

# Fostering a Sense of Community in an Online Classroom Setting

Venecia Williams & Christine Pitt

Vancouver Community College

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# Agenda



- Introduction
- Community of Inquiry Framework
- Class activity as community building exercise
- Student impact
- Future implications

# Introduction: The Impact of Online Learning

- Switch to online learning has led to an increase in social isolation
- Students are lacking socialization within and *between* cohorts
- International students are likely to face increased feelings of isolation and loneliness
- Research found students with no preexisting mental health concerns were likely to experience greater mental distress than students with preexisting concerns (*Hamza et al., 2020*)
- Research recommends creating more opportunities to imitate in-person interaction among students online (*McKenzie-Sutter, 2020*)



How can we promote social  
interaction among  
students in an online  
classroom setting?

# The Community of Inquiry Model

(Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 1999)

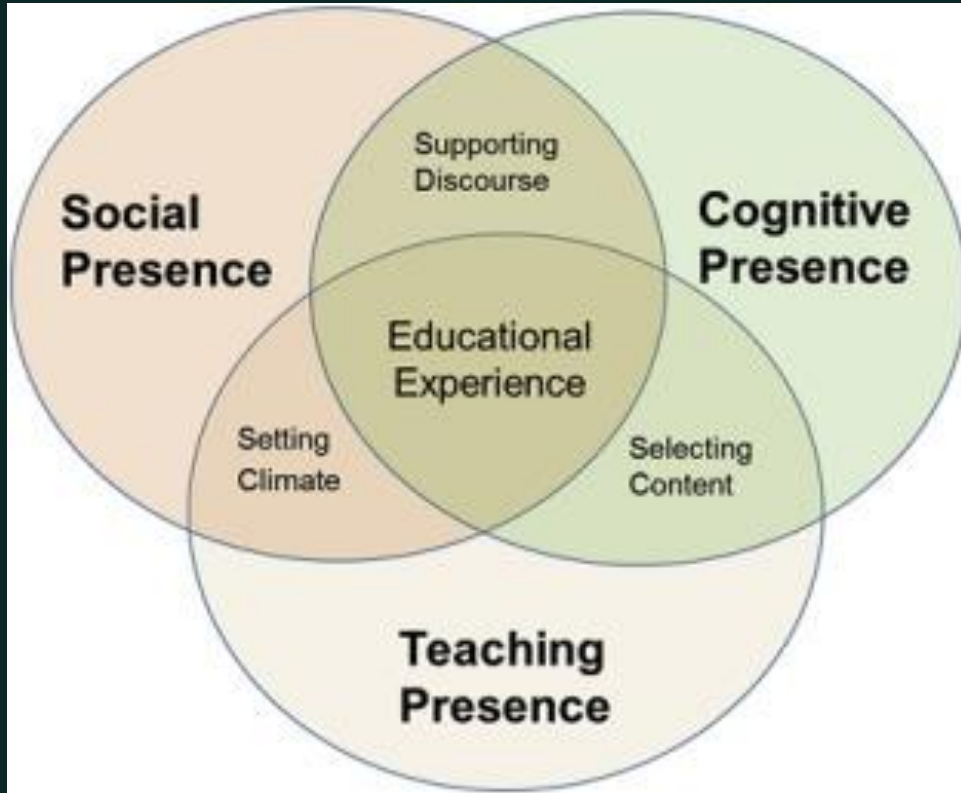
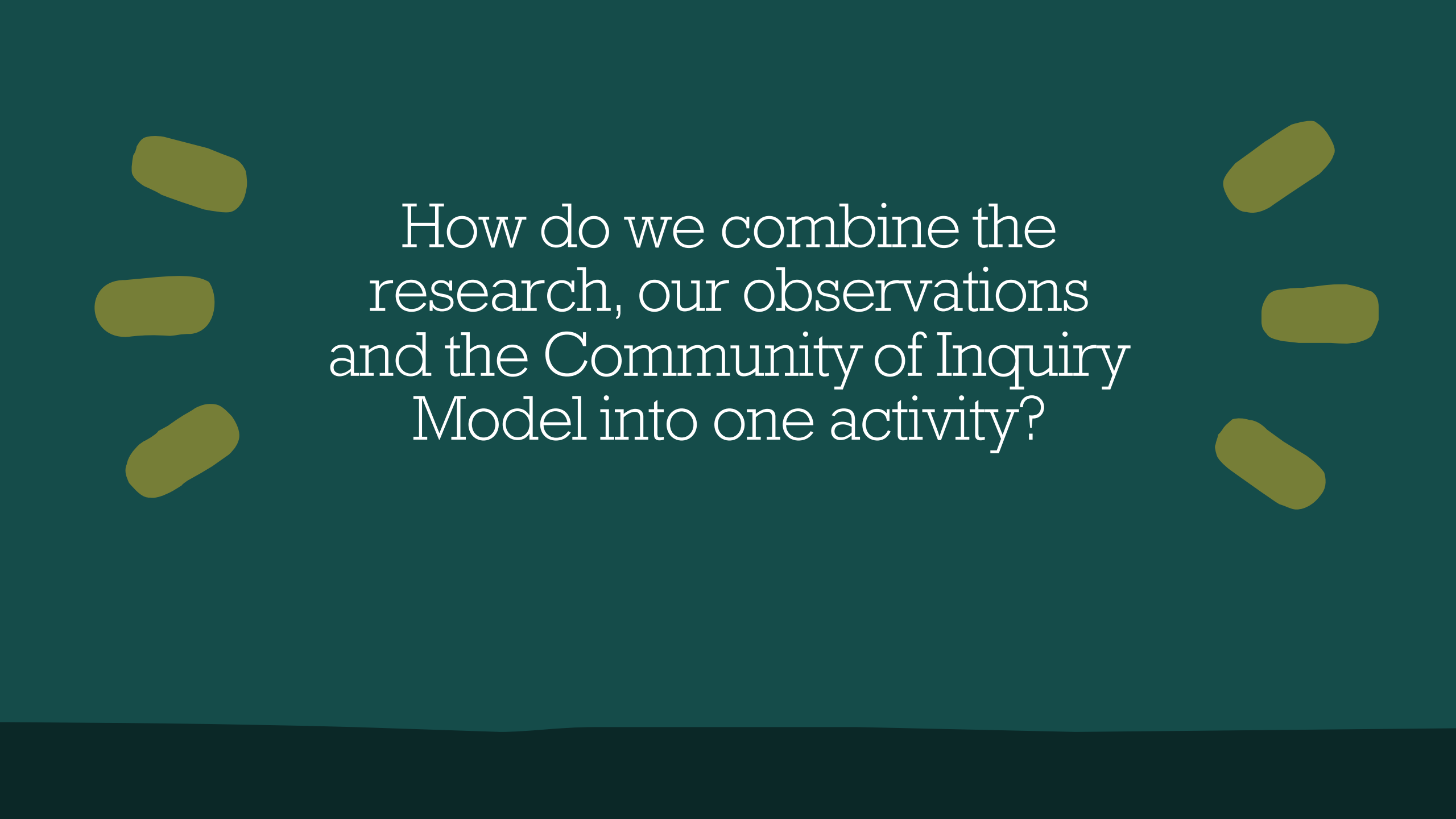


