Nursing Faculty Experiences and Perceptions of the Implementation Process to a Learner-Centered Teaching Philosophy: A Case Study

Sharon L. Colley

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NURSING FACULTY EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS TO A LEARNER-CENTERED TEACHING PHILOSOPHY: A CASE STUDY

by

Sharon L. Colley

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
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requirements for the
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Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology
Advisor: Louann Bierlein-Palmer, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
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NURSING FACULTY EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS TO A LEARNER-CENTERED TEACHING PHILOSOPHY: A CASE STUDY

Sharon L. Colley, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University, 2009

This study explores nursing faculty’s experiences with and perceptions of, their school of nursing’s change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. The primary research goals are to determine faculty perceptions of what learner-centered approaches they are utilizing in their classes, what change conditions they perceive as significant to the implementation process, and how they perceive the overall faculty progress and unity toward the goal of adopting a learner-centered teaching philosophy. Using the theoretical frameworks of Carl Rogers and Donald Ely, a case study approach is used to examine the faculties’ use of five key concepts associated with the learner-centered philosophy, as well as the perceived importance of the eight conditions of change during the implementation phase of the change.

The participants included nine nursing faculty members from a mid-sized, mid-western public university. Interviews are conducted with each participant, and two narrative questionnaires are completed by participants over a period of three months. A review of university and department artifacts is also conducted. Thematic analysis is used to code and categorize the data.
Data analysis revealed five categories with a total of 20 themes. The five categories include: (a) understanding of the philosophy, (b) teaching approaches, (c) mixed responses from students, (d) factors affecting implementation, and (e) perceptions of the current state.

This study supports the extant literature in many respects. Certain conditions for change are found to be important to the implementation process. However, other conditions are not deemed significant by participants, such as university leadership support, dissatisfaction with the status quo, and participation in the decision to make the change. The learner-centered philosophy is broad and requires an understanding of how it can be utilized in a multitude of different venues and with a variety of student populations. This study suggests faculty have a continued need for faculty development allowing them to grow in their knowledge of the philosophy. In addition, faculty need time built into their schedules that will allow increased faculty interaction to share implementation approaches. This study adds to the available literature by providing an in-depth understanding of how one nursing faculty group experienced the implementation phase of a change to a learner-centered philosophy.
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Sharon L. Colley
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Statement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl Rogers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Ely</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Research Methodology</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Limitations and Delimitations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Chapter I</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Foundations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl Rogers</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everett Rogers</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ely</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Concepts of the Study</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolution of Nursing</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER

The Philosophy of Learner-Centered Teaching ........................................ 36
Review of Research on Study Sub-Concepts ........................................ 40

Application of Learner-Centered Teaching in Educational Settings .................. 40

Nursing Faculty Implementation of Aspects of Learner-Centered Teaching .................. 43

Nursing Faculty Change Processes ......................................................... 46

Summary of Chapter II ................................................................. 51

III. METHODOLOGY ................................................................................. 53

Study Design ................................................................. 53

Researcher Role .......................................................... 54

Ethical Concerns .......................................................... 55

Setting and Sample ......................................................... 56

Participant Demographics .................................................. 57

Data Collection ............................................................. 57

Review of Documents ...................................................... 58

Interviews ................................................................. 59

Narrative Questionnaires .................................................. 60

Data Analysis ............................................................... 60

Data Validity and Reliability .................................................. 61

Limitations ................................................................. 64
# Table of Contents—Continued

## CHAPTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Chapter III</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV. RESULTS</strong></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Change Decision</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Findings</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 1: Understanding of the Philosophy</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2: Teaching Approaches</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3: Mixed Responses from Students</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 4: Factors Affecting Implementation</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 5: Perceptions of the Current State</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Chapter IV</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V. CONCLUSIONS</strong></td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1a Findings</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Research Question 1a Findings</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1b Findings</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Research Question 1b Findings</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1c Findings</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Research Question 1c Findings</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2 Findings</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Research Question 2 Findings</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER

Research Question 3 Findings ......................................................... 174
Summary of Research Question 3 Findings ................................. 177
Implications ................................................................................ 179
Recommendations for Further Research ...................................... 180
Conclusions Related to Theory ..................................................... 182
REFERENCES ............................................................................... 188
APPENDICES ............................................................................... 208
A. Demographic Questions ............................................................... 208
B. Consent Form ........................................................................ 210
C. Interview Questions .................................................................. 213
D. Definition of Codes .................................................................. 217
E. Intercoder Reliability for the Twenty Themes ......................... 221
F. Research Protocol Approval ...................................................... 223
# LIST OF TABLES

1. Individual Intercoder Results ................................................................. 63  
2. Nursing Faculty Perceptions of the Implementation Process Thematic Distribution ................................................................. 120  
3. Themes Responsive to Research Question 1a ........................................ 133  
4. Themes Responsive to Research Question 1b ........................................ 144  
5. Study Themes from Categories 1 and 2 as They Relate to Carl Rogers’ Theoretical Framework from Figure 1 ......................................................... 146  
6. Themes Responsive to Research Question 1c ........................................ 153  
7. Themes Responsive to Research Question 2 and Ely’s Eight Conditions for Change Model ................................................................. 170  
8. Themes Responsive to Research Question 3 ........................................ 178
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Conceptual model for study................................................................. 12

2. Simple causal loop depicting relationship between student resistance and learner-centered methods................................................................. 89

3. Nursing faculty perceptions of the implementation process categories and themes................................................................. 119
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The nursing field has evolved over the last 150 years to become a specialized profession with high expectations placed on nurses. Increasingly nurses must be able to perform at higher levels of skill both technologically and scientifically (Candela, Dalley, & Benzel-Lindley, 2006). Patients arrive at healthcare facilities with complex health issues that require nurses to be able to anticipate and respond to unpredictable situations (Porter-O’Grady, 2003). A report by the Institute of Medicine (2004) recognized that care provided by nurses can be a matter of life and death for patients, and that nurses are essential for safety. Studies have shown that nurses are much more likely to recognize, interrupt, and correct life-threatening errors than other health care professionals (Rothschild et al, 2006). However, the Institute of Medicine also found that the educational preparation of nurses is inadequate, in need of renovation, and is affecting the quality of care delivered to patients. The literature suggests that inadequate educational preparation of nurses contributes to a yearly death rate of over 90,000 people in the United States, who die from hospital-acquired infections (Institute of Medicine, 2001). Improving educational preparation could potentially improve the nursing care patients receive during their hospitalization, decreasing death rates from hospital-acquired infections.

Quality of care is also affected by a lack of diversity in the nursing profession (Giddens, 2008; Institute of Medicine, 2004). Minority nurses tend to work in underserved areas and minority patients seek healthcare providers with analogous ethnic or racial backgrounds (Giddens). Unfortunately, minority students have the highest attrition rates from nursing programs and the highest failure rates on the nursing licensure
exam (Bagnardi & Perkel, 2005). Giddens suggests that schools of nursing are inadequately preparing students by not providing alternative pedagogical approaches that could better meet the learning needs of diverse students. The current emphasis on teacher-centered curriculum and heavy content have been identified as approaches having limited effectiveness in accommodating diverse learners (Diekelmann, 2002; Giddens & Brady, 2007; Ironside, 2004). These same approaches also contribute to feelings of anxiety and insecurity as minority students attempt to adapt to culturally conflicting learning environments (Childs, Jones, Nugent, & Cook, 2004; Hall, 2004; Seago & Spetz, 2005). Giddens argues that a learner-centered pedagogy may create a more egalitarian educational experience for all students, and reduce attrition rates for minority students. Increasing the number of minority nurses is one response to society’s call for improved healthcare. Studies that contribute to helping nursing faculty understand how to implement learner-centered teaching methods may improve minority success in schools of nursing, which in turn may improve healthcare outcomes.

Revolutionary changes such as technological innovations, industry globalization, and the use of informatics are occurring on an unprecedented scale and are transforming the nursing profession (Goodwin, Sener, & Steiner, 2007; Williams, 2004). Despite these increasing expectations placed on nurses, nursing curriculums continue to be based for the most part on the Tyler model developed in 1949 which established a structural framework for nursing education that was “content-laden, highly structured, and emphasized measurable, behavioral outcomes” (National League of Nurses [NLN], 2003, ¶5). Nurse educators tend to focus on the dissemination of content as opposed to helping students learn (Bevis, & Watson, 1989; Goodwin et al.; NLN). They also have a
propensity to teach the way they were taught (Giddens, 2008; Hansen & Stephens, 2000). These factors result in curriculum stagnation and can be associated with unchanged teaching approaches that studies indicate continue to be primarily lecture-based with little incorporation of evidence-based best practice methods (Goodwin et al.; Schaefer & Zygmont, 2003). It is critical that nursing programs demonstrate stakeholder accountability by incorporating optimal teaching practices which produce nurses capable of meeting increasing professional demands and providing safe patient care.

One of the most researched and acclaimed approaches in the last two decades is learner-centered teaching (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Gardiner, 1994, 1998; Weimer, 2002). The learner-centered philosophy has several premises, whereby students become responsible for their learning, instructors are no longer the focus of the classroom, but rather act as guides and resources for learning, and the classroom climate is created in such a way that it is conducive to optimal learning (Fink, 2003; Weimer). Recognizing the increasingly complex expectations placed on nurses, the NLN (2003) issued a strong recommendation that the learner-centered teaching philosophy be used to optimize nursing students’ learning. Broad support for this initiative has been voiced by nursing education leaders (Dalley, 2004; Diekelmann & Smythe, 2004; Ignatavicius, 2007; New York Organization of Nurse Executives, 2005).

Yet few nursing programs are implementing changes to teaching practice (Hansen & Stephens, 2000; Schaefer & Zygmont, 2003). One of the reasons for resistance stems from faculty who are comfortable with the traditional lecture format and have difficulty adapting to alternative teaching methods (Candela et al., 2006). Gaining skill regarding new approaches and preparing materials for use in learner-centered classes requires time
that many faculty do not feel is available (Brown, 2003). In addition, students may initially resist unfamiliar approaches, weakening faculty resolve to continue with learner-centered approaches. Issues of individual academic freedom, differing faculty perceptions of what constitutes good teaching, as well as a lack of time and encouragement to learn and instigate new methods, creates difficulty in effectively implementing a new program approach to instruction (Candela et al., 2006; Giddens, 2008; Redman, Lenburg, & Walker, 1999). These complexities can create a lack of faculty cohesion that stymies efforts to improve learning outcomes for students.

As nursing programs attempt to keep pace with the rapid changes occurring in the profession, content continues to be added to courses (Diekelmann, 2002). Faculty are disinclined to delete any subject matter, leading to content laden courses for which the traditional lecture method is seemingly best suited. While traditional teaching methods have been largely successful in ensuring the majority of students are able to pass the national licensure examination, the approach does little to generate students who will be critical thinkers and active, lifelong learners continuing to grow and contribute to their profession (Candela et al., 2006). Traditional methods such as lecture may also be contributing to a lack of affective and holistic awareness that is an inherent aspect of the profession of nursing (Goodwin, Sener, & Steiner, 2007). The necessity of all of these qualities is especially evident in the nursing profession at this point in history (Candela et al.; McLoughlin & Darvill, 2006; Williams, 2004).

Multiple studies and leaders in the educational field suggest that learner-centered approaches create responsible, active learners who demonstrate higher levels of achievement than those gained through traditional teaching methods (Barr & Tagg, 1995;
Farida, Khalil, Weaver, & Newcomer, 1999; Fink, 2003; Gardiner, 1994, 1998; Weimer, 2002). Creating a comfortable learning environment in which the student and teacher are engaged in an educational partnership allows deep learning to occur (Goodwin et al., 2007; Weimer). Therefore, it is critical that nursing faculty be willing to make necessary changes to teaching approaches in order to optimize the learning experience for students. Studies that explore the experiences of faculty during the implementation process of a change to learner-centered teaching philosophy could prove meaningful to other nursing programs wanting to adopt the approach, but uncertain as to how to proceed.

Problem Statement

Students graduating from schools of nursing must be prepared to work in a profession that bears little resemblance to nursing of the past (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 1998; Carter, Fournier, Grover, Kiehl, & Sims, 2005; Redman et al., 1999). During the last decade, stakeholders have increasingly cited the need for nursing school graduates to demonstrate competence in critical thinking, communication, and problem solving in order to be responsive to rapid shifts and technological advances occurring in healthcare environments (Candela et al., 2006; Hokanson-Hawks, 1999; Institute of Medicine, 2003; Redman et al.). It is the responsibility of schools of nursing to provide education in a manner that optimizes students’ learning, and creates active, lifelong learners who will contribute to improving the status of healthcare in the United States. Research suggests that learner-centered approaches to teaching in any field enhance learning and create responsible learners (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Farida et al., 1999; Gardner, 1994, 1998; Weimer, 2002).
Issues with academic freedom and individual beliefs as to how best to teach, may create dissent among faculty. Any change can be arduous and require additional effort on the part of faculty engaged in the process (Redman et al., 1999). Due to these factors, an effort to transform a nursing program from a traditional teaching format to one that is learner-centered may be complicated and equally challenging. Therefore, it is important to study how nursing faculty experience this change process in order to facilitate understanding and potentially improve processes.

There are a number of studies available that demonstrate use of particular aspects of the learner-centered philosophy in nursing programs, including problem-based and self-directed learning (Lunyk-Child et al., 2001; McLoughlin & Darvill, 2006; Rideout et al., 2002; Williams, 2004). However, problem-based learning and self-directed learning are only aspects of the learner-centered philosophy and as such do not fully represent the concept. The learner-centered philosophy places an emphasis on creating an environment of caring, and recognizing that both teachers and students are learners who work together to improve the students’ capacity for learning (Candela et al., 2006; Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003; Weimer, 2002). There is also a shift from a focus on content to what the student needs to learn (Diekelmann, 2002), and an increased emphasis on establishing positive relationships between teachers and students (Bankert & Kozel, 2005; Candela et al.; Clark, 2008; Palmer, 2001; Weimer).

The expressions student-centered and learning-centered are often used interchangeably with the term learner-centered. However, the operational definition of learner-centered teaching that will be used for the purposes of this study is derived from the works of Doyle (2008), Fink (2003), Carl Rogers (1969), and Weimer (2002), and is
presented here for clarification. Learner-centered teaching is an approach that places the focus on learning rather than teaching by encouraging students’ active use of content through new methods of learning and self-directed study, and appreciating students’ value, input, and experiences. Five major concepts are identified as: (a) classrooms are safe and comfortable environments in which to learn, (b) teaching is done in ways that optimize student learning, (c) the focus is less on the teacher and more on the learning process, (d) students share control and take greater responsibility for their own learning, thereby empowering and motivating them to learn, and (e) learners’ past experiences and knowledge is recognized, valued, and allowed to expand by making learning relevant (Doyle; Fink; Rogers; Weimer). Chapter II provides a more comprehensive demarcation of these concepts.

While a few studies have addressed faculty perceptions of teaching nursing students using problem-based or self-directed methods (Hwang & Kim, 2005; Lunyk-Child et al., 2001; Rideout et al., 2002; Williams, 2004), there is a gap in the literature related to the experiences of an entire faculty group related to implementation of the learner-centered teaching philosophy. Literature strongly supports the effectiveness of a learner-centered teaching approach in post-secondary education (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Ben-Zur, Yagil, & Spitzer, 1999; Farida et al., 1999; Gardner, 1994, 1998; Weimer, 2002; Zull, 2004), but there is a paucity of research related to how faculty experience and perceive such a teaching paradigm shift specifically within a nursing program. There is a need to understand the experiences of nursing faculty who are implementing a learner-centered approach over a period of time. It is also important to understand how nursing faculty interpret learner-centered teaching, and how these interpretations are manifested
in the classroom. Research is needed that examines nursing faculty experiences during the implementation process of moving to a comprehensive learner-centered teaching approach.

Conceptual Framework

There are two primary considerations in establishing a theoretical framework for this study. The learner-centered teaching philosophy and the key change factors associated with the implementation change process are both integral to the purpose of this study. Carl Rogers’ Theory of Experiential Learning strongly supports and forms the basis for the learner-centered philosophy. Roger’s theory has been referenced multiple times in the literature espousing the benefits of the learner-centered approaches in post-secondary education (Lunyk-Child et al., 2001; McCombs, 2001; McLoughlin, 2006; Reynolds, 2000). Ely’s (1990) Conditions for Change Model, an expansion of Everett Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovations theory (1963, 2003), forms the framework for the change aspect of this study focusing on the implementation phase. Both of these theoretical frameworks will be discussed in the following sections.

Carl Rogers

Carl Rogers’ (1969) influential work contributed significantly to the field of adult education. His humanistic, experiential theory of learning formed the basis for many of the principles of the learner-centered philosophy (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Fink, 2003; Spence, 2001; Weimer, 2002). Rogers’ message, derived from his work as a psychologist, was that humans’ natural capacities for empathy, authenticity, and unconditional respect for others, combined with a natural ability for self-growth results in transformative effects. Professional disciplines with a salient focus on human interactions
such as psychotherapy, education, and nursing have widely used Rogers’ theory to test and validate their respective approaches (O’Hara, 2003). The use of Rogerian theory in both nursing and education makes this a particularly useful framework for the purposes of this research study.

Rogers (1994) categorized learning as being either cognitive and meaningless, or experiential and significant. Cognitive learning consists of rote memorization, while experiential learning involves applying knowledge based on the needs of the learners. Rogers further defined the roles of teachers as facilitators who: (a) establish a positive learning environment, (b) establish relevance for the learner, (c) organize and make learning resources available, (d) balance intellectual and emotional components of learning, and (e) share feelings and thoughts with learners without dominating.

Principles Rogers suggested as integral to the personal growth and development of students included: (a) significant learning takes place when the subject matter is relevant to the personal interests of the student, (b) learning which is threatening to the self is more easily assimilated when external threats are at a minimum, (c) learning proceeds faster when the threat to the self is low, and (d) self-initiated learning is the most lasting and pervasive.

Rogers’ (1994) concepts support the learner-centered teaching philosophy, and establish the importance of understanding and employing these concepts to improve student learning. The works of contemporary authorities in the field of educational pedagogies emulate many of the concepts that Rogers promoted over fifty years ago (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Fink, 2003; Spence, 2001; Weimer, 2002).
Donald Ely

Donald Ely’s Conditions for Change Theory (1990) expands on Everett Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovations Theory (1963) by focusing on the implementation of change process. As a relatively new theory, Ely’s model has been used to support research on implementation change processes (Ensminger, Surry, & Miller, 2002; Ensminger, Surry, Porter, & Wright, 2004; Surry & Ensminger, 2002), and serves as an additional theoretical framework for this study.

Rogers’ (1963) theory addresses how individuals move from first knowledge of a change to adoption of the change. Recognizing the need to expand on the understanding of what occurs following adoption of a change, Ely (1999) identified eight factors present in successful implementation of innovations. These are: (a) dissatisfaction with the status quo, (b) existence of knowledge and skills, (c) availability of resources, (d) availability of time, (e) rewards or incentives exist, (f) participation, (g) commitment, and (h) leadership. There is no hierarchy inherent in the model’s conditions; rather the conditions possess varied levels of strength and importance, with stronger associations linked to rewards and incentives and availability of time, and lesser associations linked to dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Figure 1 depicts a coalescence of Rogers’ and Ely’s models to form the theoretical framework for this study. This study explores the lived experiences of nursing faculty implementing a learner-centered teaching philosophy. For the purposes of this study, learner-centered teaching is defined as a philosophy that places the focus on learning rather than teaching by encouraging students’ active use of content through new methods of learning and self-directed study, and appreciating students’ value, input, and
experiences. Chapter II provides a more detailed explanation of this definition. The theoretical framework shown in Figure 1 aids in forming the basis for the research questions as well as the tools used in the nursing faculty interviews and narrative questionnaires. The theoretical frameworks of Carl Rogers, Everett Rogers, and Donald Ely are also discussed in more detail in Chapter II.

Research Questions

A qualitative study utilizing a case study approach is most effective in responding to the gap in the research related to nursing faculty experiences in implementing a learner-centered philosophy. The research goal is to examine a group of nursing faculty's perceptions and lived experiences during the implementation process of a change to a learner-centered paradigm. The broad research question generated from the problem statement and applicable to this study focuses on the lived experiences of nursing faculty during the implementation phase of a move from a traditional teaching approach to a learner-centered philosophy. Specifically, the research questions examined include:

1. Within a nursing department implementing the second year of a learner centered teaching philosophy,

   (a) how do the nursing faculty understand this philosophy;

   (b) how are the nursing faculty incorporating the five major philosophical concepts in their classrooms (i.e., classrooms are safe and comfortable environments in which to learn; teaching is done in ways that optimize student learning; the focus is less on the teacher and more on the learning process; students share control and take greater responsibility for their own learning, thereby empowering and motivating them to learn; and learners' past
Carl Rogers' Experiential Learning Theory states that the faculty role should establish:

1. a positive climate
2. relevance
3. learning resources
4. a balance of intellectual/emotional components
5. a sharing of feelings/thoughts without dominating

Additionally, significant learning occurs with:

6. relevant subject matter
7. minimal external threats
8. low threat to self

Learner-Centered Philosophy includes:

1. Classrooms are safe & comfortable
2. Teaching methods optimize learning
3. Focus is less on the teacher, and more on the learning process
4. Students share power and take more responsibility
5. Students are more responsible
6. Learning methods are self-initiated
7. Learners are safe & comfortable

Everett Rogers' Innovation - Decision Process Theory includes:

1. Knowledge
2. Persuasion
3. Decision
4. Implementation
5. Confirmation

Ely's 8 Conditions for Change Model:

1. Dissatisfaction with the status quo
2. Availability of knowledge & skills
3. Availability of time
4. Availability of resources
5. Rewards or incentives
6. Participation
7. Commitment
8. Leadership

Successful Implementation of Learner-Centered Methods

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Figure 1. Conceptual model for study.
experiences and knowledge are recognized, valued, and allowed to expand by making learning relevant); and,

(c) how do nursing faculty perceive students' responses to these changes?

2. Within such a nursing department, how do nursing faculty perceive the impact of key change factors associated with the implementation change process (i.e., dissatisfaction with the status quo; existence of knowledge and skills; availability of time; availability of resources; rewards or incentives; participation; commitment; and leadership)?

3. Based on their lived experiences implementing a learner-centered teaching philosophy, how successful do nursing faculty perceive their initial efforts to be, and what recommendations do they offer other schools of nursing that are considering adopting such a learner-centered teaching philosophy?

Background

The setting for this case study is Ferris State University, a mid-sized university in central Michigan. Based on extensive research by a task force appointed by the president, the university established an initiative in 2004 that encouraged the use of learner-centered teaching approaches. The university has an enrollment of 13,087 during 2008/2009, and its mission statement reflects a goal of preparing students to be responsible citizens who are lifelong learners. The initiative began as a means of improving student outcomes and fulfilling the university's mission statement. Since its inception, ongoing professional development opportunities have been made available to faculty.

In fall of 2006, the School of Nursing in the College of Allied Health Sciences at Ferris State University, began discussing the concept of comprehensively adopting a
learner-centered approach to teaching within the program. The School of Nursing was planning a transition from an Associate Degree to Baccalaureate Degree education, and this seemed an appropriate time to implement such a change (J. Coon, personal communication, March 31, 2009). The School of Nursing has a total student population of approximately 450, and offers a Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing (BSN), a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), a Registered Nurse (RN) to BSN, and an accelerated second-degree BSN program. The MSN and RN to BSN also have fully online options. There are 12 faculty members in the School of Nursing; however, over the past several years there have been changes in the faculty composition with retirements, newly created positions, and changes from temporary to tenure-track assignments. Other programmatic changes have occurred in the last several years, including a complete curriculum revision from an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) to a BSN degree, the addition of an accelerated second-degree BSN program, and a change to a fully online MSN degree. The agreement to adopt a learner-centered teaching philosophy, along with these other revisions, has increased individual workloads for nursing faculty.

Faculty meetings were held on a regular basis during the 2006-2007 academic year to discuss the curriculum change to a BSN with attention to incorporation of the learner-centered philosophy. Faculty were encouraged to begin making alterations to course materials during the 2006-2007 academic year, but full implementation by all faculty began in the fall of 2007.

Overview of Research Methodology

A qualitative critical case study approach was employed using triangulation of methods to strengthen and validate the data collected. As a member of the nursing faculty
cohort at this university, I was in the role of a participant observer and had direct observation of activities and faculty interactions in some situations. Naturalistic data was collected through descriptions of participants, meetings, and artifacts that were part of the implementation process. Data collection also included phenomenological individual interviews with nine nursing faculty using open-ended questions. Participants also completed two narrative questionnaires. Participants completed the first questionnaire in the month prior to the interview, and the second in the month following the interview. Chapter 3 provides the detailed methodology used in this study.

Study Limitations and Delimitations

The case study approach has a limited scope and cannot be generalized to larger populations (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). However, the findings from this research provides a rich and in-depth examination of one nursing program's experience in transitioning to a learner-centered teaching philosophy and can offer insights to other schools of nursing interested in undertaking a similar change.

As a nursing faculty member in the nursing program studied, I was in the unique position of being an observer of the study participants. The position of participant observer provided me the opportunity to gain perspectives as both a participant and investigator. While ultimately this provided for richer and deeper data, personal biases could have affected study results. It was imperative to consider these biases and I attempted to bracket them prior to data analysis in order to remain neutral during the research process.

Summary of Chapter I

The purpose of this research was to explore one nursing school's experience in
implementing a learner-centered teaching philosophy throughout the curriculum. This study sought the perspectives of nursing faculty as to their reflections on the change process, as well as their personal experiences and approaches in implementing learner-centered teaching. It is important to generate research that may assist other nursing programs in understanding the implementation process of a change in teaching paradigms and methods.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter addresses several essential aspects that help demonstrate a need, as well as establish the historical underpinnings that provide a theoretical framework for conducting the study. The discussion begins with an overview of the theories of Carl Rogers, Everett Rogers, and Donald Ely, as well as research conducted in the area of education that utilized their models. The chapter also examines two major concepts related to the study topic: the philosophy of learner-centered teaching and the evolution of the nursing profession which ultimately led to a call to reform educational practices. Finally, studies are reviewed that focus on the use of learner centered approaches in education, current teaching methodologies used by nursing faculty and issues related to use of these approaches, and program change processes in nursing education.

Theoretical Foundations

**Carl Rogers**

One of the most prominent psychotherapists in American history, Carl Rogers applied his *person-centered* therapy approach to the field of education (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989) distinguishing significant and meaningful learning with a set of definitive characteristics (Rogers, 1969). Rogers' humanistic theory of experiential learning proposes that learning occurs most efficaciously when the learner as a whole is personally involved, when learning is initiated and evaluated by the learner, and when the subject is meaningful to the learner. Deep learning that is of individual and personal consequence, ultimately influences the behaviors, attitudes, and personality of learners.

Rogers' seminal work *The Freedom to Learn* (1969) delineated his beliefs on education, which he believed to be a similar process to that of therapy. Rogers
hypothesized that a person cannot directly teach another. Instead, he pointed out that the role of the teacher should be that of a facilitator of learning, with an emphasis on creating an environment in which students' opportunities to learn are optimized. Rogers termed this type of education person-centered learning, and believed that students who make use of personal experiences, discover their own meanings, and pursue directions of interest, become self-directed, creative, and flexible thinkers who adapt to changing environments. These are qualities deemed critical for graduates of nursing programs to possess, and necessary for nursing faculty to attempt to promote in students (NLN, 2005). Rogers' tenets of person-centered learning also closely correlate to the foundational principles of the learner-centered teaching philosophy; a philosophy strongly influenced by humanistic learning theory.

Proponents of humanistic education claim learning is promoted when the learner is empowered and liberated, and when affective needs of the learner are addressed (Combs, 1982; Patterson, 1973; Rogers, 1969; Valett, 1977). Rogers' humanistic learning theory was heavily influenced by John Dewey (Smith, 2001) whose philosophy of education was concerned with interaction, reflection, and experience (Dewey, 1963), and Abraham Maslow (1970) who established the hierarchy of human needs with its concept of self-actualization. His theoretical model in turn influenced adult learning theorists such as Knowles, Cross, and Combs (Kearsley, 1998). Malcolm Knowles (1970, 1980) developed the theory of androgogy or adult learning, with associated assumptions that adult learners: (a) have a need to know why they need to learn, (b) have the ability to be self-directed, (c) recognize that experiences have pervasive biases, (d) have a readiness to learn, and (e) need learning to be relevant to real-life situations (Atherton, 2005). Combs
addressed the concepts of motivation, differentiation, threat, and meaning in his educational theory that focused on the internal factors that influence learning. Cross (1982) created a model that established guidelines for adult education programs titled *Characteristics of Adults as Learners* [CAL]. This model incorporated the concepts of personal and situational characteristics that influence the learning process.

In turn, the work of many learner-centered advocates was influenced by those theorists building on Rogers’ work (Fink, 2003; Gardner, 1994; Smith & Waller, 1997; Weimer, 2002). Fink developed a taxonomy of significant learning that included six concepts: (a) learning how to learn; which focuses on becoming a self-directed learner, (b) foundational knowledge; recognition of a base knowledge necessary for higher order learning to occur, (c) application; incorporating facts and ideas with various forms of thinking, (d) integration; concerned with connections between personal ideas, people, or areas of life, (e) human dimension; concerned with learning about the self and others, and (f) caring; in which the learner develops new feelings, values, and interests.

