The Relationship Between Moral Reinforcement and Learner-Centered Practice in Adult Learners: A Multi-Grounded Theory Study

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Danielle L. Erickson

Major Professor: Michael Kroth, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Davin Carr-Chellman, Ph.D.; Sydney Freeman Jr., Ph.D.; Margaret Vaughn, Ph.D.
Department Administrator: Kathy Canfield-Davis, Ph.D.

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Danielle L. Erickson, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a Major in Education and titled "The Relationship Between Moral Reinforcement and Learner-Centered Practice in Adult Learners: A Multi-Grounded Theory Study," has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

Major Professor: _____ Date: _____
Michael Kroth, Ph.D.

Committee Members: _____ Date: _____
Davin Carr-Chellman, Ph.D.

_____ Date: _____
Sydney Freeman Jr., Ph.D.

_____ Date: _____
Margaret Vaughn, Ph.D.

Department Administrator: _____ Date: _____
Kathy Canfield-Davis, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Moral development is a significant issue in education, yet there is no concrete understanding of how moral learning and moral reasoning are integrated into higher education institutions, especially without a religious connotation. This study aimed to explore the relationship between learner-centered practice, moral development, and moral reasoning within adult learners in higher education institutions. This grounded theory study intended to provide insight into the moral reflections, experiences, and perceptions of adult learners in the context of learner-centered practice. Thirteen adult learners from four research settings participated in this study. The research settings were observed using an observational protocol to ensure that they were learner-centered. In-depth phone interviews were the main source of data collection; participants were interviewed two to three times each. Through methods of coding, constant comparative analysis, memoing, and explicit grounding processes, five overarching themes emerged from the data: intentionality, reflective processes, community of learning, perspective scaffolding, and moral reinforcement. These themes contributed to the emergence of a grounded theory: *the theoretical model for moral reinforcement in learner-centered practice*. Theoretical matching was used to compare the emergent theory with existing frameworks, which included research on learner-centered practice, morality of instruction and learning, andragogy, cognitivism and constructivism, and moral development theory. This study offers one interpretation of the findings, namely, that moral reinforcement is a possible outcome for adult learners in learner-centered practice. According to participants, moral reinforcement was a result of personal motivation and effort, reflection and consideration, peer collaboration and support, and perspective scaffolding. The findings fill a gap in current literature by describing the relationship of moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice in the context of adult learners. A better understanding of how learner-centered practice contributes to a learner's moral development and moral reasoning has implications for lifelong learners and their learning, educators and their curriculum design, and higher education institutions attempting to meet society's expectations to create a nation of learners.

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DEDICATION

To my mom and dad – Everything I am, I owe to you.

To my fiancé – The source of my joy.

To Penny and Milo – My favorite study buddies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Education is a moral act, and will fail if morality is treated as optional"
(Hansen & Stephens, 2000, p. 47).

A constantly changing society dictates that we pass on to the next generation the critical importance of integrity, compassion, moral aptitude, and personal responsibility. The Wingspread Group on Higher Education [WGHE] (1993) consisted of a group of national leaders in higher education, who determined that higher education was not meeting society's needs and indicated three central concerns: taking values seriously, putting student learning first, and creating a nation of learners. While the WGHE is considered more ideologically than empirically driven, they based their conclusions on a number of research studies, such as the 1993 National Adult Literacy Survey and the 1993 Educational Testing Service reports (Holmes, 2007). The WGHE (1993) said, "No nation can remain great without developing a truly well-educated people [and] no nation can remain good without transmitting the fundamental values of a civil society to each new generation" (p. i). We, as members of society and higher education institutions, have an obligation to educate learners to develop a sense of civic values and moral responsibility.

> There is ample evidence that cognitive aspects of personal and social responsibility – namely moral reasoning – continue to develop during the college years. This evidence would suggest that education for personal and social responsibility is indeed a legitimate consideration for higher education. (Swaner, 2004, p. 44)

We have the opportunity to ask important questions about the value of higher education and the contribution of current teaching practices.

When the first American colleges were founded over 300 years ago, higher education viewed the development of character and the transmission of values as an essential

responsibility of the professors and administration (Nucci & Pascarella, 1987; WGHE, 1993). Higher education had a responsibility to consider the whole student, including their moral values (American Council on Education, 1937; Liddell & Cooper, 2012). Despite a decline of emphasis on values, there has been a renewed focus of higher education to consider moral development as an anticipated outcome of a college education (Liddell & Cooper, 2012; Whiteley, 2002). Whiteley (2002) said, "One of the fundamental obligations of the modern college and university is to influence intentionally the moral thinking and action of the next generation of society's leaders and citizens" (p. 5). The importance of upholding moral values and developing character in learners is even more necessary in today's society. Bok (2009) noted,

> At a time of such dissatisfaction and concern over the level of ethical behavior in the society, there is every reason for educational institutions to consider how they might use their strategic position to encourage students to think more deeply about ethical issues and strengthen their powers of moral reasoning. (p. 116)

It is appropriate to question how well higher education institutions are passing on an understanding of good versus bad, right versus wrong, and other societal values (WGHE, 1993). Otherwise, the successes of higher education are less valuable without a moral foundation to validate them. According to Kristol (2002), the moral neutrality of our educational institutions deprives them of their legitimacy.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities [AACU] is one of several initiatives designed to cultivate moral and ethical development in college students (Liddell & Cooper, 2012). The AACU outlined core dimensions of personal and social responsibility for students: striving for excellence, cultivating personal and academic integrity, contributing to a

larger community, taking seriously the perspectives of others, and developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action (Dey & Associates, 2010). Dey and Associates (2010) found that students and professionals strongly agreed that higher education institutions should assist learners to develop their moral and ethical reasoning. Their findings demonstrated that higher education institutions have a unique opportunity to "cultivate students' moral and ethical reasoning and integrity in their personal lives and in their academic pursuits" (Dey & Associates, 2010, p. 23).

Learner-centered practice addresses the needs of the learner as a whole in balance with the needs of the community (McCombs & Miller, 2007). This teaching practice also respects differing perspectives about what it means to live, learn, and grow within today's society, with a focus on becoming a fully functioning learner (McCombs & Miller, 2007). Learner-centered practice "promotes critical thinking as students explore issues or questions that require more than literal, concrete thought" (Rhodes, Schutt, Langham, & Bilotta, 2012). When a higher level of thinking and learning takes place, an opportunity for moral development arises. According to Hansen and Stephens (2000), learner-centered practice is associated with "key humanistic ideas of personal growth and development" (p. 45). With this method of instruction, teachers take on the role of facilitators, rather than instructors, resulting in a new type of relationship with the learners. This relationship becomes a moral partnership whose purpose is the student's growth (Hansen & Stephens, 2000). By sharing the power in the classroom, students are more engaged in the learning process and become more autonomous decision-makers (Ayers, 2004; Weimer, 2013). This autonomy becomes a habit the more that it is practiced (Aristotle, 350/2009), which allows the learner to be open to moral development.

Many elements of learner-centered practice are consistent with aspects of moral development and moral reasoning, as noted in prior research. Kohlberg (1975) claimed moral education has a cognitive core because it "recognizes that moral education, like intellectual education, has its basis in stimulating the active thinking" of the learner (p. 670). Moreover, moral education should stimulate people's thinking ability in ways that enable them to use more adequate and complex reasoning patterns to solve moral problems (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Other researchers asserted that active learning facilitates the development of moral reasoning (Lies, Bock, Brandenberger, & Trozzolo, 2012; Mayhew & King, 2008).

Brookfield (1998) argued that acknowledging learners' experiences, using discussion circles, and engaging in critical reflection contribute to moral learning. Berkowitz (1985) also cited that discussions led by peers are likely to produce growth in learners. Enright, Lapsley, and Levy (1983) and Kohlberg (1975) found that interactive instructional methods, such as group discussion, produce significantly more moral development compared to teacher-controlled instruction. Mayhew and King (2008) and Joseph (2016) noted that instructors who encouraged students' critical reflection stimulate moral development in the learners. Mayhew and King (2008) asserted that moral reasoning is "consistent with collegiate values of using critical inquiry" to make decisions (p. 18).

Several researchers placed emphasis on peer interaction and intergroup relationships, claiming that these strategies impact individuals' moral reasoning and understanding of values (Endicott, Bock, & Narvaez, 2003; Killen, Margie, & Sinno, 2010; Nucci, 2005). Nucci (2005) explained that peer interaction and discussion create a positive environment for social and moral growth. McCombs and Miller (2007) stated that learners have the opportunity to learn ethical decision-making through collaboration. Kohlberg (1975) also found a

correlation between moral development and one's level of cognitive reasoning: the higher level of cognitive reasoning, the higher level of moral development. Facilitators of learner-centered practice encourage students to be reflective, evaluative, and empowered (Ayers, 2004). Learner-centered practice provides students with ownership over their learning and helps them "achieve independent minds and the capacity to make educated decisions and value judgments" (Brown, 2008).

Active learning, learners' experiences, critical reflection, discussion groups, peer collaboration, cognitive reasoning, critical thinking, and student ownership of learning are all elements of learner-centered practice. Researchers have found a correlation between these individual components and moral development, thus there may be a relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice. It is important to follow up on these studies to provide more recent and novel literature on the topic, as well as to offer concrete findings regarding moral development and moral reasoning in the context of learner-centered practice. This chapter presents the problem statement, statement of purpose, research questions, an overview of the methodology, rationale and significance, researcher positionality, researcher assumptions, definitions of key terminology, and the organization of the study.

Problem Statement

Moral development is a significant issue in education, yet we do not have a concrete understanding of how moral learning and moral reasoning are integrated in higher education institutions, especially without a religious connotation. As members of an educated society, it is our individual and collective responsibility to uphold values and maintain the quality of higher education. Based on the literature, there is a relationship between the individual

components of learner-centered instruction and moral development, along with moral reasoning. However, little or no research could be found about the specific relationship between learner-centered practice as a whole, moral development, and moral reasoning. This study aimed to determine the moral development and moral reasoning processes in the context of learner-centered practice by exploring the relationship between learner-centered practice, moral development, and moral reasoning within adult learners in higher education institutions.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore learner-centered practice within higher education institutions and add to our understanding of the moral development and moral reasoning processes of adult learners. This grounded theory study intended to provide insight into the moral reflections, experiences, and perceptions of adult learners in the context of learner-centered practice in higher education institutions.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study's inquiry are:

1. What emergent theory explains the relationship between the moral development and moral reasoning of adult learners in the context of learner-centered practice in higher education institutions?
2. How does learner-centered practice contribute to the moral reasoning and moral development of adult learners?
3. What are the moral reflections, experiences, and perceptions of adult learners who participate in learner-centered instruction?

Overview of Methodology

A qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study to identify considerations of morality, individuals' thinking processes, and relationships in adult learning. Qualitative research, in its most basic terms, "is a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (Shank, 2005, p. 5). A qualitative approach allowed for a more accurate picture of individuals' experiences of morality in learning, with findings that were rich, insightful, and full of meaning. This study aimed to explore perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of adult learners to gain an in-depth understanding of the moral development and moral reasoning processes in the context of learner-centered practice. A grounded theory approach addressed the gap in the literature concerning the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered instruction. A grounded theory allowed the construction of a new theory to emerge from the data. Elements of multi-grounded theory were also incorporated into the research design, which allowed for a comparison of existing frameworks to the emergent theory to reinforce the validity of the theory.

Participants were selected based on purposeful sampling in order to intentionally find a sample that met the study criteria. Participants were required to be at least 21 years of age and enrolled in a graduate or professional development course within a higher education institution. This course had to incorporate learner-centered practice. The course was required to be at least six weeks in length or longer. Participant interviews were the primary source of data, which allowed the researcher to capture the individual perceptions, experiences, and beliefs regarding morality and learner-centered practice. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a constant comparative method of analysis and explicit grounding processes. Data was also organized using open coding, axial coding, and selective

coding until an emergent theory was revealed. This methodology is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Rationale and Significance

Despite an abundance of research regarding values and ethics in the context of higher education, there was a lack of information regarding the relationship between learner-centered practice and moral development within the literature. The majority of research described the relationship between ethics and athletics (Copeland & Potwarka, 2016; French, 2004; Hartill, 2013; Hochstetler, 2006; Winters, 2011). Other research described the intersection of moral development and self-esteem (Hight, 2004), ethics and religion (Crawford, 2012; Fantazy & Al Athmay, 2014; Langer, Hall, Lewis, & McMartin, 2010), and morality and academic integrity (Aurich, 2012; Cavico & Mujtaba, 2009). Additionally, there was considerable research regarding learner-centered higher education, with research mainly focusing on learner-centered theory and distance education (DeFrance, 2011; Duffy & Kirkley, 2004; Ware, 2006), as well as best practices for a learner-centered education (Blumberg, 2012; Cleveland-Innes & Emes, 2005; Weimer, 2013). Mostly, the literature emphasized learner-centered practice within nursing education (Greer, Pokorny, Clay, Brown, & Steele, 2010; Lau & Wang, 2013; Rhodes et al., 2012). In spite of the quantity of literature, a lack of research seemed to exist regarding the relationship between learner-centered higher education and moral development.

This study addresses the need identified in the literature for research within higher education institutions on the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice. This study also adds to the growing body of literature in the fields of moral development and learner-centered practice, as well as to that of higher education

research. Examining learner-centered practice not only provides a deeper conceptual understanding, but also creates an opportunity to improve existing teaching practices within higher education institutions. Specifically, conducting a grounded theory study on this topic generates an emergent contribution to researchers' and educators' knowledge of both moral development and learner-centered practice. A better understanding of how learner-centered practice contributes to a learner's moral development and moral reasoning has implications for educators and their curriculum design, lifelong learners and their learning, and higher education institutions attempting to meet society's expectations to create a nation of learners.

Researcher Positionality

I acquired an interest in moral development when I was quite young. I attended a private Christian school from the elementary level to my high school graduation. My school emphasized the importance of morality, knowledge of good versus evil, and the religious implications of every decision and action. I even wrote my senior thesis on the morality of lawyers. Since childhood, I have been drilled on the importance of moral development, character, and ethics. In college, I participated in several service learning activities, volunteer opportunities, and international service trips. There is an ongoing dialogue about moral development and service learning and I first thought that I would do my graduate research on just that. However, there was already an overwhelming amount of research on that topic; I still wanted to explore moral development somehow.

While I was enrolled in my master's program, I was able to take several learner-centered courses. I enjoyed how engaged I was when I attended those classes and started to do research on exactly what it meant to be "learner-centered." Several elements of learner-centered instruction are similar to service learning, such as reflection, collaboration, peer

discussion, and experiential learning, so I thought it would be interesting to see if moral development and learner-centered practice had a relationship. I also enjoyed learning about the concept of andragogy and the philosophy behind that model. Eventually, it made sense to put all of these ideas together and begin to compose this study.

At the time of conducting this study, I was a doctoral student in the College of Education at the University of Idaho. I had experience working as a co-instructor within the graduate program of Adult Organizational Learning and Leadership. I was also employed as graduate research assistant with the responsibility of collecting and analyzing data for a variety of qualitative projects. As the researcher, I brought practical experience as a working professional to the inquiry process.

Coming into this study, I had some preconceived notions that needed to be addressed to identify researcher bias and understand their implications on this research. I believed that learner-centered practice is an effective instructional method. However, this bias did not affect the outcome of this study, as I was not offering recommendations on best practice. I also believed that learner-centered practice contributes to moral development, as suggested by prior research; I was interested in understanding the specific processes of moral development and moral reasoning in relation to learner-centered practice.

Researcher Assumptions

The following assumptions were applicable to this study:

1. The researcher had the ability to set aside existing theoretical ideas to allow for an emergent theory.

2. The assessment of programs and courses through the Learner-Centered Rubric for Observation Protocol [LCROP] reflected the actual and consistent practice for qualification for inclusion in this study.
3. Learners' responses about their critical thinking, meaning construction, moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centeredness reflected an honest evaluation of themselves and their learning.
4. Learner-centered practice provided the opportunity for moral development and moral reasoning processes based on learner-centered practice characteristics.

Definitions of Key Terminology

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions of key terminology apply:

Adult Education: Activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among adults (Merriam & Brockett, 2007).

Adult Learner: An individual whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults (Merriam & Brockett, 2007); an individual who is 21 years of age and older and is involved in a form of learning activity.

Adult Learning: Cognitive processes internal to the adult learner, including planned and unplanned educational activities (Merriam & Brockett, 2007).

Andragogy: A theory of adult learning, based on seven components: the need to know, the learners' self-concept, the role of learners' experiences, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, motivation, and teachers as facilitators (Knowles, 1975; 1979; 1980; 1990; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011).

Critical Thinking: A habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2009).

Learner-Centered Practice: An instructional practice focused on individual learners (heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs) and learning to promote the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement (McCombs & Whisler, 1997).

Learner-Centered Principles: Fourteen principles that characterize learner-centered practice, which are grouped into four domains: metacognitive and cognitive, motivational and affective, developmental and social, and individual differences (American Psychological Association, 1997).

Moral Development: The transformations that occur in an individual's form or structure of thought regarding moral judgments and actions (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977).

Morality: The system individuals use to make moral judgments about their own actions or those of others (Gert, 2005), evidenced by one's beliefs (values), choices (ethics), and actions (character).

Moral Reasoning: The process by which adults learn to integrate a moral dimension into their decision-making (Brookfield, 1998).

Moral Reinforcement: The validation and strengthening of an existing thought or practice.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 examines related literature that supports the aims of this study. The literature review includes a discussion of learner-centered practice, morality in higher

education, foundational frameworks, gaps in the literature, and a brief summary relating the literature to this study.

Chapter 3 situates the study within a particular methodology. This chapter contains an explanation of the methodology, rationale for the approach and design, research sample and settings, data collection and data analysis methods, validation strategies, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 4 provides a summary of the research settings and the participants to provide context for the findings. This chapter organizes and reports the findings for the data collected during the study, including a presentation of relevant qualitative data and an examination of the emergent theory.

Chapter 5 involves a discussion of the findings in relation to the study's research questions and the literature, as well as includes a summery of the interpretation of findings. This chapter also revisits researcher assumptions and study limitations, presents implications for practice and recommendations for further research, provides concluding statements, and offers the researcher's final thoughts.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review is organized into the following main sections: (1) learner-centered practice, (2) morality in higher education, (3) foundational frameworks, and (4) research on moral development and learner-centered practice. The learner-centered practice portion has several subsections: (a) alternative instructional practices in higher education, (b) learner-centered origins, (c) learner-centered concept, (d) learner-centered principles, and (e) learner-centered outcomes. The morality in higher education segment also includes subgroups: (a) historical relevance, (b) morality of instruction, and (c) morality of learning. The foundational frameworks unit consists of: (a) adults as learners, (b) andragogical model of adult learning, (c) cognitivism and constructivism, and (d) moral development theory. Finally, this review concludes with research on moral development and learner-centered practice, a summary of the literature, and an explanation of the research gap. This conceptual structure guided the findings into a recognizable pattern.

Learner-Centered Practice

Over two decades ago, the WGHE (1994) presented an open letter to educators advocating the need for change, stating,

> Given the diversity of American higher education, there can be no single formula for change common to all, but we do believe that there are at least three fundamental issues common to all 3,400 colleges and universities: taking values seriously; putting student learning first; creating a nation of learners. (p. 7)

The WGHE encouraged higher education institutions to consider a new direction for education and to understand that their priority needed to be learning and learners. Around the same time, Barr and Tagg (1995) claimed that a shift had occurred in higher education from

an instructive model to a learning paradigm. Even though a learner-centered teaching style has been advocated to replace teacher-centered practice in higher education (McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Weimer, 2013), teacher-centered instruction may still be dominant in actual practice (Liu, Qiao, & Liu, 2006). Liu et al. (2006) found that most instructors in university settings still use traditional, teacher-centered instruction styles despite the plea for a paradigm shift to learner-centered practice.

Alternative Instructional Practices in Higher Education

The Association for Authentic Experiential Evidence-Based Learning (AAEEBL) focused on alternative teaching practices, with the mission to provide students more genuine and long-term learning experiences (Brown, Chen & Gordon, 2012). Their mission was consistent with the teaching beliefs of higher education practitioners; accordingly, the AAEEBL constructed and confirmed the relationships of three categories of teaching beliefs: teaching-centered, learning-centered, and learner-centered. These teaching practices were informed by the previous research of others (Brookfield, 1995; Downes, 2006; Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Siemens, 2004). These teaching beliefs are not mutually exclusive and may be shaped by context and constraints (Brown et al., 2012). These teaching beliefs not only vary in their practices, but also in their epistemology. Hannafin, Hill, and Land (1997) explained,

> [Conventional instructional approaches] reflect a positivist epistemology: information and concepts are separated from the contexts in which they naturally occur, meaning exists independent of the perceiver, and attainment of externally defined learning outcomes provides evidence of acquisition. Student centered approaches, on the other hand, are rooted in constructivist epistemology: knowledge and context are

> inextricably connected, meaning is uniquely determined by individuals and is experiential in nature, and the solving of authentic problems provides evidence of understanding. (p. 94)

Schuh (2004) described how in teaching-centered practice, "the development of the instruction and control of the learning process is retained by the teacher" and the role of the teacher is seen as "giving knowledge that has been defined and organized from the teacher's or expert's perspective to the students" (p. 834-835). This teaching practice is guided by structures and sequences of activities that are determined by the instructor, such as lectures, tests, whole group instruction, reliance on textbooks, and presentational uses of technology (Brown et al., 2012; Cuban, 1983; Schuh, 2004). This approach views students as unable to take a more active role in constructing knowledge due to deficient skills and abilities (Lambert & Walker, 1995).

Learning-centered practice takes the focus away from the instructor and emphasizes learning. In learning-centered practice, "the faculty member invites learners to have some determination in not only how the work will be pursued and represented, but also in determining what it is that is necessary to learn" (Brown et al., 2012, p. 133). In learning-centered practice, students and faculty collaborate, employ peer review, network to inform their learning, and feel personal responsibility for their learning (Henscheid, Brown, Gordon, & Chen, 2014).

Learner-Centered Origins

Early instructors, such as Socrates, Plato, and Confucius, have their methods recorded in historical accounts. These philosophers knew how to challenge learners to achieve at their highest level and how to push their limits and learning potentials (McCombs & Miller, 2007).

Socrates, specifically, believed that every individual is autonomous and morally independent (Demirci, 2012). Socrates also attested to the importance of lifelong learning and the idea that learning lies within the domain of the individual (Demirci, 2012). Socrates' early ideas and philosophies contributed to our modern understanding of learner-centered practice, as he believed that the responsibility for learning falls to the learner, not the instructor. Socrates also used critical reasoning in his teaching methods to push the limits of learning and thinking.

In the sixteenth century, Francis Bacon introduced the idea of the scientific method as a way of thinking and problem-solving (Henson, 2003). Bacon expressed that our thinking is limited by a lack of experience and insisted that we should use inductive reasoning to make less thinking errors (Henson, 2003). John Locke proposed the concept of *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, in the 1600s to assert that learning occurs through one's experiences and reflection on those experiences (Henson, 2003). The eighteenth century introduced Jean Jacques Rousseau, who recommended experiential, student-centered learning (Henson, 2003). Over the next 100 years or so, several European educators, such as Pestalozzi, Hegel, Harbart, and Froebel, implemented a learner-centered approach in their teaching; this approach did not spread to American educators until the late nineteenth century (Henson, 2003).

In surveying the origins, it is known that the concept of "learner-centered" is not a new idea, but one that is most notably associated with the work of American philosopher John Dewey and his theory of learning through experience. According to Schrenko (1994), "The Dewey lab school focused on the students' needs rather than on covering a well-defined scope and sequence of curriculum. Much of Dewey's philosophy is evident in the learner-centered classroom" (p. viii). Dewey (2009) identified learning as an interactive process within a social environment. Dewey (2009) further established that the responsibility of schools

should be to cultivate lifelong learning and gradually reweave, not reproduce, the fabric of society.

Dewey's work influenced the idea of constructivism, which is also associated with learner-centered practice. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) noted, constructivism "maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experience" (p. 291). Dewey (1938, 2009) claimed that the utilization of prior experience is essential for creating new knowledge and continuing the learning process. For learning to happen through experience, Dewey (1938) argued, "Every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 27). He also advocated for active learning, as well as emphasized problem-solving as foundational to learning (Dewey, 2009).

Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky also influenced the development of constructivism by building on and extending Dewey's discussion in their own way. Piaget (1954) focused on the individual, while Vygotsky (1978) focused on social interaction. Piaget (1954) claimed that individuals act according to schemas (conceptual categories), which assist them in interpreting knowledge and understanding the world. Vygotsky (1978), on the other hand, emphasized that constructs are learned through the interaction with others. For Vygotsky, the teacher acts as a facilitator and guides the learner to become increasingly self-directed (Oxford, 1997). These conceptions created a foundation for learner-centered practice, as it is known today. Piaget contributed to learner-centered practice with his understanding of creating meaning and using critical thinking in our learning. Vygotsky also contributed with the ideas of peer collaboration, teachers as facilitators, and self-directed learning.

Carl Rogers (1951), a humanist psychologist, developed propositions for a theory of personality and behavior from adults in therapy. This eventually led to Rogers' conceptualization of student-centered teaching as a parallel to client-centered therapy (Knowles et al., 2011). Rogers (1951) based his student-centered educational approach on five hypotheses, the first of which is, "We cannot teach another person directly; we can only facilitate his learning" (p. 389). The second hypothesis implies that an individual meaningfully learns those things that are relevant and applicable to them. The third and fourth hypotheses suggest the importance of providing a supportive learning environment, with learning being the student's responsibility. The fifth and final hypothesis promotes collaboration between facilitator and learner.

In the 1970s, the goal of a college education became more widespread for a more diverse population (Huba & Freed, 2000). Concerns were raised that college graduates did not possess the necessary skills and abilities in the workplace. At this time, people began to question the value of higher education, starting a movement to bring about reform in education at all levels (Ewell, 1991). According to Ewell (1991), several major reports were published in the mid 1980s, all with clear general requirements for reform: the need for feedback (institutional, faculty, and learner feedback) for persistent improvement and a change in instruction that focuses on the individual needs of learners.

Learner-Centered Concept

Learner-centered practice shifts the attention from the teacher and instruction to the student and learning (Schuh, 2004). McCombs & Whisler (1997) defined learner-centered practice as:

> The perspective that couples a focus on individual learners – their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs – with a focus on learning – the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners. (p. 9)

Many people associate learner-centered with *child-centered*. However, McCombs and Whisler (1997) thought the focus should be broader because the principles of learner-centered practice "apply to all individuals, from the very young to the very old" (p. 9).

Learner-centered practice provides activities that enable learners to address their unique interests and needs, examine content at varying levels of complexity, and deepen their understanding (Hannafin et al., 1997). Certain learner-centered activities include: multiple drafts of written work, constructive and progressive feedback by faculty, student oral presentations, peer review of each other's work, group projects, group discussion, critical reflection, and active learning projects (Cuban, 1983; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Webber, 2012; Enright et al., 2008). These activities provide a "mechanism for prompt feedback to students," foster "collaboration with peers and faculty," and result in "increased student-faculty contact" (Webber, 2012, p. 203). Emes and Cleveland-Innes (2003) explained that the intended outcome of learner-centered practice is the development of "individuals with the skills to continue the process of creating learning experiences, digesting current knowledge, and creating new knowledge within the curriculum itself" (p. 66). Based on consistencies in the literature, there are four main concepts that contribute to learner-centered practice: interaction and collaboration, student responsibility for learning, development of critical thinking skills, and student-teacher dynamic as co-learners.

Interaction and Collaboration. The Education Commission of the States (1996) published, "Students learn better when engaged in a team effort rather than working on their own… it is the way the world outside the academy works" (p. 8). Collaboration between teachers and students develops meaningful learning activities for all students (Keefe & Jenkins, 2002). Herrmann (2013) found that students are likely to engage in cooperative learning when it is meaningful to them. The opportunity and time for reflective dialogue are essential in creating a collaborative environment. Learners also need opportunities to assess their own work and the work of others (Weimer, 2013), which can be accomplished through constructive feedback and peer review. Students need to learn how to provide good feedback to their peers, as well as how to interpret and effectively use the feedback that they receive. When students start giving and receiving useful feedback, from both their peers and the instructor, their motivation to collaborate with each other increases (Weimer, 2013). Learner-centered assessment involves the use of reflection, problem solving, peer review, constructive feedback, and small cooperative groups (Keefe & Jenkins, 2002; McCombs & Whisler, 1997), all of which contribute to a collaborative and interactive environment.

Responsibility for Learning. Students take responsibility for their own learning and become directly involved in the learning process (Ahmed, 2013). Self-motivated learning is possible in environments that provide the learner with choice and control, as learners are more likely to manage their thinking and learning than when they have little or no control (McCombs & Miller, 2007). Learner-centered practice promotes the need for learners to have greater autonomy in the choice of curriculum, content, and evaluation, as well as personal responsibility and trust (Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003; McCombs & Miller, 2007). This

autonomy contributes to the development of knowledge producers and critical thinkers who actively participate in the learning process (McCombs & Miller, 2007).

Learner-centered practice allows "students to participate more fully in the arrangement of their own learning experiences, such that they can continue to do so for a life-time" (Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003, p. 62). The role of the learner is not determined "according to the traditional assumptions regarding undergraduate, masters or doctoral level," but rather "determined in terms of their academic capacity" (p. 65). Learner-centered practice is most suitable for the more autonomous, self-directed learners who participate in the learning process and construct their own learning experiences (Ahmed, 2013). Wohlfarth et al. (2008) surveyed graduate students about the perceptions of their experiences in a learner-centered classroom, who noted that the learner-centered approach contributed to feeling respected as learners, developed critical thinking skills, and encouraged self-directedness.

Critical Thinking. Principles 4 and 5 of the American Psychological Associations's [APA] (1997) learner-centered principles describe "higher order thinking," "strategic thinking," and "thinking about thinking" as essential to the learner-centered model (the APA's principles are discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter). The active engagement of learners provides opportunities for students to retain information by allowing the brain to "create synaptic connections and anchor learning through contextual experience" (Bellah et al., 2008, p. 15). Evers, Rush, and Berdrow (1998) posited that the goal of education should be to help learners solve problems, think critically, and become lifelong learners. This occurs through the promotion of higher order thinking skills (Bellah et al., 2008). Thompson, Jungst, Colletti, Licklider, and Benna (2003) suggested that meaningful learning happens in a learner-centered environment, with flexible thinking and the integration

of student-centered teaching methods (Bellah et al., 2008). Reflection is also a key component of the learner-centered model, which can contribute to critical thinking. Learner-centered practice promotes learners' reflection about what they are learning and how they are learning it (Weimer, 2013), which leads to higher and more strategic thinking. The use of specific complex reasoning encourages the production of new knowledge rather than the more simple recollection of knowledge (McCombs & Whisler, 1997).

Student-Teacher Dynamic. In learner-centered practice, a new relationship emerges in which the teacher moves from a role of authority to that of a mentor who guides the learning process (Ege, Coppola, & Lawton, 1996). The teacher and student become co-learners, in which teachers share ownership of the learning, as well as model effective learning processes and lifelong learning skills (McCombs & Miller, 2007). McCombs and Whisler (1997) emphasized that learning is achieved by active collaboration between teacher and learners who together determine what learning means, as well as how learning can be enhanced by drawing on the unique capacities and experiences of each individual learner.

The instructor and student both have input concerning how the learning time is utilized. Placing the emphasis on learning rather than time allows students to make decisions regarding curriculum and instruction (Keefe & Jenkins, 2002). In collaborative learning, the emphasis is on both individual and group learning, where the teacher becomes a member of the group and participates alongside students. The basis of this joint action is the individuals' own experiences, thereby creating new knowledge amongst everyone in the group (Peters & Grey, 2005). By focusing on individual learning needs, instructors view students as active participants in the learning process with unlimited potential for development (Liu et al., 2006). McCombs and Miller (2007) posited that a strong student-teacher relationship provides a

constructive environment from which natural learning and motivation emerge. This method of instruction motivates and empowers learners by giving them some control over the learning process (Weimer, 2013) and engages them in the challenge of learning.

Learner-Centered Principles

In the early 1990s, the American Psychological Association [APA] reviewed over a century of research to identify general principles that could provide a framework for school reform and redesign (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). These principles were developed in response to what educators called a "crisis in education," intended to provide greater levels of accountability for student achievement (McCombs, 2003). Originally, twelve principles were identified that characterized learner-centered practice (later revised into fourteen principles) (APA, 1993, 1997). The principles convey the idea that previous reform efforts lack the knowledge of teaching and learning based on research from human development, motivation, and learning that is necessary to be affective and enduring (APA, 1993, 1997; McCombs & Whisler, 1997). These principles describe learners of all ages and stipulate that educational systems must "focus on the individual learner, reflect an understanding of the learning process, and address the essential knowledge and skills to be learned" (McCombs, 2003, p. 94). The development of these principles was intended to "contribute not only to a new design for America's schools, but also to a society committed to lifelong learning, healthy human development, and productivity" (APA, 1997, p. 2).

The fourteen principles are sorted into four domains: a) metacognitive and cognitive, b) motivational and affective, c) developmental and social, and d) individual differences; these principles are illustrated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1
Learner-Centered Psychological Principles

Cognitive and Metacognitive Factors	
***Principle 1**: Nature of the learning process*	The learning of complex subject matter is most effective when it is an intentional process of constructing meaning from information and experience.
***Principle 2**: Goals of the learning process*	The successful learner, over time and with support and instructional guidance, can create meaningful, coherent representations of knowledge.
***Principle 3**: Construction of knowledge*	The successful learner can link new information with existing knowledge in meaningful ways.
***Principle 4**: Strategic thinking*	The successful learner can create and use a repertoire of thinking and reasoning strategies to achieve complex learning goals.
***Principle 5**: Thinking about thinking*	Higher order strategies for selecting and monitoring mental operations facilitate creative and critical thinking.
***Principle 6**: Context of learning*	Learning is influenced by environmental factors, including culture, technology, and instructional practices.
Motivational and Affective Factors	
***Principle 7**: Motivational and emotional influences on learning*	What and how much is learned is influenced by the motivation. Motivation to learn, in turn, is influenced by the individual's emotional states, beliefs, interests and goals, and habits of thinking.
***Principle 8**: Intrinsic motivation to learn*	The learner's creativity, higher order thinking, and natural curiosity all contribute to motivation to learn. Intrinsic motivation is stimulated by tasks of optimal novelty and difficulty, relevant to personal interests, and providing for personal choice and control.
***Principle 9**: Effects of motivation on effort*	Acquisition of complex knowledge and skills requires extended learner effort and guided practice. Without learners' motivation to learn, the willingness to exert this effort is unlikely without coercion.
Developmental and Social Factors	
***Principle 10**: Developmental influences on learning*	As individuals develop, there are different opportunities and constraints for learning. Learning is most effective when differential development within and across physical, intellectual, emotional, and social domains is taken into account.
***Principle 11**: Social influences on learning*	Learning is influenced by social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others.
Individual Differences Factors	
***Principle 12**: Individual differences in learning*	Learners have different strategies, approaches, and capabilities for learning that are a function of prior experience and heredity.
***Principle 13**: Learning and diversity*	Learning is most effective when differences in learners' linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds are taken into account.
***Principle 14**: Standards and assessment*	Setting appropriately high and challenging standards and assessing the learner as well as learning progress -- including diagnostic, process, and outcome assessment -- are integral parts of the learning process.

Source: Developed by American Psychological Association [APA], 1997.

Cognitive and metacognitive principles include: 1) nature of the learning process, 2) goals of the learning process, 3) construction of knowledge, 4) strategic thinking, 5) thinking about thinking, and 6) context of learning (APA, 1997). The metacognitive and cognitive factors describe how the mind of a learner works, how they think and remember, and how a learner constructs meaning (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). This domain involves critical thinking skills, reasoning strategies, linking new information with existing knowledge, and understanding learning contexts. Motivational and affective factors comprise: 7) motivational and emotional influences on learning, 8) intrinsic motivation to learn, and 9) effects of motivation on effort (APA, 1997). These factors emphasize how learners' perceptions of self, emotions, and thinking habits affect motivation to learn. These principles also examine how learners' motivations influence learning situations, effort invested in learning, and how much one learns.

Developmental and social factors are: 10) developmental influence on learning and 11) social influences on learning (APA, 1997). These principles recognize that capacities for learning develop over time (McCombs & Whisler, 1997), as well as understand the influence of social interactions on the learning process. Individuals develop differently – physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially – and, thus, experience different constraints for learning. Finally, individual differences include: 12) individual differences in learning, 13) learning and diversity, and 14) standards and assessment (APA, 1997). Learners' unique backgrounds, individual capabilities, and personal strategies impact learning. Setting challenging and appropriate standards to assess learners is a key aspect of the learning process as well.

These psychological principles have since contributed to reform in educational programs throughout America by inspiring a large number of studies and educational

programs (Salinas & Garr, 2009). These studies and programs have suggested that learner-centered models are more effective in promoting achievement (Alfassi, 2004; Derting & Ebert-May, 2010; McCombs, 2004; Salinas, Kane-Johnson, & Vasil-Miller, 2008), graduation rates (Ancess, 1995; Friedlaender, Burns, Lewis-Charp, Cook-Harvey, & Darling-Hammond, 2014), motivation (Alfassi, 2004; Cheang, 2009; Daniels, Kalkman, & McCombs, 2001), and learner qualities, such as self-efficacy and creativity (Bell & Kozlowski, 2008; Fasko, 2001). The 14 principles, presented in full in Table 2.1, "define a research-validated knowledge base about learning and learners" (McCombs, 2003, p. 94).

