with teaching	3.1	14	17.4	80	42.7	196	30.9	142	5.9	27

Table A11. Do certain developments fill you more with excitement or with fear?

	More excitement than fear		More fear than excitement	
	%	#		#
a. The growth of online education	42.5	195	57.5	264
b. Changing the faculty role to spend less time lecturing and more time coaching students	50.8	233	49.2	226
c. The increasing collection and analysis of data on teaching and learning, on a course-by-course basis	61.9	284	38.1	175
d. Other teachers teaching an online course you have designed	48.6	223	51.4	236
e. Policies regarding plagiarism in online education	43.1	198	56.9	261

Table A12. Student-related perceptions

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
a. I interact more with students in my online course than in my face-to-face course.	2.2	10	8.5	39	25.3	116	34.9	160	29.2	134
b. My online students actively participate in their learning.	8.3	38	41.6	191	29.4	135	17.4	80	3.3	15
c. Students in my online course are more enthusiastic about their learning than students in my face-to-face course.	2	9	7.8	36	41.4	190	33.8	155	15	69
d. I am able to provide better feedback to students in my online course than my face-to-face course.	1.5	7	13.3	61	29.4	135	38.8	178	17	78
e. It is valuable to me that my students can access my online course from any place in the world.	32	147	44.7	205	20.5	94	2.2	10	0.7	3
f. I appreciate the ability of online education to extend my reach to students who otherwise would not be able to take my courses.	36.6	168	42.3	194	17.4	80	2.8	13	0.9	4

Table A13. Theological education online perceptions

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
a. Online education can achieve the goals of theological education.	14.8	68	38.3	176	14.4	66	21.8	100	10.7	49
b. Online education can equip students to be successful pastors/ ministers	9.4	43	32.5	149	20.3	93	23.1	106	14.8	68
c. Online education can foster students' spiritual development	8.1	41	41.2	189	22	101	17.2	79	10.7	49
d. Online education can create a genuine community for students	6.5	30	25.1	115	18.5	85	27	124	22.9	105
e. Online education can equip students to critically engage the culture	12	55	44.7	205	24.8	114	11.8	54	6.8	31
f. Online education can prepare students' character and ability as leaders	7.2	33	25.3	116	24	110	27.9	128	15.7	74

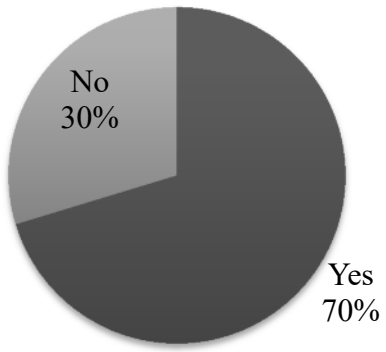


Figure A6. In 10 years, do you think online education will be better at achieving the goals of theological education?

