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When Communicative Worlds Collide: Strategies for Negotiating Misalignments in Attentional Social Presence

Jeanine Warisse Turner [1,*] and Sonja K. Foss [2]

[1] Communication, Culture & Technology Program, The McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20057, USA
[2] Department of Communication, University of Colorado Denver, Denver, CO 80204, USA; sonja.foss@ucdenver.edu
* Correspondence: turnerjw@georgetown.edu

Abstract: A significant issue facing communicators in the current multicommunicative environment is securing the attention of potential audience members who are likely to be engrossed in their digital devices. The theory of attentional social presence suggests that communicators secure their attention using one of four types of social presence—budgeted, competitive, entitled, and invitational. In this essay, the theory of attentional social presence is extended by identifying strategies interactants use to resolve misalignments in expected or preferred types of social presence. The research design involved interviews with 32 individuals about their experiences with misalignment in attentional social presence. Transcripts of the interviews were coded following the qualitative approach of grounded theory. Three primary strategies emerged from the analysis—prescribing to eliminate misalignment, rationalizing to overlook misalignment, and co-creating to resolve misalignment. Understanding various methods for negotiating mismatches among chosen types of social presence will allow communicators to create more satisfying and productive interactions.

Keywords: social presence; attentional social presence; multicommunicating; alignment; matching; mismatching; congruence; coordination; digital devices; mobile technologies

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1. Introduction

The advent of portable communication devices such as cell phones, smartwatches, and iPads has transformed the practice of communication in dramatic ways. Because these devices allow individuals to multicommunicate, engaging in multiple conversations simultaneously [1], communicators now must assume that all potential interactants have access to other conversations. In fact, they probably do. Approximately 97% of Americans own a cell phone, and about 85% own a smartphone [2]. Those who own smartphones spend an average of almost five hours a day on them [3]; indeed, 82% of smartphone users never turn them off [4]. The plethora of terms that have been developed to capture the hold that digital devices have suggests the difficulty individuals face as they seek to interact with others. Among these are the terms *phubbing*, the act of snubbing someone in a social setting by focusing on the phone rather than on a face-to-face conversation [5,6]; *smartphone orientation*, individuals' interactions with their smartphones that are performed consistently as part of their lifestyles [7]; *nomophobia*, the fear of being separated from a cell phone [8]; *technostress*, the inability to cope with the demands of mobile instant messaging apps [9]; and *social media fatigue*, negative emotional responses to activities on social networking sites such as burnout, exhaustion, frustration, and disinterest toward communication [10].

Even the norms surrounding communication use are changing rapidly as access to technology and wireless signals continues to expand. An initial study that found that the mere presence of a phone during a conversation affects relational quality [11] was not replicated in a later study [12]. In a growing number of contexts, the norm has become that the practice of multicommunicating is appropriate and even expected.

Many communication practices that have been theorized in the communication discipline now must be reconsidered as a result of mobile technologies. The construct of social presence in particular has undergone a substantial shift as a result of mobile technologies. Initially defined as "the degree of salience of the other person in the interaction" [13], social presence as a construct has changed with the practice of multicommunicating. One way in which social presence is now defined refers to the ways communicators must make themselves salient or present in the communicative space of another to secure audience involvement in an interaction [14]. To address the need for communicators to secure attention prior to an interaction, Turner and Foss [14–17] theorized a new form of social presence—attentional social presence—as a means of allowing communicators to insert themselves into the communicative space of others and thus to secure their attention. Our goal in this essay is to extend the earlier theorizing of attentional social presence by identifying and explicating the strategies interlocutors use to negotiate misalignments in expectations for social presence.

We see the issue of social presence as fundamentally an ontological issue related to Heidegger's notion of the human individual conceptualized as "being-in-the-world" [18]. We posit that smart phones remove individuals from the social space in which they are physically located and insert them into another space or reality that comes into existence through the use of the smart phone. As social constructionists, we believe all worlds are socially constructed [19], so we are not suggesting that the world in which individuals are physically present is more real, authentic, or significant than the world created via smart phones. Both realities are relational in that they are continually being negotiated, filtered, and thus co-constructed by the joint actions of social actors. The issue with which we are dealing arises because of the clear distinction between these two worlds or realities, which requires that humans almost continuously toggle back and forth between them, contending with dramatically different ways of being in the world, options for constructing and experiencing reality, and ways of being present to others. Our essay addresses the mechanisms individuals choose for coordinating and negotiating these often ambiguous spaces with others in order to communicate.

2. Theoretical Framework

Our study is informed by two theoretical antecedents—social presence and alignment. We turn now to overviews of the literature on these two constructs.

2.1. Social Presence

The construct of social presence has been linked to communication technologies in various ways in the literature. An early conception of social presence was that it is a property of a communicative medium. From this perspective, social presence is the "degree to which the medium permits users to experience others as being psychologically present" (p. 531, [20]). As communication technologies continued to develop, the extent to which individuals experience the illusion that a mediated experience is not mediated became a focus [21,22]. Lee's [23] definition of social presence as "a psychological state in which virtual (para-authentic or artificial) objects are experienced as actual objects in either sensory or nonsensory ways" (p. 37) is representative of this perspective.

The availability of the internet as a venue for identity construction triggered another evolution of the construct of social presence, with social presence conceptualized as the development and management of self-representation online to produce a particular "degree of feeling, perception, and reaction" in response (p. 146, [24]). The construction of this form of social presence is the product of a number of elements, including the information that individuals include in profiles, the photographs they upload, the preferences they indicate, the products they endorse, and the timeliness and frequency of their postings and replies [25,26].

The emergence of the digitally enhanced multicommunicative environment required a shift yet again in the conception of social presence. In this environment, in order to interact

with others, individuals must attempt to project themselves into the communicative worlds of others. Turner and Foss's theory of attentional social presence [14] exemplifies this construction of social presence, and it is the theory on which we elaborate in this essay. Attentional social presence is defined as a state achieved when an interactant's actions shift attention from the targeted audience's current objects of attention (typically other interactions available on mobile technologies) to the interactant. Attentional social presence includes four options—budgeted, entitled, competitive, and invitational [14].

2.1.1. Budgeted Social Presence

Budgeted social presence is often the default mode in today's communicative environment. It is a state in which individuals are participating in or have access to multiple interactions, and they continually face the choice of when to step out of budgeted into another type of social presence. Budgeted social presence exists across a wide continuum, ranging from a state of alertness, in which digital devices are turned on and available for interaction, to a state of active initiation, in which individuals initiate a new conversation while involved in another interaction.

In budgeted social presence, interactants focus on efficiency and managing their own availability by processing multiple messages at once. Their key strategy is to multicommunicate—engaging in multiple conversations at once—and thus allocating their social presence across a number of interactions. They continually make decisions about when to be open to incoming messages, when to participate in outgoing messages, in how many conversations to be involved, and how fast the pace of each conversation will be.