Gardner (1983) was critical of the standard definition of intelligence, proposing instead the idea of multiple intelligences. He identified seven core intelligences including: (a) linguistic, (b) logical-mathematical, (c) spatial, (d) bodily-kinesthetic, (e) musical, (f) interpersonal, and (g) intrapersonal. Based on his theory, he advocated for individual-centered teaching utilizing methodologies to specifically address or work to improve on learners’ strengths or weaknesses in these areas. Despite criticisms for a presumed lack of empirical data to support the theory, Gardner’s work is widely incorporated and heavily cited in the learner-centered literature (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2005; Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003; Weimer, 2002).
Millis and Cottell (1995) and Johnson, Johnson, and Smith’s (1993) works that focused on cooperative learning are reflective of the humanistic learning concepts espoused by earlier theorists (Combs, 1982; Cross, 1982; Knowles, 1970, 1980; Rogers, 1969, 1994). Ideas such as *think-pair-share* and *structured controversy* are strategies developed to enhance the learning experience incorporating learner-centered principles (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith; Millis & Cottell).

Weimer (2002) describes how the teaching role changes when the learner-centered philosophy is employed. She identifies seven principles as follows: (a) teachers provide students opportunities to complete learning tasks such as summarizing the discussion, constructing concept maps, and asking the questions, (b) teachers do less talking or lecturing and provide students opportunities to discover answers for themselves, (c) teachers design more activities that promote learning, (d) faculty model skilled approaches to problem solving tasks, (e) faculty design more group learning experiences, (f) teachers build positive climates in the classroom, and (g) feedback is constructive and formative.

All of the aforementioned authors, researchers, and theorists have aspects of Rogers’ model of learning embedded in their work. A closer examination of Rogers’ work provides a more thorough insight of his beliefs and concepts that formed the basis for the development of many of the principles widely recognized today as essential to the premise of the learner-centered philosophy.

Rogers (1969) identified *significant learning* as that which involves the whole person by combining cognitive and affective elements to form personal and lasting meaning for the learner. He hypothesized that certain principles were involved in this
type of learning. First, he believed that all humans have a proclivity to learn, but that at
times this learning can be uncomfortable. Recompense in the form of gains from
learning, ultimately overshadows the discomfort and learning continues.

Relevance of the subject matter to the learner was a second principle Rogers
(1994) identified as integral to significant learning. The needs and purposes of the learner
influence how quickly and deeply the material will be assimilated. In addition, the values,
attitudes, and beliefs of the learner must be respected or there will be resistance to
learning as learners defend against suggestions that they may be inferior or lacking in
some way. Additional resistance can result if learners are subjected to pressure or
ridicule. External threats must be kept at a minimum for significant learning to occur.
Providing a supportive environment that reduces fear of these threats allows learners
opportunities to attempt new skills and experience success. Rogers points out that threats
to the self-concept create a situation in which the learner strives to maintain the current
self, inhibiting growth.

Learning by doing is an essential principle recognized by Rogers (1969). Learners
must engage in activities that allow them to problem solve realistic and meaningful
situations that are relevant to them. Learners should be allowed a part in selecting their
own goals, problems, and courses of action in the learning process to maximize
opportunities for significant learning to occur. Further, this type of self-directed learning
prepares the learner for careers in which lifelong learning is imperative. When learners
take responsibility for their learning, and incorporate both intellect and feelings, learning
is internalized and endures beyond the few months during which the course takes place.
Rogers (1994) stressed the importance of self-evaluation and self-criticism. He diminished the importance of others' evaluations of learners' work. He believed creativity was stifled when mistakes were deemed a failure by an external evaluator, but that creativity, self-reliance, and independence were heightened if learners are able to effectively evaluate their own works. Finally, Rogers pointed out that learning to learn is one of the most important tools to be developed by learners. An awareness of the change process and the continuous learning that must necessarily occur as a result of ongoing change, is a vital attribute of a lifelong learner who achieves significant learning.

Rogers (1994) believed teachers to be facilitators of learning, and believed significant learning occurred when learners were self-directed and discovered meaning for themselves. He recognized the value of teachers to be in the way they provide the conditions of the classroom, including the formation of a community of learners. This group of learners encompasses the students and teacher and provides a safe environment for questioning and exploring subject matter. A crucial element in effectively establishing such a community of learners is in the affective abilities of the instructor. Rogers identified three conditions of the interpersonal relationship that facilitate the learning process.

The instructor must be authentic and let go of any arrogance associated with the role (Rogers, 1994). Genuine interactions with students allow students to see the instructor as a person, encouraging trust and effective communications. Rogers believed educators needed to risk sharing their own feelings and perceptions, without placing blame on others in order to establish trust. In addition, the instructor must be open to recognizing the unique contributions and value of the learner on an unconditional basis.
Finally, the concept of *empathic understanding* suggests that instructors attempt to put themselves in the position of the students to try to understand their perceptions of a particular experience.

Rogers (1994) also recognized students' contributions to the learning process. As an active participant, learners must be engaged in three ways for learning to occur. This engagement can only occur with the instructor's incorporation of facilitative conditions. *Perception of the facilitative conditions* states that based on previous experiences, learners may perceive instructor attempts to be authentic as false or as an attempt to manipulate them. It is important for students to be open to recognizing the realness or humanness of the educator. Second, learners need to be able to perceive problem solving situations as personally relevant in order to be stimulated to learn. Therefore, it is important for students to be open to sharing and engaging in the learning process by incorporating personal experiences into the context of the class.

*Motivation* for learning is a natural tendency for most (Rogers, 1994). Rogers believed that the educational system stifled this natural motivation, but that when an educator facilitated a classroom climate that incorporated the conditions mentioned in the previous section, that learning occurred more quickly and at a deeper level.

Carl Rogers' influence on the major helping professions has been vast, but not without a number of critics in the educational realm who find his theoretical methods to be oversimplified, lacking in significance, and even potentially harmful (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989). Rogers' work has been accused of taking too extreme a position on the person-centered approach, leading to fear that extending so much freedom to learners negates the impact that instructor guidance has in the learning process. These criticisms
have prevented Rogers’ work from becoming one of the more prominent models used in academia, despite the parallels in his work to that of the learner-centered philosophy he influenced. Extensive research utilizing Rogers’ theory as a framework supports the utility of his principles.

Rogers (1994) suggested that it is necessary for teachers to share power with the learner in the classroom. The relationship between teacher and student is critical for successful learning to occur. Pettitt (2002) used Rogers’ framework to examine the experiences of ten students in an adult distance education course. His findings revealed that students who were allowed to control elements of the learning experience such as time online, personal routines, and testing locations, became more self-directed and expressed satisfaction with their learning experience.

Miller and Mazur (2000) also used Rogers’ person-centered theory to design a web-based instructional model. They claimed that virtual environments can have a dehumanizing effect if not facilitated effectively. The authors developed the model based on Rogers’ tenets of person-centered instruction and provided appropriate methods that could be used in an online environment. Use of such a model has the potential to create a positive and valuable online learning experience, as opposed to one that is frustrating and non-productive (Miller & Mazur). Miller (2002) went on to develop nine criteria for use in determining whether a web-based course demonstrated Rogers’ theory principles. The tool is beneficial to faculty who are attempting to design on-line courses incorporating learner-centered concepts, as well as establishing a means of evaluating these courses in an ongoing manner.
Recognizing the whole person as being instrumental to successful learning, Rogers (1969) expounded that faculty recognition of individuals’ self-concept and receptiveness to same is necessary. Poor academic achievement can be attributed to variations in self-concept as a result of socioeconomic status, disruptive home lives, race, ethnicity, or other issues (Fitzgerald & Bloodsworth, 1993). Rogers’ theoretical principles were cited by Fitzgerald and Bloodsworth in a paper encouraging the use of multi-cultural materials to improve the self-concept of at-risk students. Their review of the literature revealed that many educators feel inadequately prepared to effectively utilize such materials to aid students in development of positive self-concept.

Rogers’ work was antecedent to many of the learner-centered teaching concepts touted by proponents (Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003; Weimer, 2002). His supporters recognized him as a futurist, able to anticipate the new global society and an associated need for alternate socializing processes and pedagogies that would enhance learners’ development of qualities necessary to effectively deal with such a society (O’Hara, 2003). His theoretical learning principles were instrumental in changing the way learning was perceived and aided in the development of many of the teaching approaches currently used by advocates of the learner-centered philosophy (Combs, 1982; Cross, 1982; Fink; Knowles, 2005; Weimer).

Everett Rogers

One of the foremost theories dealing with institutional change processes is Everett Rogers’ (2003) Diffusion of Innovations. Rogers elaborates on the manner by which change is facilitated by communication methods through structural channels among group members. He defines four primary elements that are influential in adoption of
innovation as: (a) the innovation, (b) communication channels, (c) time, and (d) the social system.

Rogers (2003) identifies the innovation-decision process as an associated theory which recognizes that group members follow a process in the decision to change. Step one is knowledge of the innovation and a basic idea of what it entails. During step two the person develops an attitude toward the change idea. Step three involves the person participating in activities that aid in the decision to adopt or reject the idea. The fourth step is implementation and during this time the person begins to actively use the idea. The final step requires the person to evaluate results of the decision to implement the innovation. This process is unique to the individual and yet interdependent with other group members.

Rogers' (2003) theory identifies five distinct types of groups that emerge during a change process. Innovators are enthusiastic about change and eager to begin the process. Early adopters use available information to make a quick decision as to whether to adopt the innovation. These people tend to be viewed as change agents, and are influential in persuading others to adopt the innovation. The early majority will quickly follow the early adopters, while the late majority will take longer, but eventually also adopt the change. The laggards tend to be those individuals extremely resistant to change and are often very traditional in their views and rather isolated in the social system. According to Rogers, the successful spread of an innovation tends to follow an S-shaped curve.

Rogers' (2003) theory has been used in studies of educational systems in attempts to improve the change process. Incorporation of collaboration as an instructional strategy
was examined to determine how best it could be initiated and ultimately maintained in a university educational technology program (Lowry, Osman-Jouchouz, & Cyr, 1994). The study determined that collaboration was poorly understood by faculty, and a checklist of questions was developed based on Rogers' theory to aid in promoting use of instructional innovations.

Instructional technologists use Rogers' theory to examine how to effectively increase rates of adoption of media literacy programs in schools. Yates (2001) noted that 48 of 50 states are appealing to schools to adopt such programs, and the diffusion of innovations theory has been instrumental in providing a framework for schools to follow during the change process.

While Rogers' diffusion research is still widely used and respected, several criticisms of his theory have been identified in recent years. Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) first acknowledged the pro-innovation bias of diffusion research. The theory seems to imply that a change should be diffused and rapidly adopted by members of a social group. This bias limits understanding of the theory by leading researchers to ignore aspects of diffusion theory related to rejection of innovations, lack of knowledge about innovations, or prevention of faulty innovations (Rogers, 2003). Rogers responds to this criticism with various propositions including the suggestion that researchers conduct research prior to completion of an innovation process, so that the focus is not solely on successful innovations. He also concedes that the idea of re-invention, in which an innovation is adapted to meet the needs of a particular situation, is an inherent aspect of the diffusion process. Each adopter may perceive an innovation differently, and so diffusion researchers no longer assume the idea of a perfect innovation for all.
A study by Derksen and Gartell (1993) concerned with recycling behaviors in Canada provides an example of how **individual-blame bias** limits the credibility of Rogers' diffusion theory. Individual attitudes toward recycling were determined to be related to whether curbside pick-up of recyclables was available. Rogers (2003) points out that many times researchers use individuals as the primary source for data collection, and then fail to analyze the data from the perspective of the larger system or network of which individuals are a part. Rogers indicates the need for researchers to use other options when analyzing data, and to involve all participants when defining the problem with an innovation, rather than focusing only on the change agents.

There is also a criticism termed the **recall** problem that has been associated with Rogers' diffusion theory (Rogers, 2003). Diffusion researchers expect participants to remember at what point in time they adopted an innovation. The ability to accurately recall timing of events is largely dependent on how quickly research is conducted following an innovation, and the individual importance placed on the innovation. To address this criticism, it is important to study innovations that meet these criteria (Rogers). Another suggestion is that data be collected from alternative sources in addition to participant recall. For example, archival records or online records that provide purchase dates can substantiate individual participant claims.

A fourth criticism of diffusion theory is the **issue of equality** (Rogers, 2003). Socioeconomic inequalities may increase when innovations are diffused. For example, in a study by Shefner-Rogers, Rao, Rogers, and Wayangankar (1998) technological innovations were found to increase male empowerment over female dairy farmers in India. Rogers argues that careful consideration must be given to the social structure, as
well as appropriateness of the technology for the society being contemplated for study, in order to avoid negative consequences such as widened socioeconomic gaps.

Finally, Rogers' theory has been criticized for oversimplifying a complex process (Wilkinson, 2005). Factors that influence the implementation and confirmation stages are not clearly addressed, and yet Wilkinson points out that the very simplicity of Rogers' theory is what has made it a categorical and preeminent success among researchers not only during its inception in rural sociology, but also in the health and education realms. The clear language used in the theory presents complex ideas in an easily understood manner. Other theories have also built on the work of Rogers, helping to clarify and expand on those areas that have been criticized. The following section discusses Donald Ely's contributions to the implementation phase of Rogers' theory, and will provide the theoretical framework for the portion of my research study examining nursing faculty perceptions of the implementation process.

Ely

Rogers' innovation-decision process theory was expanded by Ely (1990) who determined eight conditions that facilitate the implementation phase specifically. Dissatisfaction with the status quo occurs when someone within the organization experiences an emotional discomfort from a perception of an ineffective or inefficient system (Ely). Existence of knowledge and skills is an assessment of the knowledge and ability to utilize the innovation product. Frequently this is the most influential of the eight conditions. Availability of resources identifies those materials necessary to make the change work. The fourth condition concerns the availability of time to gain knowledge regarding use of the innovation, and to plan and implement the change. A relatively
minor condition is that of rewards or incentives to motivate users to employ the
innovation. Participation speaks to the involvement of key stakeholders in the plan and
design of the change. The seventh condition is the perception by those implementing the
change that top management or high leadership within the organization actively
encourages and supports the innovation implementation. Finally, leadership addresses the
aspect of immediate leaders assisting those implementing the change with support,
encouragement, and role modeling.

Ely's model has been used in studying faculty perceptions of which conditions
were most influential during implementation of an online degree program (Ensminger,
Surry, & Miller, 2002). A survey questionnaire was used to gain insights as to what 56
participants felt was most important in facilitating implementation of a new program or
technology innovation. The results of this study corroborated Ely's theory that the eight
conditions were critical for successful implementation to occur. Faculty perceived a need
for universities to provide necessary resources to facilitate implementation, and
considered their ability to participate in the planning and decision making related to the
change as vital to the process.

A study (Porter, Surry, & Ensminger, 2003) was conducted to test the reliability
of the instrument used in determining the comparative value of Ely's eight conditions. A
56 item, test-retest approach was used with 39 participants. Statistical analysis concluded
that there were significant correlations for all eight conditions, indicating very high test-
retest reliability for this instrument. Based on their findings, the researchers developed a
framework that could be used by higher education faculty to implement web based
learning utilizing Ely's eight conditions (Surry & Ensminger, 2003).
The instrument tested by Porter et al. (2003) was then used in a study of 179 participants to determine the relative importance of each of the eight conditions that facilitate implementation of an innovation (Ensminger, Surry, Porter, & Wright, 2004). Subjects were primarily educators, although there was a small percentage from the business and private sector included. Participants responded to the 56 item online questionnaire over a period of three months. Descriptive and factor analysis was used in determining relationships between the conditions. The four major factors that emerged were: (a) participants wanted leadership involved and communicative regarding the change process, (b) confidence in personal ability to implement the change, (c) recognition or rewards provide motivation to implement the change, and (d) resources to effectively implement the change must be readily available. Further use of Ely's model in studying implementation of innovations in educational settings could provide beneficial information concerning optimal conditions essential to successful facilitation of change processes.

**Major Concepts of the Study**

There are two fundamental concepts that are relevant when considering faculty perceptions of the change process to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. The evolution of the nursing profession is key to understanding the need to adapt teaching to a constantly changing environment and increasing role expectations of nurses. An understanding of the premise of the learner-centered teaching philosophy is also necessary. These concepts are first discussed with a review of pertinent sources. Several sub-concepts associated with this study are then addressed with a review of the research literature. These sub-concepts include: (a) current teaching methodologies used by
faculty in nursing courses, (b) program change processes in nursing and higher education, and (c) issues associated with use of learner-centered principles. Examining each of these ideas will establish support for this study.

**Evolution of Nursing**

It is important to understand the origins of nursing and how the profession and educational preparation have evolved, in order to comprehend the current need for nursing programs to implement learner-centered teaching approaches. Prior to the establishment of the General Nursing Council Register in 1923, any persons who elected to care for the ill were described as nurses and the work they did as nursing (Dingwall, Rafferty, & Webster, 1988). Nuns, family members of the sick person, or paid helpers carried out the informal work of nursing the ill. No training or education was required, and the care consisted of basic assistance with activities of daily living and simple techniques such as dressing changes. The basis and rationale for care lacked empirical evidence, resulting in unsafe practices and patient injury. In 19th century England, the work of nursing fell to paupers and inmates who cared for the sick and elderly in workhouses and poor farms. These individuals did work considered so degrading and repugnant that it was difficult to employ anyone else to do it. Paupers and inmates were cheap labor who sometimes received a glass of gin as payment for some of the worst jobs, such as care of the dead (Dingwall et al.).

Florence Nightingale recognized the need for nurses to be educated and was instrumental in establishing nursing as a respectable profession. Prior to her well-documented efforts, there was no scientific basis for the work done by nurses (Keeling, 2001), nor was there consensus on what was valid or reliable in providing care to patients.
nightingale was the first nurse to support patient care with empirical evidence obtained from her Crimean War experience. She also advocated for training and education for nurses, ultimately raising the status of nursing to a respectable level (The Florence Nightingale Museum, 2008). The Nightingale Training School, established in 1860, provided an occasional lecture and a year of practical training within a hospital setting. Her book, Notes on Nursing, provided principles of nursing care and addressed the importance of observation and sensitivity to patient needs. It was influential in the development and progression of subsequent theorists' works, and stands as the first nursing theory. Translated into eleven languages, it is still in print today (The Florence Nightingale Museum).

While Florence Nightingale is a highly recognized name related to establishing nursing as a profession, several other 19th century women played key roles in the transformation. These noted nurses significantly altered the way nursing was practiced, and patient care delivered. Physicians of the time were not focusing on the holistic approach to patient care, but rather were pursuing research into treatment of specific disease processes. The realization of what nurses could and needed to accomplish to deliver improved healthcare to all populations was astounding, and led to extensive philosophies and theories of what nursing is or should be in various practice areas. This progression led to changes in educational requirements and practice expectations for nurses, but unfortunately did not have a major influence on public perceptions of the nursing field (Fletcher, 2007; Takase, Kershaw, & Burt, 2002). While perhaps viewed in a more kindly sense, nurses continued to be viewed as handmaidens to physicians, despite their remarkable contributions to societal healthcare. The public, including
physicians, continues to view nursing as an extension of the medical model of care, despite nursing being a unique and separate discipline focused on a holistic approach to patient care as opposed to treatment of disease (Anthony & Barkell, 2008).

The early 20th century marked other major changes in the nursing profession and educational preparation of nurses. The International Council of Nurses and the Associated Alumnae of the United States and Canada was formed, and worked collaboratively to address nursing's lack of control over education and the absence of legal registration for nurses (Nursing World, 1996). North Carolina, New York, New Jersey, and Virginia passed licensure laws for nursing in 1903, followed by many more states in the pursuant years (Nursing World). This was the beginning of the move to professional nursing practice and education. The establishment of three educational pathways included a hospital based diploma program, an associate degree program, and a baccalaureate degree program.

The evolution in the way nurses practiced predictably led to requirements that nurses be educated and registered so that care could be delivered in a safe and knowledgeable manner. Nurses began developing theories in an attempt to establish a framework and specialized knowledge base for professional practice (Northrup, Tschanz, Schick-Makaroff, Szabo, & Biasio, 2004). The nature of nursing and a need to articulate the specialized practice became necessary in order to develop an empirical knowledge base that would advance the profession (Alligood, 1997). Nursing up to the mid 20th century continued to make practical goals the focus of the profession, as opposed to academic and research goals. This created a situation of disparate practices in nursing with no real basis for procedures or routine care techniques (Northrup et al.).
In the early 1950s, nursing began an even greater transition from the traditional view of a vocation to that of a profession (Kalish & Kalish, 1995). Several factors played a role in this transformation, including a greater value placed on the sciences in nursing curricula. However, the apprenticeship model of education employed by schools of nursing continued to perpetuate the idea of nurses trained to serve physicians and hospital administrators. By the 1960s, nursing programs recognized the need to establish a distinct and separate discipline, and began increasing offerings of four-year baccalaureate degree programs (Bisset, 2000). Associate degree programs began to replace diploma programs, and increased students’ community experiences as opposed to offering only bedside instruction. The varying degrees that emerged during this period led to confusion and class distinctions that continue today.

The growth of nursing theories in the 1980s led to increased research and the development of a knowledge structure that greatly aided in the development of nursing as a discipline in its own right (Meleis, 1985). Metaparadigm development, along with philosophies, theories, and frameworks of nursing, have guided and enhanced nursing practice considerably in the last several decades (Barrett, 2002; Phillips, 1996). Nurses have created extensive bodies of scholarly works that have contributed to the recognition of nursing as both a scientific and academic discipline (Newman, 1994; Parse, 1999). Research by nurses has led to positive alterations in patient care delivery, and innovative and holistic approaches to patient health.

The continuous advancement of the nursing profession demands that nursing programs keep pace with stakeholders’ expectations of a graduate nurse. Deficiencies in areas of critical thinking, problem solving, and communication in team settings are
concerns expressed by employers (Redman et al., 1999). Students express feeling unprepared for practice after graduation and that their education was not learner-centered (Redman et al.). One study found that nursing faculty predominately used teacher-centered instructional methods, despite recognizing the need for learner-centered approaches (Schaefer & Zygmont, 2003). The reason for this was attributed to difficulty with implementation of the approach.

The evolution of the nursing profession has been astounding, and education has struggled to keep pace. It is imperative that nursing educators continue to strive to improve the quality of their teaching in order to meet the need for highly skilled nurses. The appeal for nursing faculty to adopt new teaching methodologies that employ learner-centered concepts continues to drive programmatic change in many schools of nursing (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations [JCAHO], 2002; NLN, 2007).

*The Philosophy of Learner-Centered Teaching*

The literature is replete with research supporting the use of the learner-centered approach to teaching in post-secondary education. It has been studied extensively over the past three decades, and has its basis in humanistic learning theories (Combs, 1982; Cross, 1982; Maslow, 1962; Rogers, 1969, 1994; Valett, 1977). While much has been written on its value in promoting deeper and more lasting learning, creating active, engaged learners, and developing critical thinkers and problem solvers who are sought after by employers (Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003; Weimer, 2002), little has changed in the way nursing faculty teach (Schaefer & Zygmont, 2003).
The term *learner-centered* is often interpreted or understood differently by faculty members. It has been equated with problem-based learning, self-directed learning, and discovery learning. While all of these are in fact a part of the whole that comprises learner-centered teaching, none of them is definitive of the philosophy in its entirety. Authors and researchers of learner-centered practices consistently cite several key elements that are critical, and these concepts will serve as the basis for the definition of learner-centered teaching that is utilized for the purposes of this study (Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003; Rogers, 1969; Weimer, 2002). These concepts include:

1. Classrooms are safe and comfortable environments in which to learn.
2. Teaching is done in ways that optimize student learning.
3. The focus is less on the teacher and more on the learning process.
4. Students share control and take greater responsibility for their own learning, thereby empowering and motivating them to learn.
5. Learners' past experiences and knowledge is recognized, valued and allowed to expand.

It is clear that while terms such as problem-based learning, self-directed learning, and discovery learning speak to certain aspects of the learner-centered teaching philosophy, none incorporate all of these pedagogical elements. The blurring of these concepts by faculty underscores the need for research that explores faculty perceptions of the learner-centered paradigm so that necessary distinctions can be clarified and more readily understood and applied.

Learner-centered teaching is based in large part on humanistic learning theory, and even more recently supported by brain research that demonstrates how neuronal
pathways are formed (Zull, 2002). It is important to understand more fully the concepts associated with learner-centered teaching in order to adequately appreciate how faculty perceive implementation or application of same.

Classrooms are safe and comfortable. Learner-centered principles state the necessity of establishing relationships with students that are conducive to student learning. Contentious classrooms stifle and restrict learning (Goldman, 1996; Doyle, 2008). Environments should be comfortable in regards to temperature, seating arrangement, seats, and other aesthetics. Instructors should know students' names, be open to students' suggestions and input, and be available. Students who feel comfortable with each other and the faculty will be more motivated to participate and take responsibility for their own learning.

Teaching methods optimize learning. The learner-centered teacher utilizes the method that will be most effective in optimizing student learning (Doyle, 2008). Every class activity should be assessed prior to use by questioning whether it is the best approach for optimizing the opportunity for students to learn. This means that any number of methods may be appropriate at a given time. Lecture is not precluded from the learner-centered approach, but rather should be utilized if it is deemed the most effective way of sharing information. However, lecture is used much less frequently as more active and engaging methods of learning are employed (Weimer, 2002).

Focus is on learning. The role of the teacher changes in a learner-centered classroom (Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003; Rogers, 1969, 1994; Weimer, 2002). The conventional, dominating role of an erudite professor who imparts wisdom to a body of students continues to be the prevailing representation apparent in most university
classrooms, despite an abundance of research demonstrating that lectures generally transmit rudimentary information for short-term recall through passive listening (Gardner, 1998). When the focus shifts to learning, faculty take on the roles of guides and facilitators. They design activities that optimize learning, and encourage atmospheres in which students learn from each other (Weimer).

*Students share control and responsibility.* In a learner-centered environment, students are responsible for their own learning (Weimer, 2002). Students must realize this, and make a conscious decision to learn if learning is to occur. Faculty must relinquish some of the control of assignments and learning activities to students, who will participate in the planning and establishing of the course guidelines (Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003; Weimer). Establishing the responsibility for learning and allowing students to have some control over how they learn empowers and motivates, while engaging them in a process that inspires a propensity for lifelong learning.

*Learners build on knowledge.* Constructivist theories support the learner-centered approach of using prior knowledge and experiences to understand new information and generate questions, hypotheses, and possible models to explain atypical situations (Fosnot, 1996; Rogers, 1969, 1994; Weimer, 2002). Critical thinking is promoted and deeper, more meaningful learning occurs when students' previous knowledge and experiences are allowed to contribute to the learning activity. Stories, reflective journals, and classroom discussions are encouraged as a means of connecting new material to previously learned concepts.

There is a plethora of literature supporting the use of learner-centered principles. Extensive research corroborates the benefits of various aspects of the learner-centered
approach, as well as the premise for their use. There has been research conducted that addresses student resistance to the move from traditional teaching to learner-centered teaching, as well as reasons for faculty resistance to adopting the approach (Brown, 2003; Candela et al., 2006; Hansen & Stephens, 2000). What is less clear in the literature is how faculty experience and perceive the implementation process of a change to learner-centered teaching, and what faculty perceive as being learner-centered methods in their classrooms. Related concepts that further understanding of the need for this type of study are important to consider.

Review of Research on Study Sub-Concepts

*Application of Learner-Centered Teaching in Educational Settings*

Universities and colleges are facing increasing demands to improve student outcomes by changing from the traditional teacher-centered approaches to learner-centered approaches (Abrams, 2003; Walczyk & Ramsey, 2003). Attempts to address stakeholder concerns are being studied to determine effectiveness of various approaches. Gess-Newsome and Haden (2008) conducted an action research study at a small, Western university engaged in a Faculty Improving Student Achievement Success (FISAS) project. Forty percent of students enrolled in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields were noted to lose interest in their respective field following the first undergraduate STEM course. The project had two goals: (a) to increase student success and retention rates, and (b) to increase the number of faculty utilizing learner-centered techniques. The study was conducted over two years, and included 14 tenure or tenure-track faculty and 13 instructor interviews collected 18 months after the project ended. Data from 719 students were also collected before, during, and after the project.
These data were triangulated with artifacts including minutes of meetings, annual work plans, final reports and exit surveys to gain understanding of faculty views on teaching, the sustainability of their work with the project, and their perceptions of the impact of the project. Results of this study indicated that student learning was significantly improved in all classrooms participating in the project, and that the majority of faculty sustained the change efforts throughout the project period. However, while many of the student improvements continued well after the project ended, less than 50% of the faculty expressed interest in continuing with the change process beyond the project period. Time and lack of financial incentives were cited by faculty as reasons for non-interest in extending their project work.

The increased number of web-based courses in recent years has led to considerable interest as to their effectiveness (Bata-Jones & Avery, 2004; Palloff & Pratt, 2001). The literature supports the need for online course delivery to utilize learner-centered principles (Chernish, DeFranco, Lindner, & Dooley, 2005; Palloff & Pratt). Boyer, Maher, and Kirkman (2006) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study designed to determine whether use of self-direction, metacognition, and collaborative learning promoted deeper levels of learning in an online course. Fifty-nine students participated in the study by providing reflective responses at four intervals throughout the course. Questions were focused on their progress and the learning process. Data analysis involved coding of themes using three researchers to strengthen validity. Results indicated that approximately 25% of the students experienced positive changes in ideas, beliefs, and habits in the areas of self-direction, technology comprehension, and
collaborative learning. The instructor role was found to be an integral factor in facilitating significant learning in the online environment.

Characteristics of faculty engaged in teaching based on the learner-centered philosophy were explored by Knobloch and Ball (2006). A national survey of 1,553 faculty from 19 universities and colleges were asked to participate in the study. A web-based questionnaire was returned by 329 faculty, and focused on three areas: (a) faculty teaching and learning conceptualizations, (b) faculty motivation related to learner-centered teaching, and (c) the teaching methods and approaches used by faculty in the classroom. Simple linear correlations and multiple regression models were used to analyze the data. Results indicated that faculty had four conceptualizations related to teaching including: (a) developmental, (b) apprenticeship, (c) transmission, and (d) nurturing. An interesting finding was that professors indicated they felt interested, motivated, and confident in their ability to use learner-centered approaches and yet they used lecture 77% of the time. The teaching methods used were found to be related to individual teaching conceptualizations. The study concluded that there is a disparity between faculty perceptions of how they are teaching and what approaches they are actually using in the classroom.

