

Treating first-year students like adult learners: Exploring first-year seminar instructors'
classroom environments, teaching techniques, and philosophies

by

Andrew E. Parzyck

B.S., Southern Connecticut State University, 2009
M.S., Central Connecticut State University, 2011

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Department of Educational Leadership
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Abstract

The transition from high school to college is a crucial period for students, marked by personal and academic growth as they adapt to a more independent higher education environment. First-year seminars are offered by colleges and universities to support this transition, emphasizing the importance of instructors recognizing and treating students as adult learners. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the strategies employed by first-year seminar instructors within 4-year higher educational institutions in the New England region of the United States (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, and VT) to cultivate adult-like learning environments and to delve into the potential outcomes associated with this approach. This research drew upon three key adult learning concepts to form the theoretical framework for this study: (a) andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980), (b) the Psychological Teaching Environment (Brockett, 2015), and (c) the Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda, 2012). The primary goal of this investigation was to identify the significant characteristics that contribute to the establishment of adult learner-focused learning environments within first-year seminars. To achieve this, the research was conducted through a basic qualitative study utilizing semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis as the research method. Three rounds of coding cycles were employed: provisional, thematic coding, and pattern coding. The results found that first-year seminar instructors treat their students as adult learners, making it crucial to integrate adult learning theories into their training and teaching practices to enhance educational outcomes. Supporting first-year seminar instructors in understanding and applying these principles is essential due to the significant role they play in shaping the first-year college experience.

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Royce Ann Collins

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ABSTRACT

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the key elements that lay the foundation for the study. The chapter covers the researcher's background, the importance of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the significance of the research, researcher questions, an overview of the research design, including qualitative methodology employed, the operationalization of terms, and the researcher's personal positionality.

First-Year Students as Adult Learners in the College Classroom

Treating first-year college students as adult learners involves recognizing and respecting their distinct characteristics and learning preferences (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980). In this approach, the focus is on: (a) acknowledging learners' autonomy, (b) valuing their prior experiences, and (c) providing education and training that are practical and relevant to their lives. This introduction sets the stage for a discussion on the principles and considerations essential for creating effective learning environments tailored to adult learners' needs and preferences.

Adult learners are individuals who pursue education and learning experiences beyond the typical age of required schooling (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017).

They are characterized by their diverse backgrounds, life experiences, and motivations (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017).

Adult learners come from various walks of life and have a wide range of goals, which may include: (a) career advancement, (b) personal enrichment, (c) skills development, or (d) addressing specific challenges (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017).

They often require flexible learning options due to their busy schedules and responsibilities (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017).

Adult learners tend to be self-directed, drawing upon their prior knowledge and problem-solving

skills to sharpen their learning journeys (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Embracing the concept of lifelong learning, they continue to seek knowledge and personal growth throughout their lives (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Effective education for adult learners should be designed to cater to their unique needs and characteristics, allowing them to achieve their educational and personal goals (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017).

Independence, self-direction, and prior experience are three significant characteristics observed in current first-year college students. These traits have become more pronounced as a result of the coping mechanisms and adaptive behaviors these students were forced to develop in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on education (Keyserlingk et al., 2020). During the pandemic, educational institutions widely transitioned to remote and online learning formats (Baruth et al., 2020; Petroski & Rogers, 2020; Keyserlingk et al., 2020). Consequently, many students acquired proficiency in technology, which now serves as a foundational skill as they enter higher education (Baruth et al., 2020). In addition, the shift to online education fostered greater self-directed learning opportunities and encouraged students to engage in independent learning to varying degrees (Santa-Ramirez et al., 2022).

The significance of how college professors engage with their students carries great importance within the realm of higher education. Understanding and examining how professors treat students like adult learners is a matter of great importance, as it profoundly impacts various aspects of the student's educational journey. This approach not only recognizes and nurtures students' intellectual and personal development but also cultivates a climate of respect and responsibility. In addition, this approach equips students with the essential skills and mindset required to thrive in the real world. This can empower them to embrace independence, foster

critical thinking, and allow students to actively engage in their own educational pursuits. By researching this dynamic, it could be possible to uncover and understand the transformative power of treating college students as capable adult learners, ultimately shaping their trajectory toward success and fulfillment. This background will highlight some key evidence as to why this topic is important.

College represents a significant transition period for students. One where students are expected to take on more responsibility and become independent learners. Treating students like adult learners acknowledges their growing maturity and fosters an environment where they can develop self-reliance and critical thinking skills (Bansal et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2023; Conway, 2023; Noor et al., 2012). Research has shown that this approach helps students transition from a dependent environment like what they might find in high school, to one that encourages autonomy and personal growth. Treating students like adult learners cultivates a sense of respect and dignity within the learning environment. When professors treat students as equals, it demonstrates that their ideas, opinions, and contributions are valued (Murry, 2014; Noor et al., 2012). A respectful approach encourages students to actively engage in class discussions, express their thoughts, and take greater ownership of their education.

College is a time for intellectual exploration and academic development. When professors treat students like adult learners, they create an atmosphere that encourages intellectual growth. This includes providing opportunities for critical thinking, encouraging open dialogue, and challenging students to analyze and synthesize information (Allen et al., 2016). By treating students as capable adult learners, professors foster an environment that promotes intellectual curiosity and encourages students to reach their full potential.

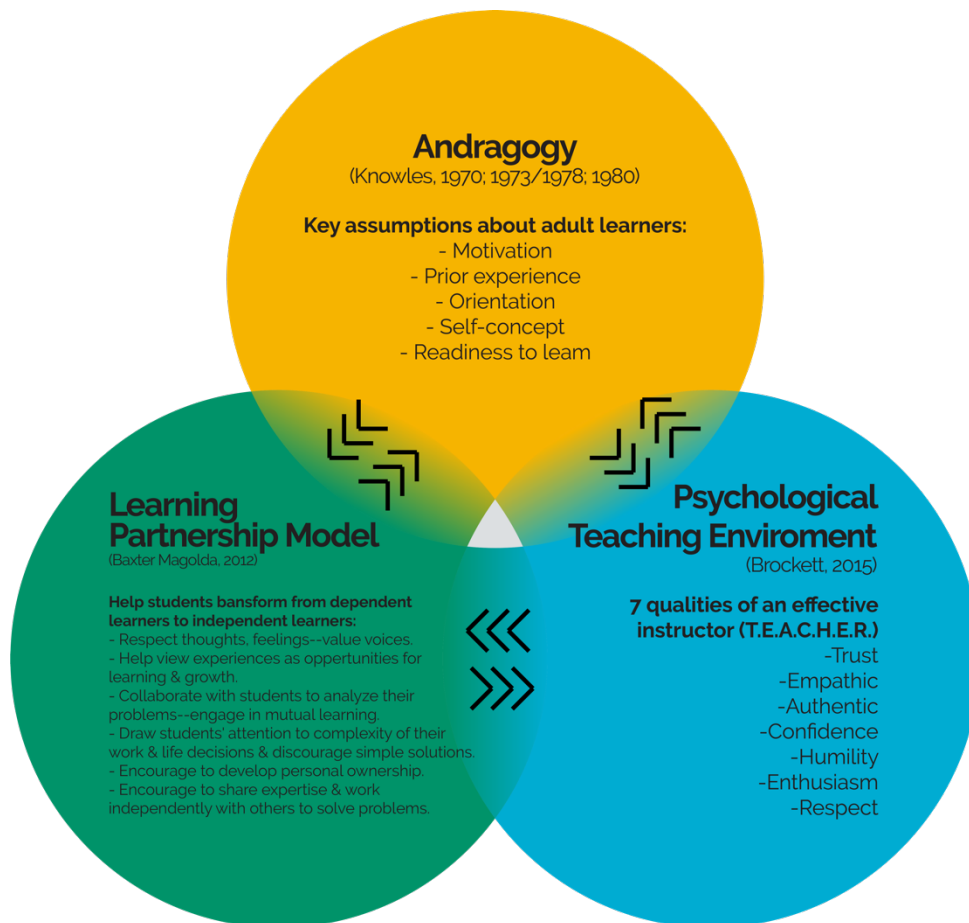
Treating students like adult learners also helps them develop a sense of responsibility and accountability. When students are treated as responsible individuals, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning, actively participate in class, and meet academic expectations (Kasworm, 2012). In addition, professors who engage in activities that promote this style of teaching hold students accountable for their actions and academic performances, which prepares them for the expectations and responsibilities they will encounter in their future careers. College is a stepping stone to the professional world. By treating students like adult learners, professors can help prepare them for workplace realities, where students will most likely be expected to take initiative, problem-solve, and communicate effectively. Learning to navigate a college environment, especially when students are treated as adult learners, helps students develop the skills and mindset needed for success in their future careers and overall success.

Studying how college professors treat students like adult learners is important because: (a) it acknowledges and supports students' intellectual and personal growth, (b) fosters respect and responsibility, and (c) prepares them for the demands of the real world. Understanding this concept may also create an environment that empowers students to become independent, critical thinkers, and active participants in their education.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, the conceptual framework incorporates: (a) Baxter Magolda's (2012) Learning Partnership Model (LPM), (b) Brockett's (2015) Seven Qualities of an Effective Instructor, and (c) Knowles' (1970, 1973/1978, 1980) andragogy framework. These three conceptual lenses were incorporated to examine the extent to which freshman seminar instructors employ adult learning concepts and principles in their first-year seminars.

Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework



Note. This framework illustrates the interplay between the three key concepts and how they are examined within the study.

Andragogy

Using andragogy as a part of the conceptual framework provides a lens through which this study examined the experiences and actions of adult learners in the context of freshman seminar courses. Andragogy, as a theory of adult learning, emphasizes self-directiveness, relevance, and active engagement in the learning process (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015).

Andragogy is a concept that focuses on the unique characteristics of adult learners and their learning preferences. Central to andragogy are a set of assumptions that differentiate adult learning from childhood learning (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015).

Within this there is a significant assumption that: (a) adults are self-directed and motivated to learn based on their own life experiences and goals, (b) that they are more likely to engage in learning that is relevant and applicable to their real-world situations (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015), (c) that adults possess a wealth of prior knowledge and experience, which forms the foundation for new learning (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015), (d) that adult learners prefer a problem-centered and experiential approach, valuing discussions, and active participation (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015), (e) that learning for adults is often driven by immediate needs, making them goal oriented and result driven (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015), (f) that adult learners appreciate a collaborative and participatory learning environment where they can share experiences and learn from peers (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015), and (g) that adults seek to learn practical information that can be applied effectively, emphasizing the importance of learning outcomes that have direct relevance to their personal and professional lives (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015). These assumptions collectively shape the principles of andragogy and inform instructional strategies tailored to adult learners.

This investigation involved identifying and highlighting major responses or actions by the participants that align with the principles of andragogy. These included instances where participants took ownership of their own learning, sought out relevant information, engaged in critical thinking, and applied their knowledge in real-life contexts (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015).

Fundamentally, andragogy facilitates a targeted examination of adult learning encounters within the realm of freshman seminar courses. It empowered this investigation to help unveil the precise characteristics that influence first-year seminar instructors and their approaches toward

students as mature learners. By anchoring this concept within the study, the objective was to enrich the comprehension of how first-year seminar instructors adeptly engaged with their students as adults in the learning process.

Instructor Qualities for Learning Environment

The specific instructor qualities that make for an effective teacher are significant in creating a positive and impactful learning environment. Brockett (2015) outlines seven fundamental attributes that enhance educators' effectiveness in their roles with adult learners, employing the acronym TEACHER. These attributes represent key concepts proposed by Brockett (2015) for effectively instructing adult learners. These qualities include: (a) building trust, (b) demonstrating empathy, (c) teaching authentically, (d) demonstrating confidence, (e) working with humility, (f) inspiring enthusiasm, and (g) generating a sense of respect. By embodying these qualities, teachers can establish a climate of trust, connect with students on a personal level, and create a supportive atmosphere for learning. Brockett's (2015) framework originated from the field and perspective of adult education.

Building a climate of trust is a vital aspect of effective teaching (Brockett, 2015). Recognizing the significance of a safe and supportive learning environment, skilled teachers prioritize the creation of an atmosphere where students feel at ease expressing their thoughts and opinions. Through the establishment of trust, educators foster an environment of mutual respect, open communication, and collaboration.

Displaying empathetic understanding towards learners and their circumstances is an essential trait of effective teachers (Brockett, 2015). Empathy enables educators to forge meaningful connections with their students, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. By demonstrating empathy, educators can provide the necessary support tailored to

the diverse needs of their learners. This empathetic approach ensures that students feel seen, heard, and valued, enhancing their overall engagement, motivation, and academic success.

Being authentic and genuine in how teachers relate to learners is critical to establishing meaningful relationships (Brockett, 2015). Effective educators approach their interactions with sincerity and honesty, fostering an atmosphere of trust and credibility. This authenticity encourages students to feel comfortable and engaged in the learning process, resulting in improved outcomes. When teachers are genuine in their approach, students recognize and appreciate the authenticity, creating deeper connections and enhanced educational experiences.

Demonstrating and modeling confidence is a key attribute of effective teachers (Brockett, 2015). They possess a steady faith in their student's potential and capabilities, consistently communicating high expectations for their success. This confidence in themselves and their expertise fosters trust and respect from students, creating an environment conducive to learning and growth. Students are motivated to engage actively, knowing they have a knowledgeable and confident guide to support their educational journey.

Effective teachers of adults understand the importance of striking a balance between confidence and humility (Brockett, 2015). While confidence is necessary to inspire and guide students, humility, and modesty are equally critical. Teachers recognize their own mistakes and understand that learning is a collaborative journey. By practicing this, educators create a safe and inclusive environment where students feel encouraged to freely express their ideas, ask questions, and explore new concepts without fear of judgment. Humility fosters a sense of openness and promotes a growth mindset, allowing both educators and students to engage in a more meaningful and constructive learning experience together.

An inspiring love for learning can be demonstrated through the power of enthusiasm (Brockett, 2015). By displaying genuine excitement for the subject matter and the growth of their students, instructors can ignite a contagious enthusiasm within the classroom. With their energy and passion, teachers can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that motivates students to actively participate and explore new ideas.

Demonstrating respect for learners and the subject matter is a cornerstone of effective teaching (Brockett, 2015). Effective teachers prioritize creating an environment where students feel respected for their individual perspectives, experiences, and contributions. They foster a classroom culture that values diversity, encourages inclusivity, and promotes mutual respect among students. In addition, teachers who exhibit a profound respect for the content they teach, emphasize the significance and relevance in their students' lives.

By embodying these qualities, effective teachers create a supportive, engaging, and respectful learning environment that empowers students to reach their full potential. These qualities contribute to building strong teacher-student relationships, enhancing student motivation, and fostering the love for lifelong learning.

In essence, applying Brockett's (2015) seven essential instructor qualities for the learning environment allows for a focused exploration of adult learning experiences within the context of freshman seminar courses. It enables this investigation to uncover the specific attributes that contribute to first-year seminar instructors creating an environment that aligns with the needs of adult learners. By grounding this research in this framework, the aim of the study was to enhance the understanding of effective instructional concepts tailored for adult learners in the freshman seminar setting.

Learning Partnership Model

Baxter Magolda's (2010, 2012) Learning Partnership Model (LPM) illuminates the process of fostering learning partnerships between students and educators. The LPM is centered around the construction of individual self-identity by college students and highlights the significance of collaborative relationships within the learning journey. By employing this model, educators can explore strategies to facilitate the transition of students from dependent learners to independent learners, ultimately fostering their autonomy and growth. The LPM is frequently employed and researched within the realm of student development and affairs in higher education.

Within the LPM, several strategies can be implemented (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004), including: (a) acknowledging and respecting students' thoughts, feelings, and perspectives, by valuing their voices, educators can create an inclusive and empowering environment that encourages active participation and engagement, (b) emphasizing the learning and growth opportunities can help students perceive experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, as valuable opportunities for learning and personal growth, (c) reframing challenges as learning experiences allows student's the opportunity to develop a growth mindset and become more resilient in the face of difficulties, (d) allowing instructors to collaborate with students to analyze problems and challenges they encounter, and (e) engaging in mutual learning by encouraging dialogue and active participation fosters this adult learning mindset. This collaborative approach empowers students to take ownership of their learning and problem-solving processes.

To foster critical thinking and a deeper understanding, it's important for educators to highlight the complexity that is embedded within academic and personal decision-making

processes. By drawing students' attention to this complexity, they are encouraged to move beyond simple, surface-level solutions (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Additionally, it's important for educators to cultivate a sense of personal ownership in their student's learning journeys. By encouraging students to take responsibility for their own education, instructors can help their students develop essential self-directed learning skills. By teaching them how to set goals, plan their studies, and monitor their progress, students gain the ability to proactively steer their learning experiences (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Inspiring this sense of ownership can add a greater sense of self-reliance and motivation, as students feel a stronger connection to their educational goals and aspirations.

Promoting interdependence and expertise sharing among students is an essential aspect of effective education. By encouraging collaboration and teamwork, educators create an environment that values and harnesses the diverse expertise and perspective students bring to the learning process (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). This approach fosters a sense of shared responsibility and mutual support, where students learn from one another and collaboratively work to meet their learning goals.

By implementing these strategies, instructors can effectively support students in their transition from dependent learners to independent learners, empowering them to take responsibility for their own learning and development. By fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment, instructors can encourage students to become self-directed and motivated learners. Providing relevant and practical content helps students understand the immediate applicability of their learning. Overall, these strategies enable instructors to guide students in

their journey toward becoming independent learners who are equipped to take charge of their own learning and development.

The utilization of the LPM as a conceptual framework provided a targeted avenue for investigating the adult learning journey in first-year seminar courses for this study. It enabled the exploration of how instructors align their teaching methods with the LPM and how first-year students transition from dependent learners to independent learners. By grounding research in the LPM, this study enhanced the comprehension of impactful instructional strategies for adult learners in first-year seminar settings.

Conceptual Framework Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the teaching methodologies employed by university instructors in first-year seminars, specifically focusing on the perspectives of adult learning. By applying these three theoretical frames, this interdisciplinary study aimed to investigate first-year seminar instructors' approaches to teaching their students and how those align with the education of adult learners. By understanding the teaching approach of first-year seminar instructors, this study uncovered the techniques, strategies, and considerations that shape their teaching practices.

Research Problem

Based on personal discussions held during professional conferences for first-year students, a common conversation expressed by both first-year seminar instructors and academic researchers specializing in first-year seminars is that a primary objective of this focus was to establish a mature learning environment for first-year students within the framework of the first-year seminar course. More specifically, during conversations with academic professionals and scholars, Howard Gardner, and Betsy Barefoot, at the 20th National Conference on Students in

Transition (USC, n.d.) in Atlanta, Georgia, in October 2013, a central theme emerged: there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the practical implementation of first-year seminar instructors in creating an adult like learning environment within first-year seminar courses.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand how and if, in any way, first-year seminar instructors, who teach first-year students at 4-year higher educational institutions, located in the New England region of the United States (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, and VT), construct, or incorporate adult-like learning environments and to explore the outcomes of this approach of constructing adult-like learning environments. By employing adult learning theories, this research identified significant characteristics and aspects that contribute to fostering an adult-like environment in first-year seminars.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

RQ1: If in anyway, how do first-year seminar instructors craft their classroom learning environment to align with strategies for teaching adult learners as framed in the conceptual framework?

RQ2: How do the teaching techniques used by first-year seminar instructors align with the conceptual framework of this study?

RQ3: How do first-year seminar instructors' philosophy of teaching, align with established adult learning principles?

Overview of the Research Design

This section will address the fundamental components of the research design, outlining the key considerations and decisions necessary for how the study was conducted. In addition, this

section will provide a comprehensive overview of the research design, including the reasons for the methodology the study employed, participant population, data collection, and data analysis. This blueprint served as a guide for the study, ensuring that the research objectives were met, and the data collection was reliable and valid. Chapter 3 - provides a comprehensive examination of the research design and offers a thorough framework for how the study was implemented.

The qualitative research design for this study explored the teaching strategies, techniques, and viewpoints that college professors who teach freshmen seminars and analyzed if they aligned with known teaching frameworks for adult learners. The study adopted a basic qualitative research approach to gain an understanding of participants' subjective experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Basic qualitative studies are well suited for exploring relatively uncharted research areas or topics where little prior research exists. By centering on a basic qualitative study, this study aided me in gaining a deep understanding of the research topic, refining research questions, and identifying potential factors of interest (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Not only do qualitative studies allow for a detailed and in-depth exploration of research questions (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), but qualitative research also focuses on the understanding of the context, meanings, and experiences of the individuals, providing rich insights that quantitative methods may not capture (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, qualitative research is particularly useful when the goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of a complex social phenomena (Bhattacharya, 2017; Crotty, 1998; deMarris & Lapan, 2004).

Participant

The sample for this qualitative study was specifically targeted toward 12 instructors who held master's degrees or doctoral degrees and were actively teaching freshman seminar courses

at a 4-year university within the New England region of the United States. Additionally, participants completed a minimum of two years of teaching experience in first-year seminar courses (FYS).

Data Collection

This research involved three different data collection approaches: (a) interviews, (b) observations, and (c) document analysis. These three primary approaches offered a comprehensive perspective of the study.

Interviews

A collection of formal semi-structured interviews was appropriate for this study because they capture the stories of the university instructor's lived experiences and perceptions. Regarding semi-structured interviews Kim (2016) writes "...interviews are the most commonly used data collection method in qualitative research...as we understand that our interviewees will tell stories based on their narrative schema that reflects personal knowledge and experiences arranged by their cognitive strategies" (p. 157). Qualitative interviews are important in qualitative research studies as they allow researchers to explore, understand, and interpret the complexity of human experiences. By providing rich and contextual data, qualitative interviews offer unique insights that can contribute to the conceptual framework of this study by providing insight into the ideas, perceptions, and thoughts first-year seminar instructors have of their first-year seminar students.

During this process, I recorded notes in a researcher's journal. Keeping a researcher's journal or field notes is an essential practice when conducting qualitative interviews (Bhattacharya, 2017; Kim, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Journals allow the researcher's personal reflection and self-awareness to be exposed throughout the research process. I was able

to examine my own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions that may influence data collection and analysis (Bhattacharya, 2017; Saldaña, 2021). This process also promoted reflexivity, ensuring that my perspectives were acknowledged and accounted for. Additionally, the journal served as a valuable record for contextual details relating to the research setting, participants, and interactions. It captured information such as the physical environment, nonverbal cues, and unforeseen events that impacted the interpretation of data (Bhattacharya, 2017; Saldaña, 2021). Finally, it acted as a space to record preliminary analytical insights and emerging themes and patterns observed during interviews. Overall, this valuable tool was for reflection, documentation, methodological transparency, analytical insights, and ethical considerations.

Interview questions were prepared and given to the participants before the interview occurred. A series of questions were asked in sequential order to each participant. There was room for probing questions, which is an additional characteristic of formal semi-structured interviews (Bhattacharya, 2017). It was important to conduct interviews since the premises of the study were based on intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication, and perception of planning and development. Interview questions and qualitative research facilitate a comprehensive exploration of participant's perspectives, experiences, and meanings. It enabled the study to gather rich data that led to in-depth insights and contributed to a deeper understanding of the research topic.

Observations

Observations and qualitative research create a process of directly witnessing and documenting people, events, or phenomena within their natural context (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This research approach was valuable for understanding the intricacies of social, cultural, and behavioral aspects, specifically when exploring complex, multilayered,

and content-dependent subjects. Observations can employ two primary modes including: (a) participant observation, where researchers actively immerse themselves in the observed setting, (b) nonparticipant observation, where they maintain a more objective, detached stance (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Within these modes, observations can be structured, meaning guided by predefined categories and checklists, or unstructured, which would mean allowing for open-ended exploration (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The research study used participant observation as I sat in the classroom and recorded the instructor's actions, techniques, and ways of approaching the students.

Documents

Documents and qualitative research encompass a diverse range of textual, visual, or recorded materials that serve as invaluable sources of data and insight. These materials encompass a wide spectrum, of potentially relevant information, including written records, reports, photographs, audio recordings, and even social media posts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers should employ document analysis as both a method of data collection and a tool for conducting more thorough investigation. This should enable researchers to uncover meaningful patterns, identify underlying themes, and decode the significance of their research inquiries (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The documents reviewed in this research were the instructor's syllabus, sample lesson plan, and teaching philosophy.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involves organizing, interpreting, and making sense of the collected data to uncover meaningful patterns, themes, and insights (Bhattacharya, 2017; Saldaña, 2021). This study had three rounds of coding. The first round of coding utilized provisional, next was thematic coding, last round employed pattern coding (Saldaña, 2021).

Thematic coding is a technique that involves systematically analyzing and organizing of qualitative data to identify recurring themes and patterns (Saldaña, 2021). The process begins with data preparation and familiarization, followed by the creation of concise codes through constant comparison (Saldaña, 2021). These codes are then grouped into broader themes, refined, and organized into a hierarchical structure. Thematic coding enables researchers to extract meaningful insights from qualitative data, supporting the interpretation of findings and their integration into research reports (Saldaña, 2021). Thematic coding is a flexible and iterative approach that balances rigor with the need to capture the coding richness and depth of qualitative data.