Although the enactment of budgeted social presence allows individuals to exchange information and maintain connections with many others, its use evokes particular types of relationships and concomitant conceptions of fellow interactants. In the moment in which messages to others are subjected to budgeted social presence, those others are seen as demands on the finite availability of the communicator. Each potential audience member is assessed as to how much of an availability expenditure that individual deserves at that time, and the individual is managed accordingly.

2.1.2. Entitled Social Presence

A second type of presence is entitled social presence, in which individuals limit the number of messages available to the targeted audience so that few or no messages compete with the ones they are offering. To respond to the potential lack of attention by potential audiences in the multicommunicative environment, some interactants try to secure attention through coercion—limiting their access to many other messages so targeted audience members will be more likely to attend to the message being offered. Entitled interactants believe their message should be privileged over other messages because it is important for and will benefit the audience. An interactant conceives of the audience as a container to be filled with information, a conception not unlike the view of the receiver in the transmission or linear model of communication [27,28].

Entitled interactants insist that the audience members pay attention to the message they want to present and use a variety of strategies to achieve this control. They may require, for example, that targeted audience members look at them, stop talking and listen, stop texting, or put their cell phones or laptops away. The critical element of entitled presence is the removal of digital distractions to encourage the audience to focus on the communicator's message.

2.1.3. Competitive Social Presence

Competitive social presence describes a third option for attentional social presence. Interactants produce a message they hope will compete with other messages in such a compelling fashion that targeted audience members will deliberately shift their focus from other messages to that message. When interactants enact competitive social presence, they recognize that the message they want to convey has competition from potentially

many different messages that are likely to be highly relevant to the individual's interests. Communicators enacting competitive social presence seek to win the competition between their message and the others available by using various persuasive strategies to create an engaging message.

Interactants who employ competitive social presence envision an asymmetrical relationship with the audience. The individual who seeks to initiate interaction is in the inferior position, while targeted audience members are in the superior position because of their agency and control of their own technology and conversations. Interactants who are trying to insert themselves into the communicative world of another adopt low-power or weaker positions than their targeted participants because they have a choice about whether to invest their attention in the initiator's message.

2.1.4. Invitational Social Presence

In a fourth type of social presence, communicators invite someone to interact with them in an effort to learn more about and to understand that person better. This type of presence is invitational social presence, rooted in the theory of invitational rhetoric [29,30]. Individuals invite someone to interact with them, and if the invitation is accepted, an equal relationship is generated between them. In invitational social presence, audience members are viewed as conversational partners because they are seen as having experiences and holding perspectives that are valuable to communicators.

Individuals who enact invitational social presence are not confined to any particular type of communication mode or to synchronous technology; they may use face-to-face interaction or interact using some form of communication technology. Typically, interactants each use the same mode (face-to-face, cell phone, or email, for example) for their interaction, but invitational social presence may be conducted using different media—one using email and the other responding via phone, for example. Because their focus is on one person or a small group of people, however, if all participants choose to engage in invitational social presence, they restrict their communication to one interaction or conversation.

Our research extends the theory of attentional social presence by exploring how interlocutors deal with misalignments in conceptions of appropriate or desired social presence. In the earlier theorizing about attentional social presence, the focus was largely on the communicator and the choices the communicator makes about social presence. However, communicators are interacting with audiences, and their choices concerning social presence sometimes collide with the expectations and preferences of audience members. If communication is to take place, then potential interactants must negotiate the type of social presence that will be used in an interaction.

2.2. Alignment

A second theoretical antecedent of this paper is the notion of alignment or matching. The subject of extensive research, alignment has been studied in a number of different contexts; a few examples will suggest the scope of such research. Some studies deal with alignment between humans and digital technologies, exemplified by the research of Vollmer and her colleagues [31], who explored alignment between individuals' nonverbal actions and those of robot interaction partners. Other research in this category includes studies of alignment between visually impaired people and assistive digital navigation technologies [32] and between human users and intelligent advisory systems [33]. Another stream of research has focused on alignment among key elements of the operation of organizations or businesses, including congruence between knowledge-management systems and organizational strategy [34]; corporate social responsibility considerations and the work motivation of employees [35]; personal and organizational spiritual identities [36]; information systems and the strategy goals of organizations [37]; perceptions of current performance between supply chain and sales management [38]; and perceptions of internal communication managers and employees during a crisis [39]. Health-care settings are places where congruence among perceptions and choices can be particularly salient; an

example of research in this area is a study of divergent views of hope between health care providers and parents who are at risk of delivering a premature infant [40].

Our focus in this study is on alignment among interlocutors in both personal and professional communication interactions. A large body of research suggests that individuals are innately predisposed to move toward synchronicity with each other as they communicate, matching one another's behaviors. When individuals engage each other, they usually unconsciously and consciously synchronize, harmonize, and adapt their communication behaviors to become more similar to their partner's, converging on common ways of communicating [41–43]. The tendency of individuals to synchronize their communication behaviors in the course of an interaction has been variously termed *alignment*, *coordination*, *convergence*, *congruence*, and *matching*; a number of theories address this basic impetus toward alignment. Primary among them are interaction adaptation theory, which posits that there are biological, psychological, and social pressures toward entrainment and synchrony in interactions [44]; communication accommodation theory, which explains why and how communicators adjust their behaviors to others through convergence or divergence [45,46]; the theory of coordinated management of meaning, which addresses the ways in which communicators coordinate and manage meanings [47]; and the language convergence/meaning divergence theory, which explores the ways in which language convergence may mask differences in meaning [48].

Interlocutors tend to align on a plethora of communication behaviors. Among the types of alignments that have been explored are pitch, loudness, and speech rate [49]; grammatical choices [41]; and choice of words or lexical alignment [50–52]. Interactants also typically align nonverbally, matching each other in facial expressions, postures, body movements, and mannerisms [31,53].

To capture the nature of the processes of alignment and misalignment, some studies identify the continuum of states or conditions that characterize communicators' relationship to congruence. Soliz and Giles [54] categorize the options for alignment into four broad categories—accommodation, nonaccommodation, reluctant accommodation, and avoidant communication. In accommodation, one or both of the interactants enact conversationally appropriate behavior toward the other person; in strategies of nonaccommodation, individuals fail to attune their communication to others. Interactants may use reluctant accommodation in their interactions not because they want to achieve relational affinity but because they are conforming to situational or cultural norms. When they engage in avoidant communication, interactants seek to end a conversation quickly and avoid future interactions.

Gilchrist and her colleagues [55] also describe processes that characterize individuals' movement toward and away from alignment in communication. They identify four processes of social misalignment—separation (a state in which one or more subsets of stakeholders are psychologically distantly from another subset); disrespect (a state in which one or more subsets of stakeholders hold negative views about the characteristics and intent of another subset); lack of cross-discipline participation (a state in which one or more subsets of stakeholders fail to participate in relevant aspects of the project); and misalignment (a state in which project stakeholders have divergent understandings of or different levels of commitment to a desired outcome). In contrast, social alignment involves the four processes of learning (a state in which stakeholders actively seek to better understand aspects of the project and/or share their knowledge with other stakeholders); respect (a state in which one or more subsets of stakeholders hold positive views about the characteristics and intent of another subset); cross-discipline participation (a state in which different sets of stakeholders participate jointly in relevant aspects of the project); and alignment (a state in which project stakeholders have a shared understanding of and level of commitment to a desired outcome).

