

# Understanding (Dis)Engagement by Disrupting & Reversing the Experiential Learning Sequence

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# The Problem

Engaging students is a complex task.

Teaching methods and best practices rarely consider the engagement between teachers *and* students.

Taking different perspectives could help us better understand the role of engagement in teaching and learning.

# Method

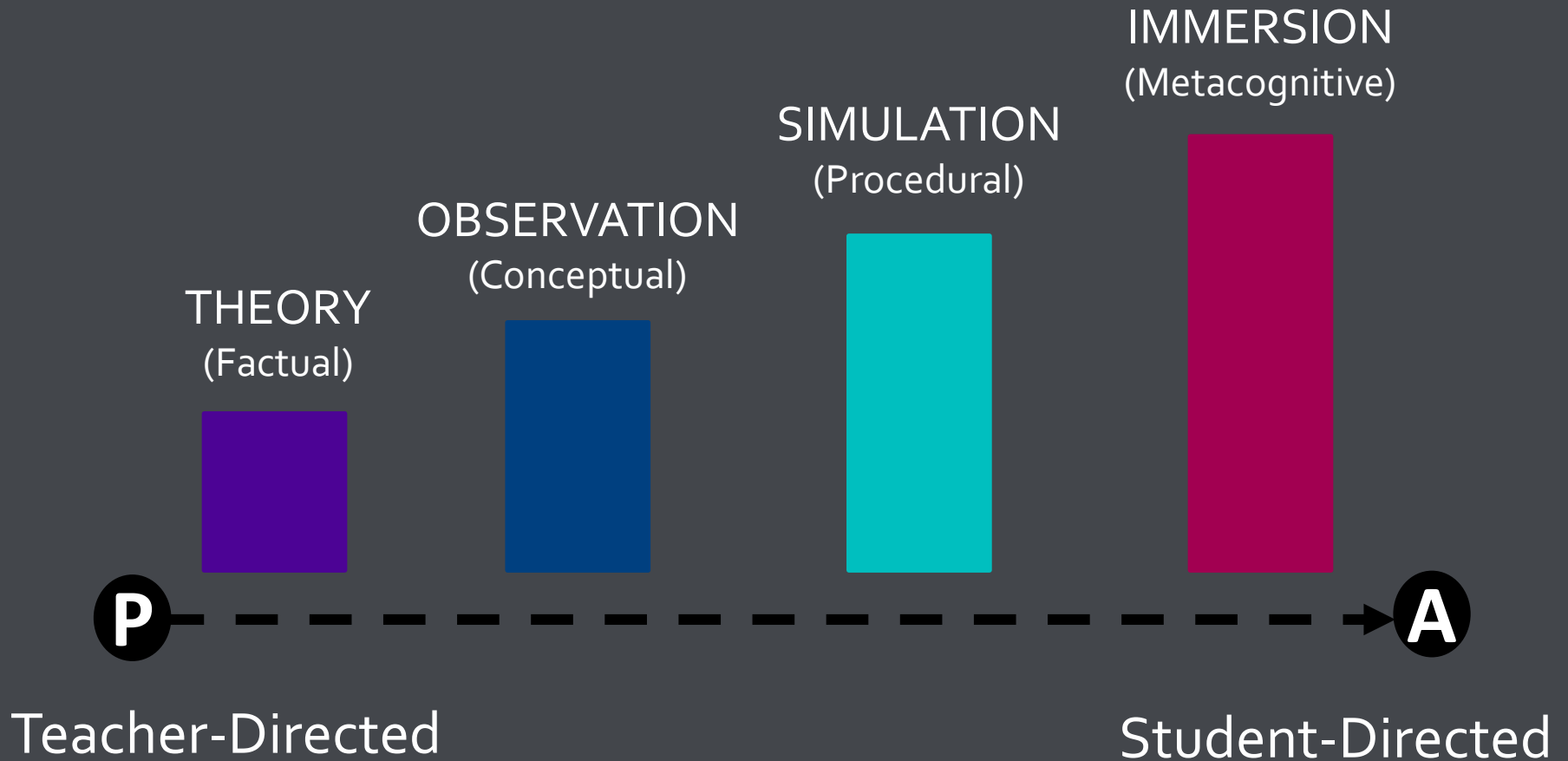
## Ethnographic case study

- Abductive
- One calendar year (spring, summer, fall)
- 42 students, four majors