Pattern coding is a coding technique that involves identifying and analyzing reoccurring patterns or themes in the collected data (Saldaña, 2021). It aims to uncover commonalities, consistencies, and relationships within the data set to gain a deeper understanding of the research (Saldaña, 2021). Pattern coding can examine the data to identify patterns and then analyze their significance and meaning within the research context (Saldaña, 2021). This coding can support the conceptual frameworks that are being analyzed within this study. Visual representations will be employed to communicate and enhance the effectiveness and soundness of the data patterns as necessary (Saldaña, 2021). Pattern coding adds the depth to uncover overarching themes and meaningful connections within the study.

Limitations of Research

It is important to acknowledge that this study exploring how first-year seminar instructors treat students like adult learners had certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The findings of this study were context specific and were not easily generalizable to other educational settings or populations. Factors such as institution culture, instructor-student dynamics, and

regional variations may influence the findings, limiting the extent to which the results can be applied universally.

In addition, the study's sample was limited to specific institutions and regions, potentially excluding diverse perspectives and experiences. The findings do not fully capture the breadth and diversity of how professors treat students like adult learners across different contexts and demographics. Qualitative research inherently involves interpretation and subjectivity. The researcher's perspectives and preconceptions about adult learning and professor-student interactions influenced data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Careful reflexivity, transparency, and reporting my positionality were important to mitigate potential bias and allow both the myself and anyone who may use this research in the future, a greater understanding of the research, the analysis, and the conclusions.

Delimitations

To clarify the scope of this research, the study focused on full-time or part-time instructors who had taught first-year seminar courses for at least two years or more at a 4-year college or university. At the time of data collection, all instructors were actively teaching a first-year seminar course. Each participant held a master's degree or higher and was not enrolled in a degree program to further their education. Additionally, all instructors were based in the New England region of the United States.

Researcher's Background

Over the past 10 years, I have gained extensive experience teaching freshman seminar courses and have actively worked on the topic of treating students as adult learners. My involvement in national conferences on first-year students and student transitions demonstrates a commitment to staying informed about current practices and research in the field. I have a

genuine curiosity about understanding how instructors, including myself, effectively treat students as adult learners and implement teaching strategies to foster their growth.

I have enthusiasm in discussing this topic with colleagues. This reflects a collaborative approach to professional development and a desire to consistently improve institutional practices. By engaging in these conversations, I seek to explore ways to elevate students into becoming true adult learners, indicating a commitment to creating an environment that supports students' autonomy, responsibility, and self-directed learning.

My experience teaching freshman seminar courses, participating in national conferences, and eagerness to discuss effective teaching strategies highlights my dedication to treating students as adult learners. My passion for exploring innovative approaches and elevating students' learning experiences emphasizes a commitment to fostering a supportive environment that empowers students to take ownership of their education.

Significance of the Study

Studying how professors treat students like adult learners contributes to the field of adult learning by enhancing our understanding of adult learning principles, informing instructional practices, shaping institution policies, and supporting services, promoting student success and persistence, and advancing professional development for educators. This research deepens the knowledge base of effective concepts for engaging and supporting adult learners and all learners, leading to improved educational experiences and outcomes. It has the potential to positively impact the personal growth, career advancement, and lifelong learning of adult students.

This research further extends the research on first-year seminar courses and how instructors approach the learning environment. While there have been discussions at

conferences, the findings of this research provide empirical data on how instructors approach and teach first-year seminar students.

Definitions

Adult Learner—An individual who pursues further education or training with self-direction, often motivated by personal or professional goals (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017).

Andragogy—The art and science of teaching adults (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980, Knowles et al., 2015).

College Freshmen or First-Year Student—This term is used to identify students who are in their first year of study at a college or university (Erickson et al., 2006). The traditional first-year college student is between the ages of 17-20 (Buote et al., 2007; Kuh & Ardaiole, 1979).

Educator, Instructor, or Professor—These terms represent all college faculty, regardless of status (i.e., Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Lecturer, part-time, or full-time) and are used interchangeably.

First-Year Experience (FYE), First-Year Seminar (FYS), or Freshmen Seminar—A course in higher education that is offered or required for entering students who have no or little knowledge of the higher education setting. These courses can have an array of objectives, such as an extension of orientation, helping students navigate through the college or university institution, assisting in career and academic planning and development, understanding self-management strategies, as well as introducing and fostering creative and critical thinking (Barefoot, 2000; Gardner, 1986). These terms are used interchangeably.

New England Region—The following states make up the New England Region of the United States: Connecticut (CT), Massachusetts (MA), Maine (ME), New Hampshire (NH), Rhode Island (RI), and Vermont (VT).

Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive overview of the fundamental elements that establish the groundwork for this study. The primary focus of this qualitative research study was to investigate whether first-year seminar instructors apply principles of adult learning in their teaching practices with first-year students. By employing these adult education conceptual frameworks, (a) Knowles (1970, 1973/1978, 1980), andragogy framework, (b) Baxter Magolda's (2012) Building Learning Partnership Model, and (c) Brockett's (2015) Seven Qualities of an Effective Instructor, this research gained insights into how first-year seminar instructor's approach and regard their first-year students as adult learners.

This basic qualitative research design provided the framework for the study. The research involved conducting interviews with instructors who teach first-year seminars or first-year experience courses. A formal semi-structured interview method was employed for data collection. The participant pool will consist of 12 instructors who had an earned master's degree or higher, had a minimum of two year of teaching experience at a 4-year university in the New England region of the United States and are currently teaching freshman seminar courses. This selection criteria ensured a relevant sample for the study. The choice of formal semi-structured interview was well suited for the research's goals, as it enabled the capturing of rich narratives, personal experiences, and perspectives of university instructors. The data analysis process encompassed two phases: values coding followed by pattern coding. Additionally, a researcher's journal was maintained during the interview phase, serving as a platform to document personal

reflections and insights throughout the interview process. By employing this comprehensive methodology, the study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how first-year seminar instructors engage with their students as adult learners in the context of New England region's four-year universities. This comprehensive review set the stage for subsequent chapters, providing a solid foundation for the study and guiding the reader through the research journey.

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

Higher education forms a critical juncture in an individual's intellectual and personal development journey. This literature review seeks to provide a comprehensive exploration of various dimensions of this developmental process, anchored in the framework of the first-year seminar, first-year seminar instructors, and the application of known adult learning frameworks. The first-year seminar marks the inception of the college journey, setting the stage for academic pursuits and personal growth. This is further enriched by the research of college instructors who teach first-year seminars. Finally, the concept of andragogy shows the unique needs and characteristics of adult learners, which is a crucial aspect of higher education, followed by psychological learning environments, and learning partnerships. Each section of this review aims to delve deeper into these areas, offering critical insights to inform future research, policies, and educational practices, and to help guide this study.

Historical Perspectives and the Significance of the First-Year Seminar

The first-year seminar, also sometimes referred to as freshmen seminar, first-year experience course, or orientation seminar, historically is a course or seminar designed for new incoming college students entering the first semester of college. Depending on the institution, these courses can be delivered as electives or provided as a part of the student's general education requirements. This first section of this literature review will address the history and the significance of the first-year seminar.

The first-year seminar is named for and geared towards first-semester college students who have recently graduated high school (Barefoot, 2000; Crissman, 2002). These courses can serve different purposes, such as: (a) providing an extension of new student orientation (Boudreau & Kromrey, 1994; Murphy, 1989); (b) integrating students into the academic seminar

(Gordon, 1991), which often includes social integration (Maisto & Tammi, 1991), and (c) exposing students to an inquiry or critical and creative thinking approach (Lamb et al., 1997). The course is typically designed to help foster student success, academic success, and social skills (Davis, 1992; Maisto & Tammi, 1991), in addition to working to retain students while at the same time helping them successfully transition into higher education (Gardner, 1986).

History of the Seminar

The first-year seminar can be traced back to the early 1880s at Lee College in Kentucky and Boston University when it was then called “the freshmen seminar” (Barefoot, 2000; Barefoot & Fidler, 1996; Gordon, 1991). Gardner (1986) explains that these early courses embedded a multitude of elements such as: (a) college spirit, (b) personal health and well-being, (c) student government activities, (d) academic advising, (e) the philosophy of higher education, and (f) the institutions’ purpose. However, by the 1960s, many first-year seminars began to disappear due to demands for rigor from faculty and administration who claimed students were not challenged enough throughout the course curriculum (Barefoot, 2000; Drake, 1966). It was not until the late 1970s that higher education institutions began reestablishing these seminars. One of the reasons this reestablishment occurred was due to identity and social chaos. Students were going through multiple political disruptions on campus, and institutions believed students needed positive guidance and unity to help them transition through their academic journey (Gardner, 1986). Additionally, administrators began to pay more attention to student retention rates and look for reasons why some students were succeeding academically and why others were not (Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989). Wilkie and Kuckuck (1989) were among the first to track GPA and retention rates of high-risk students who completed an orientation course against those who did not complete the course over a three-year period. Through this study, they determined that high-risk

students who completed the course, not only retained more information more often, but also maintained a higher GPA than students who did not take the course.

According to Barefoot and Fidler (1996), retaining students after their first year became a significant issue partly because in the 1970s—1990s, there was a surge of students who identified as first-generational, non-traditional, or academically not prepared for learning at the collegial level. Barefoot and Fidler (1996) note that colleges and universities were worried about first-year students' mental health and overall well-being, and it appeared in the public eye that colleges and universities were not supporting and assisting students in their academic abilities and financial issues. Eventually, universities yielded to this pressure, and by the early 1990s the freshmen seminar was significantly awakened from its late 1960s and 1970s slumber and began to gain significant popularity at many colleges and universities (Gardner, 1986).

The most well-known first-semester seminar was established at The University of South Carolina, which is still considered the flagship institution for the first-year seminar due to their attention to students in transition (Gardner, 1986). Their program was established in 1982, and by 1983 the first annual national conference debuted (Gardner, 1986). Today, the center focuses on student transition at the University of South Carolina (USC) and is known as the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (USC, n.d.).

The Characteristics of the First-Year Seminar

First-year experience can be identified as a program or a course (Barefoot & Fidler, 1992; Young, 2020). Many researchers (Jamelske, 2009; Padgett et al., 2013; Reid et al., 2014; Rogerson & Poock, 2013; Sobel, 2018; Young 2020) have articulated their ideas and understandings of the purpose of the first-year seminar. Zeer and Bjerke (2016) argue that the institution's design of these courses is usually focused on aiding new students through to a

successful transition into the higher education environment. Other scholars suggest that these seminars support students' learning experiences (Padgett et al., 2013; Young 2020), in addition to providing a socially and academically stimulating experience (Permzadian & Credé, 2016; Young, 2020).

Each institution's seminar can look different based on the curriculum, hours, and credits (Reid et al., 2014). The size and format of these seminars are designed and developed differently based on each institution's ideas and philosophy (Jamelske, 2009). Some seminars are theme-based and teach students how to think critically and creatively in higher education (Rogerson & Poock, 2013; Sobel, 2018). Barefoot and Fidler (1992), Porter and Swing (2006), and Young (2020) researched the variety of different formats institutions offer of the first-year seminar, focusing on discipline, format, special academic characteristics, remedial capabilities, and transition, the last being the most popular among the formats (Porter & Swing, 2006; Young, 2020). In comparison to an earlier study conducted by Barefoot and Fidler (1992), the top five significant formats to conduct were continuation—or—extension of orientation, academic seminars that emphasize research skills, subject discipline, pre-professional, and study success and enrichment skills.

Discipline-Focused Seminars

Discipline seminars are centered on the introduction to the field of study, which can also be known as a brief introduction to the major (Lamb et al., 1997). In addition, this seminar may also have an introduction to academic components such as expectations in the disciplined-focused field and a motivational segment of academic abilities (Clark, 2005; Porter & Swing, 2006). Career planning and goal setting can also be found in this type of seminar (Permzadian & Credé, 2016). Institution personnel such as graduate students or content-related full-time or part-

time faculty are the most popular instructors to teach this type of seminar (Keup & Petschauer, 2011; Lamb et al., 1997).

Pre-Professional Seminars

In a national report conducted by Tobolosky (2008), academic programs that usually have an additional admissions requirement—such as licensure, would be associated with a pre-professional student seminar. For example, majors such as nursing or education would be found to have this theme. These seminars help students focus their attention on their rigorous course of study and future career goals (Keup & Petschauer, 2011; Tobolosky, 2008),

Academic-Focused Seminars

Contrary to discipline-focused seminars, or pre-professional seminars students within academic-focused seminars, may not specifically be enrolled with peers, or taught by an instructor from their own discipline. Its common that this seminar type centers on interdisciplinary approaches from faculty (Keup & Petschauer, 2011). An inquiry-based approach as well as a course theme woven throughout the seminar is also common (Friedman & Marsh, 2009). Critical thinking, creative thinking, academic writing, and an introduction to academic research skills are the main concentrations taught in this type of seminar (Lamb et al., 1997).

Continuation—Extension of Orientation Seminars

The length and timing of new student orientation can vary from each institution. Extension of orientation seminars act as an additional avenue to complete and understand material that is usually covered in the orientation sessions (Barefoot & Fidler, 1992; Keup & Petschauer, 2011). Historically, extension of orientation seminars are popular and one of the oldest models among the first-year seminars (Barefoot & Fidler, 1992). As mentioned earlier,

college or university personnel, and upper-level classmen such as graduate students are the most common instructors to teach this type of course (Barefoot & Fidler, 1992). Keup and Petschauer (2011) completed a study on this course delivery and reported that these models are highly successful in retaining first-year students into the second year, in addition to creating better peer relationships and a better understanding and knowledge of the institution's resources.

Common Curriculum and Goals

Popular topics and objectives within the curricular segment include: (a) community building, (b) understanding self-identity, (c) exploring academics, and understanding academic abilities (McKinney & Denton, 2006), (d) academic and career development, and (e) getting equated with the academic institution (Rogerson & Poock, 2013). Keup (2014) explained in the 2012-2013 National Survey on first-year seminars, that the three significant goals of the first-year seminar are developing and understanding a connection with colleges and universities, acquainting students with the resources and services the institution offers, and teaching students to foster academic skills. In a study conducted by Schnell and Doetkott (2003), first-year seminars create a rich link among academic advisers, persistence, and retention. As stated earlier, retaining students from the first year of college to the second year is a challenge many colleges and universities struggle with (Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2015; Schnell & Doetkott 2003; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989; Young, 2020).

Summary of the First-Year Seminar

The first-year seminar is one of the many events a student is confronted with as they enter their higher educational journey. For this reason, it is critical to unravel the many viewpoints that the first-year seminar consists of since the course appears to be woven throughout many phases and entities of the higher educational institution. Research has indicated that student

improvement is based on the student population and the needs of the students. The first-year seminar may be present for many more years and a continuous analysis will need to be conducted in order to help it improve and reach its goals of helping students through the transition.

The First-Year Seminar Instructor

College instructors, especially those who facilitate first-year seminars, have a unique perspective on their students, as they interact with them regularly in the classroom setting. Understanding instructors' viewpoints of their students is important because it can provide insight into how instructors approach teaching and interacting with their students. This section of the literature review will explore various studies that have examined college instructors' viewpoints of their students, including their attitudes, expectations, and perceptions, in addition to the characteristics of the first-year seminar instructor.

Characteristics of the First-Year Seminar Instructor

First-year seminars are designed to facilitate a smooth transition for students into higher education by offering guidance, academic support, and opportunities for personal growth. These courses provide a period for students to achieve these goals, and institutions employ a wide array of educators and professionals to teach these courses (Murry & Wolf, 2016). The first-year seminar instructor usually has a master's degree or higher, or in some cases, they are working on their master's degree (Scanlon & Dvorak, 2019). These instructors can significantly impact the overall learning experience for students. The specific types of people who teach these seminars are diverse (Murry & Wolf, 2016) and can vary depending on the institution's policies and goals (Sobel, 2018). This section will address some of the common categories of individuals who often teach first-year seminars.

Professors and instructors from various academic departments, known for their expertise in specific fields, play a significant role in imparting knowledge and academic skills to incoming students (Scanlon & Dvorak, 2019). Colleges and universities may invite visiting professors or adjunct faculty members who bring unique perspectives and expertise to the seminar curriculum (Sobel, 2018). Faculty can be chosen to teach first-year seminar courses because of their understanding of specific fields, making them well-equipped to impart knowledge and academic skills to incoming students (Scanlon & Dvorak, 2019; Sobel, 2018). A common requirement at many colleges and universities is for full-time faculty to teach a certain number of courses or credits each semester (Scanlon & Dvorak, 2019; Sobel, 2018). If their assigned original course gets canceled, these faculty members can then be tasked to teach a first-year seminar (Sobel, 2018).

At some colleges and universities, graduate teaching assistants or graduate students may teach first-year seminars (Scanlon & Dvorak, 2019; Swank & Whitton, 2019). This provides these teaching assistants the opportunity to gain valuable teaching experience, which contributes to their professional development (Swank & Whitton, 2019). Meanwhile, college freshmen may benefit from the enthusiasm and relatability of these younger instructors who may be closer in age and experience to the students' own age and experience level (Swank & Whitton, 2019).

College student personnel and college administration employees may also be found teaching first-year seminar courses (Fidler et al., 1999; Scanlon & Dvorak, 2019). Many of these professionals have a background in student affairs, counseling, education, or academic advising (Fidler et al., 1999; Scanlon & Dvorak, 2019). These individuals can provide students with additional support and guidance beyond just providing academic instruction. They are well-versed in addressing the personal and transitional challenges and changes that students may face

during their initial year in college (Scanlon & Dvorak, 2019). In addition, their extensive knowledge and leadership roles within the institution contribute to a well-rounded educational experience (Fidler et al., 1999; Scanlon & Dvorak, 2019). They may bring a broader perspective and insight into the institution's culture and resources, offering students a comprehensive introduction to college life (Fidler et al., 1999).

Attitudes Towards Students

College instructors' attitudes toward students are critical in determining the quality of education and learning outcomes in higher education institutions. Understanding the attitudes of college instructors toward students is necessary for creating effective and efficient learning environments. Several studies (Dorner & Scott, 2016; Fairlie et al., 2014; Griffin et al., 2012; Littleford et al., 2010; Myers et al., 2009) have investigated college instructor's attitudes toward students.

Instructors' attitudes influence their perceptions and their own behaviors toward the student as well as the student's behavior. Research conducted by Wittmann and Wulf (2023) found that college instructors' attitudes toward students were influenced by their perceptions of student characteristics. Their study discovered that instructors' perceptions of students' intelligence, effort, and behavior affected their attitudes toward them. Similarly, Myers et al. (2009) explored college instructors' attitudes toward students' participation in class discussions. The research found that instructors with positive attitudes toward student participation were more likely to create interactive and engaging learning environments. Dorner and Scott (2016) examined the impact of college instructors' attitudes toward students on their grading practices. Instructors with positive attitudes toward students were more likely to provide fair and consistent grades. Furthermore, Hariri (2014) investigated college instructors' attitudes toward students'

social and emotional well-being. It was found that instructors who were supportive and caring toward students were more likely to create positive learning environments.

Moreover, instructors' attitudes toward students also affected their creation of inclusive learning environments. Griffin et al. (2012) examined college instructors' attitudes toward students with disabilities. The authors found that instructors who had positive attitudes toward students with disabilities were more likely to provide inclusive learning environments. Similarly, college instructors' positive attitudes toward diversity, which encompasses racial and ethnic identities, were more likely to create an inclusive learning environment as well (Fairlie et al., 2014; Littleford et al., 2010).

Positive attitudes toward students are critical in creating effective learning environments. Instructors who believe in their students trust that their students are capable of learning and succeeding (Smith & Robertson, 2021). Positive attitudes toward students can lead to better learning outcomes (Parnes et al., 2020), increased student engagement (Fairlie et al., 2014; Littleford et al., 2010; Myers et al., 2009), and improved mental health and well-being (Meluch et al., 2022). In contrast, some instructors reported negative attitudes toward their students, such as viewing them as lazy or unmotivated (Park et al., 2021). Understanding instructors' attitudes toward students is vital for promoting an inclusive and supportive learning environment. By recognizing the impact of these attitudes on student performance, motivation, and relationships, educational institutions can implement targeted strategies to address and overcome these challenges. Ultimately, fostering positive attitudes among instructors contributes to students' holistic development (Hariri, 2014), academic success (Smith & Robertson, 2021), and overall well-being (Meluch et al., 2022).

Expectations of Students

Instructors who hold expectations for their students, can impact their teaching practices and interactions with students. Instructors who had high expectations for their students tended to use more interactive teaching methods, such as class discussions and group work (Kuh, 1995). However, instructors who held low expectations for their students tended to rely more on traditional lecture-style teaching (Lai & Savage, 2013) and assumed that they lacked motivation (Park et al., 2021). College instructors' expectations of their students' abilities can impact student motivation and academic performance. In addition, instructors who have high expectations of their students' abilities, regardless of their initial performance, are more likely to motivate them to improve and succeed (Veletsianos et al., 2013).

The impact of instructor's expectations on student learning outcomes and classroom environment has been demonstrated through research on language proficiency and participation in class discussions. Elshaw et al. (2017) examined college instructors' expectations of their student's language proficiency. Research has found that instructors' expectations of their student's language proficiency impact their teaching practices and student learning outcomes. Instructors who had high expectations of their students' language proficiency were more likely to provide more challenging tasks and create a more demanding learning environment. Furthermore, Cavanagh et al. (2018) investigated college instructors' expectations of their students' participation in class discussions. It was discovered that instructors' expectations of their students' participation impact student motivation and learning outcomes. Instructors who had high expectations of their students' participation were more likely to create a more interactive and engaging learning environment.

In addition to participation, student attendance is a significant element to the instructor expectations. A study conducted by Chenneville and Jordan (2008) examined college instructors' expectations of their students' attendance. The research found that instructors who had high expectations of their student's attendance were more likely to create policies and practices that encouraged attendance and fostered a culture of responsibility and accountability.

College instructors' expectations of their students are critical in determining the quality of education and learning outcomes in higher education institutions. High expectations of students can lead to improved motivation (Veletsianos et al., 2013), better learning outcomes, and increased accountability (Kuh, 1995).

Low expectations from college instructors towards their college students on the other hand can have consequences on student outcomes and the overall learning environment for students. When instructors have low expectations, they may assign less challenging tasks and provide limited feedback and guidance (Brinkworth et al., 2009). This lack of rigor and support can lead to decreased student achievement and hinder academic growth (Brinkworth et al., 2009). In addition, low expectations from college instructors can also negatively affect student motivation (Bolkan et al., 2022; Lowis & Castley, 2008). When students perceive that their instructors have low expectations of their abilities, it can undermine their self-confidence and diminish their motivation to excel (Bolkan et al., 2022). Research by Lowis and Castley (2008) has shown that students with low expectations placed upon them by instructors tend to exhibit reduced effort, engagement, and a decreased sense of self-efficacy. Consequently, students may become disengaged, leading to a decline in overall learning outcomes.

Perceptions of Students

College instructors' perceptions of their students play a crucial role in shaping teaching practices, learning outcomes, and student success. Understanding the perceptions of college instructors toward their students is necessary for creating effective and efficient learning environments. Instructors' perceptions of their students' abilities have been shown to impact student achievement. In a study by Hattie and Marsh (1996), instructors' perceptions of their students' abilities were found to be a significant predictor of student achievement. The study found that when instructors had high expectations for their student's abilities, students were more likely to earn better grades.

Motivation also plays a significant role. College instructors' perceptions of their students' self-efficacy are found to be positively related to students' academic (Guo et al., 2020). In addition, instructors noticed that when students are capable of achieving academic success, students are more likely to develop a growth mindset and work harder to achieve their academic goals (Brez et al., 2020; Yeager & Dweck, 2020). Alongside motivation, student behavior is an additional ingredient instructors base their perceptions on. If instructors perceive their students as being anxious or stressed, students are more likely to experience negative emotions and exhibit behavior that can be detrimental to their academic success (Pekrun et al., 2009).

The perceptions that college instructors portray of their students play a significant role in shaping student learning outcomes (Holmgren & Bolkan, 2014). Research has identified that instructors' perceptions of their students' abilities, motivations, and behavior impact student achievement (Brez et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2020; Holmgren & Bolkan, 2014). When instructors have high expectations for their student's abilities, believe in their student's capacity to succeed,

and perceive their students as being motivated and engaging in their learning, students are more likely to achieve academic success.

Further Research of Instructors Perspectives

This literature review has highlighted the significance of understanding who the first-year seminar instructor is and their perspectives, attitudes, and expectations of their students. By exploring various studies that have examined college instructors' attitudes, expectations, and perceptions of their students, this review hopes to shed light and use these perceptions to learn how this can impact student learning outcomes. The unique perspective that instructors have on their students, gained through regular interaction in the classroom setting, can provide valuable insights into how instructors approach teaching and interacting with their students. However, little research has been conducted on how college instructors view their students as adult learners. In addition, there is little information on how instructors who specifically teach college freshmen view and treat their students as adult learners.