Learner-Centered Outcomes

When entire education institutions apply learner-centered practice to enhance learning and motivation, the results are powerful. These educational systems produce higher achievement and positive interpersonal relationships, as well as cultures of caring and learning (McCombs, 2003). McCombs (2001) explained that learner-centered practice is not just about the learner, but also about the methods of the instructor:

> When teachers derive their practices from an understanding of the principles, they (a) include learners in decisions about how and what they learn and how that learning is assessed; (b) value each learner's unique perspectives; (c) respect and accommodate individual differences in learners' backgrounds, interests, abilities, and experiences; and (d) treat learners as co-creators and partners in the teaching and learning process. (p. 186)

Learner-centered practice involves the interaction of the teacher, the instructional practices, and the perceptions of the learners (McCombs, 2001). Research that examined the impact of teacher and student perceptions revealed specific domains of practice that are important to

motivation and achievement (McCombs, 2001; McCombs & Miller, 2007; McCombs & Whisler, 1997). For adult learners, specifically undergraduate and graduate students, the domains include: establishing positive relationships amongst each other, facilitation of the learning process, adapting to individual learning needs, encouraging responsibility for learning, and providing for social learning needs (McCombs, 2001).

Table 2.2
Premises of the Learner-Centered Model

1. Learners are distinct and unique. Their distinctiveness and uniqueness must be attended to and taken into account if learners are to engage in and take responsibility for their own learning.
2. Learners' unique differences include their emotional states of mind, learning rates, learning styles, stages of development, abilities, talents, feelings of efficacy, and other academic and non-academic attributes and needs. These must be taken into account if all learners are to be provided with the necessary challenges and opportunities or learning and self-development.
3. Learning is a constructive process that occurs best when what is being learned is relevant and meaningful to the learner and when the learner is actively engaged in creating his or her own knowledge and understanding by connecting what is being learned with prior knowledge and experience.
4. Learning occurs best in a positive environment, one that contains positive interpersonal relationships and interactions, that contains comfort and order, and in which the learner feels appreciated, acknowledged, respected, and validated.
5. Learning is a fundamentally natural process; learners are naturally curious and basically interested in learning about and mastering their world. Although negative thoughts and feelings sometimes interfere with this natural inclination and must be dealt with, the learner does not require "fixing."

Source: Developed by McCombs and Whisler, 1997, p.10.

McCombs and Whisler (1997) described their five fundamental conclusions about learners and learning, as seen in Table 2.2. These premises need to be reflected in the practices of the educator to maximize learning for all students. When the premises are replicated in practice, there are several outcomes: learners are included in decision-making, learners' perspectives are encouraged and respected, individual differences are acknowledged, and learners are responsible for the learning process (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). The

learner-centered model centers on interpersonal connections, positive individual growth and learning, and the development of personal and social accountability.

Morality in Higher Education

Morality in higher education is a broad topic. For the purposes of this review, this section has been focused into three main sections: historical relevance, the morality of instruction, and the morality of learning. The following discussions are all concerned with morality in the context of higher education.

Historical Relevance

Socrates is credited as one of the first moral philosophers; however, his reflective attitude was already familiar in some areas of ancient Greek society (Irwin, 2007). Socrates believed that moral education was necessary, as it focused on the good of the individual and society (Murphy, 2006). Socrates was known for his technique of inquiry and dialogue, the "Socratic method," which he used to question and reflect on issues of morality and discover new knowledge (Demirchi, 2012; Irwin, 2007). According to Socrates, virtue is knowledge and if an individual knows what is moral, then they will perform moral actions; no one does wrong intentionally (Demirchi, 2012). In the mind of Socrates, wrongdoing arises out of ignorance, or a lack of knowledge (Rosen, 2017). Socrates' philosophy on inquiry and education has continued to be used in modern teaching practices.

Plato, student of Socrates, believed that to become virtuous, one must practice the virtues under the guidance of role models (Jonas, 2016). Plato stated in his *Republic*, "Imitations practiced from youth become part of nature and settle into habits of gesture, voice, and thought" (Plato, 380/1997, p. 1033). In *Republic*, Plato also emphasized that there is a parallel between the well-being of an individual and a well-ordered society; the purpose of

education is to fulfill the needs of both the individual and society (Bailey, Barrow, Carr, & McCarthy, 2010). For Plato, the intention of education was to instruct people on the concepts of goodness and virtue to create a just society for all (Murphy, 2006).

> Aristotle (350/2009), student of Plato, stated in his *Nicomachean Ethics*,
>
> Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit... The virtues we get by first exercising them… For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. (p. lvi)

Aristotle (350/2009) was clear that there are two domains of virtue, intellectual and moral (or thought and character, depending on the translation), and that learning by doing is the only method of attaining morality. Intellectual virtues include: scientific knowledge, craft knowledge, practical wisdom, intuitive reason, and philosophic wisdom. Moral virtues include: courage, temperance, generosity, magnificence, magnanimity, honor, mildness, friendliness, truthfulness, wit, and justice (Aristotle, 350/2009). Aristotle (350/2009) also noted that character has a social component in addition to a moral one; character is acquired and learned.

Moral philosophy, historically, was regarded as the most important course in a college curriculum with the aim to give meaning and purpose to students' course of study (Sloan, 2012). In the nineteenth century, Americans looked primarily to education to create common social and moral values (Sloan, 1980). There was a sense of faith in the power of education.

The intention of moral philosophy was "to shape and instruct an American public conscience, to create an ethical frame of mind that would direct a new nation seeking a moral… identity in a changing world" (Meyer, 1972, p. viii-ix). Moral philosophy, at this time, served to form the moral character and disposition of the individual learner to inspire the pursuit of their own continuing moral development (Sloan, 1980).

By the mid-twentieth century, the previous efforts of colleges and universities gave way to stricter demands for academic excellence and freedom (Bok, 2009). However, a call for reform arose due to a lack of ethical standards from those in positions of power (Bok, 2009; Sloan, 1980). For instance, the U.S. Congress voted to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to include character, stating, "Congress should support and encourage character building initiatives in schools across America and urge colleges and universities to affirm that the development of character is one of the primary goals of higher education" (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Additionally, the Association of American Colleges and Universities [AACU] (2002) published a report expressing that, "the integrity of a democratic society depends on citizens' sense of social responsibility and ethical judgment" (p. xii). To thrive in today's world, the AACU (2002) called for higher education institutions to help students become intentional learners: learners who are empowered, informed, and responsible.

As a result, educational institutions hoped to help students become more aware of moral issues, to foster a capacity to reason about ethical issues, and to clarify their moral aspirations (Bok, 2009). Bok (2009) argued that individuals will set higher ethical standards for themselves if they have already encountered moral issues in the classroom, rather than waiting to encounter them in a manner that pressures them to act in a morally questionable way. The instruction of ethics in education had declined, but nevertheless reappears on and

off throughout the centuries due "to the inseparable connection between the moral uses and the unity of knowledge" (Sloan, 1980, p. 57).

Morality of Instruction

Most teachers are unaware that they must deal with issues of moral education (Kohlberg, 1980), even though value issues are plentiful in the context and process of teaching (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Nevertheless, instructors constantly act as moral educators by continually telling students what to do, evaluating their behavior, and monitoring social relationships within the classroom. All this is done as part of a larger social institution (the school), which is defined by an even larger institution (society). Some adult educators acknowledge that learning to act in a moral manner is "one the most significant and unavoidable imperatives of adulthood," yet moral learning is curiously absent from discussions of teaching and learning (Brookfield, 1998, p. 283).

A report written by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (1992) required beginning teachers to "have the dispositions and commitments that pledge them to professional development and responsibility" (p. 11). This report added the terminology of "disposition" into the teaching framework, reviving the scholarly interest in teaching as a moral activity (Sockett, 2009). Mayhew and King (2008) asserted that faculty members have the responsibility to be effective teachers by creating environments conducive to moral discussions. Mayhew and King (2008) further argued that, "Avoiding or ignoring this role may inhibit moral reasoning development and subsequently undermine their effectiveness as educators whose role it is to help students realise their potential for becoming responsible and engaged citizens" (p. 36). Hansen and Stephens (2000) maintained that

educators need to rediscover the moral foundation of teaching and learning because human growth cannot be facilitated without the use of moral categories.

Bok (1981) spoke to the purpose of universities, which,

> Offer us a continuing critique of our values, our behaviour, our institutions, and our social practices with benefits that eventually touch the lives and learning of all students at all levels of education and, indeed, of all human beings who seek to broaden their understanding. (p. 21)

Bok (1988) later argued that universities should be the last to discourage the analysis of moral issues and among the first to endorse the importance of basic values (such as honesty, peacefulness, free expression, and responsibility). These are principles essential to civilized society, as well as "values on which all learning and discovery ultimately depend" (p. 12); it is appropriate for a university to make these values a foundation for programs "to help students develop a strong set of moral standards" (p. 12).

Rogers and Freiburg (1994) insisted that teaching is not a matter of professional skill, but rather a matter of having certain dispositions, which are based on moral virtues. Campbell (2006) maintained that teachers become ethical educators by upholding core values such as "honesty, justice, fairness, care, empathy, integrity, courage, respect, and responsibility" (p. 32). Sockett (2009) said, "A moral or intellectual virtue shares three general characteristics of a disposition: It is stable, learned, and has a cognitive core" (p. 296). Sockett (2009) continued and claimed that to become virtuous is threefold; it is the result of an individual's intention, it implies that the individual has overcome internal tendencies or external obstacles, and it is always driven by intrinsic motivation.

Sockett (2006; 2009) described those moral virtues that are relevant and applicable to the profession of teaching. They are divided into three categories, namely, virtues of character, intellect, and care:

(a) Virtues of *character* include self-knowledge, courage, sincerity, integrity, trustworthiness, and endeavor as including virtues of the will, such as persistence, perseverance, and heed.

(b) Virtues of *intellect* include truthfulness, accuracy, consistency (e.g., in the application of rules), fairness and impartiality, especially in making judgments, clarity, thoughtfulness, and open-mindedness.

(c) Virtues of *care* include tolerance, tact, discretion, civility, receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness notably in becoming trustworthy and compassionate. (Sockett, 2009, p. 296)

Character describes the kind of individual the instructor is; *intellect* describes the instructor's stock-in-trade; learners are placed in the *care* of instructors (Sockett, 2009). Narvaez (2008) claimed that establishing a caring relationship with each learner is necessary for moral character development; students are more likely to have a greater sense of belonging, which is related to higher motivation and success (Klem & Connell, 2004; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). Sockett (2009) also named essential virtues of instructors, such as honesty, courage, care, fairness, and accountability – honesty to search for truth and create trust, courage to experiment with new approaches and risk failure, care for students to be successful, fairness in distribution of time and attention and assessing student work, and accountability to develop trust and an ongoing search for improvement (Hansen & Stephens, 2000). Moral

values become incorporated into the learning through what instructors emphasize, as well as through their relationships with the learners (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002).

Morality of Learning

While Sockett was concerned solely with a moral foundation for teaching, Hansen and Stephens (2000) expanded on his work to include both teaching and learning. "Since the ultimate purpose of teaching is student learning, an appropriate basis for morality must come from the intersection between the student's and the teacher's efforts" (Hansen & Stephens, 2000, p. 45). The virtues of the instructor must, therefore, be paralleled by the learner's capacity to fulfill the moral contract (Hansen & Stephens, 2000). These moral virtues are based on a mutual interest in intellectual development, which involves three partners: the instructor, the learner, and society. Instructors assist students to become educated members of a larger society, with each of them being responsible for the other two. According to Hansen and Stephens (2000),

> Knowledge acquisition is only one element in this contract. More important is that the teacher help the student acquire the courage to grow and develop his or her potential. This can never be accomplished in a service relationship, which is by definition one-sided… The educational relationship is, therefore, characterized by a compassion that is relatively uncompromising in the demands it makes on all three partners in the educational contract. (p. 46)

Instructors' morality and virtues alone are unable to create an educated individual. Rather, an instructor's virtues must be accompanied by the learner's discipline to follow through with the challenging process of learning and development (Hansen & Stephens, 2000). Narvaez (2008) claimed, "the final responsibility for character development lies with the individual" (p.

320). Mentors are necessary for character development until the individual is able to self-direct their morality (Narvaez, 2008).

Paterson (1979) argued that the purpose of adult education is to cultivate one's personhood and help learners develop autonomous moral judgments (Brookfield, 1998). These judgments are dependent on "an ability to distinguish between good and bad, a capacity for reflective discernment, and a familiarity with the content of the moral life" (Brookfield, 1998, p. 283). Brookfield (1998) attempted to define adult moral learning by identifying five core processes, as seen in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3
Processes of Adult Moral Learning

1. Learning to be aware of the inevitable contextuality and situationality of moral reasoning. This involves us realizing that what constitutes morally admirable or defensible behavior is subjectively defined and experienced, and varies from person to person and time to time.
2. Learning that morality is collectively determined, transmitted, and enforced. This involves us realizing that what passes for the dominant espoused moral code in any group of people is socially negotiated and invariably reflects the values of those in positions of power. It may also involve us realizing that subcultural codes that challenge the dominant code are evolved according to class, race, and gender.
3. Learning to recognize the ambiguity of moral reasoning and behavior. This involves us understanding the limits to any attempt to apply universal moral rules to specific situations. We come to understand the contradictions and disjunctions between our moral impulses and our actions. This learning entails the development of reflective skepticism regarding claims of moral certainty, and a consequent tolerance for the multiplicity of views that can be taken regarding "correct" moral choices.
4. Learning to accept one's own moral limitations. This is close to what some would call the attainment of personal wisdom. It involves us realizing the difficulties involved in our behaving morally (however we might define that) and our learning to live with a degree of moral inconsistency that falls short of the exact correspondence between our beliefs and actions that, ideally, we might desire.
5. Learning to be self-reflective about our own moral reasoning and claims to morality. This involves the application of critical reflection to our own moral decision-making. We come to realize that what we think are disinterested actions often end up as self-serving. We learn to recognize the dimensions of selfishness that attach themselves to moral action and come to distrust the pleasurable feelings we experience in acting "morally." Moral behavior is scrutinized for the selfishness it sometimes represents.

Source: Adapted from Brookfield, 1998, p. 289-290.

All of these processes involve critical reflection in respect to moral issues. Being critically reflective means analyzing the soundness of moral norms for the context of adult life. This critical reflection can only occur as adults experience their interpersonal, professional, social, and political lives, which only comes with time (Brookfield, 1998).

Brookfield (1998) named three conceptual clusters as central to these processes of adult moral learning: dialectic thinking, emancipatory learning, and learning to learn. Dialectic thinking is a form of reasoning that explores the interrelationship between norms and contextual contradictions (Brookfield, 1998). In other words, moral choices and decisions may vary depending on the context, making moral reasoning ambiguous. When one attempts to resolve the ambiguity and think through the relativity, one is thinking in a dialectic manner. Emancipatory learning is the process by which adults learn to free themselves from imposed moral codes and structured ways of thinking (Brookfield, 1998). Emancipatory learning helps adults develop a more authentic perspective by seeing through the distortions and oppressions. The third conceptual cluster is learning to learn, which is the capacity to become aware of one's own learning styles (Brookfield, 1998). One's learning styles may need to be adjusted depending on the situation, so it is important to be aware of how one learns. All three of these concepts involve critical reflection and awareness as an adult learner.

Relationship Between Moral Learning and Learner-Centered Practice. The researcher compared Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 to find similarities between adult moral learning and our understanding of learner-centered practice. Table 2.1 outlines the learner-centered psychological principles, Table 2.2 describes premises of the learner-centered model, and Table 2.3 explains the processes of adult moral learning. The researcher examined all three

tables and color-coded them to search for similarities relevant to the concepts in this study. Six themes were found: individualization, experience, socialization, culture, cognition, and situation to self. Table 2.4 provides the inter-table coding of the three tables aforementioned.

Table 2.4
Inter-Table Coding of Moral Learning and Learner-Centered Practice

Theme	*Table 2.1: Learner-Centered Psychological Principles*	*Table 2.2: Premises of the Learner-Centered Model*	*Table 2.3: Processes of Adult Moral Learning*
Individualization	Different opportunities and constraints (#10)	Learners are distinct and unique (#1)	Varies from person to person; subjectively defined and experienced (#1)
Experience	Existing knowledge; prior experience (#3; 12)	Prior knowledge and experience (#3)	Moral behavior subjectively experienced (#1)
Socialization	Social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others (#11)	Interpersonal relationships and interactions (#4)	Collectively determined; socially negotiated (#2)
Culture	Environmental factors, including culture; cultural backgrounds (#6; 13)	Nonacademic attributes (#2)	Subcultural codes according to class, race, and gender (#2)
Cognition	Strategic thinking; reasoning strategies; critical thinking; thinking about thinking (#4; 5; 8)	Constructive process; relevant and meaningful (#3)	Moral reasoning; reflective skepticism (#3)
Situation to Self	Learner's creativity; natural curiosity (#8)	Learners are naturally curious; responsibility for their own learning (#1; 5)	Self-reflective; critical reflection (#5)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the location from the individual tables for reference purposes.

Learner-centered practice asserts that learners are distinct and unique and such differences need to be taken into account, resulting in the first theme of individualization. In moral learning, what constitutes as morally admirable behavior varies from person to person, acknowledging that individuals have different perspectives. The second theme found was experience. Learner-centered practice names prior knowledge and experience as necessary to

connect learning and information in new ways. The processes of adult moral learning suggest that morality is subjectively experienced, thus prior knowledge has an affect on learning and behavior. The third theme was socialization. Learner-centered instruction states that learning occurs best in an environment with positive interpersonal relationships and interactions. Moral learning maintains that morality is collectively determined, transmitted, and enforced; morality is socially negotiated.

Culture was recognized as the fourth theme. In learner-centered practice, learning is influenced by cultural and contextual factors. Moral learning also takes cultural factors into account, such as race, class, and gender. The fifth theme was cognition. Learner-centered practice utilizes strategic thinking, reasoning strategies, critical thinking, and thinking about thinking for effective learning. Moral learning uses moral reasoning and reflective skepticism to understand morality. The final theme was situation to self. Learner-centered instruction considers natural curiosity and reflection as contributing to learning and taking responsibility for one's own learning. Moral learning applies critical reflection to decision-making and learning to be self-reflective helps to situate morality to one's self. These themes demonstrate the opportunity for a relationship between adult moral learning and individual characteristics of learner-centered practice. Understanding the overlap of these concepts is relevant to this study, as it provides insight into potential findings of this study and provides a more in-depth picture of the relationship between these models.

Foundational Frameworks

There are several foundational frameworks that inform this research and contribute to a better understanding of the concepts under review. It is necessary to first understand the particular characteristics of adults as learners. The andragogical model of adult learning

explains how adults learn as part of a lifelong learning process. Cognitivism and constructivism are theoretical frameworks that establish a foundation for understanding how and why learner-centered practice functions as a method of instruction. Finally, moral development theory describes how morality can occur in an educational setting. It is essential to have an in-depth understanding of each of these frameworks to provide a foundation for the various concepts within this study.

Adults as Learners

It is appropriate to understand and define what it means to be an adult learner. Lindeman (1926) emphasized the primacy of personal experience as an adult over the concept of age. Lindeman formulated that "the attainment of adulthood is characterized by a growing awareness of self and by a readiness to make existential choices" (Brookfield, 1984). Building on the writings of Lindeman, Knowles et al. (2011) wrote that adult learning is distinct from the learning of children due to the following principles:

> Adults need to know why they need to learn something; adults maintain the concept of responsibility for their own decisions, their own lives; adults enter the educational activity with a greater volume and more varied experiences than do children; adults have a readiness to learn those things that they need to know in order to cope effectively with real-life situations; adults are life-centered in their orientation to learning; and adults are more responsive to internal motivators than external motivators. (p. 70)

Knowles et al. (2011) explained that there are four viable definitions of an adult – biological, legal, social, and psychological. Biologically, adulthood is reached when we can reproduce. Legally, we become an adult when we can vote, drive, marry without consent, etc.

Socially, adulthood occurs when we perform adult roles, such as being a spouse, parent, full-time employee, and so forth. Psychologically, an adult is one who has a self-concept of being responsible for one's own life and is self-directing. Knowles et al. (2011) considered this latter definition to be the most significant in regards to learning, but did not claim that a specific age defines adulthood. Merriam and Brockett (2007) broadly defined an adult learner as an individual "whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults" (p. 8). Merriam and Bierema (2014) claimed that age is not as important as understanding how an adult's life situation differs from a child's and the resulting implications for learning. According to Schaffner (2002), adulthood is an age of reason, rights, and responsibilities, which represents an achieved status.

Arnett (2000) used the term "emerging adulthood" to describe the period between 18 and 25 years of age, when individuals are able to explore their roles independently. Arnett (2000) explained, "Emerging adults do not see themselves as adolescents, but many of them also do not see themselves entirely as adults" (p. 471). Levinson (1978) pioneered psychological research on life task development and claimed that the developmental period of entering the adult world is ages 22 to 29, while ages 17 to 22 experience early adult transition. Typically, if a student transitions directly from high school, they would enter into a four-year educational institution around the age of 18, which means that they would not enter into graduate school until at least the age of 21. For the purposes of this study, since a guideline regarding age is required, an adult learner is considered 21 years of age or older.

Andragogical Model of Adult Learning

Since this research focuses specifically on adult learners, it is necessary to have a foundation of how it is known that adults learn. Many regard the andragogical model of adult

learning as the conceptual cornerstone of adult education (Brookfield, 2017). There is some debate as to who first coined the term "andragogy." The origin of andragogy has been attributed to several philosophers and instructors, such as Alexander Kapp, Johan Herbart, and Eugen Rosenstock (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005), falling in and out of use throughout the last 175 years. Eduard Lindeman offered a conceptualization of practice, which still guides many adult learners, as well as outlines a critical theory of adult learning (Brookfield, 1984). Lindeman is also credited with introducing the concept of andragogy into American literature (Beder & Carrea, 1988; Brookfield, 1984).

However, it was Malcolm Knowles, an American theorist, who popularized andragogy. It was not until Knowles' work in the 1970s that the term was "adopted as the conceptual anchor from which was derived a set of teaching-learning behaviors appropriate to adults" (Brookfield, 1984, p. 195). In the 1970s and 80s, Knowles established the fundamentals of andragogy as a legitimate and effective model of adult education (Beder & Carrea, 1988; Zmeyov, 1998). Knowles developed this innovative model because he felt that it was no longer functional to define education as a process of transmitting what is known. Rather, he thought that education should be a lifelong process and he considered the most important aspect of education to learn how to learn (Knowles, 1980).

Andragogy is derived from the Greek *andros,* which means "adult man" and *ago*, which means "to lead" (Zmeyov, 1998, p. 104). Many philosophers, teachers, and theorists have helped develop and evolve the concept to become the dominant teaching style of modern adult education. Knowles (1980) defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 43). An adult learning experience should be a process of self-directed inquiry, along with the resources of an instructor, peers, and materials being available to learners but

not imposed on them (Knowles, 1980). Knowles described the assumptions that comprise the andragogical model: the need to know, the learners' self-concept, the role of learners' experiences, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn (Knowles, 1975, 1980, 1990; Knowles et al., 2005; Knowles et al., 2011). Andragogy originally included only four assumptions until Knowles added two more, the need to know and motivation, in later writings (Knowles, 1990; Knowles et al., 2005). Based on consistencies in the literature, a seventh component is included in this review – teachers as facilitators – as Knowles explained the importance of this factor in many of his writings. Figure 2.1 provides an illustration of andragogy in practice.

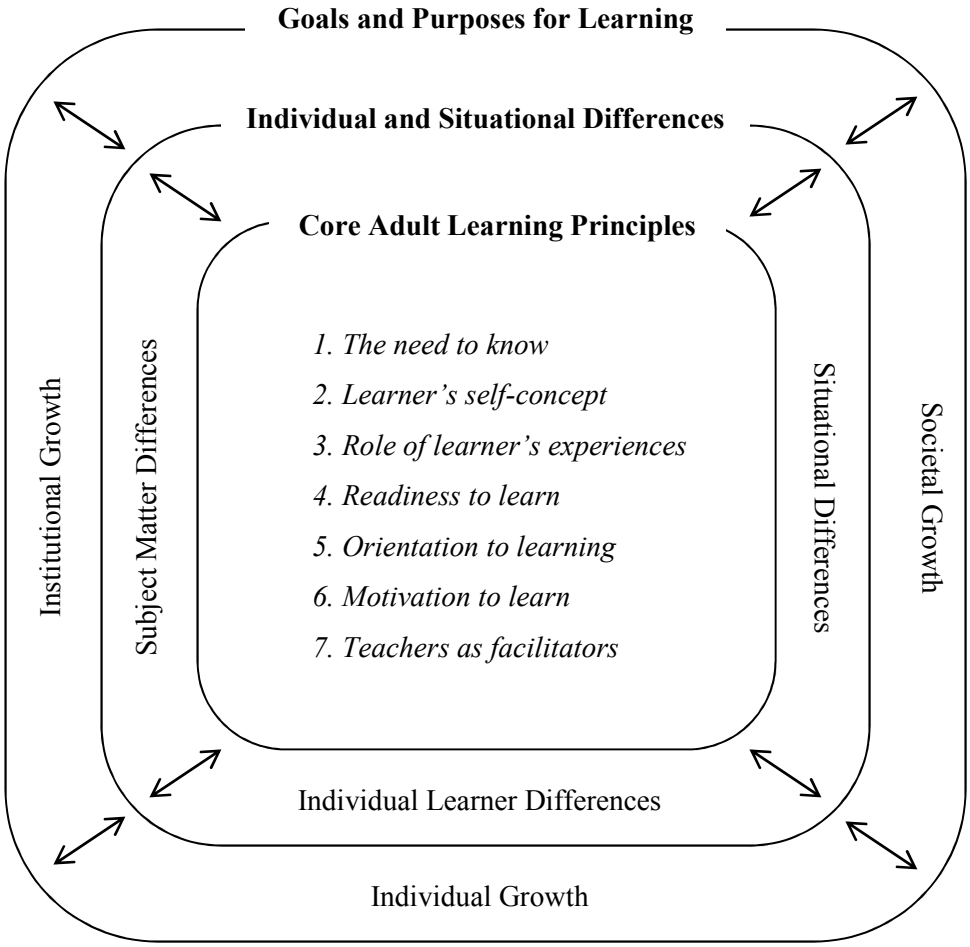

Figure 2.1. Andragogy in practice (Adapted from Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998).

The Need to Know. Adults need to know why they are learning something before they commit to learning it (Knowles et al., 2005). Tough (1979) conducted several studies that examined how self-directed learning affects adult learning. Tough (1979) found that when adults choose to learn something on their own, they will be more motivated to understand the benefits of learning it, as well as the consequences of not learning it. Adults are prompted to learn when they become aware that they are in need of additional skills or knowledge (Bridges, 2004). Thus, the first task of the facilitator of learning is to assist learners in recognizing their "need to know" (Knowles et al., 2005). Becoming aware of the value of learning can improve learners' performance and quality of life (Knowles et al., 2005).

Learners' Self-Concept. As individuals become adults, they acquire a new status and "their self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed human being" (Knowles, 1980, p. 44). Adults begin to make their own decisions and manage their own lives (Knowles, 1979; 1980; Knowles et al., 2005). Knowles (1980) claimed that adults have been conditioned as children to believe that the appropriate way to learn is by passively transmitting information, even if they are self-directed in other aspects of their lives. Subsequently, instructors tend to teach adult learners as if they are dependent on their instruction. The andragogical model helps adult learners understand their role as a learner and gain skills in self-directed learning (Knowles, 1980).

Brookfield (2013) classified self-directed learning as learning in which decisions around what to learn, how to learn it, and how to decide if one has learned well enough are all in the hands of learners (p. 90). Knowles (1975) defined self-directed learning as,

> A process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and

> material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. (p. 18)

Self-directed learning is also described as "a construct that moves away from the traditional notions of education and instruction and places the responsibility for learning on the individual" (Hoban & Hoban, 2004, p. 8). Some characteristics associated with self-directed learning are motivation, empowerment, self-regulation, choice, competence, control, and confidence (Brookfield, 2013; Hoban & Hoban, 2004).

Self-directed learning does not mean that the learner is completely on his or her own. Rather, the self-directed learner has to rely on and collaborate with others in the same field of learning, which involves a social component (Peters & Grey, 2005, p. 13). The nature of learning and attaining knowledge involves learners developing relationships with one another. These relationships allow for collaborative learning and dialogue with one another, which in turn help to create new knowledge and ways of knowing (Peters & Grey, 2005, p. 18).

Role of Learner's Experiences. Adults accumulate a number of experiences throughout their life that become "an increasingly rich resource for learning" (Knowles, 1980, p. 44). These experiences vary based on life roles, knowledge amassed, and other life occurrences, all of which have an impact on an adult's learning. Adults enter the learning environment with a different perspective than young learners due to their vast and varying life experience (Knowles et al., 2005; Merriam et al., 2007). Because the richest resource for learning resides in adults themselves, exploring their experiences through experiential techniques, such as discussions, simulations, problem-solving activities, or case methods can be beneficial (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles et al., 2005; Silberman & Auerbach, 1998). Moreover, different experiences assure diversity within the learning environment. Individual

differences in background, learning style, motivation, needs, interests, and goals create a greater need for individualization of teaching and learning strategies (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles et al., 2005; Silberman & Auerbach, 1998). Emphasizing experience is also important for adults' self-identity; to ignore one's experience may be equated to ignoring them as a person (Knowles et al., 2005).

Readiness to Learn. "Andragogy assumes that adults are living their lives while learning" (Houde, 2006, p. 94). Adults become ready to learn when they need to understand how to effectively cope with real-life situations (Knowles et al., 2005). The demands of everyday life lead adults to prioritize different learning at different instances. Adults want to learn what they can apply to actual circumstances, in the present moment. Thus, learning should focus on content that relates to adults' current situations, timed to coincide with a learner's specific developmental tasks (Knowles et al., 2005).

Orientation to Learning. The perspective of an adult learner changes to immediacy of application of knowledge, and accordingly, their orientation toward learning shifts to one that applies to their personal context (Knowles, 1980). Orientation to learning becomes life-centered, or problem-centered, in their approach to learning. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998) conducted a study concerning this element of andragogy to emphasize the importance of orientation to learning and applied their ideas to actual educational programs. They found that when students participated in programs that were disconnected from life experiences and real life issues, the program had a poor impact on learners. After the administrators connected content to the learners' context, those same programs had quite a powerful impact. When new knowledge, skills, values, and understandings are presented in the context of application to real-life situations, adults are more motivated to learn (Knowles et al., 2005).

Motivation to Learn. Adults are more responsive to internal factors, rather then external factors. While adults are receptive to some external motivators, such as better jobs, promotions, and higher salaries, the most powerful motivators are internal influences, such as the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, and quality of life (Knowles et al., 1998; Knowles et al., 2005). Adults' motivation to learn and grow can be impeded by training and education that ignores these adult learning principles (Tough, 1979).

Teachers as Facilitators. Although there is no official assumption in andragogy of teachers as facilitators, Knowles discusses this concept at length in the majority of his publications. Knowles (1980) claimed that the function of a teacher "has moved increasingly away from being remedial toward being developmental – toward helping their clients achieve full potential" (p. 37). As agents of change, their part in this process is that of helper, guide, encourager, consultant, resource, and co-inquirer with their ultimate goal to help people grow in their ability to learn (Knowles, 1980; Peters & Grey, 2005). Knowles (1980) suggested, "andragogical practice treats the learning-teaching transaction as the mutual responsibility of learners and teachers" (p. 48). A mission of the adult educator is to help individuals develop the attitude that learning is a lifelong process and to acquire the skills necessary for self-directed learning (Knowles, 1980, p. 28). Brookfield (2013) indicated that teachers have the ability to help their students develop the confidence and ability to conduct self-directed learning efforts and decrease students' reliance on educational institutions.

Cognitivism and Constructivism

The learner-centered construct is rooted in both cognitivism and constructivism (Henscheid et al., 2014). These theoretical frameworks have contributed to the development of learner-centered practice; it is valuable to this study to examine the frameworks more

closely. Cognitivism focuses on the information-processing component of learning, whereas constructivism emphasizes meaning making.

Cognitivism. Cognitivism originated as a challenge to behaviorism (Merriam et al., 2007), as behaviorism emphasizes learners' observable behavior and response to external stimuli provided by the teacher (Henscheid et al., 2014). Gredler (1997) named two central assumptions of cognitivism: the memory system is a functioning processor of information and prior knowledge plays a critical role in learning. Moreover, cognitivists claim that the human mind is not a system meant to passively exchange information. Rather, "the thinking person interprets sensations and gives meaning to the events that impinge upon his consciousness" (Grippin & Peters, 1984, p. 76). In cognitivism, the control over learning lies with the individual learner, instead of with the environment as thought by behaviorists (Merriam et al., 2007).

Ausubel (1967) suggested that learning becomes meaningful only when it can be related to preexisting concepts in an individual's mind. Allen (2007) proposed that "a focus on real life problems that have immediate importance will better assist learners in solving problems that have immediacy" (p. 31), otherwise learners may get lost in the ambiguity. In andragogical terms, a person finds learning meaningful when it is linked to their previous experience and corresponds with their readiness to learn and orientation to learning.

Cognitivism also explores the idea of learning how to learn. Smith (1982) explained that it important to teach adults how to learn, which "involves possessing, or acquiring, the knowledge and skill to learn effectively in whatever learning situation one encounters" (p. 19). Smith outlined methods for facilitators to help learners become more self-reflective, such as self-directed learning and collaborative learning (Brookfield, 1986). Adult learning is more

than a change in behavior; learning should involve new ways of understanding and active participation in the learning process (Allen, 2007).

Constructivism. Constructivism is most notably attributed to the work of Piaget, Dewey, Bruner, von Glasersfeld, and Vygotsky (Fosnot, 2005; Merriam et al., 2007; Nucci, Narvaez, & Krettenauer, 2014; Weimer, 2013). Constructivism is a prominent educational theory that focuses on the relationship between learners and content (Weimer, 2013). Constructivist theory emphasizes that learners must construct their own knowledge (Bruning, Schraw, Norby, & Ronning, 2004; Piaget, 1970; Stage, Muller, Kinzie, & Simmons, 1998; von Glasersfeld, 1995). This occurs by interacting with the teacher as a facilitator, interacting with their environment, and drawing meaning from the learning context (Bruning et al., 2004). The main goal of constructivism in education is for students to become "autonomous, lifelong learners," whose "thoughts and actions are guided by reason, conviction, and commitment" (Nucci et al., 2014, p. 180).

Stage et al. (1998) described the constructivist approach as emphasizing learners "actively constructing their own knowledge rather than passively receiving information transmitted to them from teachers and textbooks. From a constructivist perspective, knowledge cannot simply be given to students: Students must construct their own meanings" (p. 35). Instructors are meant to support the learning of students, rather than direct it. The control of learning moves away from the instructor and toward the learner; the instructor guides the student to discover meaning (Weimer, 2013). Guidance of the instructor should be "focused on promoting students' critical thinking rather than telling them what to do or what to pay attention to" (Duffy & Raymer, 2010, p. 4). Freire (1996) agreed that when learners take ownership of their learning, the education is more autonomous and empowering.

Educators endorsing a constructivist perspective understand that learning is active, dynamic, and learner-centered as opposed to teacher-centered (Freire, 1996).

Fosnot (2005) suggested that the constructivist view "gives learners the opportunity for concrete, contextually meaningful experience through which they can search for patterns; raise questions; and model, interpret, and defend their strategies and ideas" (p. i). Keefe and Jenkins (2002) explained that individual learners construct knowledge to give meaning to their current understanding, using their prior experience to do so. Constructing meaning does not equate to making up knowledge; instead, the goal is to position new knowledge to connect with what is already known to make more sense to the learner (Weimer, 2013).

There are several approaches within the overarching theory of constructivism, but all share fundamental beliefs about learning. The differing approaches mainly vary in the degree of social interaction and activeness of the learner. Derived from Piaget's theory of cognitive development, constructivists suggest that learning is more of a personal and individual activity. Meaning is dependent on the learner's previous and current knowledge structure; thus, learning is an internal cognitive activity (Merriam et al., 2007). In a social constructivist view, based on the work of Vygotsky, knowledge is constructed in social contexts, when learning about shared ways of understanding (Merriam et al., 2007; Vygotsky, 1978; Weimer, 2013).

Despite theoretical differences, all forms of constructivism agree that learning is an active endeavor, not passive. Value is placed on learners' points of view and creating meaningful learning constructs (Weimer, 2013). In this way, learning occurs through dialogue, collaborative learning, self-directed learning, reflective practice, experiential learning, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Duffy & Raymer, 2010; Knowles et al.,

2005; Merriam et al., 2007, Weimer, 2013). Constructivism aligns with learner-centered practice in that students interact with each other and with content, connect new knowledge with previous experience, mold and shape new knowledge to fit what is already known, utilize new information to deepen current understandings, and build knowledge with the guidance of instructors (Weimer, 2013).

Nucci et al. (2014) related constructivism and moral development when they noted that a major premise of constructivist education is that learners cannot become autonomous intellectually or morally in an authoritarian relationship with the instructor. Piaget (1932) wrote, "If he [the learner] is intellectually passive, he will not know how to be free ethically… If his ethics consist exclusively in submission to adult authority… he will not know how to be intellectually active" (p. 107). Constructivism also allows for moral development through direct experience. Learners must construct their moral understandings from the raw material of their day-to-day social interactions (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987). Constructivism provides the opportunity for moral development to take place through the establishment of mutual respect, the promotion of autonomy, the sharing of power, group learning, conflict resolution, and moral discussion (Nucci et al., 2014).

Moral Development Theory

Jean Piaget initially defined moral development as representing an increasing knowledge of cultural values, leading to ethical relativity (Piaget, 1932). Moral development was refined by Lawrence Kohlberg to represent the "transformations that occur in a person's form or structure of thought" (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977, p. 54). Damon (1980) claimed that the more one is instructed in morality, the more moral one will be. Alternatively, Turiel (1980) thought that interaction with one's environment causes a growth in moral judgment.

