

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY  
OF CROSS-CULTURAL  
ENGAGEMENT IN THE  
COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY:  
INSTRUCTOR  
PERSPECTIVES AND  
CHALLENGES**

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# Introduction & Statement of the problem

- Culture plays a major role in online learning (Bates & Gpe, 1997; Morse, 2003; Hewling, 2005; Moore, 2006; Edmundson, 2007, 2009).
- Literature on this topic is still in its infancy and there are deficiencies in research-based studies especially in regards to globalization of education and cross-cultural issues (Gunawardena, Wilson, & Nolla, 2003; Edmundson, 2007; Zawacki-Richter, Bäcker & Vogt, 2009).
- Asynchronous text-based computer-mediated communication (CMC) learning communities have afforded a growing number of cross-cultural learners the opportunity to study in internationally renowned universities or institutions without being bound by geographical or temporal constraints (McIssac, 2002).
- Studies have revealed that some of the factors that hinder successful online learning are: inability to understand specific cultural references, language limitations, inability to question authority (instructor or peers), differing emotional needs, time zone limitations, and technological limitations (Zhao & McDougall, 2008; Uzner, 2009; Zhang & Kenny, 2010).
- The Col framework is geared toward providing a theoretical framework that addresses how learning and teaching can be achieved in dynamic yet intricate online learning environments through the use of effective communities of practical inquiry and is becoming increasingly influential for explaining and prescribing effective conduct of collaborative constructivist online learning and teaching (Arbaugh, Cleveland-Innes, Diaz, Garrison, Ice, Richardson, Shea, & Swan, 2008; Garrison, 2011).
- The Col model does not consider cultural issues and multicultural online engagement (Morgan, 2011).
- **The underlying assumption of this study is that, as instructors project their personalities in the online environment via their teaching and social presence, both of which are largely rooted in their dominant culture, their values, beliefs and attitudes will significantly affect learners' social and cognitive presence. Therefore, it is extremely important that we understand how instructors in such a learning context accommodate and make provisions for culturally diverse learners.**



# Defining culture and “cross-cultural”

- **Culture** is defined in this study as “*the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual*” (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 16).
- “**Cross-cultural**” refers to interaction among individuals from different cultures (<http://tinyurl.com/44vlwv3>). In the context of this study “cross-cultural” specifically refers to individuals who may or may not be currently living in Canada but were born in another country and whose native language is notably not English or individuals who identify with a culturally distinct group (e.g., Aboriginals, French Canadians, or a new immigrant group now residing in Canada).



# Purpose of study and central research question

- The central question that guides this study is:

How do instructors accommodate and make provisions for cross-cultural learners in an online community of learning?



# Theoretical Frameworks used in the Study

- **Col Framework**

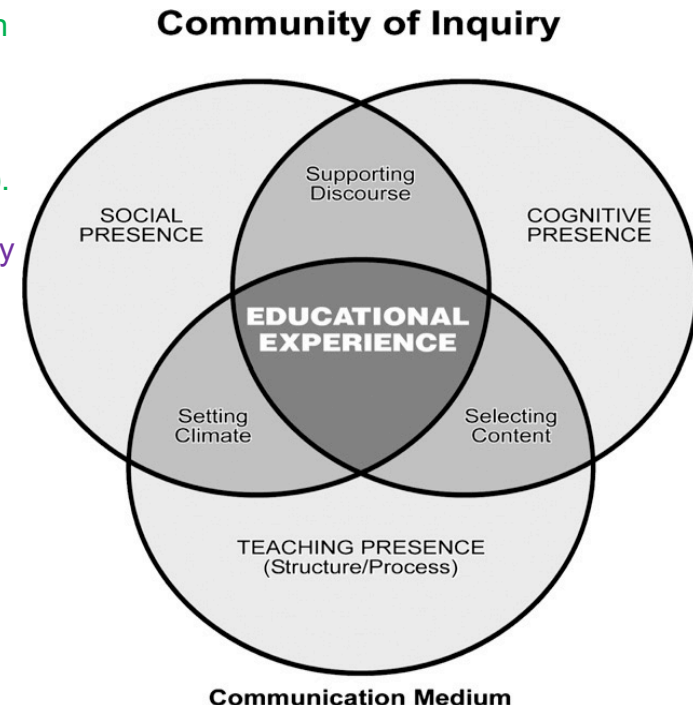
- **Teaching Presence:** “The design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes” (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison & Archer, 2001 as cited in Garrison, 2011, p. 24).