Colleges and universities are studying students’ perceptions of learner-centered educational practices. Howell (2006) explored the experiences of 45 freshman and sophomore students at a Midwestern college as they transitioned to a learner-centered approach in either a composition or humanities course. Students were presented the premise of the learner-centered approach on the first day of class and were asked to write personal goals and a means of achieving those goals. At mid-semester students were
asked to provide a report of their progress, and write two additional goals. On the last day of class, students provided a self-assessment of their progress over the course. Students were noted to have transitioned from feeling intimidated and initially resisting, to reporting satisfaction as they began to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

In a quantitative study exploring the efficiency of learner-centered instruction, Meglietti and Strange (1998) asked 61 adult and 95 traditional-age, two-year college students to respond to a series of instruments distributed in five remedial English and five remedial mathematics courses. Data analyses indicated student age accounts for little variance in student expectations of the classroom environment, learning style, or select course outcomes. The study did indicate students in reading and mathematics classes with learner-centered activities achieved higher course grades.

*Nursing Faculty Implementation of Aspects of Learner-Centered Teaching*

Determining the teaching approaches used by nurse faculty is critical to understanding the need to implement learner-centered instruction. Using a mixed methods descriptive approach, Schaefer and Zygmont (2003) randomly selected 100 baccalaureate nursing programs to participate in a study that examined nursing faculty's teaching styles. One hundred eighty-seven nursing faculty participated, which equated to a 37.4% return rate. The Principles of Adult Learning Style (PALS) instrument was used, as well as a questionnaire that requested additional information on teaching styles utilized. Results indicated faculty teaching styles were predominately teacher-centered, but inconsistency between the PALS scores and analysis of the questionnaires indicated a conflict between faculty practice and beliefs. Faculty may recognize the need for learner-centered approaches, but have difficulty implementing necessary changes. Factors upon
which faculty scored lower than average included personalizing instruction, climate building, and participation in the learning process. The study recommended that faculty have assistance in moving from a teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching approach. It was also noted that some faculty approached teaching and learning as a nurse as opposed to an educator, making implementation of learner-centered practices more challenging. Study recommendations emphasized the importance of helping faculty transition from the nurse to teacher role.

Nursing faculty continue to be encouraged to incorporate new methods of instruction to optimize students' learning (Glen, 1995; MacLeod & Farrell, 1994). Lunyk-Child et al. (2001) explored the perceptions of faculty who taught in a self-directed nursing education program. Five focus groups were conducted with 47 nursing faculty. Questions were posed related to the meaning of self-directed learning (SDL) and factors that influence its use by professors. Four major themes were identified as: (a) faculty have similar definitions for SDL, (b) faculty question their abilities to implement SDL, (c) faculty struggle for consistency in implementing SDL, and (d) instructors need ongoing faculty development. The study concluded that there was great variation in how SDL was implemented and how well informed faculty were as to expectations for utilizing methods in the classroom.

Problem based learning (PBL) is a component of the learner-centered approach, and has been successful in increasing students' motivation to learn (Arthur, 2001; Rideout et al., 2002). A quasi-experimental study using a pretest-posttest design assessed 71 second year nursing students' knowledge levels and learning attitudes by comparing outcomes of a control group who were taught using traditional methods, and a treatment
group who were taught using problem based learning methods (Hwang & Kim, 2005). Learning attitudes were assessed using an adapted version of the Learning Attitude Measurement Scale, a 16-item questionnaire measured on a Likert scale. Learning motivation was also measured with a modified 27-item Instructional Materials Motivation Survey. Data analysis indicated that the PBL group had higher knowledge scores, and articulated higher degrees of motivation and attitudes toward learning.

The methods of instruction a professor uses may have bearing on how prepared nursing students feel for clinical practice, as well as overall satisfaction with their educational experience. Rideout et al. (2002) compared students who were graduating from two schools of nursing to determine similarities and differences in their views on how prepared they felt to enter the nursing profession. Levels of satisfaction with the nursing programs were also determined. One school used conventional methods of instruction, while the other employed PBL methods throughout the program. A questionnaire was distributed to all participants shortly before the end of the final term of the program which consisted of sections related to perceptions of their clinical functioning ability, satisfaction with entry level preparation for practice in various areas of nursing, knowledge base in various content areas, and overall student satisfaction with the program. Forty-five students in the PBL group and 31 students in the traditional group completed the questionnaire which also included open-ended questions related to course experiences. Statistical and qualitative thematic analysis revealed that students in the PBL program were more satisfied with their education and had greater confidence in their ability to practice in the clinical setting. Pass rates for the national licensing examinations were found to be similar for both groups.
The need for nursing graduates to enter the profession with an appreciation and ability to engage in continuing education has been consistently emphasized as a critical component of their educational experience (NLN, 2004). A quasi-experimental study by Williams (2004) used the Self Directed Learning Readiness Scale to determine the readiness perceptions for self-directed learning of 148 students enrolled in the first year of a nursing program. Students completed the scale at the beginning and end of one year of a problem based learning program. Additionally, focus groups were held with the students at the end of the year to complement the quantitative data by exploring students' experiences with the program. Quantitative analysis indicated that students had not increased their levels of self-directed readiness from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. However, thematic analysis of qualitative focus group data was rather contradictory, as students described themselves as having many of the characteristics associated with self-directed learners.

**Nursing Faculty Change Processes**

The change process can be difficult and time-consuming, making it a challenging effort for faculty to undertake. While there is a lack of research related to a comprehensive change process to a learner-centered teaching philosophy in nursing programs, there are studies available that address the issues nursing faculty encounter during implementation of aspects of the philosophy, and change in other program areas.

Redman, Lenburg, and Walker (1999) presented an example of a curriculum redesign process at the University of Colorado School of Nursing. Stakeholders had expressed dissatisfaction with program outcomes. Focus groups were held to decide fundamental changes to the curriculum that would improve student learning outcomes.
One of the major guiding principles for the redesign was to move to a learner-centered teaching approach. While the experience was found to be positive, there were also numerous challenges encountered during the change process including the faculty need for a comprehensive orientation, ongoing reinforcement and encouragement, and time to develop and implement new methods.

Challenges such as these contribute to faculty resistance and negative attitudes toward adoption of new teaching methods. An Iranian study (Vahidi, Azamian, & Valizadeh, 2007) sought to discern the barriers nursing faculty perceive when attempting to implement PBL into their curriculum. Fifty-three nursing faculty members participated by responding to a 13 item questionnaire that addressed various components of the teaching experience. The results of this study revealed that while faculty recognized the value of PBL, serious barriers existed which prevented successful implementation. These barriers included lack of student competency for group work and interactions, student resistance and anger at the change to PBL, lack of supervisory commitment to the process, and inadequate staff knowledge and preparation for implementing PBL techniques. Creating a supportive environment was considered an essential condition for successful implementation of problem-based learning.

Faculty development is one approach to assist faculty in becoming comfortable with adopting a new teaching approach. Matthew-Maich et al. (2007) held five focus groups with a total of 30 nurse educators who attended a five-day workshop as part of a larger and ongoing faculty development program. The program was intended, in part, to aid in understanding and implementing problem-based learning approaches. Qualitative thematic analysis indicated faculty felt a sense of community and building of trust with
peers. This bonding and trust, as well as the faculty development opportunity itself, led them to evolve from a state of uncertainty to certainty in the decision to change to the problem-based learning approach. The study addresses the importance of ongoing faculty development as well as the building of community among faculty, to successful change processes.

Creating an environment of caring is another component of the learner-centered teaching philosophy (Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2002; Rogers, 1969, 1994; Weimer; 2003). Yet the actual implementation of caring into a nursing curriculum can be a complex and intricate undertaking. Lee-Hsieh, Kuo, and Tsai (2004) used participant action research to investigate how 18 nursing faculty at a junior college implemented caring into their courses. Teaching strategies used in implementing the caring curriculum included role modeling, dialogues, reflection, journaling, and caring groups composed of instructors and students. Data were collected by literature reviews, participant observation, and self-reports which included interviews, questionnaires, and journals. The aspect of the study that focused on the implementation process found that instructors felt they were required to make significant alterations in personal classroom behaviors, and that they needed more instruction and practice with the new teaching strategies. Faculty found it particularly challenging when their professional area of expertise seemed to conflict with the course style of preparation, and felt there were increased workload demands. The study proposed that faculty be provided training to reduce the stress of implementation, and to increase the instructors' ability to act as caring role models for students.

Hokanson-Hawks (1999) identified another issue that represents a challenge nursing instructors encounter when attempting to change teaching approaches. The 55
item Survey of Organizational Culture (SOC) instrument and the 40 item Status and Promotion of Professional Nursing Practice Questionnaire (SPPNPQ) were used to determine the relationship between faculty perceptions of organizational culture and the use of teaching strategies that empower nursing students. Two hundred eighty-one full-time nursing faculty from nine schools of nursing at public universities participated in the study. Results of data analysis indicated that faculty used less than half of the empowering teaching methods, and that this may be related to a lack of involvement in the decision making processes of the organization, as well as a lack of faculty development programs to promote implementation of such methods. The study suggested that a lack of elements necessary for an organization to maintain a successful culture contributes to faculty deficiency in implementing empowering teaching behaviors.

Nursing programs have increased the number of online course offerings in recent years (Sakraida & Draus, 2003). Using Rogers’ (2003) innovation-diffusion model, Sakraida & Draus presented the process that one school of nursing undertook to transition to a web-based curriculum. An educational retreat was designed as part of the planned change process, and was intended to promote adoption of the new teaching method. Providing faculty support throughout the change process was a primary concern of the planning team. Faculty were educated as to availability of campus resources for assistance in developing web-based courses. Outcomes from this planned change were positive in that faculty felt administrative support was evident, fears related to technological issues were reduced by having campus assistance available, and faculty were comfortable in the role of change agent because they were offered a choice as to whether to offer the course in an online format.
Curriculum revision is a change process that occurs frequently in schools of nursing due to the rapidly transforming field of nursing. The philosophy of health was integrated into the educational curricula of four nursing schools in an action research study that took place over a period of three years (Smith et al., 2000). During the first year, small groups of nursing educators became agents of change within their respective institutions, and attempted to interest and encourage colleagues during meetings. Funding was obtained to provide on-site support for the change process. In the second year, educators were encouraged to participate in national activities that supported them in conducting research and publishing articles, and strategic outcomes were identified. The third year involved a final session with all participants, and the preparation of a proposal for a teaching package on health promotion and applied research for nurse educators. Participants encountered challenges as well as opportunities during the implementation process to a health-based philosophy of instruction. Themes emerged that noted challenges as being: (a) managing difficult relationships, (b) differing agendas and timetables, (c) managing workloads, and (d) needing to change priorities. Opportunities were described as: (a) being part of innovations in curriculum change, (b) collaborative sharing of research, and (c) working together with colleagues to conduct scholarly activities.

Schools of nursing are also focused on continuous quality improvement (CQI). Yearwood, Singleton, Feldman, and Colombraro (2001) conducted a case study that examined the implementation process of CQI in a nursing program. The number of faculty involved in the study process fluctuated from 19 to 27, and the number of staff from four to ten over the several year course of the study. A CQI task force was formed
at the suggestion of the assistant dean after overcoming initial resistance from the faculty and dean. Initial skepticism was overcome by including all stakeholders in the process of determining what changes would need to occur, and then setting realistic goals and time frames for completion. A consultant was hired to assist in framework development and support the paradigm shift required to be successful. Change efforts were reviewed by an organizational development counselor, who interviewed and observed all involved stakeholders, and analyzed significant documents. His recommendations included: (a) faculty needed to increase the time and ways in which they communicated, (b) rapidly occurring or major changes needed to be followed by slow down period, and (c) work needed to be done on the perceptions of inequitable faculty treatment by some administrators. Faculty, students, and staff all realized the need to take ownership of their individual responsibilities within the process in order for change to occur in a timely manner.

Factors that facilitate the implementation process are important considerations when undergoing programmatic change. Martsolf et al. (1999) identified four factors that assisted a college of nursing in the process of developing a peer review program. These factors include: (a) the project should be voluntary on the part of the faculty, (b) the culture of the college should be respected when developing and implementing the change, (c) administrative support should be strong and appropriate resources should be made available, and (d) the timing of the change needs to be right. These factors correlate to Ely’s (1990) implementation model and support his theoretical assumptions.

Summary of Chapter II

While the research indicates that learner-centered instruction results in higher
levels of retention and improved student outcomes, it also suggests that nursing faculty are unprepared to effectively implement such approaches in the classroom. Research has explored faculty and student perceptions of and responses to learner-centered teaching. Much of the research has supported the value of learner-centered teaching, and acknowledged the innate challenges that such strategies present for both faculty and students. What is not clear in the literature is how nursing faculty experience the implementation process to a learner-centered teaching paradigm. In addition, little is known as to how nursing faculty are supported in efforts to integrate learner-centered strategies in the classroom or what methods they perceive as being learner-centered. While it is clear that the learner-centered teaching philosophy can promote lifelong learning and greater retention of content, it is unclear how a nursing program should effectively implement such an approach. This study explores one program within a school of nursing and those faculty’s perceptions and experiences with the implementation process of moving to a learner-centered teaching philosophy.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The approach to this study was qualitative utilizing a case study approach with nursing faculty members to explore their experiences with the implementation process to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. The case study approach is often used when examining the social and cultural aspects of a particular program, group, or organization (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Data triangulation was used that included data from two narrative questionnaires, a face-to-face interview, as well as a review of university and departmental artifacts from the past five years. These data were obtained over a three month period and began with faculty participants completing an initial questionnaire that explored the use of the learner-centered philosophy in teaching practices. A follow-up in-depth interview was conducted with all participants, and questions pertained to faculty perceptions of the change process, teaching strategies, and issues related to implementation. Finally, a second narrative questionnaire, focused on participants’ perceptions of the current state of the implementation process, was sent to participants pursuant to the interviews.

This study examines how implementation of a change to a learner-centered philosophy is understood and experienced by those directly involved in the change process. Participants’ perspectives were obtained at several points in time and in different ways in order to accurately assess and portray their responses. The choice of a qualitative study allows the complexity of the implementation process to be studied in its natural environment, and provides a means to obtain deeper perspectives through face-to-face interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).
Researcher Role

As the primary researcher who conducted data collection and analysis, it is important to clarify my own background as it relates to this study. I have been a nurse for nearly twenty years, and have spent the last seven years in nursing education. Throughout my nursing career, I have been involved in educating diverse groups and individuals who exhibited a wide range of learning capacities. I have also participated in staff development workshops and conferences, and done extensive reading related to the learner-centered teaching philosophy.

As a member of the nursing faculty in the program being studied, I was in the role of participant observer. Participant observation requires that the researcher be directly involved in the social world that the study involves (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). My understanding and involvement in the daily life of the program helped to inform the research questions, as well as strengthen personal reflections and analysis of the group culture. Prior teaching experience with diverse groups as well as my familiarity with the learner-centered teaching philosophy allowed me to become immersed in the data, lending greater insights during analysis (Creswell, 2003).

My previous experiences in the educational setting and my current position as a nursing faculty member in the program being studied was beneficial to achieving a greater understanding of the social culture in which the study occurred. At the same time, the study findings could have been affected by my intrinsic biases and assumptions. It was important to acknowledge biases and assumptions to promote honesty in data interpretation (Streubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003). First, I believed learner-centered approaches were lacking in nursing education, and I assumed most nursing
faculty did not have the time to devote to understanding the philosophy or incorporating its principles. Secondly, I assumed that faculty in the School of Nursing being studied were engaged in the change process to the learner-centered teaching paradigm, and that faculty conceptualizations of this philosophy were fairly consistent. Third, I believed classroom manifestations of these conceptualizations might vary greatly among faculty members. Fourth, I believed the change process could be hindered by the number of other changes occurring within the School of Nursing. I assumed faculty were feeling overwhelmed with the change process. Finally, I have a strong belief in the intrinsic value of the learner-centered philosophy and assumed my peers in the program held similar beliefs.

There was a potential for skewed results because of the familiarity of the environment and participants with me. Conversely, having a rapport and trusting relationship with participants may have facilitated comfortable interviews and interactions that increased the likelihood of obtaining more information (Streubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003).

Ethical Concerns

As the investigator as well as a member of the faculty group being studied, I was aware of the identity of participants and their individual responses. There was a small, but potential risk for emotional distress as a result of responding to questions that were reflective of personal teaching practices and departmental activities. I provided assurance to participants that they could refuse to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable responding to without any repercussions. I also personally transcribed the interviews to further protect participants’ confidentiality. All participants were provided an electronic
copy of the transcribed interview to review for accuracy and they were given the opportunity to omit any statements with which they were uncomfortable. No participants elected to omit any content from the transcribed interviews.

Confidentiality of responses was maintained by using pseudonyms and by removing identifying characteristics from the transcripts of the questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. This minimized the risk of other faculty participants or those outside the study recognizing or associating specific responses with a particular participant. Tapes from the interviews and questionnaires are kept in a locked file accessible only to me as the researcher. This data will be maintained for a minimum period of three years and at that point will be destroyed.

Setting and Sample

Eleven nursing faculty working at Ferris State University in Michigan and who participated in the implementation process of a change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy were recruited for this study. One of these eleven declined participation and another was unable to participate due to issues preventing her from meeting the criteria for inclusion. This resulted in nine faculty participants. The study was limited to examining perceptions related to the early implementation period that began in fall of 2007. It involved faculty teaching in any of the nursing degree programs offered at the university, including both the traditional and accelerated BSN, the RN to BSN, and the MSN programs. This case study was limited to those faculty who had taught in the program for a minimum of two semesters, which could include the semester during which the study occurred. Participants signed an informed consent prior to beginning the study (see Appendix B).
Criteria for inclusion in the study were: (1) participants must have been a full-time faculty at the university where the study was being conducted, and (2) participants must have taught a minimum of two semesters (may include the semester during which the study occurs) during the implementation period.

Participant Demographics

Age, gender, and ethnicity were obtained to describe the sample and population and allow for comparisons to future samples (Gillis & Jackson, 2002). Years of teaching experience at the university level and at this university in particular, as well as familiarity and practice in using learner-centered approaches were also examined in order to determine demographic trends or potential extraneous variables that could be considerations during the analysis process and for future research studies (see Appendix A for the questionnaire completed by participants).

Nine female faculty participants participated in the study, ranging in age from 43 to 66. Years of teaching experience ranged from under one year to 30 years, and learner-centered teaching experience ranged from under one year to eight years. The number of years teaching at this particular school ranged from under one year to 22 years. Six of the participants were prepared at the master's level and three were prepared at the doctorate level.

Data Collection

Information for qualitative research is primarily gathered by actively participating, conducting in-depth interviews, directly observing, and analyzing relevant documents or other materials related to the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I utilized the following methods in collecting data for this study: (a) completing an in-depth
interview with each participant, (b) delivering two narrative questionnaires electronically, and (c) reviewing artifacts that led to the learner-centered change. The participants were purposefully selected because of their particular knowledge of the phenomenon being studied, and to assure richness of the information obtained (Streubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003).

I explained the study and asked faculty members to participate in the study during the fall 2008 semester. Assurance was provided that participation or lack thereof would in no way impact our working or personal relationship, and that pseudonyms would be used to help ensure confidentiality. Faculty use of pseudonyms on written material, privately conducted interviews, and data from interviews, or other documentation aided in maintenance of confidentiality. I provided faculty an explanation of the study along with a consent form explaining selection of faculty, information on procedures, benefits and risks, costs, and confidentiality issues (see Appendix B for the consent form provided to participants). I also informed faculty they would be able to obtain a copy of the study results.

Interviews were conducted in a private, comfortable conference room or office at the university setting at times convenient for participants. The narrative questionnaires were distributed electronically to each participant at two separate times during data collection. Each of the methods used in this study is described in detail in the following sections.

**Review of Documents**

All qualitative studies require that the background and historical context of the phenomenon be gathered (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I reviewed the process the
nursing program undertook in the move to a learner-centered program, as well as any preparation nursing faculty were provided in anticipation of the change. I looked at past minutes from university leadership council meetings, nursing faculty meetings, and available policy statements to inform the decision to move to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. The review and analysis of documents helped provide the context for the study, and aided in describing and understanding the group and setting being studied.

**Interviews**

Nine faculty members were individually interviewed in face-to-face sessions. The interviews were approximately thirty to sixty minutes in length, and were designed to ascertain participants' perceptions and experiences during the implementation process to date. The nine participants were considered knowledgeable about the learner-centered change process and were viewed as key informants on the study topic (Streubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003). It was important to be cognizant of age, gender, race, and cultural value differences that could have inhibited the interview session, and to establish a rapport with the participants by exhibiting excellent listening skills, and framing questions in such a way that cooperation and responsiveness was promoted (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). My prior congenial relationships with this faculty group proved beneficial in establishing trust and encouraging open and honest responses during the interview sessions (Streubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter).

I used a set of questions as a guide, taking an unstructured, open-ended interview approach to allow participants to fully share their experiences with the study phenomenon (Streubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003). Each interview was tape recorded for later transcription, and notes were taken during the sessions to describe participant's
expressions, body language, or other observations that voice recordings could not reflect. The interviews examined nursing faculty members’ experiences and perceptions of the implementation process to a learner centered teaching approach. The interview questions used during the face-to-face interviews are attached as Appendix C.

Narrative Questionnaires

Two electronic narrative questionnaires were sent to participants for completion. The first was the initial questionnaire and was sent in month one, the second questionnaire was a follow-up to the face-to-face interviews and was sent in month three. The initial questionnaire pertained to faculty knowledge of the learner-centered philosophy, and the final questionnaire explored faculty perceptions of the change and recommendations for other nursing programs considering the change to the philosophy (see Appendix C for the two narrative electronic questionnaires provided to participants). Each questionnaire consisted of seven or eight open-ended narrative questions that required approximately one hour to complete.

Data Analysis

I allowed each participant to review her own transcribed interview for accuracy prior to data analysis. After their agreement with the transcribed materials, data analysis involved examination of responses to the face-to-face interviews and narrative questionnaires.

Organizing the vast amount of data collected using these various methods was very important. A log was kept of pertinent information related to the data collection methods as recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2006). Immersion in the data by first transcribing and then repeatedly reading the collected material forced me to become
very familiar with the data. Creswell (2003) suggests writing notes or thoughts in the margin as a means to begin generating broad ideas or impressions. A more detailed analysis followed, in which I identified common themes that resulted in categories. I continued to code and recode data until theme classification occurred, and emergence of sufficient numbers of regularities resulted (Creswell; Streubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003). Descriptions of themes were provided, and further analyzed for connections or relationships to each other (Creswell).

The final step was to interpret the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2003). I used my personal understanding based on my experiences and background, as well as the extant literature and theories provided in Chapter 2 to help derive meaning from the data. New questions emerged during this process that suggested future potential research objectives.

Data Validity and Reliability

The ability to establish validity and reliability is somewhat limited in qualitative research. There are eight strategies Creswell (2003) recommends to achieve accuracy of findings. I used several of these approaches to ensure that my findings were as credible and trustworthy as possible.

First, I triangulated my methods by collecting data in several ways. I conducted member-checking, in which participants were allowed to review the transcripts of their interviews for accuracy. I also considered my own biases, whereby my views on learner-centered teaching approaches and the intrinsic difficulties that can arise during faculty change implementation could have influenced the meaning behind my study’s findings. To minimize this risk I explicated my personal perceptions and beliefs about my research
area prior to beginning the study. I listed my feelings and beliefs regarding the study topic, and attempted to bracket (Streubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2003) those beliefs throughout the process of data collection and analysis. This allowed my study to be presented in as honest and open manner as possible. Descriptions of findings were in-depth, so that readers could feel a part of the study through the rich narrative. Finally, I used a peer debriefer who reviewed the study and asked questions that might not have been apparent to me.

In addition to Creswell’s strategies, I piloted my interview questions with two people prior to using them in my participant sessions. Not only did this help me to refine my interview questions, but it also allowed me to test my skills as a research interviewer (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Ultimately, this approach could have improved the quality of participant responses and accuracy of the study findings as a whole.

Reliability is used more frequently in quantitative research, but can be used in a limited way in qualitative research by having others check for consistency in theme development (Kurasaki, 2000). I used intercoder reliability by check-coding themes with two other people, who were unfamiliar with the research study. One coder was a 53 year old female allied health faculty member, who has been in the education field for over ten years. The second coder was a 39 year old dental hygiene faculty member who has been teaching for nearly six years. Both coders have some knowledge of and experience with learner-centered teaching principles.

I first analyzed the verbatim transcripts and responses to narrative questionnaires, identifying themes related to implementation of the learner-centered philosophy. I created an initial list of 43 commonalities, and then refined the list by sorting each commonality
into similar categories and subcategories. Through this process, I was able to eliminate redundancies and create a preliminary list of five major categories containing 20 themes that emerged from analysis of the data.

The next step was to define the definitions and use of the themes so that coders were familiar with and cognizant of the meaning I had applied to that particular theme (see Appendix D for the list of code definitions). I also reviewed coding procedures with both coders. I randomly selected five (55.5%) of the transcripts, and then randomly selected seven pages from each of the five transcripts. Seven pages represented 25% of the 28 page average length of each transcript. This provided some confidence that reliability levels would be adequate, since 35 pages represented nearly 14% of the total transcripts. This is beyond the recommendation to use no less than 10% of the full sample for intercoding purposes (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2008). Table 1 shows initial intercoder agreement, and that after clarification and review with both of the coders, individual intercoder agreement rose.

Table 1

*Individual Intercoder Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initial Code Matches</th>
<th>Final Code Matches</th>
<th>Initial Agreement</th>
<th>Final Agreement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coder #1</td>
<td>48/78</td>
<td>70/78</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder #2</td>
<td>52/78</td>
<td>71/78</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A visualization of final intercoder agreement is depicted in Appendix E. The agreement for coded passages for each of the individual twenty themes ranged from .50 to 1.00, with an overall average agreement for all 78 coded passages of .91.
Limitations

This is a small qualitative study of only nine faculty participants and documents related to a single university and program. While the data obtained is rich and in-depth, it cannot be generalized to other faculty groups at other university settings. The findings from this study can only be used to benefit those who participated by helping them to understand and explain their own experiences. However, while the findings cannot be generalized, they may be of informational interest to other schools of nursing that are considering a change to a learner-centered philosophy.

Summary of Chapter III

The design and methodology for this study have been presented in this chapter. A qualitative case study was determined to be the best approach for examining this phenomenon because of the need to understand at a deeper level what faculty perceptions were of the change process to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. Change is difficult in any situation, but when that change involves altering long-held beliefs about personal teaching preferences and practices, it can be even more challenging for faculty to implement (Candela et al., 2006). The use of in-depth interviews and narrative questionnaires achieved a much richer description and understanding of the lived experiences of nursing faculty members undergoing such a change, and can be used to improve understanding of what fosters or distracts from the implementation process. Chapter 4 will share the study findings derived from the data analysis.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe faculty members' experiences within a school of nursing during the implementation phase of a change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. The sample consisted of nine female nursing faculty who teach in a school of nursing at a mid-sized, state university in Michigan. This chapter presents the results with findings organized in major categories and themes as they relate to the concepts contained in Carl Rogers' learning theory and Donald Ely's change model. A more detailed discussion of themes as they connect to these theories will be presented in Chapter Five.

This chapter provides the results of interpretive analysis conducted on data obtained from nine study participants over a period of three months. The school of nursing at which the participants taught had made the decision to move to a learner-centered teaching philosophy, and was in its second year of implementation. Data were collected on three different occasions over a period of three months. A narrative questionnaire was sent to all participants in month one, followed by a face-to-face interview in month two, and then a final narrative questionnaire was completed in month three. Questions were added to the second and third questionnaires to expound on earlier responses to enrich the data collection. University artifacts in the form of leadership council meeting minutes, presidential addresses and presentations, and minutes from nursing faculty meetings were also reviewed as a source of data to determine the level of focus placed on the change process by the university, department head, and faculty group as a whole.
I used several sources to guide the process of data analysis. Streubert-Speziale and Rinaldi-Carpenter (2003) provided a general overview of the analysis process from a nursing research perspective. A more detailed process was provided by Creswell (2003) who outlined an eight step procedure for data analysis. Transcriptions were read several times to achieve immersion in the data. Initial lists of commonalities were developed and then similar topics clustered. Descriptive words were provided for each topic and then an abbreviated code assigned. Finally, in an effort to establish validity for the constructs that emerged from the data, intercoder reliability based on method recommendations from Kurasaki (2000) and Lombard et al. (2008) was utilized. The goal of this method was to uncover the meaning behind individual faculty perceptions as themes emerged from the data analysis.

**Background of the Change Decision**

A review of various documents from the office of the university president revealed the introduction of the initiative to develop a learning-centered campus. In April of 2004, less than a year after being inaugurated, the university president delivered an address that spoke of his vision for the university (Eisler, 2004):

> My vision is that we will come to think of [this institution] as a learning university. Allow me to explain. For years education has focused upon teaching. While it is important for each of us involved with education to become better teachers, I believe it is essential we focus on learning, not teaching. Consider it this way, if I become a world-class teacher and my students do not learn, what is the value of this? (p. 2)

The president further elaborated on his concept of a learning university.
by challenging faculty to consider the teaching approaches they used in the classroom, and to consider whether they were best practice based on learning theory or whether faculty were merely maintaining conventional practices that may not be advantageous to learning. Establishing relevance and creating a love of lifelong learning were goals the president asked faculty to consider in moving the university toward becoming a learning-centered campus.

At a Founder’s Day address in 2005, the president further refined the vision for the university by identifying three primary goals, with one of these goals being the “need to create a learning centered university” (Eisler, 2005, p. 3). He expounded on this idea, expressing the need for students to learn how to learn in order to become lifelong learners. A Presidential Task Force for Learning-Centered Technology was formed to address the vision and create measures to achieve the goal set by the university.