Miller (1994) argued that morality might depend on what is found to be meaningful within a particular culture.

Boyd & Kohlberg (1973) intended moral to be understood as "referring to situations which call for judgments involving deontological concepts such as right and wrong, duty and obligations, having a right, fairness, etc." (p. 360-361). It is important to distinguish the idea of what is right or just from the notion of what is good. The focus of this moral development theory is on the concepts of rightness and justice because they are more universal than the relative idea of goodness. This review will focus on Kohlberg's theory as the primary conceptual framework.

Kohlberg (1969, 1976, 1980) claimed that there are situational dimensions of moral judgment and created a theory of moral development that reveals specific stages concerning the way individuals construct reality. Kohlberg explained that these stages of moral reasoning are structured wholes (individuals are consistent in their level), invariant (each stage builds upon the previous one so that none can be skipped), and hierarchical (a higher stage carries forward the principles of the previous one), with the stages varying from one individual and culture to another (Kliever, 1990). Kohlberg believed that patterns of moral development could be seen in all cultures and all individuals.

Kohlberg identified six stages of moral development occurring at different levels: (1) punitive, (2) instrumental, (3) conformist, (4) authoritarian, (5) utilitarian, and (6) autonomous (Kohlberg, 1969; 1976; 1980). A visual representation of Kohlberg's stages can be seen in Table 2.5. The first two stages occur at a preconventional level, in which the individual is responsive to cultural labels (such as good and bad, or right and wrong) but interprets the labels in terms of physical consequences (punishments and rewards). Stages 3 and 4 occur at

a conventional level, in which the individual values maintaining the expectations of others, regardless of immediate consequences. The last two stages emerge at a postconventional level, in which the individual attempts to define moral values and principles apart from the authority of others (Kohlberg, 1969; 1980).

Table 2.5
Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

STAGE	WHAT IS RIGHT	REASONING
Preconventional Level		
Stage 1: Punitive Heteronomous Morality, Egocentric	Avoiding breaking rules backed by punishment, obedience for obedience sake, avoiding physical damage	Avoiding punishment, belief in the superior power of authorities
Stage 2: Instrumental Individualism, Instrumental Purpose, and Exchange	Following rules when it is of immediate interest, meeting one's interest, right is what's fair, equal exchange	Serving one's own needs and recognizing that others have their own interests too
Conventional Level		
Stage 3: Conformist Mutual Interpersonal Expectations and Relationships	Living up to expectations of your role, having good motives, keeping mutual relationships	Having the need to be a good person for yourself and others, desire to maintain rules to support good behavior
Stage 4: Authoritarian Social System and Conscience	Fulfilling one's duty, upholding laws except when they conflict with social duties, contributing to society	Avoiding system breakdown, meeting one's defined obligations
Postconventional Level		
Stage 5: Utilitarian Social Contract and Individual Rights	Being aware of others' relative values in the interest of the social contract	Abiding by laws for the welfare of all, contractual commitment for overall utility
Stage 6: Autonomous Universal Ethical Principles	Following self-chosen ethical principles, laws and agreements are valid due to these universal principles	Believing in the validity of universal moral principles, personal commitment to principles

Source: Adapted from Kohlberg, 1976.

In the *punitive* stage, the individual qualifies morality based on the physical consequences, regardless of the human meaning or value of the consequences (Kohlberg, 1969; 1980). Deference to power is also valued in this stage, as well as avoidance of

punishment. In the *instrumental* orientation, right actions are determined by the satisfaction of one's own needs and occasionally the needs of others. In this stage, elements of reciprocity are present, but interpreted in a pragmatic way rather than in a manner of loyalty or gratitude. In the *conformist* stage, morality resides in interpersonal social relationships. Good behavior is considered that which pleases or is approved by others. The *authoritarian* orientation focuses on authority, rules, and maintaining social order. The individual equates morality with showing respect to authority and doing one's duty. In the *utilitarian* stage, right action is defined in terms of individual rights and standards, agreed upon by society as a whole. Morality is a matter of personal values and opinions, with a clear awareness of the relativism of these values. Finally, the *autonomous* stage defines morality by an individual's self-chosen ethical principles, which ascribe to universality, consistency, and logic.

Kohlberg (1980) characterized the higher stages of moral development as "more moral" than the previous stages, with stage 6 thinking (*autonomous*) being fully moral. The educational aim of reaching the higher stages is to give "the individual the capacity to engage in moral judgment and discourse, rather than the aim of imposing a specific morality upon him" (p. 52). Moreover, moral education should stimulate people's thinking ability in ways that enable them to use more adequate and complex reasoning patterns to solve moral problems (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977).

Kohlberg detailed justice as the central principle of the stages of moral development. Kolhberg and Hersh (1977) defined justice as "the primary regard for the value and equality of all human beings and for reciprocity in human relations" (p. 56). Justice is used as the organizing principle for moral education because it guarantees freedom of belief, provides a philosophically reasonable concept of morality, and is based on the psychological truths of

human development. Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) went on to explain that the stages of moral development represent "increasingly adequate conceptions of justice" and reflect an "expanding capacity for empathy," thus leading to an "expansion of points of view and this expansion defines the three levels of moral judgment into which the six stages subdivide" (p. 56).

Kohlberg's model is most notably compared to Carol Gilligan's alternative theory of moral development. Gilligan (1982) critiqued Kohlberg, suggesting that he does not take gender roles into account, adversely affecting his notion of universality. She argued that women's moral actions are based on care and responsibility, rather than fairness and justice (Woods, 1996). Gilligan (1982) claimed that women move from self-interest to moral reasoning through a commitment to certain relationships. After some debate, Gilligan later reframed her argument to claim that both genders use both orientations of reasoning in different contexts (Weinberg, Yacker, Orenstein, & DeSarbo, 1991). To say all men or women reason in only one way is to assume that gender roles are static and does not allow for other considerations that may expose differences (Woods, 1996). Perhaps both theories are restricted by gender roles and culture differences. However, Kohlberg's theory and methods are sound and offer one way to view moral development. Kohlberg's theory also provides a foundation for understanding moral development within the context of this study.

Research on Moral Development and Learner-Centered Practice

Many elements of learner-centered practice are consistent with elements of moral development, as noted in prior research. Kohlberg (1975) claimed that moral education has a cognitive core because it "recognizes that moral education, like intellectual education, has its basis in stimulating the active thinking" of the learner (p. 670). Other researchers asserted

that active learning facilitates the development of moral reasoning (Lies et al., 2012; Mayhew & King, 2008).

Berkowitz and Fekula (1999) promoted experiential learning, role modeling, and relevant reflection as necessary for character development. Brookfield (1998) argued that acknowledging learners' experiences and engaging in critical reflection contribute to moral learning. Mayhew and King (2008) and Joseph (2016) also noted that instructors who supported students' critical reflection stimulated moral development in the learners. Mayhew and King (2008) claimed that moral reasoning is "consistent with collegiate values of using critical inquiry" to make decisions (p. 18).

Berkowitz (1985) and Brookfield (1998) cited that discussions led by peers are likely to produce moral growth in learners. Several researchers placed emphasis on the impact of peer interaction and intergroup relationships on moral reasoning and one's understanding of values (Endicott et al., 2003; Killen et al., 2010; Nucci, 2005). Nucci (2005) explained, "A positive climate for social and moral growth is enhanced by academic experiences that foster peer interaction and discussion" (p. 149). McCombs and Miller (2007) stated that learners have the opportunity to learn ethical decision-making through collaboration. Enright et al. (1983) and Kohlberg (1975) found that interactive instructional methods produced significantly more moral development compared to didactic instruction. Enright et al. (1983) examined previous studies and found that peer discussion, higher-level thinking, and role-playing all led to increases in moral maturity.

Kohlberg (1975) also found a correlation between moral development and one's level of cognitive reasoning: the higher level of cognitive reasoning, the higher level of moral development. Additionally, Nucci and Turiel (2009) emphasized moral reasoning and critical

thinking as requiring considerable reflection on the part of the instructor. Brookfield (1998) acknowledged that treating individuals as adults is important in moral development: "A respectful stance toward an adult learner implies an awareness of the other's capacity for independent moral judgments, and a refusal to insist on conformity with the teacher's opinions" (p. 284). Learner-centered practice provides students with ownership over their learning and helps them "achieve independent minds and the capacity to make educated decisions and value judgments" (Brown, 2008).

Active learning, learners' experiences, critical reflection, discussion groups, peer collaboration, cognitive reasoning, critical thinking, and student ownership of learning are all components of learner-centered practice. Researchers have found a link between these individual elements and moral development, thus there may be a relationship between moral development and learner-centered practice as a whole. However, little or no research could be found about how learner-centered practice leads to moral development. This research follows up on these studies to provide more recent and novel literature on the topic, as well as to offer concrete findings regarding moral development in learner-centered practice.

Summary of the Literature

This review examined learner-centered practice, adult learning, and moral development in depth to provide a solid foundation for this study. It was important to understand the extent of previous research in these fields, as well as understand the relationship of these concepts. It was also necessary to assess the moral development and moral reasoning processes in the context of learner-centered practice in higher education institutions to better understand the impact of this method of instruction. Understanding that

learner-centered higher education can have an impact on a learners' moral development could lead to a significant contribution to new thinking in these fields.

Despite an abundance of research regarding values and ethics in the context of higher education, there was a lack of information within the literature regarding the specific relationship between learner-centered practice, moral development, and moral reasoning. The majority of research described the relationship between ethics and athletics (Copeland & Potwarka, 2016; French, 2004; Hartill, 2013; Hochstetler, 2006; Winters, 2011). Other research described the intersection of moral development and self-esteem (Hight, 2004), ethics and religion (Crawford, 2012; Fantazy & Al Athmay, 2014; Langer et al., 2010), and morality and academic integrity (Aurich, 2012; Cavico & Mujtaba, 2009). Additionally, there was considerable research regarding learner-centered higher education, with research mainly focusing on learner-centered theory and distance education (DeFrance, 2011; Duffy & Kirkley, 2004; Ware, 2006), as well as best practices for a learner-centered education (Blumberg, 2012; Cleveland-Innes & Emes, 2005; Weimer, 2013). Mostly, the literature emphasized learner-centered practice within nursing education (Greer et al., 2010; Lau & Wang, 2013; Rhodes et al., 2012). In spite of the quantity of literature, a gap in the research seemed to exist regarding the relationship between learner-centered higher education, moral development, and moral reasoning. However, by conducting this literature review, it has been identified that certain elements of learner-centered practice provide an opportunity for moral development and moral reasoning to exist in a higher education context.

A review of this nature offered an overview of the current state of literature in regard to the research topics, as well as avenues for further investigation. The academic articles, books, and dissertations used in this review described best teaching practice, implementing

teaching practice in a curriculum, and philosophical underpinnings of moral development. It was challenging to find literature that emphasized moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice in the same context. Despite this gap in the literature, this review focused on similar characteristics of the concepts to identify the ways in which they overlapped. The literature briefly discussed the idea of morality as a reasonable outcome of learner-centered practice, without detailing the exact relationship with moral development and moral reasoning. The following chapters discuss this study's investigation of the moral development and moral reasoning processes of adult learners in the context of learner-centered teaching practice in higher education institutions.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the moral development and moral reasoning of adult learners in the context of learner-centered practice within higher education institutions. This grounded theory study intended to provide critical insight into the moral reflections, experiences, and perceptions of adult learners in the context of learner-centered practice. This study utilized the perceptions of adult learners, gathered through observations and semi-structured interviews, to understand the relationship between learner-centered practice, moral development, and moral reasoning. Participant interviews, memo writing, course observations, and observation protocols were used to gather data. This chapter presents an explanation of the methodology, research design and rationale, research sample and settings, data collection methods, data analysis methods, validation strategies, and limitations of the study.

Explanation of Methodology

A rich description emerged from the data to inform our understanding of the moral development and moral reasoning processes in the context of learner-centered teaching practice. A qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study to identify considerations of morality, thinking and reasoning processes, and adult learning practices. A qualitative approach allowed for a more accurate picture of individuals' experiences of morality in learning, to develop findings that were rich, insightful, and full of meaning. This study aimed to explore perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of adult learners to gain an in-depth understanding of the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice.

Qualitative research methodology goes above and beyond simply amassing data, but rather aims to discover answers to social and human questions (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2013). Berg (2001) explained that qualitative procedures "provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people researchers observe and talk to or people represented by their personal traces" (p. 7). As a result, qualitative researchers are able to share in the perceptions of others and explore how individuals give meaning to their daily lives. By taking a qualitative approach to the study, the researcher was able to access unquantifiable facts about actual people, as well as examine how individuals perceive specific phenomena.

Creswell (2003) suggested that when our understanding of a situation or phenomenon needs to be explored, qualitative methodology is most appropriate. Creswell (2003) went on to propose that one of the primary reasons for conducting a qualitative study is when the research is investigative. A qualitative approach using interviews was chosen as the most appropriate methodology for this investigation of individual perceptions, experiences, and beliefs. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explained the purpose of utilizing qualitative types of research when attempting to discover the nature of individual's experiences with certain phenomena:

> Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known. It can be used to gain novel and fresh slants on things about which quite a bit is already known. Also, qualitative methods can give the intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods. (p. 19)

This research attempted to discern an emergent theory in order to make the most efficient use of the collected data. This study examined the moral development and moral reasoning processes in the context of learner-centered teaching practice, specifically for adult learners within higher education institutions.

Prior to any collection of data, this study was submitted to the University of Idaho's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review and approval. IRB approval for this study was granted on January 23, 2018, which can be viewed in full as Appendix J. Later in the study, some modifications were necessary, such as changes to the protocol title and sample criteria, which resulted in amendments to the IRB application.

Research Design and Rationale

Grounded theory methodology is considered a study in which "the researcher generates an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, a theory that explains some action, interaction, or process" (Creswell, 2013, p. 288). Grounded theory methodology promotes the creation of new theory from the data rather than the testing of existing theories. Glaser and Strauss (1967) expressed that the researcher inductively generates theory based on an interpretation of the data produced by a study of particular phenomena. This method emphasizes understanding participant perspectives to develop such a theory. Schwandt (2015) described the features of grounded theory that distinguish this approach from other qualitative methods of analyses. These features include:

> (a) Simultaneous collection and analysis of data, (b) analyses of actions and process rather than themes, (c) use of comparative methods, (d) use of multiple sources of data to develop new conceptual categories, (e) use of systematic means of analysis to

> develop core categories inductively, (f) focus on theory construction rather than description, and (g) employing theoretical sampling. (p. 63)

Creswell (2013) mentioned several defining features of grounded theory as well, focusing on theory development. Consistent with Schwandt (2015), Creswell (2013) explained that one major characteristic is in the construction of a theory by the researcher as an explanation of an understanding that the researcher developed.

Grounded theory originated in the 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, two influential researchers in the fields of health and nursing. Despite their initial collaboration, Glaser and Strauss eventually disagreed about the structure and procedures of this approach, sparking the introduction of differing perspectives about grounded theory (Creswell, 2013). One such perspective is Charmaz' constructivist grounded theory, which takes a more interpretive and flexible approach than its traditional counterpart. Charmaz (2006) described her approach as consisting of "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (p. 2).

It was necessary to decide which perspective of this methodology was most appropriate for the topic at hand. In researching grounded theory, while there are several perspectives, it was narrowed down to Strauss' traditional school of thought and Charmaz' constructivist approach. The researcher's ideals were more closely aligned with the constructivist view of Charmaz rather than the prescriptive orientation of Strauss. Strauss appeared to prioritize the focus on procedures, which could lead to a forced theory, rather than allowing the theory to emerge naturally from the data. Charmaz (2006) promoted more general and exploratory guidelines, while also assuming "that any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it" (p. 10). Charmaz

placed more emphasis on the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals than on research methods (Creswell, 2013). While this study was more aligned with the constructivist approach to grounded theory, some of the constructs and structural elements of Strauss were still applicable to the development and organization of this study.

Multi-Grounded Theory

Recently, scholars interested in grounded theory have reexamined this research design and challenged the idea of the tabula rasa and pure induction (Bryant, 2002; Clark, 2012; Clarke, 2003). Scholars have argued for more consideration of existing theories within the field of study to be included in a grounded theory approach (Bruce, 2007; Kelle, 2005; Seaman, 2008). Goldkuhl and Cronholm (2010) proposed a "multi-grounded theory" as an extension of grounded theory, meant to combine the strengths of both inductivism and deductivism and reduce each of their weaknesses (see Figure 3.1 below). Multi-grounded theory goes beyond pure inductivism by using existing theories in the grounding process (Cronholm, 2004; Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2003).

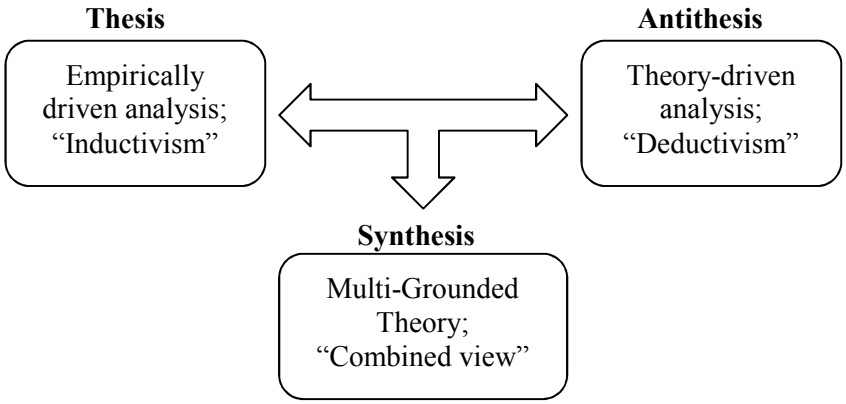

Figure 3.1. Multi-grounded theory as a dialectical synthesis between inductivism and deductivism (Adapted from Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010).

When theory is grounded in already existing theories, there may be contradictions, which afford the possibility of a dialectic approach (Lind & Goldkuhl, 2006). Contradictions

between a thesis and antithesis are resolved through the creation of a synthesis (refer to Figure 3.1); this synthesis becomes a new theory or thesis to be used in future research (Lind & Goldkuhl, 2006; Skirbekk & Gilje, 2001).

Goldkuhl and Cronholm (2010) included a more systematic use of preexisting theories and advocated an enhanced grounding perspective (illustrated In Figure 3.2), which involves:

- "Empirical data (preferably mainly through an inductive approach – empirical grounding;
- Pre-existing theories (well selected for the theorized phenomena) – theoretical grounding; and
- An explicit congruence within the theory itself (between elements in the theory) – internal grounding" (p. 192).

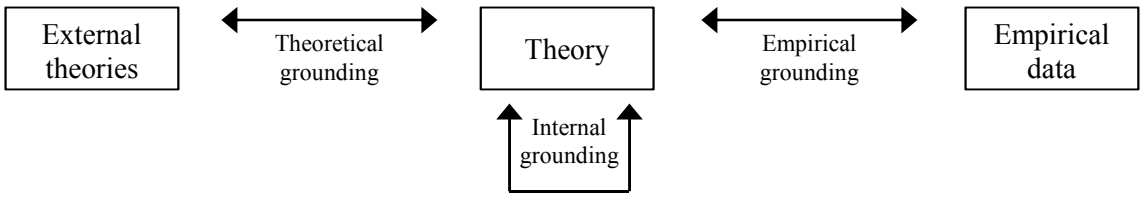

Figure 3.2. Complementary grounding sources for a developed theory (Adapted from Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010, p. 193).

The emergent theory is related to different knowledge sources, which are imperative for theory generation and its validity (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010). Instead of solely using an inductive approach for the emergent theory, multi-grounded theory also utilizes other knowledge sources for justification. In this research, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed in the literature review represent the deductive approach. These frameworks include the andragogical model of adult education, cognitivism and constructivism, and moral development theory.

Multi-grounded theory also involves the use of three types of explicit grounding processes with the intention of analyzing and controlling the validity of the emergent theory: theoretical matching, explicit empirical validation, and evaluation of theoretical cohesion (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2003). In order to expand the traditional approach of grounded theory to encompass the theoretical approach of multi-grounded theory, these processes were added to the data analysis, which is discussed in more detail in the "Data Analysis" section of this chapter.

The research questions that guided this study's inquiry are:

1. What emergent theory explains the relationship between the moral development and moral reasoning of adult learners in the context of learner-centered practice in higher education institutions?
2. How does learner-centered practice contribute to the moral reasoning and moral development of adult learners?
3. What are the moral reflections, experiences, and perceptions of adult learners who participate in learner-centered instruction?

A grounded theory was most suitable to investigate these research questions and address the gap in the literature concerning the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered instruction. An emergent theory explains the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice through the use of constant comparative methods and coding analysis. Furthermore, using aspects of multi-grounded theory allowed for a comparison of preexisting theories to the emergent theory to reinforce the validity of the findings. A grounded theory research design was the most appropriate method to support the exploratory nature of this study.

Research Sample and Setting

This section details the sampling process, the research setting, and participant recruitment. Sampling techniques included theoretical sampling and snowball sampling at various stages of the study. The research setting was comprised of graduate and professional development learner-centered courses within higher education. Participants from those courses were recruited based on specific criteria.

Sampling Process

Participants were selected based on theoretical sampling, which is a purposeful sampling technique. Qualitative researchers utilize purposeful sampling to extend knowledge through intentionally seeking sample participants known to be rich sources of data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Theoretical sampling is considered "sampling of additional incidents, events, activities, populations, and so on" that is "directed by the evolving theoretical constructs" (Schwandt, 2015, p. 63). Participants were selected according to criteria specified by the researcher, as well as based on early findings in the data. Initial findings in the data indicated issues that need exploration, in which case the sampling process was further guided by the on-going theory development. It was necessary to continue the research process as new theoretical categories emerged, requiring the need for more participants to explore these categories.

Theoretical sampling in this study sought out particular characteristics that were identified as important for investigation, such as the certain demographic characteristics of an individual participant and learner-centered contexts. Snowball sampling was also used to find other participants and courses that fit with the research criteria. "It is not uncommon that a nonprobability sample is assembled using a snowball sampling technique where initial

respondents or interviewees are used to recruit additional respondents; the sample thus grows like a rolling snowball" (Schwandt, 2015, p. 279). Snowball sampling was used about halfway through the interview process when it was realized that more respondents were needed for the sample.

Participants were required to be at least 21 years of age to be considered an adult learner. Participants had to be enrolled in a graduate or professional development course within a higher education institution (meaning that a higher education institution offered graduate credit for the course or program). This course had to be learner-centered, in accordance with the Learner-Centered Rubric for Observation Protocol [LCROP]. Finally, the course had to be at least six weeks in length or longer to provide sufficient time for any moral development, moral reasoning, or moral learning to take place. To develop a well-saturated theory, the intended number of participants for this study was ten to fifteen individuals, with the actual number of participants being thirteen adult learners; data collection continued until saturation was achieved. Saturation occurred when gathering data no longer generated novel theoretical insights, nor revealed new properties of the core theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006).

Research Settings

The settings for this study took place in learner-centered graduate courses and professional development programs within higher education institutions. This included formal classrooms, professional development workshops, and workforce training programs, all of which were adult learning environments that lasted at least six weeks in length. Graduate and professional development programs that were connected with a higher education institution were a requirement, since these courses were more likely to contain

participants aged 21 years or older. The researcher examined the class schedules of local and regional higher education institutions to find potential research settings. The facilitators of these classes were contacted, asked to participate, and provided with the facilitator informed consent (See Appendix E). If the facilitator responded with their consent, the researcher then observed the course or workshop.

For the results of this study to be more transferable, the objective was to find multiple learner-centered classrooms with a variety of participants. However, several participants came from the same learning sessions. In total, four different research settings were used for the purposes of this study, although one research setting involved two separate observations in two different locations. Research settings that had specific names were changed for the purposes of participant confidentiality. Another research setting was observed but it did not qualify as learner-centered based on the Learner-Centered Rubric for Observation Protocol [LCROP], so it was not included in this study.

Leadership in Education: Professional Development Program. The first research setting included the Leadership in Education [LIE] program, which was a professional development course for elementary school teachers who want to be leaders in their profession. Participants were from all different schools within a specific district in a northwestern state within the United States. This program lasted one year and will continue with a new cohort of teachers next year as well. The curriculum consisted of one seven-hour session each month during the school year, as well as sessions during the summer months to prepare for the following academic year.

Participants in this program had the opportunity to receive graduate level credits from a local four-year accredited university. The facilitators of this program were district leaders

and administrators. Some of the goals of this program included: creating a balanced approach to literacy, focusing on thinking strategies, fluency, and student reading time, improving reading proficiency and study agency, and improving reading instruction in the classroom.

On the day of observation, the majority of time was spent engaging in peer and group discussions. For example, participants were asked to consider their school as a system and discuss with each other what comes to mind regarding leadership, interactions with colleagues, resiliency, collaboration, and resources. Participants had the opportunity to discuss with each other their thoughts and concerns, not only with teachers from their own school, but also with others from several different schools. There were also several opportunities for journaling and reflection throughout the day. Additionally, participants were able to take what they learned that day, as well as from previous sessions, and use it to organize lesson plans, prepare activities, and utilize multiple resources for their own classrooms.

The researcher used the LCROP (see "Observations" subsection) during the observation. This program scored 87% (27 of 31 items on the protocol), which meant that this program was learner-centered and, thus, feasible to use for the purposes of this study (see Appendix D for the LCROP Observation Markups of this course). The researcher also recorded field notes (see "Memoing" subsection) throughout the observation in order to document learner-centered practice, guide the interview protocol, and record other pertinent data.

Northwest Collaborative Network: Teacher Leader Program. Another research setting included the Northwest Collaborative Network's [NCN] Teacher Leader Program, which was a professional development program for teachers who worked within a

northwestern state within the United States. This program lasted approximately one year and consisted of 15 workshop days throughout the year of which learners were asked to participate (3 days in the summer; 8 days during the academic year; 4 days in the following summer). Participants had the opportunity to return to this program for multiple years, taking on different roles each year that they attended (i.e. returning teacher, alumni, etc.). This program also involved online coursework, instructional coaching, and leadership training. Participants in this program had the opportunity to receive graduate level credits from a local four-year accredited university. The facilitators of this program were regional coaches, who work for the State Department of Education. Some of the goals of this program included: building consistency in the understanding and capacity of educators, developing deeper understandings of specific state education standards, designing authentic learning experiences, and applying and adapting new understandings to classrooms in a meaningful way.

On the days that the researcher attended, the program consisted of twelve workshops presented throughout the day. Participants were provided information on each workshop and were asked to choose three of the twelve workshops to attend that day. These workshops were developed and presented by learners who participated in the program the previous year. These returning participants decided on a special inquiry project that they were passionate about, gathered resources, and designed a professional development toolkit to be presented to the current learners.

There were two separate sections that participated in this study: Region 1 and Region 2. Each of these programs had completely different workshop focuses and topics, varying by grade level, interest, and instructional goals. The researcher first attended the Region 2 program and attended three workshops: the importance of collaboration in creating positive

school culture and engaging students, evaluating the effectiveness of professional development and planning for the future, and constructivist practices and applicable problem-solving. For the Region 1 program, the researcher attended three workshops as well: decoding the state code of ethics for professional educators, building relationships, and tapping into genius hour. Each workshop used varying learning strategies to engage with the participants.

The researcher used the LCROP (see "Observations" subsection) during each of the observations. Both of the regions' programs scored 94% (29 of 31 items on the protocol), which meant that both programs were learner-centered and, thus, viable to use for the purposes of this study (see Appendix D for the LCROP Observation Markups of these workshops). These programs scored the highest of all of the research settings, possibly due to the length of the program or the administrators having a lenient structure for the outcomes of this program (no certifications, for example). The researcher also recorded field notes (see "Memoing" subsection) throughout all of the observations in order to document learner-centered practices and record other pertinent data.

Communication for Wellbeing and Social Impact Graduate Course. This research setting was a graduate-level course, which was offered through a regional accredited four-year university. The course consisted of 15 class sessions over the span of approximately 17 weeks. The learners met once a week for three hours each session. The main goal of this course was to "create and inspire the being and practical wisdom of emotional wellbeing through communication and interaction" (Tracy, 2018, p. 1). This course also focused on practicing critically reflective and experiential techniques, creating emotional wellbeing, incorporating "phronesis," and considering specific practices associated with wellbeing.

This course had several opportunities for learning: participation and embodied presence, reading outlines, class activity ideas, discussion questions, strategizing, activity planning, path-finding assignment, peer feedback, book reviews and analyses, and a final project. Learners were able to design discussions and learning activities for future class sessions. The facilitator was clear from the beginning of the course that she was a co-learner and that the responsibility for learning lay with the participants. Learners had the ability to design their own learning through her loose class structure.

During the course observation, which occurred towards the end of the semester, one of the learners led a discussion about practical wisdom. The learner created an outline for a variety of readings concerning the key arguments and potential discussion topics. This topic was applicable to other learners for their final projects, as it presented a specific lens for thinking about material. The majority of discussion occurred amongst the learners, however, the facilitator would interject a question every so often to stimulate thinking and focus learners' attention on specific topics.

The researcher used the LCROP (see "Observations" subsection) during the observation. This program scored 90% (28 of 31 items on the protocol), which meant that this program was learner-centered and, thus, feasible to use for the purposes of this study (see Appendix D for the LCROP Observation Markups of this course). The researcher also recorded field notes (see "Memoing" subsection) throughout the observation in order to document learner-centered practice, guide the interview protocol, and record other pertinent data.

Workforce Training Center: Nursing Assistant Training. Another research setting included the Certified Nursing Assistant [CNA] training program, a health professions

program that prepared learners to be certified health care professionals in a northwestern state within the United States. This program lasted approximately twelve to eighteen weeks during the summer months, and included ten to seventeen sessions. The variation of the program length was due to time constraints in the summer, as well as due to the various facilitators teaching the course. However, all courses required at least 120 total hours to complete the program.

This program involved online coursework, lab training, and clinical experience at local health care facilities. The program required 80 hours of lab training, up to 40 hours in a clinical setting, and approximately 6 hours per week for outside course work. Participants in this program had the opportunity to become Certified Nursing Assistants and placed on the state's Nurse Aide registry upon successful completion of the program. This course could also be used as a graduate level equivalent course through a local four-year accredited university. The facilitators of this program were experienced health care professionals from a variety of backgrounds. The goal of this program was to prepare learners for employment opportunities in health care as competent nursing assistants by completing course work outside of class, meeting in the lab for in-depth exploration of material, applying real world scenarios, engaging in critical thinking activities, and practicing competency skills.

On the day of observation, which was the second session of the program, the facilitator guided the students through specific skills and competencies. Certain skills included: ambulation of a person using a transfer belt, assisting an affected person into a wheelchair, giving a bed bath, cleaning dentures, helping a person to the commode, assisting a person with eating, and hand washing. The facilitator was sure to be clear about the

expectations and modeled the learning first. Each participant was asked to practice and demonstrate the same skills, as well as peer review each other for maximized learning.

The researcher used the LCROP (see "Observations" subsection) during the observation. This program scored 81% (25 of 31 items on the protocol), which meant that this program was learner-centered and, thus, viable to use for the purposes of this study (see Appendix D for the LCROP Observation Markups of this program). This program scored the lowest of all the research settings, possibly due to being a pre-certification course, thus needing a more prescribed structure than the other sites. The researcher also recorded field notes (see "Memoing" subsection) throughout the observation in order to document learner-centered practice, guide the interview protocol, and record other pertinent data.

Participant Recruitment

The researcher identified the learner-centered courses, and then asked the facilitators to email enrolled learners to request if they were interested in participation of this study after course or program completion. Each of these facilitators was sent an email to forward to the course participants. This email invited them to participate in the study based on a recruitment script (see Appendix B for the Participant Recruitment Script). The email included general information about the study, the purpose of the study, and participant criteria. Solicited learners were also informed that participation in this study would involve multiple interviews via phone, face-to-face, or videoconference technology.

Those who responded to the recruitment email with a desire to participate were contacted again via email to ensure that they met the participant criteria and to provide them with the informed consent. Those who met the participant criteria returned the signed informed consent to the researcher before any interviews took place. The informed consent

again described what would be involved in participation in the study and explained that the study is voluntary and individuals can discontinue participation at any time. Additionally, the informed consent stated that there are no perceived risks associated with participation and that all identifying information pertaining to this study will remain confidential. Finally, individuals were asked to denote their willingness to be audio recorded and sign to indicate informed consent (see Appendix F for a copy of the Participant Informed Consent). The researcher also obtained facilitator consent to do classroom observations (see Appendix E for a copy of the Facilitator Informed Consent).

Data Collection Methods

Data collection in grounded theory often involves the researcher constantly comparing data gathered from participants with ideas about the emerging theory (Creswell, 2013). Charmaz (2006) concurred that researchers shape and reshape their data collection and refine the collected data through grounded theory methods. Further, Charmaz (2006) claimed that methods are merely tools to enhance seeing, but does not provide insight. Rather, it is how the researcher uses those tools and methods that matter. Through the use of grounded theory methods in this study, the researcher was able to take a more flexible approach to data collection, rather than being constrained by a rigid set of procedures. This allowed the emergent data to guide future data collection strategies instead of a particular theory guiding the data collection process. Data was primarily collected through observations and participant interviews; obtained data was recorded and transcribed.

Observations

When examining current literature for the most effective way to observe the learning settings and determine learner-centeredness, the researcher was unable to find a specific

observation protocol. The researcher examined leading literature in the field of learner-centered practice and focused on the research by the American Psychological Association [APA] (1993; 1997), McCombs and Whisler (1997), McCombs and Miller (2007), and Weimer (2013). The APA (1993; 1997) developed fourteen principles that characterize learner-centered practice and focus on factors in four domains: metacognitive and cognitive, motivational and affective, developmental and social, and individual differences. These principles were identified with the intention of creating a teaching practice based on human development, motivation, and lifelong learning research (APA, 1993, 1997). These psychological principles are presented in full in Chapter 2 (Table 2.1).

McCombs and Whisler (1997) described their fundamental conclusions about learners and learning (see Table 2.2 of Chapter 2), which they claimed need to be reflected in the practices of the educator to maximize learning for all students. McCombs and Whisler (1997) developed strategies for increasing student motivation and achievement through a learner-centered teaching model. McCombs and Miller (2007) used the APA's psychological principles and their own research to provide instructional strategies and assessment tools for educators. These researchers created a way to apply research to the actual classroom and put learner-centered instruction into practice. Weimer (2013) created a resource for learner-centered teaching to be applied to an adult context, in the college and university classroom. Weimer (2013) explained five key changes to create a learner-centered classroom, which involve balance of power, function of content, role of the teacher, responsibility for learning, and evaluation.

Despite the quantity of literature regarding learner-centered practice, there was the absence of a proven method for determining if a classroom was learner-centered. Thus, the

researcher determined consistencies in the aforementioned literature and developed the Learner-Centered Rubric for Observation Protocol [LCROP]. The LCROP consisted of 31 learner-centered characteristics within five categories: role of the facilitator, role of the learner, instructional strategies, content and curriculum, and assessment (see Appendix C for the LCROP). The role of the facilitator category involved items regarding expectations, feedback, facilitation, guidance and support, and structure. The role of the learner category included items regarding control over learning and pace, engagement and excitement, active participation, and respect. The instructional strategies category included items concerned with timing, relevance, responsibility for learning, stimulation of thinking, and peer teaching and learning. The content and curriculum category involved items having to do with skill development, critical thinking, self-directed learning, peer collaboration, and discussion. Finally, the category of assessment included items regarding self-assessment and reflection, varied methods, peer review, constructive feedback, and the importance of learning over grades. The learning session was considered "learner-centered" if it scored above 75%, which meant that at least 24 of the 31 items were selected.

Several observations – one observation per learning session – were made. The researcher used the LCROP during the observations to determine if the session was learner-centered. These observations provided an opportunity to examine learner-centered techniques, such as critical thinking, peer discussion, active learning activities, and reflection. The observations were also important to inform the interview protocol by having a foundational understanding of the course or program for the purposes of this study. The scores of each research setting ranged from 81% to 94%, which qualified them all to be part of this study. One research setting did not reach the appropriate score to qualify it for use in

this study, thus it was not included, nor were any learners from that setting asked to participate in interviews. Appendix D illustrates how the LCROP was used during the observations of each of the research settings. The markings in red indicate how each of the items in the protocol were applicable to the course or program. The red notes were based on personal statements of enrolled learners, program/course observations, and program/course documents, such as a syllabus or other informative papers.

After confirming that the course was learner-centered, the researcher contacted the facilitators and asked them to forward a recruitment email to the learners within the program or course. The email asked for volunteers to provide their contact information if they were interested in participation of this study. This recruitment email can be viewed in Appendix B. The observations informed the study and supported the data from participant interviews.

Participant Interviews

The primary data collection method for this study was multiple post-session participant interviews, which occurred after the participants spent time within a learner-centered context. Interviews enabled the researcher to access in-depth descriptions of the experiences and perceptions of the participants. By interviewing participants multiple times after experiencing learner-centered teaching practice, the researcher was able to better understand the participants' perceptions of their moral development and moral reasoning experiences over that period of time. Each participant was interviewed two to three times, loosely based on Seidman's (2013) interview protocol. The initial interview was used to establish rapport with the participants and put their experiences in context of the topic at hand. The second interview delved deeper into the individual's personal context, learner-centered experiences, and perceptions of morality. The third and final interview was used to follow up,

clarify any prior discussions, and encourage participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. "Each interview serves a purpose both by itself [and] within the series… Each interview provides a foundation of detail that helps illumine the next" (Seidman, 2013, p. 23). Some participants were only interviewed twice because the researcher had previously established rapport with them during the course observations. In these instances, the first and second interview protocols were loosely combined.