The literature also suggests possible outcomes of alignment or matching between communication partners. Congruence typically produces more positive outcomes than divergence and usually is seen to contribute to communicative success. Individuals tend to

like interacting when they perceive that an interactional partner is intentionally speaking in a style close to their own [56]. Converging speakers are generally viewed as more attractive, easier to understand, and more efficient and cooperative as communicators than those who diverge [42,54] and alignment is also associated with increased predictability of the other and heightened mutual understanding [57]. Patterns of perceived accommodation also tend to enhance recipients' self-esteem; task, interactional, and job satisfaction; and attributions of speaker politeness, empathy, competence, benevolence, and trust [58]. Moreover, convergence in communication behaviors has been linked to increased closeness, affiliation, and relational intimacy [59–61] as well as to greater approval of the conversational partner [62,63]. Synchrony also has been found to produce solidarity, positive emotions, and increased success in meeting collective goals [43].

Although a lack of accommodation by one party to the form of communication offered by another is likely to lead to a more negative evaluation of an interaction [62,64,65], in some instances, mismatches or misalignment may have positive outcomes. As expectancy violations theory explains, unanticipated violations of social norms and expectations may produce arousal value—when individuals' expectations are violated, their interests or attentions are aroused [66]. Such arousal may increase interest in or attention to a message or an interaction. Language expectancy theory [67] provides further evidence that an intentional or accidental deviation from an expected type of social presence by a communicator can produce a positive reaction on the part of the audience.

There are other instances in which divergence is preferable to congruence or at least may have somewhat positive outcomes. Interaction adaptation theory proposes that, in instances involving negative communication behaviors such as the expression of hostility, communicators produce more positive messages and garner more favorable assessments by behaving incongruently so as not to reciprocate the negativity [44]. Similarly, research has established that when interlocutors encounter messages of control and dominance involving, for example, longer gaze or talk time, communicators elicit greater attractiveness and satisfaction by being incongruent than by being congruent with the conversational partner [68,69]. In some instances, then, communicators may choose to emphasize and exaggerate their differences to establish distinctiveness from an interactional partner [45,46].

Misalignment also may be positive when it is used to increase communication among conversational partners. Misalignment appears to generate positive consequences when the parties involved acknowledge that a misalignment exists and, as a result, exert greater effort in coordinating their activities. Positive consequences result not necessarily because a more aligned state is reached but because of the attempts the interactants make to improve their communication [70]. Similarly, Healey [71] characterizes misalignment as a ubiquitous feature of human interaction that prompts continuous communicative work as interlocutors detect and deal with problems concerning mutual intelligibility.

Our focus in this current study is on a particular kind of matching behavior—alignment between the expected or desired form of attentional social presence between interlocutors. We are interested in discovering the strategies interactants use when they discover a misalignment between themselves and others in terms of the type of social presence that is expected or desired. A few examples illustrate the kinds of misalignments that can result from divergent choices of social presence. A particularly common mismatch occurs when one interactant chooses budgeted social presence, while another chooses entitled social presence. A study of the logs of almost 100,000 Microsoft employees found, for example, that they were sending emails in 30% of their meetings [72]; they were engaged in budgeted social presence, while those conducting the meetings expected entitled or invitational social presence. A clash between expectations for invitational and entitled social presence is also common in interactions. A manager in a company facing severe financial problems might call a meeting of the staff to discuss how to address the issue. She uses entitled social presence, asking those at the meeting to silence their digital devices so that she can present her ideas without interruption. The staff of the organization, in contrast, expects that the meeting will be characterized by invitational social presence, where everyone brainstorms

and offers suggestions for dealing with the problem. Such mismatches are not likely to be satisfactory to the interactants as a result.

Earlier studies on alignment do not deal with issues of alignment in human communication as it is mediated by communication technologies. Current research of alignment in communication bifurcates into studies that deal with human–human interactions and those that deal with human–computer interactions, but communication is being affected in major ways by the ubiquity of and individuals' attachment to digital communication devices. An understanding of alignment in choices of social presence requires the identification of strategies that individuals do and can use to secure the attention of potential audience members when they are faced with the fact that most of those individuals are engrossed in their own digital technologies. In this relatively new communicative situation, traditional rules for coordination are being challenged, and interactants must invent new patterns that allow them to work smoothly and effectively with others. Giles [58] suggests that "how we accommodate and fashion meaningful interpersonal communication" in a "technologically-changing world is possibly our most demanding quest" (p. 171). The theory, we propose for negotiating misalignments in social presence is one way by which we seek to address this quest.

3. Methods

3.1. Interviewees

To better understand the strategies individuals adopt when they are faced with a mismatch between their expected form of social presence and that of another, we interviewed 32 individuals about their experiences with attentional social presence. The 26 women and six men interviewed lived and worked in a metropolitan area on the East Coast and ranged in age from 18 to 64. The racial makeup of the interviewees was American Indian (one), Asian (one), Asian-American (four), Black (three), Hispanic (two), White (21). Our sample involved individuals with various types of work experience—in the private sector (seven), non-profit work (23), and government (two). The positions held by the interviewees ranged from executive leadership positions such as senior vice president (12) to middle managers (18) to entry-level employees (two). Most of the interviewees were from the United States (from the East Coast, Midwest, and South); one was from China; one from Colombia; and one from Sri Lanka.

Interviewees were initially approached through personal contacts within one non-profit organization with the criterion of achieving variability in terms of status within the organization. This criterion was important because variability in positions equates to variability in status, which may influence individuals' behaviors around multicommunicating, choices of social presence, and the norms they develop or follow in communicating with digital devices [73]. The sample of interviewees was then extended through snowball sampling to locate individuals with work experience in a variety of organizations. Potential interviewees were asked to participate in research involving the use of smartphones within the context of business and personal conversations. The interviewees' participation was voluntary, and they were not compensated. Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately one hour and included a series of questions about situations pertaining to the four types of attentional social presence and then strategies interviewees used to address mismatches if and when they occurred. Following completion of the interviews, a research assistant to the corresponding author transcribed the interviews.

