Authentic Presence & Digital Doubles

Navigating Synthetic Media in Equitable Onli g

A CVC@ONE Webinar

April 10, 2025

Resource Site

California Community Colleges | California Virtual Campus Online Network of Educators

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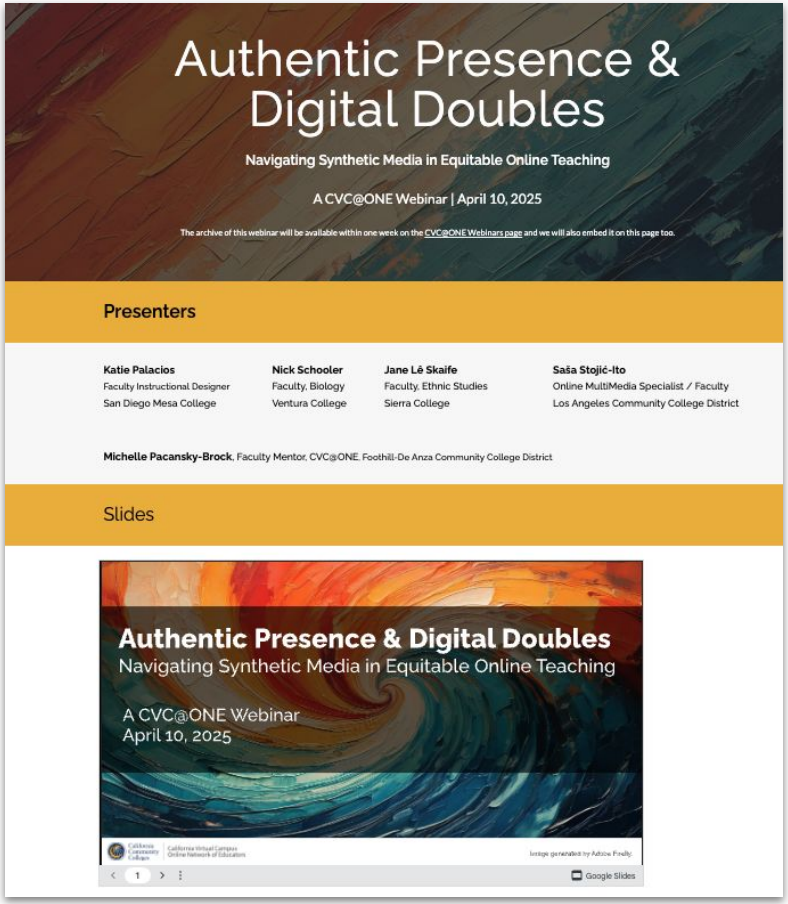


Resource Site

with Slides and Examples

Agenda

- Context
- A Conversation with CoP Participants
- Your Questions

Synthetic Media

... is a term used to describe content (video, audio, image or text) that has been generated or modified through the use of AI.

This type of content can include deepfakes – realistic AI-generated videos or audio recordings that appear as if someone really said or did things they did not.

Equitable Online Teaching

Intentionally designing and facilitating asynchronous learning environments that mitigate power inequities by supporting the varying social, emotional, and cognitive needs, abilities, and cultural knowledge of the diverse students served by community colleges.

Authentic Presence & Digital Doubles: Navigating Synthetic Media in Equitable Online Teaching

A CVC@ONE Community of Practice

REGISTER NOW! SPACE IS LIMITED.

As synthetic media tools become more available, instructors are exploring how AI-generated videos and voice clones may enhance their online teaching presence. But in an era where equity gaps persist, how do we harness these emerging technologies while preserving the authentic human connections that drive student success?

Join your California Community College colleagues in this Community of Practice to critically examine the opportunities and challenges of teaching with synthetic media. Through identity-conscious, collaborative dialogue and shared experimentation, we'll explore questions like:

- How can synthetic media support instructor presence while maintaining authenticity and trust?
- What role does human imperfection play in creating inclusive learning environments?
- How might the use of AI-generated video and voice clones impact our relationships with students and, in turn, their success?
- What ethical considerations should guide our use of synthetic media in community college teaching?

Together, we'll apply the CCC Human-Centered Principles for Adopting Generative AI as we develop frameworks for intentional integration of synthetic media that prioritize human connection, support equity, and honor the unique value of authentic instructor presence in the online learning experience.