These interviews were semi-structured, open-ended, and conversational. The use of a semi-structured format required the researcher to execute slight probing and prompting, establish rapport with the interviewee, and understand the aims of the project (Silverman, 2014). The use of semi-structured interviews helped to avoid the potential of the researcher limiting discussion and, rather, allowed the flexibility to expand upon specific questions proposed on the interview protocol (see Appendices G, H, and I for the Interview Protocols). This format also allowed for more in-depth insights from participants. In order to achieve rich data, Silverman (2014) suggested the key is active listening in which the interviewee is allowed the freedom to communicate and ascribe meanings while keeping in mind the broader aims of the study.

> The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to test hypotheses… At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience… At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth. (Seidman, 2013, p. 9)

Appendix G, Appendix H, and Appendix I outline the first, second, and third participant interview questions, respectively. These interview questions were slightly modified based on the responses of the participants.

Participants were given the choice to interview over the phone, face-to-face, or through video conferencing technology. Phone interviews were chosen by nearly all of the participants. Some offered to do a face-to-face interview, but were most were unable to because of differences in geographical location. Two participants were able to meet face-to-face for one of their interviews, but chose to be contacted by phone for the rest of the interviews. Phone interviews allowed flexibility for both the researcher and the participants to find a mutually convenient time. A disadvantage of phone interviews compared with interviews via face-to-face or video conferencing was the inability to observe participants' non-verbal gestures and behaviors. However, this was not a significant issue, as the researcher was aware of the participants' verbal cues, such as changes in inflection, tone, and expression.

Participants were contacted by phone, based on a contact number that was provided to the researcher by the participants themselves. The interviews varied in duration, from fifteen to thirty minutes. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed soon thereafter. The researcher used an interview protocol to guide each of the interviews, but some interviewees required prompting from the researcher to ensure that particular topics were covered. Some interviews also warranted the researcher to ask additional, probing questions based on the data that the participants provided. Probes included asking some of the following questions: (a) "Can you give me a specific example of what you just talked about?" (b) "Can you elaborate on this?" (c) "What else did that make you think of?" At the end of each interview, participants were

asked, “Was there anything else not addressed that you would like to add?” This proved to be an important question for some of the interviewees, as they thought of other experiences during the interview and this was their chance to share those considerations. Interviews began in April and continued through August 2018.

First Interview. Participants were first reminded of the purpose of this research and the goals of the research study and interviews. Participants were also reminded of the information provided in the informed consent, such as confidentiality, pseudonyms, audio recording, and transcription. Some of the opening questions in the first interviews included:

(a) “How long have you been part of this program?”

(b) “Why did you decide to participate in this program?”

(c) “Can you tell me about this program that you were enrolled in?”

(d) “What kind of self-directed learning activities did you do?”

These initial questions allowed the researcher to develop a rapport with the participants and acquire data related to the participants’ experiences and their decision to participate in the learner-centered program. Questions in the first interview addressed experiences relating to learner-centered practice, such as critical thinking, self-directed activities, peer discussion, and active learning. The first interview was also used to initiate the participants’ thinking about moral development and what it means to them. The resulting discussion was used to support the data collection from the observations, as well as begin an initial construction of themes. The First Interview Protocol can be viewed in full in Appendix G.

Second Interview. In the second interviews, participants were asked to think about moral development in relation to their program or course. Questions in the second interview

focused on morality, moral questions, moral decision-making, and moral reasoning. Some of the questions included:

(a) "When you think about a moral question, what kind of question comes to mind?"

(b) "Can you tell me about a time when you had to make a moral decision?"

(c) "Can you describe any instances from this course when you thought about being moral?"

(d) "How has your moral reasoning changed since participating in this program?"

Information from the first interview was used to inform the protocol in the second interview. The second interview responses were utilized to build on the construction of initial themes and compare the data to the participants' previous responses, as well as to the responses of other participants. The Second Interview Protocol can be viewed in full in Appendix H.

Third Interview. The third interview was meant to follow up on the discussion of previous interviews, so the questions varied with each participant. The researcher used the Third Interview Protocol (see Appendix I) as a template to create an individualized protocol for the follow-up interviews with each of the participants. Specific questions from some of the individualized protocols included:

(a) "You spoke about confirmation and reinforcement, that this professional development program reinforced your understanding of morality… Can you speak a bit more to that?"

(b) "When we last spoke, you defined moral development, in reference to lifelong learners, as one who is 'raised in a certain way with morals that you have and then either emphasizes continuing along that path or completely giving up that path.' First off, is this still how you define moral reasoning? Based on this definition, do you

think your professional development program has impacted the way that you view moral development?"

(c) "When I asked you about a moral question, you said, 'How close are your actions getting to that ideological view that you have of yourself?' Did you ever have to consider this while in the program?"

(d) "When I asked you about a moral question, you referred to everyday decisions as part of moral development and your moral compass… Is your moral compass something you think about day to day? How do you think this program has influenced the way you view a moral compass?"

(e) "Given how you have thought of moral obligations within your profession, how do you understand morality in your life, if at all?"

These final interviews were used to compare data with previous interviews and the responses of other participants to enhance the development of the emergent theory.

Recording and Transcription Process

Interviews were audiotaped with the participants' consent and subsequently transcribed. Using an audio recorder allowed the researcher to devote full attention to the interview and interviewee instead of focusing on taking detailed notes (Charmaz, 2006). Audio recording also allowed for a full and accurate transcription of the interviews, a process that was beneficial to analysis, as the participants' verbatim statements were available. Finally, audio recording reduced the risk of researcher bias and forced data (Charmaz, 2006) due to reliance on memory.

Transcribing each interview took between four and six hours to complete. An audio program, SpeedScriber, was used to slow down the recording to allow the researcher to

translate the interviews into a Microsoft Word document. Most of the "ums" and repeated words were removed from the verbatim text, especially when it confused the intended meaning of the participants. For instance, one participant stated, "Um, it was, it was fun to be able to, um, have…" In this case, the quote was altered to: "It was fun to be able to have…" to clarify the participant's intended meaning. Otherwise, the transcriptions reflected the exact words of each participant. The typed document was examined compared to the audio recording in normal speed to ensure that they corresponded with one another. The completed transcriptions were then sent to the corresponding participant to confirm that their responses were accurately recorded. The participants were asked to examine the transcription and relay any concerns to the researcher. None of the participants had any significant changes or concerns.

All identifying information was removed and disassociated with the recordings and transcriptions in order to facilitate confidentiality. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym, which helped to connect multiple interviews from the same participant. The pseudonym was given to the participants in accordance with the first letter of their provided name and in consideration of their gender. Participants were also given the opportunity to provide a pseudonym for themselves, if desired. The recordings were transcribed within two to three days of the interview for initial coding and for the purpose of using the constant comparative method of data analysis, which is discussed in detail in the "Data Analysis" section of this chapter.

Having a transcription of each interview allowed for consistent immersion in data, enabling insight into themes and patterns that were not immediately apparent during the course of the interviews. Transcription also permitted the researcher to revisit earlier

interviews to inform second and third interviews with participants, as well as to see when new themes were identified. This process provided the researcher the opportunity to determine the framework and context of the data. Transcription also facilitated the use of the constant comparative method of data analysis.

Data Analysis Methods

Strauss and Corbin (1998) described data analysis as a process of organizing, breaking down, and reassembling data to develop different understandings of particular phenomena. This study applied the general procedure prescribed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) to the data analysis methods, but their procedure was not rigidly followed. In addition, Charmaz' (2006) description of procedures was valuable as a guide to the data analysis process. Coding involved three types: open, axial, and selective. Constant comparative analysis and memoing were utilized throughout the study and assisted in the coding process. Finally, explicit grounding processes were used to analyze and control the validity of the emergent theory (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010).

Coding Process

Unitizing is an essential part of the coding process, which involves identifying chunks or units of meaning in data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Unitizing defines these units, separates them, and identifies them for subsequent analysis. This process seeks meaning from the words and actions of the participants, framed by the researcher's focus of inquiry. Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, and Pederson (2013) explained that this is accomplished through the identification of appropriate blocks of text for coding, which will later serve as the foundation for defining categories of meaning. The researcher carefully read through interview transcripts and marked units of meaning to be coded. The researcher initially identified and

underlined these units of meaning with different colors to signify potential codes, which helped to visually recognize how categories were interrelated. Units of meaning could be a single word, a short phrase, or an entire paragraph. For instance, in one participant's first interview, the term, "depth-of-knowledge" was underlined in purple pen. In that same interview, "act as thinking partners" was underlined in blue pen. Phrases indicated by the purple pen were initially labeled under the general category of "critical thinking," whereas the blue pen indicated "awareness/openness/discourse."

Coding is the interpretation of these units of meaning into the terms of the study (Krippendorff, 2004). Coding involves grouping the data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from multiple databases, and finally assigning a label to that code (Creswell, 2013). In accordance with Strauss and Corbin's (1990, 1998) procedures for data analysis in grounded theory, three types of coding were involved in this study: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Creswell (2013) summarized the use of these three phases of coding, "Grounded theory provides a procedure for developing categories of information (open coding), interconnecting the categories (axial coding), building a 'story' that connects the categories (selective coding), and ending with a discursive set of theoretical propositions" (p. 195).

Open Coding. The first step in building theory is conceptualizing (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding begins the process of breaking down the data into concepts or representations, which was done through segment-by-segment coding. Segment-by-segment coding involved naming each section of text in order to prompt observations of nuances in the data. A segment was considered a section of text that comprised a participant's single thought or experience, which ranged from short phrases to entire paragraphs. Charmaz (2006)

explained that engaging in this type of coding might generate a range of information, resulting in a discovery of ideas on which to build. The researcher chose to utilize segment-by-segment coding because it seemed the most efficient method of coding the data, as opposed to word-by-word or line-by-line coding, which can lead to over-conceptualization (Glaser, 1992).

Initially, the researcher examined the interview transcripts and memos for significant concepts and categories. The researcher, then, attempted to review the data thoroughly until no new information could be found about each concept and category. These initial categories were labeled based on *in vivo* coding when possible, which were labels consisting of participants' actual words (Creswell, 2013). *In vivo* codes help to preserve participants' meanings in the coding itself and serve as symbolic markers of participants' perspectives (Charmaz, 2006). For example, "reinforcement" and "reflection" were labels assigned to data based on *in vivo* coding. The researcher was surprised at some of the terms that arose from the data that seemed to be common language among participants from similar learner-centered programs. For instance, "scaffold" and "schema" were terms that came directly from participants without prompting and were thus used as *in vivo* codes. Otherwise, codes were labeled with descriptions that reflected understanding and consistency of the data, such as "intentionality."

Review of interview data resulted in a list of several initial concepts. These concepts were grouped into sub-categories. At times, the same section of text was grouped under more than one sub-category. For instance, one participant explained, "If I want to be… a moral person… that's something I actually have to do, reflect on, think critically upon and then reengage if I want to develop into, say, a more compassionate person." This section of text

was initially noted, through segment-by-segment coding, as "desire to become more moral" and "reflection and critical thinking to become moral." These segments were then grouped under the sub-categories of both "desire for moral outcomes" and "reflection and consideration," as the participant mentioned multiple concepts within one statement. The goal of this phase in coding was to generate a list of sub-categories regarding the perceptions and experiences of participants. This process is demonstrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Example of Open and Axial Coding

Interview Text	**Initial Concepts (Open Coding)**	**Sub-Categories (Open Coding)**	**Main Categories (Axial Coding)**
"You're raised in a certain way with morals that you have and then what either emphasizes continuing along that path or completely giving up that path"	Emphasizes morals you have / foundation of morality	Foundation of moral understanding	Reinforcement
	Continuing on path of morality versus straying from path of morality	Open to new perspectives	Perspective Scaffolding
"It probably further enhanced what I already knew to be true"	Reinforcement of moral knowledge and enhancement of truth/morality	Reinforcement of morality	Reinforcement
"If I want to be… a moral person… that's something I actually have to do, reflect on, think critically upon and then reengage if I want to develop into, say, a more compassionate person"	Desire to become a more moral person requires action	Desire for moral outcomes	Intentionality
	Reflection and critical thinking to become moral	Reflection and consideration	Reflection

Axial Coding. Axial coding is so named because the researcher builds relationships around the 'axis' of a category (Strauss, 1987). The purpose of axial coding, as stated by Strauss and Corbin (1998), was to "begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding" (p. 124). The goal was to relate concepts and categories for more precise and complete explanations about the phenomena being studied. Strauss and Corbin

(1998) specified that axial coding should describe the properties, conditions, and contexts of categories to frame the theoretical outcome. Boeije (2010) described the purposes of axial coding as "to determine which elements in the research are the dominant ones and which are the less important ones" and "to reduce and reorganize the data set… the best representative codes are selected" (p. 109). Charmaz (2006) warned that although axial coding is helpful to further explore and clarify the data, it also "encourages them to *apply* an analytic frame to the data" (p. 62). For the purposes of this study and to avoid casting an analytic overlay on the data, axial coding was simply used to clarify the sub-categories and prepare the data for selective coding.

Sub-categories established during the open coding phase were classified under broader, main categories, as can be seen in Table 3.1. For instance, the "desire for moral outcomes" sub-category was grouped into a main category labeled "intentionality." The main category of "intentionality" was defined by several constructs, such as having the desire to learn, choosing to become enrolled in the program or course, and placing an emphasis on purposeful effort. From the same section of text, the sub-category of "reflection and consideration" was grouped under the main category of "reflection."

Selective Coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined selective coding as the process of "integrating and refining categories" (p. 142). Selective coding was used to look for connections between categories and integrate all of the fragments from earlier coding efforts (Boeije, 2010). The purpose of this step of data analysis was to develop an all-encompassing theoretical pattern to explain the relationship of categories, as well as to identify core themes that clarified the experiences and perceptions of participants. This reconstruction of data answered the research questions and realized the research aim.

The main categories were analyzed and reviewed for similarities and differences, which resulted in the emergence of several main constructs (or all-encompassing theoretical categories). Finally, a narrative describing the emergent theory was developed based on these constructs, explaining the moral development and moral reasoning processes of adult learners within learner-centered practice in the context of higher education. This resulted in five all-encompassing theoretical categories: *intentionality, reflective processes, community of learning, perspective scaffolding, and moral reinforcement.*

Constant Comparative Analysis

Strauss and Corbin (1998) identified comparative analysis as an essential feature of grounded theory methodology. Creswell (2013) referred to the constant comparative method as the identification of incidents, events, and activities and their constant comparison to an emerging category to develop and saturate the category. This method of analysis assisted in identifying similarities and differences in the collected data, as well as helped to group concepts under specific categories. For example, one participant discussed how her critical thinking had developed due to her time in the learning program. This data was compared with other statements in that same interview regarding incidents of critical thinking and higher order thinking. This data was also compared with statements from future interviews of the same participant, as well as statements and incidents from interviews with other participants. Finally, this data was compared with the data collected from the observation protocol of this particular learning program. It was useful to make sequential comparisons. For instance, the interviews of the same participant were examined in the order in which they occurred to help understand how certain concepts built upon one another. This process involved both

inductive and deductive strategies, as the grounded theory approach simultaneously validates theory through this method of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The researcher constantly compared information from data collection to emerging categories that arose from each level of the coding process. All coding was done manually and on hard copies of the data. Coding for initial concepts occurred after each interview through the procedural use of colored pens. Utilizing colored pens was useful for organizing information and discovering initial patterns in the data. The researcher then compared data after each interview to identify similarities and differences within the interview responses. Participant responses were also compared to each other to better understand what dialogue needed further discussion in subsequent interviews. This also proved to be a valuable method for designing future interview protocols for data collection.

Further, comparison after each interview led to the creation of new codes and instigated a slight modification of interview questions. As the coding process moved forward, emergent categories became integrated and refined as they were compared (Charmaz, 2006). Comparing these categories helped to interpret their relationships and interactions more clearly (Charmaz, 2006). For instance, one of the first participant interviews inspired a discussion about moral reinforcement, which prompted the researcher to incorporate considerations of moral reinforcement and confirmation into future interview protocols with other participants. After extensive participant discussions, moral reinforcement became an all-encompassing theoretical category due to the constant comparison of data and the consistency of participant responses.

Memoing

According to Charmaz (2006), memoing (also known as journaling) is considered a crucial intermediate step between data collection and drafting the theory. Memoing in grounded theory was important because it prompted the researcher to examine data and codes early in the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998), as well as helped to increase the level of abstraction of ideas (Charmaz, 2006). Creswell (2013) denoted that memos could help in the initial process of exploring a database. The researcher was immersed in the details and attempted to get a sense of the data as a whole before breaking it into parts.

Memo writing began at the beginning of this study and continued until the completion of the findings. The researcher took field notes during the course observations and took notes on the observation protocol. The researcher explained why the course fit in the learner-centered category of the observation protocol, as opposed to simply marking it as applicable (see Appendix D for the LCROP Observation Mark-Ups of each observation). The researcher also recorded memos whenever a significant change was made to interview questions, the methodology, the literature review, participant criteria, and other areas of the study. These memos served as important reminders of pertinent changes and were submitted to the committee for review, especially when a change would potentially affect the outcome of the study. Other memos were kept as notes to the researcher and provided a means of documenting thoughts related to codes and categories, the comparison of such codes and categories, and the emergent theory. The memos were recorded in the form of both hand-written and typed notes, depending on when ideas emerged.

For instance, the researcher recorded memos quite early in the data collection process concerning the idea of moral reasoning. While moral reasoning was incorporated into the

study from the beginning, it was not a notable consideration. As a result of organized memoing, the researcher determined that moral reasoning should have a more significant role in the study at hand. Moral reasoning was then added more prominently to the language of the research questions, the literature review, and interview protocols.

Memoing also took place during and after each interview. The purpose was to develop ideas in narrative form as early as possible in the analytic process (Charmaz, 2006). This also helped to clarify thoughts, spark new ideas, and initiate subsequent coding. For example, during the first interview with the first participant, the idea of already having morals sparked the idea of reinforcement. Through memo writing, the researcher was able to clarify the concept of moral reinforcement and incorporate that discussion into future interviews. Unknown at the time, moral reinforcement became a major theoretical theme all because the idea was clarified and expounded upon during the memoing process.

Explicit Grounding Processes

'Grounding' is considered a general term, meaning, "justifying and presenting reasons for statements (and theories)" (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010, p. 201). Multi-grounded theory involves three types of explicit grounding processes: theoretical matching, explicit empirical validation, and evaluation of theoretical cohesion (Cronholm, 2004; Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2004; 2010). Goldkuhl and Cronholm (2010) considered grounding the emergent theory in data alone to be insufficient, resulting in the need for multiple grounding processes.

Theoretical Matching. Theoretical matching consisted of comparing existing theories with the emergent theory, with the hope that the existing theories were in some way related to the studied phenomena (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010). This is when deduction was utilized. Existing theories were used in a constructive way throughout the research process to

inform the development of the emergent theory (Lind & Goldkuhl, 2006). Theoretical matching can lead to three types of results: "adaptation of evolving theory, explicit theoretical grounding, or comments and/or criticism toward existing theories" (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010, p. 198). For the purposes of this study, existing theories and frameworks included: learner-centered practice, the andragogical model of adult learning, cognitivism, constructivism, and moral development theory. These frameworks were used for theoretical matching, in conjunction with empirical data to validate the emergent theory, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 ("Discussion in the Context of the Literature").

Explicit Empirical Validation. Explicit empirical validation meant that the emergent theory was "in accordance with empirical observations of the world" and represented a shift from theory generation towards testing of validity (Cronholm, 2004, p. 3). In other words, coded categories and their properties were examined to ensure their consistency with other categories, as well as their legitimacy in the grounding of the data. It was important to provide direct references to empirical findings to evaluate the application of practical knowledge (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2004). Explicit references to participant interviews and observation protocols were used to validate each of the emergent categories. These references can be viewed in detail in Chapter 4 ("Findings in Relation to the Emergent Theory").

Evaluation of Theoretical Cohesion. Evaluation of theoretical cohesion involved internal grounding and ensuring that the conceptual structure of the theory was consistent (Cronholm, 2004). This evaluation meant that "a focused part of the theory (one or several concepts and possible relations) is assessed in relation to the other parts of the evolving theory… the theory itself is used for its grounding" (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010, p. 198). Internal grounding also included how the different categories were related to each other in a

meaningful and logical way (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2004). Properties could have been added from theoretical matching, resulting in new insights and affecting the categorical structure (Cronholm, 2004). However, this would have meant that there was a need for a reexamination of the conceptual structure, which was not appropriate for this particular study. This method of analysis aligns with Charmaz' constant comparison method.

Validation Strategies

Creswell (2013) discussed the qualitative equivalents that parallel traditional quantitative approaches to validation. For the purposes of this qualitative study, the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used in preference to the traditional terms of internal validity, external validity and generalizability, reliability, and objectivity.

Credibility

Credibility, the qualitative equivalent of internal validity, addresses the issue of the researcher manipulating the respondents' views to fit the researcher's reconstruction and representation (Schwandt, 2015). The researcher demonstrated credibility through the clarification of researcher bias and member checking.

Clarifying Researcher Bias. The credibility of the researcher is especially important in qualitative research, as they are a major instrument of data collection and analysis. Thus, it was necessary to clarify researcher bias so that the reader understands the researcher's position and any biases or assumptions that may impact the inquiry (Creswell, 2013). Researcher bias was initially addressed in the "Researcher Positionality" and "Researcher Assumptions" sections of the Introduction.

Coming into this study, I had some preconceived notions that needed to be addressed to identify researcher bias and understand their implications on this research. I believe that learner-centered practice is an effective instructional method. However, this bias did not affect the outcome of this study, as I was not offering recommendations on best practice. I also believe that learner-centered practice contributes to moral development, as suggested by prior research; I was interested in understanding the specific processes of moral development and moral reasoning in relation to learner-centered practice.

Member Checking. Only the participants of this study can legitimately judge the credibility of results. It was important to ensure that the data collected for this study was truly representative of the perspectives of participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered member checking the single most important technique that can be made to strengthen a study's credibility.

The researcher sent a copy of the transcribed interviews to each corresponding participant to ensure that the data demonstrated their intended meaning. Participants were asked to read through the transcription of their interview to make sure that their perspective was accurately documented. Participants were only asked to respond if they had changes to make in the transcriptions. None of the participants made changes to their account, verifying the credibility of the raw data. This was also discussed previously within the "Data Collection Methods" section of this chapter.

Transferability

Transferability, parallel to external validity, addresses the issue of generalization. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that transferability is about showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts. It was the responsibility of the researcher to provide sufficient

information to readers "such that readers could establish the degree of similarity between the case studied and the case to which findings might be transferred" (Schwandt, 2015, p. 309). Since this study was specific to a small number of individuals, the findings and conclusions were not necessarily transferable to all adult learners. On the other hand, this study can be transferable to adult learners in higher education institutions with similar demographics, backgrounds, and motivations to the sample populations who experience learner-centered practice in similar contexts and research settings.

Transferability was established through rich, thick description of all elements of the study. Creswell (2013) explained that rich, thick description allows readers to make decisions regarding the transferability of study elements to other populations or settings of interest. In this study, the researcher provided detailed information regarding participant recruitment, criteria for participation, sampling, and research settings. Detail was also given in regards to the data collection through the observation protocols, interview protocols, and interview processes, providing sufficient information to readers for transferability purposes.

Dependability

Dependability, the qualitative equivalent to reliability, ensures that the findings are consistent and able to be repeated. Schwandt (2015) explained that dependability requires the researcher to document the process of the study in detail to ensure similar results if the same study were to be conducted again. In-depth methodological description was implemented, allowing the study to be repeated if necessary. Another provision for strengthening dependability was the use of auditing. An external auditor was asked to assess the research process and findings for accuracy. This auditor had no connection to the study in any way and was given no outside information about this study. The auditor was a scholar (PhD) in

the field of education with experience in scholarly and academic writing. The auditor examined the interpretations, findings, and conclusions to make sure that these areas were supported by the data.

Confirmability

Each researcher tends to bring a unique perspective to a study. Confirmability, parallel to objectivity, refers to the degree of neutrality of the researcher. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability is the extent to which the findings are shaped by the participants and not researcher bias or personal interest. In a grounded theory study, there is constant interaction between the researcher and the research process, resulting in the data shaping the researcher as much as the researcher shapes the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In order to maintain confirmability, the researcher maintained an openness and willingness to 'give voice' to the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data was constantly compared with other data, multiple data collection and analysis techniques were utilized, and the researcher was overseen by a supervisor for objectivity purposes. Moreover, direct quotations were used as evidence to support all claims made in relation to this study.

Limitations of the Study

This study involved certain limitations, which are inherent in qualitative research methodology and should be acknowledged. This study was limited by the following factors:

1. This study is transferable to higher education institutions of similar demographics and other characteristics similar to the sample population and research settings.
2. This study was limited by the self-reporting nature of the interviews. Truthfulness and accuracy were dependent on the nature of the responses.

3. This study was limited by the characteristics of the sample population. Those who volunteered to participate were likely to have differing characteristics as opposed to non-volunteers.
4. This study was limited by the utilization of purposeful sampling. Different voices and perspectives might have offered alternative views than those shared by the participants of the sample. Findings were less transferable than if this study had used a random sample.
5. This study was limited by the data collection method of phone interviews. Interviews over the phone, rather than face-to-face, were the only appropriate method for data collection as the participants and research were dispersed in different geographical locations.
6. This study was limited by the nature of the adult learning settings, as they varied in size, time, activities, learning goals, and other such characteristics. A different variation of learning settings may have produced different results.
7. This study was limited by the demographics of the participants. With only one male as opposed to twelve female participants, the findings are not necessarily transferable to learning settings with different gender ratios. Having an equal number of male and female participants may have led to different discussions and findings.
8. This study was limited by the quantity of participants, as the findings may have been different with a larger number of participants. Increasing the sample size could have broadened the overall assessment and provided further insight to the essential themes. A larger sample would have allowed for greater transferability of findings.

9. This study was limited by the time frame, as moral development was examined within a short period of time. The research criteria designated that courses needed to be at least six weeks in length to ensure an appropriate amount of time for research participants to experience learner-centered practice.
10. This study was limited by the exploratory nature of this study in an attempt to develop a theoretically based description of moral development and moral reasoning in the context of learner-centered practice. The grounded theory methodology required a focused approach with purposeful sampling of participants

As with all research, there were limitations of this study. Nevertheless, these limitations did not take away from this study's findings and implications for practice and future research. A more detailed discussion of how this study's limitations were addressed and minimized can be found in the "Revisiting Study Limitations" section of Chapter 5. The subsequent chapter discusses the findings of this study in detail.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore learner-centered practice within higher education institutions and add to our understanding of the moral development and moral reasoning processes of adult learners. This grounded theory study intended to provide insight into the moral reflections, experiences, and perceptions of adult learners in the context of learner-centered practice. The reflections and perceptions of the adult learners were varied and unique; yet, many of their experiences were also quite consistent with one another. Much of the dialogue was interrelated, which allowed for the recognition of themes through their shared experiences. In analyzing the data, five overarching themes emerged: *intentionality, reflective processes, community of learning, perspective scaffolding,* and *moral reinforcement.*

This chapter begins by describing the context of the study in order to illustrate the findings in terms of the research settings, the participants, and the data they generated. Then, the findings are reviewed in terms of the emergent theoretical model. This section focuses on the emergent themes of intentionality, reflective processes, community of learning, perspective scaffolding, and moral reinforcement.

Context of the Study

Summary of the Research Settings

Four different research settings were used in this study: two professional developments for working individuals (one occurring in two separate regions), one workforce training program, and one graduate level communications course. These programs/courses ranged from three months to one year in length. Some of the individuals participated in multiple years of the same program. Each of the research settings were based on learner-centered practice, applied as (or equated to) graduate credit at a four-year accredited

university, had face-to-face interaction, and included participants that were at least 21 years of age.

The researcher observed each of the research settings based on the Learner-Centered Rubric for Observation Protocol [LCROP]. All of the observations of these research settings took place within a four-month period (from the beginning of February to the end of May 2018). The research settings had to score 75% or higher on the LCROP to be included in the study – they scored between 81% (25 of 31 items) and 94% (29 of 31 items). The Northwest Collaborative Network program scored 94% (both regions scored the same), the communications graduate course scored 90%, the Leadership in Education program scored 87%, and the Nursing Assistant program scored 81%.

Summary of the Participants

Thirteen participants were interviewed two to three times each. Some of the participants were part of the same research setting: seven participants from the Northwest Collaborative Network, three participants from the Nursing Assistant program, two participants from the Leadership in Education program, and one participant from the communications graduate course. The participants from the professional developments were in their programs longer than those in the other learning programs, between one and three years. Time spent in the programs may have influenced the findings, due to how the participants responded. A participant who has been in a learner-centered program for three years is likely to have more experiences and insights than a participant who has only been in learner-centered practice for three months, since they would have had more time for reflection, collaboration, and learning.

Of the thirteen participants, twelve were female and one was male. The majority of the participants were female, but Conger and Dickson (2017) asserted that there are more women than men enrolled in higher education institutions. During the observations, the researcher noted that women were much more prevalent than men within all of the learning settings. This uneven gender distribution could also be due to the context of the research sites, namely that the workshops and professional developments were intended for professionals in fields – nursing and elementary-level teaching – traditionally dominated by women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; United States Census Bureau, 2013).

Of the participants who disclosed their age, they ranged between the ages of 21 and 60 years, although they were not specifically asked how old they were (besides inquiring through the informed consent that they were at least 21 years of age to participate in the study). Age may have also been a factor that influenced the responses of the participants. Participants who are older are more likely to have more experiences and more to contribute to the discussions about moral development and moral reasoning. Additionally, older participants are more likely to have experienced learner-centered practice earlier in their lives, which also could have shaped their interview responses and reflections. The following are brief descriptions of each of the research participants, based on their interview responses. These descriptions are focused mainly on why they chose to participate in their respective learning settings and their role as a learner (Table 4.1 illustrates a summary of the study participants).

Lisa has been part of the Northwest Collaborative Network program as an active participant for three years, although she has attended the program for longer than that. She is an instructional leader and district administrator, so she is in charge of facilitating professional development in the district. Lisa chose to participate in the program to better

understand the state's core standards and to be able to instruct other teachers in the district about these standards.

Table 4.1
Data Summary Table – Study Participants

Order*	Pseudonym**	Gender	Learner-Centered Practice	Time Spent in Program/Course
1	Lisa	Female	Northwest Collaborative Network – Region 2	3 years
2	Connie	Female	Northwest Collaborative Network – Region 1	2 years
3	Karen	Female	Northwest Collaborative Network – Region 1	3 years
4	Renae	Female	Northwest Collaborative Network – Region 2	2 years
5	Natalie	Female	Northwest Collaborative Network – Region 2	2 years
6	Christy	Female	Nursing Assistant Program	3 months
7	Shelby	Female	Nursing Assistant Program	3 months
8	Cole	Male	Communication and Wellbeing Course	5 months
9	Annie	Female	Nursing Assistant Program	3 months
10	Maya	Female	Northwest Collaborative Network – Region 2	1 year
11	Jill	Female	Leadership in Education Program	1 year
12	Tracy	Female	Northwest Collaborative Network – Region 1	2 years
13	Sara	Female	Leadership in Education Program	1 year

***Order:** Participants are listed in the order in which the interviews were conducted, first being the earliest interviews and last being the latest interviews conducted.
****Pseudonyms:** Pseudonyms were each randomly assigned (with consideration of genders and the first letter of participants' provided names) to maintain confidentiality.

Connie entered into the Northwest Collaborative Network program two years ago. This year, she was considered a "returning teacher," so she had to present a workshop for other participants during one of the program's conferences. She chose to participate in the program because another teacher, who had participated in the program previously, encouraged

her to do so. Connie felt that since she had been a teacher in education for quite some time, she could use a boost to get motivated again.

Karen participated in the Northwest Collaborative Network program for three years. She was a regular teacher her first year, then a "returning teacher" the next two years. When she first joined the program, she had moved here from the Midwest, where she was rather involved with their curriculum and common core state standards. Karen decided to join the program initially to learn about how the state runs their educational program. She also wanted to be with like-minded professionals who wanted to increase their teaching abilities in the classrooms.

Renae just completed her second year in the Northwest Collaborative Network program, but she wants to continue it next year as well. This year, she was a "teacher leader," which meant she mentored and took on more leadership roles. She chose to participate because she wanted to be part of a professional development that was relevant to her as an art teacher, as it was marketed towards what she would want to get out of it. Renae was also at a point in her career where she was ready to take on a bit more responsibility.

Natalie participated in the Northwest Collaborative Network program for two years as a teacher, then returned to the program as part of the alumni group. She knew teachers who had gone through the program previously, who said that it was a good program and that they learned several quality teaching strategies. Natalie said she also wanted to be immersed in the state's common core standards, so that they were a more natural part of her everyday teaching.

Christy has been caregiving for family members for the last twenty years and did not realize that she could actually get paid for taking care of others. So, she decided to join the Nursing Assistant program to be able to get a well-paying job at a hospital or nursing home.

Christy has always wanted to work and had over 60 different jobs, but the only thing she has ever been able to continually do is take care of people, even though it is very challenging. She was been in the Nursing Assistant program for three months.

Shelby recently graduated from a regional university with her Bachelor's degree in communications. She decided to continue her education and take a few different classes at a local college, one of which is the Nursing Assistant program. Shelby wants to be in the medical field and is considering becoming a Registered Nurse, so she wanted to be part of this program to see what it is like and demonstrate that she has some foundational knowledge.

Cole is working towards a PhD in Human Communication at a regional university. The Communication for Wellbeing and Social Impact graduate course counted towards his degree completion, but it was not a mandatory course. Cole primarily decided to take this course because it was of interest to him, but it also helped him fulfill degree requirements. He has been part of the PhD program for over two years, but this course occurred over a five-month semester.

Annie decided, later in life, that she would go back to school after already getting multiple Master's degrees in music and German language. She was offered a teaching and performing job for music when she was in pre-med many years ago. Now, she is planning on going back into the medical field. She decided to enter into the Nursing Assistant program because she wanted to understand the patient care experience and discover if this was actually a road she wanted to go down.

Maya entered into the Northwest Collaborative Network program this past year, so she just completed her first year. She is always looking for ways to hone her craft and improve what she does as an elementary school teacher. She had taken several courses

previously from the facilitators of this program and she knew they were excellent instructors and wanted to try out this program as well.

Jill is an elementary school teacher and wanted to participate in the Leadership in Education program to do better for her students. She thought the program would be a great learning opportunity for getting her students interested in a love of reading, as well as to build her own perseverance as a teacher. Finding new ways for her students to learn and understand would also enable Jill to share that knowledge with her colleagues.

Tracy recently finished her second year in the Northwest Collaborative Network program. She needed to know more about teaching the common core standards, as well as incorporating English language arts into her instruction. The program was greatly impactful on her due to the enthusiasm of the coaches, which, in turn, made Tracy enthusiastic about the content of the program.

Sara is a first grade teacher in an elementary school. She decided to participate in the Leadership in Education program because she believed in the literacy curriculum that the program promoted. She though being in the program would help hone in different skills that she would be able to translate back to her classroom. Sara hoped that she would be able to deepen her understanding and get better as a teacher, so that it would translate to the kids in her class.

Findings in Relation to the Emergent Theory

In this study, the interpretive theory emphasizes understanding as opposed to explanation, which gives priority to showing patterns and connections rather than seeking causality (Charmaz, 2006). Using Charmaz' (2000, 2006) constructivist approach, the researcher focused on the shared experiences and relationships with participants to discover

the emergent theory. In analyzing the data, five overarching themes emerged: *intentionality, reflective processes, community of learning, perspective scaffolding, and moral reinforcement.* These theoretical concepts "serve[d] as interpretive frames and offer[ed] an abstract understanding of relationships" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 139-140). These themes contributed to the emergence of a grounded theory to describe the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice in the context of adult learners in higher education institutions. The emergence of these themes resulted in the interpretive theory – *the theoretical model for moral reinforcement in learner-centered practice* –, which provided a lens for understanding this multifaceted relationship. Moral reinforcement in this context is defined as the validation and strengthening of an existing thought or practice.