3.2. Analysis

We used the method of grounded theory to analyze the data [74–77]. It is a method of generating theory through inductive reasoning that is rooted in the comparative analytic method. We chose to use grounded theory to analyze our data for a number of reasons. The method is particularly well suited to dealing with qualitative data of the kind we gathered from our interviews, which generated large amounts of data in diverse formats. The method also provides a documented record of the progress of the analysis that is

generated, making it possible for us to trace and review the derivation of our constructs to ensure that the theory we developed was tied to the data. We also believe that grounded theory was an appropriate method to use to analyze our data because we were exploring an area where existing theories are limited. Because the theory of attentional social presence is a relatively new theory that largely has not been verified or extended, research has not yet identified the communication strategies used by interlocutors who face misalignments in social presence. Grounded theory allowed us to identify such strategies from the rich and diverse data our interviews produced.

The process of analyzing the transcripts using grounded theory began with our hand coding of the interviews on physical copies of the transcripts using a process of open coding [78]. We identified and marked excerpts on the pages of the transcripts that constituted strategies for negotiating mismatches in social presence. As we identified them, we wrote temporary, provisional labels for the strategies next to the textual passages we had highlighted. The two authors coded the transcripts independently and then discussed areas of disagreement until we reached consensus on our codes.

At the completion of the open-coding process, we compiled a list of the labels we had given to the strategies identified in the transcripts. We then physically cut the strategies in the list apart and sorted them into piles according to which strategies seemed to share similar properties. In this process of axial coding, which involves rebuilding the data fractured through open coding [78], we compared and contrasted our initial codes, sorting them and grouping them based on similarities and differences. We gave each of these piles/categories provisional labels to indicate the key property we saw in the strategies they contained. When all of the strategies had been sorted, we reviewed the piles/categories to confirm that all of the strategies in each were relevant to the categories in which we had placed them. We also checked the categories for overlap, relationships, and ambiguities, combining and rearranging the strategies in the piles/categories as necessary.

Our next step was to integrate and refine the categories into a theory in a process of selective coding [78]. We discovered that the strategies that emerged from the data were best conceptualized according to three communicative functions they play in the process of negotiating misalignments in social presence, and we gave these three functions labels—prescribing to eliminate misalignment, rationalizing to overlook misalignment, and co-creating to resolve misalignment. We then sorted the labels within each of the three key strategies, seeking to discover how best to organize the data within each; as the results suggest, each key strategy contained subcategories organized in various ways. Our final step was to create the definitive labels for the strategies that became the components of our theory of the strategies interactants use to negotiate misalignments in expectations for social presence.

4. Results

As a result of our coding and analysis of the interviews, we theorized three primary strategies used in the current multicommunicative climate to resolve mismatches involving social presence—prescribing to eliminate mismatch, rationalizing to overlook mismatch, and co-creating to resolve mismatch. We turn now to an explanation of these strategies, which are summarized in Table 1.

4.1. Prescribing to Eliminate Misalignment

One option that may result when a mismatch in social presence occurs is prescribing, in which one party tries to secure the acquiescence of another to the kind of social presence that will prevail in an interaction. Interactants who acquiesce to the social presence prescribed by another are not always—or even often—persuaded that the other's chosen form of social presence is best, but they comply nonetheless. Individuals use one of four strategies to secure the acquiescence of others to their preferred form of social presence: modeling, requesting, demanding, and shaming.

Table 1. Strategies for Negotiating Misalignments in Social Presence.

Strategy for Resolving Misalignment	Definition	Example
Prescribing to eliminate misalignment	Communicators are able to make the other party give in to their expectation for social presence.	
Modeling	Communicators enact the type of presence they are asking others to employ.	"She took out of her phone and turned it off to indicate she wanted to spend time with me."
Requesting	Communicators politely ask the other party for a specific type of social presence.	"We're having a really sensitive conversation here, and we need everyone to put their phones away."
Demanding	Communicators ask for compliance in a forceful way.	"Hey, pay attention to me!"
Shaming	Communicators request a specific type of social presence and use humiliation to achieve it.	"She'll call you out by saying something like: 'What is the theme of what I just said?'"
Rationalizing to overlook misalignment	Interactants do not agree on appropriate social presence and rationalize their decision to overlook the divergent types of presence in the interaction.	
Ground rules not established	No boundaries or ground rules for social presence were established prior to the interaction.	"They haven't set ground rules. I am not the police force."
Relevance to the interaction	Communicators were engaged in a different form of presence to gain information relevant to the conversation.	"I don't mind if they get on their phone to look something up that is relevant for us."
Not relevant to the interaction	The content of the interaction was not relevant to communicators.	"It's not a productive meeting. He calls us in and just talks to us."
Natural break in the interaction	There was a lull or moment of silence in the conversation.	"When there is a vacuum in the conversation, I take a break to see what is going on on my phone."
Retribution later	Communicators will be able to "get even" with a noncompliant interactant later.	"I am not going to say anything, but I am never going to promote him."
Co-creating to resolve misalignment	Interactants metacommunicate about expectations for social presence and jointly decide on the type they will employ.	
	Beginning of the interaction	"Shall we all decide on the kind of social presence we're going to be employing in this meeting?"
	Middle of the interaction	"I see you're busy. What is the best way to interact together going forward?"
	Conclusion of the interaction	"I don't think this meeting was as productive as it could be, so maybe we can think of some other approaches to social presence for future meetings."

4.1.1. Modeling

In modeling, communicators who are seeking acquiescence to their desired type of social presence enact the type of social presence they are (often implicitly) asking others to employ. They introduce the behavior they want those with whom they are communicating to imitate. Sometimes, communicators verbally model for the other person the kind of social presence they expect from the other. One of our interviewees, for example, related a story about a conversation with a friend who "took out her phone, and she told me that

she was going to turn it off because she wants to spend time with me". The friend expected her conversational partner to follow suit so that they both could engage in invitational social presence.

At other times, modeling occurs nonverbally. One interviewee explained that when others pull out their phones and look at them, "it's like a subconscious cue to get my phone out, too. I am like, 'Oh, maybe I should check my phone'". In this case, one interactant acquiesces to the budgeted social presence that others around her are modeling, adjusting her behavior to theirs. In other instances, the modeling is less explicit, but everyone involved in the interaction knows what kind of social presence is expected. One interviewee explained how this works with one of her colleagues: "She's not the type of person you would want to sit in a meeting with and be on your phone or your iPad. I mean, she's set that tone". Another interviewee explained that she deliberately wears a watch to keep herself from looking at her phone to tell the time:

> I recently have tried to wear a watch more because I do like to know the time, and I don't want to seem like I'm not paying attention by looking at my phone. So having a watch is a good way of knowing the time without having to check my phone.

In this way, she models the kind of social presence she would like those with whom she is interacting to enact.

4.1.2. Requesting

Using the strategy of requesting, individuals ask other interactants to participate in the kind of social presence they want to see prevail in the interaction. In some cases, the request is direct and explicit, as exemplified by an interviewee who reported saying to others in a meeting, "I really want you to be engaged in this webinar. Please put your technology away". In this instance, the communicator is asking others to be involved in entitled presence and to pay attention to the individual who is conducting the webinar. Another interviewee explained that she sometimes explicitly asks for invitational social presence by requesting: "We're going to have a really sensitive conversation, and I need everyone to put their phones away. Let's be present for each other because it's going to be very hard". Requesting also may assume the form of someone at a social gathering asking for a particular type of social presence at the beginning of an evening: "Hey, can we do a phone bucket and all put our phones in this box?".