Limited research has been conducted on how first-year seminar instructors approach teaching their students as adult learners. Additionally, even fewer studies explore how these instructors incorporate adult learning principles into their classroom environments, teaching techniques, and overall teaching philosophy. This gap highlights the importance of investigating this topic further.

Philosophical Education Approaches

Education is a multifaceted field that encompasses diverse philosophies and approaches aimed at facilitating learning and development. Within the field of adult education, various philosophical approaches guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs. Each of these categories, including behaviorism, humanistic education, liberal

education, progressive education, and radical/critical pedagogy, offers distinct perspectives on the purpose and methods of adult education. These approaches are established by varying justifications for adult education as a field and for the decision-making process involved in developing and teaching in programs. This section will address an overview of the research of the five significant adult education philosophical educational approaches in undergraduate education.

Behaviorism

Rooted in the belief that behavior can be learned and modified through conditioning, behaviorism focuses on observable actions and external stimuli (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Moore, 2011; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). It emphasizes reinforcement, repetition, in rewards to shape desired behaviors (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Moore, 2011; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). In education, behaviorists approaches often involves structured lessons, drills, and rote memorization to facilitate learning outcomes. This philosophical concept is rooted in the principles of psychology, particularly the work of B. F. Skinner (Araiba, 2020; Moore, 2011; Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017).

Instructors may employ teaching techniques such as direct instruction, drills, and rote memorization to instill desired knowledge and skills. Livengood et al. (2012) conducted a study illustrating the efficacy of employing a diverse range of homework assignments, supplemented by tutor support, as a means to facilitate student's understanding of complex subjects. This approach not only aids in reducing stress levels but also enhances students' confidence in their ability to comprehend challenging topics. In addition, assessments can focus on measuring observable behaviors and outcomes, rather than internal cognitive processes (Elias & Merriam,

2005; Moore, 2011; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Learning settings that establish clear, measurable outcomes are an influential educational practice.

Humanistic

Humanistic education prioritizes the holistic development of individuals, emphasizing personal growth, self-actualization, and fulfillment (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Humanistic education stems from educational psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow in addition to Malcolm Knowles (Elias & Merriam, 2005). This educational philosophy promotes student-centered learning experiences that focus on our individual differences, encourage self-expression, and foster empathy and compassion (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Humanistic educators aim to create supportive, nurturing environments that empower students to explore their identities, values, and aspirations (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). In a study conducted by Goldstein and Fernald (2008), it is discussed how undergraduate capstone courses prioritize students' experience and learning over course content, aligning with the principles of humanistic education. Specifically, the study outlines five key features of the capstone course that reflects humanistic education principles, including student-centered learning, empathetic listening, effective and experiential learning, collaborative learning with self-disclosure, and writing assessment focusing on personal and professional growth.

An emphasis is placed on building positive relationships between educators and learners, there is a focus on empathy, understanding, and respect for individual differences (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Educators often employ strategies such as active listening, empathy, and unconditional positive regard to create meaningful connections with students. Curriculum-designed and humanistic education prioritizes relevance, personalization,

and the integration of real-life experiences. Learning experiences are designed to be meaningful and engaging, allowing learners to explore their interests, passions, and values.

Liberal

Liberal education emphasizes the cultivation of broad knowledge and critical thinking skills, with a focus on intellectual curiosity, open-mindedness, and lifelong learning (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). This philosophical perspective emerges from ancient Greece and Rome (Elias & Merriam, 2005). It seeks to provide students with a well-rounded education that includes exposure to diverse perspectives, ideas, and discipline (Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Liberal education aims to develop independent thinkers who are capable of engaging thoughtfully with complex issues and contributing positively to society (Elias & Merriam, 2005).

Educators strive to create environments that foster intellectual curiosity, independent thinking, and intellectual freedom. An emphasis is placed on active learning, inquiry-based teaching methods, and Socratic dialogue (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Schneller & Wacholtz, 2018). Students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning, pursue their interests, and engage deeply with course material (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Liberal education is the notion of a broad and balanced curriculum that exposes students to diverse perspectives, cultures, and intellectual traditions. Many scholars argue, that introducing and teaching this philosophy is important to focus on with students, especially in undergraduate first-year seminars (Bidwell & Smirnoff, 2022; Lou, 2013; Schneller & Wacholtz, 2018). Rather than focusing on vocational skills or narrow specialization, liberal education seeks to cultivate intellectual curiosity, analytical reasoning, and cultural literacy (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017).

Progressive

Progressive education advocates for student-centered, experiential learning approaches that prioritize active engagement, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). The progressive philosophical educational approach was influenced by the ideas of John Dewey (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017), William Heard Kilpatrick, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Elias & Merriam, 2005). It emphasizes hands on activities, projects, and discussions to promote inquiry, creativity, and autonomy (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Progressive educators seek to create inclusive, democratic learning communities where students are encouraged to explore their interests, take ownership of their learning, and develop a deep understanding of themselves and the world around them (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017).

The goal of this approach is to empower students to become independent thinkers, responsible citizens, and agents of positive change in society (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Lackéus et al., (2016), highlighted the utilization of entrepreneurship concepts to bridge the gap between traditional and progressive education approaches, by utilizing three tools from entrepreneurship: (a) effectuation, (b) customer development, and (c) appreciative inquiry, are all means to assist educators across all levels in harmonizing undergraduate standardized curriculum with the unique needs and abilities of individual learning. In progressive education, instructors take a role as facilitators who guide students in exploring their interests, fostering creativity, and developing essential skills for lifelong learning.

Radical/Critical Pedagogy

Grounded in the belief that education should be a tool for social justice and empowerment, radical or critical pedagogy challenges oppressive power structures and seeks to

foster critical consciousness and action among students (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Radical/critical pedagogy is grounded in the work by Paulo Freire (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Freire advocated for an educational model that promotes dialogue, participation, and the co-creation of knowledge between educators and learners (Elias & Merriam, 2005). It encourages dialogue, reflection, and activism to address issues of inequality, discrimination, and injustice (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Radical educators aim to empower students to question dominant narratives, analyze systematic injustices, and work towards positive social change (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Johnson (2018), reflected on a radical college lesson which prompted a reconsideration of how course material can effectively prompt students to critically analyze their implicit worldviews, particularly in understanding systematic oppression mechanisms. Johnson (2018) notes that the challenge lies in navigating mainstream discourses that often downplay racism's significance, necessitating pedagogical approaches that foster the development of alternative perspectives to historical and contemporary radical issues.

This model fosters a deeper understanding of social issues and encourages learners to become agents of change in their communities. This allows learners to actively participate in shaping their own learning experiences (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Ross-Gordon, et al., 2017). In addition, it emphasizes the importance of integrating theory and practice, in addressing social injustices and effecting meaningful social change.

Summary of Educational Philosophies

The field of adult education is characterized by a rich array of philosophical approaches. Each approach contributes a unique perspective and method to facilitate learning and development. Behaviorism emphasizes observable behaviors and external stimuli as determinants of learning outcomes, while humanistic education prioritizes individual autonomy

and self-actualization; in the personal growth period, liberal education advocates for a broad-based curriculum that fosters critical thinking, citizenship, and cultural literacy (Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Progressive education emphasizes experiential learning, student-centered instruction, and social activism, aiming to empower learners as agents of change (Ross-Gordon et al., 2017). Lastly, radical/critical pedagogy challenges power structures, promotes social justice, and encourages critical inquiry and reflection on societal norms and inequalities (Ross-Gordon et al., 2017).

Little research has been conducted on first-year seminar instructors' educational philosophical views. More specifically, there is little information on how instructors who specifically teach college freshmen incorporate a philosophical educational approach into their classrooms. By understanding and appreciating these diverse philosophical approaches, educators can better navigate the complexities of adult education, enriching the teaching and learning experiences for both educators and learners alike.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study will revolve around three significant concepts: (a) andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015), (b) the Psychological Learning Environment (Brockett, 2015) and (c) the Learning Partnership Model (LPM)(Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012). Each of these concepts not only holds significant relevance within the realm of adult education but also offers a valuable perspective for triangulation within this study. In the following sections, this proposal will delve into the existing literature that encompasses and interconnects with each of these fundamental concepts.

The Significance of Andragogy

Andragogy, a concept that has gained widespread recognition over the past few decades, has been a subject of extensive research and debate in the field of adult learning. With the unique needs and characteristics of adult learners in mind, Malcolm Knowles developed a set of principles to guide the practice of adult learning. This section of the literature review will explore the history, key concepts, and principles of andragogy, in addition to research that has been conducted in higher education, and end with a discussion on how this andragogical perspective can help with first-year seminar classes.

History of Andragogy

The concept of andragogy was first introduced by Alexander Kapp, a German educator, in 1833 (Loeng, 2017; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Peterson & Ray 2013), which was then later introduced to the Slavic adult educator, Dusan Savićević (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Savićević played a crucial role in highlighting the significance of andragogy, which ultimately gained popularity in the United States through Knowles (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). The term “andragogy” was popularized by Malcolm Knowles in the 1960s. Knowles was an American educator who worked in adult education and believed the traditional education models were not effective for adult learners. He proposed that adult learners have unique needs and characteristics that should be considered in the design of educational programs (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Knowles's work on andragogy was heavily influenced by the ideas of adult educator Eduard Lindeman, who believed that adult education should be based on the needs and interests of learners (Brookfield, 1984; Knowles, 1970; Loeng, 2017; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Knowles expanded on Lindeman's ideas and proposed a set of principles that could guide adult

learning, such as: (a) the importance of self-directed learning, (b) the need to make learning relevant to the learner's life experiences, and (c) the value of collaborative learning (Brookfield, 1984; Loeng, 2017). Since Knowles introduced the concept, andragogy has continued to evolve and has been the subject of ongoing debate and refinement. Some critics have questioned the relevance and validity of andragogy as a distinct theory of adult learning, in addition, some researchers have argued that the concept is too broad and lacks a clear definition (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Tennant & Pogson, 1995). Others have questioned the validity of the andragogy principles, arguing that they are not supported by empirical evidence (Illeris, 2018; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). While others have built on Knowles' idea and further developed the concept of different directions (Anderson & Boutelier, 2021; Bocianu & Radler, 2018; Hägg & Kurcezewska, 2019), the principles of andragogy continue to inform the design and implementation of adult education programs globally.

John Tennant a British educator and academic, made significant contributions to the field of adult education (Tennant & Pogson, 1995). It is believed that adults learn differently from children and that they should be taught in a way that considers their unique characteristics and experiences. Tennant and Pogson (1995) argued that adults are self-directed learners, which was supported by Knowles, who want to learn things that are relevant to their lives and that they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the learning process (Tennant & Pogson, 1995; Tusting & Barton, 2003).

Principles and Characteristics of Andragogy

Andragogy is the theory and practice of adult education, developed by Malcolm Knowles in the 1960s (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020) and is based on the premise that adults learn differently from children and require a

different approach to learning. Andragogy emphasizes self-directed learning, where adults take responsibility for their learning and participate in the process of being active learners. The approach is also characterized by using real-life examples and problem-solving activities that are relevant to the learner's life and work experiences.

Andragogy is often contrasted with pedagogy, which is the theory and practice of education for children. While pedagogy emphasizes the role of the teacher as the primary source of knowledge and instruction, andragogy emphasizes the role of the learner as the primary driver of the learning process (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). The principles of andragogy can be applied to a wide range of settings, including workplace training (Forrest & Peterson, 2006), continuing education (Nielsen, 1992), and adult literacy programs (Jack-Malik & Kuhnke, 2020).

As mentioned, andragogy is characterized by several key principles and characteristics (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). The following is a description of the andragogical principles derived from Knowles (1970, 1973/1978, 1980) and Merriam and Baumgartner (2020).

Self-Concept

Adults have a well-developed sense of self and a desire for autonomy. They perceive themselves as self-directed individuals who are capable of making decisions and taking responsibility for their own learning. Andragogy recognizes the importance of involving adult learners in the planning and evaluation of their educational experiences, allowing them to shape their learning path (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Readiness to Learn

Adults are more inclined to learn when they perceive a need or relevance for the knowledge or skills being taught. They bring a readiness to learn based on their personal circumstances, goals, and interests. Andragogy emphasizes the importance of creating a learning environment that acknowledges and addresses the specific needs and motivations of adult learners (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Motivation

Adult learners are driven by internal motivators, such as the desire for personal growth, career advancement, or self-improvement. They are more likely to engage actively in the learning process when they can see the value and benefits of what they are learning. Andragogy recognizes the significance of intrinsic motivation and encourages instructional approaches that tap into learners' intrinsic motivations (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Prior Experiences

Adults have a wealth of prior knowledge and life experiences that influence their learning. Andragogy acknowledges that adults learn best when they can connect new information to their existing knowledge and experiences. Prior experiences provide a foundation for learning and shape adult learners' perspectives, understanding, and problem-solving abilities (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Orientation

Adult learners tend to be task-oriented and focused on solving real-life problems. They seek learning opportunities that have immediate practical application and value. Andragogy

emphasizes the importance of creating learning experiences that are relevant, applicable, and tied to adult learners' personal and professional contexts (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

These characteristics of andragogy underline the importance of recognizing and addressing the unique needs, motivations, and experiences of adult learners. By catering to these characteristics, educators can create effective and engaging learning experiences that empower adult learners to take ownership of their education and achieve their desired outcomes. (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Andragogy and College Students

Andragogy emphasizes the importance of designing instructional methods and strategies that cater to the unique needs and motivations of learners, regardless of their age or experience. Scholars have argued that traditional college students, like adult learners, are self-directed, task-oriented, and motivated by relevance and collaboration (Bansal et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2023; Conway, 2023; Noor et al., 2012).

One way to apply the principles of andragogy to traditional college students is to incorporate more hands-on, practical learning activities into the curriculum. This can include group projects, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities that allow students to apply new knowledge and skills in real-world contexts (Loeng, 2018; Mews, 2020). By giving students the opportunity to actively engage with the material, educators can create a more engaging and effective learning environment that supports student success. Another way to apply this andragogy to traditional college students is to provide more opportunities for collaboration and peer learning. This can include group discussions, study groups, and other collaborative learning activities that allow students to share their experiences and perspectives and learn from

each other's strengths and weaknesses (Tusting & Barton, 2003). By encouraging collaboration, educators can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that fosters student engagement and motivation (Loeng, 2018; Mews, 2020; Noor et al., 2012).

Finally, educators can apply andragogy to traditional college students by creating a more personalized learning experience. This can involve providing students with more choices and autonomy in their learning, such as allowing them to choose their own research topics or designing their own learning projects. By giving students more control over their learning process, educators can help them develop a stronger sense of ownership and motivation, which can lead to greater success in college and beyond (Murry, 2014; Noor et al., 2012). While andragogy is often associated with adult learners, its principles can also be applied to college students (Noor et al., 2012). By incorporating more hands-on, practical learning activities, promoting collaboration, peer learning, and providing a more personalized learning experience, educators can create a more engaging and effective learning environment that supports the success of all students, regardless of their age or experience (Mews, 2020).

Research on Higher Education and Andragogy

The andragogical approach to education has gained popularity in adult education settings (Kasworm, 2012). However, the extent to which andragogy has been applied in college classrooms and its effectiveness remains unclear (Grace, 1996). In addition, the application of andragogy in college classrooms has been subject to debate (Davenport & Davenport, 1985; Grace, 1996).

According to Grasha (1996), college instructors often struggle to implement andragogy in their teaching practices due to the traditional structure of college education, which prioritizes content delivery over student-centered learning. Similarly, Merriam and Baumgartner (2020)

suggest that the andragogical approach may not be suitable for all college courses, particularly those that require mastery of technical or specialized skills. In retrospect, some researchers have found that the andragogical approach can be effective in college classrooms (Mews, 2020). In addition, Allen et al. (2016) conducted a study on the impact of andragogical teaching methods on adult learners in a college-level course. They found that students who were taught using andragogical methods showed higher levels of motivation and engagement compared to those taught using traditional P-12 grade teaching methods.

Researchers have emphasized the importance of integrating andragogical principles in the curriculum design (Balsamo & Martin, 1995; Grasha, 1996) and teaching practices of college instructors (Moore & Shemberger, 2019). In addition, some research suggests that college instructors should be trained in andragogical principles to better meet the needs of adult learners (McNally et al., 2020). Brown (2006) proposes a framework for designing and implementing andragogical principles in college courses, which includes establishing a learning partnership between instructors and students and emphasizing the experiential learning and critical reflection.

Overall, the application of andragogical principles in college education remains a topic of ongoing research and discussion period while there may be challenges in implementing this approach, there is growing evidence that it can enhance the learning experiences of adult learners in college courses (Conway, 2023). As such, it is important for college instructors to consider incorporating andragogical principles in their teaching practices.

Andragogy and Communication

Effective communication is an essential element in the realm of adult learning, particularly in the context of andragogy (Murry, 2014). Andragogy, which focuses on the unique

characteristics and needs of adult learners, emphasizes the importance of open dialogue, learner-centered approaches, and active participation (Murry, 2014). In the pursuit of creating engaging and supportive learning environments, communication plays a pivotal role in facilitating the exchange information, fostering collaboration, and nurturing a sense of partnership between educators and adult learners (Moore & Shemberger, 2019; Murry, 2014; Tipton & Wideman, 2021). By understanding the vital relationship between andragogy and communication, educators can employ effective strategies to promote meaningful interactions, cater to diverse learning preferences, and empower adult learners to take charge of their educational journeys.

Andragogy recognizes the importance of open and two-way communication between educators and adult learners. Unlike traditional pedagogy where information flows primarily from the teacher to the student, andragogy emphasizes dialogue, collaboration, and active participation (Moore & Shemberger, 2019; Tipton & Wideman, 2021). Effective communication involves creating opportunities for adult learners to share their perspectives, ask questions, express their needs, and engage in meaningful discussions (Moore & Shemberger, 2019; Tipton & Wideman, 2021).

The concept of andragogy emphasizes the learner's role in directing their learning experience. Communication in andragogy should be learner-centered, focusing on understanding individual needs, goals, and experiences (Moore & Shemberger, 2019). Educators should actively listen, show empathy, and adapt their communication style to accommodate different learning preferences and communication styles. This learner-centered approach builds rapport, trust, and a sense of partnership between educators and adult learners (Moore & Shemberger, 2019).

Communication in andragogy should provide clear instructions, objectives, and expectations. Adult learners need to understand the purpose and relevance of what they are learning, as well as the desired outcomes (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014). Clear and concise communication helps adult learners stay focused, motivated, and effectively manage their learning process. Educators should communicate learning objectives, expectations, and assessment criteria in a transparent manner (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014). In addition, communication and andragogy should include regular feedback and opportunities for reflection (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Moore & Shemberger, 2019). Feedback provides learners with information on their progress, strengths, and areas for improvement (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). It helps them refine their understanding and skills. Educators should provide constructive feedback that focuses on growth and development (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Moore & Shemberger, 2019; Murry, 2014). Communicating reflective moments allows adult learners to connect their experiences and prior knowledge with new information, enhancing their understanding and promoting deeper learning (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

By employing effective communication strategies, educators can create a supportive and engaging learning environment that aligns with the principles of andragogy. Communication in andragogy can be learner-centered, interactive, clear, and purposeful, enabling adult learners to take ownership of their learning and achieve their educational goals.

Further Research of Andragogy

Despite the widespread use of andragogy in adult education, there is a noticeable gap in the literature on college instructors and andragogy. While there is a significant body of research on the application of andragogy in corporate and community settings, there is relatively little research on how college instructors use andragogy in their teaching practices. In addition, Murry

(2014) notes the lack of research on the dyadic learning relationship between the instructor and student; “future research should explore...other aspects of andragogical development and communication patterns beyond the context of dyads” (Murry, 2014, p. 330). Further, an additional gap is particularly concerning given the increasing number of adult learners in higher education and the unique challenges they face in the college classroom. Without a better understanding of how andragogy can be effectively applied in the college classroom, instructors may struggle to meet the needs of adult learners and may miss out on opportunities to enhance their teaching practices. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the potential benefits of andragogy in the context of college instruction. Andragogy remains a key concept in adult education and has been applied in a variety of settings. While the concept has been subject to critique and debate, it continues to inform the design and implementation of adult education programs globally.

Instructor Qualities for Teaching Adults in a Classroom Environment

The attributes that characterize a proficient teacher play a critical role in fostering a constructive and influential learning atmosphere. Brockett (2015) outlines seven specific qualities of teachers of adult learners, forming the acronym TEACHER, which significantly contributes to educators’ success in their roles. These qualities encompass the ability to: (a) build trust, (b) demonstrate empathy, (c) exhibit authenticity, (d) exude confidence, (e) display humility, (f) manifest enthusiasm, and (g) show respect. By embodying these traits, teachers can cultivate an environment of trust, forge personal connections with their students, and foster a supportive environment that promotes effective learning. While there are no reported studies on Brockett’s (2015) framework, this literature review will thoroughly examine each of the seven qualities of the adult learning environment and explore how other adult education scholars

support and utilize these characteristics. This analysis will examine the importance and relevance of Brockett's (2015) identified qualities in fostering a conducive and enriching learning experience for adult learners.

Building Trust

In the realm of effective teaching, one of the fundamental elements emphasized is the construction of a climate of trust. As highlighted by Brockett (2015), educators who possess expertise in their profession recognize the immense importance of providing a safe and supportive learning environment for their students. A key aspect of this process involves the intentional creation of an atmosphere where students feel comfortable and confident enough to freely express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions without fear of judgment or retribution (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

By actively working to establish trust with their students, skilled adult educators can cultivate a positive and conducive learning environment (Brookfield, 2015; Spalding, 2014). This climate of trust fosters mutual respect between teachers and students, paving the way for open communication and constructive interactions (Brookfield, 2015, 2017). In such an environment, learners are encouraged to engage in discussions, ask questions, and participate in collaborative activities, knowing that their contributions are valid and appreciated (Brookfield, 2015, 2017; Spalding, 2014).

Through the establishment of trust, educators lay the groundwork for more meaningful and enriching educational experiences. Students are more likely to feel motivated to learn, take academic risks, and explore new concepts (Brookfield, 2015). According to Brookfield (2017), "teachers who take students seriously and who treat them as adults show that they can be trusted"

(p. 95). They develop a sense of belonging and connection within the classroom, which leads to greater overall satisfaction with the learning process (Brookfield, 2015, 2017).

Several studies provide indirect support for Brockett's (2015) concept of trust. Jassma and Koper (1999) research, as well as the work by Khan et al. (2015), all serve to highlight how verbal communication between students and faculty outside the classroom can enhance student responsiveness, trust, and motivation. Similarly, Faranda (2015) reinforces the idea that out-of-class communication fosters responsiveness and trust between faculty and students. Furthermore, these studies suggest that trust-building can extend beyond the classroom and positively impact students' professional careers.

Building a climate of trust is a vital aspect of effective teaching, as it sets the stage for a safe and supportive learning environment where students can thrive academically and personally. By prioritizing trust, educators promote mutual respect, open communication, and collaboration, which contributes to a more engaging and productive educational journey for all involved.

Demonstrating Empathy

Among the numerous qualities that contribute to effective teaching, demonstrating empathy is critical in forming meaningful connections with learners and creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment (Brockett, 2015; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). By demonstrating empathy, educators show genuine concern and compassion for their students' feelings, experiences, and challenges (Brookfield, 2017; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). This understanding enables educators to respond to their students with sensitivity and care, acknowledging the unique needs and struggles that the learner may be facing (Brookfield, 2017).

An empathetic teacher can create a safe space where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and emotions without fear of judgment (Brookfield, 2015, 2017). This sense of

psychological safety fosters trust and openness, leading to increased communication and collaboration within the classroom (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). In addition, by being empathetic, teachers can provide tailored support to meet the diverse needs of their learners (Brookfield, 2015, 2017). They can identify when a student requires additional assistance or encouragement, and they can adapt their teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles and abilities (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

When students feel seen, heard, and valued by their teachers, their overall engagement and motivation in the learning process improves significantly (Brookfield, 2015; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). They are more likely to participate actively in class, ask questions, and take ownership of their learning journey. The results are that academic success is enhanced, and students are more willing to push their boundaries and strive for excellence (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

A study conducted by Ross et al. (2023) reinforces Brockett's (2015) demonstrating empathy in the classroom environment. Ross et al. (2023) conducted a mixed-methods study and found that instructors who display empathy played a crucial role in promoting student success. According to student reports, they felt that their concerns were genuinely acknowledged and heard. Furthermore, students expressed a stronger sense of connection with both their instructors and the course curriculum, ultimately enhancing their overall experience within the learning environment.

Similarly, Meyers et al. (2019) provide valuable recommendations for cultivating empathy in the classroom. They propose the following strategies: (a) understanding students' social context, (b) fostering empathy for individual students, and (c) communicating empathy toward the class. By actively embracing these empathetic characteristics within the classroom,

Meyers et al. (2019) assert that instructors can create a more positive and supportive learning environment.