A review of documents revealed university leaders were making efforts to incorporate changes that addressed the goal of establishing a learning-centered university. In the discussion notes of a meeting of the University Leadership Council (Ferris State University Office of the President, 2005), it was noted, “there has been some transferring of assignments from other divisions in beginning the efforts on learning-centered assessments and outcomes. They are reviewing the CTLFD [Center for Teaching, Learning and Faculty Development] to orient its focus on teaching and learning, and they are reviewing orientation and services that are provided during that period” (p. 2).

The Office of Academic Affairs (2007) in collaboration with the Physical Plant also responded to the initiative by renovating many of the classrooms throughout the university based on the concept of a learner-centered design. Based on empirical
evidence, the renovations were responsive to the need for: (a) furnishings and classroom designs that fostered group activities, (b) technology that maximized learning potential, (c) color schemes and ergonomically supportive furnishings, and (d) the use of carpeting and ceiling tiles that aided in reducing distracting sounds in classrooms.

Further evidence of continued efforts to create a learning-centered campus was demonstrated in a report by the Office of Academic Affairs at a Leadership Council meeting in 2007 (Ferris State University Office of the President, 2007):

... provided an update on the activities of the division's focus to become learning-centered, noting that the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning's sponsorship of John Tagg's program was well received, and they are looking at activities to engage students and bring "learning-centered" into the dorm rooms. In response to an inquiry from [a faculty member] regarding class size relative to lecturing and being learning-centered, [an Academic Affairs member] indicated that while class size is one of several factors, there are no initiatives to reduce or enlarge class sizes at this time. [The President] noted that the idea of being learning-centered does not apply to a certain teaching strategy – it refers to what the impact is on the student. (p. 3)

A revised vision statement provided by the University Strategic Planning Office in early 2008 demonstrated efforts to advance the learner-centered initiative by stating the university will be "a stimulating, student-centered academic environment that fosters lifelong engagement, leadership, citizenship, and continuing intellectual development" (¶ 1). In late 2008, the office shared further goals that had been established in the continued effort to improve the quality of education at the university. Goal one was to "become a
demonstrable center of excellence in educational quality and student learning” (Ferris State University Strategic Planning Office, 2008, ¶1). One of the identified means of reaching this goal was to “cultivate a stimulating, student-centered learning environment that integrates theory and practice” (¶1).

Ultimately, the university efforts attempted to create a learning-centered culture by a focus on three key elements: “(1) classrooms; (2) learning spaces outside the classroom; and (3) professional development...they transformed the academic milieu both physically and intellectually with the primary purpose of fostering a more learning-centered culture and environment” (Harris & Cullen, 2008, p. 6).

Previous to the fall of 2007, faculty in the school of nursing at the university used no specific teaching philosophy to guide approaches used in the classroom. As a faculty member in the school of nursing, my personal interactions with colleagues provided insights as to the teaching approaches used by various faculty members. The school of nursing faculty members also share their syllabi and course resources with each other. These materials also indicate that faculty took eclectic positions on how nursing education should be approached and these positions were manifested in the classroom. A common approach to presenting content was through the traditional PowerPoint accompanied by a lecture, although other teaching methods were occasionally incorporated as well. While results of state board examinations consistently met or exceeded state and national averages, of concern was the need to produce nurses who excelled as critical thinkers and lifelong learners in order to meet the increasing demands of the profession, and in turn improve their ability to provide safe patient care.
The school of nursing responded to the university initiative as well as National League of Nursing directives in 2006 by making the decision to cooperatively adopt the learner-centered teaching philosophy. The official change to the learner-centered philosophy began in the fall 2007 semester.

A review of the nursing faculty minutes from the year 2005 through 2007 indicates surprisingly little discussion regarding the decision or change initiative. The department leader noted that during the 2006 academic year, multiple faculty sessions were held as part of the planning process to move from an associate degree to a baccalaureate degree program (personal communication, J. Coon, March 23, 2009). Minutes were not taken at these meetings, but this was where much of the discussion regarding the change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy transpired as the school of nursing worked to incorporate the learner-centered philosophy into the new curriculum.

Department leadership also encouraged attendance at an on-campus, learner-centered teaching seminar conducted by renowned learner-centered author, John Tagg, in January of 2007. In February of 2007, faculty were also encouraged to attend an off-site conference entitled *Transitioning to a Learner-Centered Curriculum: Structure vs. Process*. Five of the seven faculty members employed in the school of nursing at that time attended both of these offerings. Four of those five members were participants in this study, and serve as mentors to new faculty members who are participants in the study, allowing transference of learning from these presentations.

The department head provides all faculty members a copy of Mary Ellen Weimer’s book, *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice* as a resource to aid in understanding the philosophy and to provide some practical approaches to
implementing the change. While no comprehensive list of shared literature was
maintained by the department head or faculty members, current literature deemed of
interest by the department head was provided to faculty members at points throughout the
academic year. The implementation phase officially began in the fall semester of 2007.
At that time, the department head replaced the traditional faculty teaching evaluation
form with a new document based on the learner-centered philosophy. This new form
allows the department head to evaluate faculty members during classroom observations
based on the key concepts associated with the learner-centered philosophy, and assists
faculty members in recognizing aspects of their teaching that could be improved or that
meet the expectations of a learner-centered classroom.

Students new to the nursing program are also provided with information related to
the use of the learner-centered philosophy throughout the curriculum. An introduction to
the learner-centered philosophy, its relevance to learning, as well as expectations of both
the faculty and student, are provided in one of the introductory courses in each of the
different degree programs. While this may or may not be consistently provided by all
faculty members, it has been discussed and PowerPoints and other materials are available
for faculty use in presenting this content.

Participants

Participants in this study were required to be employed full-time and at a
minimum be in their second semester of teaching in the nursing program at this
university. Ten faculty met this criteria, and nine consented to participate in the study.
Six faculty had over ten years of teaching experience, while the other three had four years
or fewer. Six of the nine had worked for eight or more years at this institution, and the
remaining three had worked for less than a year to four years at the institution. Numbers were used as pseudonyms for faculty names and information such as course names were altered in an attempt to maintain participants' confidentiality. An effort to maintain the confidentiality of participants prevents me from including a table sharing multiple participant characteristics that would make identification of individual participants possible.

Description of Findings

Analysis of the questionnaire and interview data revealed five main categories of results. These categories are: (a) understanding of the philosophy, (b) teaching approaches, (c) mixed responses from students, (d) factors affecting implementation, and (e) perceptions of the current state. Each of these categories of results contain themes that are identified in the following sections.

The first category, understanding of the philosophy, includes themes of: (a) many faculty members provide a definition of the philosophy that focuses on students needing to be responsible for learning, (b) many faculty members have incomplete knowledge of the philosophy, and (c) many faculty express a level of comfort using learner-centered teaching approaches.

The second category, teaching approaches, includes themes of: (a) faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to create comfortable classrooms, (b) faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to optimize students' learning, (c) faculty use learner-centered methods intended to empower and motivate students, and (d) faculty use learner-centered teaching approaches that help to establish relevance for the learner.
The third category, *mixed responses from students*, includes the themes of both: (a) initially, faculty received negative feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches, and (b) later in the process, many faculty received positive feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches.

The fourth category, *factors affecting implementation*, contains themes including: (a) previous knowledge and experience of faculty members facilitates the change process, (b) lack of participation in the decision process does not negatively affect faculty members' willingness to implement change, (c) availability of resources facilitates the implementation of change, (d) many faculty believe in and live the philosophy, (e) lack of time negatively affects faculty members' ability to implement change, (f) supportive department leadership is important to implementation process, (g) although faculty members perceive minimal university support, this is insignificant to the implementation process, (h) faculty are motivated to implement the change by intrinsic incentives and rewards, and (i) many faculty were satisfied with the status quo.

The final major category, *perceptions of the current state*, includes the following two themes: (a) faculty perceive they are implementing the change in isolation, and (b) many faculty perceive the need for organized faculty interaction on a regular basis. Each of these categories and themes will now be comprehensively discussed. When participant quotes are provided, the source of each will be designated as interview, narrative questionnaire 1, or narrative questionnaire 2.

**Category 1: Understanding of the Philosophy**

Study participants were asked to share their own personal understanding of the learner-centered philosophy, and how those understandings were manifested in their
classrooms. This category includes three themes which emerged as: (1.1) many faculty members provide a definition of the philosophy that focuses on students needing to be responsible for learning, (1.2) many faculty members have incomplete knowledge of the philosophy, and (1.3) many faculty express a level of comfort using learner-centered teaching approaches. These themes provide a response to research question 1a which asks: Within a nursing department implementing the second year of a learner-centered teaching philosophy, how do nursing faculty understand this philosophy?

1.1 Many faculty members provide a definition of the philosophy that focuses on students needing to be responsible for learning. In order to understand nursing faculty experiences of the implementation process to a learner-centered teaching philosophy, an important preliminary focus was to establish how faculty individually understand the philosophy. While the literature supports that nursing faculty do use some aspects of the learner-centered philosophy such as problem-based and self-directed learning (Hwang & Kim, 2005; Lunyk-Child et al., 2001; Rideout et al., 2002; Williams, 2004), there is little to support that nursing faculty in schools of nursing embrace the philosophy in a holistic way. This gap in the research raises a question as to whether nursing faculty understand the learner-centered philosophy, and whether their understanding correlates with its associated major concepts. This theme explores how faculty participants in this study perceive the learner-centered philosophy, and the depth of their own understanding of it.

The participants' understanding of the learner-centered philosophy demonstrated a belief that students were ultimately responsible for learning, and the faculty role is one of creating an environment conducive to student accountability. For example, the
following statement describes participant #3's (narrative questionnaire 1) view of the philosophy:

Learner-centered education means focusing the attention of the subject matter on the student learning. By this I mean it is an opportunity to engage students in the learning process where the student is accountable for his/her learning.

One participant described how she perceives her role in aiding students to take more accountability for their own learning:

[I encourage accountability in students by] preparing an interest and need in the learner to explore course (and other) materials to find answers and learn how to solve problems. (Participant #8, narrative questionnaire 1)

Participant #1 focused her definition on ways in which she encouraged students to be responsible by being prepared to engage in the classroom:

[I encourage students to be responsible by] helping the student take ownership for their learning. This would mean that the students actively prepare for class, are engaged in class by participating in the discussions, and review the material several times before exams. (Participant #1, narrative questionnaire 1)

Participant #2 (interview) described the difference in the faculty role she perceived between teaching using traditional methods versus teaching using the learner-centered philosophy as a basis for instruction:

[When using traditional methods] I felt like I had to understand every single PowerPoint slide and answer every single question. Where when you're learner centered...that is not your role. Your role is to present problems and issues and
concepts and try to help people think through it. Not to think them through for
them.

1.2 Many faculty members have incomplete knowledge of the philosophy. The
concepts associated with the learner-centered philosophy may be effectively utilized in
face-to-face, online, and mixed delivery classes, as well as with large and small class
sizes (Boyer et al., 2006; Miglietti & Strange, 1998). In addition, learner-centered
teaching approaches can be employed with students from differing academic levels and
programs. Of course, these differences must be considered and adaptations made to meet
the needs of each group, but it is clear that the use of learner-centered premises benefit
learners and can be successfully implemented if faculty have adequate knowledge and
understanding of how to employ them in given situations. Faced with uncertainty as to
how to employ the philosophy in alternative situations, faculty may resort to traditional
teaching methods that superficially respond to a particular group’s demands for same
(Brown, 2003; Candela et al., 2006; Hansen & Stephens, 2000).

While participants perceived themselves as having an understanding of the
learner-centered philosophy, they also made comments that revealed a lack of knowledge
regarding the philosophy that hampered efforts to effectively implement teaching
approaches. Faculty participants distinguished several reasons for why the learner-
centered philosophy was challenging to implement effectively, revealing uncertainty with
their knowledge level. Participant #7 (interview) displayed incomplete knowledge by
expressing concern with the validity of the philosophy:

I’m not sure that there’s anything I could do for them [students in her class who
were having difficulty with concepts presented], but I guess I tried. And I don’t
want to stop there, but... all this learner-centered instruction, I don’t see evidence there. I mean we talk about it, we say how people did it, and even in the book... we’ve read and I’ve taken three classes over at the teaching and learning center... the evidence isn’t there. We talk about nursing using the evidence, well show me the studies. Probably because it’s new, there’s not a lot out there.

At another point in the interview participant #7 also shared her lack of knowledge in applying this philosophy in the online classroom:

That’s what’s so hard with this online teaching format... I don’t find an email to be very personal and even though you try... to show your concern... it’s still very difficult... It’s the inadequacy that I feel of online teaching that isn’t able to get at learner-centered instruction. Online teaching is more self-instruction for the students. Even though you’re there, even though you answer their emails, even though you give them feedback. I don’t see it as learner-centered instruction. I see it as self-instruction.

In addition to the format of the course, the level of student was also perceived as affecting faculty’s ability to implement. For example, participant #4 (interview) had attempted to utilize learner-centered approaches in her classroom of traditional nursing students and perceived a lack of knowledge of learner-centered approaches that would help her reach this group:

It appears to me that the traditional nursing students are resistant to the learner-centered approach and the RN to BSN are very accepting of it. It didn’t work for them [traditional group] and I don’t know why. I mean I’m wracking my brain
trying to figure out what I could’ve done different to incorporate the learner-centered.

Literature is available that acknowledges the challenge of the new college student in adapting to a learner-centered approach, and how to adapt the concepts to meet the needs of this particular group. Yet participant #4 expressed uncertainty as to how to reach students at this level. Participant #8 (interview) also shared perceptions of incomplete knowledge when teaching in an online format, sharing her lack of positive experiences and a lack of understanding of how to engage students:

Online I’m not that comfortable at all. Because I’ve had nothing. I’ve never had a positive experience myself as a student online. And that wasn’t a big part of my education, so I don’t really know how to make it engaging. There’s got to be some kind of hook and I haven’t found that yet.

Other participants felt successful implementation of learner-centered methods was contingent on the class size and type of content. Participant #1 (interview) described her lack of knowledge in how to apply the philosophy when she has a large class that is content heavy:

When you have a class of 50 students and you have a ton of important content that they need to understand and be able to apply...I don’t think with their limited background that they can figure out how to design their own learning. Yes, they’re designing how they’re going to study...but with that kind of course it’s hard for me to totally like the [Weimer] book.

Participant #9 (interview) shared similar concerns:
Many of the face-to-face courses I have taught have been in classes with 40 to 60 students. I find the size of the class to be more of an influence on my ability to have a learner-centered environment... I do think one of the variables affecting my ability to be more learner-centered is the smaller class size [in some programs].

Incomplete knowledge related to the learner-centered philosophy was also noted related to the ability to motivate students. The learner-centered philosophy encourages less emphasis on the use of grades as a motivation for learning, and instead encourages the use of teaching approaches that stimulate students' natural proclivity to learn (Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003; Rogers, 1994; Weimer, 2002). Participants revealed uncertain knowledge related to this learner-centered concept by sharing their perceptions that grades were a primary motivator. Participant #9 (interview) stated:

I think the biggest motivator [for students to learn] is grades. They earn their grades through assignments and I make them responsible by giving them guidelines.

Participant #4 (interview) voiced similar perceptions and expressed a lack of knowledge on how to motivate students in any other way:

I am learning that I cannot motivate them [students]; they seem to have to have internal motivations. Grades are the only motivator and extra credit that seem to work for me.

1.3 Many faculty express a level of comfort using learner-centered teaching approaches. If faculty feel they understand particular concepts of the learner-centered philosophy, they are more inclined to feel comfortable and continue using them (Redman et al., 1999; Vahidi et al., 2007). Weimer (2002) points out that faculty frequently resist
adopting the learner-centered approach out of a lack of self-confidence in their ability.

Faculty who teach using the learner-centered philosophy often feel threatened by the need to move from their former primary reliance on content expertise, to becoming more familiar with the domain of learning skills.

Participants widely expressed a level of comfort using learner-centered approaches, despite the incomplete knowledge related to certain circumstances (like large class and on-line learning) that was apparent among some participants at times. Some participants perceived the implementation process as relatively effortless because their previous teaching approach was analogous to the learner-centered philosophy.

Interestingly, participant #5 (interview) stated:

I was feeling more comfortable and utilizing those philosophies [learner-centered]...I was probably one of the more comfortable faculty with embracing it because I had already had some theoretical training in that.

Participant #2 (interview) mentioned a similar comfort level, and in addition shared her comfort level within the online environment:

I was [already] teaching in a learner-centered fashion. So I didn’t realize I was doing anything different (laughs). I’ve not ever taught another fashion...I don’t think the change process impacted maybe the way it would with others...I felt more comfortable teaching the way I wanted to teach...I see on-line as an easier environment to implement learner-centered philosophy...On-line learning is relatively new and very dependent on the learner’s motivation and ability.

Participant #3 (interview) also expressed comfort with the approach, particularly in the online environment:
I am quite comfortable with this approach. I actually think online...is easier. The expectation is there that you as the learner are responsible for demonstrating your learning. I think students ask more questions related to their learning in the online environment. In the online environment each student is "forced" to contribute in the discussions and thus to their learning.

Participant #6 (interview) also perceived herself as comfortable in implementing the learner-centered philosophy:

I was reasonably comfortable [with skill level]. It never seemed like a threat to me to collectively move to that mode at all.

Category 2: Teaching Approaches

A second category focused on teaching approaches used by participants in classrooms, and themes responded to research question 1b which asked: Within a nursing department implementing the second year of a learner-centered teaching philosophy, how are nursing faculty incorporating the five major philosophical concepts in their classrooms (i.e., classrooms are safe and comfortable environments in which to learn; teaching is done in ways that optimize student learning; the focus is less on the teacher and more on the learning process; students share control and take greater responsibility for their own learning, thereby empowering and motivating them to learn; and, learners’ past experiences and knowledge are recognized, valued, and allowed to expand by making learning relevant)? Four themes emerged as: (2.1) faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to create comfortable classrooms, (2.2) faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to optimize students’ learning, (2.3) faculty use learner-centered methods intended to empower and motivate students, and (2.4) faculty use
learner-centered approaches that help to establish relevance for the learner. The following sections share the findings for each of these themes.

2.1 Faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to create comfortable classrooms. Classroom environments that are safe and comfortable are conducive to optimal learning (Goldman, 1996; Doyle, 2008; Rogers, 1994). It was important to allow participants to share their personal perceptions of how they created comfortable learning environments to determine if their methods were supported by the learner-centered theoretical framework.

Participants perceived students' ability to safely speak out in the classroom without fear of being criticized or demeaned for making a mistake, as being one of the aspects of a comfortable classroom environment. Participant #9 (narrative questionnaire 1) shared her approach to creating a comfortable classroom:

When I think of safety in a classroom, I think of students feeling safe to share ideas and ask questions without fear of repercussions. I do that by being open and allowing everyone to participate. Comfort for me includes temperature, lighting, chairs and desks, and a clean environment. I attempt to make sure these things are all in place.

Participant #1 (narrative questionnaire) reiterated the perception that students need to feel safe when speaking out in the class as well as when self-selecting group members:

When students contribute to the discussions, I am encouraging and complimentary even if their answer is incorrect. I encourage them to critically
think without being judgmental. They were able to choose their own groups which provides a level of comfort for them.

Building relationships with students was also perceived as key to creating a comfortable classroom environment. Participant #7 (interview) shared her approach to establishing rapport with her students:

[I] encourage students to contact me. Getting to know the students by commenting on something we experienced in the past to give them a sense of being an individual. Humor, humor, humor!...Personally call them if they are having issues.

Participant #5 (narrative questionnaire 1) keyed in on methods she employs in both the online and face-to-face classrooms to promote positive relationships with students:

I provide positive affective behaviors (e.g., smiling, humor) in both the virtual (with emoticons) and face-to-face environments. I not only encourage questions, but I thank students openly in front of others for their questions. I support diverse learners who may need more support and encouragement than traditional students to be successful.

Sharing of self during semester introductions was an approach participant #6 (narrative questionnaire 1) perceived as aiding in the creation of a comfortable classroom:

I start each semester with introductions. I try to share a bit of myself. I do the same online and ask for pictures. I try to comment on the introductions—make the connection.
2.1 Faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to optimize students' learning. There are multiple teaching approaches that can be used in a learner-centered classroom, including lecture. However, it is imperative that faculty consider what method is most effective in optimizing learning for a given class on a given day (Doyle, 2008; Weimer, 2002). Educators need to do more than merely employ a list of techniques, but instead continuously assess and determine the best teaching approach for a particular situation.

Participants perceived themselves as utilizing learner-centered teaching approaches in their classrooms. Some participants' use of approaches were based on an assessment of student needs and particular content that needed to be presented. Methods utilized were closely aligned with learner-centered approaches cited in the literature. Participant #5 (narrative questionnaire 1) provided approaches she uses to stimulate students' interest in learning:

I foster curiosity...have students present in a public environment to obtain feedback beyond the classroom and immediate peers. [I] plan debates so students are prepared to support their ideas and advocate for change. [I] have students critique each others' work as a learning activity and to foster growth in providing supportive peer review. I sequence learning activities that stimulate growth.

Participant #4 (interview) perceived the need for a variety of approaches to successfully implement the learner-centered philosophy in the classroom:

I think there should be a little bit of everything...I believe case scenarios are important to apply the knowledge that you’ve learned, and then I believe
discussion is important to see where they are...whether they’re getting it. So I
don’t know if you can do either or; I think you have to do it all.

The use of problem solving strategies and case studies to engage students in
actively applying course concepts was identified by participant #8 (narrative
questionnaire 1):

[I try] posing questions/case studies/projects which require the student to search
for answers, apply course concepts and try new skills.

Participant #1 (narrative questionnaire 1) shared similar methods that she employs in her classroo:

[I use] Socratic questioning, group work on case studies/mind maps/problem
solving etc., and discussion of clinical experiences that relate to the content.

Other faculty also perceived the use of a variety of approaches as being necessary
to address the diverse learning needs in a given classroom. Participant #9 (narrative
questionnaire 1) altered her approach to the use of lecture and PowerPoint presentations
to align them with learner-centered principles:

The biggest thing I do is encourage student participation during lecture. I have
PowerPoints for lectures but have little information on them, there are mostly
titles....In the classroom I have used lecturing, student presentations, discussions,
case studies, videos, and power points....I have had assignments where the
students work together in teams for papers and projects. I also have had students
be the discussion leader for the week.

2.3 Faculty use learner-centered methods intended to empower and motivate
students. Students who feel they have some control over their learning environment by
necessity take more responsibility for their learning, and are more engaged and motivated to learn (Doyle, 2008; Rogers, 1994; Weimer, 2002). In taking this approach, it is imperative that educators assess students' preparedness and pragmatically allocate power accordingly. To explore perceptions of this concept, participants were asked how they share power in the classroom and how they attempt to motivate students to learn. The use of negotiation as a means of sharing power was a recurring approach mentioned.

Participant #5 (narrative questionnaire 1) stated:

I allow flexibility in due dates and am always willing to negotiate changes in assignments when all students agree and I agree the alternative is a great learning opportunity...I make changes to assignments based on student feedback. Students choose topics of interest. I am always open to a better approach that enhances students learning.

Participant #6 (interview) expressed similar views, noting that while she had used Negotiation prior to implementation of the learner-centered philosophy, she has become more cognizant of its use in teaching:

[I've] restructured based on feedback I got from students...took that input and looked at it...I've always negotiated with the students...and tried to adapt to different classes. I think I do it more overtly now than I may have in the past.

Allowing students to aid in the designing of course assignments was another approach participants perceived themselves as using to empower and motivate students. Participant #8 (narrative questionnaire 1) shared her approach to allowing students input into the construction of an assignment:
[I] allow a lot of flexibility in meeting assignment criteria. For example, while I required student groups to assess the "health" of a county, they were free to choose how broad or narrow to make the assessment. Multiple assessment format suggestions were given, but none were required.

Participant #3 (narrative questionnaire 1) shared several methods that empowered students in her classes, including the use of peer reviews, formative course evaluations, and choices of assignments:

Students have choices for projects and topics for some assignments...the learner can select areas of interest for them...also asking students for feedback midpoint in the course and then responding to them is empowering for the student. I use peer review for papers in the graduate courses and I think this gives the students a sense of power in helping one another improve.

2.4 Faculty use learner-centered teaching approaches that help establish relevance for the learner. Students need to understand why they are learning what they are learning, how it relates to their career choice, how their past experiences can help them understand new concepts, and finally, why the approach to learning the concepts is being used (Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003; Rogers, 1994; Weimer, 2002). Students who are provided with and understand the relevance of what and why they are learning are more likely to be engaged in the learning process and take greater responsibility for their own learning. It was important to understand how faculty participants felt they incorporated this concept into their teaching methods.
Participants felt they provided an explanation of the relevance of course work to students, and attempted to build relevance into the class discussions that related content to their personal experiences. Participant #6 (narrative questionnaire 1) shared:

I try to frame individual activities or assignments so the outcome is clear; to help students understand it is not "busy work"...I try to tap into the motivation that brought them into the program and make the link with the particular course.

Participant #8 (narrative questionnaire 1) provided examples of how she shares the relevance of particular assignments with students:

[I] include the long-term benefit of some not so apparent requirements, such as writing in APA format. [I] mention real-life situations in which the course content is used. I’ve also pointed out how ongoing...projects like the portfolio and service learning may be helpful to future plans, like pay raises, promotions, graduate school applications, etc. I attempt to bring current events and issues into the discussion questions I post.

Participant #1 (narrative questionnaire 1) shared her approach to incorporating the clinical aspect of the students’ experiences into a classroom discussion, by providing opportunities for reflection in an effort to establish the relevance for a given topic:

I am constantly asking students about their clinical experiences or personal experiences that provide examples of the content being covered. Sometimes students interpret “learner-centered” to mean the teacher doesn’t do anything. I try to explain rationale for the assignments so the students can see the relevance they have to their learning.
**Category 3: Mixed Responses from Students**

The third category to emerge from data analysis was responsive to part of research question one, which asked: Within a nursing department implementing the second year of a learner-centered teaching philosophy, how do nursing faculty perceive students’ responses to these changes? Two main themes that were responsive to this question are discussed in the following sections.

3.1 *Initially, faculty received negative feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches.* Students’ resistance to unfamiliar teaching approaches often creates challenges for faculty, ultimately leading to faculty resistance (Doyle, 2008; Weimer, 2002). Figure 2 depicts the causal loop that can result. Therefore, understanding how participants perceive students’ responses to their change in teaching approach was important to consider in this study.

![Causal Loop Diagram](image)

*Figure 2.* Simple causal loop depicting relationship between student resistance and learner-centered methods.
Participants shared their perceptions of student responses to the change in their teaching approaches. As is often noted in the literature, resistance to learner-centered methodologies is most common in the early implementation phase (Doyle, 2008).

Participant #2 (interview) shared her experience with this:

It was horrible. I was accused of not teaching them anything, that they didn’t want other students correcting their work because I was lazy and other students were not qualified to correct their work. I tried to explain if they had a better handle on the disease process by pre-reading and applying it somehow, they would be able to focus on the nursing interventions involved in patient care during the lecture. I also pointed out if their fellow students could not understand what they were saying, certainly a patient would have trouble understanding it. [Their perceptions were] that I was not teaching. I was forcing them to do some of the preparing, and that’s not what they felt a teacher should be doing. The students hated it. They hated it because I was forcing them to come in prepared. I was forcing them to answer questions in class. I was forcing them to be responsible for what they were learning, and to really think about what they were learning instead of just lecturing....when I changed to the philosophy [learner-centered] that I felt comfortable with, the students didn’t enjoy it.

Participant #6 (interview) also shared her perceptions of students’ reactions to her implementation of learner-centered methods:

I see initially frustration depending on the class and what their experiences have been. Because there’s sometimes that mindset “just tell me what to do and I’ll do it and let me get this done with”...I get some...indirect and sometimes direct
feedback from students “we’re wasting time doing this. Let’s just get on with the course. What is it we have to learn?”

Participant #4 (interview) voiced a similar reaction by students in a particular course who expressed a desire to return to a more traditional learning format:

I attempted to [incorporate a learner-centered approach] with the [specific class] and it failed. I would have like it to have worked, but for whatever reason that population did not buy it and they wanted a traditional format.

3.2 Later in the process, many faculty received positive feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches. Weimer (2002) and Doyle (2008) point out that students’ resistance to learner-centered approaches dissipates over time as faculty become more confident and persevere with their change efforts. Educators who meet with positive responses from students are more likely to want to continue teaching in a learner-centered way.

Positive responses from students were also perceived by some of the same faculty, as students became accustomed to the methodologies and as faculty became more confident in their ability to implement them. Participant #4 (interview) provided her perceptions of positive student responses in a given course when she avoided the use of lecture:

I do know that when...I have a more lecture driven class that has a lot of...need to know information, I don’t feel the comfort level within the classroom. I don’t feel the sense of decreased anxiety level that you do get when you...segmentally give information where people can talk and assimilate. I see more value or I get more
positive interaction with immediate feedback, then I would say if I stood up and lectured to them.

Faculty recognized that by not giving up when faced with students' initial negative responses, responses over time improved. Participant #2 (interview) perceived an improved response from students during the second year of the implementation process to a learner-centered philosophy:

I think I learned from one year to the next, if I didn't allow the students to manipulate me and I stood fast in what I believed in and what I felt was good for them even though they didn't think it was good for them, that they accepted it more readily. And it went better.

Participant #6 (interview) perceived positive responses when she grew in her own comfort with adapting her teaching approaches in response to the learner-centered philosophy:

When I go with a focus on the learning and the learners, I find students are generally more engaged, worry less about "points" and more about learning... When the learning is front and center I see the students getting excited about learning, start to see ways to apply new knowledge outside the "classroom", refer back to previous learning and build on that.

Participant #8 (narrative questionnaire 2) shared similar perceptions of student responses related to a particular learner-centered assignment. Students who initially resisted the assignment, ultimately developed an appreciation for its value:
All the students came away glad they had done the assignment...and came up with some very creative ideas. Many stated they plan to become more involved politically and through volunteering in their communities as a result of the course.