Requesting is an act that can be directed at a group of interactants or at one person in a group, typically apart from the group setting. Often, this latter kind of request targets an individual who is engaged in budgeted social presence when another form of social presence has been accepted and is being enacted by the others in the interaction. As one interviewee explained, she talked with a person who was on his phone during a meeting about the behavior during a break: "You're on your phone a lot. People are noticing it. I really need you to be engaged". Another interviewee relayed a similar request she made to a nonconforming team member: "It looks like you're concentrating on something else. We can have this conversation in another time, another place".

Requesting sometimes assumes the form of imposing rules on an interaction. An interactant tells others the ground rules for interacting around technology, and the rules that are stated constitute an implicit request that they be followed. One interviewee explained how this works in her family, where she does not allow cell phones at the dinner table. If her daughter shows up at the table with her phone in hand, her mother tells her daughter: "We're going to talk about the day. As miserably uncomfortable as it is, you're going to interact with your family". A manager in a large company also illustrated the imposition of rules as a strategy of requesting. She states at the beginning of her team's learning sessions: "Just remember that everybody's put in a lot of time, so be courteous. No unnecessary cell phones or laptops unless you're taking notes".

The imposition of rules as a request strategy is typically rooted in the higher status of the interactants who are making the request. Because their higher status is recognized, they

often do not need to make a spoken request; their status does the requesting nonverbally for them. One interviewee captured this form of request when he explained:

> Our director doesn't have to say "put your phone away" if she wants to have a substantial conversation. I would never bring my phone, or I would have it on mute if I did. It's not spoken, and it's not requested.

This observation was echoed by an interviewee who is a senior leader in her organization. She noted that mismatches in types of social presence are not a problem for her because the subordinates on her team acquiesce to her desired form of social presence: "Now maybe it could be because I'm a senior leader, so I would be curious if people more junior have a different experience. But I haven't really experienced that where I have to really struggle to get somebody's attention".

Although individual communicators tend to be the ones who impose rules as a means of requesting compliance, groups can do the imposing as well. One interviewee explained that, in group meetings in which he is involved, if someone's phone rings, group members together make a request to the noncompliant member: "No. No. Please, no. Go outside" or "Please turn the ringer off. . . . And so we instruct each other". Whether executed by an individual or a group, the strategy of requesting involves a polite method of attempting to secure conformity to a desired form of social presence.

4.1.3. Demanding

In the strategy of demanding, communicators ask for compliance forcefully and are very explicit; the request is not cloaked in polite language. The communicator insists on acquiescence and clearly does not expect to be refused. Examples our interviewees provided of this strategy included statements such as, "If you're going to be on your phone, just leave the damn thing on the desk"; "Can you stop it?"; "Hey, pay attention to me!"; and "Oh, my God, just put your phone away!" One interviewee illustrated this strategy when she wanted an employee to stop enacting entitled presence and to participate in invitational social presence (her preferred mode) instead:

> There was one time when I was in a meeting with someone—a meeting about dialogue and collaboration. And there was a person who was typing on his computer, taking notes of everything we were saying. I finally said, "This isn't a meeting to keep track of stuff. This is a meeting where I want information from you". Because I really wanted his input.

One interviewee explained a more elaborate and dramatic demand he uses when his daughter enacts budgeted presence and he is expecting her to participate in a different mode:

> Far be it for me to be dramatic, but I tell her: "You know the 14th Street bridge? You're going to read about me at rush hour on the 14th Street bridge. I'm the guy on the hood of the car throwing your phone into the Potomac".

In the strategy of demanding, then, communicators are very forceful in their efforts to secure the acquiescence of other interactants and often communicate anger or frustration at the lack of acquiescence as part of their messaging.

4.1.4. Shaming

Communicators also may use shaming as a strategy to secure acquiescence from others to their prescribed mode of social presence. In this strategy, there is an element of humiliating or embarrassing the person who is not compliant. A key assumption behind the strategy is that a loss of face and the desire not to lose face in the future will coerce individuals into acquiescing to the communicator's preferred type of social presence. Shaming typically takes the form of calling others out in public about their lack of acquiescence. Interviewees reported that they sometimes focus on one person who is not acquiescing to the desired social presence in a meeting by asking questions

to engage them. In this implicit request, communicators "turn to them and bring them back in," pivoting from the planned message content to something designed to engage the recalcitrant interactant.

In other instances, communicators are more explicit and even dramatic in highlighting someone's lack of acquiescence and shaming them for it. As one interviewee explained, her supervisor uses this strategy very effectively by asking participants in a meeting to recall something she just said: "If you're sitting there screwing around on your phone and she sees you, she's going to pick you out of that crowd. She'll call you out: 'All right, what is the theme of what I just said?'". Catching individuals who are not enacting the desired social presence sometimes involves other forms of trickery as well. One interviewee told how her husband uses shaming with her when he is being invitational and she is using budgeted social presence:

> The other day, he was going on and on. And he called me at the office, and that was a time where I was just doing other stuff, and he's going into every little detail about a project he was doing: "I used the 3¼ inch, and maybe I should've used the 2½ inch". And then he said, "So what do you think?". And I'm like, "Well, whatever you want to do". And it wasn't the right answer. He totally knew I wasn't paying attention.

The strategy of shaming can escalate into much more extreme actions to embarrass people into acquiescing to a desired form of social presence. One interviewee explained that she walks away and refuses to interact with someone who does not acquiesce to the type of social presence she has established (in this case, something other than budgeted presence):

> I'm not the kind of person who's going to compete with a phone. It's like, hello? If they're not going to listen to me, I'll just walk away. If they're too engulfed in their phone to listen to me, it's not worth it to me to sit there and wait for them. I've got other things to do in my life than wait for them to get off their phone.

The desired outcome for the strategy of shaming is to make the noncompliant interactant feel ashamed and to alter behavior around technology and social presence as a result.

4.2. Rationalizing to Overlook Misalignment

Communicators and audiences may not be able to reach agreement about the appropriate kind of social presence to enact in a given situation. Consequently, a second key strategy that interactants employ when misalignment occurs is that individuals continue interacting even though their conceptions of what the appropriate social presence is in that situation do not align. Each party brings a definition of social presence to the interaction, and neither acquiesces to the other. Thus, the interaction continues with the two different types of social presence tangling throughout the interaction with the differences overlooked. A manager might not want her employee to be texting while she is trying to talk to him about a performance issue, for example, but she might say nothing because she does not want to be seen as unsupportive. She continues to expect and to enact entitled social presence, while her employee continues to expect and to enact budgeted social presence.