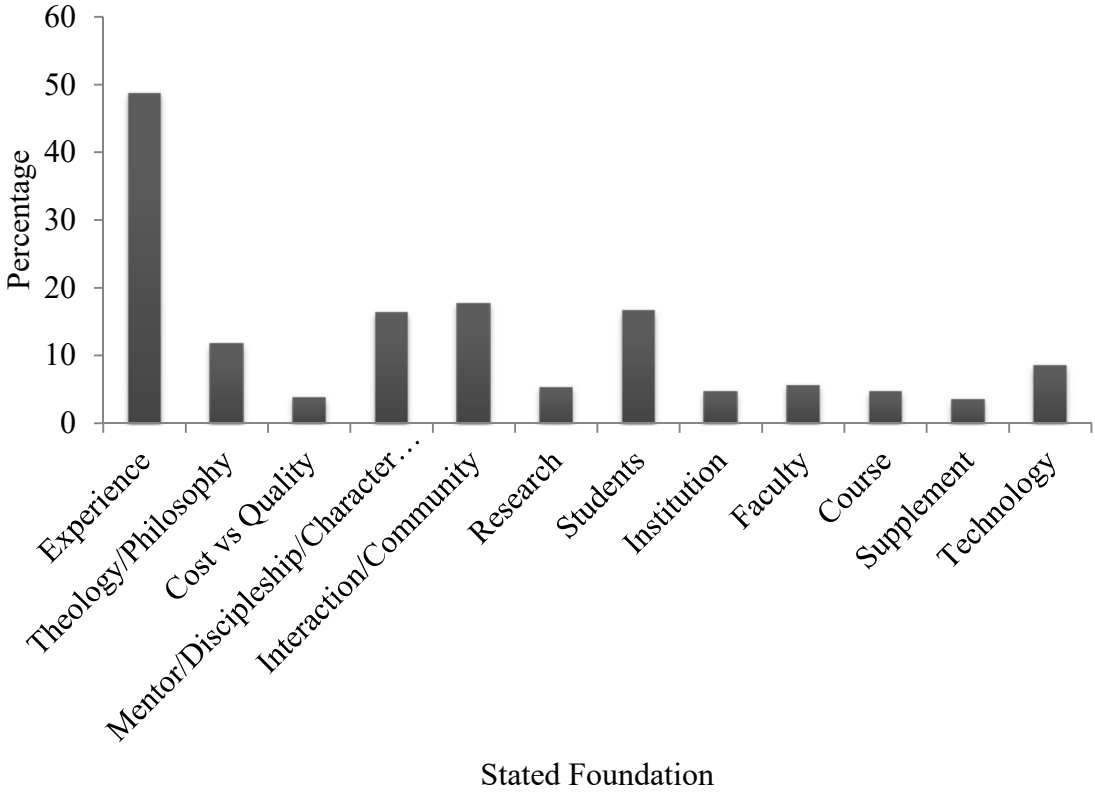


Figure A7. What forms the foundations of your beliefs and perceptions about online education?

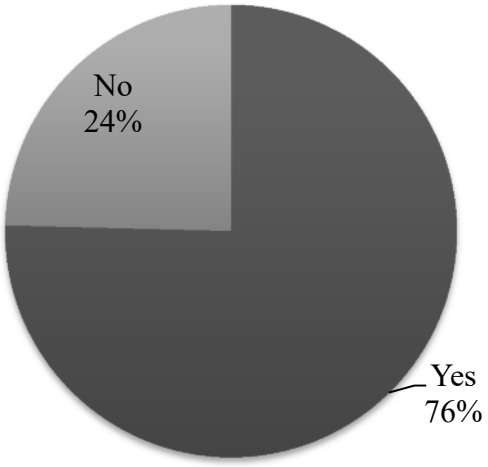


Figure A8. Do you believe that online education is a benefit to graduate-level theological education?

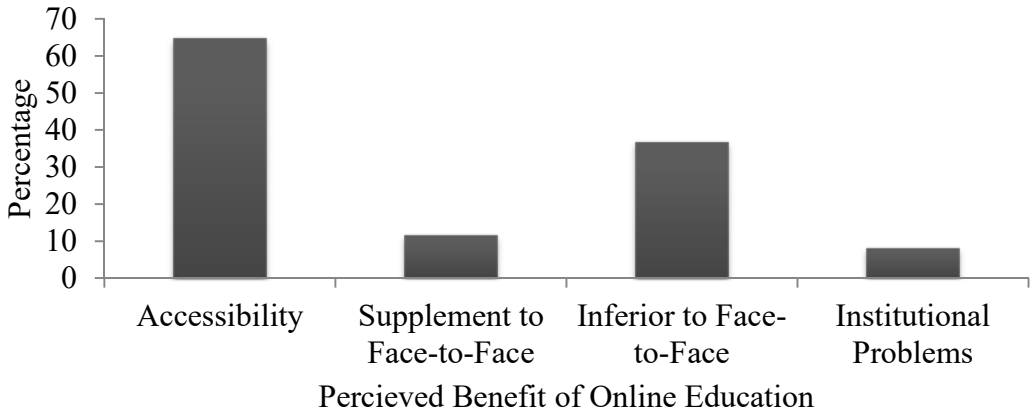


Figure A9. Why or why not do you believe that online education is a benefit to graduate-level theological education?