Displaying empathetic understanding towards learners is an essential quality of effective teachers. By fostering connections with their students and creating a supportive and inclusive environment, educators can address individual needs, boost engagement, increase motivation, and improve overall academic performance. Empathy forms a cornerstone in nurturing a positive and enriching educational experience for students.

Authenticity and Genuineness

In the pursuit of meaningful and impactful teaching, Brockett (2015) emphasizes the important role of authenticity and genuineness in how teachers relate to their students. Effective educators recognize that sincerity and honesty are essential in building strong connections and trust within the classroom. By fostering an authentic atmosphere, teachers create a safe and supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable and engaged (Brookfield, 2017).

Authenticity displayed by teachers plays a pivotal role in encouraging students to actively participate in the learning process. When students sense that their teachers are genuine in their approach, they feel more motivated to collaborate, ask questions, and share their thoughts without fear of judgment (Brookfield, 2017; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). This heightened level of engagement leads to improved learning outcomes as students become more invested in their studies. In addition, when teachers genuinely connect with their students, they establish a sense of credibility that goes beyond simply imparting knowledge (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). Students recognize and appreciate the authenticity displayed by their educators, thereby strengthening the teacher-student relationship. This deeper connection fosters mutual respect and

open communication, enabling teachers to better understand the individual needs of their students (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

In a study conducted by LaBelle et al. (2023), several significant themes emerged concerning students' experiences in college classrooms where instructors exhibit authentic communication and behaviors. These themes encompassed: (a) openness to learning, (b) the cultivation of a growth mindset, (c) increased motivation, (d) the ability to bring course concepts to life, (e) student empowerment, and (f) a tolerance for ambiguity.

In a similar investigation, Johnson and LaBelle (2017) explored whether college students could discern instances of authentic behavior in their instructors and, if so, how these observations affected the students. The findings of the study indicate that students indeed demonstrate an ability to identify authentic communicative behaviors exhibited by their instructors in traditional, in-person classroom settings. In addition, students expressed a deep appreciation for instructors who displayed such behavior, perceiving them as more approachable, passionate, capable, and attentive.

As a result of the authentic interactions between teachers and learners, the overall educational experience is greatly enriched (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Students feel valued and supported, allowing them to explore their full potential with confidence. This positive and empowering atmosphere nurtures a love for learning and can instill a lifelong curiosity for knowledge (Brookfield, 2015, 2017). The significance of authenticity and genuineness in the teacher-student relationship cannot be overstated. Effective educators prioritize sincerity and honesty, creating an atmosphere of trust and credibility that encourages students to actively engage in the learning process. This authenticity leads to deeper connections, mutual appreciation, and enhanced educational experiences for both teachers and learners.

Modeling Confidence

Demonstrating and modeling confidence is an essential quality of effective teachers (Brockett, 2015). Adult educators have unwavering faith in the potential and capabilities of other students and consistently communicate high expectations for their success. By exhibiting confidence in themselves and their expertise, they earn the trust and respect of their students, which creates a learning environment that is conducive to growth and development (Brookfield, 2015).

Educators' confidence serves as a powerful motivator for students, inspiring them to actively engage in the learning process. Knowing that they have a knowledgeable and self-assured guide to support their educational journey, students feel more empowered to take on challenges and strive for excellence (Brookfield, 2015). This sense of confidence can encourage educators to instill a sense of belief in their students, helping them recognize their own abilities can encourage them to reach their full potential. This positive and affirming approach can boost students' self-esteem and encourage students to take ownership of their learning.

Carpenter et al. (2016) conducted a study that aligns with Brockett's (2015) concept of confidence within the learning environment. Their research delves into the influence of instructor understanding of students' confidence, perceptions, and academic outcomes. The findings indicate that when students depend on the instructor for to build their confidence, exposure to a fluent instructor often leads to increased overconfidence. These results imply that while instructors' understanding of their students in this regard can enhance instructor evaluations and boost student confidence, it may not necessarily translate into improved learning outcomes.

The atmosphere of trust and respect cultivated by confident teachers enhances the overall learning experience. Students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, asking questions, and

seeking guidance without fear of judgment. This open and supportive environment facilitates meaningful interactions and promotes active participation in the learning process. The display of confidence by effective teachers plays a crucial role in creating an inspiring and motivating learning environment (Brookfield, 2015; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). This confidence, provided by an instructor's belief in their student's potential, coupled with high expectations, fosters trust and respect between both the instructor and the students and empowers students to take charge of their education and strive for success.

Balancing Humility and Modesty

Brockett (2015) emphasizes that effective teachers possess a clear understanding of the importance of balancing confidence with humility in their approach to education. While confidence is essential for inspiring and guiding students, humility and modesty are equally critical traits that contribute to successful learning environments (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

This humility and modesty can be provided by having adult educators who acknowledge that they are fallible and recognize their own mistakes. They should understand that learning is a collaborative journey where both educators and students can grow and develop together (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). By practicing humility, teachers create a safe and inclusive classroom atmosphere that encourages students to freely express their ideas, ask questions, and explore new concepts without fear of judgment.

Humility also plays a vital role in fostering an environment of openness and mutual respect (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). Students feel more comfortable engaging in discussions and sharing their perspectives when they know their teacher is approachable and receptive to diverse viewpoints (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). This sense of safety and

inclusivity empowers students to take intellectual risks and actively participate in the learning process. Humility promotes a growth mindset in both teachers and students (Dweck, 2016). When educators display a willingness to learn from their students and adapt their teaching methods accordingly, it sets a powerful example of a growth-oriented approach to learning. This, in turn, encourages students to embrace challenges and view mistakes as opportunities for growth and development.

Effective adult educators strike a distinct balance between confidence and humility. While confidence inspires and guides students' needs, humility creates a nurturing and supportive learning environment. By practicing humility, educators foster openness and inclusivity, enabling meaningful and constructive learning experiences for both teachers and students. This balanced approach ultimately contributes to the overall success and growth of everyone involved in the educational journey.

Showing Enthusiasm

According to Brockett (2015), displaying enthusiasm is a powerful method of showcasing and inspiring a love for learning. Effective instructors demonstrate genuine excitement, not only for the subject matter they teach but also for the growth and development of their students (Brookfield, 2015; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). This enthusiasm creates a contagious atmosphere, filling the classroom with energy and passion (Brookfield, 2015; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

Through their passionate approach, educators create a dynamic and engaging learning environment. Their energy motivates students to actively participate in discussions, ask questions, and explore new ideas with curiosity and eagerness (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

As a result, students become more invested in their learning journey and develop a greater appreciation for the subject matter (Brookfield, 2015, 2017; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

The enthusiasm displayed by teachers fosters a positive and supportive classroom culture. Learners feel encouraged and inspired by their instructor's passion, which boosts their own interest and commitment to learning (Brookfield, 2015). The classroom becomes a space where creativity and critical thinking thrive, and students feel empowered to take intellectual risks and contribute actively to the learning process (Brookfield, 2015). A study conducted by Zhang (2014) reported on enthusiasm and investigated how teacher enthusiasm influences student engagement, learning goals, and self-belief. The findings revealed that teacher enthusiasm strongly predicts student behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement, as well as intrinsic goal orientation and academic self-confidence. However, it does not significantly affect extrinsic goal orientation. The study supports Brockett's (2015) characteristic of enthusiasm in the classroom by highlighting the significant role of teacher enthusiasm in shaping students' classroom behavior and attitudes.

Enthusiasm serves as a powerful tool for inspiring a love of learning. When educators generally express excitement for the subject matter and the growth of their students, they create an environment that ignites curiosity and engagement among learners (Brookfield, 2015). Through their energy and passion, instructors foster a dynamic and motivating classroom atmosphere that encourages active participation and exploration of new ideas.

Respect

Showing respect for learners and the subject matter is fundamental in effective teaching, as emphasized by Brockett (2015). Successful educators prioritize the establishment of a classroom environment where students feel valued for their unique perspectives, experiences,

and contributions. They foster a culture that celebrates diversity, encourages inclusivity, and promotes mutual respect among all students (Brookfield, 2015, 2017; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

Respect for learners means recognizing and appreciating the unique qualities and backgrounds that each student brings to the classroom (Brookfield, 2015; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). It involves listening to their thoughts, opinions, and concerns with genuine interest and consideration (Brookfield, 2015). By creating an atmosphere of respect, teachers empower students to freely express themselves, thus fostering a sense of belonging and engagement in the learning process.

Effective educators demonstrate a profound respect for the subject matter they teach (Brookfield, 2015). They emphasize the relevance and significance of the content in students' lives, making connections between academic concepts and real-world applications. This approach helps students understand the importance of what they are learning, encouraging a deeper level of interest and motivation to explore the subject matter further (Brookfield, 2017; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). In addition, by showing respect for the subject matter, teachers model the value of lifelong learning and intellectual curiosity (Brookfield, 2017). This attitude influences students positively and can inspire them to approach learning with a sense of wonder and enthusiasm (Brookfield, 2015, 2017).

Demonstrating respect for learners and the subject matter forms a cornerstone of effective teaching. By valuing and honoring individual perspectives and contributions, teachers create an inclusive and supportive classroom environment. Additionally, their profound respect for the subject matter sparks students' interest and appreciation for learning, fostering lifelong passion

for knowledge. In this way, respect becomes a guiding principle that enriches the educational journey for both teachers and students alike.

Summary of the Learning Environment

The qualities that define a skilled adult educator hold immense significance in creating a positive and impactful learning environment. Brockett (2015) identified seven essential attributes, forming the acronym TEACHER, that contribute to educators' success in their roles. These qualities from the acronym encompass: (a) building trust, (b) demonstrating empathy, (c) exhibiting authenticity, (d) exuding confidence, (e) displaying humility, (f) manifesting enthusiasm, and (g) showing respect. By embracing these traits, teachers can establish a climate of trust, forge personal connections with their students, and foster a supportive atmosphere that promotes effective learning. This section of the literature review focused on each of Brockett's (2015) seven qualities for the adult learning environment and explored how other adult education scholars also support these characteristics.

The Learning Partnership Model

The LPM is an instructional approach that emphasizes collaboration, shared responsibility, and mutual learning between learners and educators. By fostering meaningful partnerships, promoting active engagement, and integrating learner perspectives, the LPM enhances student outcomes and promotes a student-centered approach to education. The LPM is grounded in the work of Marcia Baxter Magolda (2010, 2012), who emphasizes the importance of self-authorship and the transformation of students' meaning-making capacities. The model draws from constructivist and social cognitive theories, highlighting the role of reflective thinking, dialogue, and challenging assumptions in the learning process. This section of the

literature review will examine Baxter Magolda's LPM, and the existing research that has been employed with this approach.

Concepts of the Model

The LPM offers several benefits for both learners and educators. Studies have shown that the model enhances student engagement and motivation (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004) by actively involving learners in decision-making processes. Furthermore, the model fosters deeper learning experiences, promotes critical thinking, encourages problem-solving, and enhances effective communication skills (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Learners can also develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning through the LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004), leading to increased motivation and investment in the educational process.

The LPM was developed from Baxter Magolda's (2001) 17-year longitudinal study that involved emerging adult development. The LPM identifies three fundamental assumptions and three key principles. Baxter Magolda (1992, 2001, 2010, 2012) discovered that these assumptions and principles were consistently utilized across different environments. The assumptions serve as the driving force for self-authorship development, while the principles provide support for the individual's current process of meaning-making. In addition, each assumption and principle corresponds to the cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions that together form the structure of meaning-making. It is the fusion of these assumptions and principles that constitutes the learning partnership.

The LPM centers around collaboration and sharing responsibility between learners and educators. Through this model, learners are encouraged to actively contribute to the learning process by sharing their experiences, perspectives, and ideas (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012;

Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Educators serve as facilitators, guiding the learning process while valuing and integrating learner perspectives (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Collaborative learning and shared responsibility create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters meaningful engagement and mutual learning.

An essential aspect of the LPM is the integration of learner perspectives into the instructional design. Learners' interests, goals, and learning needs are considered and incorporated, making the learning experience more relevant and meaningful (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). This integration empowers learners, as it recognizes their agency and promotes a learner-center approach to education.

Implementing this model requires a shift in traditional power dynamics and a willingness to embrace learner agency and autonomy. Educators need to develop facilitation skills to create safe spaces for open dialogue and communication (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Challenges in implementing the model include resistance to change, logistical considerations, and the need for ongoing support and professional development for educators (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Addressing these challenges is crucial to successfully integrating the LPM into educational settings.

LPM Applied to Curriculum

In a longitudinal study conducted by Bekken and Marie (2007), a two-year course curriculum was implemented at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, focusing on earth sustainability for undergraduate students. The curriculum was designed based on the LPM, specifically targeting the development of self-authorship in students. The study had 50 first-year students who were recruited during the summer orientation of 2004. Among them, only 19 students participated and completed the study. Bekken and Marie (2007) reported that initially,

most of the students' exhibited characteristics of dualistic knowers. However, over the course of three semesters, students began to shift towards a self-authorship development. In 2011, Olsen et al., continued the Bekken and Marie (2007) study. They examined two key aspects: (1) whether students in a LPM curriculum exhibited significantly greater epistemological development by the end of their sophomore year compared to their initial state as first-year students, and (2) whether these students showed significantly greater epistemological development at the end of their sophomore year compared to a comparison group of students in a traditional curriculum, measured over the same time period. Until the end of the second year, there was a minimal distinction observed between the participants and the control group across five dimensions: (a) the role of the learner, (b) the role of the instructor, (c) the role of peers, (d) evaluation of learning, and (e) the nature of knowledge.

In a similar study, Cardone et al. (2013), researched the involvement of students in the Miami University's Community of Practice on Engaged Learning (COPEL). This enabled the students to cultivate developmental and suitable learning-focused strategies that effectively promoted the process of student self-authorship. Four significant outcomes were discovered. First, when formulating and advocating for learning outcomes in any educational endeavor, it is essential to take into account students' developmental capacities. This is because such outcomes are multilayered and complex, and demand more than obtaining information. Secondly, to optimize learning partnerships within a specific context, it is crucial to scaffold learning outcomes gradually over time. Thirdly, nurturing productive learning partnerships with students requires genuine transformation for both students and professional staff members. Lastly, learning takes time, and patience from administrators and learners is critical for student development.

The LPM has also been employed as a framework in a study-abroad context. Nyuny (2021) studied 17 undergraduate students and revealed four significant findings that revealed the following four concepts in the transition of students from dependent learners to independent learners. First is mentoring engagement: Engaging in mentoring relationships facilitates students' development as independent learners. Secondly, challenging existing knowledge and validating learners' capabilities: students were encouraged to challenge pre-existing knowledge while also being reassured of their capacity to acquire knowledge. Thirdly, exploration of values, beliefs, and social identities: encouraging students to explore their values, beliefs, and social identities, while facilitating deep reflection, contributes to their growth as independent learners. Lastly, collaboration activities: engaging in collaborative activities during the study abroad, the study found that experience fosters independent learning among the participants. These findings from the Nyunt (2021) case study highlights the factors that can contribute to students' transition from dependency to independence in their learning journey during a study abroad program.

In higher education, teaching and learning can be designed to achieve not only subject matter knowledge and transferable skills but also student developmental goals. The LPM, based on the theoretical concept of self-authorship, was utilized in teaching a graduate-level course on social research methods. Cen (2018) outlines the process of this qualitative study. Data was collected from five cohorts of course participants through reflective essays, student interviews, and the instructor's teaching journal. The analysis revealed seven themes that reflected student development throughout the course. The findings were classified into the following three dimensions: (a) epistemological, (b) intrapersonal, and (c) interpersonal development, which were found to be interconnected. These findings hold potentially important implications for university faculty as they shed light on the importance of integrating student development into

their teaching practices. By adopting approaches like the LPM and considering the interconnected dimensions of student growth, educators can enhance the overall learning experiences for their students.

LPM Applied to Non-Curriculum

While the studies above highlight curricular models, Pizzolato (2003, 2004) suggests applying the LPM to a non-academic curriculum. One such example is the study conducted by Pizzolato and Ozaki (2007), which examined the impact of an academic advising program called Support To Enhance Performance (STEP) on the self-authorship development of students who were facing academic challenges. The program incorporated the LPM as a framework. The findings indicate that while the students did not explicitly attain self-authorship through the LPM advising program, they did experience enhanced clarity in personal relationships and began processing toward self-authorship as a result of their participation in the program. In a related publication, Pizzolato (2008) applied the LPM to reshape the landscape of academic advising. Pizzolato (2008) offers valuable recommendations encompassing four distinct forms of support that academic advisers and institutions can embrace when revamping their advising programs. These four support types were derived from a comparison to the LPM and include the following: (a) adjusting advising workloads to allocate sufficient time for the effective implementation of the LPM, (b) recognizing that change is a gradual process, and therefore not to expect a significant improvement among students within a single semester, (c) encouraging institutions to facilitate increased awareness of the various advising services available across campus, and (d) allocating dedicated time and space for advisers to engage in regular communication and collaboration throughout the academic year.

In relation to support and development, the LPM has been relevant in a Taylor and Baxter Magolda (2015) study. This study expands the principles of Baxter Magolda and King's (2004) LPM by devising a comprehensive seven-step plan. This plan serves as a powerful tool for educators, empowering them to foster learning partnerships that nurture personal and professional development. The plan comprises essential steps, including: (a) identifying a relevant context to address adaptive challenges, (b) establishing learning goals, (c) recognizing required developmental capacities, (d) setting developmental goals, (e) supporting individual growth, (f) finding suitable learning partners, and (g) actively engaging in community of practice. Another study examined the applicability of the LPM to the work environment and student affairs programs (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). The research specifically focuses on the transition of new professionals entering the field of student affairs. Through an online qualitative survey involving 90 new professionals in their first full-time job within student affairs, the study investigated whether graduate programs in student affairs and higher education prepare graduates for the transition into these professional positions. The data analysis discovered themes that include: (a) the development of a professional identity, (b) navigating cultural adjustments, (c) maintaining a learning mindset, and (d) seeking guidance from experienced individuals.

In the field of higher education, there has been considerable interest in fostering comprehensive student development. Hodge et al. (2009) and Chunoo (2020) endorse this viewpoint by integrating the LPM into their respective research. Hodge et al. (2009) completed an article that revolves around the awareness of the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, which outlines the essential college outcomes for success, as synthesized by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2007). These outcomes span various dimensions, including cognitive, social, and personal aspects, implying that achieving them goes

beyond simple information or critical analysis. The primary focus of Hodge et al. (2009) work is to promote the LPM and proposed four targeted strategies tailored to colleges and universities, including: (a) foster a collaborative approach involving faculty, staff, and parents as active partners in facilitating students' development, (b) encourage educators to form communities of practice to explore innovative ways of learning and collaborating across conventional boundaries, (c) employee assessment as a guiding tool to steer practices effectively, and (d) implement policy and practice revisions that shift the emphasis away from consumer satisfaction, checklists, and formulas, and prioritize reflection, personal growth, and meaningful learning experiences.

In a similar perspective, Chunoo (2020) also endorses the LPM, aligning with the Hodge et al. (2009) perspective. However, Chunoo (2020) takes a distinctly different approach to examining the model within the context of leadership learning experiences, emphasizing the importance of self-authorship for students. Furthermore, Chunoo (2020) offers valuable advice to educators who teach leadership, empowering them to guide their students effectively in their self-authorship journey.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) programs are distinct and tailored to each higher institution and the students they cater to. While several best practices are observed, the demand for academically rigorous and reputable programs remains crucial for continued student development, especially as institutions adapt to meet the increasing requirements of adult learners. Gleiman (2023) presents a case study that examines institution best practices at American Public University Systems emphasizing the prioritization of learning and knowledge within the PLA program. To ensure academic integrity and rigor, self-authorship and LPM are utilized as guiding frameworks. Gleiman (2023) reports institutions that focus on the LPM as

their guiding framework achieve the most significant success when they implement a system that allows, encourages, and even guides learners toward programs that facilitate a layered process for cognitive advancement.

The LPM, characterized by collaboration, shared responsibility, and the integration of learner perspectives, offers numerous benefits in educational contexts. The model enhances student engagement, deepens learner experiences, and fosters a sense of ownership in the learning process. While implementing the model presents challenges, such as resistance to change and logistical considerations, providing facilitation, support, and ongoing professional development for educators is key to successful implementation.

Conceptual Framework Summary

The study will be grounded in three key concepts: (a) Knowles' (1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015), andragogy, (b) Brockett's (2015) Psychological Learning Environment, and (c) Baxter Magolda's (2010, 2012) LPM. These concepts are written from an adult education point of view. They also not only bear significance in the field of adult education but also provide valuable perspectives to address adult learners in the classroom.

Summary

This literature review has explored various facets surrounding the first-year seminar and its significance within the realm of higher education by: (a) tracing its historical development, (b) understanding the viewpoints of college freshmen and college instructors, (c) examining the principles of andragogy, (d) appreciating the characteristics of the Psychological Learning Environment, and (e) advocating the development of a LPM, a comprehensive picture emerges of the pivotal role played by first-year seminar in shaping students' academic journeys. The first-year seminar serves as a critical transitional space, allowing students to navigate the challenges

of college life and formulate their identities, values, and beliefs. It highlights the importance of understanding students' perspectives to design effective educational programs and policies that support their success. This study is conducted through an adult education point of view, by focusing on instructors as adult educators. Furthermore, gaining insights into first-year seminar instructors' teaching ideas and philosophies provides valuable knowledge on their teaching approaches and interactions with students. Finally, the exploration of learning partnerships, the classroom environment, and andragogy sheds light and the unique needs of adult learners, presenting opportunities to enhance their educational experiences. By integrating these findings, this study hopes to offer a foundation for further research and underscores the significance of ongoing evaluation and refinement of first-year seminar programs to maximize their impact on student outcomes.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in a basic qualitative study. The primary objective of this study was to gain insight into the way first-year seminar instructors regard their first-year students as adult learners. This chapter provides an overview of the qualitative research tradition, expounds on the data collection approach, illustrates the importance of coding cycles, and emphasizes the ethical considerations alongside my role in the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to help guide me in performing this study and in the analysis following data collection:

- RQ1: If in anyway, how do first-year seminar instructors craft their classroom learning environment to align with strategies for teaching adult learners as framed in the conceptual framework?
- RQ2: How do the teaching techniques used by first-year seminar instructors align with the conceptual framework of this study?
- RQ3: How do first-year seminar instructors' philosophy of teaching align with established adult learning principles?

Subjectivity Statement

In light of my research focus on examining how instructors approach their treatment of students as adults in freshman seminars, acknowledging my subjectivity within this study was critical. Over the past 12 years, my professional experience has centered around teaching freshman seminar courses across various public and private colleges and universities in the New England area. My instructional portfolio spans multiple disciplines, including communication,

psychology, freshman seminar/college development, and introduction to academic research. This extensive exposure to working with college freshmen has shaped my perspective significantly.

Throughout my instructional experience in these courses, I have observed a wide array of emotions and reactions among students as they grapple with adult-related challenges. Some of the issues that may have come to my attention include: (a) roommate conflicts, (b) homesickness, (c) time management difficulties, and (d) academic struggles. The process of college freshmen navigating their journey through emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) has consistently heightened my curiosity. I find myself particularly intrigued by the interpersonal and intrapersonal transitions that college freshmen undergo during the period between high school graduation and college entry. This developmental phase can be an exhilarating time for most, yet it also can invoke feelings of apprehension for some.

As an instructor, my goal is to treat my college freshmen during their developmental stages with the respect and consideration they deserve as adults. By engaging in casual conversations with my colleagues, who also teach freshman seminars, I have found that they share similar thoughts. Upon reflection, I find myself pondering the actions and approaches that exemplify treating students as adults. This contemplation leads me to two distinct questions: (a) how do we, as educators, treat our students as adults, and (b) in the context of this research, how do we specifically treat our college students as adult learners? For the purposes of this study, I will direct my attention to: how do we effectively treat our first-year students as adult learners?

Frequent discussions with my colleagues revolve around the ways we can effectively treat our college freshmen as adult learners. It was during my introduction to and exploration of the conceptual frameworks of andragogy (Knowles 1970, 1973/1978, 1980), that I realized the potential it holds, yet I noticed it is not widely discussed nor practiced in higher education

circles. Interestingly, the term “pedagogy” is more commonly used in higher education, despite its origins in the context of P-12 education. Recognizing this disparity has further fueled my belief in the significance of incorporating andragogical principles into our teaching practices at the college level.

As I embark on the journey of preparing my first-year seminar courses, my approach involves crafting syllabi, assignments, selecting readings, and designing engaging activities. Throughout this process, I am aware of the opportunity to create an enriching educational experience that goes beyond the walls of higher educational learning. My goal is to provide my students with a unique and rewarding journey. Mindful of their developmental stage, I approach the course with the belief that they have chosen to be in college willingly, seeking to embrace the challenges and growth that come with it. My aspiration is to foster a positive and adult like learning environment that empowers and nurtures their academic and personal growth.

