

Pivoting During a Pandemic: Creating Presence for All Students

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Abstract: The 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic prompted faculty across the country to pivot their in-person courses to ones that could be offered virtually. Some faculty learned quickly that economically challenged students had difficulty accessing resources that suddenly became remote. In this reflective essay, we highlight the experiences of five social scientists working to transform courses from in-person to remote delivery, attending to each of the “presences” in the community of inquiry framework, while also addressing the economic challenges of students on two regional Midwestern campuses. We end with several “lessons learned” and suggestions for remote delivery as we move forward.

Keywords: community of inquiry, online learning, social science.

Among other things, the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has revealed the fragility of many sectors of society, and education is no exception. While faculty across the country have raced to transform in-person courses to remote ones, economically challenged students have tried to keep up, but many have been left behind (e.g., Scheidel, 2020). Using the community of inquiry (COI) framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001), we highlight the experiences of five social scientists working to transform courses from in-person to remote delivery, attending to each of the “presences” in the COI framework, while also addressing the economic challenges of students on two regional Midwestern campuses. Many of our students do not own computers, and some do not have access to the educational resources, such as libraries or the internet, that suddenly became requisite. Additionally, the majority of students on the regional campus are employed either part-time or full-time. While many of them lost their jobs during the pandemic, others suddenly found themselves with erratic and unpredictable work schedules. We describe how we tried to overcome the ever-deepening economic divide accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic in our pivot to remote learning.

COVID-19's Economic Impact

The twin economic and health crises that exploded in the first half of 2020 have exacerbated social inequality in the United States, which was already the highest among the countries of the global north. Tens of millions of wage workers have been laid off, while essential workers, most of whom are low-wage employees, face dangerous working conditions daily for themselves and their families. Our students have been among them. While state and federal unemployment insurance and moratoriums on evictions have provided a social safety net, uncertainty over the future of both will surely be reflected in worsening unemployment data, poverty rates, evictions, foreclosures, and data on food insecurity and malnutrition. There has also been evidence of increased domestic violence against women (Human Rights Watch, 2020). While the CARES aid package approved by Congress in the spring of 2020 provided short-term relief for millions of working families in the form of stimulus checks and federal unemployment insurance payments, large corporations, and to a lesser extent, smaller businesses, received stimulus payments in ways that will likely further transfer wealth and income to the upper strata in the United States.

Infection, sickness, and mortality rates from COVID-19 have shown clear class and race patterns, with African Americans suffering at rates 2 to 3 times higher than for Whites. Other communities of color including Latinx and native peoples have also suffered excessively from the disease while having less access to adequate medical care. These health inequalities reflect and are deeply connected to multiple sources of inequalities, many of which have been exposed by the crises (Mann, 2020; Qureshi, 2021). The largely working-class composition of the student body at both of our regional campuses puts our students, especially those of color, at a higher risk of suffering from the health and economic ravages of the crises than is the case for more privileged student bodies.

With the social, economic, and health issues in mind, we now turn our attention to our pivot to remote instruction. Like most other educational institutions, our university was required to pivot from in-person instruction to remote instruction. Faculty on the regional campuses had the dual challenge of moving in-person courses to online ones, while needing to be mindful of the demographic characteristics of our students. To aid in our pivot, we employed the COI framework.

Overview of the COI Approach

Drawn from the collaborative constructivist idea that learning is largely social and takes place in communion with others, the COI framework developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) has become a useful, if not seminal, heuristic guiding the development of the online classroom. To these authors, online learning necessarily takes place in a collaborative context; students learn from the teacher and each other. So, deep and meaningful educational experiences emerge with three interdependent types of presence: social, cognitive, and teaching.

Garrison et al. (2000) defined social presence as the ability of participants in the online environment to present themselves to other participants as “real people” (p. 89). They noted that social presence is needed to sustain the community of learners “nurtured within the broader social-emotional environment of the communicative transaction” (p. 94). To them, students must be brought into a collaborative learning experience where they can engage in critical discourse with other learners.