CVC@ONE
Community of Practice (CoP)
February - April 2025

CoP promotional video

Synthetic Media Community of Practice (CoP)

Members

- **Anish Bhatia**, Riverside Community District
- **Audrey Blumeneau**, San José City College
- **Jane Bowers**, Antelope Valley College
- **Lori Hokerson**, American River College
- **Rhiannon Lares**, Chaffey College
- **Samuel Moyle**, Bakersfield College
- **Brett Myhren**, Saddleback College
- **Michelle Pacansky-Brock**, CVC@ONE (facilitator)
- **Katie Palacios**, San Diego Mesa College
- **Nick Schooler,** Ventura College
- **Kimberly Shediak**, Pasadena City College
- **Jane Lê Skaife**, Sierra College
- **Saša Stojić-Ito**, Los Angeles Community College District

Meeting Schedule

- Every other week
- Six sessions
- 1.5 hours each

Synthetic Media Community of Practice (CoP)

Participant Breakdown

- Representation from 12 California Community Colleges /Districts
- Balanced mix of teaching and support roles
- Majority have 3+ years online teaching experience
- Strong foundation in online pedagogy
- Basic (57%) to moderate (43%) familiarity with Gen AI video tools
- No use of AI generated videos in instruction

Participant Perceptions

Opportunities of Synthetic Media

Content Creation

- Quick content updates and revisions
- Multiple language support

Learning Experience

- Supplemental instruction in multiple modalities
- Options for diverse representation (speakers)

Opportunities: Open-ended Response

"I think of the Magic School bus. Can I transport myself to the areas I am teaching about? When covering cells, can I lecture about mitochondria as I am standing next to one? I think that would be really cool."

- Teaching Faculty, 3-5 years experience

Participant Perceptions

Concerns about Synthetic Media

Authenticity & Trust

- Impact on student-teacher relationships (loss off human touch)
- Balance between efficiency and authenticity

Technical & Ethical

- Privacy and data security/deepfakes
- Learning curve and time investment
- Exacerbating equity gaps

Concerns: Open-ended Responses

"Deep fakes; Identity theft; Misinformation and disinformation; Supporting the very tools that are arguably compromising the careers of artists and others; Contributing to the downfall of humankind, particularly the already downtrodden."

- Teaching Faculty, 3-5 years experience

Identity Conscious Inquiry

- Identity shapes how a person experiences the world, how they engage and interact with others, as well as their opportunities and challenges
- Identity is intersectional
- Power inequities are always at play
- How a person feels influences a their ability to achieve their full potential
- Center all of this as we consider how synthetic media may mitigate and/or exacerbate power inequities

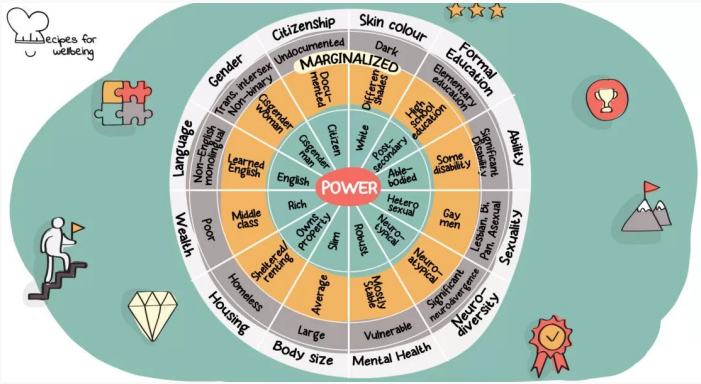
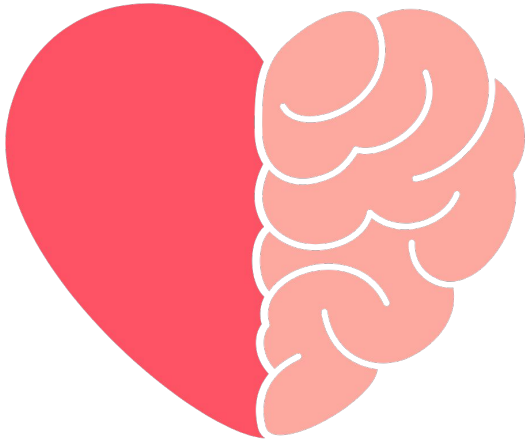


Image by Recipes for Well Being. Adapted from the work of Sylvia Duckworth
https://www.recipesforwellbeing.org/the-wheel-of-power-and-privilege/

Costino, K. A. Equity-Minded Faculty Development: An Instersectional Identity-Conscious Commmunity of Practice Model for Faculty Learning, *Metropolitan Universities, 29*(1). DOI: 10.18060/22170

How a person feels



affects everything.

