

Writing a Research Proposal

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Agenda

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Dr. Martha Cleveland-Innes



**Professor & Chair
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Introductions

<http://cde.athabasca.ca/faculty/martic.php>

Names and program of participants

Qualifiers

- What but not how
- Ceteris parabis* – proposal writing is discipline specific
- Holy grail – clarity, argument, parsimonious questions, and detailed, appropriate design

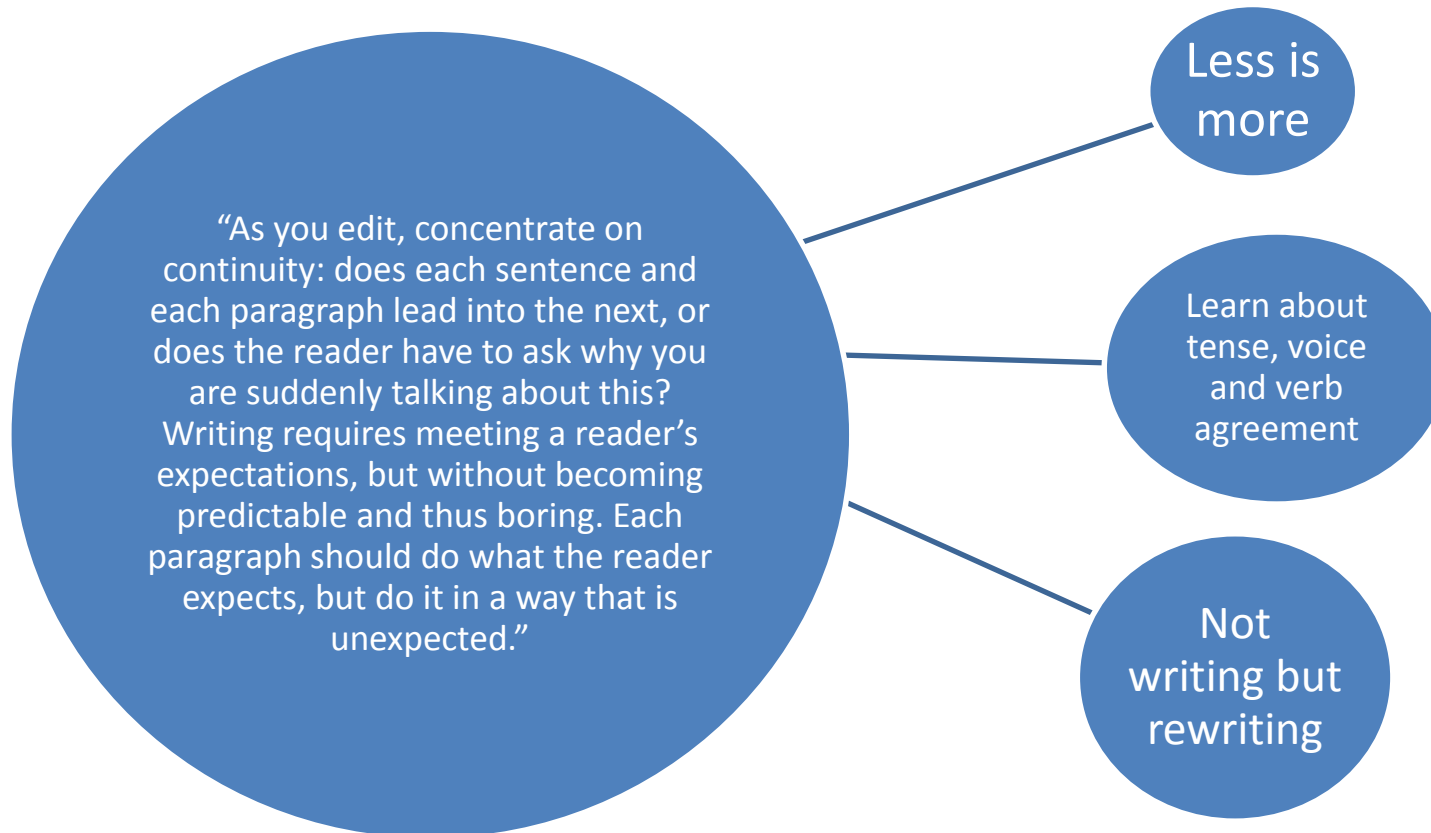
*Latin phrase that translates approximately to "holding other things constant" and is usually rendered in English as "all other things being equal".

Read more: <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/ceterisparibus.asp#ixzz1YWzcfm5v>

Becoming a writer

"The most universal advice on writing a successful grant proposal is to present a well written, focused solution to a problem in a logical progression. This is much easier said than done, and finding the focus is often the most difficult piece of the puzzle. To find this focus, we suggest writing a "concept paper." A concept paper summarizes in two to three pages the entire project from beginning to end. The point is to take all of the ideas in your head and put them down on paper as concisely as possible. Writing a concept paper is a good exercise in defining your priorities and mission, and can be a useful tool in obtaining valuable feedback before "diving into" the full proposal." (cf. About page).