Cognitive presence is “the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry are able to construct meaning through sustained communication” (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 89). Garrison et al. (2001) stated that cognitive presence is most basic to higher education’s success. They defined cognitive presence in terms of the practical inquiry model, which consists of four phases: a triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution. The triggering event initiates the student’s inquiry and engagement. Students then explore relevant information to

aid in understanding. They seek out additional information so as to apply the new ideas and test out alternative explanations. Integration occurs when students incorporate concepts, ideas, and materials into a meaningful synthesis. Finally, resolution is when the student masters the issue and constructs new meaning. Often, resolution triggers a new learning cycle.

The framework's third element, teaching presence, consists of two general functions. The first, designing the educational experience, includes (a) the selection, organization, and presentation of course content; and (b) the design and development of learning activities and assessment. The second function is facilitation of the educational experience, where cognitive and social presences are supported for the realization of learning (Garrison et al., 2001).

Since Garrison and colleagues first published the COI conceptualization, the model has received considerable empirical support (Akyol & Garrison, 2011; Gi-cheol & Gurvitch, 2020; Sidiropoulou & Mavroidis, 2019). However, research on teaching presence from the educator's perspective has lagged behind research on cognitive and social presence, particularly among those in higher education (Gurley, 2018). Teaching in online and hybrid environments requires pedagogical approaches that differ from face-to-face approaches (See Holbeck & Hartman, 2018). For example, the online and hybrid instructor must address the nearly ubiquitous absence of nonverbal cues. As Rovai and Jordan (2004) discovered, students interpreted instructor feedback as "sharp," while the instructor saw his remarks as "direct and concise." So, online course design and facilitation must take into account the unique online platform, which presents challenges but also opportunities. Several researchers suggested specific faculty training in online course delivery (Gurley, 2018; Rovai & Jordan, 2004) or at least systematic reflection (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2014).

Yet, in March 2020, many higher education professionals were thrust into the online teaching environment with little to no preparation. So, when the call came to teach remotely, all of us switched from teaching in our normative face-to-face mode to crafting an online teaching presence. In terms of design, we had to decide what aspects of our course to keep and what to scrap or transform. Our concerns were based not only on the logistics and techniques of transforming our course to an online platform, but also on our student population. We teach at the regional campuses of a mid-sized, Midwestern university. Our student population consists of traditional and nontraditional-age students. In every class, we encounter students who are working part-time or even full-time; students who are parents of infants, toddlers, and school-age children; and students who face a number of family and health challenges. Several of us have high school students in our classes who are in the College Credit Plus program. Such concerns impacted the choices we made in crafting and facilitating our classes. We detail these concerns in a series of reflections.

Pivoting an Upper Level Psychological Science Course to a Remote Format

The Course

The course that Beth Dietz focus on in this analysis is an upper level discussion-based course on advanced social psychology. Prior to the COVID-19-shut-down, the course met twice per week during the day. When the university made the decision to pivot to remote learning, the remainder of the course was conducted in an online, asynchronous format so as to be as flexible as possible for students in the course who worked or had childcare responsibilities.

The pedagogical tools used in the in-person version of the course were predominantly collaborative in nature, including whole-class discussions based on student-generated discussion questions, active-learning-based lectures and demonstrations, and collaborative research projects. The students ($n = 14$) were mostly nontraditional-age undergraduates who were employed either part-time or full-time.

When the university announced that all classes would begin remote instruction (which in fact happened while the class was meeting), students immediately expressed concern about missing the in-person discussions, as well as about the collaborative research projects. Below, I describe how I used the COI framework to create and maintain social, cognitive, and teaching presence.

Social Presence

The in-class conversation with students about the loss of the social aspects of the course led me to realize that my first course of action as we pivoted to remote learning would be to leverage the technologies available to create and maintain social presence. In prior online courses that I designed and delivered, it was sometimes too easy for students to be “just students,” devoid of any personal characteristics. Anticipating that the pandemic would likely be a disruptive force in my students’ lives, I chose to exploit this opportunity to learn as much about them as I could, and also for them to learn more about one another. Toward that end, I sent personal emails to students, which opened dialogue and allowed for more personalized conversations than I had previously been engaging in with them. These conversations allowed me to learn more about how the pandemic was disproportionately impacting their lives as regional-campus students (e.g., a job loss meant complete loss of income; erratic work schedules led to worries about childcare). In our learning management system (LMS) discussion forum, I asked for student feedback and invited them to express their concerns and preferences for course modifications. There was, for example, an overwhelming preference to make the projects individual rather than collaborative. I also “softened” my policies on late work when students reported struggling, with the goal of giving students more of a voice.