On some occasions, a misalignment is known only to one of the parties, so the mismatch is overlooked by that one party. Because the other is unaware of or is oblivious to the mismatch, it is inadvertently overlooked by that party as well. If a communicator is talking by phone to another person, for example, and cannot see the other person texting others (and thus engaging in budgeted social presence), the communicator may believe that her choice of entitled social presence is operative in the interaction. In this example, there is no discussion about the mismatch; the two parties simply "agree" to ignore the mismatch. Neither party is dissatisfied because both are overlooking the misalignment.

At other times, mismatches are openly discussed by interactants, and they verbally agree to disagree; they then continue interacting with the misalignment in place. One person at a wedding, for example, might explain that he believes people should focus on the couple being married at a wedding, so he is expecting to be involved in entitled

social presence. Another attendee might explain to him why she believes budgeted social presence is appropriate and why sending pictures of herself at the wedding to absent friends is acceptable. They might choose to disagree but to continue interacting—somewhat unhappily—without a resolution of the misalignment.

Overlooking a mismatch is typically a passive strategy where interactants do little or even nothing to resolve the mismatch. Instead, their primary response is to rationalize why they are choosing to overlook it. They explain or justify why their decision to overlook another's chosen form of social presence is reasonable—a rationale that is usually thought or stated to themselves but may be shared with other interactants. The interviewees identified seven rationales they use when they choose to overlook a mismatch in social presence: lack of ground rules, size of group, nature of the interactional partner, relevance of the nonconforming behavior to the interaction, irrelevance of the nonconforming behavior to the interaction, natural break in an interaction, and anticipated future retribution.

4.2.1. Lack of Ground Rules

One rationale for overlooking mismatches named by the interviewees is that no ground rules have been established—a particular type of social presence has not been specified. Consequently, interviewees do not believe they have the right or obligation to take any action to align the various types of social presence during an interaction. One interviewee found another interactant's behavior on his cell phone distracting, but, as she explained: "They haven't set ground rules; I'm not the police force". Another echoed this rationale: "Nobody ever said anything about putting away our technology, so I guess I can't complain when someone is looking at their iPad or phone".

4.2.2. Size of Group

Size of the group or the number of interactants involved was also cited as a rationale for not taking action to resolve misalignment among modes of social presence. One interviewee explained that she believes interactants can engage in different kinds of social presence from the one being employed by the communicator if a group is large enough and visibility of the undesirable social presence is diminished:

> I think the level of acceptability [for engaging in budgeted social presence] varies depending on how perceptible your checking your phone is. If you're in a crowded auditorium, then I think it's a little more acceptable to look at your phone during a lecture than, say, if you were in the front row of a group of 15.

Another interviewee also used size as a rationale for overlooking a mismatch among forms of social presence:

> I think it is okay to have your phone out in a big group because not everyone is going to be talking to you all the time, so you can just go on your phone and check it. During one-to-one conversations, though, I wouldn't like the person I'm talking to to be on their phone more than they were talking to me.

4.2.3. Nature of Interactional Partner

Other rationales for overlooking mismatch involve the nature of the person with whom an individual is interacting. As is the case with strategies of prescription, individuals are more likely to let an explicit disruption in the desired social presence go and not say or do anything about it when an interactional partner is of high status. An interviewee explained that the chief of staff of his organization, who "kind of is the mayor, is routinely checking his phone during meetings. I find it shocking. But he is an important person". In this case, his supervisor's status provides a reason for the annoyed interactant not to act. A similar rationale was provided by another interviewee who used as a rationale for overlooking a mismatch how busy another interactant (presumably someone of higher status) is:

> It was a brainstorming meeting, and I invited her, and she was more quiet than I would expect of her in that type of a meeting. So at one point, I thought, "Oh, she must just be busy. It's bad timing. She's got stuff going on. She's incredibly busy, and she's incredibly stretched thin".

Even when the interviewee discovered that the individual was shopping on Amazon and not engaged in tasks related to work, she chose to overlook the mismatch and not to seek a different kind of behavior from her because of her higher status. In other cases, interactants excuse individuals for a lack of alignment in social presence simply because they are young. As one interviewee explained,

> If someone my age gets really involved in their phone while I am talking to them, that would have a different impact on me than if I saw someone who was younger than me. By default, I would assume that person lives on their phone more than I do.

4.2.4. Relevance to the Interaction

Relevance to the interaction also serves as the basis for rationalizing the overlook of mismatched social presences. Interactants may excuse nonconformity if it supports the interaction. One interviewee, for example, explained that she sometimes engages in budgeted social presence when another type is being enacted because it contributes to the interaction in a positive way, in this case for purposes of translation:

> There are occasions when I know the Chinese name of something, but I'm not 100% sure of the corresponding English name. So I resort to Google to get the right translation of the things I'm discussing. Then we resume our previous conversation.

Another interviewee also chooses to overlook a misalignment in social presence when the mismatch is momentary and is relevant to the conversation: "If I'm talking with somebody or having a meeting, I don't mind if they get on their phone if they have to look something up and are trying to figure something out—if it's related to the conversation". Another interviewee agreed: "If it's something important that someone is calling up on their iPad or phone, it can help contribute to the mutual understanding of what's going on". In these cases, interactants overlook the mismatch in social presence because the information being generated contributes in a positive way to the accomplishment of the objectives for the interaction.

4.2.5. Irrelevance of the Interaction

In contrast, interactants sometimes justify their overlook of a misalignment in social presence by the lack of relevance in an interaction. Because nothing important is going on in the interaction, they are not moved to take any action to resolve misalignments in the enactment of social presence. One interviewee explained that she overlooks mismatched social presence when her supervisor calls very long team meetings during which he engages in entitled social presence and expects no input from team members: "It's not a productive meeting. I bring work and everybody's on their phone. I understand that because he calls us into this meeting for 3 1/2 h and just talks to us". Another explained that, in her organization, the norm is for everyone to agree to the proposals that are put forth in a meeting, but "then everyone walks out and talks to everyone else about how they don't agree". Because the interaction in the meeting does not matter and the real communication happens after the meeting is over, interactants do not act to resolve misalignments during the meeting itself.

4.2.6. Natural Break in the Interaction

Another rationale for overlooking a mismatch in social presence is that there is a natural break in a conversation, and the break is seen as an appropriate time for engaging in

a different kind of social presence from what is being enacted. One interviewee explained this rationale in this way:

> There's often a moment when there's a vacuum between conversations, and sometimes, I take it as a chance to see what is going on on my phone. I'm okay with when we finish one stage of the conversation, we check our cell phones before continuing the conversation. Otherwise, it would be kind of awkward to just stare at each other.

Another interviewee rationalized engaging in budgeted social presence when another individual is enacting invitational social presence in a similar way: "In those lulls of conversation, where it's kind of just in that in-between time, then people will pull their phones out". She did admit, however, that

> once you get into that position where everyone is checking their phone, you're probably not going to go back to a conversation. It would probably be better to just sit in silence for a little bit and then go to something else.