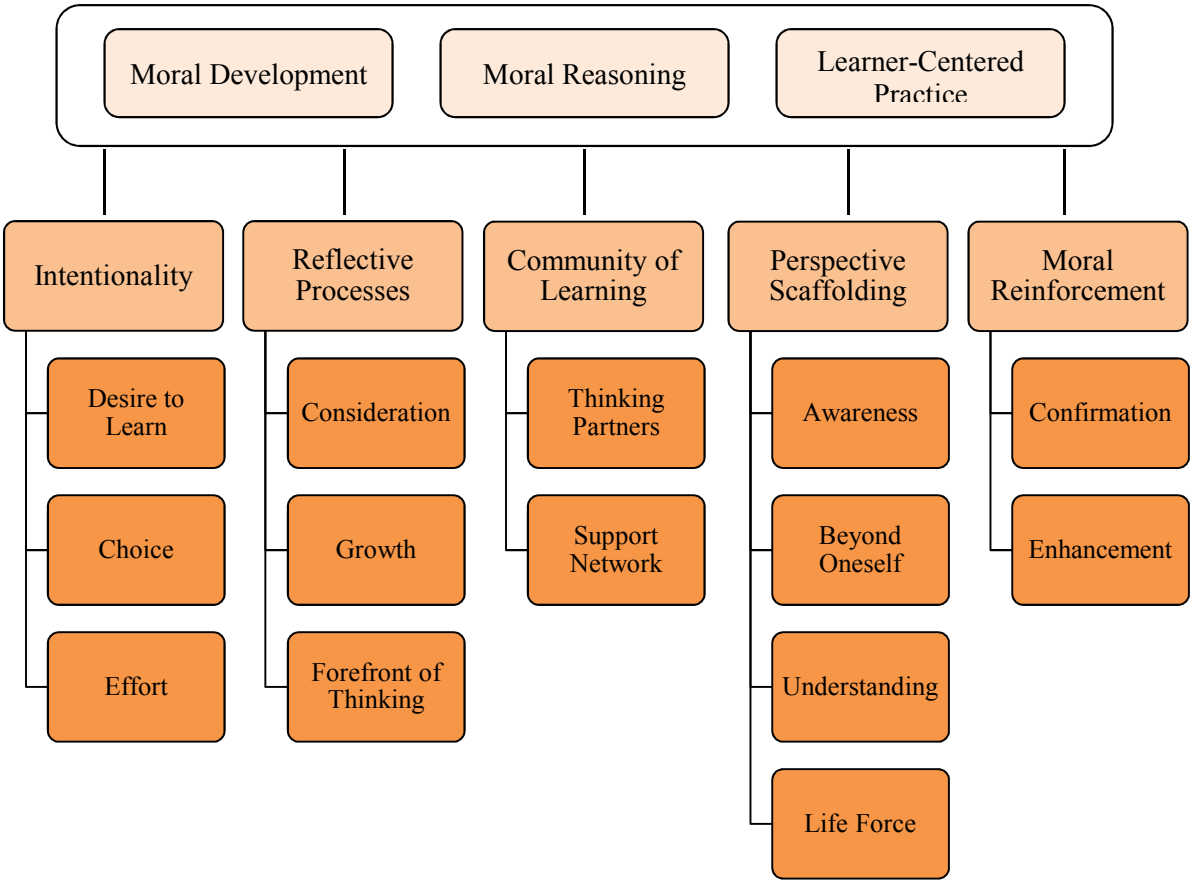

Figure 4.1. Theoretical Model for Moral Reinforcement in Learner-Centered Practice

This theoretical model is illustrated in Figure 4.1 and is clarified in this chapter through explicit empirical validation, which involved in-depth descriptions of the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

The following theoretical categories were important for understanding the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice in the context of adult learners in higher education institutions. In addition to defining the themes and codes, evidence was provided through the use of direct quotations. This evidence was essential to understanding the experiences and perspectives of adult learners in a learner-centered context. It was also important to allow the voices of these participants to outweigh the researcher's interpretation in order to capture the essence of their perceptions and experiences.

Organizing the generated theory in a sequence can be difficult because the categories are analytically interrelated, all deriving from the core experience, process, or context (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The order of themes was not organized by importance, but rather by the natural order in which they occurred in a learner-centered context. However, the themes may occur out of order and still result in moral reinforcement, as the themes have a correlational relationship rather than a causal one (see Figure 4.1 for an illustration). *Intentionality* initiated adult learners' experiences due to their desire to learn and the fact that they chose to participate in learner-centered practice. Intentionality also involved effort and determination on the part of the learner. *Reflective processes* encompassed consideration and growth through the progression of learner-centered practice. Reflection also allowed moral considerations to be at the forefront of one's thinking. *Community of learning* was integral for developing thinking partners and having a support network. *Perspective scaffolding* encompassed several concepts, such as being more aware of new perspectives, thinking

beyond oneself, gaining new understanding, and integrating morality as a life force. Finally, *moral reinforcement* emerged based on participants' experiences of confirmation of their existing morals, as well as worked to solidify and strengthen those morals.

One theme did not necessarily cause another, nor did the absence of one theme dissolve the entire theoretical model, as the themes have a correlational relationship rather than a causal one. Some of the participants did not fall within all five of the themes, yet they still referred to morality as an outcome of their experiences in learner-centered practice. For instance, one participant did not provide any commentary within the theme of community of learning, yet she referred to moral discussions and moral reinforcement during her time in the learner-centered program. The absence of one theme does not necessarily take away from the positive contributions of the other themes, as can be seen through the participant interviews. Each of these themes is interconnected with one another and it was found that several of the emergent codes overlap. These themes were organized by the natural order in which they occur in a learner-centered context. Additionally, the researcher recognized that arranging the themes in this order made the most organizational sense for the purposes of this study.

Theme One: Intentionality

Intentionality prompted adult learners' experiences, which is why it was the first emergent theme. The participants initially had a deep desire to learn and they chose to participate in learner-centered practice, rather than being forced into the learning setting. Participants also referred to choices in the context of right and wrong. Participants, then, put forth effort and determination once they were in a learner-centered context.

Desire to Learn. *Desire to learn* is considered an individual's intrinsic drive to be in an adult learning environment. This was one of the first emergent codes, as several

participants discussed how everyone who was in the program was there because they wanted to be. Laura explained, in reference to the Northwest Collaborative Network [NCN] program,

> Everybody's there because you want to be there. Nobody has been forced to take this and I think that's the other reason why making it a mandatory thing for all teachers wouldn't work because these are all people that want to be there, they want to do the learning.

Laura was clear that everyone who is part of the program wants to be part of that learning environment because they have that desire for knowledge.

Many of the participants from the NCN program explained that they decided to participate in the program because they wanted to learn more about specific practices and strategies to incorporate into their teaching. Laura said,

> I felt as an instructional leader and district administrator that I needed to be able to not only talk the talk but also walk the talk. And so that was really what prompted me to sign up was if I'm gonna be able to help others with this way of teaching I need to better understand myself.

Laura wanted to better understand how to instruct others by entering into this learning program. Karen also aspired to learn more about instructional strategies and better foundation of knowledge and said, "Well this is a way to kind of learn a little bit about how [the state] runs their educational program. You know, be with like-minded professionals who want to increase their teaching abilities in the classroom." Maya claimed, "I'm always trying to hone my craft to improve what I do... I just wanted to get some new ideas. I wanted to keep current. I think stagnation is something I fear." Maya had previously taken classes from the

facilitators and thought they were excellent, so she "wanted to try out their new class." She wanted to continually learn and better herself in her profession.

Renae also explained that she has "always been looking for professional development that is relevant to what I do." She joined the program because she "had been told, or people that I had talked to about it said that it would be a program that is really marketed towards what I would want to get out of it." Renae wanted to be part of a learning environment that was relevant to her profession as an art teacher and chose this program specifically because she would be able to tailor the learning to her desires. Natalie, another participant of the NCN, "really wanted to be immersed in the standards more, so that they were more a part of my everyday teaching and more natural and I understood them better." That desire to learn spurred her to join the program and try to become a better teacher.

Similarly, Jill, of the Leadership in Education [LIE] program, expressed,

> I thought it was gonna be a great learning opportunity for getting kids interested in the love of reading and building that perseverance as a teacher and as the student for them to keep finding ways to help them learn and understand and then go back and share it with my colleagues.

Jill wanted to experience a great learning opportunity to build her own perseverance as a teacher, but also to find ways to create a desire for learning in her students. Sara also went through the LIE program because of her desire to learn more and deepen her own understanding:

> I thought that being a part of that would help hone in different skills that would then be able to translate back to my classroom and the things that I learned, I always take

> back to the kids and so that was my hope is to be able to deepen my understanding and get better with that so that then that would translate to the kids in my class.

Sara was motivated by her desire for learning and her desire to build her students' learning.

Cole was getting his PhD in Human Communications and explained, "I know in my class I took it primarily because it was of interest to me." He wanted to take the course because he wanted to learn instead of taking the course as a requirement. Annie also had the desire to enroll in the Certified Nursing Assistant [CNA] program to learn, not just to get a certification. She clarified,

> I maybe direct my own life different than somebody else in the class who took a looser attitude toward it… For instance, when it says we have chapters that are assigned to read and then we have to take a quiz over those chapters, you get two chances at the quiz and they're pretty easy answers, so I can imagine a lot of people wouldn't take the time to read the chapters, but I do because this is what I want to do with my life. I want to do it the best I can.

Her desire to learn overpowered taking the easy way in that class. Claire, another participant of the CNA program explained, "I wanted to get my credentials because I had been caretaking for the last 20 years… and it's turning into something else. Like I want to advocate for elderly people and focus on nutrition." Claire wanted to learn more about what she had been doing for several years previously. In the process of becoming certified, she found the desire to learn more about advocating for the elderly and nutrition.

Choice. *Choice* is an *in vivo* code and is defined, for the purposes of this study, as a voluntary decision. All of the participants in this study made the decision to join their program or course voluntarily. It was important for the participants to choose to immerse

themselves in their particular learning environment. Laura was rather outspoken about her ideas:

> Part of my brain says every teacher should have to go through [state] core and the other part of my brain, the logical part, says as soon as you do that, you're gonna bastardize the program, right? As soon as we start trying to shove everybody through it you can't truly have the quality that is the program that makes the program.

Laura went on to explain, "Everybody's there because you want to be there" and "nobody has been forced to take this." The quality of the program is such because people determine that they should be there on their own.

Annie also described her thought process in choosing to join the CNA program, "It's the first time that I've taken a practical course like this and decided to step out of my comfort zone and commit to serving others in what can be a very challenging field." In a service industry position, it seems significant for someone to choose to be there instead of someone else forcing their hand. Otherwise, they may not wish to truly help and serve others, which could be detrimental. When Claire overheard others during her clinicals at an assisted living facility complain about their jobs, she simply stated, "This is the job you chose." She acknowledged that she and others chose to be in these positions and claimed that they, then, had no right to complain about that choice. Claire chose her path and accepted all that came with it.

Choice went beyond choosing to participate in the particular learner-centered programs. Other participants discussed choices in terms of right and wrong. For instance, Karen shared,

> In life, we make good choices and we make bad choices and we're going to get consequences for the good and consequences for the bad. The bad consequences hurt a little bit more. But ultimately if we were to stop and think, I think you're going to make a better choice for like, what's going to happen.

Karen had an interesting insight into the consequences of the choices one makes. Renae also focused on choice in consideration of right and wrong. She stated,

> Yeah, I guess [moral reasoning] would go back to that, you know slow it down piece and make actually consider what is the right choice or right option and then having that follow through piece as well because you can think something but that's meaningless unless you actually do it.

Additionally, Shelby had an actual example of her having to make a choice regarding the right thing to do while in the CNA program. She explained,

> Yeah, during clinicals there was, there was a woman resident and she was an elderly woman and she couldn't hold her bladder or anything. And she was a mess… So it was kind of like, 'oh, I have to do this because it helps her and this is the right thing to do,' but at the same time it's like, 'this is definitely not what I want to do.' So I guess like being moral, like it was right to help her. So I did it, but I would have rather someone else handle that problem.

Despite not wanting to do something, Shelby made the choice to do the right thing and help a woman who could not help herself. Due to her experiences in the CNA program, she decided to do something she did not want to, rather than selecting an easier path. Later in that same interview, Shelby also spoke to the nature of work, saying, "I would say I guess [my moral reasoning] has progressed because you have like, like all the other students, you know, we've

chosen to push through and we've all seen things in resident homes." Working in a field of service takes a conscious choice to do messy jobs and do the work that others do not want to do. After seeing things in her field, she has chosen to push through, which she associated with moral reasoning. She made that moral choice.

Effort. *Effort* is defined as a determined attempt to make something happen. Effort is an *in vivo* code that originated with Connie, who wanted to join the NCN program to be more motivated and provide a spark in her teaching. She understood that, as a teacher, she could just do enough to get by, but she wasn't going to be satisfied with doing the bare minimum. She explained,

> This class actually made me really think to myself how I've become kind of a slacker in my teaching… After taking this class, it's not so much as putting me on that defensive anymore. It's like the right thing to do is to take these standards and still be used in a way that's going to get these kids excited about learning and make them enjoy what's happening in the classroom… But really we do owe a lot more to the kids and do a lot more to our school. I think that's kind of a moral issue there too. It's like, even though I don't want to, the right thing to do is put a little bit more effort into it and try to utilize what I've learned.

For Connie, the right thing to do was put more effort into her teaching.

Karen had similar ideas about putting effort into her teaching and said, "Probably just being more cognizant about making sure to question my own practices and then also – trying to think – to like enhance how I'm teaching." Karen wanted to enhance her teaching by making a determined effort to do better for her students. She also stated earlier in her interview, "If you really want to get into things, you get your name out there and you find out

about things that you may not have found about if you just go upon your normal teaching day." Karen was clear that if you want to do something, you need to make that conscious effort. A person can't simply sit back and wait for things to happen; rather, individuals need to put in the effort.

Cole was specific when he discussed how effort could make a great impact on morality and one's perceptions.

> I think [morality] has to be experiential, so I don't think it can sit at a theoretical level. So, you know, if you're thinking of the classroom context, you can talk about these ideas, but they're still merely ideas I think in a developmental perspective until you actually try to practice these things until you actually consider, 'well, what is a moral approach to relationships,' and then actually try it and see what happens… I think it's something that absolutely can't stay at a theoretical level.

Cole expressed that one has to make determined attempts to truly understand morality and how morality affects one's life. Cole went one to say,

> [The class] really challenged me coming out of it to think critically about, okay, if I want to be, let's say a moral person, a person that speaks with compassion and kindness, a person that makes others feel uplifted after I speak to them, I can't just keep reading about that, that's something I actually have to do.

This was such an interesting insight that focused on making that effort and actually doing something instead of merely talking about it. For Cole, morality must be a determined effort; otherwise, one cannot sincerely understand or change.

Annie, during her time in the CNA program, had a negative experience with a coworker. While working in a clinical setting, she observed some abuse from another nursing

assistant and agreed to file a report. After this experience, she disclosed that it was a "whole set of moral decisions," but decided, "I can choose to take the extra time and do what I need to do. I can't choose that for, for someone else." Annie overcame a situation and decided to make the effort to put in extra time with patients to treat them how she believed they should be treated.

Theme Two: Reflective Processes

Reflective processes emerged as the second overarching theme. Participants had the desire to learn, made the choice to be part of a learner-centered program/course, and put effort into their learning; next, they could be reflective on their learning process. Reflection occurred throughout the process of learner-centered practice and continued after the course/program concluded as well. Reflective processes encompassed consideration and, then, growth through the progression of learner-centered practice. Reflection eventually allowed moral considerations to be at the forefront of one's thinking.

Consideration. *Consideration* is an act of mindful deliberation in regards to the self and others. Consideration as an act denotes that individuals were doing something with intention and being thoughtful regarding themselves and others. Consideration is an *in vivo* code that materialized from discussions of reflection within the different programs/courses. Sara explained the reflective activities of the LIE program,

> Every time we met, I'm pretty sure we reflected journal-wise of something that was going well… A lot of my reflection was on behavior because [my students'] stamina through anything was so short-lived that my goal was to build, build their stamina, build that love of learning, and, and go at it from that perspective.

Sara used the reflection time to consider how to build the stamina and love of learning for her students. She utilized the reflection to be concerned about her students. Jill also mentioned the use of reflection in the LIE program,

> We always were looking at areas we wanted to kind of improve on and then reflect on things or if we learned new things to take back and try in our classroom and then how that might have worked. And, so we were always reflecting on that.

Jill used reflection to think about what could be improved and how to improve it within her own classroom.

Connie described the NCN program as requiring "a lot of reflection on what you've done when you're teaching or when you're putting together a program or activity." The goal of this reflection was to "document anytime that you have had an impact on other people." Tracy mentioned, in regards to the NCN program,

> I'm a reflective person anyway and when they allow that time at the beginning of each workshop and then again at the end of each workshop, it helps me to remember the important things that made the biggest impression with me through that workshop.

Tracy was able to remember the most influential aspects of the workshops and reflect on how those impacted her. Maya expressed,

> Reflection is just something that I automatically do now and it just helps me analyze and then improve everything I do because I always analyze why I could have done this. Well this went well, that maybe this could be tweaked, so it's an imperative part of our practice I think... Cognitively, it was really challenging and really made you analyze and reflect, so I think it reinforces the reflection part of our job.

Being part of the NCN program allowed Maya to better understand why she used certain teaching practices, as well as helped her to improve those practices.

Natalie similarly described the same program, saying,

> I would say that there were a lot of activities that we did that impacted, you know, made me reflect on who I am and what I stand for and why I do the things that I do. And then through that, I think I was able to kind of use some of those same things within my classroom for kids and I saw, you know, changes in them, you know, just the way that they treated each other and kind of looked at situations.

Natalie took the reflective processes that she learned from the program and used them in her classroom. She explained that doing reflective activities and practices not only impacted her understandings of self, but also affected the students in her classroom. Natalie also talked about how reflection during the program really impacted considerations of herself and her life. She said,

> There's a lot of things in the class that make you reflect on who you are also and like who you want to be, you know, just in life and as a person, a part of society, and a part of impacting kids. Um, so yeah, I would say, just to be like, you know, a kinder, more thoughtful, and a better listener in my life through just, yeah, that class.

The program allowed her the time to consider her role in life and how to be a better person.

Laura also used reflection to realize her positive experiences in the program, stating, "I recognize how strong the learning is and how beneficial the learning is." She challenged herself, then, to get more teachers and administrators involved in the program. Likewise, Karen used reflection to consider how she relates to others. She said,

> You really start to think about how am I saying things to my colleagues or how am I looking at things? What can I say in a reflective way? And then also to get my colleagues to reflect about it.

Reflection helped her to be more considerate of others, to think about how she says things, and to want to help her colleagues be more reflective as well. Karen also used reflection to consider how she relates to students:

> And I think really when it comes to educating and coaching… are you doing what's best for your students or are you doing what's best for you? And I'd say that's one thing that was pretty I think prevalent in the program is, you know, you look at what is best for the students, not what is best for you as a teacher.

Karen expressed that the NCN program was influential in having teachers consider their students over themselves.

Cole perceived multiple benefits of reflection. For one, he mentioned, "This class stimulated a lot of my own thinking of kind of that idea of how can we communicate in moral ways." He went on to explain that he considered, "How can we communicate in ways that actually not just impact your own emotional or subjective wellbeing, but can impact others?" Cole reflected on the idea of moral communication and how words can impact others. He found it interesting that, in the field of academia, "We talk about a lot of things without considering the moral component… I think a lot of times we do things and we don't really maybe understand that they're quote unquote immoral until maybe later reflecting on it." Cole understood that reflection could help to clarify moral considerations and how one relates to others. He also stated that, through reflection, he experienced "a little more confidence in approaching things from a moral or justice perspective."

Cole made another interesting point, later in his first interview, about the idea that considerations of moral obligations impact others. His graduate course allowed him to reflect on this idea in multiple ways. According to Cole,

> I think [the course] stimulated much more thinking just around the power of our own words and language to impact other people's wellbeing and our own. And so I would say there is a moral component in that, right. I think in communication, we often don't think about the words that we use and how they actually can impact and shape other people's lives… And so, I think we often don't think about the impact of our language and so I think that would extend that to I think we actually have a moral obligation to think critically about the power of our language and how it impacts other people.

That critical thinking and reflection forced him to consider how words impact others in powerful ways.

Within the CNA program, Christy, Shelby, and Annie also had moments of consideration. Christy had to stop and reflect on something she read in her course textbook:

> My textbook] said that there's something to the effect of: is it okay to take a resident's money out of her purse if you're going to pay it back later? That was literally in my textbook and I thought, why? Why does this have to be in a textbook? Why don't people know morally that's wrong? Legally, that's against the law... Morally, that's insane to even believe that's okay.

She took the time to reflect and, first, consider why this was even part of her learning, then to consider what is right versus wrong. Annie, on the other had, equated reflection and moral thinking and said, "Moral thinking is basis of every decision I make… And that means making hard choices and it means self-discipline. It means self-denial at times. It's not about

me." For Annie, reflection and moral thinking meant considering others over herself. Shelby also reflected on moral considerations:

> With people with dementia and stuff, like they don't, they're not going to remember you or they don't know what's going on half the time, but um, you just need to like not be shady or anything and you just don't know if like you can't skip steps or just work half assed because there aren't going to remember or they don't care about you, you know?

Shelby reflected on the needs of others and how that can translate into being a moral person, especially when it would be easy to mistreat someone in a particular situation.

Growth. *Growth* is considered a progression in one's thinking and learning in the context of reflection. After one considers the impact of reflection on their self and others, one can grow as a thinker, as a learner, and as a person. Growth is an *in vivo* code that came from the verbatim discussions of several participants. Renae chose to continue on in the NCN program because of the progress she made her first year: "The reason that I did it the second year was because of how much growth I had in the first year because through that program." She briefly explained how she grew and why she appreciated her time in the program,

> I'm motivated to do that thinking piece and that learning piece… This program has just helped me, given me that support that I needed to go forward with [thinking] or to push it to the next level or they didn't make me feel weird because I was thinking so deeply about something so silly.

The program supported her reflection and deep thinking in such a profound way.

Natalie similarly felt that the program allowed her to grow through reflection:

> I would say definitely the program pushes you out of your comfort zone, which allows you to grow, I think. I mean it's really uncomfortable in the beginning and maybe even frustrating at times. But when you reflect back, there's a lot of good that comes from being in that uncomfortability… Once I was pushed out of that comfort zone and I did it, reflecting back, I feel like I grew a lot in that.

Natalie understood through reflection that by participating in many of the activities in the learner-centered program, she was able to grow. Even Sara simply stated, "Reflection always helps. You can't grow if you don't reflect, right?" In a later interview, Sara expounded on her initial thought,

> The thing about reflection is if you can't be true to what you're trying to learn about, then you can't fully grow with it. So you know, like for example, like if I'm struggling with a kiddo, with their behavior, if I can't look at myself and be like, oh my gosh, I could have done something wrong there and grow from that, then it's not really true reflection.

Sara acknowledged that she makes mistakes and reflecting on those mistakes helps her grow as a teacher as well as a person. She expressed that a person can't truly grow from reflection unless one is honest about their intentions and purpose.

Karen thought about being a good person and a good coach to others. She said, "To be like a good person, you're going to always reflect, you're always going to make the person be reflecting instead of just giving the answers… [The program] did help with that aspect." Karen also thought of reflection as an opportunity to become more moral:

> I think if you're very reflective that, you know, going through the program can make you a little bit more moral because you're thinking of how you're ethically treating

> students and how you're teaching them and, and all of that. But I think that is, you know, I guess I've seen teachers go through their program and be transformed… But I think if you open yourself up to really being reflective and saying, am I doing what is best? Is this ethical to do this or is it not?

Karen mentioned that if a person takes the time to reflect, then they night become more moral because they are thinking and caring about others. She went on to say,

> From the backdoor kind of base you could say that [the program] totally, it does enhance that morality... But I also think you need to, you know, it would require the teacher to really think about that when it comes to coaching people. I think that it, the program does help you think about the way that you questioned people instead of saying, 'Well, here's what I would do.'

Karen thought the program enhanced one's morality because of the reflection and consideration that goes into coaching others. According to her, reflection can lead to moral growth when one considers how they talk to and lead others.

Shelby also had a moment of reflection regarding how she considered others:

> Prior to this class I thought, you know, like the stereotypical like, 'oh, you're going to send your old person, like your 80-year old resident to a nursing home because you don't want to take care of him…' But when I, when you work there, you see like these people literally are sitting in their own mess and… they literally cannot control it. And so you kind of just realize like, you know what, this is how we're all going to end up for the most part unless you die young. But um, yeah, it's just like this is kind of a necessary thing.

Participating in the program altered and progressed her thinking because of reflection and the consideration of others. Similarly, Cole equated reflection with becoming more moral. When asked if his communications course influenced his considerations of morality, he spoke of such growth:

> Yeah, it absolutely did. I think both topically and just specifically with that developmentally, it really challenged me coming out of it to think critically about, okay, if I want to be, let's say a moral person, a person that speaks with compassion and kindness, a person that makes others feel uplifted after I speak to them, I can't just keep reading about that, that's something I actually have to do, reflect on, think critically upon and then reengage if I want to develop into say, a more compassionate person.

Cole understood that if he wants to grow into a moral and compassionate person, he has to reflect and think critically about it, rather than thinking it is just going to happen.

Forefront of Thinking. *Forefront of thinking* is having certain ideas in the front of one's mind due to reflection and consideration. This *in vivo* code arose from the data during discussions of reflection. Participants discussed several different ideas as being in the forefront of their mind due to their continued reflection. Karen explained,

> If you look at the [program], they really center on the learner and reflecting a lot, which I think through reflection you become in a way more moral because if you don't reflect, you're just like, 'la la, do whatever you want, don't really care about anybody else.' Whereas, it might not always be written down, but it's definitely at the forefront of thinking all the time.

Karen realized that by reflecting constantly, not only does one start to consider others, but also certain thoughts and ideas are at the forefront of thinking. In reference to morality, reflection allowed an individual to potentially become more moral because certain considerations were then at the forefront.

When asked if the program impacted her thinking, Laura responded, "It probably has much closer to the forefront when I do my planning of what kinds of critical thinking questions can I ask adult learners." She went on to say, "That program really helps to kind of recognize like what is it that keeps learners engaged, and it's that constantly needing to think." There were constant moments of reflection that led to certain thinking being in the forefront of her mind. Laura discussed exactly what sticks out to her because of that reflection:

> I think if you keep that – are we doing best for kids – at the forefront, then that guides everything else in education. That should, to me, that guides every decision I make, whether it's the training that I'm gonna offer because I'm seeing that there's a need – kids are lacking X in their classroom or in their lives and where do we need to help our teachers better understand that… If we're doing what's best for kids, then that's gonna hit on so many aspects of education.

The idea of doing what is best for kids was at the forefront of her thinking (and likely continues to be) due to reflection and consideration while in the program.

Maya also discussed the influence of the NCN program,

> I think that it makes you really analyze things on the spot, like as you're teaching, you know, those teaching moments, you're able to grasp them more effectively and they don't pass you by as often as they used to.

Those moments stick out in her mind instead of passing her by due to the reflective strategies in the program. Jill also referred to reflection in the context of her profession as an elementary school teacher, "If you're not reflecting on and assessing where it is they're at, you don't know if we're being effective or if they're getting with a need. So you have to constantly be in that mode." Jill understood that she needed to constantly have certain thoughts in the forefront of her mind in order to be an effective teacher. This reflective practice was demonstrated through the LIE program and Jill applied that skill to her profession. Tracy mentioned how the NCN program allowed moral values and consideration to be in the front of people's minds:

> The moral values don't really seem to be in the forefront of people's minds to have conversation about it. So there it does at the [Northwest Collaborative Network], I frequently talk about it and it's frequently discussed… I think the [Northwest Collaborative Network] allows that to be talked about, and to be validated and to be reflected upon.

The NCN program allowed for discussion and reflection, which resulted in moral considerations being in the forefront of learners' minds. Tracy, in a later interview, explained the benefit of realizing your goals during reflection,

> To write down a particular goal and to keep that in mind as I go through my day or session, whatever it is I'm doing, and then to reflect back on it, just keeps it real instead of just something in my head.

Writing down her goals and reflections, Tracy kept those thoughts in the forefront of her mind and helped her make them realistic instead of mere thoughts. Having constantly considered her goals meant she was able to accomplish her intentions.

Annie mentioned that she was nervous to go into clinicals, as part of the CNA program, because there were so many things that she had to think about. During the course, she had to constantly reflect on the practices necessary for each patient. She stated,

> I think it's three main things that they stressed. Infection control was one, of privacy was another, and respect for the dignity of the patient, you know. So I mean, and I saw that transgressed a lot in clinicals, unfortunately, just because of time constraints and you know, maybe bad habits or whatever on the part of clinicians, but, for me, that was uppermost in my mind… For me, it's a moral thing. I looked at those things as it's not like, well I have to do that, so I passed my exam or you know, I have to do that if somebody is looking. For me, those things are in place for moral reasons and the patient comes first always.

For Annie, the patient was always in the forefront of her mind because she believed she was morally obligated to protect and care for her patients. Annie had an incident with a superior where she observed someone not taking proper care of a patient. This forced her to consider whether or not to file a report on that superior. She explained,

> I agreed to file a report. I tried to write it very carefully, you know, but this was a whole set of moral decisions, the whole thing for me… And it's a moral dilemma if you're serving under someone else and you see that they're not doing what they should… So these kinds of things are going to come up all the time. I have no doubt. And people, not just mentors, but these are going to be nurses and doctors over me that are doing things wrong. And sometimes because they just don't want to take the time or bother to do it right. So this is something I think about. This gives me pause.

This was something that Annie constantly thought about and reflected on. She had certain ideas and practices in the forefront of her thinking, so she was aware when something occurred that was out of place.

Theme Three: Community of Learning

Community of learning developed as the third emergent theme in this study. Participants were intentional about their learning and reflected on their learning processes, which occurred within a particular community of learning. Community of learning first involved collaboration with thinking partners, which then allowed for the development of a support network. Nearly every participant had experience with a community of learning and utilized such a community to contribute towards their growth as a learner and colleague.

Thinking Partners. *Thinking partners* is defined as the intellectual collaboration of peers and facilitators. Thinking partners is an *in vivo* code from the very first interview with the first participant. When asked if the NCN program impacted the way that she thought through issues, Laura responded:

> Absolutely, because you have, because I know that there are other teachers that are going through this with me, I have automatic, I have a professional learning network that just builds in there, so if I have ideas for units or lessons that I'm gonna put together, rather than just putting them together, I have this team of people that I can go to and say, 'Hey, this is what I'm thinking, do you think this would be beneficial to other teachers, do you think this would be beneficial to other administrators.' So, they act as a sounding board for one, but they also act as thinking partners a lot throughout the entire process… It's very community-oriented.

Karen had similar thoughts about the NCN program: "This is a way to learn… [and] be with like-minded professionals who want to increase their teaching abilities in the classroom." Being surrounded by a community of professionals allowed the participants to think through issues and improve their skills as teachers and facilitators.

Laura later went on to explain how such thinking partners create a sense of community and collaboration. She said,

> I think that the community that's created in this program is one in which you can have discourse without offending anyone. And I think that we do that constantly, I mean, as you set up peer mentors with one another… I think that the community that's created in the [Northwest Collaborative Network] is one in which we're all equals and we all have equal say.

The NCN program created a community of learning in which participants felt able to express themselves openly and honestly, and have respectful discourse with one another. Natalie also mentioned that she "had to do a lot of peer coaching and reflecting and problem solving with other people." She went on to say, "There's a lot of questioning, a lot of writing, and just reflecting and then a lot of sharing out and discussion amongst, you know, peers." Maya also contributed to this idea, stating, "They always emphasize it with our activities, our flexible grouping and all that… They definitely enhance that community." Most significantly, Maya said, "I think that a community is always important to create that moral reasoning, meeting as a group, you know, as a group of people." Maya felt that learning within a community allowed for moral reasoning to take place due to the group dynamic.

Tracy summed up the benefits of a community of learning well, explaining that the facilitators and peers alike taught and learned from each other:

> So it's a larger learning community than what I have when I'm at work… It's so good for me to be with other teachers because I think as teachers we sort of isolate ourselves for whatever reason in our classroom. But in these workshops I have a community of people from different districts and from different schools, from different age ranges, from different experiences. And we all come together for the purpose of learning how to do our teaching better.

This community was why Tracy returned to the program for a second year. In a later interview, she said,

> I think in the coaching network, that's one of the things that attracts me to it is learning from other teachers in a casual manner such as just having conversation around the lunch table or around the table where you are as a group of people sharing resources and their own experiences with a particular strategy or sharing a strategy that you'd not heard of before. So just that the coaching network put me in touch, and still does, put me in touch with other teachers from whom I can learn from just on a conversational level.

Renae also expressed the benefits of community learning, "It makes it easier to collaborate because I think collaboration is really important and that's one thing that the core program does too is stress that." Collaboration allowed Renae to "meet other teachers in other areas of the district, which I would never have gotten to meet."

Cole had some interesting insights into the idea of having thinking partners within a community of learning. He explained that his communications course allowed for a context to discuss more moral and ethical topics, which "exposed us to, I don't know, a variety of kind of broad thinkers that, yeah, that would talk about things in that sense." These broad thinking

partners enabled more open conversations amongst peers. Jill thought, "It was good to have other colleagues to bounce off ideas" to "help each other" and "then also looking at ways to come up with strategies and outcomes together, which it was positive." These thinking partners helped her realize that the things they were learning were important and that her "colleagues are faced with similar things we want to see the best for our kids." Jill also said, "I've always felt it's important to have community in the classroom and that it embraces the right and wrong of your choices, what it means to be a community." For her, this sense of community reinforced her considerations of morality. Relatedly, Sara expressed,

> It was fun to be able to have, you know, I mean we meet like as a school a lot, so it was really nice to actually meet with other teachers at other schools and gather ideas and really think through processes and um, tricky behaviors or anything like that… so the cross school thing for me was, was really powerful in that community building.

Sara also stated that the program enhanced her thinking regarding that sense of community and applying it to her classroom. Sara and Jill both used their colleagues as thinking partners within the LIE program to help sort through strategies, processes, and outcomes to better themselves as educators.

The CNA program involved a community of learning as well. Shelby expressed, "In class we use [peers] for like role playing and stuff and examples and it's kinda like, it's neat that we all get to learn together." She found the course to be challenging, but she would help her peers throughout the course and "help them realize what they did wrong" to assist them in the learning process. Annie was also "proactive in terms of community learning." She sought out a few peers to work with outside of class to practice skills and study for the final exam. Christy agreed with her peers: "I think that we all tried to work together to help each other out,

to help each other learn the skills that are necessary to pass the state exam." She and her classmates used each other as thinking partners in order to one another learn and pass their final exam.

Support Network. While *thinking partners* served as an intellectual collaboration, *support network* functioned as the emotional connection, specifically defined as a group of individuals who provides emotional and personal encouragement. Support network is an *in vivo* code, originating with Natalie, who shared her experiences within the NCN program:

> We've built some relationships with a lot of the people in there, which was great. It was nice to have, you know, it's uncomfortable at first sometimes, but other times, you know, you had people that you could reach out to that were, you know, believed in the same thing as you did and can support you. And it was always a very safe environment… That support network and being able to reach out to some of these people later on.

Natalie built relationships with her peers and was able to use them as a support network during and after the program. Sara also spoke of building relationships with her peers through the LIE program, "If you don't have that relationship with the peers, don't have relationships among one another, then you're gonna have a tough year basically." Sara went on to say that the thinking partners she developed "led to other relationships, you know, like I, there's a couple from [another school] that I now, like talk to frequently and brainstorming. So that would've never happened had it not been for the program." In her final interview, when asked what her biggest takeaway from the program was, Sara said,

> Relationships was my biggest takeaway. And I mean it was, not only relationships that were built among colleagues in there, but it just enhanced my thinking of students,

> student-to-student relationships and student-to teacher-relationships. And that you, you really don't have a lot in a classroom if you don't have that community and relationships built.

The program not only assisted in creating relationships and having the support of her peers, but also helped her to realize the importance of community and support within her classroom for her students.

Jill expressed her gratitude of the support network that she built within the LIE program. She appreciated hearing other people's challenges and "knowing you're not alone." She continued, "I would say just like having that emotional support of one another, knowing we're all trying to help our students find ways to do that was really good for me as a teacher." Tracy had an interesting insight regarding community on a bit of a deeper level,

> I don't take advice or, you know, I don't really take something from someone else that I don't trust. So I think trust is an emotion and without that trust, without that emotion of trust, I personally don't learn from other people… I don't know that they necessarily teach trust as much as show that they can be trusted.

Tracy had a difficult time at first with trusting one of the facilitators, but eventually came to have a deep, supportive relationship with that person as well. Trust was the foundation for her to receive and provide that support to others. She went on to describe her outcomes from the program,

> I am still taking away from the program, just the sense of, I guess the sense of energy that comes from a group of people coming together and learning. It's a very good sense of energy. Even if the project might be difficult, there's such a good positive sense that you can do this, you have everything that you need in order to do this and

> we are supporting you if you have questions. So it was just a very supportive learning environment that I definitely want to duplicate as I teach in my classroom.

Tracy had such a powerfully positive experience within the NCN program receiving support from both her peers and facilitators that she wanted to replicate those same feelings in her classroom.

Renae had a similar experience within the NCN program:

> And, and I guess that that is one thing I would say connects to the program as well as that you are always looking out for each other and you get to be around other teachers who are passionate about the job, which isn't like, in our day-to-day world isn't always like that, but the people that are in the program are like that… You get to be around those people who have that moral compass like you and it's like on a spiritual level really.

Renae realized that the relationships with her peers were based on more than their careers, but founded in their moral beliefs and parallel ideals. Likewise, Laura had a support network comprised of those who held the same beliefs as her:

> When you believe a certain thing and it, it's your belief, it's different when you are surrounded by others who also believe the same thing or are coming to the understanding or doing the learning that helps them to come to an understanding and when that understanding is the same as yours and it's not just you thinking a certain way, but you have a cohort that also thinks the same way… Well, I mean, I think it's very natural that we then tend to go in a direction in which we already believe. And so then you have these others that may not be in your district or in your state who are also

> talking along the same lines that you are, and so that, that just, that continues to develop as you go along with your learning.

Laura was greatly impacted by her peers in the sense that it reinforced and strengthened her understandings and beliefs. When discussing moral development, Laura was quick to name her peer network as the reason that her beliefs and morals were supported and enhanced. She continued, "If anything I think it just confirms, like these are my people… These are my people, these are people that think in a manner in which I already have strong feelings toward." She explained that her support network was the reason why she stayed in the program for three years as opposed to just one year or not even applying at all.

Karen also felt reinforced by her support network,

> I think for the program, just a meeting with other teachers, it reinforces the fact that you are doing a good job and then you'd come back and you're kind of refreshed after that day of learning or just even getting to talk to some other teachers from other districts.

Maya felt the same way about the facilitators of the program. When she was going through a challenging time and felt stuck within the NCN program, they helped through it, "I really was stressed and they just, you know, they, they were there to support me in my greatest time of stress." Christy also felt supported by her facilitator, "The instructor was amazing… I could come to her with anything. She helped me work it out." Shelby lent her support to others during the CNA program, "I was a supportive learner, as in like I really wanted other people, like when we would do partner stuff, I really wanted them to get it."