Cognitive Presence

In the in-person course, critical thinking was required and assessed in the reading assignments, active-learning activities, class discussions, and collaborative projects. To maintain the requisite critical-thinking component in the remote version of the course, I highlighted the reading assignments and lectures as the primary triggering event, followed by critical analysis of this content. This critical analysis involved asking students to submit reading summaries and discussion questions about the readings. In the instructions for the discussion questions, students were informed that understanding the research literature at an advanced level requires immersing themselves in the fine details of the work and simultaneously placing the work in its broader context. I encouraged them to “see the forest *and* the trees.”

The in-class discussion necessarily moved to an online discussion using the LMS discussion forum. I chose and posted five of the student-submitted discussion questions and students were required to use their critical-thinking skills to engage in a week-long discussion with their classmates. Students were required to contribute to the discussion on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Because the discussion became text based, it allowed me to be even more demanding of critical thinking. My observation is that students’ critical thinking improved as we moved from in-person to online.

Teaching Presence

Because I have been teaching online for about 20 years, I was fortunate to have firsthand experience with strategies to increase teaching presence and to design a remote course that allowed for a good educational experience for students. Because many of the students’ lives changed so much with regard to work and childcare schedules, I made all aspects of the course asynchronous so as to maximize

flexibility. This included recorded lectures, “how to” videos, recreation of projects that allowed us to incorporate responses to the pandemic, and critical-thinking discussion boards. These strategies allowed me to leverage the technologies that students had available to them while still maintaining the student learning outcomes. Of course, not all students were able to access the technology. Some students did not have computers at home and some students lost their internet access.

Epilogue

Now that a semester has elapsed since pivoting to remote delivery, I have had an opportunity to reflect on the design and delivery of the course. With regard to teaching and cognitive presence, I am satisfied with the outcomes and likely would not make any major changes to the course. With regard to social presence, however, I would have incorporated more “checking in” activities. For example, in a similar (upper level) course that was unexpectedly delivered online in the fall semester, I included a “mental and physical health” discussion topic in the LMS that allowed me and students to check in on one another, share our thoughts and feelings about the pandemic and social unrest, and offer some ways to improve both mental and physical health. The inclusion of this discussion board seemed to improve social presence in the course.

Transferring an Evening Face-to-Face Introduction to Sociology Class to Online

The Course

The face-to-face course Gina Petonito transitioned online was a 2.5-hr evening introduction to sociology course, a time that catered to students with jobs and families. Common features of my face-to-face classes include an in-class game and an out-of-class experiential learning exercise, scaffolded group assignments leading to an individual final paper, and in-class discussions, quizzes, and tests. The class usually consists of traditional and nontraditional-age undergraduates, and College Credit Plus high school students.

Social Presence

I have two approaches to designing discussion boards to facilitate social presence. The first type, which I call a typical post-and-respond board, is where students post their answer to the instructor prompt and then respond to one or two students. The second type consists of two parts: a completion-grade discussion and a second discussion where students select their colleagues’ responses from the completion-graded posts and engage with them (see Petonito, 2018). I find that this format pushes students to interact with their peers at both a cognitive and a social level. I mostly used the traditional post-and-respond discussion board throughout the class. I did employ the second type for discussion on the out-of-class experiential exercise to serve as a facsimile of in-class discussion.

Social presence online is facilitated when students have already met face-to-face. Friendship groups have formed, and one challenge the instructor faces is having students engage with colleagues outside their groups. I noticed this happening in the discussion sections of my course, and I tried to increase my facilitation. In addition to greater teaching presence via instructor facilitation, a heightened instructor social presence could encourage broader discussion (see Oyarzun, Barreto, & Conklin, 2018).

Cognitive Presence

A narrated PowerPoint lecture served as the main triggering event, supplemented by a film or video. Students explored new ideas and integrated what they learned in the discussion boards. The main vehicle for integration and resolution was the final paper. I provided applications of COVID-19 to course concepts in the lectures, to assist them with their analysis. Scaffolding continued with paragraph-long essays in their tests. After my corrections, they transferred these to their final papers with minimal editing.