- **Social Presence:** The ability of participants in a community of inquiry “to identify with a group, communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop personal and affective relationships progressively by way of projecting their individual personalities” (Garrison, 2009b as cited in Garrison, 2011, p.23).

- **Cognitive presence:** The extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through course activities, sustained reflection, and discourse (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000).

- **MES Framework** (a 35-instrument, with subscales for experience, attitude, efficacy and instructors’ views on multicultural teaching (Guyton & Wesche, 2005).

- **Adapted Multicultural Efficacy Scale (AMEQ)**



# Methodology

- Sequential exploratory design : a partial level of mixing, sequential time orientation, and greater emphasis on the qualitative phase of the study than on the quantitative phase.
- The sequential approach enables the researcher to obtain themes and specific statements from participants in an initial qualitative data collection, and then use these statements as specific items and the themes for scales to add on to an existing survey instrument (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).
- Data collection: three-phase approach with intramethod mixing (Johnson & Turner, 2003).
  - Phase 1: Collecting qualitative data using the Adapted Multicultural Efficacy Questionnaire (AMEQ).
  - Phase 2: AMEQ data underwent inductive qualitative analysis.
  - Phase 3: Administering revised Col instrument to target population



# Participants' Demographic Information

Respondents	Total Number	Age Group	Cultural Background
Female ( $N = 7$ )	2	35-44	Canadian
	1		Western European (Dutch) descent
	1	45-54	Canadian
	2	55-64	Canadian
	1	65-74	Canadian
Male ( $N = 3$ )	1	35-44	Greek
	1	55-64	Indian
	1		Canadian



# Data Collection and Analysis for Phase 1

- Data for the qualitative phase (phase 1) of this study was collected using the Adapted Multicultural Efficacy Questionnaire (AMEQ).
- The AMEQ, Online Survey 1, was designed to assess instructors' perceived multicultural efficacy in teaching cross-cultural students online. This survey contained fifteen open-ended survey questions. The AMEQ was administered to all ten participants during the months of June and July, 2011.



# Cultural Indicators and Descriptors

<i>Indicator abbreviation</i>	<i>Definition</i>
ACC	<b>accommodation</b> - instructor adapts or modifies instructional material to address cross-cultural students' needs (also includes ways in which instructor adapts or modifies instructional material for cross-cultural learners)
CON	<b>contextualization</b> - instructor takes into account specific cultural factors when adapting curricula and activities
CSS	<b>creation of safe spaces</b> - instructor develops and incorporates activities designed to promote the success of cross-cultural learners
ENC	<b>encouragement</b> - instructor encourages cross-cultural collaborative online engagement
ANT	<b>anticipation</b> - instructor can anticipate online cross-cultural learner difficulties
PREV	<b>prevention</b> - instructor can take preventative measures to lessen or relieve learner difficulties
ADAP	<b>adaptation</b> - instructor can adapt to concerns and expectations of culturally diverse learners
ID	<b>identification</b> - instructor can identify solutions to possible online cultural clashes
KOD	<b>knowledge of diversity</b> - instructor can identify ways in which culturally diverse learners contribute to the online learning community and environment
SOD	<b>supportive of diversity</b> - instructor encourages online learners to assimilate and accept the perspective of ethnic and cultural groups different from their own



# Qualitative Results

- Qualitative data findings – matrix results

	Social Presence – Open Communication	Social Presence – Group Cohesion	Social Presence – Affective Expression	Teaching Presence – Design	Teaching Presence – Direct Instruction	Teaching Presence – Facilitation
1 : ACC	0	0	0	8	0	6
2 : ADAP	3	0	0	6	2	9
3 : ANT	0	0	0	0	2	4
4 : CON	1	0	0	7	3	3
5 : CSS	4	0	0	3	3	5
6 : ENC	4	0	1	0	0	7
7 : ID	4	0	0	2	1	6
8 : KOD	8	0	0	1	1	1
9 : PREV	1	0	0	3	4	6
10 : SOD	5	0	0	1	0	6
Total Frequency	30	0	1	31	16	53

# Building onto the 34-item Col Instrument

Core Codes	Cultural indicator
Teaching presence – design and organization	Q 35. The instructor allows for adjustments to the design and organization when necessary to accommodate cultural diversity.
Teaching presence – facilitation	Q 36. The instructor supports interaction among culturally diverse learners.
Social presence – open communication	Q 37. Open communication in this community allows for culturally diverse presentation.