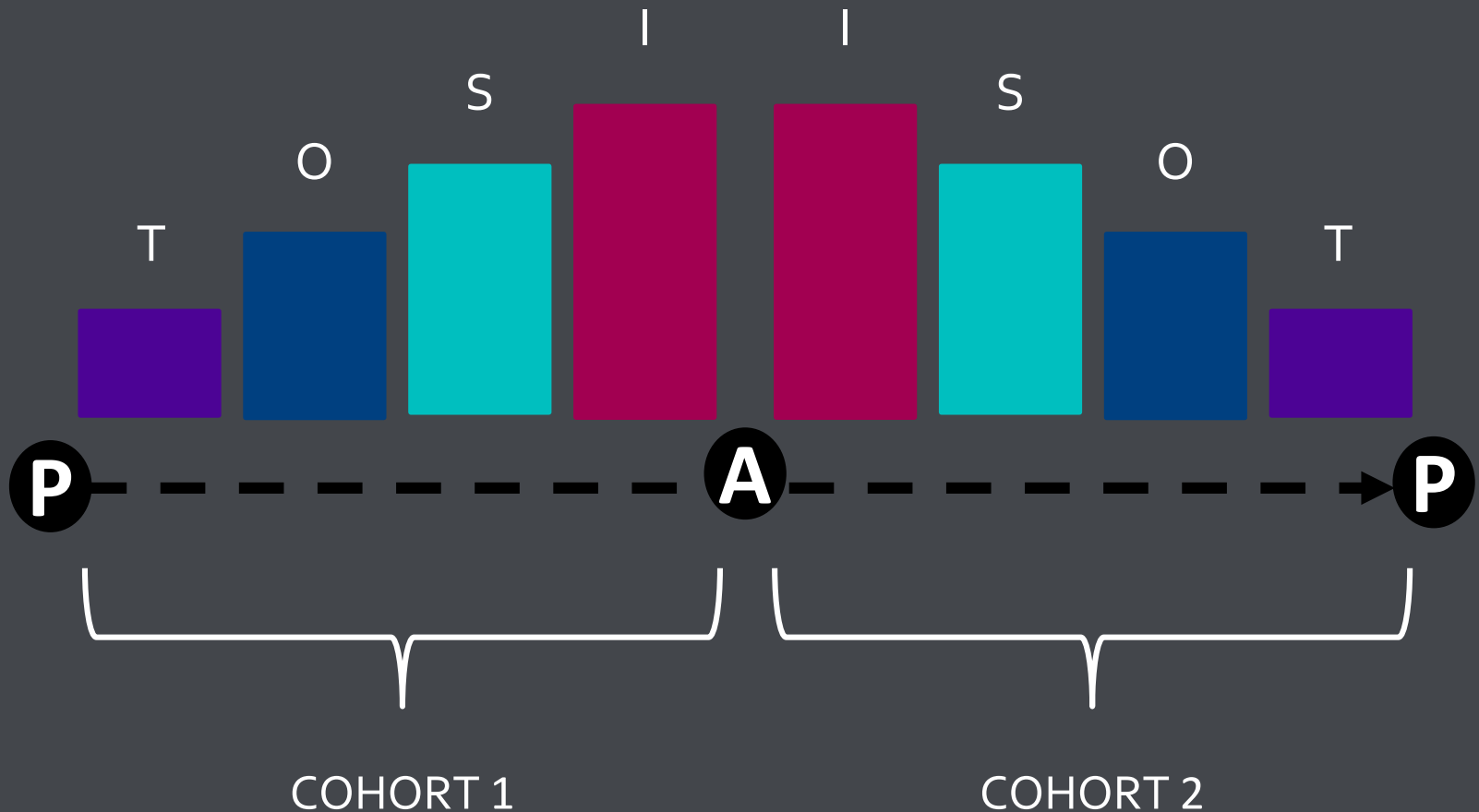
## Grounded theory

- Process (data collection and analysis)
- Product (theory construction)

# Depth of Experience



# Sequence of Experience



# Sources of Data

Multiple sources of data, but one human instrument.