Annie was proactive in finding her support network and lending her support to others, "I picked a partner that I had a pretty firm impression that she shared my moral reasoning."

Annie wanted to surround herself with peers that shared similar ideals to help her be more comfortable during the learning process. Cole explained that his communications course allowed for "more engagement and open sharing in a little more of a personal level" and he "appreciated that this class was more open, was more supportive." He shared that the course provided space for him and his peers to share vulnerably and openly,

> There was both a critical lens but also a supportive lens on kind of more personal sharing and how that relates to a lot of things we're studying... I think a lot of that also just kind of facilitated with some interesting dialogues that were more personal.

This personal sharing provided a support network for the learners to have a safe space for that type of discussion.

Theme Four: Perspective Scaffolding

Perspective scaffolding was the fourth theme that developed from the data. Learners were intentional about their learning, reflected on the learning process, and participated in a community that facilitated such learning. The perspectives of the learners were then framed by several components, such as fostering awareness, thinking beyond oneself, constructing understanding, and developing a life force.

Awareness. For the purposes of this study, *awareness* is defined as being cognizant of other means of thinking and understanding. *Awareness* was an *in vivo* code, deriving from Laura's first interview. When asked how the NCN program influenced her critical thinking ability, Laura responded, "I think that the program, going through it as a learner but then also knowing that we'll transfer that learning as learners to also as facilitators. I think it just makes it much more aware." The program increased her awareness of different learning

strategies that she could convey to others. Tracy became more aware of thinking strategies during her time in the program. She explained,

> I think what it has done with my critical thinking is it opened up another avenue for thinking about how to teach what I teach. I get pretty narrow-minded and I'm pretty restrictive in my own thinking when it comes to teaching something. So in the Northwest Collaborative Network, not only are the teachers showing you something or the host is showing you something, but everybody else that you are with shows you something as well. So it's a larger learning community than what I have when I'm at work.

Tracy was enlightened with other avenues of thinking to avoid being narrow-minded in her teaching methods. Karen also felt that the professional development program increased her awareness of thinking and learning strategies. She disclosed,

> Probably just being more cognizant about making sure to question my own practices and then also… to like enhance how I'm teaching, so like to have the students respond to questioning and making sure that they are also thinking critically about their answers.

Karen reexamined her own teaching practices to make sure that she was doing what she needed to transfer her critical thinking skills to her students. She went on to explain that the program "shed light onto things that maybe I don't necessarily pay attention to." She provided an example of when one of her peers gave a presentation on the state's Code of Ethics, of which "morally-wise," she thought it was a great idea and it brought "some things to light" that she hadn't been aware of previously.

Connie became more aware of certain moral considerations from her time in the NCN program,

> I think it's definitely made me more aware of [moral thinking]. I think it definitely made me make sure that I'm using the scaffolding, that I'm using the steps to get to where I want to go properly. I think that's one thing that this class taught me more than anything else is that, you know, I know my goal and I know what my end result is going to be, that sometimes the steps for getting there are what get lost in the process and this class that I just took definitely focuses on those steps.

Connie utilized steps from the professional development program to scaffold her perspective and become more aware of moral thinking. Cole experienced similar awareness through his communications course regarding moral considerations. When asked how he thought the graduate course impacted his moral development, he responded,

> I think even just the awareness that there is some semblance of right and wrong… I think moral questions are really around awareness, awareness of power, awareness of privilege, awareness of the dynamics that we have.

Cole went on to say that the course "spurred me to think more about" different "moral and ethical" issues, such as overt negative language and conscious versus unconscious decision-making.

In the CNA program, Christy became more aware of how the elderly were cared for within certain facilities. For her, "The challenging part was seeing how our elderly people are cared for and how their family doesn't come and see them and it just really gets to me a lot… It just upsets me a lot." She continued, "It makes me look at my life and what's going to happen." More so, she "can visually see that people are lacking [morals] and it's really

upsetting." She saw that people were not caring for others and became aware that others lack morals, which was distressing for her. This awareness was due to her experiences in the CNA program. Annie also became aware of a lack of morals by others because of her time in the program. When a senior CNA did not treat a patient appropriately, Annie noticed, "When we do anything, you know, when we look at a part of the body or we administered care or whatever we're doing, the patient is always covered and that is just drilled into us." She continued, "This was moral reasoning for me. I'm not the mentor… but doing the best I can to protect this patient." Annie was aware of wrongdoing and wanted to do the right thing. The CNA program instilled the knowledge of always covering patients to protect their privacy, which assisted Annie in becoming aware of mistreatment.

Maya became aware of different situations regarding students during her time in the NCN program,

> They always bring like little scenarios, you know, and they discuss, you know, different components and it really makes you analyze and see things that I'm like, 'Oh, I hadn't thought about it that way. You know, I didn't realize that these kids come without X, Y and Z, and, what is the most important for them?'

The program provided scenarios to allow participants to consider and reflect upon. Maya became more aware that kids come into her classroom lacking certain needs and realized that she could focus on what is important for them. Sara also became aware of other perspectives while in the LIE professional development. She claimed, "Maybe I should look at this differently. Maybe I should think about it differently." The program raised awareness about other ways of thinking and understanding.

Beyond Oneself. After an individual has become aware of other means of thinking and understanding, they can think beyond themselves. *Beyond oneself* is defined as being open and considerate of perspectives and situations outside of the self. *Beyond oneself* was an emergent code that integrated several elements, all of which assisted in furthering a person's perspective. For some, this meant opening themselves up to new perspectives and thinking about their life and their profession in a novel way. Renae mentioned, "[The program] has helped me think about things a little bit differently and from different perspectives instead of just the one perspective." This allowed her to think beyond her current knowledge and think in new ways. Maya had similar considerations, "It gave me a different perspective by working with people from across the districts across the region, and see how they approach, you know learning and teaching and students." She was able to look at her profession through a different lens. Shelby also described her learning experience as involving multiple perspectives, "I mean, of course, like if you disagree, just do it respectfully, but just kind of like add onto it. Maybe give some other point of views." Having an open and respectful discourse allowed learners to become acquainted with other points of view.

The LIE program provided many opportunities to examine professional practice through another lens. Jill explained, "There's a lot of discussion, analyzing and looking at [content] and other perspectives and focusing on different thinking strategies." She then transferred her learning strategies to her students, "You just teach them that they can share their thinking and you scaffold what that looks like by sharing your thinking." Sharing one's thinking allows others to view something from a different perspective and think beyond oneself. Natalie mentioned that "other people might have a different point of view, but just because it's different, it's not always wrong." Tracy had parallel thoughts,

> We all come from a different perspective when we're looking at something or when we're learning something or when we're sharing something and to respect the differences that we have and as learners and to value those differences that people have… we had all these different ideas and thoughts and attitudes.

Tracy acknowledged that everyone in her program had differing views and learning styles, but sharing those ideas and perceptions was enlightening and valuable to her and her peers. Sara also recognized the value of considering outside perspectives,

> Honestly and with teaching, I mean it kind of gave me a little different perspective and more in depth a little bit… If somebody else is thinking something differently, I love for them to share it because then that allows me to see through their thinking process also.

When others shared their perspectives with Sara, she was able to expand her own thinking processes and utilize another's point of view.

Cole had much to contribute to the conversation. He explained that he had a variety of different people with a variety of worldviews within his graduate course: "Lots and lots of different perspectives and also like pretty deep roots in very different worldviews and methodologies and approaches that are very different." At times, this was frustrating and challenging because everyone saw "the world so differently," but Cole also felt this was beneficial because the learners could participate in a dialogue that allowed them to think beyond themselves. He continued,

> [The course] allowed people to peel back the veil a little bit of some of their worldviews and share a little more why they do it based on their own experiences… That's always helpful for me because I think most of the time if you're going to have a

> different moral approach, it's not often going to be because someone presented some new logic to you. It's probably through further development of empathy, broadening of your perspective based on hearing the personal experiences of others.

Cole realized that being presented with the personal experiences and worldviews of others can open one's mind to the possibility of a new moral approach. He delved further into what a moral approach can look like:

> I think just at a base level, I think there is a moral reality to the fact that most of us are pretty selfish and the amount of time we spend thinking about ourselves and I think there's something moral about shifting some of that emphasis and focus and energy towards others.

Cole recognized that thinking beyond the self in consideration of others is a moral act. This moral understanding can come about by acknowledging and being open to the perspectives of others.

Thinking beyond oneself truly permeated the professional practice of certain participants. Natalie had a positive experience with the facilitator of the professional development program,

> I would say that [the facilitator] and just her kind, sweet spirit, you know, impacted me and just being more patient and sitting back a little bit more and asking more questions and listening to people more, you know, probably just through some of her teaching [my perspective changed] for sure.

The facilitator of the NCN program had a positive impact on Natalie with her kind demeanor and helpful attitude. This experience in the program allowed Natalie to transfer her learning to her students:

> I was able to kind of use some of those same things within my classroom for kids and I saw, you know, changes in them, you know, just there, the way that they treated each other and kind of looked at situations.

Sara also brought her learning from the professional development back to her classroom, which had a positive impact on her students,

> Yeah, I would say [the program] gives you, what I feel like it was designed to do is try to give you a picture of the whole child… There's a reason behind their actions and what they're doing and how they're doing it and we're the adults and our job is to help guide that for them. So you know, if we are not, you know, of good character or whatever, then that's going, because we're going to see everything, that's going to reflect on the kids and then it's, you know, a spiraling effect.

Sara understood that being a person of good character reflects on the students and sets an example for how they should behave. The program provided a picture of the whole child, as well as the logic behind a student's behavior, which allowed Sara to concentrate on the importance of character and setting a morally positive example.

Maya also acknowledged the importance of teaching to the whole child, beyond mere academic growth,

> It definitely does because it makes you reflect and really analyze all aspects of your students, not just the teaching, you know also where they come from, what they bring to your class… It makes you value the student and meet them where they're at. You know, academics is important, but I think that fulfilling their potentials as individuals is even more imperative.

Maya wanted to look beyond academic growth and focus on fulfilling the potentials of her students to set them up for success outside of school. This focus on the whole individual helped them to feel valued as more than a student, but as a well-rounded human being. Likewise, Karen looked beyond herself and focused on what is best for her students,

> And I think really when it comes to educating and coaching… Are you doing what's best for your students or are you doing what's best for you? And I'd say that's one thing that was pretty I think prevalent in the program is, you know, you look at what is best for the students, not what is best for you as a teacher. From the backdoor kind of base you could say that it totally, it does enhance that morality... But I also think you need to, you know, it would require the teacher to really think about that when it comes to coaching people… I think if you open yourself up to really being reflective and saying, 'Am I doing what is best? Is this ethical to do this or is it not?'

The NCN program encouraged learners to use a moral lens to consider their students beyond what is best for them as instructors. Karen was clear that teachers needed to be intentional in order for morality to be enhanced. She said that by thinking beyond oneself and doing what is best for students, a teacher would need to be quite thoughtful and reflective on that moral component.

Christy thought beyond herself often during the course of her CNA program. She initially enrolled in the program because she had taken care of her grandmother and other family members for years, so continuing to care for others was a desire of hers. She provided an example in which a senior CNA neglected a patient because she could not understand him. Christy, on the other hand, explained,

> I saw some things happened at an assisted living center that I don't feel are right… I went and helped him. And I figured it out. All you have to do is take a second… We helped him and I was glad to have helped him.

As a result of her experiences, she wanted to help "stand up for elderly people more." She decided that she wanted to "go into advocacy for the elderly." Christy thought beyond herself and helped others because she knew that was the right thing to do even if it was not the easiest thing to do. Annie had similarly challenging experiences during the CNA program. She thought it was unsettling to be working with others who chose their profession based on salary rather than to help others: "They choose one thing or another depending on how much money they're gonna make, which is certainly a consideration, but it's rather than how useful can I be to other human beings." Moreover, Annie felt that a job in the health professions meant thinking beyond oneself,

> [You are] very much embodied in the person that you're ministering to and being focused outside of yourself, outside of your own brain or outside of your own will and being focused on the needs of another person is a whole different dimension.

She explained that she would be working in acute are hospital settings, which would challenge her morally because she didn't always agree some of the decisions made:

> There may be times when I'm faced with a discrepancy between what I think is morally right and what's expected of me… Moral thinking is the basis of every decision I make… And that means making hard choices and it means self-discipline. It means self-denial at times. It's not about me.

Annie realized that her morals might not match up with what is required of her in her profession, which would be challenging in future situations. Regardless, she was adamant

that she would base her decisions on what she felt was morally correct because she consistently thought beyond herself and in regards for others instead.

Understanding. When individuals became aware of other means of thinking and were open to new perspectives, they were able to reach a certain level of understanding. *Understanding*, for the purposes of this study, is defined as the ability to grasp meaning and acquire knowledge. *Understanding* was an *in vivo* code and overlapped with many of the other codes.

Cole was able to reach a higher level of understanding through his graduate course in communications. He and his peers discussed, "What does kind of moral or ethical communication look like?" This spurred their thinking to not only become more aware of new ways to communicate, but to truly understand how words impact others. He said,

> Ideas and learning are important because that helps us frame and think about our experience in new ways… I think a lot of times we do things and we don't really maybe understand that they're quote unquote immoral until maybe later reflecting on it.

This graduate course allowed Cole to reflect on ideas and learning and have a better understanding of how certain concepts tie into moral issues. Laura had similar considerations that education can lead to a moral understanding,

> I think that that moral piece can be changed just the more that you're educated… but that doesn't necessarily mean that's the same for everyone and I'm thinking about kids that are growing up in poverty now and don't have that moral compass, but through education they're gaining that… Especially those that don't have that guidance from home. That's where education really provides an opening, either for that compass or, it's something more than nothing. Right. So where they, where they ended up on that

> continuum may be different from someone who's had that in the home as well, but yeah, I think it's some guidance over no guidance.

Laura felt that education afforded an opportunity for learners to gain an understanding of morality, as well as to provide moral guidance, especially for those who lacked guidance at home. The NCN program brought her to this understanding because of the topics and discussions throughout the professional development.

Natalie also felt that the NCN program helped her to think about learning and learners differently, "I think it challenges the way you teach within your classroom and how you structure your learning. It also, I think allows you to, you know, it changes how you view kids as learners." Sara also thought that the LIE program enhanced her understanding regarding her students,

> The things that I learned, I always take back to the kids and so that was my hope is to be able to deepen my understanding and get better with that so that then that would translate to the kids in my class… I mean even learning about brain development and things like that you can't help but grow yourself.

Sara realized that the program could deepen her understanding of her students through discussions of brain development, as well as through continual peer discussion and feedback. She elaborated and put her learning in the context of moral reasoning,

> I think it helped enhance [moral reasoning] because the more people that you are able to bounce ideas off of or talk through problems or situations and you gain their feedback, then it's going to do a couple of things: it's going to enhance what you're already thinking, it's going to challenge your thinking.

Sara had many moments of enlightenment throughout her learner-centered program that brought her to a higher level of understanding.

Connie cited that the program "definitely focuses on meeting the kids at their level and then helping them to transcend to higher levels of understanding." Connie was able to use teaching strategies she learned from the NCN program to help her students increase their own understanding. Jill revealed,

> I think I evolved in my way as I learned more about what it means to use the thinking strategies, especially through reader's workshop. I know the thinking strategies can be applied in any, any curriculum or any subject… So yeah, I would say [my thinking] definitely shifted and my teaching was enhanced.

Jill also utilized different thinking strategies to enhance her own understanding, as well as transfer her learning and to her students and the curriculum. Karen mentioned that she could "see how the [Northwest Collaborative Network] would enhance [one's moral development] because it does make you think," with her goal being to enhance how she was teaching. She said, "I guess it helps you think about things in a different way so that you are being moral." The program helped her to develop her moral understanding.

Renae also claimed, "When I think about all the things that it's given me and yeah, I think about things differently... I think it's helped me like rationalize things a little bit better." Renae was able to consider things in a different light in order to rationalize certain concepts to come to a new understanding. Shelby had an interesting insight in reference to nursing homes through her experience in the CNA program, "My understanding has increased I guess because a lot of people just don't know what goes on in those homes… Like the shock factor of like what these people see everyday, like you're just seeing humanity at their worst

basically." Shelby had an eye-opening experience through her learner-centered program and her understanding of elderly people's living situations was increased. Annie also had a moment of understanding within the CNA course,

> This [course] really put flesh on a particular kind of situation where moral reasoning needed to be applied, namely patient care. And it showed me how I could actually do that. Not just, okay, I have this sort of philosophical bent that I think I should take care of the patient first, but this is what I need to do to make that real. And here are some of the situations where it may be difficult to do that, but that has to be the overarching goal and motivation for everything I do.

The course added to her understanding of how to implement moral reasoning in specific situations with patients. This course allowed for hypothetical situations to be applied to real life, which increased Annie's overall understanding of moral reasoning and patient care.

The NCN program really allowed Natalie to scaffold her perspective and reach higher levels of understanding,

> The learning is longer lasting and I think it's because through those techniques, you build your schema slowly from a small scale and then through those, you give a bit more information and you attach it to what you just had and then there's a little bit deeper information and you attach it to that next thing you learned. So I think you start off with no existing schema and it's slowly scaffold and built upon and so, you are able to just really analyze things and link things together and make good connections.

Natalie explained that the program presented her with techniques to slowly build a foundation of understanding. At that point, she was able to analyze and make connections within her profession to transcend her understanding. Maya had a similar experience in the same

program, “It makes you really analyze things on the spot, like as you're teaching, you know, those teaching moments, you're able to grasp them more effectively and they don't pass you by as often as they used to.” Due to her increase in understanding, Maya was capable of being more analytical and aware of teaching moments. Tracy described how the facilitators of the NCN program created an effective space for all of the learners to come to a necessary understanding,

> Somehow or another they brought us all together to whatever point it was they wanted us to get, even though we had all these different ideas and thoughts and attitudes, somehow or another, they brought us to the point that we needed to come to.

The facilitators guided the learners to an individualized level of understanding, which was a unique component of learner-centered practice.

A Life Force. Becoming aware, being open to others’ perspectives, and developing an understanding all contributed to generating a life force. *Life force* is a habitual way of thinking that penetrates all aspects of one’s life. *Life force* was another *in vivo* code from Connie’s final interview. Connie discussed how she is off duty, as a teacher, during the summer months,

> You don't have to think about being a teacher, but really whether or not you're a teacher, these are things that you don't just do the job then go home and turn it off.
>
> And it definitely has to be a life force, a life belief, something that you do all the time.

Connie believed that, despite having time off in the summer, her particular mindset needed to be a life force because it became part of who she was.

Renae also felt that her perspectives developed into a habitual practice,

> I would put moral reasoning and stuff into that as a way of life. And so I do think it has had a heavy role in like my day-to-day decision-making. And that's another reason I'm doing [the program] again next year. It's just so that I can make, because the more you do something, the more it becomes habit and then you don't really have to work as hard at it. It's just how it is.

Many of the elements of learner-centered practice, such as reflection and critical thinking, created a habitual method for thinking and learning. In turn, moral reasoning became a way of life for Renae and she no longer had to work at it; it simply became a part of her process. Laura made a similar comment, "When I think of education I believe that educators, all educators should be lifelong learners." Laura felt that learning should be a process that penetrates all aspects of one's life. Even Natalie expressed that "the learning is longer lasting" due to learner-centered practice. Shelby had similar thoughts about habitual practice, stating, "It's like muscle memory to learn all the kind of stuff you need to do." Shelby put this in the context of having ethical discussions with the peers in her CNA course and applying those discussions to the real situations that occurred during clinicals. This muscle memory helped her to be able to incorporate morality into her decision-making and thinking without having to work as hard at it.

Sara expressed how critical thinking and discussion has helped her better understand why she thinks the way she does, "I love my thinking being challenged because then that's how I grow the most because I really have to think about why I believe what I believe." This was important because she had an understanding of the foundations of her thinking, which contributed to her life beliefs. Natalie shared a related idea, "I would say that there were a lot of activities that we did that impacted, you know, made me reflect on who I am and what I

stand for and why I do the things that I do." These activities, as discussed in her initial interview, included critical thinking, peer discussion, peer coaching, and reflection. She elaborated,

> Going through experiences and reflecting on those experiences and it changing who you are and what you're going to do in the future because you're going to have stronger stances or your stances that you did have are going to be changed… There were a lot of things that lined up with, you know, how to just be a good person in life and be true to who you are and be true to others and kind and just listen well.

The experiences of the professional development program altered Natalie and her plans for the future because she was able to have stronger ideals. The program also aligned with her moral understandings, such as how to be a good, true, and kind person. All of these things contributed to her life force.

Cole also referred to the importance of experience as having an impact on his life force,

> We talked about the development of expertise and the importance of experience in our own development… I think that is always going to be healthy because when you think of morality or ethics, one, I think so much of that in our development is based on not just ideas but informed from experience.

This experience was significant in informing his moral development, which penetrated all aspects of his life. Cole discussed morality in the specific context of his graduate course,

> For me, [my perspective] has [changed] in the sense of moral reasoning because when I think of that idea of practical wisdom and virtues and things like that, I think it absolutely aligns with that idea that we can't just make decisions without some moral

> component, without some sense of virtue. Right? So I have been thinking a lot about, you know, really this idea of what is the bedrock of our decisions specifically in the way in which we take care of other people with our language.

His graduate course involved discussions on communication, practical wisdom, and language. These topics allowed him to evaluate the foundation of his decision-making and how that influenced himself and others. This "bedrock" contributed to his life force and penetrated all aspects of his life.

Sara and Jill used what they learned from the LIE program and applied it to their classrooms to help influence their students' life forces for the better and make a lasting impact. A student from Sara's class was stealing and Sara decided to take action,

> For me, you know, if you don't stop it at that point, that is part of that moral part that you're talking about because if they learn at age six that they know that their teacher knows that they're taking things and their teacher does nothing, then they learned that, oh, this must be okay. And then it just keeps getting, it develops worse and worse and worse. And then that helps define their character as they're growing into adulthood.

Sara intervened before the situation could get worse and taught him right and wrong, which influenced the student's character for the better. Sara's intervention and instruction impacted the student's life force. Jill was working on introducing moral components into her curriculum,

> We really tried to incorporate that in the curriculum today with the text that we choose to focus on what it means to be kind, you know, empathy, being able to have those values… We're focusing on restorative practices and teaching kids to communicate and work through their adversity and differences. And I think that has to go with that

> moral development strongly… I do know that [the program] embraced knowing we want kids to make good choices and what that looks like and encouraging a sense of community in your classroom and that mutual respect for their peers and their teacher. I mean that definitely is part of what the program wanted to see.

By focusing on restorative practices and values, the students' life forces were altered. They were able to see what it means to treat others with respect and kindness, as well as experience a sense of community and empathy. These values contributed to deeper aspects of the students' lives, rather than a focus on surface knowledge.

Theme Five: Moral Reinforcement

Moral reinforcement was the fifth theme, emerging from one of the initial interviews. Learners were intentional and reflective, part of a community of learning, and were able to build upon their perspectives. Moral reinforcement emerged through the confirmation and strengthening of existing understandings of morality.

Confirmation. *Confirmation* is an *in vivo* code, which was defined as the validation of an existing thought or practice. Laura initially expressed that she believed a person is "raised in a certain way with morals that you have and then what either emphasizes continuing along that path or completely giving up that path." Laura thought that an individual is raised to believe and think in a certain way and finds that their beliefs are either confirmed or completely abandoned. She felt that the program "added, you know, it reinforced my beliefs… If anything, I think it just confirms." The NCN program reinforced the beliefs that she already held to be true. Laura expounded on this idea,

> Well it reinforces… When you believe a certain thing and it, it's your belief, it's different when you are surrounded by others who also believe the same thing or are

> coming to the understanding or doing the learning that helps them to come to an understanding and when that understanding is the same as yours and it's not just you thinking a certain way, but you have a cohort that also thinks the same way... Well, I mean, I think it's very natural that we then tend to go in a direction in which we already believe.

Being surrounded by her peers in the program who believed the same things she did and had the same morals to guide them, she felt validated in her ideals. Tracy also felt validated in her existing principles,

> I think [the program] aligns with what is there and I think that's what was attractive to me is the things that I already believe in as a person, I found them to be true there among the teachers, among the coaches. So that whole atmosphere, it's like I stepped into an atmosphere of what internally is what already takes place inside of me. So that really resonated with me… I think it's been validated. I think that program has validated the value of that moral development, not only in myself but in my students. I think the [Northwest Collaborative Network] allows that to be talked about, and to be validated and to be reflected upon.

Tracy found that the NCN program aligned with her beliefs, which validated the value of her moral understandings.

Natalie also felt that she started with a certain set of morals that was validated by others in the NCN program,

> I think I kind of always have lived my life in a way that, you know, I'm pretty honest and I do things, I'm pretty true, honest, and forthcoming. I would say… [The program] allowed me to practice strategies, I guess, in how to be who I am in a way that, you

> know, works with other people and when other people have something, just how to interact with them better.

The program allowed Natalie to practice strategies that fell in line with her existing moral understandings. Renae had very similar ideas, "You get to be around those people who have that moral compass like you and it's like on a spiritual level really." She explained that she was not a religious person, but being surrounded by others with the same moral compass was a spiritual experience. Renae felt reinforced in her ideas by peers who shared her beliefs. When asked if the professional development impacted the way that she viewed moral development, Connie mentioned, "I pretty much had that idea before I started the class, but I think it fits in nicely… I would say reinforced is a great way to explain it. Yes… Reinforced." Connie came into the program with preconceived moral beliefs, which were reinforced by the NCN program.

Sara explained that the program reiterated that there was a reason why she has certain practices and procedures concerning her classroom:

> I would probably say that what [the program] did was reaffirm what I believe in how I approach things in my classroom… I would say it definitely, it just reaffirmed, like just gave me a more firm foundation of 'yes, that is, thank you…' And, you know, there is a reason why I do what I do in my classroom.

The LIE program reaffirmed that her methods and rationales were applicable for her classroom. Jill had insight into the same program,

> I would say it reaffirmed things. I think we as teachers are always taught in our programs the importance of moral intelligence and all of that emotional connecting with your kids and how much great that does for the community… Like I said, it

> maybe more reaffirmed. I definitely have sensitivity towards our kids who might've been labeled as, you know, just bad kids or not good kids. And so I feel like it just reaffirmed that we just need to find ways to connect to them and find ways to encourage them.

For Jill, connecting with her students was a moral concern, one that she held in high regard for herself and other teachers. She continued,

> I guess it probably just reaffirmed that yeah, there's a need for [moral development], that there's an importance and that my colleagues are faced with similar things and we want to see the best for our kids… And I do think that that is a development where you build and you build that in your classroom and you foster it by teaching them what it means to resolve their differences or appreciate their differences.

Jill explained moral intelligence as having sensitivity towards students' situations, connecting with and encouraging those students, doing what is best for her kids, and resolving and appreciating differences. All of these ideals were reaffirmed for her and other teachers within the LIE program.

Maya's statements corresponded with others from the LIE program, "It just helps reinforce what I believed. It helps me realize that, 'Yes, I'm in the right train of thought…' And so it definitely reinforces what I already had thought about it." Maya was concerned that she needed to find new ideas to add to her plethora of knowledge and felt that the program reinforced her mentality. Cole had interesting insight into the deeper channels of an individual's mentality. When asked if he thought his communications course impacted his moral development or influenced the way that he thought through issues, Cole responded,

> We have these cognitive structures and then we have to actually apply them to situations and then have to be shaken up a little bit and be like, 'Ooh, that didn't sit as neatly as I wanted on that.' How does that now change the framework in which I have and inform it? Um, so yeah, it absolutely did. I think both topically and just specifically with that developmentally, it really challenged me coming out of it to think critically.

He explained that he came into the course with preexisting ideas about morality and when he had to actually apply those ideas, they did not necessarily play out as well as he thought. As a result, the course forced him to reconsider his mental framework concerning morality without actually changing his principles. In other words, the course confirmed his ideals and beliefs, but altered the way that he thought about them.

Christy had certain expectations and understandings when she entered the CNA program. She learned about the concept of "cultural competence," which she explained was "how to identify cultural differences in residents in a nursing home or long term care setting and it's a method of learning about each individual's views and behaviors and applying that knowledge to their healthcare." She was surprised that there was an actual term for helping people in that way because she "always thought that that was just how a person should do things." Christy's idea of how to care for others, which was a moral concern, was confirmed by the teachings of the course. Annie, from the CNA program, also explained that she felt reinforced in her own beliefs. She intended to continue her career in a place that was "consistent with a lot of things that I hold to be true that may not be held across society." She wanted to continue to be in an environment that upheld her existing moral views.

Enhancement. While *confirmation* validated the prevailing ideals of participants, *enhancement* strengthened their existing thoughts and practices. Enhancement is another *in vivo* code, originally appearing in the first interview with Laura. When asked if the NCN program affected her views about making moral decisions, Laura replied, "I think it probably further enhanced what I already knew to be true." In later interviews, she stated that it "solidifies" her beliefs because she was surrounded by others who also believed in the same things that she did. Connie also mentioned that the professional development "enhanced" her views concerning moral development. Karen thought moral development could occur within the NCN program based on her experiences,

> Let's say, you know, you were posed with the question about moral development, I can see how the [Northwest Collaborative Network] would enhance that because it does make you think. And I think really when it comes to educating and coaching, especially that, I guess that coaching aspect when you're looking at other teachers, not necessarily are you a good person, but are you doing what's best for your students or are you doing what's best for you… So I'd say maybe on a, from the backdoor kind of base you could say that it totally, it does enhance that morality.

The program helped her and her peers to really question their beliefs because they were expected to think critically and understand why they belief what they believe instead of just being told what to think. Karen thought it all came down to being a good person and a good coach as moral obligations.

Sara also discussed how critical thinking strengthened her perspectives and enhanced her moral stances,

> I think it helped enhance [moral reasoning] because the more people that you are able to bounce ideas off of or talk through problems or situations and you gain their feedback, then it's going to do a couple of things: it's going to enhance what you're already thinking, it's going to challenge your thinking to where you're like, 'Oh, well, you know, maybe I should look at this differently.'

Sara did not think that the LIE program "changed the way that I view things or thought about things. It just enhanced it." Utilizing those critical thinking skills and talking things through with her peers augmented her moral understandings and reasoning. Tracy thought of moral development as developing certain virtues, such as civility, respect, listening, encouragement, and having a positive influence on others. She claimed, "It put depth to those words for me. And it showed me how to do some of those things that I value." Through the NCN program, Tracy was able to put those values that were significant for her into practice. Natalie felt that her experiences altered her as a person, mainly because she was able to reflect on those experiences,

> Going through experiences and reflecting on those experiences and it changing who you are and what you're going to do in the future because you're going to have stronger stances or your stances that you did have are going to be changed.

She thought that her views were not only strengthened, but some of them were even changed due to her experiences and reflections in the professional development program. Christy also felt bolstered in her views from her experiences in the CNA program, "I just think that maybe like I feel more strongly… and it's made my voice stronger." Christy felt strengthened in her beliefs and in her voice. In fact, her experiences in the program were so impactful that she decided that she wanted to go into advocacy for the elderly.

Cole explained that his communications course allowed for more reflection and "more confidence in approaching things from a moral or justice perspective" within the context of academic and scientific study. He continued,

> I think all of it just gave me more confidence and more encouragement to apply moral and ethical kind of lenses to relationships and communication and the things that I want to study and how I want to live my life… It didn't necessarily make me less passionate about my views of morality and some days it almost bolstered and made me feel like this is even more important because it, I don't know, it just becomes clearer to me.

Cole was able to become more confident in his views of morality because he was able to have discourse with his fellow students and he realized that most people think in moral and ethical terms, even if they don't realize it. He felt bolstered in his views and was able to examine concepts in the class through a moral lens, which, in turn, made his views even clearer to him. Renae also felt more confident in her beliefs due to her experiences in her professional development program,

> I've always held high morals or I've always held that piece in high regard. I would say that what it does do though is it puts you in a position where you're around more people that feel that same way. So just by nature of being around people like that you can start embodying it even more or sharing it with others or just feeling more like comfortable and confident in it.

Renae was surrounded by peers who held the same regard for moral concepts, which strengthened her beliefs. She added, in a later interview, "Maybe [reinforcement is] a good way of putting it and it makes it so that you're more secure maybe in how you believe." She

was reinforced by others who had the same ideals, thus enhancing and securing her moral understandings.

Summary of the Findings

Thirteen adult learners from four research settings participated in this study. The research settings were observed by the researcher to ensure that they were learner-centered, based on an observational protocol. Participants were interviewed two to three times each to discuss their moral reflections, perceptions, and experiences within learner-centered practice. Through methods of coding, constant comparative analysis, memoing, and explicit grounding processes, significant qualitative findings emerged from the data.

Each theme and code was significant on its own, although these concepts overlapped and supported each other. In many ways, one theme influenced another, which in turn affected moral reasoning and moral development in the context of learner-centered practice. The overarching themes that emerged from this research as major factors involved in the relationship between moral reasoning, moral development, and learner-centered practice were: *intentionality, reflective processes, community of learning, perspective scaffolding, and moral reinforcement.* These themes contributed to the emergence of a grounded theory: *the theoretical model for moral reinforcement in learner-centered practice*.

Intentionality initiated adult learners' experiences due to their desire to learn and their choice to participate in learner-centered practice. Participants also referred to choices in the context of right and wrong. Participants, then, put forth effort and determination once they were in a learner-centered context. *Reflective processes* encompassed consideration and growth through the progression of learner-centered practice. Reflection also allowed moral considerations to be at the forefront of one's thinking.

Community of learning was the most shared theme amongst participants, which involved collaboration with thinking partners and allowed for the development of a support network. Community of learning may have been the most common theme because it is the most relatable amongst the participants – nearly all of the participants felt included within some form of community, whether personal or professional or both. *Perspective scaffolding* encompassed several concepts to frame the perspectives of the learners, such as fostering awareness, thinking beyond oneself, constructing understanding, and developing a life force. Finally, *moral reinforcement* emerged through the confirmation and strengthening of existing understandings of morality.

Table 4.2 displays the Code Definitions table and Table 4.3 refers to the Distribution of Coding by Participants table. The subsequent chapter presents a discussion of the findings in the context of the research questions and the literature, as well as presents a summary of the interpretation of findings. Chapter 5 revisits researcher assumptions and study limitations, includes implications and recommendations, and provides conclusions and final thoughts related to this study.

Table 4.2

Data Summary Table – Code Definitions

Themes and Codes	**Type of Code**	**Definitions**
Intentionality	Emergent	Theme 1
Desire to Learn	Emergent	An individual's intrinsic drive to be in an adult learning environment
Choice	In vivo*	A voluntary decision
Effort	In vivo	A determined attempt to make something happen
Reflective Processes	Emergent	Theme 2
Consideration	In vivo	An act of mindful deliberation in regards to the self and others
Growth	In vivo	A progression in one's thinking and learning in the context of reflection
Forefront of Thinking	In vivo	Having certain ideas in the front of one's mind due to reflection and consideration
Community of Learning	In vivo	Theme 3
Thinking Partners	In vivo	The intellectual collaboration of peers and facilitators
Support Network	In vivo	A group of individuals who provides emotional and personal encouragement
Perspective Scaffolding	In vivo	Theme 4
Awareness	In vivo	Being cognizant of other means of thinking and understanding
Beyond Oneself	Emergent	Being open and considerate of perspectives and situations outside of the self
Understanding	In vivo	The ability to grasp meaning and acquire knowledge
Life Force	In vivo	A habitual way of thinking that penetrates all aspects of one's life
Moral Reinforcement	In vivo	Theme 5
Confirmation	In vivo	The validation of an existing thought or practice
Enhancement	In vivo	The strengthening of an existing thought or practice

*In vivo: codes/labels that consist of participants' actual words.

Table 4.3

Data Summary Table – Distribution of Coding by Participants

CODE	Laura	Connie	Karen	Renae	Natalie	Christy	Shelby	Cole	Annie	Maya	Jill	Tracy	Sara
Desire to Learn	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x
Choice	x		x	x		x	x		x				
Effort		x	x					x	x				
Consideration	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Growth			x	x	x		x	x					x
Forefront of Thinking	x		x						x	x		x	
Thinking Partners	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Support Network	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Awareness	x	x	x			x		x	x	x		x	x
Beyond Oneself			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Understanding	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
A Life Force	x	x		x	x		x	x			x		x
Confirmation	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Enhancement	x	x	x	x	x	x		x				x	
TOTAL*	79%	50%	86%	64%	71%	64%	57%	86%	79%	64%	57%	64%	71%

*Totals indicate the percentage of codes that were contributed to by participants (e.g. 10 of 14 codes = 71%)

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

A grounded theory approach of inquiry was used to develop a theory regarding the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice in the context of higher education. This theoretical model for moral reinforcement in learner-centered practice was developed based on the reflections, perceptions, and experiences of adult learners within a learner-centered context. Due to a gap in current literature regarding the relationship between learner-centered higher education, moral development, and moral reasoning, this study explored a new understanding of these concepts. This chapter discusses the findings in the context of the research questions and in the context of existing literature, as well as includes a summary of the interpretations of findings. This chapter also revisits researcher assumptions and study limitations, provides recommendations, presents the conclusions, and offers the researcher's final thoughts.

Discussion in the Context of the Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study: What emergent theory explains the relationship between the moral development and moral reasoning of adult learners in the context of learner-centered practice in higher education institutions? How does learner-centered practice contribute to the moral reasoning and moral development of adult learners? What are the moral reflections, experiences, and perceptions of adult learners who participate in learner-centered instruction? These questions were designed to guide the qualitative inquiry and explore a relationship that was missing in current literature. The following is a discussion of the findings in the context of the research questions.