APPENDIX 9

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

Table A14. Statistically significant findings

	Age	Faculty Status	# Year Online	# Years F2F	Admin
9a	--	--	0.0088**	0.0435*	0.0061**
9b	0.0302*	--	0.00***	--	--
9c	0.0001***	--	0.0068**	--	0.011*
9d	--	--	--	--	0.0099**
9e	--	--	0.0024**		--
10a	0.0496*	--	--	0.0224*	--
10b	--	--	0.0348*	--	--
11	--	--	0.00***	--	--
12b	--	0.0117*	0.0054**	--	0.0281*
13a	--	--	0.0089**	--	--
13b	--	--	0.00***	--	--
13c	--	--	0.0185**	0.0001***	0.0128*
14a	0.0288*	--	--	--	0.0275*
15a	--	--	0.00***	--	0.0423*
15b	--	--	0.00***	0.0229*	--
15c	--	--	0.00***	--	--
15d	--	--	0.00***	--	--
15e	--	--	0.00***	--	0.0256*
15f	--	--	0.00***	--	--
16a	--	0.0264*	0.0005***	--	0.0014**
16b	--	0.0276*	--	--	--
16c	--	--	--	--	0.0095**
16d	--	0.00***	--	--	--
16e	--	--	--	--	0.0034**
17a	--	--	0.00***	--	--
17b	0.0068**	--	0.00***	0.0056**	0.0198*
17c	--	--	0.00***	--	--
17d	--	--	0.00***	--	--
17e	--	--	0.00***	--	--
17f	--	--	0.00***	--	--
18a	--	--	0.0167*	--	0.0036**
18c	--	--	--	--	0.0141*
18d	--	--	--	--	0.0123*
18e	--	--	--	--	0.002**
18f	--	--	--	--	0.0075**
19	0.0146*	--	--	--	0.0025**

*Confidence Interval of 95 percent or more (p = 0.05)
** Confidence Interval of 99 percent or more (p = 0.01)
*** Confidence Interval of 99.9 percent or more (p = 0.001)

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ABSTRACT

EVANGELICAL FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF ONLINE LEARNING IN GRADUATE-LEVEL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Kristen Ann Ferguson, Ed.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016
Chair: Dr. Anthony W. Foster

Chapter 1 articulates that theological institutions have continued to increase online learning offerings, but the current literature has not taken into account what evangelical faculty think about this growth. The research conducted was an explanatory sequential study to determine current evangelical faculty perceptions, future evangelical faculty perceptions, and a comparison to the existing literature about faculty perception of online learning.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature pertaining to the topic. The following subcategories are addressed: brief overview of evangelical values in theological education and online learning, studies regarding faculty perceptions of online learning in higher education, and studies regarding evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning.

Chapter 3 indicates the methodology that used in the research to determine evangelical faculty perceptions of online learning. The first phase of research was a survey of 459 full members of ETS to acquire their perceptions of the current state as well as the future of online learning in theological education. The second phase of research included two volunteer focus groups designed to acquire further explanation of the survey findings from evangelical faculty.

In chapter 4, the findings of the survey and focus group display a conflict in perceptions as evangelical faculty believe access to theological education to be important,

but online learning to be inferior in achieving certain aspects crucial to theological education, such as discipleship, mentoring, community, and leadership characteristics. From these findings, chapter 5 presents conclusions and practical considerations to improve online learning and faculty perceptions of online learning.

Key Words: Online learning, Online education, Theological education, Faculty, Faculty Perceptions, Evangelical

VITA

Kristen Ann Ferguson

EDUCATIONAL

B.A.T., California Baptist University, 2009
Adv.M.Div. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014

PUBLICATIONS

Ferguson, Kristen, and Ryan Baltrip. "Leveraging Transactional Distance: Bringing the Real World into the Online Classroom." Online Learning Consortium, May 19, 2015. Accessed March 24, 2016. http://goo.gl/KiMQBq.