Recognizing the diverse levels of motivation among traditional college freshmen is a subject I find truly rewarding to explore and impart during my interactions with them. Guiding these young minds towards understanding their own self-motivation is a passion of mine. Beyond comprehending their learning styles as adults, my aspiration for these students is to help them build their educational toolbox to manage their self-efficacy effectively, ensuring they remain motivated in pursuing their academic abilities and aspirations. My greatest hope is that they discover the resilience to tackle any obstacles they encounter while actively shaping their own motivation—which is a vital aspect of the journey into adulthood.

The findings of this research hold the potential to benefit all those involved in the higher education realm, especially those working with first-year students in college. By offering insights, this study can spark meaningful conversations leading to potential solutions on how to

effectively treat first-year college students as adult learners. In addition, the implications of this research extend beyond the immediate scope of college freshmen. This research can lay the foundation for understanding how other student groups, including upperclassmen and pre-college students, experienced adult learning within the college environment. Such a broad perspective can lead to the formation of assumptions and innovative ideas about adult learning across diverse student populations, enriching the educational landscape at large.

Constructivism

The epistemological perspective I have adopted for this study is constructivism. Constructivism offers a significant image of how we perceive, acquire, and conceptualize knowledge (Crotty, 1998). This view challenges the idea that knowledge is an absolute truth waiting to be discovered, replacing it with a dynamic and deeply human understanding of the process of knowing (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004; Crotty, 1998). Constructivism posits that knowledge is inherently subjective, rather than a fixed and universally applicable body of facts, it suggests that what we know is shaped by our unique experiences, perspectives, and interpretations (Crotty, 1998). This perspective reframes knowledge as personal and context-dependent construction, highlighting the role of the individual as an active participant in the creation of knowledge (Crotty, 1998).

The central tenant of constructivism is the active role of the learner. It contends that individuals are not passive recipients of information but rather architects of their own understanding (Crotty, 1998). Through the following: (a) interactions with their environment, (b) engagement with experiences, and (c) reflection of their own thinking processes, learners actively construct and reconstruct knowledge (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004; Crotty, 1998). This

perspective places significant value on the learner's curiosity and capacity to make meaning from the world (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004).

Following this perspective, knowledge is viewed as fluid, evolving, and adaptable. It grows and transforms as individuals encounter new information, revise their understandings, and incorporate fresh insights into their existing mental frameworks (Crotty, 1998). Incorporation of prior knowledge is a significant aspect of the epistemological framework (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004). New knowledge is not acquired in isolation; it is integrated into the existing web of understanding that each individual possesses (Crotty, 1998). Recognition of the interconnectedness of knowledge encourages a holistic and comprehensive approach to learning.

Research Design

This section will highlight the essential elements of the research design, outlining the crucial considerations and decisions that were conducted throughout this study. A comprehensive overview of the research design is provided, which encompasses the rationale behind the chosen methodology, the selection of the participant population, the data collection methods employed, and the data analysis techniques used. This section served as a guiding framework for the study, ensuring that the research objectives were efficiently achieved in the data collected, and that the data were both reliable and valid.

Basic Qualitative Research

The qualitative research design of this study focuses on the perceptions and encounters of college instructors who teach first-year seminars, specifically in regard to viewing their students as adult learners. This study adopted a basic qualitative research approach, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the participants' subjective experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Basic qualitative studies are particularly well suited for investigating unexplored research areas

or topics with limited prior research. Embracing this approach will enable me to gain significant insights into the research topic, research questions, and identify key factors of interest (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative studies offer a comprehensive and thorough explanation of research questions (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By focusing on the context, meanings, and experiences of individuals, qualitative research provides invaluable insights that quantitative methods may not fully capture (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When working with complex social phenomena, qualitative research proves particularly stable, as it allows for a deep understanding (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By prioritizing the participants perspectives, basic qualitative research gives a voice to their viewpoints and contributes to a more accurate and authentic representation of the experience (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By centering on the research process, acknowledging lived experiences, and embracing flexibility in data collection and analysis, basic qualitative research enriches our understanding of the complexities of human behavior, attitudes, and social interactions.

This qualitative study had a basic exploratory design, focusing on practitioners in the field. Several factors influenced the choice of this method, including: (a) it provided flexibility in the design process, aligning with recommendations from researchers (Ellis & Hart, 2023; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), (b) there is a growing demand for basic qualitative research (Ellis & Hart, 2023), and (c) this framework is well suited for understanding the human experience (Ellis & Hart, 2023), which is a significant objective of this study.

After careful consideration, other specific qualitative research designs such as case study, narrative inquiry, and phenomenology were ruled out. While the basic qualitative design

incorporates elements from each of these research approaches, it was the best fit for the objectives of this study. A basic qualitative design aims to achieve a broader understanding and typically employs simpler qualitative techniques such as thematic analysis and pattern analysis (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Case studies involve an in-depth exploration of one or a few cases to gain comprehensive insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While this research shares some characteristics with a case study research design, it remains open to exploring a wider range of experiences and perspectives. In addition, a case study is not suitable because it focuses on an in-depth exploration of specific cases, can have limited sample sizes, and typically does not allow for generalization (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Narrative inquiry was not suitable because this method focuses on individual narratives, has specific sample selection and data collection methods, employs unique analytical approaches, and emphasizes unique experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kim, 2016). Even though this study's participants shared personal narratives, this is not the only collection process that was analyzed as a part of this investigation.

A phenomenological study was also ruled out. A phenomenological study typically focuses on exploring individual experiences and may not involve a smaller sample size, specific research design, and philosophical frameworks (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peoples, 2021). This study aimed to understand a broader range of factors among a larger group of practitioners, which is why a basic qualitative design was more practical and efficient.

Participants

The initial sample for this qualitative study specifically targeted 10-15 instructors who held a master's degree or higher and were actively teaching freshman seminar courses at a 4-year

university within the New England region of the United States. Additionally, participants would have to have had completed a minimum of two years of teaching in a first-year seminar course (FYS). A total of 12 participants who met these criteria participated in the study.

By narrowing the focus to the specific population of instructors, the study aimed to gain valuable insights and perspectives from experienced educators who had first-hand experiences in teaching first-year college students during their academic and personal transitions. This approach ensured that the research captured in-depth and relevant perspectives from instructors with sustainable familiarity in dealing with the challenges faced by incoming college freshmen.

Collecting data from 10-15 participants is commonly recommended in qualitative research due to its association with the concept of saturation analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Saturation is the point at which new data no longer provides significant insights, and the sample size is often sufficient to reach the significance analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, this sample size aimed for a rich understanding of specific context rather than generalizability analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The initial plan was to reach out to potential participants by distributing an e-mail via a National First-Year Experience listserv. The recruitment letter can be found in Appendix A. However, a snowball solicitation method was initiated first, which met the participant goal for this study so other methods were not necessary.

Protection of Human Subjects

This study was not initiated until it was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Kansas State University. The research specifically focused on interviewing participants who taught one or more sections of first-year experience seminars at

universities in the New England region. Interviews were recorded using the Zoom video conferencing applications. The audio was retained for transcription purposes and the video was deleted. All participants were given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. All identifiable information was deleted from all study documents as necessary to maintain confidentiality of the participants.

Throughout this process, I committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct throughout the research process. To uphold ethical practices and data protection guidelines, all collected data was securely stored and maintained. The data was collected then retained in a password-protected computer and locked filing cabinets. The data from the study was stored in a secure location, ensuring its confidentiality, and safeguarding the privacy of the participants. All data will be responsibly destroyed after three years from the date of collection.

Prior to the participant's interviews, each research participant received a written explanation of the study's purpose and the procedures, along with a consent form, shown in Appendix B, that was thoroughly reviewed with them by myself. The consent form, designed in accordance with the ethical guidelines set forth by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Standards of Ethics (AERA, 2009), addressed various critical aspects of the study.

The consent form covered the following key elements:

- Human consent and access to information: Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their involvement and were told that they had the right to withdraw at any point without consequences. Additionally, they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

- Perspectives and voice: The participants were assured that their perspectives and experiences would be respected and valued throughout the study. Their voices were acknowledged and considered in the analysis.
- Bias: Measures were taken to minimize bias during data collection and analysis. The research was conducted with openness.
- Evidence and reasoning: The study adhered to rigorous research practices, ensuring that evidence and reasoning were transparently presented to support the findings.
- Funding and sponsorship: Any funding or sponsorship related to this research was disclosed to the participants, ensuring transparency and integrity in the study.

A copy of the consent form, which can be found in Appendix B of this document, was made available for participants to review. Before proceeding, each participant was required to carefully read the consent form and was provided with a signed copy for their records. The consent forms were signed and returned to myself before the round of recorded interviews began. By adhering to the AERA ethical standards, this study prioritized the rights and well-being of the participants and ensured the highest ethical standards were met throughout the entire investigation.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted during the Fall 2023 semester. It was administered to refine the research design, evaluate the feasibility of the processes, enhance the data collection and quality, test analysis procedures, address ethical considerations, and shape the study's framework. The pilot study involved data collection from three first-year seminar instructors. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and the

collection of various documents, including personal teaching philosophy statements, sample syllabi, and lesson plans. This pilot study involved two distinct phases of coding: (a) thematic coding and (b) pattern coding. In the initial round of coding, significant segments of the data were condensed into concise summaries. Subsequently, the categorization of these summaries was reduced into a set of overarching concepts. By employing these two coding phases, I effectively synthesize the material to facilitate a more insightful analysis. Following the coding stages, I addressed each research question and explained how each theme aligned with the research findings.

A follow-up meeting was conducted with the participants to gather feedback regarding the interview process, and questions were asked for clarity. The feedback that was received highlighted redundancy in one of the interview questions, particularly with regard to the third question: “Could you provide examples of how you promote autonomy and responsibility among your students during semesters, including activities, assignments, or discussions?” This question was removed from the interview script for the primary research study. Additionally, participants suggested increasing the observation time. They explained that many students engaged with them right before and immediately after class sessions and felt that a significant amount of adult learning occurs during these brief interactions that are not a part of the class time.

This pilot study served as a valuable point in this study’s development. It not only provided a glimpse into how to conduct a larger-scale study, but also played a significant role in refining the methods used for gathering information from participants during the primary study. The insights gained from the pilot study enhanced the quality and efficiency of future research, which contributed to a more comprehensive and insightful exploration of the collected data.

Data Collection

This basic qualitative research study employed a triangulation approach for data collection. Through the utilization of diverse data sources, methods, and perspectives, this study provided an overview to validate and cross-verify its findings, thereby reducing potential biases and strengthening the reliability of the results. Triangulation significantly enhances the credibility of qualitative research by facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the subject under investigation and reducing the likelihood of errors or misinterpretations (Bhattacharya, 2017; Kim, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To implement triangulation, the study employed three distinct data collection methods: (a) interviews, (b) observations, (c) document analysis. All the data were then aligned with the research questions in the data alignment table, as shown in Appendix F.

Semi-Structured Interviews

For this study, 12 first-year seminar instructors were interviewed. A total of nine semi-structured interview questions were asked of each participant. These interview questions can be found in Appendix C of this document. The utilization of formal semi-structured interviews is well suited to capture the authentic narratives of the university instructors, showcasing their experiences and perceptions. This approach allowed for a meaningful exploration of the subject matter, examining deep into the rich insights and perspectives of the participants.

Formal semi-structured interviews involve me to prepare questions in advance with possible probes identified. The researcher usually sticks to the prepared protocol while making room for unexpected directions in the interview if it occurs and is relevant to the study (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 127).

Qualitative interviews hold significant importance in qualitative research studies, as they offer a valuable avenue for researchers to explore, comprehend, and interpret the significance of human experiences. Through these interviews, researchers gain access to rich and contextual data, providing unique insights that contribute to the conceptual framework of the study. In this research, qualitative interviews played a crucial role in gaining a deeper understanding of the ideas, perceptions, and thoughts of first-year seminar instructors regarding their first-year students. The insights generated from these interviews shed light on the dynamics of the instructor-student relationship and enriched an overall comprehension of the subject matter under investigation.

Throughout this process, I maintained a researcher's journal, while I conducted qualitative interviews (Bhattacharya, 2017; Kim, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher's journal served as a powerful instrument for personal reflection and self-awareness through the research journey. It allowed me to explore and assess my own biases, assumptions, and perceptions that might have influenced data collection and analysis (Bhattacharya, 2017; Kim, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); it also promoted reflexivity and ensured that my perspectives were duly acknowledged and accounted.

The researcher's journal also acted as a valuable archive, capturing contextual details about the research setting, participants, and interactions. It recorded vital information such as the physical environment, nonverbal cues, and unforeseen events that significantly impacted data interpretation (Bhattacharya, 2017; Saldaña, 2021). Additionally, the journal provided a space to document preliminary analytical insights and emerging themes and patterns observed during interviews. The researcher's journal serves a multitude of purposes. It fostered reflection and documentation, promoting methodological transparencies and ethical considerations

(Bhattacharya, 2017). It facilitated the recording of analytical insights, aiding in the comprehensive analysis and synthesis of data. Maintaining this journal, aided me in upholding the integrity and rigor of the research process while maximizing the depth and authenticity of the study's findings.

Before conducting the interviews, the interview questions were shared with the participants. Each participant was asked the same series of questions in a sequential order, allowing for consistency across interviews. Additionally, the interviews included room for probing questions, a key characteristic of formal semi-structured interviews (Bhattacharya, 2017). Conducting interviews was critical for the study as it centered on exploring intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication, and the perception of planning and development. By utilizing interview questions and adapting the qualitative research approach, the study aimed to comprehensively focus on the participant's perspectives, experiences, and meanings. The rich data gathered from the interviews offered profound insights, contributing to a deeper understanding of the research topic. This basic qualitative exploration was essential in uncovering the complexities of the research purpose, which paved the way for meaningful findings.

The data collection was done through one round of interviews, utilizing the video-conferencing platform Zoom to conduct the interviews. Zoom was used to engage with participants and allowed them to ask any questions they may have had about the study. The initial meeting was not recorded since the participant, and I reviewed the informed consent and answered the participant's questions. To ensure the participants were well prepared and felt more certain about their responses, I provided them a list of interview questions at the end of the preliminary meeting. In the first round, I conducted the interview with semi-structured interview

questions and recorded the session. Those questions were descriptive in nature, enabling a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives.

Zoom offered a convenient and versatile solution for conducting single-participant interviews, providing both audio and visual recording capability, along with automatic transcription. The platform's accessibility was open and easily available to both myself and participants, as participants could use it without the need for an account (Gray et al., 2020). In addition, Zoom ensured data security by incorporating features such as password protection and the ability to store recordings either on the host's computer or in Zoom cloud storage. Each interview was saved as two separate files: an audio-only recording and a combined audio-video file (Gray et al., 2020). To preserve the focus on participants' narratives and not nonverbal cues, only the audio recording option was utilized for the data collection process. The video portion was deleted by me after transcription of the audio was complete.

Member checking is a critical step and was conducted after the interviews. It involved returning to the participants to validate findings, enhance credibility, and ensure the accuracy of interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During this process I recorded the participants' impressions by writing participant responses, and reported on any received feedback from the participants as I confirmed or corrected my interpretations. Member checking was a valuable practice that enhanced the trustworthiness and quality of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Observations

Observations played a critical role in the data collection process of this qualitative study. In qualitative research, the aim is to understand complex social phenomena, behaviors, and interactions, often within natural settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Observations involve the

systematic and structured act of watching and recording phenomena as it unfolds in real-time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Capturing observations of the participants allowed for a more holistic understanding of participants' behaviors, interactions, emotions, and environmental factors (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This method allowed me to explore the implications that might not be captured through documents or interviews alone (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The process of conducting observations within this study was completed by way of capturing first-year seminar instructors facilitating a class period of their first year of seminar.

Classroom observations were conducted following the interviews, aligning with the triangulation approach, where observation data are used to validate interviews, in order to enhance the overall reliability of the study. These classroom observations were aimed at assessing how first-year seminar instructors treat their students as adult learners, and particular attention was given to the conceptual framework. The observations encompassed instructor-student interactions both before the class began, during the class session, and after its conclusion. Key aspects, such as the classroom layout, the instructor's classroom management techniques, and the content of the lecture, were collected as part of the classroom observations. The observation protocol can be found in Appendix D.

Documents

Documents within qualitative research studies encompass a wide array of textual, visual, or recorded materials that serve as invaluable sources of data and insight. Documents include written reports, reports, photographs, audio recordings, and even social media posts (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The utilization and review of documents is used as a method of data collection and as a tool for comprehensive investigation, commonly used to

uncover meaningful patterns, identify underlying themes, and decode the significance of the research inquiries (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Within the array of documents, various types can be utilized, such as primary and secondary documents, official records, and unofficial records, all of which can help gain a deeper understanding of the research investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The inclusion of special documents, such as sample syllabi, sample lesson plans, and/or a teaching philosophy statement, in this study was critical to enhance the depth and provide valuable insight into the investigation of how first-year seminar instructors treat their first-year students as adult learners. Documents were sought from participants at the onset of the participant search, forming a critical component of the research methodology. The document review protocol can be found in Appendix E.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process encompassed the systematic organization, interpretation, and synthesis of the collected data to reveal significant patterns, themes, and insights (Bhattacharya, 2017; Saldaña, 2021). For this research, a three-step coding process was adopted. In the first round of coding, thematic coding was applied, followed by pattern coding in the second round (Saldaña, 2021). The last round of coding was a review for concepts that might align with the conceptual framework. Thematic coding and pattern coding were complementary techniques in the qualitative data analysis (Saldaña, 2021). Thematic coding identified reoccurring themes and provided structure to the data, while pattern coding allowed me to delve deeper into how themes related to each other, revealing overarching insights (Saldaña, 2021). Together, they offered a more comprehensive understanding of the data by addressing both what was in the data (themes) and how and why it related to the study (patterns and relationships).

These coding methods served as effective tools for extracting and structuring the data, enabling a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of the information gathered. Through this analytical process, the research aim was to identify meaningful connections and overarching themes that might contribute to a deeper understanding of the research subject.

Organizing Data

As stated above, after transcribing the participants' recorded interviews, conducting classroom observations, and gathering documents. I conducted three rounds of coding cycles: (a) provisional, which was a review for concepts that aligned with the conceptual framework (b) pattern, and (c) thematic.

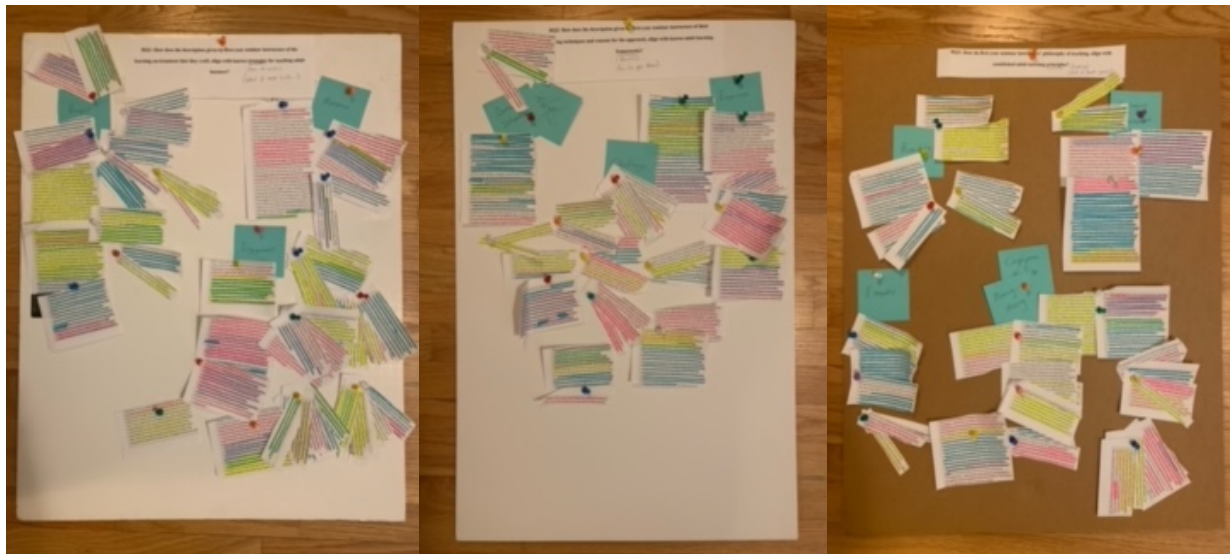
Provisional Coding

Provisional coding involves starting the data analysis process with a set of predefined codes derived from existing theories, prior research, or the researcher's knowledge of the subject (Saldaña, 2021). These initial codes guide the analysis but remain flexible, allowing me to modify, add, or remove codes as new insights emerge from the data. This method is particularly useful in theory driven or well-defined studies, as it streamlines the coding process while still accommodating unexpected findings and nuanced understanding (Saldaña, 2021).

Starting with provisional coding, I applied the study's conceptual framework, which comprises three key theories: (a) the Learning Partnership Model (LPM) (Baxter Magolda, 2012), (b) Psychological Teaching Environment (Brockett, 2015), and (c) andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980). Each theory was assigned a distinct color, which I used to highlight significant concepts corresponding to that theory in the interview transcripts, documents, and classroom observation notes. This method facilitated the identification of examples for each significant concept. Next, I cut out each color-coded piece and arranged them on a bulletin

board. This allowed me the opportunity to identify significant patterns on a visual tableau. I also included the three research questions on this bulletin board. As I analyzed each piece of paper, I identified and pinned them beneath the corresponding research question as shown in Figure 3.1. This systematic approach not only facilitated organization of the data but also revealed significant concepts throughout the analyzation process.

Figure 3.1. Transcription Organization



Note. This information presented shows bulletin board and the analyzation process of the color-coded transcripts.

Thematic Coding

Thematic coding, as outlined by Saldaña (2021), is a coding process for systematically analyzing and structuring qualitative data to discern recurring themes and patterns. The procedure began with data preparation and becoming acquainted with the collected data and information, followed by the creation of codes through an ongoing comparison. The codes were then subsequently clustered into broader themes, underwent refinement, and then were hierarchically structured. This approach allowed me to develop meaningful insights from the

qualitative data. Thematic coding was an adaptable and repetitive technique creating a balance between rigor and the imperative to capture the richness of qualitative data through coding.

Pattern Coding

Pattern coding is a coding technique that involves the identification and analysis of reoccurring patterns or themes presented in the collected data (Saldaña, 2021). The primary objective was to uncover commonalities, consistencies, and relationships within the data set, thereby fostering a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the research subject (Saldaña, 2021). By examining the data to identify these patterns, their significance and meaning within the research context was thoroughly analyzed (Saldaña, 2021). This coding approach played a significant role in supporting the conceptual framework analyzed in this study. To communicate and enhance the effectiveness and robustness of the data patterns, visual representation was employed (Saldaña, 2021). This visualization aids in presenting the identified patterns in a clear and concise manner, facilitating a better grasp of their implications. The use of pattern coding added depth to the research process, as it uncovered overarching themes and meaningful connections within the study. This approach enriches the overall findings, providing valuable insights that contribute to a more profound exploration of the research topic.

In this basic qualitative research, the data analysis process played a crucial role in organizing, interpreting, and providing meaningful insights from the collective data. To achieve this, the study employed several rounds of coding. In the first round, thematic coding was utilized to identify and analyze the values expressed by participants in the data. This exploration provided an understanding of how participants' attitudes, beliefs, and values shape their experiences and perspectives. In the second round, pattern coding was applied to identify and analyze reoccurring patterns and themes in the data, uncovering commonalities and relationships

within the data set. At the conclusion of this round, a review of concepts that align with the conceptual framework occurred. Visual representation techniques were employed to enhance the communication and effectiveness of the identified patterns.

The combination of these three coding cycles contributed to a comprehensive analysis of the data and effectively supported the conceptual frameworks explored in the study. Through these analytical processes, the research gained a deeper insight into the research topic, revealing meaningful connections and overarching themes that enrich the overall understanding of the subject matter.

Data Representation

My objective was to ensure that a diverse audience would comprehend the perceptions and experiences of the participants, understanding their thoughts and emotions. Additionally, I wanted to demonstrate the alignment of my research with the methodological framework, research questions, research purpose, and the overall conceptual framework of the study. Once the coding cycles were completed, I presented the findings in two ways through written explanations. These explanations highlight how university instructors who teach first-year seminar courses might be implementing Knowles' (1970, 1973/1978, 1980) andragogy framework, Brockett's (2015) Seven Qualities of an Effective Instructor, and Baxter Magolda's (2012) LPM, providing valuable insights into their practices. By achieving these goals, this study contributed to a deeper understanding of the application of the conceptual frameworks in the context of teaching first-year seminars.

My approach involved organizing the data around the significant themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews. I highlighted these themes and patterns by incorporating relevant

and impactful quotes from the participants. This allows readers to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's perspectives and experiences.