Research Question One

The first question that guided this study was: *What emergent theory explains the relationship between the moral development and moral reasoning of adult learners in the context of learner-centered practice in higher education institutions?* The theoretical model for moral reinforcement in learner-centered practice emerged from the data. Moral reinforcement in this context is defined as the validation and strengthening of an existing thought or practice. This emergent theory postulates that moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice have a relationship, with one outcome being moral reinforcement. This outcome occurs for adult learners within the context of learner-centered practice in higher education institutions.

The theoretical model is defined by five emergent themes: intentionality, reflective processes, community of learning, perspective scaffolding, and moral reinforcement. The order of these themes is not organized by importance, but rather by the natural order in which they occur in a learner-centered context. However, the themes may occur out of order and still result in moral reinforcement, as the themes have a correlational relationship rather than a causal one (see Figure 4.1 in Chapter 4 for an illustration). Intentionality initiates an adult learner's experience through choice, the desire to learn, and effort. It follows that reflective processes occur in learner-centered practice through consideration and growth, which leads to thinking in the forefront of one's mind. As learner-centered practice progresses, a community of learning develops, resulting in thinking partners and a support network. After being immersed learner-centered practice for a time, perspective scaffolding can take place, which involves being more aware of new perspectives, thinking beyond oneself, gaining new understanding, and integrating morality and learning as a life force. Finally, moral

reinforcement emerges and confirms existing morals, as well as works to solidify and strengthen such morals.

One theme does not necessarily cause another, nor does the absence of one theme dissolve the entire theoretical model. Some of the participants did not fall within all five of the themes, yet they still referred to morality as an outcome of their experiences in learner-centered practice. For instance, Connie did not provide any commentary within the theme of community of learning, even when specifically asked. Despite the absence of one theme, Connie referred to moral discussions and moral reinforcement during her time in the learner-centered program. Similarly, Tracy did not specify any discussion concerning the theme of intentionality, yet she still made several comments about moral reinforcement throughout her interviews. The absence of one theme does not necessarily take away from the positive contributions of the other themes, as can be seen through the participant interviews. Only one participant did not contribute to the theme of moral reinforcement, although they agreed when specifically asked if they felt that the program impacted to their moral development and moral reasoning.

Each of these themes is interconnected with one another and it was found that several of the emergent codes overlap. For instance, several participants discussed how reflection led to moral considerations being in the forefront of their minds, which would fall under both reflective processes and moral reinforcement. Another common overlap was between reflective processes and perspective scaffolding, since certain reflections led to an increase in awareness and understanding. Perspective scaffolding tended to overlap with many of the other themes since the participants' perspectives were framed by many components, such as effort, consideration, growth, and thinking partners. Further observation and data collection

would have to be made to reach a complete and definitive understanding of the relationship of the themes.

Research Question Two

The second research question was: *How does learner-centered practice contribute to the moral reasoning and moral development of adult learners?* The structure of learner-centered practice was heavily discussed in the participant interviews. One of the questions from the first interview protocol asked about the self-directed learning activities that were incorporated into their learner-centered program or course. In later interviews, participants were asked to share their biggest takeaways and clarify previous statements. Several constructs resulted from the participants' responses, such as student-centeredness, role of experience, and application of learning.

Many participants mentioned that their program or course was centered on the learner, which allowed them the freedom to learn in a way that worked best for them. Participants shared that being student-centered led to reflection, a willingness to try new things, a safe place to learn, learner autonomy, discovery, and responsibility for learning. One participant specifically stated that "centering it back on the learner" can help an individual "think about things in a different way so that you are being more moral." Being student-centered provided a safe environment to learn from peers and discover learning and even morality in their own way.

Participants were also able to use their previous experience to inform their new understandings and considerations of morality. One participant mentioned, "When you think of morality or ethics, one, I think so much of that in our development is based on not just ideas but informed from experience." Other participants shared that the role of experience

was important for facilitating peer feedback and discussion, for visualizing how others had actually used certain strategies before, for sharing expertise, and for realizing how new experiences could be used in the future. They were able to use the role of experience to inform their moral development and reinforce their perspectives.

Nearly all of the participants shared how their learning could be applied to their life and/or profession. This application of learning demonstrated that true learning took place during their programs and they were able to use what they learned to share with others. Some of the participant takeaways included: being more adaptive, questioning more and instructing less, thinking critically in new situations, applying moral reasoning when necessary, using thinking strategies, and creating a collaborative and supportive environment. A participant stated, "This [course] really put flesh on a particular kind of situation where moral reasoning needed to be applied… And it showed me how I could actually do that." The learner-centered programs and courses applied the learning to real life and actual situations, which allowed the participants to understand how to integrate moral development and moral reasoning into their lives and professions. A lengthier discussion about how learner-centered practice contributed to the moral reasoning and moral development of adult learners is included in the "Discussion in the Context of the Literature" subsection of this chapter.

Research Question Three

The third research question was: *What are the moral reflections, experiences, and perceptions of adult learners who participate in learner-centered instruction?* Chapter 4 used direct quotations to capture the participants' reflections, experiences, and perceptions, which were essential to understanding the perspectives of adult learners in a learner-centered context.

Specifically, their moral perceptions were present in some way in each of the five emergent themes.

Within the intentionality theme, the code of *choice* brought up moral considerations within several participants. Multiple participants referred to choice in the context of right and wrong decision-making. Other participants referred to choice as helping others because it was the right thing to do. Within the theme of reflection, both of the codes *consideration* and *growth* incorporated the moral experiences of participants. One participant thought that reflection led to becoming more moral because you have to consider others more when you reflect. Others thought that you became more moral because you are thinking about how to ethically treat and do what is best for others. Learner-centered practice also allowed for participants to have these moral reflections and considerations. In the community of learning theme, moral reflections and experiences fell within the codes of *thinking partners* and *support network.* Participants referred to thinking partners as a sounding board to learn new ideas and new ways of consideration. Thinking partners also allowed for collaboration and in-depth discussion with like-minded professionals. Several participants discussed how their support network helped them feel surrounded by others who believed in the same things and had a similar moral compass. That emotional support of one another allowed participants to open up about moral issues and reflections.

The theme of perspective scaffolding had several codes that integrated moral considerations, such as *awareness*, *beyond oneself*, *understanding*, and *life force*. Participants mentioned that they became more aware of moral reasoning and potential moral issues. This awareness helped to be more cognizant of ethical matters in order to ensure that they are doing what is right in their professions and lives. Through learner-centered practice,

participants had to think beyond themselves and consider if they were doing what is best for others. They also had to consider other points of view to open themselves up to new ways of thinking, especially in regards to reflections on morality. Participants reached a higher level of understanding pertaining to these moral reflections and began to perceive ethical matters in new ways. As a result, there was a shift in their life force, in which moral understandings became more integrated into their everyday lives. This scaffolding of perspectives was a powerful contributor to participants' moral reflections, experiences, and perceptions within learner-centered practice. Within the theme of moral reinforcement, *confirmation* and *enhancement* both offered moral insights from participants. The overall consensus from participants was that learner-centered practice reinforced and/or enhanced what they already knew to be true regarding morality. These perceptions on moral development and moral reasoning provided a new understanding regarding the potential outcomes of learner-centered instruction.

Discussion in the Context of the Literature

A multi-grounded theory approach of inquiry was useful for this study to combine the strengths of both inductivism and deductivism and use pre-existing theories to further validate the data (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010). Theoretical matching consisted of comparing existing theories with the emergent theory, with the hope that the existing theories were in some way related to the studied phenomena (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010). Pre-existing theories and studies provided a foundation for this study, which included research on learner-centered practice, morality of instruction and learning, andragogy, cognitivism and constructivism, and moral development theory. This discussion is organized to be consistent with the structure of the literature review, as can be seen in Chapter 2. These frameworks are

discussed in this section in conjunction with empirical data to further validate the emergent theory.

Learner-Centered Practice

Learner-centered practice shifts the focus from the teacher and their instruction to the student and their learning (Schuh, 2004). Certain learner-centered activities include: multiple drafts of written work, constructive and progressive feedback by faculty, student oral presentations, peer review of each other's work, group projects, group discussion, critical reflection, and active learning projects (Cuban, 1983; Enright et al., 2008; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Webber, 2012). All of these activities were present at the research settings, as was noted in the observation protocol mark-ups (see Appendix D).

The most commonly discussed learner-centered activities from all of the research settings were critical reflection and peer discussion. These activities also seemed to be the most impactful on participants according to their interview responses. All of the participants contributed to the theme of reflective processes and consistently mentioned the influence of reflection on their growth as a learner and their consideration for others (see Table 4.3 for a visual of the distribution of coding by participants). This critical reflection also allowed certain deliberations, both moral and general, to be at the forefront of their thinking. Additionally, every participant, except for one learner, discussed their community of learning through peer discussion, peer feedback, and peer instruction. Having thinking partners assisted in their considerations of morality and contributed to their understanding as lifelong learners.

Based on consistencies in the literature, there are four main concepts that shape learner-centered practice: interaction and collaboration, student responsibility for learning,

development of critical thinking skills, and student-teacher dynamic as co-learners. According to the Education Commission of the States (1996), students learn better when engaged with others instead on working independently because it corresponds with the world outside of academia. Collaboration developed more meaningful and engaging learning activities for students (Herrmann, 2013; Keefe & Jenkins, 2002) through reflective dialogue, constructive feedback, and peer interaction. As previously mentioned, the participants in this study consistently referred to peer discussion and reflection as particularly impactful on their learning. One participant said, "In these workshops I have a community of people from different districts and from different schools, from different age ranges, from different experiences. And we all come together for the purpose of learning." Constructive feedback was noted during the observations of most of the research settings, but was not necessarily discussed during the interviews, besides referring to their facilitators as particularly helpful.

When students took responsibility for their own learning, they became directly involved in the learning process (Ahmed, 2013) and had more choice and control to manage their thinking (McCombs & Miller, 2007). Wohlfarth et al. (2008) found that adult learners in felt that a learner-centered approach contributed to feeling more respected and self-directed, as well as contributed to the development of critical thinking skills. In the current study, participants claimed to feel more autonomous because of the open nature of the instruction. Participants also chose to be part of their learning programs and chose to take on that responsibility as a learner, "Everybody's there because you want to be there… they want to do the learning." Learners were very intentional about participating in their particular programs and put effort into their learning. Several participants mentioned that they wanted

to enhance their professional capacities, which meant taking on that responsibility for their own learning and growth.

Learner-centered practice provided opportunities for critical thinking through active engagement, flexible thinking, and reflection (APA, 1993, 1997; Bellah et al., 2008; Thompson et al., 2003). Evers et al. (1998) posited that the goal of education should be to help learners solve problems, think critically, and become lifelong learners. Reflection was a key component of learner-centered practice, based on the observations and the participant interviews (see Figure 5.1 for a memo that was written by the researcher concerning reflection). An individual said, "The thing about reflection is if you can't be true to what you're trying to learn about, then you can't fully grow with it." Learners' reflection about what and how they are learning can lead to higher and more strategic thinking and can encourage the production of new knowledge (McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Weimer, 2013). Many of the participants also discussed reflection as a contributor to moral considerations. For instance, one participant said, "The class allowed maybe more actual reflection and maybe a little more confidence in approaching things from a moral or justice perspective." Reflection was referred to by all of the participants in this study and several noted that their reflection led to higher order thinking. Participants mentioned that their learner-centered program helped them to "think critically" or "challenged" their thinking. Within the theme of perspective scaffolding, nearly all of the participants mentioned that they were exposed to different perspectives and other ways of knowing and thinking, which led to the production of new knowledge and new understanding.

Figure 5.1

Memo that was written after a participant's final interview

Reflection is Profound

In initial interviews, participants were not asked about reflection directly. They were asked about self-directed learning activities, how learner-centered practice impacted their morality, and so forth. To which they responded by discussing reflection as having a significant influence on their moral development or moral reasoning.

Reflection was a very personal component of learner-centered practice. Participants brought several interesting question relating to themselves, but also to life in general:

- What is the point of this?
- Why do I do what I do?
- What am I doing right/wrong?
- Am I doing what is best?
- How can I do/be better?

These were broad questions that concerned the participants' existences, careers, lives, and characters. I was surprised at how fast participants delved into the deeper meanings of their reflective processes and even of their considerations of morality. I thought it would take much more probing to get to this more profound level of discussion and understanding.

When I first asked about morality, the initial thought from participants tended to be about perceiving their own life and their own existence. I wondered if this was an intimidating topic for participants. It reminded me of reactions when one is asked about the meaning of life. This tends to be quite a daunting and profound question and I feel like participants had similar reactions when asked about their own morality.

So, when asked about the impact on one's moral development/moral reasoning/morality, many individuals responded by first establishing that they are a good person…

- They are surrounded by other 'good' people
- They are individuals of character and virtues (i.e. honesty, goodness, kindness, integrity)
- They are within a network that 'confirms' their goodness

It seemed to be important for them to first establish that they have morals (as though they needed to be validated by me, the researcher) before discussing the impact of learner-centered practice. This was quite an interesting pattern. I think the reflection piece of learner-centered practice was so impactful on the participants and I believe reflection is why the participants were able to delve so quickly into the deeper conversations about themselves and their moral development.

Within learner-centered practice, instructors step down from their traditional role of authority and become more of a mentor and guide (Ege, Coppola, & Lawton, 1996). The teacher and student become co-learners who share ownership in learning and actively collaborate on the learning process ((McCombs & Miller, 2007; McCombs & Whisler, 1997).

The participants in the current study took responsibility for their learning, as was previously discussed. However, they also took ownership of the learning process through peer learning and teaching. In several of the research settings, students were responsible for teaching a particular unit or section of the curriculum, one that they determined to be of importance: "A lot of the class structure each week was guided by a certain student or a couple of students that had chosen that topic area… she gives autonomy for students to lead this how they want." This peer instruction allowed the facilitator to become a co-learner and the students to become more active participants in the learning process. Several participants also noted that their relationship with their instructor was especially helpful in motivating them to be more engaged learners.

The American Psychological Association [APA] (1997) developed fourteen learner-centered psychological principles, which have been used as a framework for understanding the factors involved in learner-centered instruction. The principles are sorted into four domains: a) metacognitive and cognitive, b) motivational and affective, c) developmental and social, and d) individual differences (APA, 1997). The metacognitive and cognitive factors describe how the mind of a learner works, how they think and remember, and how a learner constructs meaning (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). This domain involves critical thinking skills, reasoning strategies, linking new information with existing knowledge, and understanding learning contexts. Participants in the current study mentioned that they felt their critical thinking skills were enhanced, their moral reasoning skills were developed, and they were able to discover new understandings by being exposed to other points of view. One participant specifically said that the program "applied my ability to think critically to new situations." Participants were able to construct meaning because the information presented

was relevant to their personal and professional lives. Motivational and affective factors emphasize how learners' perceptions of self, emotions, and thinking habits affect motivation to learn (APA, 1997). These principles also examine how learners' motivations influence learning situations, effort invested in learning, and how much one learns. All of the participants of this study entered into their learning program voluntarily because they wanted to enhance their professional capacities. Nearly all of the participants expressed a desire to learn and noted intrinsic motivation as their reason for joining the learning program or course: "I thought it was gonna be a great learning opportunity."

Developmental and social factors recognize that capacities for learning develop over time (McCombs & Whisler, 1997), as well as understand the influence of social interactions on the learning process. Individuals develop differently – physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially – and, thus, experience different constraints for learning. Social interactions and community of learning had a powerful impact on participants. As noted previously, nearly every participant expressed that having thinking partners and a support network helped them learn and develop new ways of thinking and understanding: "I have a professional learning network… they act as a sounding board for one but they also act as thinking partners." Finally, individual differences factors include learners' unique backgrounds, individual capabilities, and personal strategies impact learning. Setting challenging and appropriate standards to assess learners is a key aspect of the learning process as well. Participants mentioned that they felt challenged in their learning and the assessments were about more than grades. Additionally, individual differences were taken into account when participants could choose their learning focuses, strategies, and peer instruction topics to fit their individual needs.

Morality of Instruction and Learning

Instructors are constantly acting as moral educators by continually telling students what to do, evaluating their behavior, and monitoring social relationships within the classroom. Mayhew and King (2008) argued that, "Avoiding or ignoring this role may inhibit moral reasoning development and subsequently undermine their effectiveness as educators whose role it is to help students realise their potential for becoming responsible and engaged citizens" (p. 36). One participant said, "I think we as teachers are always taught in our programs the importance of moral intelligence and all of that emotional connecting with your kids and, and how much great that does for the community." Several of the participants from the teacher professional developments recognized that they have a moral obligation to guide their students in a positive direction. Another participant said,

> There's a reason behind their actions and what they're doing and how they're doing it and we're the adults and our job is to help guide that for them. So you know, if we are not, you know, of good character or whatever, then that's going, because we're going to see everything, that's going to reflect on the kids.

She recognized the importance of having good character, ethics, and values because it reflects on the students. As learners within their graduate programs and courses, it was just as important for the facilitators to be of good character to positively influence the participants.

Campbell (2006) maintained that teachers become ethical educators by upholding core values such as "honesty, justice, fairness, care, empathy, integrity, courage, respect, and responsibility" (p. 32). One of the participants described their facilitator's disposition,

> I would say that [the facilitator] and just her kind, sweet spirit, you know, impacted me and just being more patient and sitting back a little bit more and asking more

> questions and listening to people more, you know, probably just through some of her teaching [my perspective changed] for sure.

Other participants had positive things to say about their facilitators, that they helped guide their learning in a constructive way. Buzzelli and Johnston (2002) maintained that moral values become incorporated into the learning through what instructors emphasize, as well as through their relationships with the learners. Nearly all of the participants named the relationships developed during their program/course as a significant contribution to their learning, as well as to the reinforcement of their moral understandings: relationships with both their peers and facilitators.

Hansen and Stephens (2000) said, "Since the ultimate purpose of teaching is student learning, an appropriate basis for morality must come from the intersection between the student's and the teacher's efforts" (p. 45). An instructor's virtues must be accompanied by the learner's discipline to follow through with the challenging process of learning and character development (Hansen & Stephens, 2000; Narvaez, 2008). Since the graduate programs and courses were learner-centered, much of the learning was self-directed. Additionally, the participants chose to partake in the learning program and had a desire to learn and improve themselves within their discipline. Participants took on the responsibility for learning and used their relationships with their peers and facilitators to reinforce their morality.

Brookfield (1998) identified core processes of adult moral learning, which all involve critical reflection: awareness of moral reasoning, community involvement in morality, understanding of alternative perspectives, attainment of personal wisdom, and critical reflection of moral reasoning. Participants mentioned all of these core processes within their

interviews: “it's definitely made me more aware of [moral reasoning],” “I think that a community is always important to create that moral reasoning,” “[my perspective] has [changed] in the sense of moral reasoning,” “I would put moral reasoning and stuff into that as a way of life,” “This [course] really put flesh on a particular kind of situation where moral reasoning needed to be applied.” Reflective processes became a central emergent category that arose from the data. Every participant recognized the significance of reflection and critical thinking regarding their learning and morality. One participant stated that there were several activities during the learning program “that make you reflect on who you are also and like who you want to be, you know, just in life and as a person, a part of society and a part of impacting kids.” She went on to say that she became “a kinder, more thoughtful, and a better listener in my life.” Other participants expressed similar growth in their self and their moral reasoning due to critical reflection.

Andragogy

Knowles established andragogy as a legitimate model of adult education (Beder & Carrea, 1988; Zmeyov, 1998) and defined andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). Knowles developed an andragogical model of adult learning that includes seven principles: the need to know, learners’ self-concept, role of learners’ experiences, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, motivation to learn, and teachers as facilitators. Adults need to know why they are learning something before they commit to learning it (Knowles et al., 2005). All of the participants chose to participate in their learning program or course. One participant said, “I thought that being a part of that would help hone in different skills that would then be able to translate back to my classroom… My hope is to be able to deepen my understanding and get better with that.” This was consistent amongst

nearly all of the participants. They had a desire to learn more and improve their professional capacities, so they were aware of their need to know and understood the value of learning.

As individuals become adults, they acquire a new status and "their self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed human being" (Knowles, 1980, p. 44). A self-directed learner has to also rely on and collaborate with others, which helps to create new knowledge (Peters & Grey, 2005). Participants from this study were intentional about their decision to actively participate in the learning process and took responsibility for their own learning. Participants also collaborated with their peers and facilitators to create dialogue and discover new ways of knowing. Participants were insistent that collaboration was a key component to their learning process, using terms such as, "sounding board," "thinking partners," "peer mentors," "like-minded professionals," "peer coaching," "community learning," and "support network."

Adults accumulate a number of experiences throughout their life that become "an increasingly rich resource for learning" (Knowles, 1980, p. 44). Because the richest resource for learning resides in adults themselves, exploring their experiences through experiential techniques and individualized teaching strategies can be beneficial (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles et al., 2005; Silberman & Auerbach, 1998). Participants noted peer discussions and reflections as moments to consider how their previous experiences affected their current life and learning situations. One participant said, "We talked about the development of expertise and the importance of experience in our own development." This individual also discussed the role of experience specifically in the context of morality, "When you think of morality or ethics, one, I think so much of that in our development is based on not just ideas but informed from experience." Participants were able to use their individual backgrounds and learning

styles to create a learning environment that worked for them, as they were given the freedom to design their own workshops and projects.

Adults become ready to learn when they need to understand how to effectively cope with real-life situations, so learning should focus on content that relates to adults' current situations (Knowles et al., 2005). The research settings were mainly professional developments or workforce training programs, so they were relevant to what the participants needed and wanted to learn. Several participants mentioned how their learning could be applied to real-life situations and circumstances. When asked how their moral reasoning and moral understandings could be applied to their personal and professional lives, participants provided several real-life examples. For instance, many of the participants were older individuals with families, so their examples involved their moral obligations and influence on their children. It was important for the participants to have a certain readiness to learn that could coincide with their specific developmental tasks and priorities.

The perspective of an adult learner changes to immediacy of application of knowledge, and accordingly, their orientation toward learning shifts to one that applies to their personal context (Knowles, 1980). An adult learner's orientation to learning becomes life-centered or problem-centered. Participants mentioned how their program or course presented information that was connected with their life experiences and real life contexts. For instance, participants applied their learning in many ways: "application based to our own lives," "utilize in our own classroom," applied my ability to think critically to new situations," "thinking strategies can be applies in any curriculum," "applicable for classroom use," and "tying back to the learning." When new knowledge was presented in the context of application to real-life situations, adults were more motivated to learn and retain that knowledge (Knowles et al., 2005).

Regarding motivation to learn, adults are more responsive to internal factors, such as the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, and quality of life (Knowles et al., 1998; Knowles et al., 2005). Knowles et al. (1998; 2005) acknowledged that while adults are still receptive to some external motivators, the most powerful motivators are internal influences. When asked why they chose to enroll in their learning program or course, participants named internal motivations as particularly significant: to enhance their teaching, to get a boost of motivation, to increase their teaching abilities, to care for others, to hone their craft, to help their students find a love of learning, to deepen their understanding of their profession. Nearly all of the participants named internal motivations as reasons for enrolling in an adult learning program. Only one participant named making more money as a motivator, but that same individual also noted internal motivations as influential.

Teachers of adult learners should take on the role of helper, guide, encourager, consultant, resource, and co-inquirer with their ultimate goal to help people grow in the ability to learn (Knowles, 1980; Peters & Grey, 2005). Knowles (1980) suggested, "andragogical practice treats the learning-teaching transaction as the mutual responsibility of learners and teachers" (p. 48). Participants touched on their facilitators being helpful in guiding their learning, stating that their instructors were "using the strategies that they wanted us to be using" instead of lecturing, they used "different teaching styles during their lessons" to reach all individuals, they "were able to help me just hone down to those teaching focuses to make it meaningful," they "coordinated the class" but allowed the course to be "student-led." The facilitators of the research settings relinquished some of their power to help create autonomous learners and a self-directed learning environment.

Cognitivism and Constructivism

Cognitivism consists of two central assumptions: the memory system is a functioning processor of information and prior knowledge plays a critical role in learning (Gredler, 1997). As discussed within the topic of andragogy, the role of experience and prior knowledge helped to inform the learning of participants. Being adult learners, the participants entered into their program or course with a variety of experiences, knowledge, and life occurrences already. One participant said, "We have these cognitive structures and then we have to actually apply them to situations." It was important for the facilitators to understand their role as adults and teach to them accordingly through activities such as peer discussions, problem-solving activities, demonstrations, reflections, self-directed projects, and collaboration.

Cognitivists also claim that the human mind is not a system meant to passively exchange information (Grippin & Peters, 1984). Moreover, in cognitivism, the control over learning lies with the individual learner, instead of with the environment (Merriam et al., 2007). Participants were active learners throughout their program or course. They engaged in peer discussion, peer teaching, written reflection, student-led workshops, simulations, and project design. By actively participating, instead of passively receiving information, the learners were able to control their learning and give meaning to their new knowledge (Grippin & Peters, 1984). Additionally, Ausubel (1967) suggested that learning becomes meaningful only when it can be related to preexisting concepts in an individual's mind, so a focus on real-life problems will better assist learners (Allen, 2007). One individual stated, "This class is a little more application based to our lives." Participants were able to relate their learning to issues of immediate importance, as was related to their readiness to learning and orientation to learning.

Constructivism focuses on the relationship between learners and content (Weimer, 2013) and emphasizes that learners must construct their own knowledge (Bruning et al., 2004; Piaget, 1970; Stage et al., 1998; von Glasersfeld, 1995). Participants in this study interacted with their instructors as facilitators rather than lecturers and took control of their own learning to be able to construct and discover more meaning. Constructivism emphasizes learners "actively constructing their own knowledge rather than passively receiving information transmitted to them from teachers and textbooks. From a constructivist perspective, knowledge cannot simply be given to students: Students must construct their own meanings" (Stage et al., 1998). Participants actively participated in their learning through "questioning," "a lot of writing," "reflection," "sharing out and discussion," "hands-on discovery learning," "performance tasks, "discourse," "modeling," "collaboration," "community learning," and "inquiry-based learning."

Participants also used their prior experience to construct knowledge to give meaning to their current understandings (Jenkins, 2002). For instance, one participant explained,

> It allowed people to peel back the veil a little bit of some of their worldviews, share a little more why they do it based on their own experiences. So one that's always helpful for me because I think most of the time if you're going to have a different moral approach, it's not often going to be because someone presented some new logic to you. It's probably through further development of empathy, broadening of your perspective based on hearing the personal experiences of others.

Participants were able to position new knowledge by connecting it with what was already known to make the most sense to them (Weimer, 2013), which deepened their current understandings.

Nucci et al. (2014) noted that constructivism provides the opportunity for moral development to take place through the establishment of mutual respect, the promotion of autonomy, the sharing of power, group learning, conflict resolution, and moral discussion. Additionally, an individual must be an active learner to know how to be free ethically (Piaget, 1932). In this study, learner-centered practice allowed learners to construct meaning regarding moral reinforcement, which occurred through "hearing the personal experiences of others," "discourse," "stepping back and questioning more," "coaching," "going through experiences and reflecting on those experiences," "thinking critically," "encouragement to apply moral and ethical lenses," "learning about each individual's views," the "importance of moral intelligence," "recogniz[ing] what it is that keeps learners engaged," "centering it back on the learner," and "link[ing] things together and mak[ing] good connections." The constructivist components within learner-centered practice allowed participants to construct meaning and moral understandings from their learning contexts.

Moral Development Theory

Kohlberg focused on rightness and justice within his moral development theory. Kohlberg (1969, 1976, 1980) claimed that moral development involves specific levels and stages concerning the way individuals construct reality. In the conformist stage, morality resides in interpersonal social relationships. Moral reasoning within this stage involves the need to be a good person for the self and others (Kohlberg, 1976). Interpersonal social relationships were significant to most of the participants within this study. One participant said, "All of it just gave me more confidence and more encouragement to apply moral and ethical kind of lenses to relationships and communication." Another participant stated,

> When you believe a certain thing and it's your belief, it's different when you are surrounded by others who also believe the same thing or are coming to the understanding or doing the learning that helps them to come to an understanding and when that understanding is the same as yours and it's not just you thinking a certain way, but you have a cohort that also thinks the same way... Well, I mean, I think it's very natural that we then tend to go in a direction in which we already believe.

Relationships and social interactions were the motivation behind these participants' moral thinking and moral reasoning. Their relationships seemed to determine and reinforce what they believed while involved in their learning program.

In the autonomous stage, which is the highest stage of moral development according to Kohlberg (1980), individuals follow self-chosen ethical principles and believe in a personal commitment to these principles. Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) thought that education should give people the capacity to engage in moral reasoning and discourse (Kohlberg, 1980), as well as to stimulate their thinking ability to engage in more adequate and complex reasoning patterns. This was in line with the findings from the participant interviews. A participant said,

> The things that I already believe in as a person, I found them to be true there among the teachers, among the coaches. So that whole atmosphere, it's like I stepped into an atmosphere of what internally is what already takes place with inside of me… I think that program has validated the value of that moral development… The [Northwest Collaborative Network] allows that to be talked about and to be validated and to be reflected upon.

The learner-centered program allowed moral discourse to take place amongst facilitators and learners, which allowed the learners to engage in moral reasoning and higher-level thinking.

Participants consistently used terms and phrases to describe the principles that they already believed to be valid: “reaffirmed,” “validated,” “put depth to,” “reinforced,” “consistent with,” “further enhanced,” “solidifies,” “stronger stances,” “embodying it even more,” “more confidence,” “bolstered,” and “already believed.”

Kohlberg detailed justice as the central principle of his stages of moral development. One participant actually commented on the relationship between morality and justice:

> Morality and ethics I think are a personal thing. You know, they're often related to faith, they're related to worldview, they’re related to justice and how we want to see the world and you know, maybe related to politics, all these things… The class allowed maybe more actual reflection and maybe a little more confidence in approaching things from a moral or justice perspective.

While this participant acknowledges that justice plays a major role in morality, most of the participants did not mention justice within their narratives. In opposition of the notion of justice, Gilligan (1982) suggested that moral action is based on care and responsibility rather than fairness. Gilligan (1982) claimed that individuals use moral reasoning through a commitment to certain relationships. As discussed within several contexts, the participants within this study found relationships to be a significant contribution to moral reasoning and reinforcement. One participant shared, “Relationships was my biggest takeaway. And I mean it was not only relationships that were built among colleagues in there, but it just enhanced my thinking of students, student-to-student relationships, and student-to teacher-relationships.” Another participant said, “I think trust is an emotion and without that trust, without that emotion of trust, I personally don't learn from other people.” These participants

demonstrated that care and relationships were significant to their learning as well as to their moral reinforcement.

Summary of the Interpretation of Findings

Since this research dealt with individual's reflections, experiences, and perceptions, there were multiple ways to interpret the findings and the emergent theory. According to Charmaz (2006), "the theory depends on the researcher's view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it" (p. 130). This discussion offered one interpretation of the findings, namely, that moral reinforcement is a possible outcome for adult learners in learner-centered practice. Additionally, the researcher searched for competing explanations. However, the specific approach of this study was unique and little or no research could be found with an alternative explanation regarding the relationship of the data.

The findings of this study suggest that adult learners in learner-centered practice settings experience moral reinforcement. According to participants, moral reinforcement was a result of personal motivation and effort, reflection and consideration, peer collaboration and support, and perspective scaffolding. The findings of this study were discussed in the context of the research questions to demonstrate that the interpretation of findings was relevant and that this research was directly related to the questions that guided this study. The findings were also situated in the literature and consistencies were found in the fields of learner-centered practice, morality of instruction and learning, andragogy, cognitivism and constructivism, and moral development theory. The findings fill a gap in current literature by describing the relationship of moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice in the context of adult learners. The findings build upon current research by providing a new understanding of the concepts at hand.

Revisiting Researcher Assumptions

It is important to revisit the assumptions that were presented in Chapter 1. Four assumptions were stated at the start of this study, based on the researcher's experiences and expectations. The four assumptions identified at the inception of this study are discussed next, taking into consideration the analysis of this study's findings.

The first assumption underlying this research was that the researcher had the ability to set aside existing theoretical ideas to allow for an emergent theory. The researcher acknowledged early in the study that preconceived notions existed and should be addressed to avoid research bias. The researcher believes that learner-centered practice is an effective instructional model, but as this study is not offering recommendations for best practice, this bias did not affect the outcome of the study. Additionally, elements of multi-grounded theory were incorporated into the research design, which allowed for a comparison of existing frameworks to the emergent theory to reinforce the validity of the study. Instead of trying to ignore preexisting theoretical ideas, the researcher used certain theoretical frameworks in a constructive way within the data analysis to validate the emergent theory.

The second assumption was that the assessment of programs and courses through the Learner-Centered Rubric for Observation Protocol [LCROP] reflected the actual and consistent practice for qualification for inclusion in this study. The researcher used the LCROP (see Appendix C) during the observations to determine if the session was learner-centered. The researcher developed the LCROP, based on research by the American Psychological Association (1993; 1997), McCombs and Whisler (1997), McCombs and Miller (2007), and Weimer (2013). Every program and course that was included in this study had to score above 75% to ensure that the research settings were truly learner-centered. One

research setting was observed but it did not qualify as learner-centered based on the LCROP, so it was not included in this study. This disqualification of a research setting demonstrates that the researcher only used the programs and courses that exhibited the actual and consistent practice necessary for inclusion in this study.

The third assumption posited that learners' responses about their critical thinking, meaning construction, moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centeredness reflected an honest evaluation of themselves and their learning. The participants of this study were ensured confidentiality multiple times throughout the research process. The participants were assigned pseudonyms and all identifying information was removed and disassociated with the audio recordings and transcriptions. The names of the research settings were also changed to protect the identity of the participants. The participants were reminded before each interview that their responses would remain confidential. Thus, the participants had no reason not to share an honest evaluation of themselves and their learning. Moreover, some participants included comments that were less than positive regarding their situations or experiences, which demonstrates that they were open and honest in their responses.

The fourth and final assumption was that learner-centered practice provided the opportunity for moral development and moral reasoning processes based on learner-centered practice characteristics. This assumption held true given that the participants discussed moral development and moral reasoning within the context of their learner-centered program or course. The participants expressly stated that their learning environment allowed for a reinforcement of their moral understandings.

Revisiting Study Limitations

Limitations were initially noted within the methodology chapter. It was necessary to revisit these limiting conditions to acknowledge how the limitations were addressed and minimized within this study. As previously noted, this study was limited by the following factors:

1. This study is transferable to higher education institutions of similar demographics and other characteristics similar to the sample population and research settings. For the results of this study to be more transferable, multiple learner-centered classrooms were found with a variety of participants.
2. This study was limited by the self-reporting nature of the interviews. Truthfulness and accuracy were dependent on the nature of the responses. However, the observations through the observation protocol were used to support the interview responses.
3. This study was limited by the characteristics of the sample population. Those who volunteered to participate were likely to have differing characteristics as opposed to non-volunteers. Having participants from multiple research settings in multiple areas helped to broaden the scope of the study.
4. This study was limited by the utilization of purposeful sampling. Different voices and perspectives might have offered alternative views than those shared by the participants of the sample. Findings were less transferable than if this study had used a random sample. However, purposeful sampling was necessary for this study given the research design and methodology, since participants had to meet certain guidelines to be part of this study.

5. This study was limited by the data collection method of phone interviews. Interviews over the phone, rather than face-to-face, were the only appropriate method for data collection as the participants and research were dispersed in different geographical locations. One disadvantage of phone interviews was the inability to observe participants' non-verbal gestures and behaviors. However, the researcher made sure to be aware of the participants' verbal cues, such as changes in inflection, tone, and expression to compensate for this disadvantage. The researcher also met most of the participants face-to-face during the observations, which helped to have prior knowledge of their behavior and expression.
6. This study was limited by the nature of the adult learning settings, as they varied in size, time, activities, learning goals, and other such characteristics. A different variation of learning settings may have produced different results. One the other hand, having multiple types of research settings allowed for a more diverse group of participants, which allowed for greater transferability.
7. This study was limited by the demographics of the participants. With only one male as opposed to twelve female participants, the findings are not necessarily transferable to learning settings with different gender ratios. Having an equal number of male and female participants may have led to different discussions and findings. However, females make up the majority of students enrolled in higher education (Conger & Dickson, 2017). So, this study was consistent with the female-dominated learning settings that currently exist in higher education.
8. This study was limited by the quantity of participants, as the findings may have been different with a larger number of participants. Increasing the sample size could have

broadened the overall assessment and provided further insight to the essential themes. A larger sample would have also allowed for greater transferability of findings (this is discussed in more detail in the "Recommendations" section of this chapter). However, by way of thick, rich description and detailed information regarding study participants, research settings, and methods, findings could be applied to other contexts.

9. This study was limited by the time frame, as moral development was examined within a short period of time. The research criteria designated that courses needed to be at least six weeks in length to ensure an appropriate amount of time for research participants to experience learner-centered practice. Data was actually collected over a six-month period and the participants were part of their learning program for at least three months to three years, the majority of which were in their program for at least one year. This study was able to interview participants that experiences learner-centered practice for an extended period of time, which added to the credibility of the findings.
10. This study was limited by the exploratory nature of this study in an attempt to develop a theoretically based description of moral development and moral reasoning in the context of learner-centered practice. The grounded theory methodology required a focused approach with purposeful sampling of participants. While the study's findings are not necessarily transferable to the experiences of all adult learners in a learner-centered context, this study added a detailed understanding of the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice for adult learners. This study also created a foundation for how adult learners' experiences and perceptions might prompt future research.

As with all research, there were limitations of this study. Nevertheless, these limitations did not take away from this study's findings and implications for practice and future research.

Recommendations

The researcher offers recommendations based on the findings, analysis, discussion, and limitations of this study. Implications for practice are applicable to educators, learners, and higher education institutions. Recommendations for future inquiry are provided to continue developing this research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts within this study.