4.2.7. Later Retribution Available

Sometimes, interactants observe another's refusal to acquiesce to a particular form of social presence and use as their rationale for overlooking it the fact that they can take action against the noncompliant individual later. The kind of retribution or revenge they envision ranges from excluding someone from future meetings to not paying attention to someone during interactions to not rewarding them later. One interviewee explained how an employee's refusal to enact a particular type of social presence can be held against the individual later:

> If a person is on their phone during a meeting when we are sharing ideas, I wonder if they realize how people are perceiving them. Being a leader means coming to a meeting prepared, engaged, and if you're just going to be on your phone, then, that's something you think about when you think about end-of-the-year performance: Who's engaged and who has contributed? When I think about, "Who is ready to move up to the next step?," I think about that person's behavior in meetings.

Another interviewee similarly explained how one person's lack of alignment with the expected social presence hurt him: "It ended up being a performance issue. His behavior affected his rating because he was not engaged, and he was not promoted".

4.3. Co-Creating to Resolve Misalignment

A third key strategy for dealing with a mismatch in expectations for social presence is that the parties involved actively negotiate and come to an agreement about the type of social presence that will prevail in an interaction. Together, they co-create the type of social presence that will characterize the interaction so that all interactants have input into the decision. The negotiation process typically involves metacommunicating about social presence—the parties involved discuss the options available to them and why they believe a particular choice is appropriate. They then come to a decision that is satisfactory to everyone involved. Perhaps they all agree that, for this particular situation, entitled social presence is appropriate, and they will assume the roles concomitant with that decision. In other cases, interactants may decide that they will engage in invitational social presence during a meeting but will stop halfway through for a break, at which time they can all be involved for a few minutes in budgeted social presence. Or perhaps they designate the first part of the meeting, where someone is presenting information, as defined by competitive social presence, during which time audience members are free to multicommunicate in budgeted social presence if they desire, but they all commit to engaging in invitational social presence following the formal presentation. Metacommunicating to co-create a shared social presence and to resolve possible mismatches may occur at three different

times in an interaction—at the beginning, during the interaction, and at the conclusion of an interaction.

4.3.1. Co-Creating Prior to an Interaction

One interviewee explained that he begins meetings with his regional management team by asking everyone to develop a "set of ground rules about silencing devices and storing devices and being present during that time period. So there's a discussion of ground rules for setting the context and signaling that this is this kind of meeting". Another interviewee labeled the metacommunication that occurs on the topic of social presence at the beginning of a meeting *precedent setting*:

> But if we were going to be assertive and mature and all those things that are difficult, ideally, a good rule would be to have a precedent-setting conversation the first time there seems to be a discrepancy between conceptions of the nature of the interaction that is supposed to take place.

By talking about expectations for social presence ahead of the interaction, conversational partners together set expectations to which they all will try to adhere. One interviewee did recognize, however, that such metacommunicating is rare, especially in interpersonal contexts: "I don't think anyone starts their communication with a person by saying, 'So before we start talking to each other, this is how I feel about cell phones'".

Metacommunicating at the start of an interaction may involve some kind of negotiating among participants. They all may agree on the kind of social presence they will enact, but someone who is unable to adhere to it throughout the interaction negotiates with the others to interrupt that preferred presence to enact another type temporarily. One interviewee provided an example of this negotiation when he explained that he sometimes states at the beginning of an interaction, "Look, I'm expecting an important call. I've got to have my phone out". The individual typically asks for permission from the other interactants and forewarns them that a break in the presumed and accepted acquiescence to one form of social presence might be required. One interviewee explained how he tries to neutralize the negative effects of nonconformity with this strategy: "You're issuing an apology. You're saying I'm going to do this right now, and this is why. It's almost like asking for it to be okay".

In most instances of the negotiating process, individuals provide a specific rationale for the interruption of acquiescence that they believe others will see as acceptable. If the rationale provided for the anticipated disruption seems legitimate to the other interactants, they are likely to be supportive of the disruption. Interviewees provided a variety of such rationales, including, "My mother was just admitted to the ER"; "My boss just texted me, and I need to take this"; "It's my children's babysitter, so I'd better take the call"; or "There's a critical piece of legislation I'm following, and I need to be available by phone". When the anticipated interruption comes, individuals typically deal with the issue as quickly as possible and then return to enacting the kind of social presence that was co-created earlier.

4.3.2. Co-Creating During an Interaction

Some interviewees described their attempts to metacommunicate about social presence in the middle of an interaction. In these cases, the metacommunication usually occurs to address an exigence where an agreed-upon type of social presence is disrupted. There are situations, explained one interviewee, where what is happening on a digital device is more urgent than the current situation, and the interactant is too involved in that urgent situation to communicate effectively with others in the interaction: "That is my cue to say, 'I see that you are using your device. That's fine. Based on your facial expressions, I feel that something is happening there that you need to address". The interactants then can decide together the kind of social presence they will enact for the rest of the interaction.

4.3.3. Co-Creating Following an Interaction

Only one interviewee gave an example of metacommunicating at the conclusion of an interaction to resolve a misalignment. The interviewee was frustrated because the meeting did not go well. She said, "I was so frustrated that the video meeting was taking so long because everyone needed things repeated because they were clearly doing something else. I said, 'Next time, we are going to have to meet in person and not on Zoom to force us to stay engaged'". While this seems like more of an entitled approach to metacommunicating, we suggest that metacommunicating about mismatches is critical to transforming behavior. For example, at the end of a meeting in which various participants are clearly enacting different kinds of social presence, a communicator might say something like,

> It didn't seem like this meeting was as productive as it could be. I'm thinking one of the reasons was because we weren't all in agreement about the kind of social presence we wanted to enact. Did any of you sense that was a problem, too? If so, do we want to do something about it so that our next meeting is more productive?

The strategy of metacommunicating to co-create a type of social presence that all participants agree to enact was rarely mentioned by our interviewees, suggesting that it is the least-frequently used of the three strategies for negotiating mismatches in social presence. We can only speculate about why interactants in today's multicommunicative environment tend not to choose this strategy, but its disuse undoubtedly contributes to many of the difficulties individuals are currently experiencing concerning lack of alignment in social presence.

5. Discussion

In this essay, we have extended the theory of attentional social presence by exploring the strategies interlocutors use to negotiate misaligned types of social presence. We theorized three key strategies interactants use for dealing with mismatches among types of social presence. One strategy is prescribing to eliminate misalignment, in which individuals use one of four sub strategies to secure the acquiescence of others to their preferred form of social presence—modeling, requesting, demanding, and shaming. In the second strategy, rationalizing to overlook misalignment, interactants explain or justify their decision to overlook another's chosen form of social presence. The rationales that emerged were lack of ground rules, size of group, nature of the interactional partner, relevance to the interaction, irrelevance of the interaction, natural break in the interaction, and later retribution available. The third strategy in our theory is co-creating to resolve misalignment, in which interactants metacommunicate about social presence before, during, or at the conclusion of an interaction and come to an agreement about the type of social presence that will prevail.