By combining quotes as a visual representation, the presentation of the data exhibits meaningful coherence and robust rigor (Tracy, 2010). This comprehensive approach aligns seamlessly with the methodological framework, research questions, research purpose, and the conceptual framework of the study ensuring a holistic and insightful analysis of the research findings.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness encompasses credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of research findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ensuring the integrity of these aspects was critical for upholding the rigor and quality of this basic qualitative research study. This section outlines how this study encompasses the significant criteria for achieving excellent qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). In addition to my approach to portraying the data collected from participants and my commitment to ethical considerations throughout the study. Ensuring the following characteristics were upheld within this study helped to ensure that trustworthiness was maintained throughout the study: (a) having a worthy topic, (b) ensuring rich rigor, (c) including sincerity in the subject being explored as well as in the research, (d) ensuring credibility within the process, (e) allowing for resonance, (f) making significant contributions, (g) ensuring the ethical collection of and analysis of the information, and (h) meaningful coherence to standards and practices.

Worthy Topic

The study's objective, which examined the strategies used by first-year seminar instructors and how they might foster adult-like learning environments, is highly relevant,

timely, and significant. It addresses the evolving landscape of higher education; we adapt teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of students, including adult learners, is of incredible importance. By drawing from established adult learning concepts such as andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980), the LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2012), in the psychological teaching environment (Brockett, 2015), the research offers a comprehensive conceptual framework. The primary goal of identifying the key characteristics and entities contributing to adult-like learning environments holds substantial promise for enhancing pedagogical practices and improving the learning experiences of first-year college students. In addition, the study's methodology, incorporating semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, was supported by the proposed three rounds of coding cycles, that showcase a robust and rigorous research design (Tracy, 2010). This approach generated in-depth and valuable insights, making this research an intriguing and potentially influential contribution to the field of higher education.

Rich Rigor

This study exemplifies rich rigor through its thorough approach in several key aspects. First, it establishes a solid foundation by incorporating a comprehensive conceptual framework that encompasses established adult learning concepts, showcasing a deep understanding of relevant literature and theory. The concept is significant, rich, complex, and adds depth to the existing research. The study also employed a diverse range of data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis.

This multi-layered approach is meant to ensure that data is sourced from various angles and perspectives, enriching the overall depth and breadth of the study (Tracy, 2010). It allowed for triangulation, enabling the research to cross-reference data from different sources for validation. The study's commitment to an extensive coding process should be evident. By

employing the three rounds of coding cycles, which involve provisional coding, thematic coding, and pattern coding. This study hoped to not only identified key themes and patterns, but also explore the complexity of relationships and trends, enhancing the richness of the analysis. Overall, the studies theoretical framework, diverse data collection methods, rigorous coding process, well-considered sample selection, and acknowledgement of the complexity of teaching and learning in higher education collectively exemplified rich rigor (Tracy, 2010). These elements ensured that the study was comprehensive, in-depth, and positioned to show valuable insights into the strategies employed by first-year seminar instructors in fostering adult-like learning environments within higher education.

Sincerity

Sincerity is demonstrated through this study's commitment to ethical research practices, including informed consent and confidentiality, and its transparency regarding research design and procedures. It also acknowledges potential limitations, emphasizing an honest and transparent approach. While it does not explicitly mention self-reflectivity, sincere research typically involves critical self-examination to minimize bias and maintain objectivity (Tracy, 2010). The study's commitment to unbiased and honest reporting of results, regardless of alignment with initial expectations, is another significant entity of its sincerity. In addition, involving participants in feedback and accurately representing their perspectives enhances the study's credibility and sincerity. This research exhibits sincerity by cementing itself to ethical standards, maintaining transparency, and aiming for unbiased and honest representations of findings.

Credibility

This study is characterized by strong credibility, marked by particular attention to contextual details, the rigorous application of triangulation methods, and the inclusion of member reflections (Tracy, 2010). The research focus, which is centered on specific content, namely first-year seminar instructors, located in the New England region, at 4-year higher educational institutions, enhances the study's credibility by accounting for the unique setting and population being studied. The use of triangulation, incorporating multiple data sources and methods such as: (a) interviews, (b) observations, and (c) document analysis, ensures the robustness and reliability of the study's findings. Additionally, the inclusion of member reflections highlights the commitment to representing participants' perspectives and experiences (Tracy, 2010), further enhancing the study's trustworthiness. The transparent methodology and likely data triangulation contribute to the overall credibility of the research, making it a well-grounded and dependable contribution to the field.

Resonance

Resonance in this study was observed by: (a) the practical applicability of research findings to real-world issues, (b) the alignment with contribution to existing academic concepts, (c) effective communication, (d) research methods that engage a broader audience, and (e) the study's impact on subsequent research or practices (Tracy, 2010). In addition, resonance can be seen when research findings authentically capture the experiences of participants and effectively convey the complexities of cultural and social contexts (Tracy, 2010). Resonance in this qualitative study helped ensure that I made significant connections and that the study provided impact across practical and academic domains, emphasizing relevance, engagement, and influence among various readers.

This research study is characterized by its ability to influence, affect, or engage its readers. To achieve this, the study is highly relevant to its target audience, it offers practical implications and actionable recommendations, it is aligned with current trends in the field, and should engage readers (Tracy, 2010). In addition, this study provides effective communication of research findings, as well as the ability to apply those findings beyond academia, which also contributes to the studies' resonance.

Significant Contributions

This study, which investigated strategies employed by first-year seminar instructors to create adult-like learning environments, can make significant contributions to various aspects of higher education. These contributions include: (a) advancing teaching practices, (b) informing faculty development programs, (c) enhancing student success, (d) promoting research-based decision-making, (e) fostering inclusivity and diversity, (f) contributing to the development of educational theories, (g) advancing qualitative research methods, and (h) providing context-specific insights for regional institutions. Ultimately, this study can lead to improvements in the quality of education offered by higher educational institutions, making it significant and impactful research in the field of education.

Ethical

Ethical considerations are significant in qualitative studies to safeguard the rights and well-being of participants and uphold the integrity of research. Key ethical principles include: (a) obtaining informed consent, (b) ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, (c) being sure to respect participants' autonomy, and (d) accurately representing participants' responses (Tracy, 2010). Throughout the study, I was transparent in methods, seeking to provide an ethical review when necessary and handling data responsibly. Additionally, reporting findings honestly and

addressing ethical issues as they arose was essential (Tracy, 2010). Ethics in this qualitative research are foundational to conducting research that is respectful, responsible, and contributes positively to knowledge and society.

This study demonstrates a commitment to ethical research practices. The research utilized formal semi-structured interviews to gather rich narratives and perspectives. Data was securely recorded and stored, with identifiable information removed, and retention and disposal protocols in place and conducted. The study also emphasized the importance of informed consent, ensuring that participants understood the study's purpose and procedures. In addition, it was ethically reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Kansas State University and adhered to the ethical guidelines of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Overall, this proposed study demonstrated a comprehensive approach to ethical conduct throughout the research process, encompassing participant protection, data security, and adherence to established ethical standards.

Meaningful Coherence

This study had a clear research focus. Its aim is to understand how first-year seminar instructors engage with adult learners in four-year universities, providing a clear sense of purpose. The study intended to exhibit methodological clarity through its structured approach, including formal semi-structured interviews, participant selection criteria, and symmetrical data analysis procedures. Ethical considerations were significant, with a focus on obtaining informed consent, privacy protection, and adherence to ethical guidelines, ensuring responsible research conduct. Additionally, the study outlines a well-organized data management plan, including secure recording and data storage. All study components aligned with the research purpose and research questions, enhancing overall coherence, credibility, and effectiveness.

Summary

This chapter explained the robust and insightful road map for the basic qualitative study on how first-year seminar instructors perceive their first-year students as adult learners. The research methodology outlined in this chapter ensured that the study was comprehensive, rigorous, and ethically sound. By understanding the instructor's perspectives, this research contributes significantly to the field of adult education, providing valuable insights for the improvement of first-year student support and fostering a successful transition to adulthood. The findings highlight the complex dynamics between instructors and first-year students, enriching our understanding of adult learning and guiding future research in ethical practices.

Chapter 4 - Findings

The aim of this qualitative research was to investigate how and if first-year seminar instructors, construct, or incorporate adult-like learning environments into their first-year seminar classes and to explore the outcomes of this approach. This chapter will address the overview of the research, the participant overview, and provide the findings.

Research Overview

The purpose of this study was to understand how and if, in any way, first-year seminar instructors, who teach first-year students at 4-year higher educational institutions, located in the New England region of the United States, construct, or incorporate adult-like learning environments into their classes and to explore the outcomes of this approach of constructing adult-like learning environments. By employing adult learning theories, this research identified significant characteristics and aspects that positively contribute to fostering an adult-like environment in first-year seminars.

The conceptual framework for this study encompassed three theoretical perspectives: (a) andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015), (b) Instructor Qualities for Learning Environment (Brockett, 2015), and (c) the Learning Partnership Model (LPM) (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012). By employing these three theoretical frameworks, this qualitative study aimed to explore first-year seminar instructors' classroom environments, teaching techniques, and philosophies and their alignment with adult learning principles.

This basic qualitative research study employed a triangulation approach for data collection. Through the utilization of diverse data sources, methods, and perspectives, this study provided an overview to validate and cross-verify its findings, thereby reducing potential biases and strengthening the reliability of the results. To implement triangulation, the study employed

three distinct data collection methods: (a) interviews, (b) observations, and (c) document analysis.

Participant Overview

A total of 12 participants participated in this study. All of these participants were solicited through a snowball solicitation method. Each participant met the study's established recruitment criteria. Each instructor taught first-year seminars for at least two or more years, was in the New England region of the United States, each held a master's degree or higher educational degree, and taught a section of their institution's first-year seminar. To specify, Table 4.1, displays the participants' gender-neutral pseudonyms and the type of seminar they taught. The types of seminars taught by the participants were (a) discipline-focused seminars, (b) pre-professional seminars, (c) academic-focused seminars, and (d) continuation—extension of orientation seminars. An extensive description of each seminar type is discussed in Chapter 2 - of this study.

Table 4.1. Participant Information

Participant Pseudonym	Seminar Type	Years Taught
Sam	Academic-focused seminar	11
Ashley	Academic-focused seminar	16
Jesse	Academic-focused seminar	3
Dakota	Academic-focused seminar	4
Jordan	Academic-focused seminar	3
Alex	Academic-focused seminar	4
Max	Academic-focused seminar	6
Jan	Pre-professional seminar	12
Tony	Continuation—extension of orientation seminar	9
Reese	Continuation—extension of orientation seminar	6
Shelby	Continuation—extension of orientation seminar	11
Casey	Discipline-focused seminar	15

Note. This information presented provides the participants gender-neutral pseudonym, the type of seminar they taught, and years they have taught the seminar.

Findings

The findings of this study are structured around the three research questions. Each section will highlight significant themes that emerged from the coding cycle. Specific examples will be identified to anchor triangulation. The examples are drawn from the participants interview responses, observations, and documents, providing a justification for their relevance.

Learning Environment

For my first research question, I identified significant themes that aligned with the first-year seminar instructors' learning environment. The research question regarding this stated: If in anyway, how do first-year seminar instructors craft their classroom learning environment to align with strategies for teaching adult learners as framed in the conceptual framework? This research question explored the alignment between the learning environment created by first-year seminar instructors and established strategies for teaching adult learners. The question aims to understand how the first-year seminar instructors' descriptions of their classroom environments correspond to recognized methods and approaches that are effective for teaching first-year college students. By examining this alignment, the findings can highlight effective approaches that they believe are adult-like environmental strategies for their first-year seminars.

Respect

One of the first themes to emerge from the data was respect. Participants identified how they not only respect their students but also create a respectful learning environment. Within the conceptual framework, respect is identified in two of their theories: the LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2012), and Psychological Teaching Environment (Brockett, 2015). The participants identified

how they respected their students within the interviews by stating: “I think it’s important to pay attention to our first-year students, it’s important to pay attention to them as layered people that have a variety of different needs outside of school, including family, relationships, jobs, etc.” – Jesse. “One of my biggest pet peeves, is when higher education professionals, call students’, more specifically, first-year students, kids. I am an advocate and will make sure to reframe the conversation and emphasize the word students.” –Dakota.

I say all of the time...they don’t know, what they don’t know...So, I am mindful when I’m presenting information, I try not to be overwhelming. I want to be respectful of who they are and where they are in their developmental stage. –Jan.

These statements and the embedded concepts demonstrate that the participants respect their students and are considerate of their experiences, particularly the first-year students in their classroom environments. During my observations, I noted their respectful conduct within the teaching settings. For example, when students arrived late, the instructors chose not to highlight their tardiness publicly. Instead, they simply nodded or briefly waved at students. Another example of respectful behavior occurred in Sam’s class, where a student asked a personal question at the beginning of the session. Sam recognized the sensitivity of the question and then asked the student to discuss it with them after class.

Additionally, the instructors’ syllabi reflect statements of respect. Ashley’s attendance policy stated:

It’s pretty simple. Be here... Be here every day. Be on time. Come prepared. This is not the kind of course where you can miss class and catch up by “reading the book.” This would be as absurd as reading about playing a sport but not bothering to actually practice. In this course, you must read, think, write, and come to class ready to discuss. Class is

extremely important because it is in class where we will be doing the intellectual and creative work of what we read. In other words, you read at home, and in class we discuss, think about, analyze, and form into other things what we read. Both of these things must happen for you to be successful in the course.

In this statement, Ashley supports and fosters respect humbly and authentically. In a similar attendance policy, Sam's notes the following: "Attendance/Participation: Participation is a required element of this class. It is important that students listen to and verbally respond with acceptance and support to the questions, comments, and reservations of other students."

Each of the examples addressed above demonstrates how instructors incorporate and strive for respect within their first-year seminars.

Engagement

The next theme to emerge from the data was engagement. Within the conceptual framework, engagement is highlighted significantly within the LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2012). There is much evidence of engaging techniques was identified with in all three data collection points.

During the interviews, instructors addressed ideas around communication and concepts that were meant to foster independent and collaborative engagement. Tony explained, "I like to set-up most assignments where students can discuss and engage with each other. I don't just mean group projects, but like a peer-review process." Alex addressed how they personally strategize their engagement in the class.

In the beginning of the semester, I try to give them minimal prompting in class

discussions—because I want them to explore. I also tell them this and the reason why.

It's because I want them to treat this course as an exploring class. I feel like if I give them too much prompting, it will take away from their free will of thinking.”

Dakota elaborated on the engagement process by providing an example of nonverbal engagement practices:

One of the things we're learning about this semester, is learning space...space on campus. Their task is to analyze effective and ineffective space. So, to make meaning, they can physically design what they observed with building blocks, putty, etc. They really get into this, and participation really increases.”

The “Think, Pair, Share” technique was a significant feature in many of the classroom observations. I noticed that several instructors made it a point to enter the classroom early to rearrange the desks and tables into small groups or a large circle. For example, Ashley encouraged students to help set up the classroom in a circle as they arrived. Additionally, Ashley, Jean, Jesse, Alex, and Max made it a practice to individually greet students as they entered, then asked how each student was doing. This interaction began 5 minutes before class and continued into the first five to 10 minutes after it started.

The engagement extended beyond the classroom as well. All instructors provided their e-mail addresses and other preferred contact methods in the syllabus under the section on office hours. Specifically, Ashley and Reese included details on how students could connect with them outside the class time. “Office Hours: I am on campus most of the time. Please use the link below to schedule a meeting with me or stop by the office”—Ashley, “...goal for the semester is to provide an open forum for discussion about college transition issues and concerns, and to

promote greater self-awareness, growth, and understanding of you as a scholar, individual, and global citizen.”—Reese.

Enthusiasm

Another theme that surfaced was enthusiasm. Instructors exhibited a significant level of excitement, passion, or interest, indicating a genuine enjoyment and curiosity within their teaching environment. Enthusiasm is a driving force behind motivation, which is a key concept in the conceptual framework of andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980). It is also recognized as a defining characteristic in the Psychological Teaching Environment model (Brockett, 2015).

As Max planned the seminar, they considered how to keep the material interesting, which fosters enthusiastic planning.

Before I create assignments, I think about the big picture. I usually ask myself...what do I want students to get out of this freshmen seminar? How will I keep them interested when things are dry? This also comes down to greeting them in the class and getting them excited to be here.

Breaking up the learning environment with other methods of delivery, such as incorporating guest speakers is essential. This can help influence the enthusiastic classroom environment.

I like to bring in guest speakers throughout the semester. It's a nice break for the students...So, they don't have to always listen to me. Bringing guest speakers in helps center the mood of the class and I noticed that they enjoy it. —Jan.

Incorporating enthusiasm is also a belief. “I think my philosophy is inspiring and encouraging. I believe adults need this. I know it's not only what I need but I also like... and I’m an adult! So, that’s what I should be giving my students.” –Reese.

During my observations, there were multiple instances where students shared exciting news with their instructors Casey, Dakota, Tony, and Shelby 5-minutes before class began. The instructor shared news with the entire class and congratulated the student on a significant accomplishment. This demonstrates the building of a positive classroom environment through enthusiasm. Another element that supported enthusiasm in the classroom was when Rees, played a mix of contemporary music and did not turn it off until 10 minutes into the class. While the music was playing, some students excitedly sang along, some students tapped their feet to the beat of the song, and others tapped their fingers on the desk to the beat of the song. In addition, the instructor had a PowerPoint slide visible titled “Take 5 & as you get settled.” On the slide, there was a list of items to complete: “Take out and review your notes from the article that was assigned. Begin engaging with someone next to you”. To further address enthusiasm, Ashley had inspirational quotes on their syllabus including:

- “Creative takes courage”—Henri Matisse,
- “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.” –Pablo Picasso,
- “Creativity is a gift. It doesn’t come through if the air is cluttered.” –John Lennon.

Further, Tony’s attendance policy emphasized an enthusiastic goal students can work towards. Syllabus Statement: “Attendance Policy: If you have perfect attendance, I will raise your final grade, one full letter grade!”

Empathy

Many of the instructors explained their ability to understand and share feelings, thoughts, and experiences with their students. These characteristics were defined as empathy which was emerged as a significant theme. The Psychological Teaching Environment (Brockett, 2015) characterizes empathy as one of the seven concepts.

Instructors identified and recognized their students' emotions, which involved a deep connection and willingness to support them. In Dakota's interview, they explained how it's important to provide space for students.

I like providing space in as many ways as I can. For example, I trust my students to complete their assignments... However, if they don't and they fail, I'll give them the space to reflect and a choice if they would like to redo the assignment.

Instructors also explained how they are mindful that first-year students are new at the time management process, so it's important to acknowledge this by creating space in the class to work on assignments.

I recognize that my students may not have a sufficient amount of time to complete major projects that I assign outside of class. So, I will carve out time in class for them to constructively work on their major project. I think I provide a respectful and realistic amount of time to complete their project. –Dakota

Instructors created messages that aligned with empathy. Evidence of this was written on the course syllabus. Regarding this, Casey's syllabus stated:

I am committed to supporting your success in this course and throughout your first-year experience. Your health is a critical part of your success, and I encourage you to reach out to me if you encounter challenges or difficulties that impact your performance or your

well-being. We can work together to identify solutions to course-related concerns, and I can help you navigate the many resources available to you at the university for your academic, personal, and professional development. Please don't wait until things get "bad enough" to ask for support. You matter, and the more you take care of yourself and your needs, the more you contribute toward your own success.

Evidence of empathy in the classroom environment was evident as well. Instructors allowed students to enter and exit the classroom freely throughout class time. Shelby mentioned in their interview,

...I allow students to come and go during the class time. They don't need permission.

Sometimes, they need to take care of personal matters. This is something I can relate to.

When I was in college, I had health issues where I needed to stand and use the restroom when needed. I want to be an advocate for students who may have a hidden health condition like I did.

Teaching Techniques

The first-year seminar instructors' teaching techniques highlight how instructors' descriptions of their teaching methods and their rationale behind the approaches they use correspond with recognized frameworks of adult learning. The second research question asked: How do the teaching techniques used by first-year seminar instructors align with the conceptual framework of this study? This research question seeks to investigate the alignment between teaching techniques employed by first year seminar instructors and established frameworks for adult learning. The findings address the instructor's techniques of established principles of adult learning, which hopes to provide insights for teaching practices in first-year seminars.

Challenge

Challenging students was an intellectual exercise that many participants discussed. Drawing from the conceptual framework, challenge is significant within the LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2012). This is evident when instructors help students view their experience as learning opportunities and development. In addition, instructors' direct students' attention to the complexity of their work and life decision while discouraging simple solutions. In an interview with Jesse, they explained how they challenge students to think outside of simple responses.

My teaching approach is to get students to actively and creatively write their ideas down, before speaking them. I also conduct a lot of circle discussions. I'm mindful of my prompts. Some are simple yes or no responses, and some are open-ended.

In relation to collaborative activity within the classroom, Tony used a think, pair, share teaching technique to challenge students' intellectual skills. "I really stress collaborative assignments. I often use a think, pair, share technique. I think that is important because it allows students to challenge each other's thoughts and ideas."

During the observations, there were multiple ways that the instructors challenged their students. During the class session, students brought up a conversational issue that dealt with an on-campus office. Jesse played devil's advocate and challenged students to think how they would feel if they worked in the campus office—and how they would handle challenging situations. In addition to this, all instructors challenged students by asking follow-up questions during in-class discussions. Participants also tasked students with a challenge on assignments. Jan's assignment, a descriptive analysis, provided a challenge on how the students could accumulate points throughout the semester.

Each student will be assigned nine assignments throughout the course of the semester.

Eight of these assignments will be journal assignments...one assignment will be your final semester assignment... students will have the opportunity to earn 100 points in the class.

Challenging yet encouraging messages were evident on syllabi as well. Max's included a passage: "I challenge you to be your own self-advocate. I challenge you to take charge of your own learning and create a solid path for your first semester in academia."

Prior Experience

The theme of prior experience occurs in two areas of the conceptual framework. It is characterized in the LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2012), and in andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980). The participants acknowledged and supported their students' prior learning experiences and highlighted this in a few different ways. Alex explained that "when I'm introducing a new concept, I'll often ask students to think back to high school—I'll ask them how they can relate this new concept I'm introducing to something they might have done." Participants also encouraged students to think about prior experience so they can make meaning with new and relevant material.

I love it when my students discuss or write about things that happened to them. This is a wonderful meaning-making concept. I tie this into class discussions often. I'll use some probing statements like... 'tell me a time...', or 'how many of you can relate...'. This helps them understand that it's ok to talk about their life occurrences. —Shelby

In addition, Casey incorporated teaching techniques such as practical examples:

"I love to give my students real-world scenarios or case studies. I think this helps them make meaning and incorporate their prior knowledge to new knowledge." —Casey. Participants also

acknowledged how to rely on and think about past experiences and that they have learned current information in different ways before. “I tell my students that the information that I present to them... They most likely heard about it in their past. It’s not brand new, they may be heard it at different point in their lives...” –Jan.

I think that all of our students are adult learners, but that is one of the problems we have in teaching and working with our students, many people don’t define or think of first semester, first-year students as adults... But I like to think of it this way, some of them are new to college, and some of them are newer to simply, life experiences and therefore, they need more scaffolding. –Ashley

In the initial 10 to 15 minutes of every class session, instructors prompted students to reflect on a specific moment. This could be a general inquiry or a revisit to prior knowledge, which aimed at preparing students to engage with new material or build upon existing knowledge. More specifically, during the first 10 minutes of Jordan’s class, informal class discussions lead into the main class discussion. The topic was reflecting on your high school experience. Another detailed example occurred with Ashley, at the start of class, the instructor had the students write a ‘take-off’ prompt. The purpose was to reflect on what the class had accomplished and learned during the previous session. Shelby informed the class: “Remember—it’s important to think back to where you were last class... reflect on the progress you’ve made!” During the class period, Jordan assigned the students a project. The description of this project heavily relies on these students’ experiences.

Assignment: “Tell Your Story”: tell your story about your growth this semester using visual and audio aids. Get creative with this! You can perform spoken words, create a piece of art, make a game...anything! The options are endless, and you will be graded

based on creativity as how well you can demonstrate your journey this semester and working towards your goal.”

A similar assignment description was assigned by Reese:

“My Journey”: This assignment supports you on your journey to getting involved at the university! While this first step can be overwhelming; this assignment seeks to help you purposefully reflect on your experiences and how to translate them into your professional life. You will select two on campus events or activities to attend throughout the semester. First, you will focus on how you can prepare for this event. Second, you will evaluate the relevance of the event. Finally, you will complete this assignment by sharing what you have learned, from attending these events, but also about yourself as a student. More details (including an example) will be given in class.

Developing Independence

Developing independence emerged as a recurring theme that participants emphasized. Instructors made efforts to highlight the significance of fostering independence in their lessons. This theme aligns with the conceptual framework of andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980) and the LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2012). Jesse described how they are mindful and active within their teaching approach:

I leave room in my lesson plans for asking students for feedback on what lessons worked and what lessons didn't work... This allows them to not only take ownership of their learning, it allows them to be engaged in the learning process.

The power of choice is also significant. Allowing students to rationalize through choice is evident with Jordan: “I like to provide my students with choices on how they would like to create

major projects or assignments. I think this helps develop independence.” In addition, Casey echoed this by stating:

“Providing choice, is incredibly important for students to develop a sense of independence. Usually, I provide them with choices on what to write about on their weekly discussion board posts. Typically, I provided at least five prompts, and then they could choose one or more to respond to.”