Student performance was consistent with other face-to-face classes that I taught, except for the assigned ethnography. Students appeared to engage in a copycat critique of the book, rather than grapple with the author's sensitive and nuanced portrayal of Bedouin women. If I were to teach this book again online, I would provide a more comprehensive PowerPoint introduction and craft my discussion questions to help students become more careful and critical readers.

Teaching Presence

An online instructor since 2013, I completed the campus online training program and took advantage of numerous workshops and faculty learning communities. When the university requested the pivot to online, I knew I had decisions to make. The first was creating an asynchronous course to ease students' possible increased work and family responsibilities. The next decisions involved transforming or eliminating class assignments. I canceled the classroom game and group work, because of the short time to plan for technology and logistics. I reluctantly switched the group paper assignment to an individual one but retained the scaffolding. To prevent cheating or canned papers, I had students apply course concepts to the COVID-19 pandemic rather than an individually selected topic. Discussion boards replaced the in-class discussions, and PowerPoints replaced the lectures. I narrated the PowerPoints via Screencast-o-matic, a screencasting and video editing software tool, and uploaded them to YouTube. I provided new content every Wednesday evening. Discussion boards were due on Thursdays and graded assignments were due on Fridays.

Facilitation occurred in two ways. First, I arranged for a synchronous meeting right after spring break that nearly every student attended. I provided reasons for the changes and solicited suggestions. They offered several: a timeline for paper completion and a timeline on the syllabus. Second, I communicated with students throughout the course. I posted announcements with reminders. I responded to every discussion post and assignment and answered emails promptly.

Epilogue

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted me in ways I could never have foreseen. In an austerity measure, our university terminated about 200 faculty. I was one of them and was forced into early retirement. Despite this setback, I continued my interest in online learning and I am working on a product that I will offer to middle, high school, and college students as an independent contractor. Freed from the conventions of college teaching, I am exploring an exciting new proprietary approach to online education, pioneered by Marisa Murgatroyd, called "experiencification" (see Costanzo, 2019). Experiencification focuses on stacking 10 techniques that capture and hook your students' attention and lead them through a series of wins, toward the ultimate learning outcome. I am blending the community of inquiry approach, with its emphasis on the three presences, with experiencification techniques in developing my new online course on academic writing and editing. I hope to discern how such techniques applied in an academic online learning environment impact retention rates and learning outcomes. I believe experiencification, if properly applied to higher education pedagogy, has

the potential to revolutionize online instruction.

Pivoting From Face-to-Face to Remote Teaching in an Introductory Sociology Course

The Course

The course Kay Mann will be discussing was an introductory sociology survey course of approximately 35 students. Like in most courses on our campus, these students were first-generation college students drawn from the local rural, White, blue-collar population along with a few students of color. There were also a few students, including international students, from our university's main campus. Most students in the class were women. The pedagogical framework of the course in its face-to-face version consisted of class-wide discussions and small group discussions based on class readings and PowerPoint presentations. To promote student engagement, learning, and intellectual rigor as we pivoted to the remote delivery mode, I chose a semisynchronous format to accommodate my students with work and child care responsibilities that might be presenting logistical challenges to their course engagement.

Social Presence

Under the new conditions, I wanted to keep to our biweekly schedule in a way that would assure the type of engagement that a 3-hr course should entail while accommodating the social realities facing many students in the realms of work, home, shifting schedules, and access to computers and reliable internet connections.

The connecting communicative tissue between myself, the students, and course material was the LMS announcement function that I used to (a) introduce the current topic, (b) point the students to PowerPoint presentations, and (c) explain discussion board assignments and/or short reflection papers that constituted the class material for a given topic. I used the expression "in-class" to emphasize that these exercises were the equivalent of the type of biweekly class activities that we would do had we still been meeting face-to-face.

The discussion board activities that came to play an increasingly central role in the "in-class" activities provided a social presence that linked students to each other in ways that built on and went beyond their prepandemic large- and small-group interactions. The on-line discussion boards were sites where these were both continued and expanded as students interacted directly with a wider group of students than they had with face-to-face small-group activities. These on-line intellectual interactions and exchanges were designed to not only give force and relevance to sociology's insights, but also help students see social aspects of their fellow students that they had not encountered in the face-to-face format. These interactions had the potential to foster a deeper understanding between students, helping them see each other as what Garrison et al. (2000) called "real people" (p. 89).