Becoming a writer



The Thesis Proposal

There is no one formula for a thesis proposal, given the range of disciplines and organizational sequences for processing it. The advice here is meant to raise your awareness of some of the underlying functions and issues around this important event in your graduate experience. Think of the thesis or grant proposal as a way of raising your voice to speak out within the academic community.

Process (how to do it)

- Look closely at departmental specifications (about timing, scope, length, readers, etc.)
- Ask other graduate students in your department about their experiences; look at past proposals
- Try out your ideas as widely as possible, especially with your supervisor and committee members. Make the most of chances to take part in informal discussions, drafts, preliminary meetings, presentations at colloquia, etc.
- Don't procrastinate; delay just isolates you.

Function (what it's for)

- Show why your research idea is interesting within the field (by discussing what others have done and not done).
- Show that you can carry it out (by sketching your methodology).
- Limit your promises: exclude things you won't get to (texts, topics, methods) as well as outlining those you will use.
- Remember that your proposal is a document to be filed, not a promise to be fulfilled in every detail.

Rhetoric (how it gets through)

- Start with *why* your idea is worth doing (contribution to field), then fill in *how* (technicalities about topic and method).
- Give enough detail to establish feasibility, but not so much as to bore the reader.
- Show your ability to deal with possible problems or changes in focus.
- Show confidence and eagerness (use *I* or *we* and active verbs, concise style, positive phrasing).

Writing an essay of argument



Using the relevant literature



Choose a general topic
Find 5 articles on research in your field
Read and document
Choose 5 more articles
Read and document
What don't we know?

Uncovering the dark spots



**Graduate Student Panel: The Col
Framework**

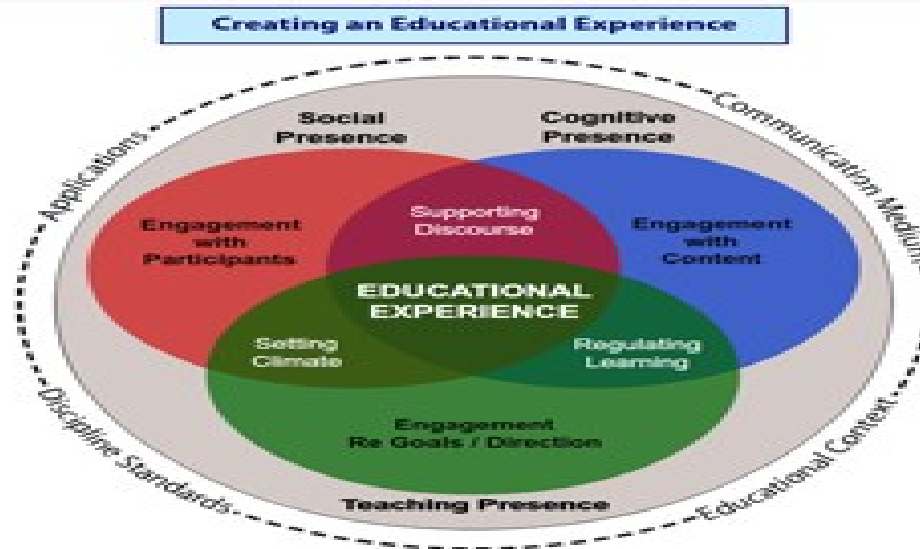
**Cultural presence in
diverse online
environments**

**Viviane Vladimirschi
CIDER SESSION
December 2014**

The Problem

- ✓ **Culture plays a major role in online learning** (Bates & Gpe, 1997; Morse, 2003; Hewling, 2005; Moore, 2006; Edmundson, 2007, 2009).
- ✓ **Literature is 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, Bächer & 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** (McIssac, 2002).
- ✓ **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).