The participants also engendered independence within their classrooms. As mentioned earlier, all participants allowed the students to enter and exit the classroom throughout the class period without permission. This demonstrates the independence and autonomy of each student. More specific examples occurred in Max and Jordan’s classrooms. At the end of class, Max reminded students about advising appointments. Students must make an appointment—on their own—with an academic adviser. If they are not advised, they cannot register for classes. Max pointed out the consequences if students do not choose to meet with an adviser. In addition, after Jordan reviewed an assignment, they emphasized to the students that they could submit the assignment any time before the next class. This provides students autonomy to submit the assignment at any point up until a certain due date. Syllabus statements were also incorporated with independence development. Max created a statement to empower independence:

“...students will gain self-awareness of their own mindset and analyze ways in which they could change and improve for their personal and academic growth and development.” Reese created a syllabus statement that informed students what this course will entail, developing independence being a key factor: “Over the course of the semester, we will investigate your college experiences holistically, which will allow you the ability to make informed decisions paving the way for a richer, fuller college career.”

Encouragement

The last theme to emerge from the teaching techniques of the participants is encouragement. Encouragement encompasses various actions aimed at uplifting students and empowering them to succeed. Encouragement is noted directly from the LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2012) and can be extended as a key ingredient into Knowles (1970, 1973/1978, 1980) andragogy's concept of motivation. As a teaching technique, Jordan decided to incorporate games into the classroom because they recognized the students enjoyment of it. "Recognizing what motivates students is important...for example, this semester my students are very competitive and like interactive games. So, I took one of my lessons and created a Jeopardy game out of it." Jordan facilitated a jeopardy game during the class observation session. Not only was the class engaged by participating, cheering on peers, but Jordan verbally encouraged students throughout the game, by saying "nice job!", "way to go!", "Great work team!". These small words of encouragement were also used by all instructors during classroom observations. Additional techniques to encourage participation is a recognized attribute that Tony discovered, "I also noticed that the think, pair, share technique encourages students...especially the quieter students, to share out loud when they are ready." Another form of encouragement was the relocation of class.

Sometimes learning outside of the classroom is incredibly powerful. Sometimes I'll hold class outside, or somewhere else on campus like their resident hall, a quiet spot in the cafeteria, or library. I notice a new change in environment motivates them." –Casey

Participants noted positive affirmations of encouragement on teaching philosophy statements: "A philosophy as mine demands that my teaching style be highly interactive,

engaging students in a discussion, and often putting students in a dialogue with each other.

–Sam.

“I believe that engagement goes beyond participation. It's a deep sense of involvement and investment in the learning experience. Through hand-on activities, meaningful discussions, and interactive learning opportunities, I believe we can captivate the minds and hearts of students, speaking a desire to explore, inquire, and discover.” –Reese

Both of these written passages acknowledge that the participants see value in the process of engagement. In addition, engagement was embedded within assignments. For example, Max created an assignment that not only engages students, but it's purpose is to understand the process of engagement:

Assignment Description: “This Engagement Path is intended to introduce our first-year students to a myriad of opportunities and resources available to help set a foundation of success for their first year at the university. The Engagement Path highlights areas of involvement, social justice, health and wellness, and academic and career success. It enables you to engage in these areas in meaningful ways and reflect on these experiences. Students will attend and then journal about the events.”

Participation is another learning technique that was emphasized in Shelby's syllabus:

“Class Participation: Active and thoughtful participation is *crucial and meaningful* to your experience in this course. Effective participation consists of being prepared to discuss weekly topics, engage with in-class assignments and activities, and tie in any assignment reading materials to class discussions. Students must be present to; participate therefore, absences will impede your ability to participate and thus having a negative impact on your achievement. If there are special circumstances causing absences, please

contact me by email. Students will be responsible for content covered in missed classes.

If you know in advance that you will need to miss class, we can work together to find a way to catch you up.”

Philosophy of Teaching

The third research question addressed: How do first-year seminar instructors’ philosophy of teaching align with established adult learning principles? This research question investigates how the teaching philosophy of first-year seminar instructors aligned with established principles of adult learning. It examines the correspondence between instructors’ beliefs about teaching and recognized theories of adult learning, providing insights into the compatibility between instructors’ approaches and the needs of adult learners in seminar settings.

The themes of trust and meaning making are foundational elements of humanistic educational philosophy, emphasizing the importance of fostering student autonomy, self-awareness, and personal growth. The first-year seminar instructors embraced this philosophy, creating space for students to make meaning and allow trust to develop by prioritizing open communication, transparency, and respect in their teaching practices. The emphasis on trust, as discussed by participants, highlights the significance of cultivating a trusting relationship between instructors and students, where students feel valued, respected, and empowered to take ownership of their learning journey. This trust is exemplified through participants' attendance policies, which not only outline expectations but also demonstrate a belief in students’ responsibility and accountability. Similarly, the concept of meaning-making highlights the dynamic process through which students construct understanding and find relevance in their educational experiences. Instructors recognize the initial challenges students may face in grasping the purpose of a class, but by providing opportunities for reflection and critical inquiry,

they create an environment where students can engage in meaningful dialogue, connect with course material, and develop a deeper sense of self-awareness and autonomy. Overall, by nurturing trust and facilitating meaning-making, instructors uphold the principles of humanistic education, promoting student-centered learning and fostering a supportive and empowering learning environment.

Trust

As participants discussed their philosophical beliefs, a significant theme that surfaced was trust. They expressed a desire for students to feel trusted by them and also instilled a trusting learning mindset in the students. Trust is highlighted in the Psychological Teaching Environment (Brockett, 2015). The participants' attendance policies were significant in demonstrating trust. Not only did they list them, but they also addressed this in the interviews. Tony explained:

I try to mirror my classroom to the real world. For example, attendance, I normally give them a certain number of absences they can utilize. Just like sick time at a professional place of employment. However, if they have appropriate documentation, such as a doctor's note, I can excuse an absence. This process not only creates independency, it also develops trust within themselves.

Jan acknowledged the autonomy and agency of the students in their learning journey. "My job is to support and guide. Not to decide for them... This seminar is a place to learn, make meaning, and make mistakes... I believe that making this a comfortable learning opportunity for them is critical." Jan's approach fosters trust by empowering students to take ownership of their learning process and make their own decisions. This cultivates and allows students to develop trust. Similarly, Alex highlights that mirroring classroom policies to real-world practices, such as an attendance policy resembling those in professional workplaces. By providing autonomy in

managing absences and recognizing valid documentation, Alex fostered trust in students' responsibility and integrity.

I try to mirror my classroom to the real world. For example, attendance, I normally give them a certain number of absences they can utilize. Just like sick time at a professional place of employment. However, if they have appropriate documentation, such as a doctor's note, I can excuse an absence. This process not only creates independency, it also develops trust within themselves.

During Sam's observation, at the end of the class session, Sam reminded the class about the attendance policy by stating:

I know many of you have email me asking about the attendance policy. I'm under the assumption that you have access to the syllabus. I believe you should start there and refresh yourself with that. If you have further questions, you can then ask me.

This reflects trust by implying that students are capable of accessing and understanding the syllabus. By directing students to refer to the syllabus and then to reach out with any remaining questions, the instructor demonstrated trust in students' ability to take initiative and responsibility for their own understanding. During Ashley's observations, they assigned an assignment and as Ashley made it available on the learning platform, they said, "I'm not going to read the directions to this assignment. I believe you can do this on your own. Make sure to complete this homework by the appropriate due date. All information is clearly listed on the assignment." Other forms of trust were evident in the participants' documents. Such as one of Ashley's assignments: "I will expect you to complete a self-assessment survey which will help me assess what you are learning in the course and help the university assess how well the FYE model is working to achieve its objectives." On Sam's teaching philosophy statement, they

noted: “I trust that my students walk away from my course, with a sense of independence, confidence, and respect for their education and the education of others...”.

Meaning-Making

Many of the participants referred to a concept of meaning-making, which is contributed to the LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2012). Participants alluded to the importance of their students rationalizing and how important it is for students to make sense of their experiences, interactions, and perceptions of the world, especially the college world around them. Meaning making is a dynamic process that is influenced by factors such as prior knowledge, cultural background, environmental factors, social perspectives, and individual perspectives. Tony recognized that their students may struggle to grasp the purpose or relevance of the class, but as they reflect on their decisions and actions throughout their first semester of college, they begin to recognize the autonomy they exercise.

I think that freshmen seminar is a class that students can have a difficult time understanding. However, I think many students recognize that at the end of the class, that the many choices they made during their first semester of college were their own. I believe it's important to point this out to them. I feel they develop a stronger sense of autonomy.

Shelby explained that students may have misperceptions about the course's depth and significance. However, through engagement with the material and invested teaching, Shelby realizes the complexity and challenges within the class.

I know many people who don't teach first-year experience think this is a light and fluffy class. I know I did—and then I was asked to teach it. And then I discovered that it's incredibly challenging... especially if you care. I believe that these students come in with

a perception of what adulthood is, and by the end of the semester, they walk away with a better understanding of how to be, think, and take ownership of themselves. This is incredibly important.

Jan recognized the power of choice and reflection in the learning process. By offering students a variety of journal prompts related to the current topics covered in class, Jan empowers them to engage with the material in a way that is personally meaningful and relevant.

A majority of my assignments are journal based. Each week I have a couple of different journal prompts they can respond to. The journal prompts are based on the current topic we've covered. This gives them the power of choice to complete the assignment.

In a teaching philosophy statement by Reese, they explained how they feel that a meaning-making process is highlighted by the transformative nature of education. Specifically, empowering students to engage critically with knowledge and construct their own understanding of the world.

True education empowers students to think critically, question assumptions, and create their own paths. By nurturing independence... through a balanced blend of guidance and autonomy, I play a significant role in cultivating students independence, guiding students to explore, experiment, and discover their unique strengths and passions. –Reese

Similarly, Casey elaborated on this in their teaching philosophy statement: “I encourage my students to think and explore with their thoughts. I also challenge their thoughts. I believe by doing this it helps build their independence and gives them confidence in their studies.”

In one of Tony's assignments, they noted:

LinkedIn is a platform that allows jobseekers the opportunity to get connected with various employers and list further qualifications that a résumé might not space. Following

the module on the online learning platform, create your own profile including the following sections...”

This represents meaning-making by allowing the students to actively engage with the course material and apply it to real-world contexts. By introducing this career assignment, the students are prompted to reflect on their qualifications, experiences, and career goals, and to consider how they can effectively present themselves to potential employers.

During observations, I noted that all participants reminded students to recall information from previous classes, so they could apply it to the course topic. In addition, all participants challenged students’ thoughts by asking them open-ended questions that helped students make sense of course material.

Summary

This section highlighted the construction and incorporation of adult-like learning environments by first-year seminar instructors. The aim was to explore the outcomes of this approach. Organized around three research questions, the findings presented significant themes aligned from the coding cycles, anchored by specific examples drawn from participant interviews, observations, and documents. These examples serve to triangulate the data and justify their relevance in understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Through a qualitative research approach, this study provided an overview of research, participant profiles, and a detailed analysis of the collected data, offering valuable insights into the complexities of adult-like learning environments in the context of first-year seminars.

Chapter 5 - Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the construction and integration of adult-like learning environments by first-year seminar instructors at 4-year higher educational institutions in the New England region of the United States. Utilizing adult learning theories, this research sought to identify key characteristics and aspects that might contribute to the development of such environments within first-year seminars for others and to examine the outcomes of this approach. This chapter will address a discussion of the findings through the study's conceptual framework, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research.

Discussion of Findings

This study addressed and analyzed three significant perspectives: (a) learning environment, (b) teaching techniques, and (c) philosophy, all grounded within a comprehensive theoretical framework. It is important to note that first-year seminar instructors not only identified and acknowledged specific elements within each of these perspectives, but also demonstrated them within the classroom environment. To further develop these ideas, the findings of this research were *analyzed* through the lens of three adult learning theories that formed the study's conceptual framework: (a) andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980), (b) Psychological Learning Environment (Brockett, 2015), and (c) the Learning Partnership Model (LPM) (Baxter Magolda, 2012). These theories were employed to assess the extent to which freshman seminar instructors integrate adult learning strategies and principles into their first-year seminars. Each theme that was identified in Chapter 4 - will be examined in this chapter and will be analyzed in terms of its relationship to the conceptual framework. Themes that were common

across two or more frameworks will be addressed last. Finally, any existing literature will be incorporated to support the themes.

Andragogy

Andragogy, as a theory of adult learning, highlights self-directiveness, relevance, and active engagement in the learning process (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980). Adults are presumed to be self-motivated learners driven by their life experiences and goals, preferring learning that is applicable to real-world situations and a problem-centered approach (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980). Adults value discussions, collaboration, and participatory learning environments, seeking practical information with direct relevance to their personal and professional lives (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980). These assumptions shape the principles of andragogy, guiding instructional strategies tailored to adult learners. The findings involve identifying participants' responses and actions that align with these principles, such as: (a) taking ownership of their learning, (b) seeking relevant information, (c) engaging in critical thinking, and (d) applying knowledge in a real-life context.

Fundamentally, andragogy facilitates a focused examination of adult learning within freshman seminar courses, revealing the specific characteristics that influence instructors' approaches to students as learners. By integrating this concept into the study, the aim was to enhance understanding of how instructors effectively engage with their students as adults in the learning process, enriching the educational experience within first-year seminars.

Prior Experiences

Andragogy recognizes that adults excel in learning when they can relate new information to their existing knowledge and experiences (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980). Previous experiences form the groundwork for learning and influence the perspectives, understandings,

and problem-solving skills of adult learners (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). The first-year seminar instructors not only recognized but also actively supported and encouraged their students to draw upon and celebrate their prior experiences. They facilitated this process through: (a) class discussions, (b) journal reflections, and (c) reminiscing about significant moments in students' lives. Ultimately, this personalized approach to learning contributes to the success of many students, regardless of their age or depth of experience (Mews, 2020). In addition, incorporating these facilitation practices allows students to apply new knowledge and skills in a real-world context (Loeng, 2018; Mews, 2020). This also supports constructive communication practices that are centered on student growth and development (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Moore & Shemberger, 2019; Murry, 2014).

Motivation

Instructors within this study demonstrated a considerable level of excitement, passion, and interest, reflecting a genuine enjoyment and curiosity within their teaching environment. Enthusiasm serves as a significant motivator, aligning closely with the principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980).

While enthusiasm may not be explicitly outlined as a characteristic of andragogy, it is closely intertwined with motivation. It's important that instructors demonstrate enthusiasm often by motivating their students through various means, such as: (a) engaging classroom activities, (b) dynamic teaching delivery, and (c) communal techniques like playing music at the start of class to inspire learners' participation in the session. Not only can these actions create a more meaningful and relevant experience for students, but it can also empower and promote curiosity (Brookfield, 2015; 2017, Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

Andragogy highlights the significance of tailoring instructional methods and strategies to suit the distinct needs and motivations of learners, regardless of their age or experience level (Mews, 2020). Scholars argue that traditional college students, much like adult learners, exhibit characteristics of being self-directed, task oriented, and motivated by relevance and collaboration (Bansal et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2023; Conway, 2023; Noor et al., 2012). Adult learners are primarily propelled by internal motivators, such as the pursuit of personal growth, career achievement, or self-improvement (Bansal et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2023; Conway, 2023; Noor et al., 2012). Their active engagement in the learning process is often contingent upon their ability to perceive the value and benefits of the subject matter (Bansal et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2023; Conway, 2023; Noor et al., 2012). Andragogy recognizes the significant role of intrinsic motivation and advocates for instructional approaches that effectively tap into learners' intrinsic motivations.

Unsupported Characteristics of Andragogy

The conceptual framework of this study outlines five characteristics of andragogy. While two characteristics were prominently highlighted by the data results, three others—orientation, self-concept, and readiness to learn—were less evident. Although there was some evidence of these characteristics, it was not as substantial for motivation and prior experiences.

The less notable presence of the characteristics of orientation, self-concept, and the readiness to learn in the study's findings can be attributed to contextual factors in the use of a provisional coding qualitative approach. In the specific learning environments observed, these characteristics may not have been as significantly displayed or relevant, especially if the educational activities were more instructor-led or did not emphasize problem-centered learning.

Additionally, the data collected might not have captured these characteristics as frequently or explicitly, leading to their underrepresentation in the analysis.

The provisional coding framework, which was based on the studies conceptual understanding of andragogy, may have also directed more attention to the more easily observable characteristics, such as motivation and prior experiences. In addition, participants might not have consistently recognize or articulated their orientation towards learning, self-concept, or readiness to learn, resulting in these characteristics being less evident in the data. This suggests that while these qualities may have been present, their subtler expression led to their reduced prominence, highlighting the need for further research in different contexts to fully understand their impact.

Instructor Qualities for Learning Environment

The TEACHER acronym encapsulates seven crucial attributes for educators (Brockett, 2015). These are essential for educators to efficiently engage adult learners. These qualities include building trust, demonstrating empathy, authenticity, confidence, humility, enthusiasm, and respect (Brockett, 2015). Using these attributes, instructors cultivate an atmosphere of trust, connect personally with students, and establish a supportive learning environment conducive to academic growth. Originating from the field of adult education, Brockett's (2015) framework demonstrates the significance of these qualities in fostering meaningful teacher-student relationships and enhancing student motivation and engagement.

Central to effective teaching is the establishment of trust, where educators prioritize creating a safe and supportive environment for students to express themselves freely (Brockett, 2015). In addition, displaying empathetic understanding toward learners' circumstances enables teachers to create meaningful connections and provide tailored support. Authenticity in teacher-student interactions fosters trust and credibility, while confidence instills faith in students'

potential and capacities (Brockett, 2015). Balance and confidence with humility encourages openness and collaboration, facilitating a constructive learning experience. Enthusiasm for learning ignites student engagement, while respect for learners and subject matter promotes inclusivity in mutual appreciation (Brockett, 2015).

Trust

The study found multiple incidents where instructors not only verbally encouraged students to trust themselves but also highlighted the importance of trust within the classroom environment. Educators who grasp the significance of fostering a safe and supportive learning environment for their students exhibit this characteristic of trust (Brockett, 2015). By actively striving to establish trust with their students, instructors can cultivate a positive and conducive learning atmosphere (Brookfield, 2015; Spalding, 2014). Within a trusting classroom environment, there is mutual respect between teachers and students, which can provide the foundation for open communication and constructive interactions (Brockett, 2015; Brookfield, 2015; Spalding, 2014). The faculty in this study integrated messages of self-trust within assignments, fostering a sense of confidence among students. Students were empowered to engage in discussions, pose questions, and partake in collaborative activities, confident that their contributions were valid and acknowledged (Brookfield, 2015; Spalding, 2014). This was evident in the classroom observations, as many students started engaging in topical discussions with minimal direction from the instructor.

Empathy

The study identified numerous instances where instructors demonstrated empathy in their interactions with students. Displaying empathy is vital for establishing meaningful connections with learners and fostering a supportive, inclusive learning atmosphere (Brockett, 2015).

Through empathy, instructors within this study expressed genuine concern and understanding for their students' emotions, experiences, and difficulties (Brockett, 2015; Brookfield, 2017; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). This understanding empowered instructors to respond to their students with sensitivity and compassion, recognizing the individual challenges and needs each learner may have encountered (Brookfield, 2017; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). An empathetic approach created a nurturing environment where students felt safe to openly share their thoughts and feelings, free from the fear of criticism or judgment (Brookfield, 2017).

Instructors demonstrated empathy by understanding and acknowledging students' emotions, thoughts, and experiences. They accommodated students' individual needs, such as providing space for reflection and offering support for challenges like time management. Empathy was also evident in the instructors' messages and actions, emphasizing their commitment to supporting student success and well-being. Additionally, instructors created a classroom environment that accommodated diverse needs. This included allowing students to enter and exit freely, demonstrating empathy towards their circumstances and advocating for their well-being.

Enthusiasm

The enthusiasm exhibited by first-year seminar instructors towards their students can significantly support and enhance their motivational drive. Enthusiasm serves as an important means of cultivating and nurturing a love for learning (Brockett, 2015). Effective educators not only exhibit genuine excitement for the subject matter they teach but also for the growth and development of their students (Brookfield, 2015; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). Enthusiasm cultivated by instructors fosters a positive and supportive classroom environment where learners feel encouraged and inspired (Brookfield, 2015; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). Passion from

instructors ignites students' interest and dedication to learning, creating a classroom atmosphere where creativity and critical thinking flourish (Brookfield, 2015). Students feel empowered to take intellectual risks and actively contribute to the learning process. In a study conducted by Zhang (2014), enthusiasm was examined for its impact on student engagement, learning objectives, self-efficacy, and motivational enhancement. The results indicated that teacher enthusiasm can promote student engagement across behavioral, cognitive, and emotional domains, as well as intrinsic goal orientation and academic self-confidence.

Based on the findings of this study, instructors acknowledged the importance of not only displaying enthusiastic behaviors to motivate their students but also integrating enthusiasm into their assignments and teaching methods. This involved: (a) inviting guest speakers who might have been relevant to the course content, (b) carefully planning assignments to ensure student engagement and interest in the curriculum, (c) offering incentives for attendance and participation, and (d) offering significant quotes of encouragement infused with enthusiasm.

As Brockett (2015) suggests, enthusiasm serves as a means of cultivating and inspiring a passion for learning. Effective instructors exhibit genuine excitement, not just for the subject matter they teach, but also for the growth and development of their students (Brookfield, 2015; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). Evidence from first-year seminar instructors in this study indicates their beliefs in the significance of demonstrating enthusiasm, not only for fostering a positive classroom environment collectively but also for reaching students on an individual level.

Unsupported Attributes of TEACHER

The conceptual framework of this study incorporates Brockett's (2015) seven qualities of the learning environment. The qualities discussed above—empathy, enthusiasm, and trust—were identified throughout this study and analyzed to determine their effects on the end goal of the

study. The quality of respect—will be covered in a subsequent section. In total, four qualities were prominently highlighted by the data results, while three others—authenticity, confidence, and humility—were less apparent. Although there was some evidence of these qualities being present throughout the observed classes, their representation in the data was not notable.

The concepts of authenticity, confidence, and humility were less notable in the study's findings due to several factors related to the data collection and analysis process. The provisional coding approach, which was guided by Brockett's (2015) seven qualities of the learning environment, may not have led to a focus on more observable qualities like empathy, enthusiasm, and trust. As a result, the less frequently demonstrated or more subtle qualities of authenticity, confidence, and humility might not have been as predominantly captured in the data. The specific learning environments and interactions observed may not have strongly highlighted these qualities, contributing to their underrepresentation.

In addition, the perception and reporting by participants could have influenced the prominence of these qualities in the data. If participants did not consciously recognize or emphasize authenticity, confidence, and humility, these traits might have been underreported, leading to their diminished presence in the study's results. While these qualities may have been present, they may require further exploration in different contexts or with alternative research methods to fully understand their impact on the learning environment.

Learning Partnerships

Baxter Magolda's (2010, 2012) LPM offers insights into fostering collaborative learning partnerships between students and educators, emphasizing the construction of individual self-identity and the importance of collaborative relationships. By employing the LPM, educators can facilitate the student's transition from dependent to independent learners by encouraging

autonomy and growth (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012). Strategies within the LPM focus on acknowledging and respecting students' voices, reframing challenges as learning opportunities, and promoting mutual learning through dialogue and active participation (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012). By highlighting the complexity of academic and personal decision-making processes, educators encourage critical thinking and deeper understanding while cultivating a sense of personal ownership in students' learning journeys. Encouraging collaboration and expertise sharing among students fosters a supportive and inclusive learning environment, empowering students to become self-directed and motivated learners (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012).

Grounded in the LPM, this study explored how instructors aligned their teaching methods with the model. More specifically, how first-year seminar instructors recognized and fostered the development of first-year students in their transition from dependent to independent learners. This study deepens the discussion of effective instructional strategies utilized by first-year seminar instructors in their courses. It offers valuable insights into guiding students towards becoming independent learners.

Challenge

Several instances were observed in the study where instructors challenged students' thinking and discouraged simple solutions. Emphasizing the importance of reframing challenges as learning opportunities is significant (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Instructors in this research collaborated with students to analyze problems and encourage dialogue, fostering a growth mindset and resilience (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012). In the classroom, instructors challenged students by encouraging them to see experiences as learning opportunities and by using teaching methods like circle discussions and prompts. In classroom observations and interviews, instructors acknowledged that collaborative activities, such as

“think, pair, share” techniques, were employed to foster intellectual skills. By engaging in mutual learning and encouraging active participation, students were empowered to take ownership of their learning and problem-solving processes (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Instructors drew students’ attention to the complexity of challenges, encouraging them to move beyond simple solutions and develop a deeper understanding (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012). During classroom observations, instructors challenged students by playing devil's advocate, asking probing questions, and assigning tasks that required demonstrating understanding. Encouraging messages intertwined with challenges were evident in syllabi passages, which urged students to take charge of their learning journey.