Category 4: Factors Affecting Implementation

Research question two asked: Within such a nursing department, how do nursing faculty perceive the impact of key change factors associated with the implementation process (i.e., dissatisfaction with the status quo; existence of knowledge and skills; availability of resources; rewards or incentives; participation; commitment; and leadership)?

A fourth category of ideas emerged as a group of eight themes that were responsive to this question and one additional theme (4.4) that was unanticipated: (4.1) previous knowledge and experience of faculty members facilitates the implementation process, (4.2) lack of participation in the decision process does not negatively affect faculty members’ willingness to implement change, (4.3) availability of resources facilitates the implementation of change, (4.4) many faculty believe in and live the philosophy, (4.5) lack of time negatively affects faculty members’ ability to implement change, (4.6) supportive department leadership is important to the implementation process, (4.7) although faculty members perceive minimal university support, this is insignificant to the implementation process, (4.8) faculty are motivated to implement the change by intrinsic incentives and rewards, and (4.9) many faculty were satisfied with the status quo. Each of these themes will now be discussed in more detail.

4.1 Previous knowledge and experience of faculty members facilitates the implementation process. Ely (1990) found the existence of knowledge and skills to be
one of the most influential of the eight conditions that facilitate implementation of a change. It was important to determine participants' perceptions of what prior skills, experiences, or knowledge they brought to the implementation effort, and how those influenced their ability to implement the change.

All participants perceived their previous teaching and learning experiences as enhancing their ability to effectively implement the change to a learner-centered philosophy. While some participants were new to academia, as nurses all had some level of teaching whether that was teaching patients one to one, or as a staff educator within a hospital setting. Participant #6 (interview) shared her perception of how previous personal learning and teaching experiences helped prepare her to implement the necessary changes:

In grad school...it was much more about everybody [being] prepared for class and we'd talk about the ideas and we'd go forward. You had almost nothing that was lecture based....it was a more engaging kind of learning....I always tried to do interactive things with students. And I didn't always succeed, and sometimes time pressures took over, but that was my idea...But I didn't have the framework [learner-centered] to wrap around it. I always thought...I shouldn't be looking out at passive [faces]...just absorbing. That if they [students] didn't interact with the information, and they couldn't see what use this content might be...what was the point? What was the point in learning something that you're going to purge out of your brain later? And so, I didn't know that that's what I was doing [learner-centered teaching]...but it formed ideas about teaching.

Participant #2 (interview) provided similar experiences with her own learning
background as well as teaching from a nursing perspective:

[I took graduate courses] and they were completely and totally learner-centered and that’s how they taught you to teach… I’ve always been learner-centered because that’s what you do with a patient. You recognize what they need and focus on what they need. So all my life I have been a teacher to some aspect on one on one.

Participant #9 (interview) recognized that past personal learning experiences had instilled a sense that there were better teaching approaches than the traditional lecture, and had previously adopted some of those, requiring less of a transition to the learner-centered philosophy:

Because of my experiences with going [through graduate classes]...I’ve heard a lot of different approaches and different ideas and I knew... lecturing probably was not the format to go. I am still not sure there has been that much change in my teaching. I have always adapted courses I taught for the type of student, the environment, and the content.

After the initial fear at needing to learn this new philosophical teaching approach, participant #7 (interview) was able to recognize many of the learner-centered concepts were similar to approaches she was already employing in her teaching:

I sat down...quite panicked, how am I going to do this [learner-centered teaching]? I...realized... some of these things aren’t new. I mean, I’ve always done them. It’s just kind of like it’s that new buzzword that’s going around.

Similarly, participant #5 (interview) perceived that the move to a learner-centered
teaching style was something she was educationally prepared for and had already embraced on some level, which eased the implementation process:

I have had a formal...program on how to teach so I was feeling more comfortable...I guess when we thought about embracing this new learning paradigm that I was somewhat “done that already.” I had more resources, so I felt like I had sort of made that paradigm shift [to the learner-centered philosophy]. I was already doing a lot of the things...there were some things I changed and implemented, but there were some things that were already there too.

4.2 Lack of participation in the decision process does not negatively affect faculty members’ willingness to implement change. Ely (1990) defined participation as the involvement of key stakeholders in the plan and design for the change. As one of the eight conditions for change, participation in the change process is viewed as being important to facilitating implementation.

Participants perceived a lack of involvement in the decision to make the change, either because they were not yet employed at the university at the time the decision was made or because there was minimal faculty input into the decision process. Interestingly, the lack of involvement in the decision process was not perceived as being problematic or as an inhibiting factor in their penchant to make the change. Participant #6 (interview) did not perceive the change to be forced on her, since she was already recognizing the value of learner-centered concepts:

It made sense to me. I mean I didn’t feel like it was forced down my throat...because I was moving in that direction without understanding the framework that was out there.
Participant #8 (interview) also did not perceive her lack of involvement in the change decision to be detrimental to her ability to implement the change, because she already perceived herself as using this teaching philosophy:

I had no involvement at all [in the decision to change]. I think I would have supported it... because it isn’t a change to me.

Previous knowledge and experiences that did not include having taught using an alternative philosophy, was also deemed beneficial by faculty with fewer years in academia. For example, participant #4 (interview) did not perceive her lack of involvement in the change decision as being problematic, because the change did not require her to alter any established teaching patterns:

[I had] none at all [participation in the change decision]... I was more comfortable not being a part of it than I would have being a part of it. [I didn’t resist the change] because I don’t think I ever really taught in the old format.

Participant #2 (interview) expressed her lack of influence on the change decision as being insignificant to her willingness to implement the change, because the change was something she wanted to see occur:

I don’t think I really had any influence because I was a nine month [position]. I felt like this change was already winding [sic], and I just happened to come into it. [It didn’t affect my adoption of the change] because I wanted this change... I think I was peripheral, because I didn’t understand the process.

Recalling how the decision process happened was challenging for faculty who were employed at the university during that time period. Participant #5 (interview) attempted to recall how the decision to move to a learner-centered philosophy was made,
perceiving her level of involvement as being how she personally embraced the concepts in her own practice:

I think we sort of went around the table...you know I don’t remember the process very well (laughs)...so I think we discussed it and I think we agreed and embraced it...I think certainly [I had] involvement in embracing the philosophy as a faculty and then my own personal involvement of what I wanted to take on within my own.

4.3 Availability of resources facilitates the implementation of change. Having necessary materials available to implement a change, is another of the eight conditions that facilitate implementation (Ely, 1990). A change to a learner-centered philosophy may require room modifications, technology updates, as well as faculty development resources (Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003; Weimer, 2002).

Participants were asked to share their perceptions of the resources available to assist them during the implementation of the change process. A common thread noted by participants was the availability of the university’s Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, and the staff at the center who provided literature and met with faculty as needed. Participant #7 (interview) shared her perception that she was able to access a variety of resources to aid in the transition:

If I have any questions or anything all the faculty are around. [#6] is my mentor...the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center is very good...I took a course the summer before I came back at the faculty center...and I took the two learning communities where we had six people talk about our experiences.
An oft-cited resource was Terry Doyle, author of *Helping Students Learn in a Learner-Centered Environment: A Guide to Facilitating Learning in Higher Education*. As a leading member of the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, he was perceived as a major source of assistance when questions or problems surfaced:

I would say Terry Doyle was my biggest resource...he made himself very available, so I would just pick up the phone and call him or email him if I had questions...I knew he was there and I felt free to call. And [I have] that book that he gave everybody (Participant #4, interview).

Participant #5 (interview) shared her view that the willingness of the university’s Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning to personalize their support by meeting with the School of Nursing, aided in structuring and providing consistency during the implementation process:

Terry Doyle came and he spoke with us. I think that was good to get everybody on the same page. It was...affirming [to know] I was on the right page with what the model and approach we were taking.

Awareness that someone at the faculty center would be able to answer questions as they arose provided participant #2 (interview) reassurance that she was not without support:

I had Terry come in and talk with the group about ...what their perceptions were....The Faculty Learning Center was always available to answer questions if I had them.

Opportunities to take part in learner-centered teaching learning activities were perceived to be available on a regular basis by participant #9 (interview):
[The department head] sent me the book to get me oriented to what it [learner-centered philosophy] was. The Faculty Learning Center certainly sends us out all kinds of things if you want to make yourself available for those kinds of things. I swear every week I get invitations to three or four things that are going on over there.

Participant #1 (interview) also found the faculty development offerings offered through the university Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning to be helpful in guiding the implementation process:

Faculty development was very much into that [learner-centered philosophy]...I went to some of the sessions...I went to the book review thing that we had...and it helps, it all really helps.

Participant #8 (interview) found online resources developed by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning for use by teachers to be valuable:

...I went online at [the university] website, and found some stuff and I thought it was cool! I was all excited about it...having access to resources online...I have gone to the new faculty training when Terry Doyle was... leading those seminars and he gave us all a copy of his book.

4.4 Many faculty believe in and live the philosophy. Educators tend to be persuaded of the value of an approach or philosophy by evidence (Weimer, 2002). Nursing faculty in particular, consistently stress to students the importance of evidence-based practice to safe patient care. Awareness of and a respect for the literature supporting the learner-centered philosophy seemed apparent among the majority of the study participants.
An important element to perceived willingness and ability to implement the change was participants' belief in the philosophy. Again, while participants at times showed incomplete knowledge related to use of the philosophy in alternative situations, it was also apparent in many cases that a belief in the broad concepts of the philosophy was present. Participant #4 (interview) provided perceptions that speak to her belief in the philosophy:

I want to try to learn those things [learner-centered approaches]. I believe in it. I mean, I believe the better your interactions are with your students and the less dictatorial you are, the better the learning is.

Participant #2 (interview) perceived her decision to stay in her current teaching position as being directly related to the program's decision to move to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. Her strong belief in the value of the learner-centered philosophy was expressed as follows:

...I think it's [the learner-centered philosophy] part of me. It's sort of a natural kind of teaching anyway...I supported the change. So to be honest with you, I don't think I would have stayed in or come back to the position if it had not been a learner-centered change...I really feel that this is how you learn. I feel being prepared and coming in and working with the material instead of just sitting back and being passive is a good way to learn.

Participant #3 (interview) cited her belief in the learner-centered philosophy as one of the drawing cards that brought her to the university:

I think one of the reasons I wanted to come [here] to teach was the philosophy, the learner-centered environment. That was something that was appealing to me.
Some participants demonstrated their belief in the philosophy by personally employing the learner-centered concepts; perceiving themselves to be self-directed and taking responsibility for their own learning. Some participants actively sought information to help them expand on their knowledge of the learner-centered philosophy, rather than waiting for things to be provided to them. Responses by participant #2 (interview) indicate an ability to be self-directed and a willingness to personally practice the philosophy espoused to students:

I'm the learner and I can find out about it [learner-centered philosophy], and what I don't want to find out, I don't have to find out about it. I think it [is] the same sort of approach that the book [Weimer] talks about.

Participant #6 (interview) expressed her willingness to seek out resources and recognized her own ability to experiment with new ideas to improve the learner-centered teaching approaches she used in the classroom:

Having done some reading on my own, I feel like I've got a bigger repertoire of options...I've looked for other ideas and tried them out to see if they work in a class or with a group and if they don't then I'll try something else.

Participant #7 (interview), who early in the implementation process, perceived the need for more available resources, later recognized that faculty need to engage in self-evaluation and self-directed learning in order to continue gaining knowledge on the best approaches to take when employing the philosophy:

I think at the time I thought there...should be [resources available],...but since I've kind of wrangled it around in my mind [I realize] there's no prescriptive way to do it....you gotta look at the group, you gotta look at the individuals, you gotta
look at the levels of maturity, you've got to look at your maturity in teaching that subject matter and how comfortable you feel...every week you need to evaluate.

4.5 Lack of time negatively affects faculty members’ ability to implement change.

Ely (1990) included time as one of the eight conditions for implementation of change, noting that there needs to be available time to acquire knowledge related to the change, as well as time to plan for and then ultimately implement the change. A lack of time available to implement changes to teaching practice was cited by participants as being problematic in effectively implementing change. Several other changes occurring simultaneously within the school of nursing negatively impacted the time allotted for implementing changes, and was recognized by participant #4 (interview):

There’s so much change with the nursing program, with a brand new bachelor’s program, a brand new accelerated program, new formats for previous classes...and [the Blackboard program] that the time for learner-centered approach last year was none, non-existent, although it was incorporated anyway. It just seemed a little, a lot, overwhelming. Because the learning curve from each one of those is enough to probably stress any human being, and then to have all of it at once, all of it implemented in the same time frame, I believe learner-centered had to be put on a back shelf.

Participant #9 (interview) cited the extensive learning required in order to utilize technology that supports the learner-centered approaches she uses in her classroom as being an impediment to implementation of the change:

The biggest distracter [from implementing the LCP] is learning all the technical gadgets we have available. Last semester I had four different technical “things” to
learn. [The Blackboard program] is a big program with lots of little idiosyncrasies; learning how to use the smart classroom; and using the clickers just about sent me over the edge.

Participant #1 (interview) voiced similar concerns with time being consumed by the need to learn new technologies:

The biggest contributing factor [to having difficulty with implementation of the change] is having the time to learn about and implement the changes. Using technology can enhance the learner-centered approach but that too comes with challenges and the need for more time. So lack of time is the greatest impediment.

Finding time to prepare for classes based on the new philosophical approach was deemed challenging by participant #2 (interview), who expressed her feelings of being overwhelmed:

At the time it was overwhelming to me; very overwhelming most of the time. It seeped into my personal life (laughs). You just don't feel like you're ever prepared quite enough. Most of the time I found out I was way, way, way over-prepared. Yeah, it was overwhelming, but I’m not sure if it was because of the change of the paradigm or because I’m a novice.

Participant #8 (interview) found time constraints to be a barrier, but perceived this to be related to her new role in teaching. Regardless of the reason, her perception was that she did not have the necessary time to implement the change as effectively as she otherwise might:

Finding the time to do the work is the thing. It's not whether it's learner-centered or not. I’m trying to learn more about teaching at the university level, and
whatever paradigm it was wouldn’t make any difference because I’ve got to learn all that.

Frustration at the inability to incorporate new ideas or to make changes based on students’ formative feedback because of a lack of time, was evident in participant #6’s (interview) statement:

I’m still licking my wounds after [last semester]. I was on massive overload and I didn’t feel like I had time to do anything. And I had enough other things going on that it was really frustrating when I didn’t have time to respond to student emails, and when I knew it would have been better to change things because of a new particular group. I simply didn’t have time to do that. I mean last semester it got so I couldn’t even ask the question because I knew I couldn’t do anything about it.

Participant #7 (interview) perceived that a lack of time prevented her from considering other approaches that may have been more effective in optimizing students’ learning:

It’s very hard because there’s probably more things I could do if I sat down and had time to think about it.

4.6 Supportive department leadership is important to the implementation process. Leaders in the immediate department of the organization who provide encouragement, support, and role modeling can facilitate the implementation process (Ely, 1990). The support of the school of nursing department head was perceived by participants as being critical to the ability to implement changes. Participant #2 (interview) perceived the department head as being a supportive force during the implementation process:
I think that our department director was very supportive. Amazingly supportive...I felt like she liked the ideas I was using. When you are very new and you have all these grandiose ideas and you put them out there and something doesn’t work, I didn’t ever feel like it was punitive or she was out to get me. So I guess not feeling like I was reprimanded for making a mistake.

Participant #1 (interview) recognized that the department head provided research and articles that supported the learner-centered philosophy:

Certainly [our department head] whenever she sees information she always forwards it to us and so she’s keyed into it for sure.

The importance of having a department head who believes in and also understands the philosophy was perceived as important by participant #9 (interview):

I think [the department head] has truly bought into it. She certainly has been supportive and encouraging. One of the other things that I saw was the [technology] road show that they brought us last year that told us the things that were available.

Participant #3 (interview) also shared her perception that ideas for learner-centered instruction that she brings forward will be supported by the department head:

I think department leadership definitely supports it and wants to move in that direction....I feel very supported about any ideas that I’ve had that would move the courses in a more learner-centered approach.

Participant #4 (interview) expressed perceptions of other changes within the school as sometimes superseding the change to a learner-centered philosophy:
I feel that the administration as a whole was more concerned with transition and the new programs than actually teaching it in a learner-centered approach....although it was being implemented, it never seemed to be a priority.

Participant #6 (interview) perceived that the level of support waned over time in terms of maintaining a focus, and mentoring new faculty in the philosophy:

I think it started out really well and we had those regular meetings when we did all this. But at the same time we had so much else going on. Because we didn’t do it in isolation. We did it as part of that new curriculum so we had all the minutia to deal with in doing that and taking out an old program and creating not just one but two new tracks in the generic bachelor’s program, the accelerated and such, and we had at that same time a whole lot of brand new faculty on board. So I’m not sure we diffused that to new people coming on.

4.7 Although faculty members perceive minimal university support, this is insignificant to the implementation process. Ely (1990) asserted that another condition necessary for implementation of change was the encouragement and support for the innovation by top management within the organization. University leadership was perceived by participants as providing only minimal recognition of or support for the school of nursing’s change to a learner-centered philosophy. Participant #7 (interview) perceived that the university merely offering learning opportunities was not enough:

I don’t think there’s any…coordinated effort. “If you want to do this then you come to the Teaching Learning Center and we’ll help you get started.”

Participant #5 (interview) perceived that university leaders needed to be more
visible in their efforts, and that efforts should be made to hold faculty accountable for making the changes:

I don’t know how much is being done throughout the university to walk the walk...the problem with change is that it takes more than talking about it and having resources available. You have to have good leadership to lead the way and to make sure that folks are being held accountable. I don’t know that that’s occurring.

While participant #4(interview) recognized that the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning was provided as a resource, she did not perceive leaders as being supportive of the implementation process in any personal or recognizable way:

I didn’t see any support. I think our Faculty for Teaching and Learning Center was created for us to access, and that would be the extent of the support that I felt that I had. You know you pick other people’s brain within the faculty on ideas so there’s support there. But leaders not so much.

A perceived lack of university leadership involvement was noted in the perceptions of participant #6 (interview), who noted that she was not clear on whether university leaders were even aware of the school of nursing’s change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy:

I don’t know that they are aware. They talk about [it] certainly in some of the official university documents...there is language to reflect the learner-centered and some of those kinds of things. They probably are aware of it and are probably supportive. I don’t know that. I don’t know of anything particular they did other than I don’t know who allowed the faculty center to give us the support they did. I
think that probably came out of the VPAA’s office…but I don’t know that for sure.

4.8 Faculty are motivated to implement the change by intrinsic incentives and rewards. Participants were asked to share what incentives or rewards motivate them to adopt the change to a learner-centered philosophy. Perceptions were focused on intrinsic factors, such as positive feedback from those involved as noted by participant #9 (interview):

I’m always looking for good evaluations from students and from my peers, my chair, my tenure chair, those kinds of things. I’m a people pleaser. I want to please all these people. Student feedback, careful with that…you may be doing a learner centered approach and they could be fighting you the entire way and when it’s all over with they see the value in it. Or they may never see the value.

Interestingly, participant #4 (interview) perceived that since she already is motivated to learn the new approaches on an intrinsic level, a monetary reward would not necessarily increase her motivation to change:

SAI [student assessment of instruction] results are one of the things and student feedback in the class. I don’t know if money would motivate me either, because I want to try to learn those things [learner-centered approaches].

Positive student outcomes were perceived as being the reward for participant #1 (interview):

I guess the only incentive or reward to me personally would be the greater amount of student success, where in the end they had a better knowledge base. A better
ability to problem solve and critically think. That to me would be a gauge of success.

Participant #6 (interview) found students' excitement for learning to be the primary motivator for using the learner-centered philosophical approaches:

What really motivates me to do it is...for me there is nothing more rewarding than to have students excited about learning. And it seems the more engaged they are in the learning, the more excited they get about it, and the more positive it is for everybody. It's more rewarding for me as a teacher when they're excited about what they're learning, when they ask questions, and when I see them empowered.

Participant #5 (interview) shared similar views, and defined herself as being intrinsically driven:

Certainly you want the learner to have the best outcomes, so certainly that is my driver. That has always been my reward...I'm an intrinsic person so I'm driven by student outcomes.

Receiving positive feedback from students based on what they have learned or how the class made a difference in their lives, was perceived by participant #8 (interview) as the motivation to teach using learner-centered approaches:

The biggest incentive for me is to have a student say "I've really learned a lot in your class" or "this class made a difference." It's not necessarily about financial incentives or more visible things like that. I'm quite content to have my pats on my back from my students. I think that's what it's about. It's nice when I get good student evaluations and [the department head] sends me a nice note...those are the types of incentives that keep me going.
Another incentive to adopt the change was personal success in the teaching role as noted by participant #8 (interview):

I want to succeed in my role, so I think that probably there’s a lot of internal motivation there.

Participant #7 (interview) also expressed an intrinsic desire to be successful in teaching using the learner-centered philosophy:

It’s more self. It’s nothing external. It’s just that I want to be able to do it. Like you’d do any kind of job, you want to make sure that you’re good at it.

4.9 Many faculty were satisfied with the status quo. Ely (1990) identified dissatisfaction with the status quo as one of the essential conditions for implementation of change. Recognition of system failures that result in poor outcomes motivates individuals to change. Interestingly, participants’ perceptions in this study did not support this condition. Six of the nine participants did not recognize a personal dissatisfaction with their teaching approaches prior to the program’s change to a learner-centered philosophy. Rather they felt satisfied with the methodologies they had been using, and at the time had not recognized a need for the change. At times this satisfaction was attributed to the fact that the faculty member already perceived herself as using learner-centered teaching methods that she had an appreciation for:

[I was] pretty satisfied [with my teaching approach prior to the change]. I was getting into [my] fifth year of full-time teaching. So I think I was settling in.

(Participant #5, interview)

Participant #4 (interview) also noted, “I [was] satisfied as a whole [with personal and departmental approaches to teaching]…it didn’t seem to be a huge change for me.”
Another participant with admittedly less familiarity with the learner-centered philosophy prior to the change, also expressed a satisfaction with previous teaching approaches:

I think...I was pretty satisfied because it was all I knew...the other way I guess [traditional teaching methods]. I felt [students] were very open to anything new or whatever they'd be taught. The students were used to the way I teach, so...that [dissatisfaction with methods] really wasn't an issue. I don't think I ever felt criticized. (Participant #1, interview)

Participant #3 (interview) ascribed her satisfaction with her teaching methods prior to the change to the learner-centered philosophy to many years of teaching experience, and what has been an ongoing personal teaching change to using learner-centered approaches:

For the most part I'm satisfied with [personal teaching approaches used]. It's been a process...I've been teaching [for a long time] and the switch from more teaching centered to student centered seemed to, if I remember right, occur somewhere in the 90s...so I'd say I'm in process...I don't know if we ever reach the end of it.

Participant #9 (interview) shared feeling satisfied with previous personal teaching approaches she employed at other educational institutions because it was what she was accustomed to:

Where I was before we did very little true learner-centered [teaching],...and it was what I was doing [traditional methods]. So was I satisfied with it? If you don't know anything different, yeah, I think I was pretty satisfied with it. I can't say that I wasn't.
Category 5: Perceptions of the Current State

The final category of ideas extracted from the data included two themes: (5.1) faculty perceive they are implementing the change in isolation, and (5.2) many faculty perceive the need for organized faculty interaction on a regular basis. These two themes provide a response to the third research question in this study, which is: Based on their lived experiences implementing a learner-centered teaching philosophy, how successful do nursing faculty perceive their initial efforts to be, and what recommendations do they offer other schools of nursing that are considering adopting such a learner-centered teaching philosophy? The two themes in this category are now discussed.

5.1 Faculty perceive they are implementing the change in isolation. A recurring theme that emerged when participants were questioned about their perceptions of the success of the change process, was that faculty did not have a true sense of how the implementation was proceeding. Faculty perceive themselves as implementing the change in an isolated fashion. They voiced feeling isolated from other faculty in terms of being aware of what others were doing in their classrooms, of where others were in the change process, and shared frustrations with the lack of unity as a group in implementing the change. Participant #5 (interview) expressed frustration with the lack of knowledge of what other faculty were doing related to the implementation process:

I don’t have a good sense for what other faculty are doing, and I guess that’s a little bit of my frustration. We’re not even looking at syllabi or how we teach to see who’s doing what and celebrating our successes. I mean certainly I had some struggles with the generic students with [a particular class] and so I brought that
to the table. I think maybe we bring our challenges to the table, but I don’t know that we bring our successes. That I wonder what’s really being done.

Participant #5 further elaborated on this in a later statement:

My perception is that there is faculty unity in this concept and theoretical approach. The adoption part I don’t have a good perception about since we don’t really discuss as faculty what we are or are not doing related to implementation of this approach.

Participant #7 (interview) questioned whether faculty were actually implementing learner-centered approaches in their classrooms, as her perception was that faculty were still using traditional teaching methods in some cases based on her limited interaction with faculty peers:

I still think that learner centered instruction was whatever instruction was whatever the instructor wanted to do. Some people were very strict lecture...and some people wouldn’t lecture, they’d just do group work.

Participant #4 (interview) expressed concern that because faculty do not have the opportunity to share experiences with the implementation of learner-centered teaching approaches, old patterns of teaching will continue:

There’s not [sic] time built into your schedule where someone who previously taught the class and implemented this has an opportunity to speak to someone and share ideas or even ways of implementation. And they need that information as well, but because of the sharing that isn’t occurring you just continue with old patterns because that’s comfort level.

Participant #8 (interview) perceived the implementation process as being carried
out in an unnecessarily independent fashion:

I have no idea [as to faculty unity in adopting the learner-centered philosophy]...it doesn't really seem like an independent learning opportunity, but rather a good time to invest in outside expertise.

Faculty perceived meeting times being spent on other curricular issues, with little time made available to share insights related to learner-centered teaching practices.

Participant #6 (interview) expressed this as follows:

I think of how seldom we're all together in any way, shape, or form, in terms of that socialization and that expectation. We spend faculty meetings talking about all the other stuff that it takes to run a school with four or five programs and dealing with all of the...minutia. It's all the logistical things that need to happen to make programs grow, but I don't think that we spend any time collectively talking about the whole learner-centered piece....It seems there is a bit of a setback with the hiring of many new faculty and little attention to socializing them to the concepts of learner centered teaching.

Participant #2 (interview) expressed concerns with what might happen if a lack of unity progressed:

Honestly, I think there is a face unity, but what happens in the classroom may be another thing. Faculty need to introduce these ideas and remain steadfast. All it takes is one faculty to cave to start discord [among students].

Participant #9 (interview) also perceived a lack of knowledge related to what
other faculty are doing in their classrooms, and stressed that the belief that faculty are
unified in implementing the change to a learner-centered philosophy is based on
assumptions that may or may not be accurate:

I have no real idea what other faculty members are doing within their own classes.
I am assuming we are all trying to adopt learner-centered approaches, but you
know what is said about assuming! ... I think it is hard to know where we are as a
program because we don't really talk about it.

5.2 Many faculty perceive the need for organized faculty interaction on a regular
basis. One objective of this study was to determine faculty recommendations for other
schools of nursing that might be considering a change to a learner-centered philosophy. A
theme that emerged from this questioning was an obvious need for increased faculty
interaction. Participants expressed a need to interact with other faculty related to the
implementation to the learner-centered philosophy. Participant #3 (interview) perceived
the need for conversations focused on the implementation process:

I think faculty need to talk to each other about what works, what doesn't. Their
frustrations as well as their high points. I think we learn a lot from one another
and it's hard to do. I would like to have more conversation on just teaching and
learning, that sort of thing... Talk to one another and students about what works
and what doesn't.

Participant #4 (interview) recognized a need for the learner-centered philosophy
to become a distinct focus during faculty meetings:

Our meetings are jammed with other things, and I don't believe that the focus was
ever on the transition to teaching. So when we were together…it’s not a sharing of ideas, it’s not a sharing of how to best implement. It wasn’t the focus of any of the meetings. It wasn’t the focus of anything, and…with all the other things, which are very important…the learner centered approach is second, or third, or fifth, or hundredth. It isn’t elevated to a level of importance that it maybe could be or should be.

Participant #5 (narrative questionnaire 2) also noted the need for regular sharing of faculty successes and challenges:

Have regular meetings to discuss what you are doing…what is working…what is not working. Share the successes…challenges.

This was reiterated by participant #8 (narrative questionnaire 2), who noted:

As all faculty members are lifelong learners of their craft, opportunities for group assessments and discussions of the process should be offered.

Participant #6 (interview) acknowledged the fact that faculty are not all campus based, and have a variety of schedules, making meetings difficult to arrange. However, she still recognized that some form of regular interaction was crucial for maintaining momentum of the change and to help each other learn and grow through the implementation process:

Maybe [we need] some sort of network, and I don’t even know that it needs to be face-to-face. What’s working for you, what’s not working, what have you tried? Or I’ve tried this and it’s not working for me, can you help me?...There was a fair amount of support for the core group, but many of those folks are rarely on campus and there is less of a focus on passing on the ideas and sharing new ideas.
Participant #9 (narrative questionnaire 2) went even further stating that all faculty meetings should include a discussion of the implementation process to the learner-centered philosophy:

Add learner-centered teaching strategies as a line item on every faculty meeting so it is discussed among the faculty on a regular basis. Talk to each other about what is working for you and what is not. In other words, use each other as mentors.

Summary of Chapter IV

Five categories of themes were identified from the data collected for this study: (a) understanding of the philosophy, (b) teaching approaches, (c) mixed responses from students, (d) factors affecting implementation, and (e) perceptions of the current state. These categories and the themes associated with each, reflect the participants’ perceptions related to their lived experiences during the implementation phase of the change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy.