5.1. Implications

The current study makes a number of contributions to an understanding of both social presence and alignment. The construct of social presence has evolved as new technologies have developed. A great deal of research has been conducted on two earlier iterations of the construct—the degree to which a medium permits users to experience others as psychologically present and the extent to which individuals experience the illusion that a mediated experience is not mediated. More research is now being undertaken on a third type of social presence that has developed as a result of computer technologies—social presence conceptualized as the management of self-representation online [23]. The newest iteration of social presence—attentional social presence—is a crucial element in many contemporary interactions, but little understanding exists of the nature of such interactions, the options available to interlocutors in these situations, and the kinds of outcomes that result. Our research provides information about one key piece of such interactions—misalignments in expectations for social presence and the options that individuals are using to negotiate such misalignments.

Much research on the subject of alignment suggests that communicators are predisposed to synchronize their communication behaviors with interactional partners [43,46,47]. Although we did not specifically ask our interviewees whether they consciously try to match their behaviors to those of potential interactants around social presence, the fact that they were able to articulate numerous strategies for attempting to negotiate such misalignments suggests that our results conform to the notion that interlocutors, at least initially, tend to coordinate with other interactants in terms of social presence.

Our study also confirmed another finding of the extant literature on alignment. Corsaro and Snehota [70] and Healey [71] suggest that misalignment generates increased and enhanced communication when both parties acknowledge that a misalignment exists and engage in communication to resolve that misalignment. The third major strategy we identified for negotiating misalignments in social presence—co-creating to resolve misalignment—involves precisely this kind of metacommunication about the misalignment. The parties actively negotiate the type of social presence they will employ in an interaction, resulting in a better understanding by everyone involved into the perceptions, preferences, and rationales of those for their expected or desired forms of social presence. There is yet another way in which our study is consistent with findings on whether alignment is positive or negative. Research suggests that misalignments may produce arousal value [66]. A lack of alignment, as happens in our second strategy—rationalizing to overlook mismatch—may keep interlocutors more engaged in an interaction because, in many cases, they are actively dealing with the misalignment.

Our study is also relevant to findings on alignment related to the processes or conditions that characterize efforts to align or not with communicative partners. Studies such as those by Soliz and Giles [54] and Gilchrist and her colleagues [55] laid out stages or processes that are likely to be visible as interactants move toward or away from congruence with conversational partners. These are a useful starting point for understanding how negotiations proceed concerning alignment around social presence, but they do not provide specific options for moving from one stage to another. Our research provides an initial set of such options.

This study provides critical guidance for practitioners who need advice on the ways in which to approach situations in which interlocutors diverge on the type of social presence. We provide both the categories of mismatches that may occur as well as strategies that individuals use when faced with this kind of misalignment. This is a problem virtually every interlocutor faces in today's digitally enhanced multicommunicative environment, but most people have very few options for dealing effectively with this situation besides erupting in anger and frustration at the individual whose view of the appropriate form of social presence differs from theirs. Our research provides everyday communicators with more strategy options as well as specific examples they either can use as models or can try to avoid using as they negotiate misalignments in social presence.

5.2. Opportunities for Future Research

There is much room for continued research in the area of misalignments in expected social presence. The theory we have proposed here should be explicated more thoroughly and developed into a more robust theory about how communicators who confront mismatches between conceptions of social presence deal with those mismatches. The data from which we built our theory of strategies for dealing with misalignments in social presence were limited, so additional data undoubtedly will generate more options for those who encounter such situations as they interact in today's communication landscape.

Digital devices are used by and are a source of disruption to interactions by a majority of individuals today; the need to deal with the problem of communicating in the presence of digital devices is not limited to specific types of organizations, cultures, ages, sexes, races, or other demographic groups [16]. Research, however, has established that individuals from different demographic groups use social media platforms and communication technology differently [79]. Although our sample provided a rich source of strategies that individuals

use, researchers should recruit a more diverse sample of interviewees to see if more strategies could be identified as well as to discover if certain strategies are used more by certain identity groups. There may be, for example, links between particular strategies and people of various ages. Although we had a wide range of ages among our interviewees, we did not correlate particular strategies to people of certain generations. As one of our interviewees noted, young people tend to be tied to their phones more than older people, so the options each group uses for negotiating misalignments may differ. Because our interviewees included substantially more women than men, additional research needs to be conducted to see if the strategies we identified are more likely to be used by women than by men. Because women tend to be socialized to pay more attention to relationship development and maintenance, they may use their digital devices differently from men and thus use different strategies for negotiating misalignments in social presence. In addition, our sample was largely homogeneous in terms of race, so future research should focus particularly on this variable to discover whether race and ethnicity account for any variations in how misalignments in social presence are negotiated.

Future research should also focus on the factors that contribute to individuals' selection of various types of social presence. Individuals bring to interactions expectations about appropriate forms of social presence derived from a number of factors, including, we suspect, the context for the interaction, the relationship among interactants, the nature of the message, and the nature of the communicator. A greater understanding of why various individuals choose to enact or expect the kinds of social presence they do may suggest additional strategies for them to use when they confront misalignments in social presence. It also may encourage interactants to be more forgiving when the type of social presence they expect does not match that of a fellow interactant.

Future research also can build on the negotiating strategies our research generated to identify which strategies are more successful or lead to better outcomes. Alignment or congruence among conversational partners has been shown to produce a number of positive outcomes, including increased affiliation [59]; trust [58]; heightened mutual understanding [57]; and increased success in meeting collective goals [43]. There is also research, however, that shows that, in some instances, dissimilarity may generate positive outcomes [44,46,66,68,69]. Additional research should investigate the kinds of outcomes that are generated by both alignment and misalignment in expectations for social presence and which negotiation strategies are most likely to produce which outcomes.

The fact that most of the identified strategies highlight mechanisms by which communicators acquiesce to another person's preferred social presence or overlook another person's preferred social presence rather than try to resolve the mismatch collaboratively suggests another area of research. We were intrigued that the individuals we interviewed for this research rarely used or even experienced the strategy of co-creating to resolve misalignment in social presence. We suggest that this strategy has the potential to be the most effective of the three in that it involves all participants in the decision and thus is likely to generate a greater degree of investment in and satisfaction with the interaction. However, this is speculation only, and additional research is necessary to confirm or disconfirm this idea. Additional research also is needed to discover the norms or expectations regarding communication technology use that prevent individuals from talking about these mismatches and what practitioners can do to help guide individuals to negotiate these misalignments more productively.

Interacting in today's multicommunicative environment certainly makes communicating difficult. Communicators no longer can assume that they have the attention of potential audience members and, if they do secure their attention, they cannot assume that they will be operating with the same expectations for and rules of interaction around social presence. The result of additional research into decisions about and mismatches in social presence should be greater satisfaction for all individuals in interactions in the digitally enhanced multicommunicative environment.

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