Instructor Social Presence and Connectedness in a Quick Shift from Face-to-Face to Online Instruction

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About us

• Sheri Conklin, Ed.D
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• Associate Professor, UNCW
• Department of Educational Leadership
• Research focus on social presence in online learning, professional development of teachers, teacher leadership
Background: Teaching Presence
Background: Instructor Social Presence
Research Questions

Which aspects of courses were deemed successful by students as keeping them connected to their instructor, content, and peers?

Which instructional practices were deemed most important for their satisfaction in the course that shifted to an online learning environment?

What recommendations can be made for faculty new to online learning or shifting face-to-face classes to an online environment to build community and connectedness in their classes?
About our study

• Cross-sectional survey design
• Anonymous online survey of representative sample of 6000 undergraduate and graduate students taking face-to-face classes that transitioned online due to COVID-19
• 432 students responded (7%)
• Survey conducted after evaluation period for Spring 2020

Specifically, we asked students to focus on a class that was successful in keeping them in touch with their instructor, content, and peers.
Participants

- 94 Males
- 317 Females
- 354 Undergraduates
- 56 Master
- 3 Doctorate
- 3 Certificate
- 2 Post Baccalaureate
Analysis

- Descriptive statistics
- Established and emergent coding
Results

- Connectedness
- Instructor responsiveness
- Empathic facilitation
- Online Teaching Best Practices
Connectedness
Instructor Responsiveness
Empathic Facilitation
Online Teaching Best Practices
Key Takeaway: Instructor responsiveness

“Professor consistently reached out and offered opportunities to talk and ask questions.”

“My instructor would email back very fast, answer any of my questions, and also continuously sent out weekly announcements to address what was due at the end of the week.”
Key Takeaway: Empathic facilitation

“My instructors were very accommodating and understood students were having to homeschool their own children while trying to complete their own graduate work and work from home (employment).”

“She was extremely understanding and helpful. She wanted us to succeed and still understand the material but knew that we were facing a lot of changes and stressors.”
Key Takeaway: Online teaching best practices

“We were supposed to have debates in class and did not get the chance. Luckily, the debates turned into discussion boards where you had to pick a side of the argument and respond to other people who you agreed/ disagreed with. It allowed me to understand the material better and was a fun way to have a form of contact with my peers.”

“The organization from my teacher and the simplicity/straight forwardness of the course layout made the transition extremely smooth. He provided reminders for upcoming due dates and video instructions for things we did not cover in class ... He also had an updated syllabus/course modules in a timely manner where it was easy to identify changes.”
• COVID
• Low response rate
• Timing of survey
Next Steps

• Faculty interviews
• Student Survey
• Student Interviews
Questions