Cognitive Presence

The very conditions imposed by the pandemic brought out in bold relief the nature of sociology as a social science with powerful tools of social analysis. Among the remaining assignments in the spring semester following the transition to remote delivery were analyses of *New York Times* articles on current events through the lens of sociological concepts and theories that were often highly relevant to students' lives. This allowed me to clearly guide students along the intellectual paths of application and synthesis.

Teaching Presence

I call the course delivery format semisynchronous because class activities were made available and due on the same days as the course was scheduled to meet, but with an expanded submission window beginning several hours before the official scheduled start of the 1-hr 20-min course and ending several hours after the end of the class. The activities, including short readings and the viewing of videos, were designed to be completed in the course's 1-hr 20-min time period. There were no thematic changes to the course following the move to remote learning; the syllabus remained the same, and papers were due on the originally scheduled date, as were the online quizzes that were already part of the course in its face-to-face format. I drew on my experience that I had acquired teaching online to integrate discussion boards into the course, which I have never used outside of structured online courses. I quickly realized that my existing PowerPoints were unequal to the needs of the remote format. At first, I enhanced the written content on the slides to make them "free standing." After several weeks, I added voice-over commentary to the slides. The combined visual and oral dimensions of these PowerPoint presentations made them close asynchronous approximations of face-to-face presentations.

Epilogue

Like my colleague, fellow sociologist, and coauthor on this article, Gina Petonito, I was one of the 200 faculty laid off by our university's austerity drive in the spring of 2020. As a result, I did not teach in the fall 2020 semester. However, I was rehired by our university in an adjunct capacity and at another university for the spring 2021 semester. As I prepared for those courses, I reflected on my experiences from the spring 2020 semester and the varied approaches by my coauthors on this article. In retrospect, it seems that my semisynchronous approach discussed above had the merit of promoting intellectual rigor and fostering student interaction through peer response commentary. However, I now feel that the social presence dimension of COI suffered from the lack of simultaneous visual interaction. In the spring 2021 semester, I intend to alternate my semisynchronous approach with live, real-time teaching through Zoom or other video-conferencing platforms to reinforce the social presence dimension of my remote teaching.

Pivoting a 5-Contact-Hour Writing and Research Methods in Psychology Course to a Remote Format

The Course

The course Barbara Oswald pivoted to online was Writing and Research Methods in Psychology, a 200-level required course in our curriculum. Students use theory to develop a testable hypothesis, then design, conduct, analyze using SPSS, interpret, report in American Psychological Association (APA) format, and present the results of a factorial experiment.

It is noteworthy that there is much trepidation among students regarding this class. The course has a reputation of being difficult and time consuming. Many students struggle with the requisite writing, and others do not have access to the hardware and software needed, specifically a computer with SPSS, Word, and Excel. To minimize the impact of unequal access, the class is taught in a computer lab on campus and meets 5 hr per week.

Closing campus due to the pandemic had the potential to devastate this class. In less than 24 hr, students had to get access to a computer, software, reliable internet, and time to work on the class

despite increased caregiver and possibly work responsibilities. The university provided software but was not able to provide internet access or laptops to all who needed them.

Social Presence

To maintain social presence, we continued synchronous class meetings. The decision was made upon overwhelming requests from student, who expressed concerns about success as we moved online. Knowing that changing responsibilities meant few students could attend 5 hr each week, I scheduled 1-hr meetings twice weekly. Most of the class ($n = 30$) was able to connect most of the time, though a number did with phones, not computers. I thought the class would tire of synchronous meetings quickly, but they did not. I suspect it is because the class was learning new skills during these meetings, as opposed to seeing a lecture. Students regularly logged in and stayed the entire session, though without video or audio. This was a normative effect: Once a few students logged in without audio and video, all students followed suit. This substantially decreased social presence. I tried increasing social presence by posting questions to answer through the chat function, either about the course or daily life in quarantine. This did little to improve social presence, though—very few students responded. To increase social presence, in the future I would require students to ask and answer questions through the chat function to earn class points. I would not recommend requiring either video or audio, as many of our students either do not have devices to support that technology or are not comfortable sharing that very personal information about the place where they connect.