Chapter Five provides a discussion on how these categories and themes are responsive to the research questions in this study, and how they relate to the literature and the theoretical framework used in this study. Figure 3 provides the reader with a visual representation of the organization of these categories and themes. Table 2 depicts the thematic distribution of participants’ perceptions of the implementation process.
Category 2: Teaching Approaches

2.1 Faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to create comfortable classrooms
2.2 Faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to optimize students' learning
2.3 Faculty use learner-centered methods intended to empower and motivate students
2.4 Faculty use learner-centered teaching approaches that help to establish relevance for the learner

Category 3: Mixed Responses from Students

3.1 Many faculty initially received negative feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches
3.2 Later in the process, many faculty received positive feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches

Category 1: Understanding of the Philosophy

1.1 Many faculty members provide a definition of the philosophy that focuses on students needing to be responsible for learning
1.2 Many faculty have incomplete knowledge of the philosophy
1.3 Many faculty express a level of comfort using learner-centered teaching approaches

Category 4: Factors Affecting Implementation

4.1 Previous knowledge and experience of faculty members facilitates the implementation process
4.2 Lack of faculty interaction with students negatively affects the implementation process
4.3 Readiness of faculty members and their willingness to implement change is important to the implementation process
4.4 Supportive departmental leadership is important to the implementation process
4.5 Availability of resources facilitates the implementation of change
4.6 Many faculty believe in and live the philosophy
4.7 Many faculty were satisfied with the status quo
4.8 Faculty are motivated to implement the change by intrinsic rewards

Category 5: Perceptions of the Current State

5.1 Faculty perceive they are implementing the change in isolation
5.2 Many faculty perceive the need for organized faculty interaction on a regular basis

Category 6: Perceptions of the Implementation Process

6.1 For experienced faculty initiating the need for organized faculty interaction on a regular basis, many faculty initially received negative feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches
6.2 Later in the process, many faculty received positive feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches
6.3 Faculty use learner-centered teaching approaches in an effort to empower and motivate students
6.4 Faculty use learner-centered methods to establish relevance for the learner
6.5 Faculty use learner-centered teaching approaches that help to create comfortable classrooms
6.6 Faculty are motivated to implement the change by intrinsic rewards
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4.1 Previous knowledge and experience of faculty members facilitates the implementation process.

4.2 Lack of participation in the decision process does not negatively affect faculty members' willingness to implement change.

4.3 Availability of resources facilitates the implementation of change.

4.4 Faculty believe in and live the philosophy.

4.5 Faculty are motivated to implement the change by intrinsic incentives and rewards.

4.6 Supportive department leadership is important to the implementation process.

4.7 Although faculty perceive minimal university support, this is insignificant to the implementation process.

4.8 Faculty were satisfied with the status quo.

4.9 Faculty are motivated to implement the change by intrinsic incentives and rewards.
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Table 2 (continued)
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides the results of this study as they relate to the three research questions presented in Chapter One, as well as the relationship of findings to the extant literature. Research implications, recommendations for further research, and final conclusions are also included.

This case study explored the perceptions of faculty at a school of nursing who were implementing a change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. The broad research goal was to examine how faculty experienced the implementation process to a learner-centered philosophy. Three key areas were explored including faculty understanding of the philosophy as compared with the philosophical concepts, the impact of key change factors on the implementation process, and the perceived success of this process.

Two theories formed the framework for this study. Carl Rogers' Experiential Learning Theory was a precursor to many of the learner-centered concepts acknowledged today. Over fifty years ago, Rogers recognized the importance of the need to establish a positive classroom climate, provide relevance, allow sharing of thoughts without domination, and minimize external threats. He also believed that for learning to occur, self-direction was necessary. These beliefs and principles form the basis for the concepts associated with the learner-centered philosophy as defined in works by McCombs (1994), Weimer (2002), and Fink (2003). The concepts consistently identified in current literature on the learner-centered philosophy are: (a) classrooms are safe and comfortable, (b) teaching methods optimize learning, (c) focus is less on the teacher and more on the learning process, (d) students share power and take more responsibility, and (e) learners'
past experiences and knowledge is recognized, valued, and allowed. The theory is that faculty who understand and employ approaches that address these concepts will be more likely to assist learners to have successful outcomes and become self-directed lifelong learners.

Ely’s Eight Conditions for Change Model, derived from Everett Rogers’ Innovation-Decision Process Theory was also used to establish a framework for this study. Ely identified eight conditions found to aid in the successful implementation of change. These are: (a) dissatisfaction with the status quo, (b) existence of knowledge and skills, (c) availability of time, (d) availability of resources, (e) rewards or incentives, (f) participation, (g) commitment, and (h) leadership. Each of these conditions have varying levels of importance, but all are considered as contributing factors to success or lack thereof in implementing change.

The faculty group in this study was in the process of implementing a change to a learner-centered philosophy in the school of nursing. The theoretical framework helped define the research questions addressed in this study, and themes that emerged during data analysis related to the concepts found in Rogers’ and Ely’s theories. Five major categories of themes emerged as: (a) understanding of the philosophy, (b) teaching approaches, (c) mixed responses from students, (d) factors affecting implementation, and (e) perceptions of the current state. Each of these categories included various themes, and I will discuss each of these in detail as they connect to the research questions.

Findings

This section presents a summarization and discussion of the findings associated with each of the twenty themes and explains how these themes are responsive to the three
research questions posed in this study. I then compare these findings to the literature and the theoretical framework.

*Research Question 1a Findings*

The first part of research question one is: Within a nursing department implementing the second year of a learner-centered teaching philosophy, how do nursing faculty understand this philosophy? The three themes in category one, **understanding of the philosophy**, provide answers to this question.

The first theme in this category is: *Many faculty members provide a definition of the philosophy that focuses on students needing to be responsible for learning.* This theme suggests that faculty recognize the need for students to be more engaged and involved in the learning process, ultimately taking more responsibility for their own learning. Six of the nine participants spoke of students being responsible for learning as a central aspect of the philosophy. The other three participants did not mention this aspect as they shared their understanding of the philosophy, but noted other relevant concepts. This suggests that the majority of participants may view students' need to be responsible for learning as one of the most important concepts to consider when employing the philosophy.

Participants shared ways they encouraged students to be responsible for the readings by using immediate mastery quizzes or discussions on the readings. They perceived their role as an instructor to be instilling an interest in learning, and engaging students by presenting the material in a way that encouraged application of content. As participant #8 (narrative questionnaire 1) noted, "[Learner-centered education involves]..."
preparing an interest and need in the learner to explore and other materials to find answers and learn how to solve problems.”

One participant perceived the main premise of the philosophy to be “students take ownership for their learning,” and that students who assume this ownership are more prepared for class, more engaged in discussions, and even spend more time reviewing content prior to examinations. Other participants defined their role as that of a guide and supportive presence, who presents problems or issues for students to think through and attempt to solve.

Fink (2003) and Weimer (2002) both place responsibility for learning on the student, but clarify this by identifying a main aspect of the faculty role as motivating and engaging students in the learning process so they are willing to take that responsibility. Doyle (2008) provided a list of student responsibilities in a learner-centered environment. Each of the identified responsibilities required faculty intervention or input. For example, one responsibility is identified as the student will “give input to course rules and guidelines” (Doyle, 2008, p. 15). While participants in my study perceived that students taking responsibility for their own learning was a key concept of the philosophy, it was less clear whether all perceived how students were motivated to take on that responsibility.

A second theme, many faculty have incomplete knowledge of the philosophy, provides further insight into how faculty members understand the philosophy. Interestingly, at times incomplete knowledge related to the philosophy was evident in participants’ perceptions. While most participants expressed knowledge of the learner-centered philosophy and feeling comfortable in using that knowledge, there were also
statements made indicating an unclear understanding of how to use the philosophy in alternative teaching situations. There were also instances when participant statements related to a particular approach or belief contrasted with the learner-centered literature. For example, two faculty expressed uncertainty in terms of how to motivate students other than with grades. Bain (2004) asserts that research consistently supports that when students graduate and no longer are provided extrinsic rewards in the form of grades, their interest in learning declines. This establishes the need for students to be motivated to learn for something other than a grade. The learner-centered philosophy consistently promotes less emphasis on grades as a motivator for students’ learning (Fink, 2003; Weimer, 2002). While participant #4 (interview) recognized that students have internal motivators, her uncertain knowledge of how to tap into those using learner-centered approaches was evident in her statement, “I am learning that I cannot motivate them [students]; they seem to have to have internal motivations. Grades are the only motivator, and extra credit, that seem to work for me.”

Other areas that demonstrated incomplete knowledge were not knowing how to alter class designs to make learner-centered approaches more effective, and citing a lack of research to support the philosophy as a concern. Participant #5 (interview) perceived the possibility that other faculty have incomplete knowledge of the philosophy, as noted in the following statement:

[Faculty were told] now go forward and prosper and change your practice. And I don’t know how comfortable other faculty were with that...We certainly talked about it as we were creating the new BSN program. It [the learner-centered philosophy] was there in theory...but as I look at syllabi that we brought to the
table I certainly didn't see. Wow, we're really embracing this and changing over to new practices...I think everybody embraces the theory, but then how do you implement it?

One participant, who at several points cited a lack of evidence to support the effectiveness of the theory, perceived ambiguity with the validity of the learner-centered philosophy. "Probably because it's new, there's not a lot out there....I DON'T [sic] feel the evidence is there to be prescriptive" (Participant #7, interview). This demonstrates an apparent lack of knowledge related to the extensive empirical support from the past several decades for the effectiveness of learner-centered approaches.

Participants also shared perceptions that certain forums (on-line versus face-to-face), class sizes, types of classes, or levels of students (first year students versus students with years of college experience) were less conducive to learner-centered approaches. This indicated a lack of knowledge of how to employ the philosophy in alternative situations and environments. Participant #1 (interview) expressed her frustration with trying to use learner-centered approaches in a heavy content course, "I'd argue with some of that [learner-centered concepts]...what ends up happening is if you have a ton of information, they [the students] don't even hear it after a while. So I guess that's always the struggle, especially in high content courses."

An interesting aspect to this theme was that faculty differed in where they perceived uncertainty in how to implement learner-centered approaches. Several faculty felt online classes were more conducive to the learner-centered approach, while others felt face-to-face classes were necessary in order to effectively utilize learner-centered approaches. As participant #9 (interview) noted, "[The loss of] that personal touch [is]...
really hard for me in this online instruction. And I think that’s [the personal touch] learner-centered instruction...it’s a personal thing and you don’t get that in the online [environment].” Conversely, another faculty perceived:

I see online as an easier environment to implement learner-centered philosophy. Face-to-face has a traditional aspect behind it. We have all been exposed to face-to-face learning and there is an expectation there. Online learning is relatively new and very dependent on the learner’s motivation and ability. (Participant #2, interview)

Many faculty perceived classes with students who had some years of college experience to be more conducive to the learner-centered philosophy, and were uncertain how to acclimate newer college students to the learner-centered approaches. “It’s certainly so much easier to be learner-centered in...the graduate program than it is at the traditional undergraduate” (Participant #9, interview). All of the varying perceptions of what is easier, more challenging, or not conducive to the learner-centered philosophy suggest that faculty have different abilities and knowledge levels in specific areas of the learner-centered philosophy, but have incomplete knowledge in other areas, which presents teaching challenges.

While perhaps more challenging and requiring creative approaches, previous research notes that the learner-centered philosophy can be effectively employed in any of these situations (Boyer et al., 2006; Candela et al., 2005; Dalley, 2006; Fay et al., 2005; Fink, 2003). The literature indicates that the concerns expressed by participants in my study are analogous to issues faculty frequently cite as being challenges (Candela et al., 2006; Matthew-Maich et al., 2007). In a study by Lunyk-Child et al. (2001) on faculty
perceptions of self-directed learning [SDL], themes emerged that suggested faculty had
doubts regarding their ability to implement SDL correctly, and insecurity with their level
of understanding of the approach. They expressed concern that not all faculty might be
implementing SDL in the same way.

A final theme that responds to research question 1a is: Many faculty express a
level of comfort using learner-centered teaching approaches. The majority of participants
expressed feeling comfortable teaching using the philosophy. In some cases, participants
perceived an almost effortless transition to the learner-centered philosophy, feeling they
had already been teaching in that manner previously. Several participants also expressed
feeling comfortable using learner-centered approaches in alternate forums, such as on-
line classrooms, and were able to share their perceptions of how this differed in a
favorable sense from the traditional classroom setting. For example, participant #5
(narrative questionnaire 2) stated:

Just as you teach differently online than you do face-to-face, the strategies for
implementing a learner-centered philosophy must be different between these two
venues. What works in one setting does not always work in the other. I have
implemented the strategy, however, in both settings...just differently.

However, the findings suggest that some faculty have particular areas that they
deem most suitable for learner-centered approaches and this is where they express levels
of comfort in employing the philosophy. While these participants did not overtly state
they were only comfortable in a particular teaching situation or environment, when the
earlier theme of incomplete knowledge is considered in relation to this theme, it becomes
apparent that comfort is relative to personal perceptions of conducive teaching environments.

These findings are inconsistent with available research that finds nursing faculty are more comfortable with traditional approaches, and tend to resist alternative teaching methods (Candela et al., 2006). Research also suggests that nursing faculty are uncomfortable with negative responses from students, and that this discomfort causes them to revert to traditional teaching practices (Brown, 2003). While Rogers' (1994) theory relates to the finding that educators must have a level of comfort employing the concepts associated with learner-centered teaching in order to be effective, it is unusual based on the extant literature, for faculty to achieve that comfort level so early in the implementation process (Doyle, 2008; Fink, 2003).

Summary of Research Question 1a Findings

Research question 1a focused on how the nursing faculty in this study understood the learner-centered philosophy. Several themes in category one provided answers to this question.

Many faculty perceived the major premise of the philosophy to be a need for students to be responsible for their own learning. Participants perceived their role as being one of a guide and supportive presence, and less of dominating force in the classroom. While this theme suggests that faculty recognize the importance of students taking responsibility for their own learning, it was not clear in most cases how faculty perceived themselves as motivating or encouraging students to do this.

It is clear that faculty have varying levels of knowledge related to the learner-centered philosophy. Yet all quickly became comfortable employing the related concepts
in particular situations they considered most conducive to the philosophy. Ultimately faculty are comfortable using the philosophy if they have knowledge of how to effectively use the approaches. If faculty are working in a new or uncomfortable setting, venue, or with students at a different level in their education, their ability to incorporate learner-centered approaches is much more challenging. This suggests that faculty need to have further professional development opportunities to expand their knowledge of how to implement the learner-centered philosophy in a wide range of situations. Intensifying efforts to provide faculty educational support for the implementation of the change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy could also facilitate faculty members' ability to promote personal responsibility for learning in students.

Finally, faculty who feel knowledgeable regarding how to implement the philosophy in a given situation perceived feeling comfortable using learner-centered approaches in the classroom. This is encouraging, as comfort levels were attained quite early in the implementation process. This suggests that furthering faculty members' knowledge of how to implement learner-centered approaches in alternate situations, could potentially improve comfort levels in those areas as well. Table 3 depicts the themes as they respond to research question 1a, along with sample supportive statements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question Sub-parts</th>
<th>Responding Theme(s)</th>
<th>Sample Supporting Quotes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Many faculty express a level of comfort using learner-centered teaching approaches</td>
<td>Learner-centered teaching approaches are not intuitive for many faculty members</td>
<td>&quot;Learner-centered education means focusing the attention on the student learning. By this, I mean it is an opportunity to engage students in the learning process where they think through the learning on their own and can help themselves learn. It's not to force the definition of the philosophy but to allow the students to be involved in the process.&quot; (Participant #3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Many faculty have incomplete knowledge of the philosophy</td>
<td>There is a lack of understanding among faculty members regarding the philosophy of learner-centered education.</td>
<td>&quot;It appears to me that the traditional nursing students are resistant to the learner-centered approach and the RN to BSN students are not. It's the inadequacy of on-line learning that seems to be the issue.&quot; (Participant #7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Many faculty express a level of comfort using learner-centered teaching approaches</td>
<td>Learner-centered teaching approaches are not intuitive for many faculty members</td>
<td>&quot;It's the inadequacy of on-line learning that seems to be the issue. It never seemed like a threat to me to collectively move to this mode.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Many faculty members believe in learner-centered education</td>
<td>Many faculty members believe in learner-centered education</td>
<td>&quot;Learner-centered education means focusing the attention on the student learning. By this, I mean it is an opportunity to engage students in the learning process where they think through the learning on their own and can help themselves learn. It's not to force the definition of the philosophy but to allow the students to be involved in the process.&quot; (Participant #3)</td>
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<td>2. Many faculty have incomplete knowledge of the philosophy</td>
<td>There is a lack of understanding among faculty members regarding the philosophy of learner-centered education.</td>
<td>&quot;It appears to me that the traditional nursing students are resistant to the learner-centered approach and the RN to BSN students are not. It's the inadequacy of on-line learning that seems to be the issue.&quot; (Participant #7)</td>
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Table 3
**Research Question 1b Findings**

The second part of research question one asked: Within a nursing department implementing the second year of a learner-centered teaching philosophy, how are nursing faculty incorporating the five major philosophical concepts in their classrooms? The themes in category two, *teaching approaches*, provide the answers to this part of the research question.

First, *faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to create comfortable classrooms*. This finding suggests that ensuring students feel comfortable in speaking out without fear of embarrassment if a mistake is made, is an important aspect of creating a comfortable classroom. Faculty participants felt providing positive feedback for student contributions and building positive relationships with students was important to creating an environment conducive to learning. The findings indicate that all faculty perceive relationships with students to be important, and some work to build this relationship using humor, sharing of self, and recognizing individuality in an effort to promote a comfortable classroom environment. One participant shared her perception that classrooms are comfortable environments when the learning is fun, “You can have fun, you can enjoy yourself...giving them a sense of being an individual. Humor, humor, humor” (#7, interview).

Being responsive to learners’ needs was also noted as important for creating a safe and comfortable learning environment, with one participant noting, “they [students] felt they were listened to.” Participants recognized that students feel comfortable and safe when respected. As participant #5 (narrative questionnaire 1) noted, “I don’t scrutinize students’ work but rather provide constructive and positive feedback. I provide positive
affective behaviors (e.g., smiling, humor) in both the virtual (with emoticons) and face-to-face environments.

Such comments made by faculty participants are supported in the literature as being conducive to creating a comfortable classroom environment. "Valuing, genuine dialogue, and connectedness were identified as the major themes for a caring learning environment" (Bankert & Kozel, 2005, p. 229). Bankert and Kozel also found that students who felt comfortable in such a caring environment expressed increased satisfaction with the learning experience, and were perceived as being more engaged and interactive in the classroom. Chang and Smith (2008) found that the interaction between the instructor and students in an on-line course greatly impacts students’ perceptions of the course.

Participant #3 (narrative questionnaire 1) created a welcoming environment for students by “being available and responding to the students [emails] within 48 hours or less.” She also noted the use of a virtual Coffee Shop, so that students could interact with each other in the online environment. She perceived her role as one of a facilitator of the discussion board and a source of encouragement to engage students in a learning conversation. “I try to have some humor and let the students see my personality through my stories and experiences” (#3, narrative questionnaire 1).

Instructors who provide prompt feedback and constructive comments influence student satisfaction with a course. In a study by Wieck (2003), students ranked approachable and good communicator as the most desired instructor traits. In the same study faculty identified clinical competence as the most desired trait, something students did not even identify among their top ten. Finally, Stavredes (2002) found that students'
achievement and positive attitudes increased as the level of interaction with the instructor and peers increased. These findings support the importance of a comfortable classroom environment for students. My study findings indicate that many faculty attempt to establish positive interactions with students through use of humor, positive feedback and interactions, and being cognizant of the importance of timely responses.

One participant addressed the aesthetics of the environment, “Comfort for me includes temperature, lighting, chairs and desks, and a clean environment. I attempt to make sure these things are all in place” (Participant #9, narrative questionnaire 1). Several of the classrooms used by the school of nursing were renovated by the university to align them with learner-centered concepts that speak to the value of comfortable environments for learning. Participants seemed to recognize not only the aesthetics of this renovation, but also the availability of advanced technology in each classroom that allowed for incorporation of additional learning approaches. For example, several faculty used the Classroom Performance System (CPS) that allows students to use clickers to take quizzes or anonymously respond to instructor questions during class and receive immediate feedback.

The approaches perceived by participants to create comfortable classrooms, have been identified in the literature as being effective in lessening student anxiety and promoting learning. Stress and fear have been shown to inhibit learning (Goldman, 1996). Goodwin et al. (2007) found that students whose classroom experiences were fostered through a holistic approach to comfort felt less anxiety and were more relaxed and involved in class activities. Faculty endeavored to inspire confidence, provide reassurance, and interact with students in a respectful and supportive manner.
The learner-centered philosophy that evolved in part from Rogers' (1994) Experiential Learning Theory, recognizes the importance of a positive classroom climate where threats to self are low. Students who are comfortable are able to focus on the learning process, and achieve better outcomes. Participants in this study perceived this aspect of teaching in the learner-centered philosophy to be important, and used approaches consistent with those found in the research to be effective. Figure 6, at the end of this category, shows the connection of the learner-centered theoretical framework to this theme in more detail.

A second theme, faculty use learner-centered teaching approaches in an effort to optimize students' learning, was also responsive to research question 1b. All participants perceived themselves as using learner-centered methods to present content in the classroom. They identified a variety of techniques and methods, including case studies, debates, group work on problem solving, Socratic questioning, discussion, and limited lecturing. Faculty recognized that lecture was not an optimal method of instruction for promoting student retention and learning, and shared alternate opportunities they provided to students that allowed application of content and a collaborative mode of practicing behaviors.

Some faculty participants provided rationale for the selection of teaching approaches, rather than merely stating a list of techniques. As Weimer (2002) asserts, the learner-centered philosophy is much more complex than a list of techniques. Doyle (2008) maintains that educators must assess each learning situation to determine which approach has the greatest potential for optimizing students' learning. Participant #5 (narrative questionnaire 1) supported this concept, by sharing her perceptions of teaching
approaches she uses as well as the rationale for why she uses them or how they will benefit the students:

[I] provide opportunities for group work (many minds are better than one). [I] provide opportunities for drafts on some papers to receive feedback and make changes to add additional growth. [I] plan debates so students are prepared to support their ideas and advocate for change. [I] have students critique each others' work as a learning activity and to foster growth in providing supportive peer review. I sequence learning activities that stimulate growth... [I] have students present in a public environment to obtain feedback beyond the classroom and immediate peers.

My study participants used a variety of methods in an attempt to meet diverse student learning needs. Several faculty noted the use of lecture in certain situations, but were able to identify how they adapted the lecture by incorporating class discussion. In this way, participants were able to place more of the focus on the learning, and less on themselves. Many of the approaches mentioned by participants were not those that required them to be center-stage, but rather gave students the opportunity to engage in the learning at a hands-on level.

This is consistent with literature that provides support for learner-centered teaching that considers the best approach for a given assignment or group of students (Doyle, 2008). Miglietti and Strange (1998) found adult students experienced a greater sense of accomplishment and a more positive learning experience when they used similar learner-centered activities. In a large study of faculty from across the nation, teaching approaches such as team projects, cooperative learning, student presentations, case
studies, service learning, and problem-based learning were perceived as being learner-centered methods they employed in the classroom.

The findings in my study are inconsistent with other literature that suggests most faculty in higher education continue to teach in a teacher-centered approach (Gardiner, 1994; Hansen & Stephens, 2000). The nursing literature also addresses the primarily teacher-centered educational approaches being used by faculty (Candela et al., 2006; Giddens, 2008; Hall, 2004; Schaefer & Zygmont, 2003). Participants’ perceptions in my study suggest faculty are attempting to use methods that optimize learning and that place more focus on learning and less on the teacher.

A third answer to research question 1b was provided in the theme, faculty use learner-centered methods intended to empower and motivate students. My study found that faculty in the school of nursing were cognizant of the need to share power with students, thereby empowering and motivating them to learn. As an essential concept of the learner-centered philosophy, it was important to determine whether faculty participants understood this concept and how they perceived themselves as sharing power in the classroom. Several approaches to power sharing were noted by participants. Figure 5 provided at the end of this category shows the relationship of this theme to the theoretical framework.

Negotiating as a means of allowing students to share power in the class was a repeated statement made by participants. Providing choices of assignments, allowing students to select topics of interest for assignments, being flexible with due dates, and making changes to the course based on students’ formative feedback were all mentioned as ways in which faculty perceived themselves as empowering and motivating students to
learn. One participant noted, “I make changes to assignments based on student feedback. Students choose topics of interest. I am always open to a better approach that enhances student learning” (#5, narrative questionnaire 1).

Zull (2002) supports power sharing with students, suggesting that motivation to learn increases as learners are provided more choices. Perry (1997) associated students’ perceived lack of power to a lack of motivation to learn. Lunyk-Child (2001) found faculty perceived students demonstrated a higher level of self-directed behaviors when students were allowed to make choices in the resources and strategies used in learning, and aided in the development of criteria to assess learning outcomes. In the same study, students perceived that while self-directed learning was difficult, they experienced positive outcomes as a result of taking more responsibility for their own learning. Rogers’ Experiential Learning theory (1994) proposes that significant learning occurs when learning is self-initiated. Participants in my study perceived themselves as sharing power and encouraging students to take more responsibility for learning, which correlates to one of the essential concepts of the learner-centered philosophy.

Finally, a fourth theme in category two, faculty use learner-centered teaching approaches that help to establish relevance for the learner, provided a further response to question 1b. My study found that participants recognized the need to establish relevance for the learning. Another element of this theme that became evident was that participants attempted to connect the content being taught to students’ life experiences. A faculty participant noted that when she taught theory courses, she always tried to have students share their clinical experiences that related to the content on a given day. Another faculty shared her personal nursing experiences with students to help them make the connection.
between what was being taught in the classroom to real-world nursing practice, thereby establishing the relevance for what they are learning.

All participants reported sharing relevance with students. They identified relating the course outcomes to particular assignments, and helping students see the relationship between learning particular content and potential promotions, acceptance to graduate school, or other future plans, as being ways they provided relevance. Discussion boards also offer a positive environment for students to share past experiences that help to establish a personal relevance and connection for the content being learned. One participant explained why she felt the need to establish relevance:

I always thought...that if they [the students] didn’t interact with the information, and [if] they couldn’t see what use this content might be, or how it might fit into their practice either now or in the future...what was the point? What was the point in learning something that you’re going to purge out of your brain later? Because now you’ve had that class and you’re done with it. That just never made sense to me. (Participant #6, interview)

Doyle (2008) stresses the value of providing students the relevance of what they are learning. Letcher and Yancey (2004) perceived an enhanced learning experience for students when they incorporated reflective journaling into their nursing courses. Students wrote nine reflective journals that provided them opportunities to connect their clinical experiences to classroom discussions. “A weekly reflective journal is a powerful tool for deepening learning and promoting long-term recall of information” (Doyle, p. 43).

The findings of my study suggest that faculty perceive they are incorporating effective methods to share relevance for learning with students. This correlates with the
learner-centered philosophy concept that recognizes and values students’ experiences and knowledge, and Rogers’ (1994) principle that learning occurs when content is relevant to the student.

*Summary of Research Question 1b Findings*

Research question 1b examined nursing faculty perceptions of how they were incorporating the five major philosophical concepts in their classrooms. The themes in category two provided answers to this research question.

Faculty participants in my study recognized the importance of the five major concepts associated with the learner-centered philosophy, and did attempt to incorporate these into their respective classrooms. They were able to describe learner-centered techniques they use in their classrooms in an effort to optimize students’ learning, and in some cases were able to provide rationale for the choice of a particular approach or assignment. Faculty members also perceived that they attempted to share power with students by use of negotiation and allowing students to have a say in how assignments would be completed.

Concern for the comfort of students in the classroom was also apparent, and faculty were able to identify a number of ways they used learner-centered approaches to create a climate of comfort. Finally, faculty perceived themselves as trying to establish relevance for students’ learning by connecting content to personal or clinical experiences, as well as future professional expectations.

It is apparent that most of the faculty participants have a clear sense of the importance of the key concepts of the learner-centered philosophy, and make an effort to employ them in respective areas of comfort. However, as identified in the earlier section
on research question 1a, incomplete knowledge about how to implement the learner-centered philosophy within alternative situations, does impact faculty members' ability to incorporate these concepts in all situations. Again, this suggests the need for further support and faculty development opportunities, as well as a sharing of ideas and resources between faculty members. Furthering faculty members' knowledge level as to how to implement learner-centered teaching approaches in alternative situations could increase their use in all situations.

Table 4 shows the correlation of themes to research question 1b, along with supporting participant statements. Table 5 demonstrates the relationship of study themes from categories one and two that are associated with Carl Rogers' theoretical tenets, and which form the basis for the learner-centered philosophy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question Sub-parts</th>
<th>Responding Theme(s)</th>
<th>Sample Supporting Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Intended to empower and motivate students</td>
<td>&quot;I've restructured based on feedback I got from student (Participant #3).&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Sample Supporting Quotes:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question Sub-parts</th>
<th>Responding Theme(s) (Participant #6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Faculty use learner-centered teaching approaches that help to establish relevance for the learner</td>
<td>&quot;I am consistently asking students about their clinical experiences that provide examples of the content being covered. I try to explain rationale for the assignments so the students can see the relevance they have to their learning.&quot; (Participant #1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I try to frame individual activities or assignments so the outcome is clear to help students understand it is not busy work. I try to lead into the motivation that brought them into the program and make the link with the particular course.&quot; (Participant #6).</td>
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Sample Supporting Quotes

"I am constantly asking students about their clinical experiences that provide examples of the content being covered. I try to explain rationale for the assignments so the students can see the relevance they have to their learning." (Participant #1).