Community Agreement

- Conditions for our learning co-created by CoP participants
- Emphasis on:
  - Inclusion, embrace diversity as an asset
  - Make space for emotions
  - Be open to trying new things
  - No judgment zone
  - Disagreements will happen
  - Be kind

Our Panelists

Katie Palacios
Faculty Instructional Designer
San Diego Mesa College

Nick Schooler
Faculty, Biology
Ventura College

Jane Lê Skaife
Faculty, Ethnic Studies
Sierra College

Saša Stojić-Ito
Online MultiMedia Specialist/ Faculty
Los Angeles Community College District

Demo

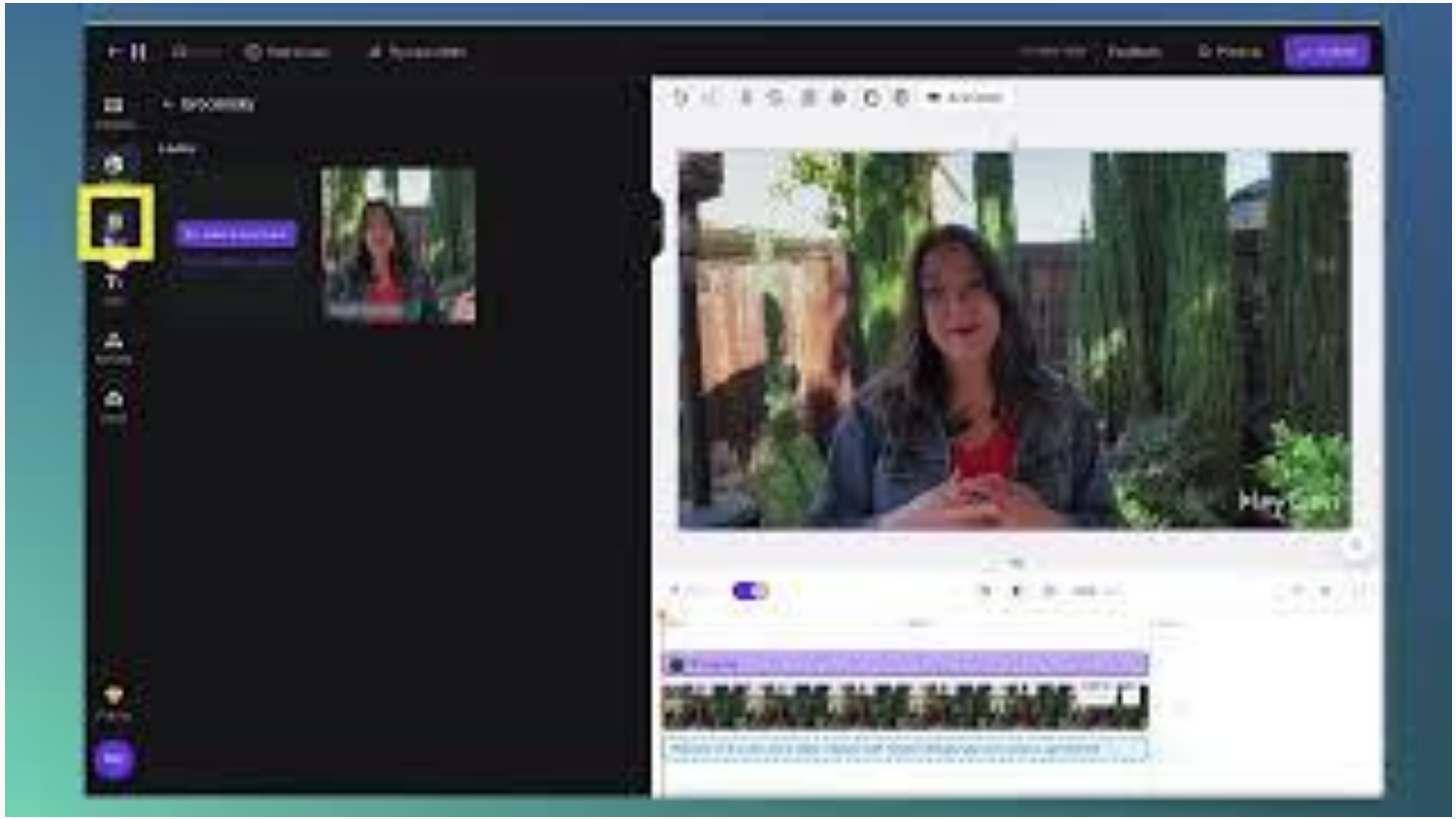
Image generated by Michelle Pacansky-Brock with Adobe Firefly. CC-0

This video is a synthetic media mashup by Michellle Pacansky-Brock. The script was generated by Claude Sonnet 3.7 (premium account) and refined by a human. Slides were generated by Gamma (free account) and refined by a human. Video avatar and voice clone of Michelle Pacansky-Brock were generated by HeyGen (free account) and used with Michelle's permission. Video clip of (the real) Michelle was recorded on an iPhone by Michelle in her backyard.