Culture and the Col Model



- ✓ **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.**

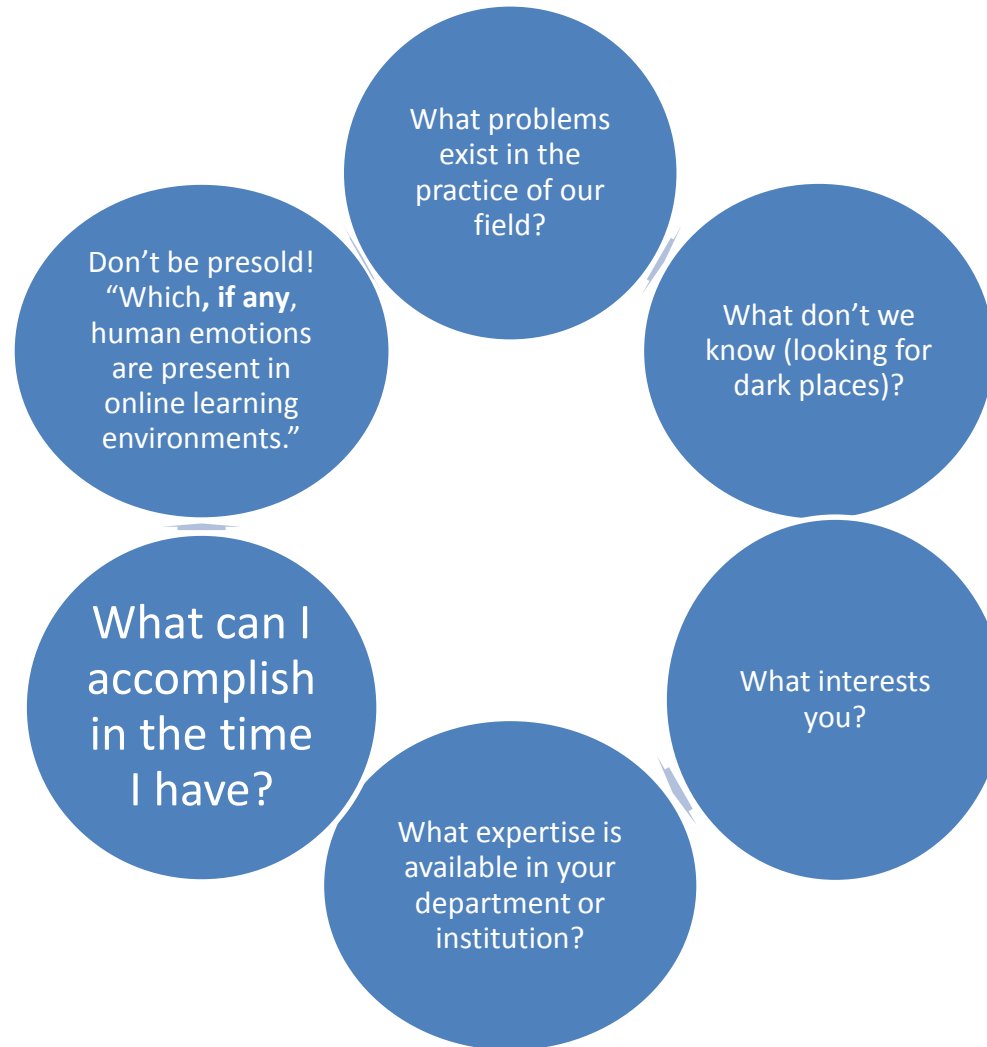
Culture: *"the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual"* (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 16).

"Cross-cultural" refers to interaction among individuals from different cultures (<http://tinyurl.com/44vlwv3>).

The Study

- ◆ **Purpose:** to explore how instructors of online courses accommodate and make provisions for culturally diverse learners in an online community of inquiry.
- ◆ **Theoretical frameworks used:** Col framework & MES Framework (Guyton & Wesche, 2005) ➡ **Adapted Multicultural Efficacy Scale (AMEQ)**
- ◆ **Sample population:** 10 online instructors from two Alberta post-secondary institutions volunteered to participate in the study.
- ◆ **Methodology:** Mixed methods with more more emphasis placed on the qualitative phase than on the quantitative phase.

Identifying the research question



Choosing the right research design

The question determines the method—maybe ;-).

Practical and applied or abstract and theoretical?

Is there enough already known to help you formulate deductive notions and test them?

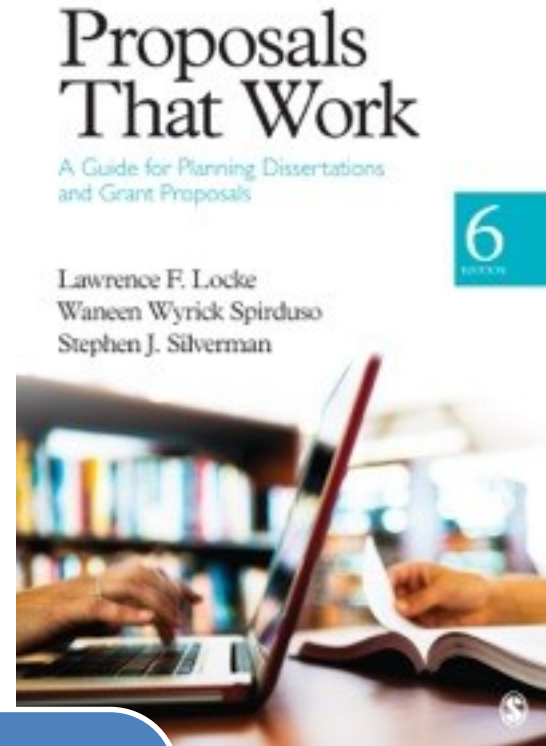
Is this an exploration of new relationships?

How or what questions that explore or describe – qualitative designs.

Testing and comparing relationships – quantitative designs.

Resources

Locke, L., Spirduso, W., & Silverman, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grants proposals*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.



Nair, A.S. (2007). On becoming a researcher. Retrieved from: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/21202688/On-Becoming-A-Researcher>

