Special Issue on “Social Presence and Identity in Online Learning”

Social Presence is a multi-faceted and complicated construct (see Biocca et al., 2003; Lombard & Ditto, 1997) that dates back to the 1970s (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976). Short et al. originally defined social presence as the degree of salience (i.e., quality or state of being there) between two communicators using a communication medium, arguing that media differ in their degree of social presence, influencing how people interact. During the 1990s, as online education grew, researchers began to notice that computer-mediated discourse (CMC) can be social, interpersonal (Gunawardena, 1995; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997), and at times even hyperpersonal (Walther, 1996). Online educators even began to argue that social presence is a key component to educational experiences (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000).

While the majority of research on social presence is grounded in the Community of Inquiry framework (see Diaz, Swan, Ice, & Kupczynski, 2010; Lowenthal, 2009; Rourke & Kanuka, 2009), researchers over the years have investigated social presence from various perspectives (e.g., Bronack et al., 2008; Caspi & Blau, 2008; Gunawardena, 1995; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Keengwe, Adjej-Boateng, & Diteeyont, 2012; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Rogers & Lea, 2005; Tu, 2001, 2002a, 2002b). Regardless of perspective, very few researchers—besides a few notable exceptions (e.g., Dennen, 2007; Rogers & Leas, 2005)—have focused on the role of identity when investigating how people establish themselves as “real” and “there” in online learning environments. Identity, like presence, is a complex topic (see Buckingham, 2007; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Hughes & Oliver, 2010). Identity is dynamic (Côté & Levine, 2002); people develop multiple identities (Gee, 2003), which shift and are influenced by cultural practices (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Identity is performed by the individual, communicated primarily via visual (e.g., avatars and photos) and textual cues (e.g., user names, profiles, writing style or voice). However, it’s also negotiated via discursive positioning (Dennen, 2007, 2011; Harré and van Langenhove, 1999) with other participants, who engage reciprocal membership categorization based on the identity cues that are provided (Schegloff, 2007).

This special issue focused on social presence and identity will bring together researchers working in these two areas and, in turn, various perspectives (e.g., CoI framework as well as others), whether focused on formal or informal learning, and whether situated in private or public discourse contexts.

Possible Topics:
We invite articles that investigate the interaction of social presence and identity in various online learning contexts, including but not limited to the following:

- Development of social presence and identity in online classes
- Effects of instructor social presence and identity on learning
- Effects of learner social presence and identity on peer engagement and community development
- The relationship between performed identity and level of social presence
- Differences in how identity and social presence are conveyed across categories of tools
- Effects of learning tool interface and features on the development of social presence and identity
- Social presence and individual identity vs. group identity
- Social presence, identity, and context
- Social presence, identity, and social media
- Instructor social presence, identity, and use of media
Those interested should email a 300-500 word proposal outlining the focus of the proposed manuscript to Patrick Lowenthal (patricklowenthal@boisestate.edu) and Vanessa Dennen (vdennen@fsu.edu) by June 13th 2016.

**Important Dates**
June 13th 2016: Deadline for Proposals
June 18th 2016: Invited authors will be notified
September 16th: Full articles due to guest editors
November 30th: Notifications of acceptance
January 6th: Revised articles due
May 2017: Expected publication

**Guest Editors**
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**References**