Cognitive Presence

To maintain cognitive presence, triggering events were assignments posted to the course LMS. To mimic the experience of our face-to-face class, I used synchronous class meetings to teach the skills needed to complete the triggering events, such as analyzing data with SPSS, creating graphs with Excel, and writing in APA format. I am unclear whether these synchronous sessions helped increase cognitive presence. While they certainly helped students accomplish the ample work in the class, I cannot verify that students took time to think through what they were doing and why, versus just mimicking what I demonstrated in the meeting. To minimize student frustration and feelings of abandonment during the pandemic, I found myself asking students to share their screens as I talked them through each keystroke. This “help” likely minimized metacognition, that is, thinking about the information and connecting it to other knowledge to encourage deep processing. In the future, I would use small-group breakout rooms for students to work collaboratively before offering help.

Teaching Presence

To maintain teaching presence, I sent reminders through the announcement function of the LMS reminding students what they should do to prepare for class. I also recorded 10- to 15-min screencasts of lectures students could watch on their own. I spent a *lot* of time meeting individually with students. Of those contacts, I believe the daily announcements and individual meetings were the most successful. The video lectures received few views. In the future, I would quiz students on the content to encourage greater engagement with the video lectures.

Epilogue

In fall 2020, the course was offered fully online with no scheduled meetings. To facilitate social, teaching, and cognitive presence fully online, I created multiple required discussions each week. Some

were specific about course content, but at least one each week was an invitation to pose questions or observations about the readings, the course, and life during the pandemic. I responded to every one of these reflection posts on the discussion board and awarded points to students for also participating. Feedback from some students confirmed that these posts did help facilitate social and teaching presence, as students felt they could connect with me and others in a somewhat informal way through the discussion board. Student comments also confirmed that the discussions facilitated teaching and cognitive presence, as students appreciated the opportunity to ask and see answers to their own and others' questions on the discussion board for the duration of the semester. Nonetheless, an important lesson learned between spring and fall semesters is that students do better in this class with at least some synchronous meeting time, specifically for assistance with analyzing data and creating graphs. Faculty might consider scheduling the course with some required synchronous meeting time (perhaps 1 or 2 hr) each week.

Remote Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic for a Senior Research Assistant

The Course

In spring 2020, my undergraduate research assistants and I (Camilla McMahon) had several goals planned for the semester, including an in-person data collection project. When our university abruptly switched to remote instruction, we, as a research lab, needed to think creatively about how to pivot our goals for the semester. Meghan, a senior research assistant in the lab, had committed to a large number of research hours for the spring semester, planning to take the lead on data collection for our project. With the pivot to remote instruction, we could not safely continue in-person data collection. So, we developed a new vision for Meghan's work in the research lab: Meghan and I would co-design a new research study for the lab, and Meghan would take the lead in designing this study. In our pivot to remote learning, we both modified the method of delivery for this course (face-to-face to online) *and* shifted the learning focus to more advanced research processes (data collection to study design).

Social Presence

When I suggested that Meghan change the focus of her research efforts from data collection to study design, she expressed emotions of both excitement and nervousness. She felt that the first steps of designing the study were the most challenging, as it was difficult to know where and how to begin this new project. As Meghan embarked upon this endeavor, we maintained open communication via emails and video conference calls. We met via video conference call approximately once per week, with a meeting schedule that was consistent but flexible. This structure gave Meghan an opportunity to regularly check in with a mentor, as well as the freedom to work, innovate and, even, make mistakes, on her own. The flexible schedule and the decrease in time spent commuting to campus also allowed Meghan to increase her work hours as an essential employee during the pandemic.

