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# EXPLORATION OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

*Finding the key to student engagement in blended delivery courses*

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Blended delivery of information involves a combination of face-to-face and online activities to create a unique learning environment with its own opportunities and challenges. While the interest and demand for this type of curriculum is increasing, the complexities of this learning context and keeping students engaged within it are not fully understood. This research highlights how instructors and adult learners interact with one another and develop interpersonal relationships in post-secondary through blended delivery learning environments and how this may be used to enhance student engagement.

## Methodology

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Informed by social interdependence theory, this qualitative research drew upon interpretive phenomenology. Through 12 interviews, collective lived experiences were revealed to highlight synergies that can be created through key interpersonal relationship development - themes of foundation, conversation, mutuality and independence - which in turn, promote deeper student engagement.

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## Main Findings

Synergistic interpersonal elements and dynamics between adult learners and instructors illuminate how learning processes and interpersonal exchanges can be enacted to enhance student engagement in an undergraduate post-secondary, blended delivery environment, thereby providing considerations for enhancing educational praxis.

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## Corresponding Data

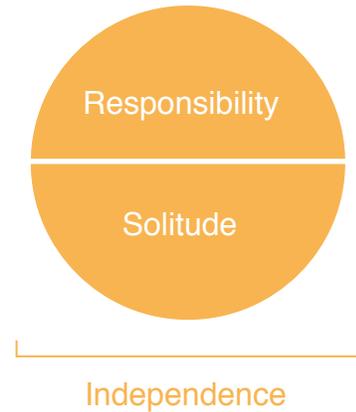
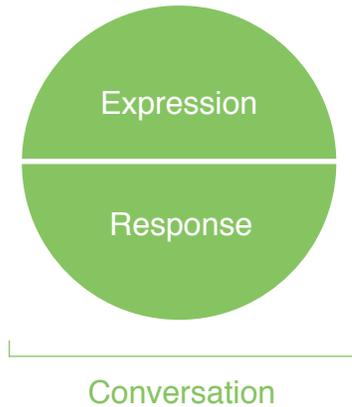
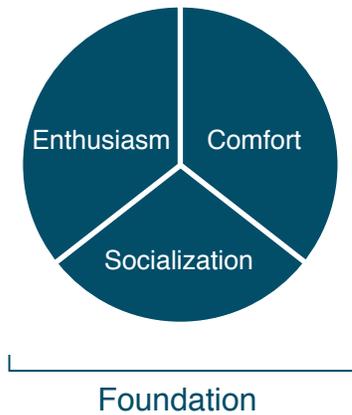
**Social Interdependence Theory:** The theory that the structure of goals determines an individual interactions and particular outcomes.

**Phenomenology:** The study of structures of experience of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view.

12 interviews conducted.

Blended delivery is a combination of face-to-face and online activities to create a distinct learning environment.

## INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT THEMES



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### Implications

Interpersonal Relationship Development (IRD) between students and instructors in blended delivery settings is important to enhance student engagement. In order for this to occur, IRD themes must complement each other and when this does not occur (i.e. intersection between themes present contradictions or cannot be reconciled) student engagement diminishes. Further, synergies created through intersections between IRD themes enhance instructors' engagement with the blended delivery curriculum and students thereby highlighting the impact that IRD between instructors and students has on engagement.

### Where from here?

This study identified the following opportunities for ongoing research:

1. How face-to-face exchanges may be structured within a blended delivery context,
2. Composition of students (i.e. class size and diversity of learners – culture, gender, disabilities) and the impact of this on interpersonal relationship development between students and instructors in blended delivery settings
3. Assessment of social interdependence capabilities of instructors and students ■