

Online Focus Groups: Selecting a Platform

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Reality Check



It's not necessarily easy...
but it *may* be worth it!

The more things change...



Photo credits: U of M Libraries, Charles Babbage Institute; <http://purl.umn.edu/87734>

The Cowan Three; http://thecowanthree.blogspot.com/2008_09_01_archive.html

Synchronous vs. Asynchronous

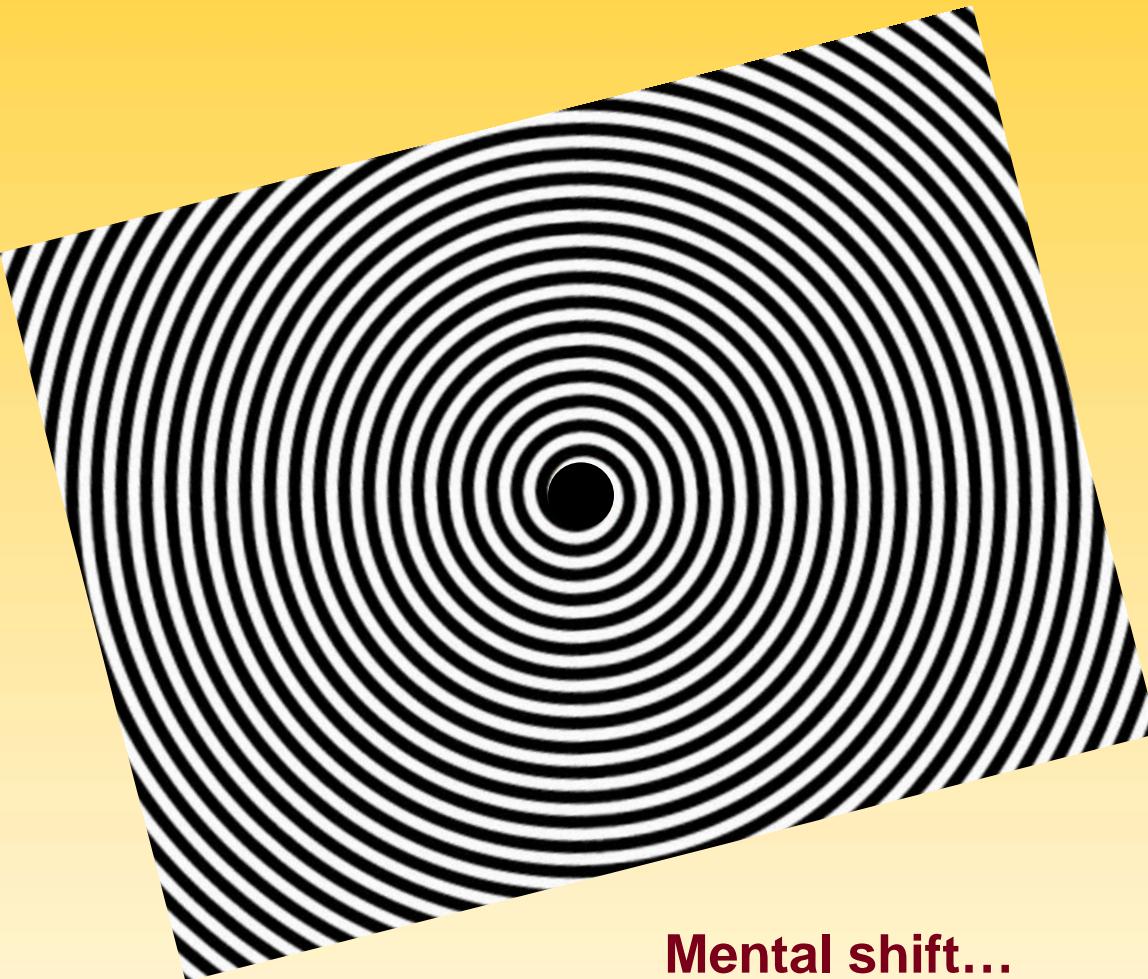


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High social presence vs. Low social presence