Cognitive Presence

Before the pivot to remote instruction, Meghan had a lot of experience with research. She had been a research assistant in the lab for 3 years and had been involved in a variety of research tasks, from participant recruitment to building Qualtrics surveys to coding qualitative data. The opportunity to design a new study, though, was a triggering event for Meghan, prompting her to think deeply about how to develop a study that would significantly extend the research literature. She explored the current literature, brainstorming a variety of innovative research ideas. Together, we selected a specific idea

for Meghan to develop in greater methodological detail. When designing this study, Meghan integrated her past experiences in the research lab, thinking carefully about how questionnaires and stimuli from previous studies could be adapted for use in the current study. She also gained experience in operationalizing new constructs that she wanted to measure and critically evaluating how well different assessments captured these constructs. As the focus of Meghan's work shifted from data collection to study design, the cognitive dimensions of her work were elevated to the "create" domain of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, the highest level of cognitive thought (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). At the end of the spring semester, we had not fully resolved all of the methodological details of the study, so at Meghan's initiation, we continued to meet informally throughout the summer to discuss the remaining study details.

Teaching Presence

In terms of instructional management, Meghan and I worked together to break the large goal of study design into smaller steps, such as identifying the independent and dependent variables and generating the hypotheses. We established an iterative framework for facilitating instructor/student discourse about the study design: Meghan would work independently on the next steps of the project and email me a synthesis of her work. Then, I would review this work and provide Meghan with written feedback. Finally, Meghan and I would discuss the feedback together on a video conference call, providing an opportunity for more detailed direct instruction. At the end of the conference call, we would generate the next steps for the research project and a target timeline for completing those steps.

Epilogue

Meghan began graduate school for school psychology in the fall semester, and many of the skills that she learned during this independent study have helped her successfully transition to graduate school. For example, as a result of this independent study, she is now more cognitively engaged when reading scholarly journal articles, endeavoring not only to understand a study, but also to think critically about next steps for that program of research. In addition, she now seeks feedback from mentors and classmates in graduate school, after experiencing how constructive criticism and directed questions can facilitate the development of clear and creative research ideas. Before she began graduate school, Meghan and I discussed next steps for the research project, thinking carefully about how to balance her desire to stay involved with the research project with her need to prioritize new graduate school responsibilities. Today, several of my current research assistants are continuing work on this project; Meghan and I stay in communication about the project; and Meghan is applying the research design principles that she learned as a senior research assistant to a new study: her master's thesis in school psychology.

Conclusion

The sudden necessary pivot to remote learning during the second week of March, 2020 offered many challenges, but many opportunities to explore course materials in ways that furthered the teaching of both the specifics of our disciplines and the critical learning skills that we as liberal arts professors work to nourish among our students. By applying a COI framework, we were able to achieve a synthesis of teaching methods from our face-to-face and online courses in ways that we had not imagined before the university shut down. By infusing social, cognitive, and teaching presence into our newly pivoted courses, we attempted to lessen some of the inequality gap exacerbated by the pandemic.

The lessons we learned as we pivoted to remote learning in the midst of a pandemic helped strengthen our courses then, as well as moving forward. These are some of the lessons learned:

- Pay ample attention to social presence so that students have a sense that you care about them and their well-being.
- When hosting synchronous virtual meetings, maintain cognitive presence by giving students ample time to think through problems on their own before providing answers. Virtual meetings lack many environmental cues typical of a face-to-face classroom, which can make it difficult to ascertain whether students are working through problems, stuck, or off-task.
- Carefully consider student needs when choosing synchronous, asynchronous, or semisynchronous delivery formats.
- Students can provide valuable suggestions that can help with teaching facilitation. Provide opportunities for them to give such feedback.
- Standard teaching methods often used in face-to-face settings such as PowerPoint presentations can be effectively adapted to the needs of remote delivery.
- Unexpected events can introduce creative mentoring and learning opportunities that may not have been realized in a typical semester. When the unexpected happens, stay agile and be open to new ideas, even if they are quite different from the original plan for that course or independent study.

In all, we believe that our efforts to infuse social, cognitive, and teaching presence in our newly pivoted courses not only strengthened the courses but challenged us in ways that improved our course design and delivery. As scholarly teachers, we all tended to focus course design and delivery on cognitive and teaching presence, as we know that using sound pedagogical strategies leads to effective learning. But most of the lessons we learned revolved around strategies to improve social presence, which is indeed consistent with our focus on learner-centered teaching (e.g., Weimer, 2002). Across all of the different courses that we described here, focusing on how the student is learning, what the student is learning, and especially the conditions under which the student is learning is of tantamount importance.

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