Implications for Practice

The implications of these findings are intended to augment the understanding of how moral development and moral reasoning are integrated in learner-centered practice for adult learners. The findings of this study provide meaningful implications for lifelong learners and their learning, educators and their curriculum design, and higher education institutions attempting to meet society's expectations to create a nation of learners.

This study demonstrated that intentionality is significant for learners and their decision to involve themselves in a learning program. Learners should have a desire to learn and put effort into their learning to create more meaningful experiences. Learners enrolled in higher education institutions have a unique opportunity to choose their paths and develop skills for lifelong learning. Participants in this study also named relationships as one of the key takeaways from their learning program. Fostering positive relationships with one's instructor and peers helps develop more profound learning. A community of learning was the most common theme among the participants. Participants in this study used relationships for professional development, as well as personal support, which aided in their learning as well as

their lives outside of the classroom. Finally, learners should be reflective about their learning to grow and develop habitual thinking. Learners in this study used reflection and relationships to scaffold their existing perspectives and develop skills necessary for lifelong learning.

Educators have the responsibility to design environments that maximize learning. Learner-centered practice is unique, in that instructors relinquish control over the learning and focus on teaching learners how to become self-directed. Educators should structure the learning in a way that guides learners how to learn so that they can take responsibility for their own learning. This active collaboration enhances learning for all by drawing on the unique capacities and experiences of each individual learner (McCombs & Whisler, 2007). Furthermore, instructors should foster an environment where dialogue about moral issues can occur. Participants in this study named peer discussion and collaboration as particularly important for developing their perspectives and opening themselves up to different points of view. Open dialogue can introduce new ways of thinking, as well as can reinforce current thoughts and practices. The most challenging part of learner-centered practice is assessment. Educators should be open to less restrictive assessments when evaluating their students' work and learning. This is also an implication for higher education institutions to see beyond exams and grades and focus on the learner and their learning.

The purpose of this study was not to recommend best practice. However, prior research and this study's findings should not be ignored. The WGHE (1994) advocated the need for change in higher education through the creation of a nation of learners. Even though a learner-centered instruction style has been advocated to replace teacher-centered practice in higher education, teacher-centered instruction may still be dominant in actual practice (Liu et

al., 2006; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Weimer, 2013). Most instructors in university settings still use traditional, teacher-centered teaching styles despite the plea for a paradigm shift to learner-centered practice (Liu et al., 2006). Other researchers found that students and professionals strongly agreed that higher education should assist learners to develop their moral and ethical reasoning (Dey & Associates, 2010). The current study also found that moral reinforcement is a possible outcome of learner-centered practice. Furthermore, higher education institutions have the burden of catering to multiple groups: students, educators, and the funding bodies. With states having such specific guidelines on what constitutes learning, the institutions and educators are forced to adhere to strict standards set out by those that fund the institution. Seeking a compromise for all those involved may be the best way to adopt learner-centered practice as a more common method of instruction. A compromise may be to create a new rubric for student assessment or a new method for evaluating instructor competence (beyond student grades). If higher education institutions want to create a nation of lifelong learners and have value beyond degree attainment, colleges and universities should consider establishing learner-centered practice as a more common method of instruction within their institutions.

Recommendations for Future Inquiry

The researcher recommends further studies be conducted to develop a greater understanding of the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice for adult learners in higher education institutions. The following recommendations for future inquiry should be considered.

The goal of this research was to have ten to fifteen participants, with the final number of participants being thirteen. This study initiated the discussion of the relationship of

morality and learner-centered practice, but this study was still limited by the quantity of participants, as the findings may have been different with a larger number of participants. Increasing the sample size could broaden the overall assessment and provide further insight into the essential themes. Conducting this same study with a larger sample population would allow for greater transferability of findings and greater credibility of the emergent theory.

A similar study using the same criteria should be undertaken among adult learners who are enrolled in teacher-centered learning settings. The purpose of this would be to compare and contrast the moral experiences, reflections, and perceptions of learners in more traditional class settings with those in this study who were enrolled in learner-centered practice. Teacher-centered practice is guided by structures and sequences of activities that are determined by the instructor, such as lectures, tests, whole group instruction, reliance on textbooks, and presentational uses of technology (Brown et al., 2012; Cuban, 1983; Schuh, 2004). It would be interesting to compare whether teacher-centered practice yields similar results as was found in learner-centered practice to better understand if moral reinforcement is unique to certain instructional practices.

Another research study should be undertaken with slightly different data collection techniques. Conducting pre-session and post-session participant interviews before and after participants experience learner-centered practice would shed light on how moral reflections and experiences take place over time. It may be challenging to find participants before they experienced learner-centered practice, but a successful study would provide insight into the impact of participants' moral development and moral reasoning over a specific period in their lives. It would also be interesting to conduct a study focusing on how significant the length of time spent in learner-centered practice influences participant perceptions and experiences.

Similarly, the demographics and characteristics of the participants were not really taken into account in this study. Using a different sampling technique, such as stratified sampling, would allow for a comparison between genders, ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds, which would result in a more complete understanding of the emergent theory, as well as greater transferability of findings.

Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore learner-centered practice within higher education institutions and add to our understanding of the moral development and moral reasoning processes of adult learners. This grounded theory study intended to provide insight into the moral reflections, experiences, and perceptions of adult learners in the context of learner-centered practice. This study addressed the need identified in the literature for research within higher education institutions concerning the relationship between moral development, moral reasoning, and learner-centered practice. This study also added to the growing body of literature in the fields of morality and learner-centered practice, as well as to that of higher education research. Examining learner-centered practice not only provides a deeper conceptual understanding, but also creates an opportunity to improve existing teaching practices within higher education institutions. Specifically, conducting a grounded theory study on this topic generated an emergent contribution to researchers' and educators' knowledge of moral reinforcement as an outcome of learner-centered practice. A better understanding of how learner-centered practice contributes to a learner's moral development and moral reasoning has implications for lifelong learners and their learning, educators and their curriculum design, and higher education institutions attempting to meet society's expectations to create a nation of learners.

In analyzing the data, five overarching themes emerged: *intentionality, reflective processes, community of learning, perspective scaffolding, and moral reinforcement.* *Intentionality* initiated adult learners' experiences due to their desire to learn and their choice to participate in learner-centered practice. Participants also referred to choices in the context of right and wrong. Participants, then, put forth effort and determination once they were in a learner-centered context. *Reflective processes* encompassed consideration and growth through the progression of learner-centered practice. Reflection also allowed moral considerations to be at the forefront of one's thinking. *Community of learning* was the most shared theme amongst participants, which involved collaboration with thinking partners and allowed for the development of a support network. *Perspective scaffolding* encompassed several concepts to frame the perspectives of the learners, such as fostering awareness, thinking beyond oneself, constructing understanding, and developing a life force. Finally, *moral reinforcement* emerged through the confirmation and strengthening of existing understandings of morality. The resulting emergent theory was the *theoretical model for moral reinforcement in learner-centered practice*.

Final Thoughts

As this study comes to a close, I want to reflect on the journey that I undertook as a researcher and as a learner. This research was the most challenging venture I have ever been part of, but it was an exciting process and I am proud of the end result. I had to overcome a few obstacles along the way – not enough participants, facilitators not allowing me into their classrooms, observations resulting in no research setting – but I was grateful at how smoothly it all came together in the end. The participants and facilitators that I did end up working with were kind and supportive of this study, acknowledging that it could have important

implications to the corresponding fields of research. The most interesting result of this study was how nearly all of the participants shared the same things; they used similar phrases, had similar experiences, and had similar outcomes in their learning. I honestly thought I would have to dig much deeper to get any significant data from the interviews. It was the participants' shared experiences that alerted me to the fact that this was a study that could make a legitimate contribution to my fields of study.

At the start of this research, I had anticipated that a clearer integration of moral development and moral reasoning would emerge within learner-centered practice. I had hoped for a deeper look into the moral development and moral reasoning processes. Instead, this study shed light on moral reinforcement as a possible outcome of learner-centered practice. I hope that this dissertation lays a foundation for future inquiry and can be expounded upon for the benefit of learners, educators, and higher education institutions alike. I am grateful for all that I have learned through this long and arduous process and for all that I continue to learn as a researcher and lifelong learner.

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APPENDIX A
Facilitator Recruitment Script

Good afternoon,

My name is Dani Erickson and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at the University of Idaho. My dissertation is about the educational experiences of adult learners, specifically, the relationship between moral development and learner-centered practice. I am looking for classes/courses/workshops/programs that are within a higher education institution.

As the facilitator of several professional development courses, you may have several opportunities for me to conduct my research. The course must be learner-centered and at least six weeks in length. I plan to do a couple observations over the course of the semester to ensure that the class is learner-centered, and then I will be asking learners to volunteer to be interviewed at the end of the course semester. Volunteers may participate if they are age 21 or older to be considered an adult learner.

I have attached a copy of my observation protocol for you to look at if you like (these are the learner-centered elements that I am looking for in a class for the purposes of my dissertation).

If you would like to allow me to observe your classroom, please reply to this email or call at _____. Otherwise, if you know of other facilitators that may be interested, would you please pass this on to them.

I greatly appreciate your help with my doctoral journey. Thank you!

Dani Erickson
Graduate Research Assistant
Doctoral Student
College of Education
University of Idaho

APPENDIX B
Participant Recruitment Script

Good afternoon,

My name is Dani Erickson and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at the University of Idaho. I sat in on the _____ professional development/course, which was wonderful! I met a lot of amazing people while I was there and I would love the chance to speak with some of you again.

You are invited to participate in a research study to share your perspectives in respect to your adult educational experiences. My goal is to better understand the relationship between moral development and learner-centered practice. You may participate if you are age 21 or older and are part of the _____ program/course. Participation in this research involves two to three interviews, 15-30 minutes each, occurring whenever it is convenient for you. These can occur over the phone, in-person, or through video conferencing, whichever you prefer.

There is no expected risk to this study. The information you share with me will be completely confidential. You will be assigned (or you can give me one!) a pseudonym and your responses will not have any identifying information. The information I gather will inform the fields of adult learning, moral development, and higher education.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please reply to this email or call at _____. This study will be limited to the first 15 volunteers, so if you are interested, let me know right away!

Thank you for your help with my doctoral journey,

Dani Erickson
Graduate Research Assistant
Doctoral Student
College of Education
University of Idaho

APPENDIX C

Learner-Centered Rubric for Observation Protocol [LCROP]

Role of the Facilitator	
	The facilitator is clear about high expectations for all learners
	The facilitator acts as a resource and guide to support and enhance learning for all
	Gives constructive feedback to all learners
	Encourages repeated attempts
	Facilitates learner participation, discussion, and shared decision-making
	Encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and meaning construction
	The facilitator provides structure without being overly directive
	The facilitator consistently listens to and respects each learner's perspective
Role of the Learner	
	Learners have control over what they learn by choosing their own projects
	Learners work at their own individual pace
	Learners demonstrate excitement about learning new things
	Learners are actively engaged participants in learning activities
	Learners listen to each other, participate in discussions, and respond to each other respectfully
Instructional Strategies	
	Time is flexible to match learner needs
	Learning activities are personally relevant to learners
	Learners have increasing responsibility for the learning process
	Tasks and activities are challenging and stimulate thinking
	Learners refine their understanding by using critical thinking skills and effective learning strategies
	Peer review, peer learning, and peer teaching are used as learning tools
Content and Curriculum	
	Tasks stimulate the varied interests of learners
	The content functions as a vehicle for skill development
	Learners understand how to critically analyze information and engage in higher-order thinking
	Learners understand how to learn and be self-directed learners
	Activities encourage learners to work collaboratively with their peers
	A significant amount of discussion is related to content and occurs between and among learners
Assessment	
	Learners have opportunities for self-assessment and reflection
	Different learners are assessed in different ways to promote learning
	Peer review and assessment is promoted
	The facilitator provides continual and constructive feedback for individual growth and progress
	Learners are given opportunities to choose, design, and revise methods of demonstrating achievement
	The facilitator emphasizes the importance of learning and understanding, rather than grades

**To be considered "learner-centered," the learning session must score above 75% (24 of 31 items)*

APPENDIX D
LCROP Observation Mark-Ups

Leadership in Education Program [2-10-18]

Role of the Facilitator	
x	The facilitator is clear about high expectations for all learners – shares norms and commitment expectations at beginning of workshop
x	The facilitator acts as a resource and guide to support and enhance learning for all – guides the discussion at first, then allows learners to take over, modeling
x	Gives constructive feedback to all learners – "I'm hearing some groups discuss this and I think that's great… Another way to think about it is this way… How else can we think through that…"
	Encourages repeated attempts
x	Facilitates learner participation, discussion, and shared decision-making – much peer discussion and participation
x	Encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and meaning construction – thinking about thinking, problem-solving some of the shared issues, attempts to resolve problems of practice
x	The facilitator provides structure without being overly directive – partial front of classroom, allows peer collaboration
x	The facilitator consistently listens to and respects each learner's perspective – asks for reflections, reactions, responses to learning
Role of the Learner	
x	Learners have control over what they learn by choosing their own projects – can use the discussion to apply to own work/project
x	Learners work at their own individual pace – allowed more time if needed
x	Learners demonstrate excitement about learning new things – ask to know more, expand further
x	Learners are actively engaged participants in learning activities – active participation
x	Learners listen to each other, participate in discussions, and respond to each other respectfully – commitment to share air time, to actively participate with each other, to be fully present, and to share with colleagues
Instructional Strategies	
x	Time is flexible to match learner needs – allowed more time if needed for further discussion
x	Learning activities are personally relevant to learners – want to apply what is learned to their own classroom and students
	Learners have increasing responsibility for the learning process
x	Tasks and activities are challenging and stimulate thinking – learners asked to challenge current thinking
x	Learners refine their understanding by using critical thinking skills and effective learning strategies – use of schemas, modeling, reflection, critical thinking, peer discussion
x	Peer review, peer learning, and peer teaching are used as learning tools – encouraged to learn from each other and build ideas on one another
Content and Curriculum	
x	Tasks stimulate the varied interests of learners – chose topics that would interest everyone, such as a discussion about cats and dogs; allowed to plan the way that fits each learner best
x	The content functions as a vehicle for skill development – intent to build communication, problem-solving, collaboration skills, modeling workshop model
x	Learners understand how to critically analyze information and engage in higher-order thinking

	– facilitator modeled higher order thinking, use schemas to relate information, applied knowledge about on topic to relate to children in the classroom
x	Learners understand how to learn and be self-directed learners – understand how to learn through modeling and critical thinking
x	Activities encourage learners to work collaboratively with their peers – peer discussion, peer reflections, group work
x	A significant amount of discussion is related to content and occurs between and among learners – lot of discussion among peers relating to the topic at hand
Assessment	
x	Learners have opportunities for self-assessment and reflection – reflection, reaction, responses through journaling
	Different learners are assessed in different ways to promote learning
x	Peer review and assessment is promoted – learners encouraged to bring learning to peers outside of the program to promote understanding and collaboration
x	The facilitator provides continual and constructive feedback for individual growth and progress – continual feedback and discussion provided
	Learners are given opportunities to choose, design, and revise methods of demonstrating achievement
x	The facilitator emphasizes the importance of learning and understanding, rather than grades – no grades, focus on leaving with greater understanding and ways to apply learning to classrooms

**27 of 31: 87% - considered "learner-centered"*

*** Data in red based on program documents, personal statements of learners and facilitators, and program observations*

Northwest Collaborative Network Program – Region 2 [3/1/18]

Role of the Facilitator	
x	The facilitator is clear about high expectations for all learners – objective to provide intensive professional development; teacher leader commitments clear; norms expressed at beginning of workshop
x	The facilitator acts as a resource and guide to support and enhance learning for all – multiple facilitators to guide and support learning
	Gives constructive feedback to all learners
x	Encourages repeated attempts – learners are able to revise their teaching unit after teaching to peers and before their final submission
x	Facilitates learner participation, discussion, and shared decision-making – several facilitators support learners' discussion and participation; one norm is 'shared participation' and 'be fully present'
x	Encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and meaning construction – one objective was to solve an open-ended problem with time and material constraints; constructivist practices discussion
x	The facilitator provides structure without being overly directive – explains the norms of the day; workshops throughout the day but can choose which to attend
x	The facilitator consistently listens to and respects each learner's perspective – allows learners to lead the conversation and supports the discussion; one norm is 'committed listening'
Role of the Learner	
x	Learners have control over what they learn by choosing their own projects – learners can choose which workshops they wish to participate in throughout the session
x	Learners work at their own individual pace – learners can complete online course at their own pace before end of the PD
x	Learners demonstrate excitement about learning new things – learners seem to be excited about learning new things to apply to their classroom
x	Learners are actively engaged participants in learning activities – active engagement in group activities and discussion
x	Learners listen to each other, participate in discussions, and respond to each other respectfully – consistently throughout the learning session
Instructional Strategies	
x	Time is flexible to match learner needs – learners can complete their units anytime before the end of the PD; can complete online course at own pace
x	Learning activities are personally relevant to learners – all activities are centered around the learners' profession as teachers
x	Learners have increasing responsibility for the learning process – learners are in charge of creating workshops based on their passions
x	Tasks and activities are challenging and stimulate thinking – thinking design bags to stimulate thinking and challenge learners; team collaboration activities;
x	Learners refine their understanding by using critical thinking skills and effective learning strategies – one norm is 'powerful questioning with the intent to understand more deeply'
x	Peer review, peer learning, and peer teaching are used as learning tools – peers facilitate the workshops throughout the day; peer learning and instruction
Content and Curriculum	
x	Tasks stimulate the varied interests of learners – tasks are intended to stimulate all learners; able to apply strategies to individual interests/professions
x	The content functions as a vehicle for skill development – shares strategies to use in their own

	classroom; collaboration skills; engaging in powerful questioning; problem solving; reflection; constructivist practices
x	Learners understand how to critically analyze information and engage in higher-order thinking – higher order thinking; annotating text to determine importance
x	Learners understand how to learn and be self-directed learners – learners know how to learn; apply learning strategies to the workshops
x	Activities encourage learners to work collaboratively with their peers – collaboration is central to the goals of the workshop
x	A significant amount of discussion is related to content and occurs between and among learners – nearly all of the discussion occurs between/among learners
Assessment	
x	Learners have opportunities for self-assessment and reflection – opportunities for reflection throughout the learning session and throughout the year; one workshop started with a self-assessment about constructivist understandings
x	Different learners are assessed in different ways to promote learning – learners are assessed based on their choice of unit
x	Peer review and assessment is promoted – learners can develop a unit of their choice for review with their peers
	The facilitator provides continual and constructive feedback for individual growth and progress
x	Learners are given opportunities to choose, design, and revise methods of demonstrating achievement – learners can develop a unit of their choice for review with their peers
x	The facilitator emphasizes the importance of learning and understanding, rather than grades – emphasizes individual projects and the sharing of information, rather than grades

**29 of 31 items: 94% - considered "learner-centered"*

***Data in red based on program documents, personal statements of learners, and program observations*

Northwest Collaborative Network Program – Region 1 [3/8/18]

Role of the Facilitator	
x	The facilitator is clear about high expectations for all learners – facilitator presents enduring understandings, framing our work, and norms at the beginning of the program
x	The facilitator acts as a resource and guide to support and enhance learning for all – guides the learners through simple structure and learning opportunities
x	Gives constructive feedback to all learners – asks for constructive feedback for the learners who present the workshops
	Encourages repeated attempts
x	Facilitates learner participation, discussion, and shared decision-making – encourages learner participation and discussion; guides discussion through writing prompts and reflection opportunities
x	Encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and meaning construction – encourages learners to think through possible/realistic problems they face in the classroom
x	The facilitator provides structure without being overly directive – structures program model but allows peers to teach each other and facilitate each of the workshops
x	The facilitator consistently listens to and respects each learner's perspective – facilitators provide time to listen to learners and respect each perspective; acknowledges good/interesting/informative ideas
Role of the Learner	
x	Learners have control over what they learn by choosing their own projects – learners choose which workshops to attend; learners choose what they want their cumulative project to be about
x	Learners work at their own individual pace – learners can complete the online assessments at their own pace
x	Learners demonstrate excitement about learning new things – learners are excited to present their workshops; participants are excited to attend the workshops of their choice
x	Learners are actively engaged participants in learning activities – one norm is to be an engaged and active learner; active learning activities (creativity sculptures; sketchnotes; map creation)
x	Learners listen to each other, participate in discussions, and respond to each other respectfully – one norm is to be a thoughtful and considerate participant
Instructional Strategies	
x	Time is flexible to match learner needs – learners can complete the online course at their own pace
x	Learning activities are personally relevant to learners – learners can choose what their passions to be the topic of their presentations
x	Learners have increasing responsibility for the learning process – learners can choose to take on leadership/presenter roles after going through the first year of the PD; increasing responsibility
x	Tasks and activities are challenging and stimulate thinking – one norm is to be a powerful, purposeful, and inquisitive questioner
x	Learners refine their understanding by using critical thinking skills and effective learning strategies – critically think about informative texts
x	Peer review, peer learning, and peer teaching are used as learning tools – peer teaching and learning are key components of the program
Content and Curriculum	
x	Tasks stimulate the varied interests of learners – program involves multiple learning opportunities, such as workshops, online coursework, coaching, and leadership training
x	The content functions as a vehicle for skill development – active learning strategies; critically analyzing text; group learning activities; peer discussion;

x	Learners understand how to critically analyze information and engage in higher-order thinking – critically analyze informative texts
x	Learners understand how to learn and be self-directed learners – learners utilize learning strategies throughout the workshop to help guide their understanding (i.e.
x	Activities encourage learners to work collaboratively with their peers – collaboration between peers throughout the program
x	A significant amount of discussion is related to content and occurs between and among learners – nearly all discussion is among peers, relating to the content at hand
Assessment	
x	Learners have opportunities for self-assessment and reflection – learners asked to reflect on their personal experiences and their decisions
x	Different learners are assessed in different ways to promote learning – learners are assessed based on the projects that they choose to present at the end of the PD
x	Peer review and assessment is promoted – learners are assessed by their peers when they present their final projects
	The facilitator provides continual and constructive feedback for individual growth and progress
x	Learners are given opportunities to choose, design, and revise methods of demonstrating achievement – learners can design their own project for their final assessment
x	The facilitator emphasizes the importance of learning and understanding, rather than grades – facilitator emphasizes learning over grades

**29 of 31 items: 94% - considered "learner-centered"*

***Data in red based on program documents, personal statements of learners, and program observations*

Communication for Wellbeing and Social Impact Graduate Course [4/19/18]

Role of the Facilitator	
x	The facilitator is clear about high expectations for all learners – facilitator is clear about expectations; syllabus lines out everything needed for success; high expectations
x	The facilitator acts as a resource and guide to support and enhance learning for all – serves as co-learner and guide rather than "topic matter expert"
x	Gives constructive feedback to all learners – provides constructive feedback
x	Encourages repeated attempts – if class missed, there are multiple ways to make it up
x	Facilitates learner participation, discussion, and shared decision-making – shared decision-making and facilitates discussion
x	Encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and meaning construction – practice critically reflective techniques; "discuss topics that are meaningful and connected to critical self-reflection"
x	The facilitator provides structure without being overly directive – structured/organized; students comfortable with improvisation and taking active part in responsibility for learning
x	The facilitator consistently listens to and respects each learner's perspective – respectful of learner perspectives
Role of the Learner	
x	Learners have control over what they learn by choosing their own projects – learners choose several of their own projects, particularly final project
	Learners work at their own individual pace
x	Learners demonstrate excitement about learning new things – projects specifically devoted to happiness; learners enjoy new material
x	Learners are actively engaged participants in learning activities – ability to design learning activities; active engagement
x	Learners listen to each other, participate in discussions, and respond to each other respectfully – peer discussion consistently throughout course
Instructional Strategies	
	Time is flexible to match learner needs
x	Learning activities are personally relevant to learners – ability to choose topics/activities/projects that are personally relevant
x	Learners have increasing responsibility for the learning process – design learning activities; responsible for learning; can choose to make up certain tasks if missed
x	Tasks and activities are challenging and stimulate thinking – evaluation of readings; thoughtful discussions; impact/contributions
x	Learners refine their understanding by using critical thinking skills and effective learning strategies – "practice critically reflective, transformational, and experiential pedagogical techniques"
x	Peer review, peer learning, and peer teaching are used as learning tools – peer review for some projects; peer teaching; peer discussion leaders
Content and Curriculum	
x	Tasks stimulate the varied interests of learners – different discussion leaders each week can tailor topics to their interests
x	The content functions as a vehicle for skill development – goal of course to practice emotional wellbeing
x	Learners understand how to critically analyze information and engage in higher-order thinking – "design, pilot, and critically reflect upon the impact of a project…"

x	Learners understand how to learn and be self-directed learners – learners are "comfortable with improvisation" and take an "active part in their own pedagogical experience"
x	Activities encourage learners to work collaboratively with their peers – encouraged to work collaboratively throughout course
x	A significant amount of discussion is related to content and occurs between and among learners –majority of discussion is led by learners and occurs between learners in online forums and in class
Assessment	
x	Learners have opportunities for self-assessment and reflection – critical self-reflection and discoveries within assignments
	Different learners are assessed in different ways to promote learning
x	Peer review and assessment is promoted – encouraged to seek feedback from peers and mentors
x	The facilitator provides continual and constructive feedback for individual growth and progress – facilitator provides constructive feedback; encourages individual and intellectual growth
x	Learners are given opportunities to choose, design, and revise methods of demonstrating achievement – able to choose final projects and books to review; can design learning activities for class sessions
x	The facilitator emphasizes the importance of learning and understanding, rather than grades – main goal of course is intellectual and emotional growth; grades are distributed, but emphasis on learning

**28 of 31 items: 90% - considered "learner-centered"*

***Data in red based on course syllabus, personal statements of learners, and course observations*

Certified Nursing Assistant Training Program [5/14/18]

Role of the Facilitator	
x	The facilitator is clear about high expectations for all learners – syllabus provided and discussed first week; clear about objectives and expectations throughout course
x	The facilitator acts as a resource and guide to support and enhance learning for all – guided learning by demonstrating how to accomplish tasks/skills; explains why the learning activities are done in a certain way
x	Gives constructive feedback to all learners – constructive feedback to learners
x	Encourages repeated attempts – encouraged repeated attempts to ensure learning has taken place and ensure success; repeated attempts on quizzes
x	Facilitates learner participation, discussion, and shared decision-making – online discussion board for peer learning; guides discussion to allow learners to actively participate in the learning
x	Encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and meaning construction – "anything I missed?"; TED Talk video used to construct meaning and think critically
x	The facilitator provides structure without being overly directive – provides structure but allowed the learners to practice skills amongst themselves and at own pace
x	The facilitator consistently listens to and respects each learner's perspective – asks for feedback; respects learners' perspectives and comments – "thank you for saying that"; "great observation"; "I'm glad you brought this point up"
Role of the Learner	
x	Learners have control over what they learn by choosing their own projects – optional learning activities that learners can choose to complete
x	Learners work at their own individual pace – not enough time within program, learners have the choice to practice skills at home if desired
x	Learners demonstrate excitement about learning new things – not a required program, learners here because they wanted to be
x	Learners are actively engaged participants in learning activities – active learning and active participation throughout course
x	Learners listen to each other, participate in discussions, and respond to each other respectfully – learners are respectful of each other; able to ask questions about potential scenarios
Instructional Strategies	
x	Time is flexible to match learner needs – learners able to practice skills at own pace during lab training
x	Learning activities are personally relevant to learners – all learning activities are relevant to their desire to become a nursing assistant
x	Learners have increasing responsibility for the learning process – asked to demonstrate their knowledge throughout the course;
x	Tasks and activities are challenging and stimulate thinking – TED Talk video; hands-on skills
x	Learners refine their understanding by using critical thinking skills and effective learning strategies – effective learning strategies include active learning, peer review, group work, discussion; critical thinking, "what did I miss?"
x	Peer review, peer learning, and peer teaching are used as learning tools – peer review; peer/group learning;
Content and Curriculum	
	Tasks stimulate the varied interests of learners
x	The content functions as a vehicle for skill development – purpose of course is skill development
	Learners understand how to critically analyze information and engage in higher-order thinking

x	Learners understand how to learn and be self-directed learners – learners required to be self-directed as they practice skills and complete online course
x	Activities encourage learners to work collaboratively with their peers – peers collaborate with each other for skills practice and discussion
	A significant amount of discussion is related to content and occurs between and among learners
Assessment	
	Learners have opportunities for self-assessment and reflection
	Different learners are assessed in different ways to promote learning
x	Peer review and assessment is promoted – peers rate each other during skills practice
x	The facilitator provides continual and constructive feedback for individual growth and progress – facilitator provided constructive feedback throughout course to ensure learning and progress
	Learners are given opportunities to choose, design, and revise methods of demonstrating achievement
x	The facilitator emphasizes the importance of learning and understanding, rather than grades – learners must pass final exams to become certified, but the learning and understanding is most important

**25 of 31 items: 81% - considered "learner-centered"*

***Data in red based on course documents, personal statements of learners, and course observations*

APPENDIX E
Facilitator Informed Consent

FACILITATOR INFORMED CONSENT for a Research Study entitled "The Relationship Between Moral Reinforcement and Learner-Centered Practice in Adult Learners: A Multi-Grounded Theory Study"

This study is being conducted under the direction of Danielle Erickson, a doctoral student within the College of Education at the University of Idaho. This is an opportunity to open your classroom to aid in understanding the relationship between moral development and learner-centered practice. You may participate if the course is a graduate or professional development course within a higher education institution. This course must incorporate learner-centered practice and must be at least six weeks in length or longer.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked questions to determine if your classroom is learner-centered. I will also come into the classroom for observations (no more than three over the course of the class). I will be asking learners from your class to voluntarily participate in interviews. The total time commitment will be approximately 3 hours.

Are there any risks or discomforts? There are no perceived risks associated with participating in this study. To minimize any risks, we will not collect any specific or identifying information and all information will be maintained confidentially. You will be assigned a pseudonym and your responses will not have any identifying information. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain *confidential*. Information obtained through your participation may be used for the purposes of doctoral study, possible publications, and presentations.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? Although there are no personal benefits, you can expect to make a general contribution to the fields of adult learning, moral development, and higher education.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study without consequence. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be removed as long as it is identifiable.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Danielle Erickson by email at eric0097@vandals.uidaho.edu. Or you may contact Michael Kroth at mkroth@uidaho.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Idaho's Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone 208-885-6162 or email at irb@uidaho.edu or jlwalker@uidaho.edu.

Having read the information provided, you must decide whether or not you wish to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates your willingness to participate.

_____ _____
Facilitator Signature Date

_____
Printed Name

APPENDIX F
Participant Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT for a Research Study entitled
"The Relationship Between Moral Reinforcement and Learner-Centered Practice in Adult Learners: A Multi-Grounded Theory Study"

This study is being conducted under the direction of Danielle Erickson, a doctoral student within the College of Education at the University of Idaho. This is an opportunity to share your perspectives in respect to your adult educational experiences. My goal is to better understand the relationship between moral development and certain teaching practices. You may participate if you are age 21 or older and enrolled in a graduate or professional development course within a higher education institution. This course must incorporate learner-centered practice and must be at least six weeks in length or longer.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in two audiotaped interviews asking about your class experiences. This use of audio devices is solely for the use of transcribing your responses. You have the option to decline the audio if desired. Your total time commitment will be approximately 1 hour.

Are there any risks or discomforts? There are no perceived risks associated with participating in this study. To minimize any risks, we will not collect any specific or identifying information during the interviews and all information will be maintained confidentially. Audio recordings from the interviews will be destroyed after transcription. You will be assigned a pseudonym and your responses will not have any identifying information. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain *confidential*. Information obtained through your participation may be used for the purposes of doctoral study, possible publications, and presentations.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? Although there are no personal benefits, you can expect to make a general contribution to the fields of adult learning, moral development, and higher education.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study without consequence. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be removed as long as it is identifiable.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Danielle Erickson by email at eric0097@vandals.uidaho.edu. Or you may contact Michael Kroth at mkroth@uidaho.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Idaho's Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone 208-885-6162 or email at irb@uidaho.edu or jlwalker@uidaho.edu.

Having read the information provided, you must decide whether or not you wish to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates your willingness to participate.

_____ _____
Participant Signature Date

_____
Printed Name

APPENDIX G
First Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. My name is Dani Erickson and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at the University of Idaho. I am going to tell you a little bit about the study and then I will ask you a few questions about your experiences as a learner.

Learner-centered practice is a method of teaching that involves certain tactics, such as peer interaction, collaboration, constructive feedback, student responsibility for learning, critical thinking, and teachers as co-learners. The practice utilizes these techniques with the intention of promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). I want to better understand the relationship between moral development and learner-centered practice.

The information you share with me today is completely confidential. You will be assigned a pseudonym and your responses will not have any identifying information. Your responses will be combined with responses from other participants to inform the study. I want to understand your perceptions, so there is no right or wrong answer; I simply want to know how you feel about these ideas.

To ensure that I am able to capture accurate and complete responses, I would like to audio record this interview. The recording will be transcribed and all names and places will be removed so as to protect your identity. Recordings will be destroyed after transcription. Do you agree to be audio recorded for the purposes of transcription?

Initial Questions for Rapport:

1. What adult learning session were you enrolled in?
    a. How long did this learning session last?
    b. How long have you been part of this program?
2. Why did you participate in this program? (Prompts: Program completion? Professional development? Requirement? Fun?)
3. Can you tell me about this program?
    a. What kind of self-directed learning activities did you do?

Main Interview Questions:

1. How do you feel this learning session has impacted your critical thinking ability?
    a. How did you exercise critical thinking skills in your learning during this program?
    b. Can you give me an example of this critical thinking?
    c. Do you think this program impacted the way that you think through issues?
2. While engaged in your program, what have you observed or experienced that has challenged your worldview?
3. What do you think of now when you hear the term moral development?
4. Is there anything else you would like to add that we did not discuss?

APPENDIX H
Second Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed again. As you know, I want to understand the relationship between moral development and certain teaching practices, so the purpose of this interview is to see if there has been any change over the course of the learning session.

I want to remind you that the information you share with me today is completely confidential. You have been assigned a pseudonym and your responses do not have any identifying information. Your responses will be combined with responses from other participants to inform the study. Some of these questions will be similar to questions I asked you in the previous interview. I want you to think about how you feel at this moment in time, knowing there are no right or wrong answers.

I would like to audio record this interview again for the purposes of transcription. Do I have your consent to be audio recorded?

Main Interview Questions:

1. Can you tell me again briefly about the adult learning session you were enrolled in?
2. When you think about a moral question what kind of question comes to mind?
    a. What about that question makes you think about morality?
    b. Why does this question come to mind?
    c. Does that force you to think about any other moral issues?
3. Can you think about a time when you had to make a moral decision?
    a. How did this course affect your views about these issues?
4. Can you describe any instances from this course when you thought about being moral?
5. Do you think your moral reasoning has changed since participating in this program?
6. How did you respond to viewpoints that you disagreed with or made you feel uncomfortable?
7. Was there anything else you would like to add?

Would it be okay if I contacted you again in a month or so for a follow up conversation?

APPENDIX I
Third Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed again. As you know, I want to understand the relationship between moral development and certain teaching practices, so the purpose of this interview is to see if there has been any change over the course of the learning session.

I want to remind you that the information you share with me today is completely confidential. You have been assigned a pseudonym and your responses do not have any identifying information. Your responses will be combined with responses from other participants to inform the study. Some of these questions will be similar to questions I asked you in the previous interview. I want you to think about how you feel at this moment in time, knowing there are no right or wrong answers.

I would like to audio record this interview again for the purposes of transcription. Do I have your consent to be audio recorded?

1. We spoke last time about X… Can you tell me more about why that resonated with you?
2. You defined moral development as X… Is this still how you view moral development?
    a. Based on this definition, do you think your course/program has impacted the way you think about moral development?
    b. Do you think your course/program has impacted your own moral development?
3. When I asked you about a moral question, you responded with X. Why was this the question you focused on?
4. Can you describe for me how you think this course has affected your critical thinking and the way you consider moral issues?
5. Given how you have thought of moral obligations within your profession, how do you understand morality in your life? If at all?
6. What was your biggest takeaway from the program/course?
7. Is there anything else you would like to discuss that we haven't touched on?

APPENDIX J
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter

University *of* Idaho
Office of Research Assurances
Institutional Review Board
875 Perimeter Drive, MS 3010
Moscow ID 83844-3010
Phone: 208-885-6162
Fax: 208-885-5752
irb@uidaho.edu

To:	Michael S. Kroth
Cc:	Danielle Erickson
From:	Jennifer Walker, IRB Coordinator
Approval Date:	January 23, 2018
Title:	In the Eyes of the Learner: The Relationship Between Moral Development and Learner-Centered Practice
Project:	18-015
Certified:	Certified as exempt under category 1,2 at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(1,2).

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for the research project In the Eyes of the Learner: The Relationship Between Moral Development and Learner-Centered Practice has been certified as exempt under the category and reference number listed above.

This certification is valid only for the study protocol as it was submitted. Studies certified as Exempt are not subject to continuing review and this certification does not expire. However, if changes are made to the study protocol, you must submit the changes through VERAS for review before implementing the changes. Amendments may include but are not limited to, changes in study population, study personnel, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment materials, sites of research, etc. If you have any additional questions, please contact me through the VERAS messaging system by clicking the 'Reply' button.

As Principal Investigator, you are responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable FERPA regulations, University of Idaho policies, state and federal regulations. Every effort should be made to ensure that the project is conducted in a manner consistent with the three fundamental principles identified in the Belmont Report: respect for persons; beneficence; and justice. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study personnel have completed the online human subjects training requirement.

You are required to timely notify the IRB if any unanticipated or adverse events occur during the study, if you experience and increased risk to the participants, or if you have participants withdraw or register complaints about the study.