"I try to frame individual activities or assignments so the outcome is clear to help students understand it is not busy work. I try to lead into the motivation that brought them into the program and make the link with the particular course." (Participant #6).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carl Rogers' Principles</th>
<th>Associated Learner-Centered Concepts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant learning occurs when learning is self-initiated (Rogers' Principle #9)</td>
<td>Learner-centered education means focusing the attention of the subject on student learning. By definition of the philosophy, learning occurs if students have choices for projects and topics of interest for them. (Participant #5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students share power and take more responsibility for their own learning (Concept #4)</td>
<td>Significant learning occurs when learning is self-initiated. Students share power and take more responsibility for their own learning. (Participant #3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty role should establish a sharing of feelings/thoughts w/o dominating (Rogers' Principle #5)</td>
<td>Faculty use learner-centered methods intended to empower and motivate learners. Focus is less on the teacher and more on the learning process (Concept #3). (Participant #3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty are expected to engage students actively, prepare for class, and encourage students to take ownership for their learning. This would mean that the teacher is a facilitator, helping the student take ownership. (Participant #5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Sample Supportive Quotes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significant learning occurs</td>
<td>&quot;Significant learning occurs when there are minimal external threats and when threat to self is low, and the faculty role should establish a positive climate.&quot; (Participant #2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classrooms are safe and comfortable</td>
<td>&quot;When I think of safety in a classroom, I think of a classroom where everyone is comfortable. I think of a classroom where everyone is comfortable and where there are minimal external threats and when learning occurs.&quot; (Participant #3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learners have a chance</td>
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Table 5 (continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carl Rogers' Principles</th>
<th>Associated Learner-Centered Concepts</th>
<th>Related Study Themes</th>
<th>Sample Supportive Quotes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The faculty role should establish appropriate learning resources (Rogers' principle #3)</td>
<td>Learning resources</td>
<td>Learning (Concept #2)</td>
<td>Faculty role should establish appropriate learning resources and new skills.</td>
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<td>which require the student to search for answers,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Advocates for change (Participant #5)</td>
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</table>
| with respect to social, and immediate peers. | | | "I foster curiosity...have students present in a public environment to obtain feedback beyond the classroom and immediate peers. I plan debates so students are prepared to support their ideas and concepts."
| Public environment to obtain feedback beyond the classroom and immediate peers. | | | "I believe case scenarios are important to apply the knowledge that you've learned, and then I believe they're case scenarios are important to apply the knowledge that you've learned, and then I believe..." (Participant #4) |
| 2.2 Faculty use learner-centered teaching methods to optimize learning (Concept #2) | | | "I try posing questions/case studies/which require the student to search for answers, I try posing questions/case studies/which require the student to search for answers," (Participant #8) |

Table 5 (continued)
Research Question 1c Findings

The themes in category three respond to research question 1c: Within a nursing department implementing the second year of a learner-centered teaching philosophy, how do nursing faculty perceive students' responses to these changes? The two themes that emerged from this questioning are discussed in the following sections.

First, many faculty initially received negative feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches. Findings in my study suggest that faculty perceived student resistance to learner-centered teaching approaches in the form of negative feedback presented to them in a variety of ways. Participants shared incidents of students reacting in a negative way to the changes in their teaching style and in the assignments they gave.

[Students were] very angry about [assignments given]. I had them...switch papers with each other and critique some of the things they did. They were to explain to a patient a particular diagnosis or disease. [Students] were very bitter and angry about that...I was asking them to become a patient and after [a peer’s explanation of a disease] how did they feel about it? Did it make sense to them? ...Learn how it is in the real world...and they were not happy with that. (Participant #2, interview)

The negative responses occurred in the early implementation phase and faculty perceived the negativity as stemming from students not understanding the utility of the approaches being used, or of having to adapt to the new responsibility they were required to assume. One participant shared her perception that pre-licensure nursing students fear failure and thus are less open to “taking on new learning strategies that they are
unfamiliar with and [that] may affect their progression in the program.” She also noted, “These students are also very dualistic in their thinking...so they find it difficult to see other ways of learning and being successful. They view only one right way...the traditional way” (Participant #5, narrative questionnaire 1).

Participants found it challenging to teach students who were responding negatively to their teaching methods, and one noted the need to “stay strong.” Another concern expressed was that some faculty could “cave” as a result of the negative responses, which could lead to conflict and potentially complicate the implementation process. These findings demonstrate the need for faculty who are adopting a learner-centered teaching philosophy to recognize these challenges and be prepared with the knowledge to respond to them accordingly.

Negativity or resistance from students is supported extensively in the literature as being common during the early implementation phase to a learner-centered teaching philosophy (Doyle, 2008; Hansen & Stephens, 2000). Weimer (2002) noted students “may understand intellectually that the new approaches are good for them and foster their personal development. But the feeling of loss...sometimes manifests itself as resistance” (p. 153). Prior to college, most students have been taught in teacher-centered classrooms that support passive learning, making the adjustment to learner-centered approaches anxiety provoking and challenging (Doyle). In a study by Lunyk-Child et al. (2001), students expressed frustration with inconsistencies in how self-directed learning was implemented by faculty or when it was not a requirement in all courses.

Second, later in the process, many faculty received positive feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches. Interestingly, this study found
that many of the same participants who perceived negative student responses to learner-centered approaches also experienced positive reactions at different points in time. They perceived students as becoming more engaged in the learning process, displaying an interest in applying what they were learning outside the classroom, and becoming more self-directed in their approach to learning. For example, participant #8 (narrative questionnaire 1) noted a change in students at the end of the semester who were initially resistant to a learner-centered assignment:

All the students came away glad they had done the assignment and indicating they learned to look at communities differently based on the assessment project...and came up with some very creative ideas. Many stated they plan to become more involved politically and through volunteering, in their own communities as a result of the course.

Participants noted these positive reactions occurred at a later point in the implementation process, suggesting that time and faculty experiential growth using the philosophy may improve student responsiveness to the philosophy. Again, these findings support the need for faculty to have an awareness that initial negative responses are often dispelled over time, while positive responses tend to promulgate as students begin to gain confidence and take a personal responsibility for their learning.

Students in the aforementioned Lunyk-Child et al. (2001) study also identified the challenge in taking more responsibility for their own learning, but recognized their confidence building as they advanced through the program. This is consistent with participants’ perceptions in my study, in that resistance or responses to the learner-centered teaching approaches lessened with time. As participant #2
(interview) noted, “I think I learned from one year to the next, if I didn’t allow the students to manipulate me and I stood fast in what I believed in and what I felt was good for them even though they didn’t think it was good for them, that they accepted it more readily. And it went better.”

Summary of Research Question 1c Findings

Research question 1c sought to answer how nursing faculty perceived students’ responses to the change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. The themes in category three provided insights to this question.

Many faculty members did receive negative feedback from students when they began using learner-centered techniques in their classrooms. Students resisted taking responsibility for learning, and at times actively voiced their displeasure to the instructor. While participants in this study perceived this as being challenging and frustrating, some of these same faculty also found that over time, students provided positive feedback related to learner-centered approaches that were being used in the classroom. These findings are significant in that it suggests that students’ responses to learner-centered approaches may improve over time. Recognizing this could potentially help reduce the development of faculty resistance to using the philosophy. Table 6 shows the correlation of themes to research question 1c, along with supporting statements.
Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question Sub-parts</th>
<th>Responding Theme(s)</th>
<th>Sample Supporting Quotes</th>
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<tr>
<td>c) how do nursing faculty perceive students' responses to these changes?</td>
<td>Learner-centered teaching approaches</td>
<td>Later in the process, many faculty received positive feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Many faculty initially received negative feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches</td>
<td></td>
<td>“It was horrible. I was accused of not teaching them anything, that they didn’t want other students correcting their work because I was lazy and other students were not qualified to correct their work. I think I learned from one year to the next, I didn’t allow the students to manipulate me, I assumed to incorporate a learner-centered approach with the specific class and I felt like I would have liked it to have worked, but for whatever reason that population did not buy it. I think it was good for them, that they accepted it, and they wanted a traditional format. I went with a focus on the learning and the learners. When I go with a focus on the learning and the learners, I think it was good for them, that they accepted it.” (Participant #2).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Later in the process, many faculty received positive feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches</td>
<td></td>
<td>“When I go with a focus on the learning and the learners, I think it was good for them, that they accepted it. And it went better.” (Participant #2).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3 Many faculty initially received negative feedback related to learner-centered teaching approaches</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I attempted to incorporate a learner-centered approach with the specific class and it failed. I would have liked it to have worked, but for whatever reason that population did not buy it. I think it was good for them, that they accepted it, and they wanted a traditional format. I went with a focus on the learning and the learners. When I go with a focus on the learning and the learners, I think it was good for them, that they accepted it.” (Participant #4).</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>“When I go with a focus on the learning and the learners, I think it was good for them, that they accepted it. And it went better.” (Participant #6).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I think I learned from one year to the next, if I didn’t allow the students to manipulate me and I stood fast in what I believed in and what I felt was good for them even though they didn’t think it was.” (Participant #2).</td>
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</table>
Research Question 2 Findings

Research question two asked: Within such a nursing department, how do nursing faculty perceive the impact of key change factors associated with the implementation change process? The themes in category four, factors affecting implementation, answer this research question. These themes as they respond to each change factor will now be discussed.

Theme 4.1 Previous knowledge and experience of faculty members facilitates the implementation process. My study found that all participants perceived their previous experience in teaching, or in being taught as a student, as being a factor that aided them in implementation of the change. Participants did not solely link teaching experience to the academic setting, but also nursing experiences with patient and staff education. Faculty participants were able to make connections between the learner-centered philosophical concepts and approaches they had used in the past to improve learning outcomes with students, patients, or staff. Some participants noted their graduate classes were taught in a learner-centered approach, which helped them develop an appreciation for the philosophy. Participants also perceived that years of experience at the university level helped them adapt their teaching to a more learner-centered approach without an overt awareness of same. As #6 (interview) pointed out, “I didn’t know that that’s what I was doing [learner-centered teaching]...but it formed ideas about teaching.”

This finding indicates that it is important for faculty who are attempting to teach using a learner-centered philosophy, to reflect on their past experiences and use them to assist them in the implementation process. The interesting aspect of this theme was that participants were able to use both positive and negative past experiences, in either their
instructor or student roles, to enhance their understanding and application of the learner-centered philosophy. If a faculty had a negative experience as a student, she recognized that she did not want to repeat that approach in her own teaching. Conversely, faculty who had been taught with learner-centered approaches had an appreciation for their value and were able to incorporate those aspects into the implementation of the learner-centered philosophy in their own teaching. Participant #8 (interview) illustrates this point:

..my graduate experience was probably more [of a learner-centered approach] than anything previous... It was largely seminar style and we did a lot of co-teaching of each other and so I think a lot of those kinds of techniques are some of the same things I see as being applicable here and I find them rewarding.

The literature frequently supports the idea that faculty tend to teach the way they were taught, perpetuating the trend of teacher-centered instruction in schools of nursing (Candela et al., 2006; Diekelmann, 2002; Giddens, 2008; Matthew-Maich, et al., 2007). Some participants in my study perceived themselves as being taught in a learner-centered approach during their graduate education; however, others had little background or experience with the philosophy. Participants all acknowledged previous work or educational experiences as influencing current teaching practices to a more learner-centered approach. This seems inconsistent with the literature that suggests previous educational experiences with teacher-centered approaches inhibit faculty ability to implement learner-centered methods (Schaefer & Zygmont, 2005).

However, participants in my study strongly supported Ely's (1991) condition for change related to the existence of knowledge and skills. All participants perceived ways
in which past experiences provided them skills that enhanced personal implementation of the learner-centered philosophy.

Theme 4.2 Lack of participation in the decision process does not negatively affect faculty members' willingness to implement change. This theme suggests that participation in the decision process to make the change is insignificant to faculty members' willingness to implement the change. None of the participants perceived that they had a significant influence on the decision to make the change. Several participants were not yet faculty in the school of nursing at the time the decision was made, and others had little recollection of the decision process. As one participant noted, “You know, I don’t remember the process very well...isn’t that terrible?”, and then added that she was satisfied with the way the decision to make the change had been made.

The perception of being satisfied with the decision process despite their lack of involvement in the change decision was an interesting finding of my study. No participant felt their lack of input into the decision impacted their willingness or motivation to adopt or implement the change. For example, participant #2 (interview) stated:

I don’t think I really had any influence [in the change decision] because I was a nine month [faculty]. I felt like this change was already winding and I just happened to come into it...I think I was peripheral, because I didn’t understand the process. This was my first immersion in anything like that. I didn’t have any experience with it [the change decision process]. [It didn’t affect my willingness to implement] because I wanted this change.
This suggests that involvement in the change decision was an insignificant factor in faculty members' implementation of the change. This finding is inconsistent with studies done on institutional change processes. Ely (1991) felt implementation occurred more readily when participation in the change decision was expected and encouraged. Participants in my study did not perceive involvement in the change decision, but at the same time, this was not perceived as impacting their decision or willingness to adopt and implement the change. This is dissimilar to previous research where in a study of nursing faculty in nine colleges of nursing, Hokanson-Hawks (1999), found subjects perceived a lack of involvement in decision-making at their colleges and that this adversely affected their ability to demonstrate empowered teaching behaviors. Similar findings were suggested in a study by Ensminger and Surry (2002) which found faculty considered participation in the decision to change as important to implementation.

Theme 4.3 Availability of resources facilitates the implementation of change. My study found that having resources available is a significant condition for facilitating implementation of the change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning at this university, was frequently cited by participants as a resource that was consistently available, supportive, and beneficial. Perceptions were that faculty development opportunities were available on a regular basis at the center. As participant #3 (interview) stated:

There’s lots of resources and I’ve been really impressed with...how helpful people are...getting into [the online classrooms] and understanding the expectations in the classroom. [I had] a number of conversations when I first started at [this university] with the Center for Teaching and Learning folks,
helping me structure and organize the classes to facilitate the learners [and their] outcomes. I thought they were very helpful and they have a number of good resources.

Many participants also referred to books that were provided to them to help with understanding the philosophy, as well as on-line resources at the university website. One participant described how the department head assigns newly hired faculty in the school of nursing a mentor who helps them through their first year of teaching in the program, adding that part of that mentor role is sharing ideas for implementing the learner-centered philosophy.

This finding suggests that faculty felt necessary resources were available, and were a factor in aiding them to implement the change. In a similar vein, previous research by Ensinger and Surry (2002) found faculty considered resources to be an important condition for successful implementation of change in an online degree program. In other previous research, a transition process to a web-supported curriculum was outlined by Sakraida and Draus (2003), and supported Ely’s (1991) condition for change related to available resources. That transition provided a production assistant to aid faculty with technological issues and decrease workloads, and also created a plan to provide workshops designed to provide faculty opportunities to share their online learning activities with each other.

The finding in my study, suggesting that faculty perceived the available resources as aiding in their implementation efforts, supports Ely’s principle that available resources are important to the implementation process. The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning offered study participants a variety of professional development opportunities.
In addition, classroom renovations sponsored by the university provided technological resources that supported use of learner-centered approaches.

**Theme 4.4 Many faculty believe in and live the philosophy.** My study shows that participants have a belief in the learner-centered philosophy, and recognize ways in which they place themselves in the role of a self-directed learner to become more familiar with the concepts associated with the philosophy. Many participants expressed a strong belief in the concepts of the learner-centered philosophy. This belief was perceived as being a key factor in participants’ willingness and ability to implement the learner-centered philosophy. Several participants made some very strong statements related to their belief in the philosophy:

To be honest with you, I don’t think I would have stayed in or come back to the position if it had not been a learner-centered change, because... I did not enjoy teaching that first semester [when she taught in a traditional format]. I did not enjoy the lecture...so without the change I wouldn’t have stayed. (Participant #2, interview)

An interesting finding was that some faculty participants manifested this belief by actively employing learner-centered methods to their own learning situation, by independently seeking resources and information on the philosophy. They perceived themselves as engaged learners needing to demonstrate personal use of the philosophy, rather than passive learners waiting for information to be instilled in them. As one participant noted, “If you choose to be the learner...there’s a lot of things [available to help]” (Participant #9, interview).
This study finding implies that belief in the change is vital to effective implementation. This finding was interesting as it was not one of Ely's (1991) eight conditions for change. Yet participants clearly perceived their personal belief in the concepts of the learner-centered philosophy to be strongly associated with their willingness and motivation to implement the change. In a similar vein, a previous study by Knobloch (2006) suggested that faculty who can see the value of changing teaching methods would be more likely to spend the time and energy to implement new approaches.

**Theme 4.5 Lack of time negatively affects faculty members' ability to implement change.** A significant finding of my study was that lack of time has a negative impact on faculty members’ ability to implement the change. Seven of the nine participants perceived time to be a barrier to effective implementation. Several changes occurring simultaneously within the school of nursing were perceived as detracting from the learner-centered philosophy implementation. A statement from participant #4 (interview) supports this finding:

> I think it was unfortunate and maybe ill-planned...to initiate so many important things in the same year. And there's new faculty and there was a lot of growth in the RN to BSN program. There were all of these factors that prevented that launch [of the learner-centered philosophy] from being successful...it definitely could have gone a lot smoother had it been initiated in a different year.

Participants experienced feelings of being overwhelmed, frustrated, and unable to spend the time necessary to review the literature on the philosophy, or to prepare and implement changes in their teaching approaches. As one participant explained, “It was
overwhelming to me, very overwhelming most of the time. It seeped into my personal
life” (Participant #2, interview). This lack of time was perceived as being a significant
factor for many participants, suggesting that timing of change should be deliberately
considered to optimize likelihood of successful implementation.

Lack of time is often noted in the literature as being detrimental to change efforts
in teaching professions. Ely (1999) identified the need for time to “learn, adapt, integrate,
and reflect” (p. 5) on the change being implemented. In particular, he noted that time is
key for educators who must revise teaching plans, practice with new materials, and try
out and evaluate teaching methods. In a similar manner, Candela et al. (2006) identify
time as a barrier to implementation of learner-centered approaches by nursing faculty.
Another study also supports that the timing of the change endeavor is significant, when
timing was found to be one of four factors deemed important for successful
implementation of a peer review program in a college of nursing (Martsolf et al., 1999).

Such previous research findings correlate to participants’ perceptions in my study
whereby multiple changes occurring simultaneously can negatively affect implementation
efforts. As participant #4 (interview) stated, “There’s so much change with the nursing
program, with a brand new bachelor’s program, a brand new accelerated program, new
formats for previous classes...and [the Blackboard program], that the time for learner
centered approach last year was none, non-existent, although it was incorporated anyway.
It just seemed a little, a lot, overwhelming.”

Theme 4.6 Supportive department leadership is important to the implementation
process. My study found that participants perceived program department leadership to be
an important condition of the implementation process. Most participants perceived
department leadership as being very supportive during the implementation process. Sharing information, supporting faculty ideas, and providing encouragement and support when students responded negatively were perceived as being helpful.

I think that our department director was very supportive. Amazingly supportive, because when I taught the course where I told you the students weren't happy with it, she was very supportive. [She would say] no, this is learner-centered, this is good, this is what you are supposed to be doing. I felt like she liked the ideas I was using and [was] very supportive. (Participant #2, interview)

Participants recognized that the department head believed in and was knowledgeable about the philosophy, and was able to understand and respect the inevitable student issues that arose during the early implementation phase. While faculty perceived support, they also expressed concern that leadership was beginning to lose the focus on the change process, by not formally addressing the change during faculty group sessions to help ease transition of newer faculty members. These perceptions suggest that faculty value department leadership support as a factor that aids in their efforts to implement the learner-centered philosophy, and that this support needs to continue in a more overt manner. One participant recognized a need for department leadership to hold faculty members accountable for the change by a review of syllabi and teaching methods. These findings indicate the need for faculty implementing a learner-centered philosophy to have a strong department leader who is supportive and knowledgeable about the philosophy.

The importance of having a department leader who is well-informed and embraces the learner-centered philosophy is noted as an essential aspect for successful
implementation of change processes (Harris & Cullen, 2007). Much of the learner-centered literature focuses on strategies for faculty implementation, but little addresses how the roles of administrators are impacted by changes to teaching paradigms. An administrator who has little grasp of the learner-centered philosophy will be challenged to effectively evaluate faculty teaching, and may even be critical of approaches they view as non-traditional.

A concept of the learner-centered philosophy that is also applicable to the leader in this situation is that of sharing power. Senge (2000) shares a compelling claim that leaders need to be less authoritarian, thereby creating a culture where all members of the system are viewed as learners who are uncertain and seeking answers without fear of reprisal. The learner-centered philosophy embraces power sharing at all levels as a means of promoting learning. This concept supports the style of leadership perceived by participants in this study. As participant #3 (interview) stated:

I think department leadership definitely supports it [the learner-centered philosophy] and wants to move in that direction...we’ve had some conversations about the practicums and projects, and I feel very supported about any ideas I’ve had that would move the courses in a more learner-centered approach.

Ely (1999) states leadership at the middle or lower management level should provide day-to-day support for the change to improve chances for implementation success. Participants' perceptions seemed to correlate to the literature and Ely's theoretical concept of leadership. College and department leaders were perceived as being knowledgeable of the philosophy and supportive of faculty implementation efforts.
Theme 4.7 Although faculty members perceive minimal university support, this is insignificant to the implementation process. This study finding suggests that faculty participants did not perceive university leaders as being actively supportive of the school of nursing’s change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy, but that this was not a significant factor in their ability or willingness to implement the change. Participants perceived little involvement in the implementation process by university leaders. While several mentioned the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning as being a resource university leaders made available, faculty did not experience other support or recognition.

Interestingly, this perceived lack of support was not considered as being consequential to faculty implementation of the philosophy. Participants seemed to lack awareness of university leadership involvement, and responses indicated it was the first time some faculty had even considered the idea of university support as being a factor. Participant #6 (interview) illustrates this in the following comment:

I don’t know that they [university leaders] are aware [of the nursing program’s change to a learner-centered philosophy]...They probably are aware of it and are probably supportive. I don’t know that. I don’t know of anything particular they did other than I don’t know who allowed the faculty center to give use the support they did. I think that probably came out of the VPAA’s office...but I don’t know that for sure.

This finding suggests that while university leadership is important for providing necessary resources for faculty, recognition of support for the change itself was not a significant factor for participants in this study. While participants did not perceive any notable involvement or recognition from university leadership, they were able to identify
the resources made available to them as a result of the initiative by leaders to become a learning-centered university. Perceptions were that the lack of support in terms of direct interactions or recognition of efforts was not significant in terms of participants' ability or willingness to implement the change to a learner-centered philosophy.

Harris and Cullen (2007) note that “administrators need to understand, embrace, and advocate learner-centered teaching” (p. 23). Directives issued by the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise (cited in Harris & Cullen, 2007) imply that activities such as service learning, internships, and writing intensive courses will aid in the move to a learner-centered curriculum. Leaders need to provide support to faculty in the form of workload adjustments and professional development opportunities. While participants certainly recognized the availability of professional development opportunities, workload adjustments were not an option during the implementation.

Ely (1999) identified commitment by those involved as a condition for change. While study participants did not perceive notable involvement from university leaders, commitment in terms of support for the innovation was in place as noted in the leadership council minutes and presidential addresses.

**Theme 4.8 Faculty are motivated to implement the change by intrinsic incentives and rewards.** This study finding suggests that faculty participants were motivated intrinsically to implement the change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. An interesting finding was that participants did not consider monetary rewards or other visible awards as being significant and did not view them as being motivating factors to implement the change. Rather, many faculty participants cited student success and
positive responses to the learning environment as the incentive to change. This is supported in a comment from participant #5 (interview): “Certainly you want the learner to have the best outcomes, so certainly that is my driver. That has always been my reward. As far as extrinsic awards or rewards; not really.”

Also perceived as being a reward were students' assessments of instruction, as well as the personal motivation of wanting to teach well. As participant #7 (interview) expressed, “It’s more self. It’s nothing external. It’s just that I want to be able to do it. Like you’d do any kind of job, you want to make sure that you’re good at it.” Other participants made similar statements such as “I want to succeed in my role, so there’s a lot of internal motivation there” (Participant #8, interview). This suggests that implementation efforts to a learner-centered philosophy are primarily enhanced by intrinsic incentives, and extrinsic rewards play a relatively minor role in motivating faculty to implement the change.

This finding is consistent with research that suggests internal as opposed to external motivators, cause people to strive to do their best and provide them a sense of control over the learning process (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Ely (1991) identified incentives and rewards as the fifth condition in his change model, but noted that it had less relevance than some of the other conditions. This did not appear to be the case in my study. While participants in my study described intrinsic incentives as being motivating, none identified monetary rewards or awards as being possible motivators. Participants' perceptions were that these intrinsic rewards did inspire them to implement the change more readily and this was a key condition for change with this group.

4.9 Many faculty were satisfied with the status quo. This study finding suggests
that faculty were not motivated to implement the change out of a dissatisfaction with previous teaching approaches either personally or within the department. Rather, most participants perceived feeling comfortable with previous teaching approaches and likely would have continued with similar approaches had the programmatic decision to change to a learner-centered philosophy not been made. A comment from participant #9 (interview) supports this finding:

Where I [worked] before we did very little true learner-centered, and it was what I was doing. So was I satisfied with it? If you don’t know anything different, yeah, I think I was pretty satisfied with it. I can’t say that I wasn’t.

However, other participant perceptions demonstrated that other factors impacted this finding. Several faculty were new educators with little teaching experience. In these cases, they were not able to express dissatisfaction with something they had not experienced. Other participants already perceived themselves as using learner-centered approaches without having knowledge of the philosophical framework with which to identify them. In these cases, the status quo was perceived as continuing to some extent and was therefore less threatening.

[I] always thought that students had a voice in the classroom. Over time I…the always tried to do interactive things with students. And I didn’t always succeed, and sometimes time pressures took over…but that was my idea. But I didn’t have the framework to wrap around it. (Participant #6, interview)

Dissatisfaction with the status quo, one of Ely’s (1990) eight conditions for change, is not supported as being significant to the implementation process in my study. This suggests that dissatisfaction with the status quo did not have a significant impact on
participants’ ability or willingness to implement the change to a learner-centered philosophy. This finding is consistent with a study done by Ensminger and Surry (2002), who found that the least significant condition of change was dissatisfaction with the status quo. Study participants indicated that while dissatisfaction with the status quo played a role in their ability to implement the change, it was the least important of Ely’s eight change conditions. Ely also suggested that dissatisfaction with the status quo had a lesser association to the implementation process than the other seven conditions.

Summary of Research Question 2 Findings

Research question 2 explored how nursing faculty perceived the impact of key change factors associated with the implementation change process. Themes in category four provided answers to this research question.

Most findings were consistent with Ely’s eight conditions for change model. Faculty members clearly perceived their previous knowledge and experience in various roles as helping to facilitate their transition to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. They found resources offered through the University Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning to be very beneficial and necessary to the implementation process. The majority of faculty also perceived time to be an essential need during the implementation process, but were challenged to find time to implement the philosophy as efficaciously as they might, had more time been available. Finally, faculty participants perceived departmental leadership to be supportive and knowledgeable regarding the change, and that this was advantageous during implementation of the change to the learner-centered philosophy.

Other findings were inconsistent with several of Ely’s conditions for change. For example, faculty did not perceive that they had participated in the decision to make the
change. However, this perception did not influence their willingness to adopt or implement the change in this particular situation. Participants also perceived minimal university support for the change, yet this was not perceived as having a significant impact on their willingness to adopt or implement the change. Extrinsic incentives and rewards were not perceived by any of the faculty participants as being motivators to implement the change. Instead faculty identified intrinsic rewards such as greater student success and wanting to improve their teaching skill, as motivators to make the change. Faculty were not dissatisfied with the status quo. Conversely, many faculty felt comfortable with their personal teaching approaches. In some cases, this was because they perceived themselves as already using learner-centered approaches, and so the change was not viewed as threatening. Lastly, many faculty expressed a belief in and also lived the philosophy, This was manifested in part, by many faculty personally taking responsibility for their own learning when attempting to learn more about the philosophy.

Table 7 shows the relationship of themes responsive to research question two and their correlation to Ely's conditions of change. Also included is the additional theme from this category, many faculty believe in and live the philosophy, that was not one of Ely's eight conditions of change. Supportive quotes are also provided.
Themes Responsive to Research Question 2 and Ely’s 8 Conditions for Change Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question Sub-parts</th>
<th>Responding Theme(s)</th>
<th>Sample Supporting Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dissatisfaction with the status quo</td>
<td>(Does not support Ely’s model)</td>
<td>I think I was pretty satisfied with it. I can say that I wasn't, I think I was pretty satisfied with it. I can say that I wasn't,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Existence of knowledge and skills</td>
<td>(Supports Ely’s model)</td>
<td>I have had a formal position on how to teach, I have had a formal position on how to teach,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lack of time negatively affects faculty process</td>
<td>(Supports Ely’s model)</td>
<td>Faculty members feel that the implementation of learner-centered courses and they were completely and totally learner-centered and then how they wanted you to teach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Previous knowledge and experience of process</td>
<td>(Supports Ely’s model)</td>
<td>I took graduate courses and they were completely learner-centered and then they were completely learner-centered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5. Lack of time negatively affects faculty process</td>
<td>(Supports Ely’s model)</td>
<td>I have had a formal position on how to teach, I have had a formal position on how to teach,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9. Many faculty were satisfied with the status quo</td>
<td>(Supports Ely’s model)</td>
<td>I have had a formal position on how to teach, I have had a formal position on how to teach,</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Within such a nursing department, how do nursing faculty perceive the impact of key change factors associated with the implementation change process?