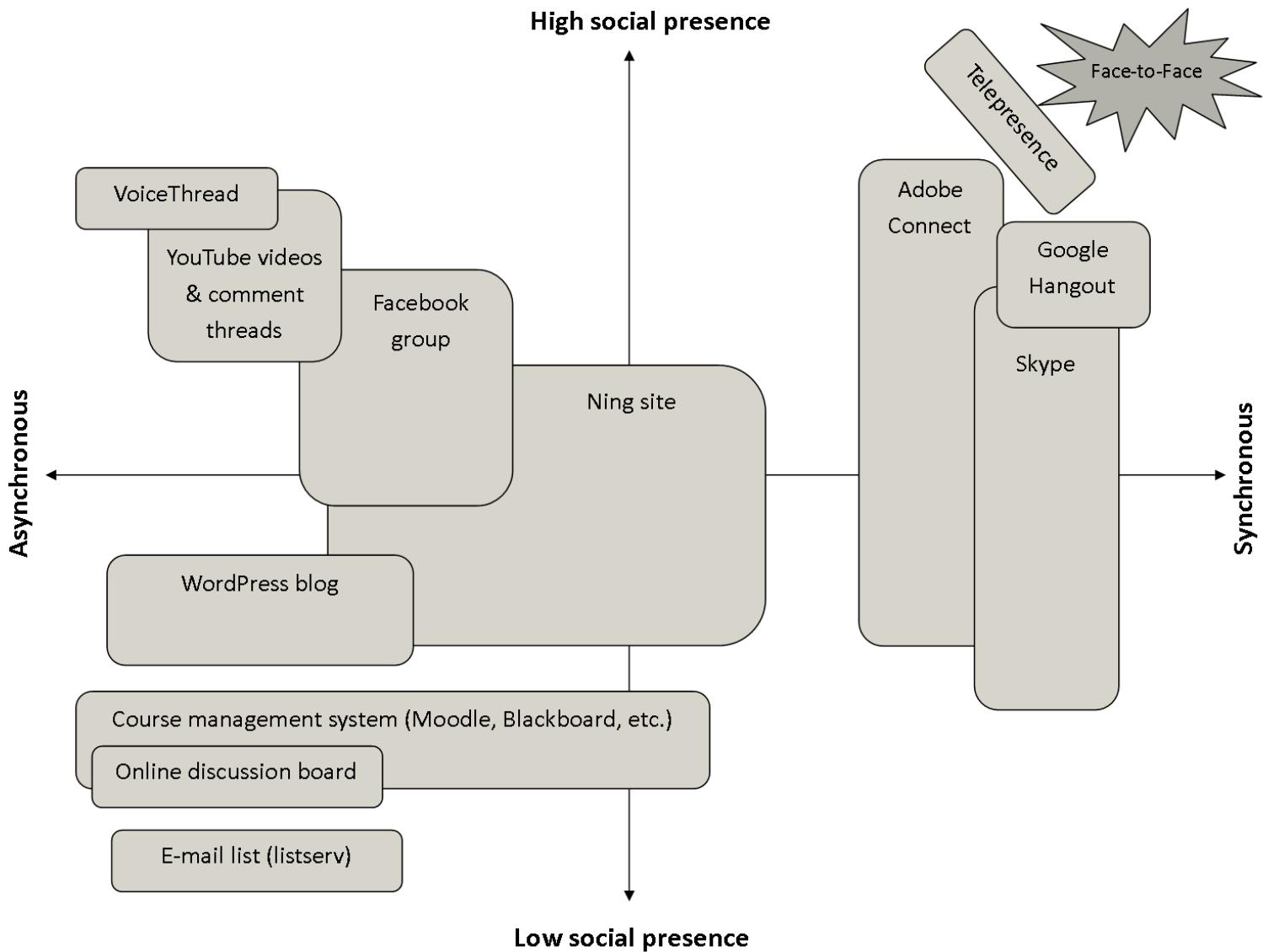
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Mental shift...

Face-to-Face no longer takes center stage—
embrace the possibilities!

The “Time-Space Continuum”



Synchronous (online at the same time)

- approximates the flow of face-to-face conversation
- good for back-and-forth discussion
- participants may feel rushed, or lose the conversation thread

Asynchronous (online at different times)

- scheduling flexibility
- longer-term discussion, longer reflection and response time
- more time to resolve technical issues: no fast, in-the-moment troubleshooting



High social presence (voice/video)	Low social presence (text-based)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• requires access to fast Internet speeds• not anonymous• preserves differences in physical appearance, age, gender, ethnicity, etc.• transmits non-verbal and emotional cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• works with slower Internet speeds• high degree of participant confidentiality and/or anonymity possible• can “mask” differences in physical appearance, age, gender, ethnicity, etc.• easily-exportable transcripts

The Supporting Infrastructure

- Internet Bandwidth
- Anonymity and Confidentiality
- Moderator Resources & Technological Expertise
- Recording/Archiving Capabilities
- Cost
- Built-In Flexibility



Cost

Free	Low-Cost	High-Cost / Institutional Subscription
WordPress	Skype (Premium)	Adobe Connect
YouTube	Ning	Course management system (Moodle, Blackboard, etc.)
Google Hangout	VoiceThread	Telepresence
Facebook group	Online discussion board	
E-mail list		



Online focus groups: embracing new opportunities of...

TIME AND SPACE