How to Create a “Digital Double” Video

1. Create a free HeyGen account
   - Review HeyGen’s Privacy Policy.
   - Optional - opt out of data sharing to train product
     HeyGen uses your data “to train and enhance the models that power our products and services, including to make our avatar creation models more accurate. It is necessary for our legitimate interest and subject to appropriate safeguards. You may request to opt-out of this training and enhancement by contacting us at privacy@heygen.com.”
2. Create your custom avatar from a 3-minute video recording.
   - Tips to consider
3. Create a video from a written script using your custom avatar.
   - Go to **Projects** page in your account
   - Select **Create a video**

How to Create a Custom Avatar Video using a Written Script



What guidance would you give to community college educators about using synthetic media?

- Guide your use with a critical consideration about how it will improve students' experiences.
- Be transparent about it.
- Use it in addition to your human presence.
- Think about this: "What is the intent of this video?" Is it to deliver content or to develop trust with students? And use those answers to guide your use.
- Decide how it will be used and use it for only that while being transparent.
- Maybe the better use is for students to take content and use synthetic media to meet their individualized needs.
- There are moments/opportunities where "shallowfake" might be better than "deepfake" (e.g., an obvious cartoon seems more authentic than a hyper realistic version of ourselves).
- Use in small doses–don't rush to convert to full synthetic video right away

Share one feature you've discovered about a particular tool that you would like to further pursue/use and how you imagine using it. Or your reasons for not pursuing a feature.

- PDF to video: could be used to augment a text-based module in Canvas (like a summary video)
- HeyGen provides custom branding options and a highlight reel (teaching: take a long lecture and create a highlight reel or break out into smaller chunks?)
- Synthesia felt easier because it generated a script for me to get started with.

What risk(s) of synthetic media are at the forefront of your mind?

- Risk of losing authenticity with our students…
- Underrepresentation of avatars and false representation of avatars when it comes to race/ethnicity
- Real story: a colleague who teaches online is using a digital double as videos for lectures and is getting pushback in their evaluation (“It is not acceptable this is human.”) Who decides?
- What happens if a student disengages when seeing an avatar and what happens with future generations if they’re raised in an environment that uses digital avatars all the time.
- Environmental risks of AI, in particular synthetic media which uses extraordinary amounts of water and energy. Every time we push the button to generate or re-generate. Leon Furze’s theory of digital plastic resonates.
- Using it as a replacement for teaching presence.
- Proliferating racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender stereotypes; leaving out neurodiverse people, older people, disabled people

Glossary of Terms Used to Guide CoP Discussions

- **Equitable Online Teaching:** Intentionally designing and facilitating asynchronous learning environments that mitigate power inequities by supporting the varying social, emotional, cognitive needs and abilities and valuing the cultural knowledge of the diverse students served by community colleges .
- **Privilege and Marginalization**: Power is distributed unevenly. Those with non-dominant identities are more likely to be left out.
- **Belonging**: When environmental cues and interpersonal interactions signal that a person's goals for connection, affiliation, and respect can be met. Humans are wired for social affinity. Not belonging is toxic and triggers the same part of the brain as physical pain.
- **Cues of Social Inclusion**: The environmental cues that set up conditions for belonging.
- **Thinking/Feeling**: Thinking and feeling are interconnected. "We are not thinking machines that feel. We are feeling machines that think." Antonio Damasio
- **Psychological Safety:** A social condition that enables a person to be their authentic self and question/challenge ideas without fear of retaliation.
- **Cognitive Bandwidth:** The brain uses the same bandwidth to navigate threat, uncertainty, and cognition all at once. Threat reduces one's capacity to learn and demonstrate their abilities. (Cia Verschelden, *Bandwidth Recovery)*
- **Uncanny Valley:** The weird feeling a human gets when confronting something unhuman that looks too human. (Masahiro Mori)
- **Connective Labor:** Work associated with human connection that results in one person making another person feel seen and valued. (Allison Pugh, *The Last Human Job*)