# Data Collection and Analysis for Phase 2

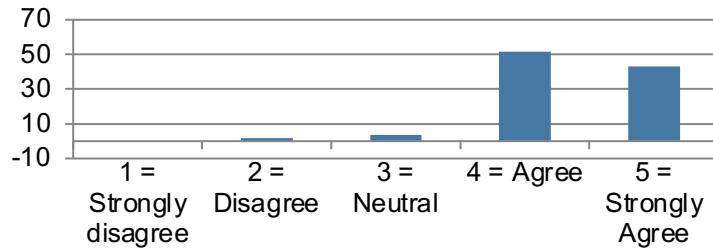
- Data for the quantitative phase of this study (phase 2) was collected using the revised version of the original 34-item Col survey instrument. The revised Col instrument was administered to the same sample population during the months of August and September, 2011. Nine participants ( $N = 9$ ) from the original sample population responded to the questionnaire.
- Ordinal responses were scored using a 5 point Likert-like scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).
- To obtain frequency distributions, Col survey questions were grouped in the following manner: (i) teaching presence indicators comprised 13 questions in the Col survey instrument; (ii) social presence indicators comprised 9 questions in the Col survey instrument; and (iii) cultural indicators comprised 3 questions incorporated into the Col survey instrument after the qualitative analysis (questions 35, 36, and 37).
  - Frequency distributions expressed as percentages were calculated according to the total number of respondents.
- To calculate whether there was any degree of association among the variables: (teaching presence, social presence, and cultural indicators), Spearman's rank correlation non-parametric measure was utilized. The null hypothesis was that there would be no association between the variables in the underlying population.



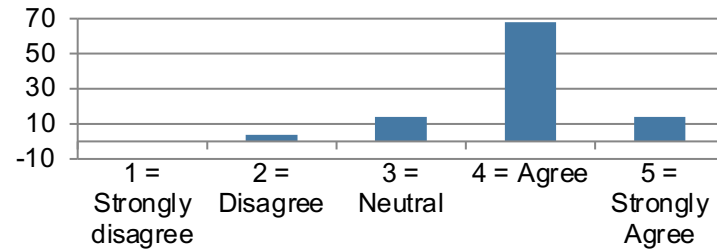
# Quantitative Results

- Quantitative data findings – Col results and data results for Spearman's rank correlation test

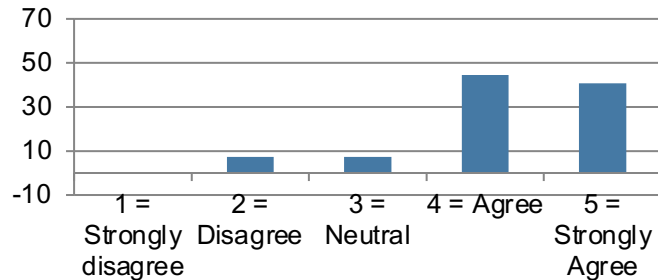
**Teaching presence**



**Social presence**




**Incorporated Cultural Indicators**



**Spearman's rank correlation test**

	Teaching Presence	Social Presence	Cultural Indicators
Teaching Presence	1.00	0.91	0.86
Social Presence	0.91	1.00	0.73
Cultural Indicators	0.86	0.73	1.00

# Conclusion

- Qualitative data results revealed that:
    - Instructors appear to be quite cognizant of cultural diversity and have strong multicultural efficacy in terms of their knowledge of diversity and the strategies that they use to promote learning and prevent conflict.
    - In the absence of any cross-cultural design, instructors use facilitation activities that take into account cultural diversity when assigning group work that encourages learners to apply the course contents to their own personal contexts and that encourages multiple perspectives in online discussions.
    - Open communication seems to be a strategy for promoting learning and preventing conflict.
  - Quantitative data results indicated that:
    - Most instructors are not only aware of the importance of design and organization in the Col context, but also willing to make necessary adjustments to accommodate culturally diverse learners.
    - Supporting interaction between culturally diverse learners via facilitation is a practice adopted by most respondents.
    - 56% of the respondents agreed that open communication enables learners to present themselves as culturally diverse.
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# Thank you!

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