Encouragement

Throughout this study, instructors consistently offered various forms of encouragement to their students. The importance of cultivating a sense of personal ownership in a student’s learning journey is highlighted through encouragement. Encouraging students to take responsibility for their own education, instructors helped them develop essential self-directed learning skills. This theme is highlighted by the instructors’ recognition of the importance of fostering a positive and empowering learning environment. By teaching students how to set goals, plan for their studies, and monitor their progress, instructors empower them to proactively steer their learning experiences (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Techniques such as incorporating interactive games, verbal affirmations, and positive reinforcement during classroom activities demonstrated the instructor's commitment to encouraging students’ engagement and participation in this study. In addition, the participants emphasized the significance of engagement in their teaching philosophies and assignments, highlighting their dedication to promoting active involvement and investment in the learning

process. This sense of ownership fostered great self-reliance and motivation among students, as they would feel a stronger connection to their educational goals and aspirations (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Participants also demonstrated and acknowledged their efforts to provide opportunities for students to explore various resources and experiences, which ultimately fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility for the students' education.

Engagement

Throughout the study, instructors consistently engaged with their students on multiple occasions. By encouraging dialogue and fostering a collaborative environment, instructors empowered students to take ownership of their learning journey and develop problem-solving skills (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012). This includes fostering independent and collaborative participation through assignments and hands-on activities. The “think, pair, share” technique was emphasized in instances in this study, promoting collaborative learning in the classroom. Furthermore, promoting interdependence and expertise sharing among students enhanced the effectiveness of education by valuing diverse perspectives and harnessing collective knowledge (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Instructors prioritized building connections with students by greeting them individually and offering avenues for communication outside of class. This collaborative approach fostered a sense of shared responsibility and mutual support, facilitating meaningful interactions and collaborative efforts toward achieving learning goals (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Meaning-Making

It was observed in the study several points, where instructors actively encouraged and engaged in meaning-making with their students. Meaning making is emphasized by reframing challenges as learning experiences and encouraging students to develop a growth mindset and

resilience in facing difficulties (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012). By engaging in mutual learning and encouraging dialogue, instructors facilitate an environment where students take ownership of their learning and problem-solving processes, contributing to their personal growth (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The instructors in this study recognized and believed that student's autonomy was significant through reflection, engaging with the course material to understand its complexity, and recognizing and believing that students were empowered through assignments that prompted critical thinking and application of knowledge, which can create an independent learning mindset for students (Cen, 2018; Nyuny, 2021). In addition, the cultivation of personal ownership in students learning journeys fostered self-directed learning skills, empowering students to set goals, plan for their studies, and monitor their progress (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). This emphasis on meaning-making was designed to allow students to perceive their learning experiences as valuable opportunities for growth and development, ultimately supporting their transition from dependent to independent learners (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Multi-Model Relationship

There was a significant overlap that addressed more than one of the theories in the conceptual framework. The following theme was significant in exemplifying this overlap and illustrating how they worked with each other.

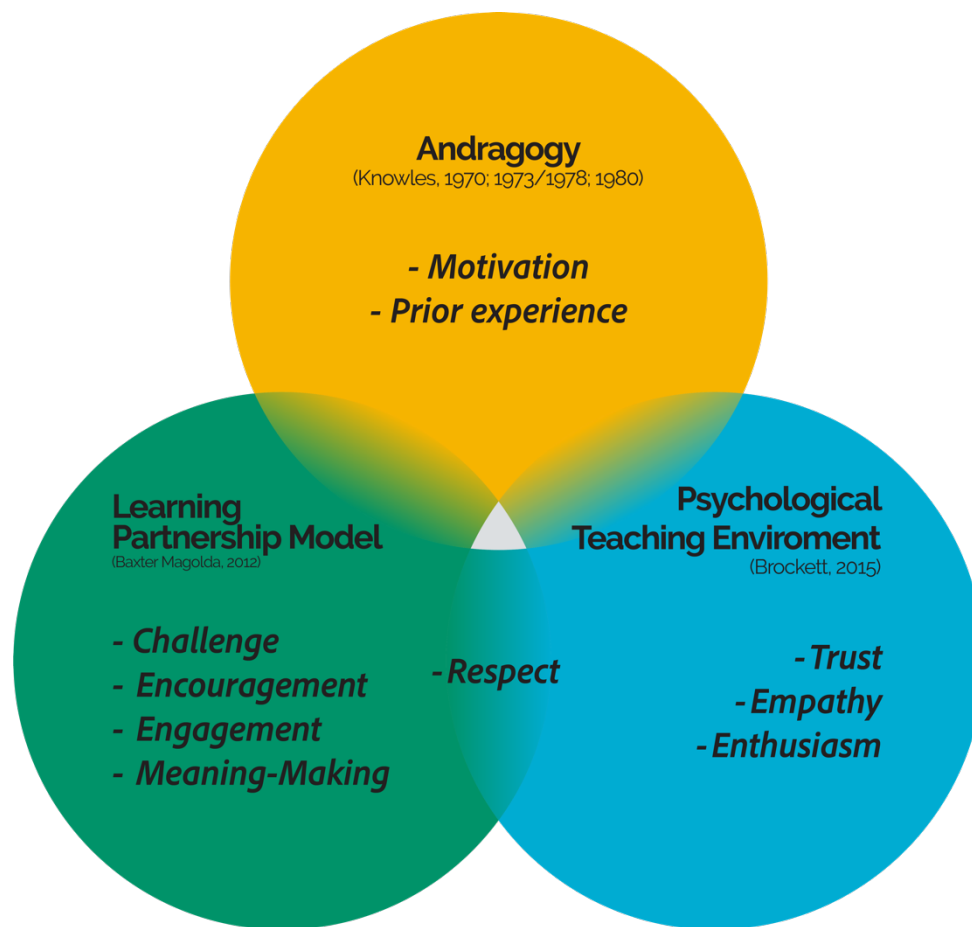
Respect

Respect was consistently demonstrated not only through effective teaching practices but also in conversations with students throughout the study. Effective educators prioritize creating a classroom atmosphere where students feel appreciated for their viewpoints, backgrounds, and active participation (Brockett, 2015). In addition, mutual learning dynamics between learners and

educators foster meaningful partnerships (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012). Through these attributes, first-year seminar instructors were able to exemplify respect in their interactions with both the classroom environment and their first-year students. While respect is acknowledged as one of the components in Brockett's (2015) Psychological Teaching Environment model, it also aligns with Baxter Magolda's (2010, 2012) framework of the LPM.

Instructors exhibited respect by prioritizing their students' needs. They carefully assessed the time required for assignments and ensured that they aligned with student learning objectives. This demonstrates how instructors recognize and incorporate inclusivity for learners (Brookfield, 2015; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). In addition, instructors handled situations involving student tardiness with consideration, reframing from publicly shaming students which ultimately creates a safe learning space for students (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Instructors also recognized the developmental stages of their students and were mindful of not only their academic but also their environmental context. This importance of recognizing individual developmental levels can foster and enhance a student's self-authorship (Bekken & Marie, 2007).

Figure 5.1. Conceptual Framework Results



Note. This framework illustrates the results and the interdisciplinary relationship of the findings.

Conceptual Framework Alignment

As I analyzed the significant themes that emerged based from each research question, I carefully aligned them with the characteristics of each theory from the conceptual framework. By creating a Venn diagram, I was able to visually demonstrate the interdisciplinary relationships between the theories and highlight the most significant characteristic of each. In terms of andragogy (Knowles 1970, 1973/1978, 1980), instructors encouraged students to take ownership of their learning and apply knowledge in real-life contexts, integrated students' prior experience through discussions and reflections, and used enthusiasm and dynamic teaching methods to tap into students' intrinsic motivation. The Psychological Teaching Environment (Brockett, 2015)

emphasized qualities like trust, empathy, and enthusiasm to create a supportive learning environment, where instructors build trust by creating safe spaces for expression and understanding students' needs. The LPM (Baxter Magolda, 2010, 2012) fostered collaborative relationships and guided students from dependence to independence, reframed challenges as learning opportunities and provided continuous engagement, and facilitated students' ownership of their learning while encouraging them to see learning as valuable. In addition, respect was demonstrated by prioritizing students' needs, fostering inclusivity, and recognizing developmental stages. This framework highlights how integrating these theories enhances the learning experience by creating a supportive, engaging, and growth-oriented learning environment.

Implications for Practice

The goal of this study was to understand how and if first-year seminar instructors treat their first-year students like adult learners. This perspective is frequently discussed at national and regional conferences focusing on professionals working with and teaching this type of student. Based on the findings, three practical implications are proposed for these professionals: (a) faculty development seminars on andragogy, (b) faculty development seminars on learning environment, and (c) faculty development seminars on the LPM. If there is not a faculty development session for first-year seminar instructors, which incorporates adult learning principles then these three faculty development implications should be considered. It is important to incorporate this study's conceptual framework into faculty development programs aimed at first-year seminar instructors, grounding these initiatives in principles from adult learning field. It is also important to operationalize the concepts of treating first-year students as adults through concrete institutional practices rather than discussion or speculation.

Faculty Development Seminars on Andragogy

Seminars on andragogy are designed to educate instructors on effectively teaching adult learners. Based on the findings in the results section, two key characteristics of andragogy stood out: (a) instructors emphasized the importance of motivation, and (b) instructors understood the significance of leveraging students' prior experiences in presenting new content. Although there was insufficient evidence to fully support the importance of the additional three characteristics—orientation, self-concept, and readiness to learn—instructors should recognize the significance of integrating all aspects of andragogy into their lessons and course material. This holistic approach is crucial in effectively treating students as adult learners, emphasizing their autonomy and readiness to engage with learning.

This seminar can cover understanding adult learner characteristics, fostering motivation and self-directed learning, integrating prior experiences into education, facilitating collaborative learning, and applying andragogical principles in course design and assessment. These seminars aim to equip educators with strategies grounded in adult learning theory to create inclusive and engaging learning environments, tailored to adult students' diverse needs in higher education.

Adult learning theories highlight the importance of creating learning environments that are meaningful and relevant to learners' experiences and goals. Instructors who apply these theories can design learning experiences that resonate with first-year students, enhancing their motivation and fostering a positive learning environment. By incorporating principles of adult learning, such as promoting active engagement and supporting learners' autonomy, instructors can empower first-year students to take ownership of their learning journey and succeed academically.

Faculty Development Seminars on Learning Environment

Faculty development on the learning environment is significant because it equips instructors with the knowledge and skills to create ideal conditions for student learning. Based on the findings, participants identified and explained their integration of four of Brockett's (2015) TEACHER attributes—trust, empathy, enthusiasm, and respect—into their classrooms. While the other attributes—authenticity, confidence, and humility—were briefly noted, the evidence supporting their significance was insufficient.

Developmental seminars on this adult education model can educate first-year seminar instructors about understanding, recognizing, and implementing the adult learning environment. These seminars can also help faculty grasp the significance of various environmental factors within the classroom which ultimately can enhance student learning and performance.

This adult learning framework highlights the importance of crafting learning environments that are meaningful and aligned with learners' experiences and aspirations. Instructors utilizing this framework can create learning experiences tailored to resonate with first-year students, thereby boosting motivation and cultivating a supportive learning atmosphere. By integrating principles from this adult learning framework, first-year students can model these practices and integrate them into their academic journeys effectively.

Faculty Development Seminars on the LPM

A seminar on the LPM is highly recommended for first-year seminar instructors because this model is intricately woven into the literature on student development in higher education. Participants acknowledged and provided specific examples of how they challenge their students by discouraging simple solutions, encouraging them to take responsibility for their educational journey, and becoming their own advocates. They also recognized and identified the higher level

of engagement with their students, and how their students created meaning, all of which are significant elements of the LPM integrated into the field of adult learning.

As discussed previously, instructors recognized, identified, and understood the importance of implementing these practices. However, it is crucial for first-year seminar instructors to grasp its critical significance in relation to treating students as adult learners. This faculty development can explore the student's developmental and educational phenomenon and explore, more specifically, enriching ideas and techniques to enhance the student's process and progress.

Recommendations for Further Research

To enhance the insights gained from this qualitative study focusing on first-year seminar instructors' classroom environments, teaching techniques, and philosophies, it is essential to acknowledge the inherent limitations. The following addresses these additional avenues for further research on this topic.

Methodology

The methodology utilized in this research involved a qualitative study. Further research using either a quantitative study, a mixed method, or a different type of qualitative study would help clarify and develop the results found in this study. Specifically, surveys administered to first-year seminar instructors to gather more numerical data on their teaching styles and ideas might lead to more insight as it will capture the student's perspectives instead of just focusing on the instructor's perspective as this study has. A mixed methods design could incorporate survey results for a quantitative component, while also integrating a narrative study to capture significant stories shared by instructors during data collection, thus providing a more fulsome understanding of the dynamics between educator and student in these contexts. This study also

examined how first-year seminar instructors integrate adult learning theories into their teaching techniques, learning environments, and teaching philosophies. Further research is recommended to include first-year students' perspectives, as well as to explore a range of pedagogical and andragogical practices, which may reveal additional insights and significance.

Participant Population

The study was limited to investigating first-year seminar instructors in the New England region of the United States at 4-year higher educational institutions in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Based on the results of this investigation, a study that expands the research to include other regions of the United States or even institutions outside of the country is warranted. Additionally, exploring community colleges across various regions of the United States could provide valuable comparative insights.

The participant criteria included instructors with a master's degree or higher, teaching experience of at least two years in first-year seminars, and a background in any discipline. Based on the results of this investigation it would be worthwhile to explore instructors from specific disciplines, such as English, communication, or math, to examine if perspectives vary based on specific subject area and expertise.

Unsupported Characteristics

For future research, it is important to explore the factors contributing to the less notable presence of certain characteristics in Knowles' (1970, 1973/1978, 1980) Andragogy—namely, orientation, self-concept, and readiness to learn—and Brockett's (2015) Psychological Teaching Environment, specifically authenticity, confidence, and humility.

One potential avenue for research is to investigate different learning environments and instructional strategies that may better highlight these underrepresented characteristics. Such as

examining settings that emphasize problem-centered learning or self-directed educational practices could provide a clearer understanding of how orientation, self-concept, and readiness to learn manifests in learners. By broadening the scope of research contexts and approaches, future studies can more fully capture the impact and significance of these characteristics in adult learning.

Further this research used very specific theories. There are other adult learning theories that could be explored with the first-year seminar instructors to better understand their approaches to this population.

Conclusion

This study examined how and if first-year seminar instructors who teach first-year students at 4-year higher educational institutions, located in the New England region of the United States construct or incorporate adult-like learning environments. This study was anchored by three significant adult learning theories that aligned with the three critical elements that were explored. These included (a) first-year seminar instructors' teaching techniques, (b) first-year seminar instructors' classroom environment, and (c) first-year seminar instructors' teaching philosophy.

The research findings indicate that first-year seminar instructors understand the importance of motivation and prior knowledge in teaching these seminars, which are two significant characteristics of andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1973/1978, 1980). It is also evident that first-year seminar instructors create an environment of trust, respect, enthusiasm, and empathy, which align with the principles of Brockett's (2015) Psychological Learning Environment. The results of this study also suggest that first-year seminar instructors recognize, integrate, and acknowledge key components of Baxter Magolda's (2010, 2012) LPM, which include respect,

engagement, challenge, encouragement, and meaning-making. In addition, the research revealed that first-year seminar instructors tend to align themselves with a humanistic approach to teaching.

Based on the results of this study, first-year seminar instructors treat their first-year students as adult learners. This topic has been frequently discussed at national conferences dedicated to first-year seminars. Therefore, integrating adult learning theories into training sessions and further research for first-year seminar instructors is crucial for recognizing and effectively implementing these principles in their teaching practices. The first-year seminar instructor should construct adult-like learning environments within first-year seminar courses. This will ultimately enhance the educational experience and outcomes for first-year students. There is incredible significance to the first-year seminar, and it addresses many important aspects for a first-year college student's life. The main vehicle of this course is the seminar instructors themselves. The instructor's role is multifaceted and multilayer. This is why it was important to support first-year seminar instructors in understanding adult learning principles and how to apply them to their courses.

This research can contribute to the interdisciplinary crossroads of adult learning and student development in higher education. While the study is primarily approached from an adult learning perspective, it offers valuable insights that can significantly enrich discussions within higher education, particularly given the diverse backgrounds and influences of the participants. Rather than siloing these two fields, I encourage and challenge practitioners from both disciplines to collaborate, share knowledge, and continue exploring how we can mutually influence each other, as both fields share important theoretical phenomenon. In addition, this

research can serve as a framework and inspiration for other related fields to adopt a more integrated approach.

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Appendix A - Recruitment Email

Treating first-year students like adult learners: Exploring first-year seminar instructors classroom environments, teaching techniques, and philosophies

Hello,

My name is Andrew Parzyck. I am a doctoral candidate at Kansas State University. I am writing to seek your valuable assistance for my dissertation study, which focuses on how first-year instructors treat their first-year students as adult learners.

I am seeking for instructors who hold an earned master's degree, are currently teaching first-year seminar courses, have taught FYS at least 2 or more of years, at 4-year colleges or universities located in the New England region of the United States (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT).

To achieve this research effectively, I intend to carry out two rounds of interviews using the platform Zoom. The first round will not be recorded, this round serves as an opportunity to discuss participant logistics and address any questions or concerns you may have. The second round will be recorded for research purposes. This round will follow a structured set of questions that I will provide in advance to ensure you have ample time for your preparation. Additionally, I'd like to arrange one in person classroom observation, which will not be recorded, to further enrich the study.

In support of my research, I am also seeking access to certain documents, which may include your syllabus, teaching philosophy statement, and a sample lesson plan. These materials will provide valuable context in depth to the study.

I want to emphasize that your participation in the study will be handled with the utmost confidentiality, and all data will be anonymous to safeguard your privacy.

Your involvement in this research will be valuable and would make a significant contribution to advancing our understanding of adult education period if you are willing to participate or if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at parzyck@ksu.edu. We can then schedule a convenient time for our initial interview and address any further details.

Thank you for considering my request. I'm excited to hear about the prospect of collaborating with you on this exciting research.

Warm regards,

Andrew Parzyck

Doctoral Candidate, Adult Learning & Leadership

Kansas State University

parzyck@ksu.edu

Appendix B - Informed Consent

PROJECT TITLE: Treating first-year students like adult learners: Exploring first-year seminar instructors classroom environments, teaching techniques, and philosophies.

APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT:

EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Dr. Royce Ann Collins, Professor

CO-INVESTIGATORS: Andrew E. Parzyck, Doctoral Candidate

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Dr. Royce Ann Collins, (758) 532-5766

IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION: Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of this study is to understand how and if first-year seminar instructors, who teach first-year students at 4-year higher educational institutions, located in the New England region of the United States (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, and VT), construct, or incorporate adult-like learning environments and to explore the possible outcomes of this approach of constructing adult-like learning environments. By employing adult learning theories, this research aims to identify significant characteristics and aspects that contribute to fostering an adult-like environment in first-year seminars.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: You're being asked to participate in at least one formal, semi-structured interview. Follow on interviews would only be scheduled to gain clarification. You will be sent a copy of the questions in advance. In addition, a classroom observation will be scheduled with you. The observation is just to gather teaching behaviors and techniques. The observation will not be video recorded. The researcher will just keep notes. You will also be asked to share sample course syllabus, teaching philosophy statement, and/or sample lesson plans.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: There are no foreseeable physical, psychological, social, or employment-related risks.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: The benefits of this study can highlight how instructors incorporate adult learning theories into their current teaching practices, effectively bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom application. It aims to enhance teaching methods for first-year seminars, offering region-specific insights. In addition, the findings of this research can serve as a valuable resource for faculty development and foster meaningful discussions in academia. Lastly, you'll have the opportunity to learn more about yourself as an instructor and your approach to the classroom.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Each interview participant will be assigned a pseudonym which will be used for all documents and reports, except personal correspondence with the participant. The school and any work locations will also be given pseudonyms to aid in confidentiality. The researcher will video and audio record the interviews. No personally identifying information will be linked to published reports of the study. The information that will be collected as part of this research will not be shared with any other investigators.

Each interview participant we'll have the opportunity to review transcripts to identify potentially sensitive data for exclusion. If necessary, reviews can be handled over a password-protected Zoom link with the researcher sharing his screen to display the interview transcript. Hard copies will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's locked office and shredded by a licensed confidential shredding company three years after the completion of the dissertation.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Signed Name _____

Date _____

Printed Name _____

Appendix C - Interview Guide

Treating first-year students like adult learners: Exploring first-year seminar instructors classroom environments, teaching techniques, and philosophies

Name: _____ Location: _____ Time/Date: _____

Note: Below are the interview processes and questions intended for three rounds of interviews with participants throughout this study. Also listed are the anticipated interview questions for rounds 2 and 3 of the interview process. Due to the nature of qualitative research, interviews in rounds 2 and 3 will be adapted based on responses offered in the first round of interviews allowing new and unforeseen topics to be explored in the research process. What is listed below, are the anticipated questions and intended lines of inquiry established at the beginning of the research process.

Questions and Interview Process:

Preliminary Meeting

Part 1: Introductions

1. Confirmation of Informed Consent signature, and receipt of the project summary handout allowing for questions and clarifications.
2. Remind participants steps taken to ensure confidentiality, and their participation is voluntary, allowing them to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Interview Protocol

Part 1: Introductions

1. Reminder of informed consent signed in first interview.
2. Remind participants steps taken to ensure confidentiality, and their participation is voluntary, allowing them to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Part 2: Questions

1. What does it mean to you to treat students like an adult learner?
2. How do you balance guiding first-year students while letting them take charge of their learning as adult learners?
3. Would you describe your approach to the teaching first-year seminar students?
4. If you provide any choices, would you please describe those? What does providing autonomy and responsibility in your seminar for students through activities, assignments, or discussions mean to you?
5. Give a brief overview of the teaching methods you use in your first-year seminar and explain why you've chosen these approaches?
6. What teaching techniques or strategies do you find most effective when working with your first-year students? Could you describe them in detail?
7. Could you share examples of successful teaching techniques you've used in the past that had a positive impact on your students' learning experiences?
8. Please share your teaching philosophy or guiding principles when you're teaching first-year seminar.
9. Describe how you see your philosophy aligning with treating students like adults?

Part 3: Debriefing statement to be read aloud at the conclusion of the interviews

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and be part of this study. As the project moves forward, I may periodically be contacting you regarding questions or clarifications related to some of the information you shared with me throughout this project. Overall, I am hoping to represent your words as accurately as possible. I also intend to keep your contributions anonymous and use a pseudonyms to protect your identity in any publications that come from this research. Please know that you may withdraw from the

study at any time, without penalty, and you are welcome to contact me at any time if you have questions or concerns. Thank you for your contributions to this research.

Appendix D - Observation Field Notes Template

Participant ID:

Date:

Time (begin):

Time (end):

Class:

Class topic:

Room description (include sketch):

5-minutes prior to class:

Beginning of class (introduction):

Teaching Techniques:

Classroom Environment:

Class Conclusion:

5-minutes after class:

Appendix E - Notes for Artifact/Document Template

Participant ID:

Type of document (syllabus, teaching philosophy statement, lesson plan, etc.):

Teaching Techniques and/or Philosophy

Statements from instructor...

Classroom Environment (statements, descriptions, diagrams, etc.)

Examples to analyze: late work policy, absentee/tardiness policy, electronic devices, required materials, extra credit, group work/collaboration expectations, class rules/roles, etc.

Appendix F - Data Alignment Table

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Observations	Documents
RQ1: If in anyway, how do first-year seminar instructors craft their classroom learning environment to align with strategies for teaching adult learners as framed in the conceptual framework?	1. What does it mean to you to treat students like an adult learner? 2. How do you balance guiding first-year students while letting them take charge of their learning as adult learners? 3. Would you describe your approach to the teaching first-year seminar students?	• Identify significant observations of the learning environment.	What types of learning environment statements, phrases, or symbols—if any, align with the conceptual framework of the study?
RQ2: How do the teaching techniques used by first-year seminar instructors align with the conceptual framework of their study?	1. If you provide any choices, would you please describe those? What does providing autonomy and responsibility in your seminar for students through activities, assignments, or discussions mean to you? 2. Give a brief overview of the teaching methods you use in your first-year seminar and explain why you've chosen these approaches? 3. What teaching techniques or strategies do you find most effective when working with your first-year students? Could you describe them in detail? 4. Could you share examples of	• Identify significant observations of instructors teaching techniques.	What types of teaching technique statements, phrases, or symbols—if any, align with the conceptual framework of the study?

	successful teaching techniques you've used in the past that had a positive impact on your students' learning experiences?		
RQ3: How do first-year seminar instructors' philosophy of teaching align with established adult learning principles?	1. Please share your teaching philosophy or guiding principles when you're teaching first-year seminar. 2. Describe how you see your philosophy aligning with treating students like adults?	• Refer to interview question responses and documents. Are instructors exhibiting significant characteristics of those responses in the classroom?	What types of teaching philosophy statements, phrases, or symbols—if any, align with the conceptual framework of the study?