1. Dissatisfaction with the status quo
2. Existence of knowledge and skills
3. Lack of time negatively affects faculty process
4. Previous knowledge and experience of process
4.5. Lack of time negatively affects faculty process
4.9. Many faculty were satisfied with the status quo
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question Sub-parts</th>
<th>Responding Theme(s)</th>
<th>Sample Supporting Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3) Availability of time (cont.)</td>
<td>Lack of time negatively affects faculty members' ability to implement change (Supports Ely's model)</td>
<td>&quot;There's so much change with the nursing program... that the time for the learner-centered approach last year was none, non-existent, although it was incorporated anyway. It just seemed a little, a lot, overwhelming&quot; (Participant #4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Availability of Resources</td>
<td>Availability of resources facilitates the implementation of change (Supports Ely's model in part)</td>
<td>&quot;I went online at [the university] website and found some stuff and thought it was cool. I was excited about it. Furthermore, we have some Faculty Learning Centers that can send us all kinds of things if we want to make ourselves available for those kinds of things. I spent every week sending requests related to this.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Rewards or Incentives</td>
<td>Faculty are motivated to implement the change by intrinsic incentives and rewards (Supports Ely's model in part)</td>
<td>&quot;I guess the only incentive I had personally was that I wanted feedback from students and see improvement of change. I mean, if you want to make yourself available, you can, you might be able to make yourself available for those kinds of things.&quot; (Participant #8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Lack of Participation in the decision process</td>
<td>Lack of participation in the decision process does not negatively affect faculty members' willingness to implement change (Does not support Ely's model)</td>
<td>&quot;I don't think I really had any influence... I felt like this was already in the works, and I just happened to come into it.&quot;</td>
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Table 7 (continued)
### Table 7 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question Sub-parts</th>
<th>Themes Responsive to Research Question 2 and Ely's 8 Conditions for Change Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample Supporting Quotes</td>
<td>Responding Theme(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) commitment</td>
<td>(Participant #3) &quot;I think department leadership definitely supports the idea of...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) leadership</td>
<td>(Participant #6) &quot;It didn't seem to me like it was punitive or she was trying to get me...&quot;</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Research Question 2 (Does not support Ely's model):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Responsive to Research Question 2 and Ely's 8 Conditions for Change Model</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importation of the implementation process</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.6 Supportive department leadership is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Although faculty members perceive minimal</td>
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<tr>
<td>7) commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importation of the implementation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Supportive department leadership is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Although faculty members perceive minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Sub-parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Theme Not Related to Ely’s Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ely’s Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Many faculty believe in and live the philosophy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 (continued)
Research Question 3 Findings

The final research question asked: Based on their lived experiences implementing a learner-centered teaching philosophy, how successful do nursing faculty perceive their initial efforts to be, and what recommendations do they offer other schools of nursing that are considering adopting such a learner-centered teaching philosophy? Themes in category five, perceptions of the current state, answer this question, and these are now discussed.

First, faculty members perceive they are implementing the change in isolation. My study suggests that all participants perceived themselves as implementing the change in isolation. They expressed feeling alone in the implementation process, and lacking awareness of what other faculty were doing, feeling, or implementing with their classes. Participants were unable to share where faculty as a whole were at in terms of the implementation process, as #2 (interview) expressed, “Honestly, I think there is face unity, but what happens in the classroom may be another thing.” Faculty perceived that the lack of unity in understanding successes, challenges, or progress experienced by faculty was impeding the implementation progress.

I don’t have a good sense for what other faculty are doing, and I guess that’s a little bit of my frustration. That I wonder what’s really being done...we don’t really discuss as faculty what we are or are not doing related to implementation of the approach. (Participant #5, interview)

This finding is significant in that it is evident that faculty perceive a disconnect with peers related to the implementation process, and that this disconnect is impeding their ability to implement effectively. Faculty participants noted that working in isolation
prohibits them from learning from peers' successes or challenges, and causes them to wonder whether other faculty are even implementing change into their teaching approaches. The lack of communication was noted to be inhibited by faculty schedules and teaching formats, with several faculty teaching primarily online or off-site with little opportunity for peer interaction.

Isolationism in academia is a common occurrence (Palmer, 1998). One of the best resources for learning about teaching is faculty peers, yet this is rarely utilized due to barriers of time, competition, and the privatization of the teaching profession. Faculty have limited time to visit each other's classes or even discuss what they are doing in their own. There is often a fear that personal teaching approaches will be questioned or found lacking. Finally, teaching is generally done in a solitary fashion, without witnesses to practice. These barriers limit faculty growth in teaching, and even more so when there is a change in teaching philosophy being implemented. Participants in my study perceived working in isolation to be a particularly challenging aspect of the implementation process, and recognized the possibility that such unilateral implementation could be an impediment to the process.

Second, many faculty members perceive the need for organized faculty interaction on a regular basis. An associated finding to theme 5.1 was the need for faculty to have regular discussions that focused on the implementation process. Many participants perceived a need for sharing of ideas, successes, and challenges, and that this sharing should occur on a regular basis to aid faculty in implementing the learner-centered philosophy. One faculty noted that the biggest barrier she perceived in the ability to
Maintain the change was the lack of continued support, especially to new faculty who were new to teaching.

We spend faculty meetings talking about all the other stuff that it takes to run a school with four or five programs, and dealing with all of the minutia. It's all the logistical things that need to happen to make programs grow, but I don't think that we spend any time collectively talking about the whole learner-centered piece.

Maybe [we need] some sort of network, and I don't even know that it needs to be face-to-face. What's working for you? What's not working? What have you tried?

( Participant #6, interview)

While participants acknowledged mentoring of new faculty and one-on-one discussions with peers as being helpful, group interactions were perceived as being lacking thus diminishing the ability of faculty to effectively implement the learner-centered philosophy. This finding suggests that implementation of a change to a learner-centered philosophy requires an ongoing commitment to regular group sessions that provide opportunities to share individual experiences.

Previous researchers support this finding. Kline and Saunders (1998) recognized the value of a learning organization that allows members to be resources for each other. When departmental culture provides opportunities for a variety of interactions focused on the change goal, enhanced productivity and creativity occurs. Palmer (1998) noted, "Involvement in a community of pedagogical discourse is more than a voluntary option for individuals who seek support and opportunities for growth. It is a professional obligation that educational institutions should expect of those who teach" (p. 144). A Flemish study (Stes, Clement, & Van Petegem, 2007) found university faculty perceived
a lack of consensus and collaboration with colleagues to be a primary constraining factor when attempting to implement student-centered teaching approaches. Interestingly, Ely (1991) did not identify this concept as one of his eight conditions for change.

Summary of Research Question 3 Findings

The third research question attempted to discern how successful nursing faculty perceived their initial efforts to be, and what recommendations they would offer other schools of nursing that might be considering adopting such a learner-centered teaching philosophy. The themes in category five provided answers to this question.

Faculty perceptions indicated they felt unsure of the success of the implementation efforts within the school of nursing, primarily because they felt they implemented the change in isolation and had no clear understanding of what colleagues were doing related to implementing the philosophy. Participants also indicated that when implementing a change to a learner-centered philosophy, faculty should supportively interact on a regular basis during the process by sharing successes or challenges in order to grow in their abilities and confidence. These findings suggest that support for faculty during the implementation process should include providing opportunities for group sharing. Participants identified this as being vital to the sustainability of the change effort, as well as the effectiveness of faculty efforts to implement the change. Table 8 shows the relationship of themes to research question three, along with supportive quotes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question Sub-parts</th>
<th>Themes Responsive to Research Question 3</th>
<th>Sample Supporting Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Faculty perceive they are implementing the change in isolation</td>
<td>3. Teachers often feel that they are implementing a learner-centered teaching philosophy</td>
<td>&quot;I don't have a good sense of what other faculty are doing...&quot; (Participant #9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Many faculty perceive the need for organized faculty interaction on a regular basis</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I think faculty need to talk to each other about what works...&quot; (Participant #5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Faculty perceive their initial efforts to be</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Based on their lived experiences...&quot;</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Implications

The intent of this study was to understand the experiences of a group of nursing faculty in a school of nursing who were implementing a change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. The results of my study suggest that implementation of a change to a learner-centered philosophy in a school of nursing can occur, but requires certain key conditions of change be present. It also suggests that support for faculty must be ongoing and interactive. The study demonstrated that the implementation effort as perceived by individual faculty was occurring, but that it was occurring in isolation from peers, resulting in a lack of understanding of where the program was at in the implementation process. Faculty also perceived feeling limited in their ability to implement new approaches or strategies across all learning environments given the lack of idea sharing with peers.

While a single case study certainly cannot be generalized to all schools of nursing, it can lend support and help strengthen findings in the literature related to implementation of philosophical changes to teaching. The findings suggest that implementation is positively impacted by faculty belief in the philosophy, intrinsic rewards, supportive department leadership, availability of resources, and previous knowledge and experience. Results also suggest such factors as lack of time, implementation in isolation, and minimal group interaction related to the implementation negatively impact the process.

One primary implication of this research is that this school of nursing can implement changes based on these findings to improve their level of success with the change to a learner-centered philosophy. Based on faculty perceptions of needed change, this is an opportunity to initiate regular discussion sessions that could benefit all faculty
in their endeavors to effectively implement this philosophy. Further, if faculty experience success in implementation of the philosophy, students may ultimately benefit most.

Schools of nursing are being encouraged to adopt learner-centered teaching approaches to improve student outcomes (NLN, 2003). Nurses are increasingly challenged to be critical thinkers, lifelong learners, and self-directed professionals who work well in team-oriented situations (Candela et al., 2006; McLoughlin & Darvill, 2006; Williams, 2004). The learner-centered philosophy is viewed as responsive to the need to educate students in a way that instills these qualities (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Farida et al., 1999; Gardner, 1994; 1998; Weimer, 2002). Yet traditional teaching methods continue to be utilized at many schools of nursing, and changes in teaching, if at all, tend to occur at an individual faculty level rather than a faculty group (Hansen & Stephens, 2000; Schaefer & Zygmunt, 2003). My study, which explored how a faculty group at a school of nursing made a change to the learner-centered philosophy, can serve to provide other nursing programs insight into possible approaches that could help or hinder a similar change within their own school.

Recommendations for Further Research

There is a paucity of research examining the experiences of a group of nursing faculty implementing a change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. While there is research available on individual nursing instructors who use a particular learner-centered approach in a course, there is little available that explores how nursing programs experience the change or implement the philosophy as a whole. Since this is an initiative being promoted by nursing associations (NLN, 2003; NYNE, 2005), it is apparent that
further research is needed to provide direction for nursing programs contemplating such a change.

Other areas of potential research became evident from the results of this study, and are recommended for future investigations. Studies that explore student outcomes from a program-wide change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy would provide a greater understanding of its benefits or lack thereof. Since my study revealed a theme that a belief in the philosophy was a key factor in willingness to implement the change, such a study could motivate other faculty in other schools of nursing to recognize the benefit of a change to the philosophy if outcomes were positive.

My study also revealed that faculty had an incomplete knowledge of the philosophy at times, especially in terms of how to apply it in alternative situations outside of their comfort zone. A longitudinal study that explored changes to faculty teaching approaches and perceptions of comfort in using the philosophy over a period of time would be useful. Participants in my study were still immersed in the implementation phase, but what was not known was how long that implementation phase would last or how it would be determined when it ended. Such a study could aid faculty and administration in understanding how faculty members’ knowledge level changes over time, and how long the implementation stage of the change process can be expected to last.

My study also suggested that many of the participants perceived themselves as previously utilizing learner-centered approaches, but had not framed them as such. More studies using a quantitative approach are recommended to determine what learner-centered approaches nursing faculty are actually using in classrooms. Such knowledge
would aid in understanding whether faculty are already utilizing some of the learner-centered concepts or primarily using traditional methods. Exploring how faculty decided to use a certain approach would also aid understanding of whether faculty are considering how students will best learn specific content. Since my study suggested previous knowledge and experience was significant in positively aiding the implementation process, such studies could ease resistance to change among nursing faculty who may be able to recognize that they already utilize some learner-centered approaches to teaching.

Finally, a study that also explored students’ perceptions of the change process to a learner-centered philosophy in a particular program would prove helpful. Such a study would aid in understanding whether faculty perceptions of the use of teaching approaches and responses from students, aligns with what students actually experience. Exploring perceptions from the perspectives of both faculty and students would provide a more in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of the change process within the program.

Conclusions Related to Theory

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of faculty in a school of nursing during the second year of an implementation process to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. A theoretical framework developed from the works of Rogers and Ely was used to guide the study.

The findings in my study suggest that faculty in this school of nursing report having an understanding of the learner-centered philosophy, but still lack knowledge as to how to utilize the philosophy in alternative situations or with different student populations. They were able to share ways in which they felt their teaching was guided by the five major philosophical concepts, but still identified challenges with student
resistance to learner-centered teaching approaches based on the students' years of college experience, the program in which the student was enrolled, the class size, and the format of the class (online or face-to-face). This uncertainty was expressed in faculty perceptions of incomplete knowledge related to the philosophy, resulting in sometimes superficial understanding and application of learner-centered approaches. This suggests a need for continuing educational offerings and supportive leadership to aid faculty as they continue with the implementation process.

Participants also perceived a change in students' responses to the change over time. Initial resistance from students was generally perceived as dissipating the longer the faculty taught using the learner-centered approaches, and being replaced with positive responses. Recognition of this among participants appeared to be a motivator for perseverance to continue implementation of the change.

Many of the findings in this study support Ely's (1991) eight conditions for change model. Participants perceived the existence of knowledge and skills, time, resources, department leadership, and intrinsic rewards as important to their ability and willingness to implement the change to a learner-centered teaching philosophy.

Dissimilar to aspects of Ely's theory, university commitment as well as participation in the decision process to make the change, were not perceived as being particularly important, and faculty were not dissatisfied with the status quo. The lack of significance placed on university commitment may be misleading, since the university did provide substantial support for the change in terms of classroom renovations and professional development activities offered through the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. Faculty did note the importance of educational offerings as well as the support
provided by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning staff, but did not appear to fully recognize this as emanating from university leaders. Participants seemed to lack awareness of efforts made by university leaders to assist faculty in adopting the learner-centered philosophy. This lack of awareness may help explain why faculty perceived minimal university support or encouragement for the change.

Another interesting finding was that faculty participants all perceived themselves as bringing knowledge and skills that reflected learner-centered teaching principles, despite some being new to teaching in the academic setting. This may suggest that nurses in this study bring a unique skill set to the academic arena, based on past patient or staff education experiences. These prior experiences may aid faculty in their ability to implement the change in philosophy more readily. The greater interest in intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards may also be reflective of the sometimes altruistic nature of nursing professionals, and could suggest that this nursing faculty group may bring that feature of their nursing experience to the academic field.

Finally, while participants perceived the implementation process to be progressing and believed all faculty to be participating, they expressed perceptions of feeling alone in implementing the change and not having an understanding of what others were doing or where they were at in the process. The need for an organized time for faculty to interact and share their experiences with the change process was very apparent. Participant recommendations were that timing of the change process should be considered so that faculty can make the necessary changes in an effective way, and allow them to place a greater focus on the change effort.
My study findings indicate that the implementation process to a learner-centered teaching philosophy in this school of nursing remains in the early stages, although there are certainly signs of initial successes. It is affirming to note that the faculty group appears to be embracing the philosophy, despite the lack of time available to implement it as effectively as they would like, and in spite of the student resistance they encounter at times. Yet it is critical that faculty gain a more complete knowledge of the philosophy in order to be successful at implementing it in alternative situations. The diverse responses regarding conditions each participant found to be conducive to teaching using a learner-centered philosophy was of interest in this study. For example, some faculty members felt on-line teaching was very conducive to learner-centered approaches, while others felt on-line teaching lacked that ability. This suggests there may be knowledge within the group, that if shared, could benefit others and facilitate the implementation process.

There were several findings in my study that suggest nursing faculty have unique qualities that may have an effect on the implementation process of a change to a learner-centered philosophy. Several examples in my findings serve to distinguish these unique qualities: (a) an accepted lack of participation in the decision process to make the change, (b) being motivated by intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards, and (c) a group willingness to implement the change despite being satisfied with the status quo. Pask (2005) points out that in nursing practice, nurses tend to be self-sacrificing, and tolerant of circumstances that are distressing. Pask also notes that nurses tend to work cooperatively when faced with challenges, which may provide partial insight as to why faculty were united in their willingness to adopt the change.
In my study, the faculty group continued to implement the change to a learner-centered philosophy despite their perceptions of not having enough time, not having complete knowledge of the philosophy, and meeting with student resistance. Faculty members’ belief in the philosophy and their desire to do what is in the best interest of students’ learning, despite the constraints it puts on their time and the student resistance sometimes reported, may demonstrate the self-sacrificing attribute inherent to the nursing profession. Pask (2005) notes, “Nurses who see intrinsic value are shown to be vulnerable to self-sacrifice in their inclination to work for the good of their patients, at the expense of themselves” (p. 247). Participants in this study all pointed to intrinsic incentives as their motivation to implement and continue the change, raising the question as to whether faculty members bring characteristics from their nursing practice to the educator role that affect how they respond to implementation of change.

DeMarco and Roberts (as cited in Pask, 2005) suggest that “institutionally imposed powerlessness has taught many nurses not to assert themselves individually or collectively in the workplace” (p. 248). One possible explanation for why faculty members did not perceive the lack of involvement in the decision process as a problematic issue, could stem from their experiences as nurses in hospital environments where change is often implemented in a top-down management style. A desire to please supervisors in the hospital setting, may manifest itself among nurses who become faculty as a desire to please department heads or other college leaders. As one participant noted, “I’m a people pleaser. I want to please all these people. So I’m looking for people [to give me] good feedback.” This type of mindset may provide a partial explanation for why
some of Ely’s conditions of implementation were not considered significant by nursing faculty.

My qualitative study adds to the extant literature by providing an in-depth understanding of how a nursing faculty group experienced early stages of the change process to a learner-centered teaching philosophy. It provides data suggesting conditions that were most significant to this nursing faculty group during the implementation phase. It also contributes to understanding what nursing faculty consider to be learner-centered approaches in their classrooms, as well as their perceptions of the status of the implementation process. The findings of my study are significant in that they serve as a valuable response to The National League for Nursing’ (2003) challenge to nursing educators to expand the evidence-based pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning with a specific focus on the learner-centered philosophy. Despite this encouragement to adopt and research learner-centered approaches in nursing programs, little has been reported in the literature. Particularly lacking was research that explored implementation of the learner-centered philosophy by an entire faculty group within a nursing program. My research provides a response to the NLN challenge by providing a more clear understanding of how the implementation process to a learner-centered philosophy occurred in one school of nursing.
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Appendix A

Demographic Questions
Demographic Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions as part of a study being conducted on nursing faculty perceptions of a change to a learning-centered teaching paradigm.

1. Age ______________________
2. Ethnicity ______________________
3. Sex ______________________
4. Religion ______________________
5. Marital Status ______________________
6. Number of Children _____________
7. Degree Level ______________________
8. Years of Teaching Experience _____________
9. Years or Semesters of Teaching at this University (include current year/semester) _____________
10. Previous number of years and/or months teaching using the learner-centered philosophy _____(years) ________(months)
Appendix B

Consent Form
CONSENT FORM

Western Michigan University
Department of Higher Education Leadership
Principal Investigator: Louann Bierlein Palmer
Student Investigator: Sharon L. Colley
Study Title: Nursing Faculty Experiences and Perceptions of a Change Process to a Learner-Centered Teaching Approach: A Case Study

PURPOSE

You are invited to participate in research studying nursing faculty perceptions of the change and implementation process to a learning-centered teaching approach. I am seeking faculty in the School of Nursing at Ferris State University to participate in the study.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, your involvement will be needed in several ways over a period of three months: (a) I will be asking you to complete a narrative questionnaire consisting of questions related to your knowledge, experience, and use of the learner-centered philosophy. This will take approximately one hour to complete, (b) There will be a face to face interview, lasting approximately 1 hour in length. I will ask open-ended questions related to your experiences during the change and implementation process to a learner-centered approach. These interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed verbatim by a third person, and (c) I will ask you to either participate in a focus group lasting approximately one hour or a second narrative questionnaire as a follow up to the first questionnaire and face to face interview. The focus group or questionnaire option will be selected based on data collected to that point, and which would be most appropriate at that time. I will provide you a written copy of your part of the study to review and ensure I have captured the essence of your responses. If you wish to omit a portion of the information, I will honor that request.
You have the right to refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name will not appear on the questionnaires and you will not be identified in any way in this study. However, if a focus group is used I cannot assure that other members within that group will not share what occurred or was said within that group session.

BENEFITS AND RISKS

There is a small but potential risk of emotional distress that could occur as a result of responding to questions that are reflective of personal teaching practices and departmental activities.
However, to protect your confidentiality, the names in the dissertation will be changed and any identifying information removed. Initially, the only people who will read the dissertation are the three members of my dissertation committee. If you would like, I will provide you their names. This study is being done in partial fulfillment of my doctoral work and will be published as a public doctoral dissertation, so it may be read by other interested parties.

Your participation will further understanding of how to cohesively change and implement improvements to teaching in schools of nursing. In addition, you may benefit from the personal reflection on teaching practices and the implementation process, as well as gain insights to colleagues' experiences. If you agree to participate in this study, please sign below and return to me. If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact my faculty advisor and principal investigator, Louann Bierlein Palmer at 269-387-3596, or me (Sharon Colley) at 231-591-2288.

You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298) if questions or problems arise during the course of the study.

Your signature below indicates that the study purpose and requirements have been explained to you and that you agree to participate. Thank you for your time!

DATE:________________________________________

PARTICIPANT'S PRINTED NAME:________________________________________

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE:________________________________________

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

CONSENT OBTAINED
BY:________________________________________DATE:________________


Appendix C

Interview Questions
Questionnaire #1

Please respond in as much depth as possible to the following questions. Please type in your answers and return by email to colleys@ferris.edu

1. Tell me your personal definition of learner-centered education.

2. Describe what approaches you utilize in the classroom that you consider to be learner-centered.

3. Describe how you strive to make your classrooms safe and comfortable learning environments.

4. What are some of the approaches you have used in order to optimize students’ learning?

5. Share the ways in which you have attempted to make the learning process the focus in your classroom.

6. How do you share power with your students?

7. How do you motivate students to take greater responsibility for their own learning? Do you incorporate the past experiences and knowledge of learners’ into the learning process to establish value and relevance? If so, how?

8. How do you feel students have responded to the changes in your teaching approaches based on the learner-centered philosophy? Describe the changes you see in your students.
General Interview Questions (data collected via face-to-face interviews).

1. Tell me how satisfied you were with your department's approach to teaching as a whole prior to the implementation. With your personal teaching approach? If not satisfied, share what you perceived as being ineffective or inefficient.

2. Describe your knowledge level of learner-centered instruction prior to implementation? How comfortable were you with your skill level with this mode of instruction?

3. Tell me your perceptions about resources available to you to assist with this implementation process.

4. Share your perceptions as to your ability to find time to implement the changes required to move to this teaching paradigm. Describe any insufficiencies.

5. Describe any incentives or rewards that are motivating you to make this change.

6. Tell me about the level of involvement you had in the decision process to make this change. About your involvement in designing a learner-centered curricula.

7. Describe the level of support or encouragement you perceive as offered from the university leaders during the change and implementation process (President, Vice-President, etc.).

8. What are your perceptions of department leadership during the change and implementation process? How did leadership aid in the process? What more could be done to assist?

Additional questions will be added based on participants' written responses to the initial questions.
Questionnaire #2

1. What are your perceptions of faculty unity in adopting the learner-centered approach?

2. What do you see as the differences in teaching face to face versus online, in terms of your ability to implement the learner centered philosophy?

3. Share your perceptions of differences between the various nursing programs (prelicensure, RN to BSN, graduate, accelerated) in terms of your ability to be successful in implementing learner centered approaches.

4. Describe your current level of comfort teaching in this modality. What factors were most helpful in reaching that comfort level? Conversely, what detracted from your ability to achieve comfort in teaching using learner centered approaches?

5. Share your personal perceptions of where the nursing program as a whole is in the implementation process to learner-centered teaching.

6. Based on your experience thus far with the change to a learner-centered philosophy, what do you perceive to be the greatest contributing factor to a successful change effort? Conversely, what is the greatest impediment to a successful change?

7. What recommendations would you offer to other nursing faculty or schools of nursing that are adopting a learner-centered teaching philosophy?
Appendix D

Definition of Codes
Codes Defined

UP-SRL Many faculty members provide a definition of the philosophy that focuses on students needing to be responsible for learning: Code comments that define LCT as such, or that speak to student being required to take responsibility for readings, preparing for class etc.

UP-IK Many faculty have incomplete knowledge of the philosophy: This code is used for comments that express uncertainty with whether something is LCT or not, comments that express uncertainty with use of LCT in a particular forum (online vs. f2f; large class vs. small class size, theory class vs. more abstract course), perceptions of other faculty lacking knowledge, or use of techniques that go against best practice as defined in the learner centered philosophy.

UP-CLC Many faculty express a level of comfort using learner centered teaching approaches: Code comments that express a level of comfort in teaching using the learner centered philosophy. This would include statements that speak to comfort in a variety of forums (being comfortable online or f2f, etc.

TA-CC Faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to create comfortable classrooms: This code encompasses things such the overall physical set up of the class, helping students to feel comfortable in speaking out by allowing mistakes, and building relationships with students.

TA-OL Faculty use learner-centered approaches in an effort to optimize students’ learning: Code statements that show inclusion of methods that are intended to improve learning outcomes as defined by learner centered philosophy. These include using a variety of approaches in the classroom, use of discussion, case studies, role modeling by faculty, etc.

TA-EM Faculty use learner-centered methods intended to empower and motivate students: Code statements that demonstrate a sharing of power in the classroom as in negotiation with students, allowing students to aid in the design of the class or assignments in the class, and allowing students the opportunity to provide feedback to the instructor, etc.

TA-ER Faculty use learner-centered teaching approaches that help to establish relevance for the learner: Include statements that show faculty establishing the relevance of an assignment or course for the student, making connections to the student’s personal life/career, providing opportunities for student reflection on the content and its relevance for them on a personal level.

MR-NF Many faculty initially received negative feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches: Code comments that share unfavorable student responses to the use of learner centered approaches.
MR-PF Later in the process, many faculty received positive feedback from students related to learner-centered teaching approaches: Code comments that share favorable student responses to the use of learner-centered approaches.

MF-PKE Previous knowledge and experience of faculty members facilitate the implementation process: Code comments that speak to teaching experience (either in nursing practice or education) that has helped the faculty build teaching skills that are learner-centered. Also include any personal educational experiences (as a student) that prepared them for teaching using a learner-centered philosophy. Statements that speak to not needing to change a lot to move to the philosophy should also be included.

MF-PD Lack of participation in the decision process does not negatively affect faculty members' willingness to implement change: Include statements that suggest the faculty was not involved in the decision to make the change to a learner-centered approach or in influencing the curricula to a learner-centered approach, and that these factors did not impact the faculty in adopting the philosophy.

MF-AR Availability of resources facilitates the implementation of change: Include statements that speak to the availability of the Faculty Center for Teaching & Learning, Terry Doyle assistance, literature provided, faculty peer mentoring, etc.

MF-BP Many faculty believe in and live the philosophy: Code comments that indicate faculty has buy-in to the philosophy, believes in the teaching approaches used as a means to optimize student learning, etc. Also include statements that show faculty use this same belief in the learner-centered philosophy by being responsible and self-directed in their own learning by gathering more information on the learner-centered philosophy independently (i.e., researching on their own without waiting for articles or inservices to be provided to them, etc.).

MF-TI Lack of time negatively affects faculty members' ability to implement change: Code comments related to time being limited to be able to implement change effectively. Also code statements that speak to time limitations due to other changes occurring simultaneously within the program.

MF-SDL Supportive department leadership is important to the implementation process: These are statements that show both college or department leaders are supportive, or how they should be supportive of change efforts.

MF-MUS Although faculty members perceive minimal university support, this is insignificant to the implementation process: These are statements that reflect faculty do not perceive university involvement or supportive presence, but that this is insignificant to them in terms of ability/willingness to make the change.

MF-IR Faculty are motivated to implement the change by intrinsic incentives and rewards: Code statements that reflect anything that motivates or provides an incentive for faculty to adopt the learner-centered philosophy.
MR-SSQ Many faculty were satisfied with the status quo: Code statements that reflect participant perceptions that they were satisfied with previous departmental or personal teaching approaches.

PCS-II Faculty perceive they are implementing the change in isolation: Code statements that demonstrate faculty feel isolated or as if they are working independently of the faculty group in making the change to a learner centered philosophy. Include statements that indicate a lack of awareness of what other faculty are doing related to implementing changes in the classroom etc.

PCS-OFl Many faculty perceive the need for organized faculty interaction on a regular basis: Code statements indicating faculty should be more engaged as a group in the process, discussing or meeting on a regular basis to share, increasing faculty mentoring, holding each other accountable for making the change responsibly etc.
Appendix E

Intercoder Reliability for the Twenty Themes
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Final Average Intercoder Agreement for all coded passages = .91
Appendix F

Research Protocol Approval
Date: December 1, 2008

To: Louann Bierlein Palmer, Principal Investigator
Sharon Colley, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Christopher Cheatham, Ph.D., Vice-Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 08-11-18

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Nursing Faculty Experiences and Perceptions of a Change Process to a Learner-Centered Teaching Approach: A Case Study" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: December 1, 2009

Walwood Hall, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5456
PHONE: (269) 387-8293 FAX: (269) 387-8276
To: Ms. Sharon Colley
From: C. Meinholdt, HSRC Chair
Re: HSRC Applications #081202 (Title: Nursing faculty experiences and perceptions of a change process to a learner-centered teaching approach: a case study)
Date: January 6th, 2009

The Ferris State University Human Subjects Research Committee (HSRC) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, “Nursing faculty experiences and perceptions of a change process to a learner-centered teaching approach: a case study” (#081202) and approved it under the category of expedited - 2F & 2G.

Your application has been assigned a project number (#081202) which you may wish to refer to in future applications involving the same research procedure. All project approvals receive an expiration date one year from the date of approval. As such you may collect data according to procedures in your applications until January 7th, 2010; you must apply for a renewal if data collection continues beyond this date. Finally, it is your obligation to inform the HSRC committee of any changes in your research protocol that would substantially alter the methods and procedures reviewed and approved by the HSRC in this application.

Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Please let me know if I can be of future assistance.