## Qualitative

Student Interviews

Direct Observation

Classroom Dialogue

Reflexive Journals

Introspection

## Quantitative

Watson-Glaser™ CT Assessment

Myers Briggs Type Indicator®

Kolb Learning Style Inventory®

EQ 2.0®

# FINDINGS





# Words Are Hard

## Research as a Second Language

“Yopp gets so excited when we figure things out.  
I need to Google, social cognitive theory.”

(07\_1A\_BR1\_014)

## Language Acquisition through Experience

“Observations seemed like useless collections of  
information. I now see it was the beginning of  
understanding a larger process.”

(013\_1B\_BR1\_018)





# Words Are Hard

## Native Language Attrition

*FN\_BR3\_062: When will I realize that not every lunch requires #researchtalk? I'm blabbering.*

*THEY DO NOT CARE.*

## Lost in Translation

*FN\_SB2\_012: Why can't I connect with them? ☹️  
#iteach? #lexicon #transitioncomplete.*



# Just Trust Me

## Details vs. Big Picture

“I’m not a mind reader. Just tell me what to do and when.” (22\_1B\_SB1\_039)

“You had me at be creative! I’m already brainstorming ways this can take shape.” (27\_2A\_BR2\_049)



# Just Trust Me

“I know they are teaching me to think for myself, maybe I should just trust ME?” (03\_1B\_BR1\_56)

*FN\_SB2\_028: Are we on the right track? Maybe I'm learning to “trust me,” too?*



# Social Motivation

*FN\_BR2\_034: If interest is based on the individual student, motivation must be the factor that is most influenced by external conditions, right? Students (myself included) are easily influenced by almost ANYTHING in their environment.*

*#millennialprobs.*



# Social Motivation

## Domination

*FN\_BR2\_041: There's a new sheriff in town, y'all. Is [student leader] even listening to their ideas?*

*FN\_BR2\_045: Why didn't [student] take on a leadership role? Why are they being so quiet?*

*“Brain: Speak! Me: I can't. Brain: It doesn't matter. [Student leader] doesn't care.” (02\_1A\_BR1\_028)*



# Social Motivation

## Competition

“They [teachers] really like the other team’s model. Why do we even try? #imdone.” (15\_1B\_BR1\_051)

*FN\_BR2\_058: [Team] is already giving up. How do I help them? Should I help them or let them work it out on their own?*

“Finally! [Student] always had the best ideas and actually wants my input. Way to step up, girl!”  
(21\_1A\_BR1\_042)



# Gut Punch

Owwwww.

“How do you expect me to be engaged when you aren’t?” (16\_IB\_BRI\_043)

*FN\_BR2\_084: Stop the bus. What did she just say? Are you kidding me?*

*FN\_BR2\_087: Oh, wait. I told her to do that.*



# Gut Punch

**cog·ni·tive dis·so·nance** (*n.*): mental stress or discomfort experienced when one holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time





# Safety Nets

## Challenge ME

“Bring it on! I’ve never been challenged like this!”  
(12\_1B\_BR1\_051)

“In most classes, professors ask questions with obvious answers. Here, I have to dig for it, and it’s fun.”  
(21\_1B\_BR1\_36)



# Safety Nets

Help ME

“If [Yopp] says, where can you find this information ONE.  
MORE. TIME. Just give me the answer! It’s your job!”  
(12\_1B\_BR1\_079)

*FN\_BR2\_39: Have [students] ever really been  
challenged? Have I? How do I understand challenge  
in terms of relative value?*



# Safety Nets

Catch. Release. Repeat.

*FN\_BR2\_77: How do I let them fail? It would be so easy just to help them.*

*FN\_BR2\_84: How long do I let them fail? This is difficult to watch.*



# Autopilot

*FN\_BR2\_114: I'm exhausted.*

*FN\_BR2\_115: I'm really exhausted.*



# Autopilot

“I’m exhausted” (38\_2B\_BR1\_071)



# Black & Blue

## Quantity

*FN\_BR1\_047: Why is this so hard? Some [students] can send out thirty tweets a day, but only muster six lines of text in class. #RAWR.*

*FN\_BR1\_099: I suppose you can't "see" engagement in two places [in class and in journals] at once. What else do I expect them to do? Juggle?*



# Black & Blue

## Quality

- *Type 1 (The Verbatims)*: If it was said in class, it was written down in almost the exact way it was expressed.
- *Type 2 (The Analyzers)*: Usually lacked great detail, but linked class information to other courses or past experiences