Figure 1. Elements of an Educational Experience (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 1999, p. 88)

- Outlines three essential elements that create a successful higher education online learning environment
  - Cognitive presence
  - Social presence
  - Teacher presence

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How do we combine the  
research, our observations  
and the Community of Inquiry  
Model into one activity?



# Fostering Community through Class Activities

- Using an online escape room activity to deliver course content
- Intentionally created groups to facilitate socialization between cohorts
  - Replicating in-person socialization that would happen on campus
- Utilized breakout rooms on Zoom
- Instructor led warm up and post activity discussion

# Escape Room & Community of Inquiry

## COGNITIVE PRESENCE

- Students provided an opportunity to critically engage with topic
- Students reflect on experience in groups and individually

## SOCIAL PRESENCE

- Students work together to achieve goal
- Students given opportunity to express own ideas and make decisions

## TEACHER PRESENCE

- Designing and explaining activity
- Supporting students throughout activity
- Directing discussion and providing feedback

# Student Impact

- Positive Class Engagement
  - Excitement on entering the room and seeing students from a different cohort
  - Active engagement in both pre and post discussions
- Student Reflection Feedback
  - Reflection questions directed at general experience and course concepts
  - Students enjoyed spending time with students from other cohorts and liked engaging in a fun activity

# Future Implications: How can you implement the COI Model in your online classroom?

- Key questions to consider when designing class activities:

Social  
Presence

- How can your students collaborate with each other over course content?
- How can you promote open communication and emotional expression to build relationships?

Cognitive  
Presence

- How can you encourage students to explore a problem together?

Teacher  
Presence

- How can you actively facilitate open discussions?

# Key Takeaways

- We learned how much students miss seeing each other
- Newer students were happy to interact with a new cohort
- Our students want more activities like this
- Students appreciate the opportunity to discuss and communicate with each other

# Thank You!

## Questions?

[vwilliams@vcc.ca](mailto:vwilliams@vcc.ca)

[cpitt@vcc.ca](mailto:cpitt@vcc.ca)

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