# Black & Blue

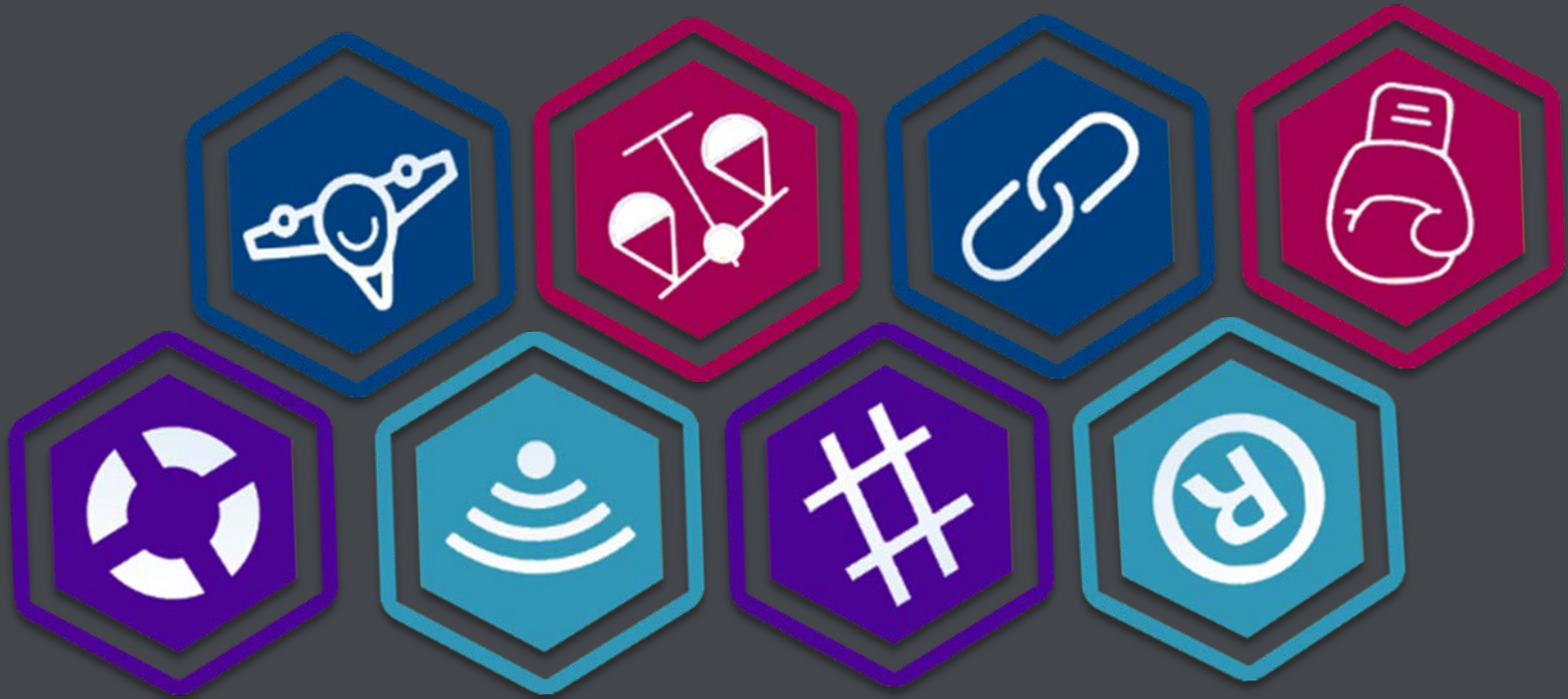
## New Colors

*FN\_BR2\_028: Clouds or rainbows, clouds or rainbows.  
Rarely do [students] fall somewhere in between.*

*FN\_BR2\_109: Maybe there's something to the colors  
[students] use after all? Feelers are more drawn to  
colors. Thinkers not so much.*



# CONCLUSIONS & CONVERSATIONS



$X \neq Y \neq Z$

Experience is engaging.

Not all experiences are created equal.

Disruptive vs. Destructive

Perspective is everything.

Proximity changes perspective.

Change may not come overnight.

What engages me today may not tomorrow.

A matter of time.

Dichotomies, spectrums, and dimensions

The problem with formulas.

Algorithms