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Social Service Supervisors' Perceptions of Professional Development Training

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

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MEd, Cleveland State University, 2011

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Adult Education

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Abstract

Chafee Independent Living Skills and Goals Program (CILSGP) is a federally mandated program for public child welfare organizations that provide services to adolescents and young adults in the foster care system. The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional professional development (PD) needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. The conceptual framework that guided this study is Knowles's andragogy in practice model. Qualitative web-based surveys were administered to a purposively selected sample of nine social service supervisors. Data were analyzed using a priori and open coding. The study findings revealed that social service supervisors described (a) the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP, (b) the motivation to engage in PD to enhance their job performance in delivering CILSGP, and (c) active learning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD. A white paper addresses social service supervisors' PD needs to deliver foster care independent living skills to strengthen services for youth in the welfare system and promote social change. Strengthening the services for youth could change the life trajectory for young adults transitioning from the foster care system.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my family, friends, staff, and colleagues who supported and encouraged me to fulfill my academic and professional goals. Thank you for believing in me and encouraging me to complete my doctoral journey. I genuinely appreciate your words of encouragement and support.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to acknowledge the Lord for providing me with the strength and endurance to achieve this great accomplishment. "'For I know the plans I have for you' so declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you, and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jeremiah 29:11, New International Version).

Secondly, I would like to thank my family, friends, and colleagues for being supportive of me throughout my doctoral journey.

Lastly, I would like to express sincere gratitude to Dr. Walker and Dr. Pearce for their support and guidance to complete my doctoral journey.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The study site was a county children and family services nonprofit public child welfare agency in the Midwest. This public welfare agency focused on delivering independent living skills and services to youth served through this county study site as part of a program referred to as the Chafee Independent Living Skills and Goals Program (CILSGP). The CILSGP is a federally mandated program for public child welfare organizations; adolescents and young adults in the foster care system receive CILSGP services (Foster Care Independence Act, 1999). The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional professional development (PD) needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. Social service supervisors oversee a team of social service professionals to ensure the delivery of independent living skills and goals program services. Currently, the state administrative code requires social service supervisors to participate in child welfare and supervisory core training modules. These core training modules are competency-based learning modules. The core training modules' curricula provide training for social service supervisors with a foundation in child welfare case management and supervision (Institute for Human Services for the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, 2009).

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the

learning activities most useful in the PD. This training assists supervisors in overseeing CILSGP. Currently, the local setting does not offer a CILSGP PD training course specifically for social service supervisors. A review of the current training guide reflected PD course offerings to enhance skills to strengthen the support for children and adolescents' behavior issues, self-care techniques and strategies, trauma, and cultural diversity (Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, 2020). Thus, these PD trainings do not specifically address the delivery of CILSGP services. Social service supervisors manage and oversee a team of professionals and ensure the CILSGP's delivery.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. Social service supervisors are required to complete the individual training needs assessment in the statewide learning management system. The findings of the individual training needs assessment are used to develop an individual development plan for each social service supervisor. Data gathered in the learning management system are used to generate a system-wide competency survey report, which (a) determines which knowledge, skills, and abilities need development; (b) assesses the depth of learning interventions; and (c) determines the location where staff need the identified training. A statewide system competency survey conducted between 2018 and 2020 housed in the learning management system revealed social service

supervisors' desires to increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities in the area of providing oversight of the foster care independent living program.

The assistant director at the Institute of Human Services (IHS) communicated the need to develop supervisory training and expand course offerings in the independent living skills and goals services. The training manager at the IHS shared that the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program does not have a supervisor-specific curriculum for independent living skills and goals services.

A training manager at IHS detailed the new initiative at the state and national levels to address independent living skills and goals training for supervisors. The governor of Ohio has prioritized a new initiative creating the Children Services Transformation Advisory Council. The council is charged to conduct a system-wide review of Ohio's foster care system to develop recommendations on necessary reforms. A deputy administrator at the study site indicated that a change had occurred in the agency's case management model; therefore, supervisory independent living skills and goals training in the agency's direct services departments is needed.

The governor of Ohio enacted an executive order to create the Office of Children Services Transformation and the Children's Advisory Council to conduct an in-depth systematic review of the Ohio foster care system. The council's preliminary findings identified workforce issues in the Ohio foster care system. The workforce issues included challenges in building and stabilizing the foster care system workforce, training staff, and poor collaboration (Ohio Governor's Office of Children's Initiative Services, 2020). The findings of this study addressed the social service supervisors' identified PD needs. The

findings of this study can also be used to address the agency's organizational needs to improve outcomes to families and empower organizational staff. Additionally, this study correlated with the Ohio Governor's foster care system reform initiative. This qualitative research project study addressed workforce issues by investigating the social service supervisors' perceptions of the PD training they receive at the local setting.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Professional literature that addresses the PD needs of social service supervisors in a nonprofit child welfare setting is limited; therefore, the professional literature reviewed for this study related to PD in the field of human resource development. In today's global marketplace, organizational leaders who want to deliver quality services must conduct an organizational analysis and individual training needs assessment to determine their employees' PD training needs. Organizational leaders must analyze and align the organization's goals, competency skill areas, and employees' training needs to improve the effectiveness of training and delivery of quality services (Sundari & Kusmiati, 2022). Sundari and Kusmiati (2022) noted that training needs analysis is a systematic data collection process that involves examining organizational values, job competencies, and employees' training needs. Organizational leaders should then use a problem-solving approach to determine if the problem can be addressed through PD training and then devise PD training courses to address the identified competency gaps (Sundari & Kusmiati, 2022). By assessing the organizational, task, and individual training needs, organizational leaders can better understand employees' training needs and can develop

relevant content and training experiences that address the specific organizational and employee needs.

The study site conducted an organizational, task, and individual training needs assessment; thus, social service supervisors at the study site identified the need to enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities in the content area of CILSGP services. The need to examine the issue of PD exists in the context of human resource development because PD is essential to providing supervisors with the necessary skills to effectively supervise caseworkers and oversee the delivery of high-quality program services (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD.

Definition of Terms

Adult learning: Adult learning refers to the process of adults enhancing their knowledge and expertise (Knowles et al., 2020).

Adult learning theory: Adult learning theory is referred to as *andragogy*. Andragogy implies that adults learn differently from children. Andragogy is focused on adults as learners. Andragogy is defined as the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles et al., 2020).

Chafee Independent Living Skills and Goals Program (CILSGP): The CILSGP is a federally mandated program for public child welfare organizations; adolescents and

young adults in the foster care system receive CILSGP services (Foster Care Independence Act, 1999).

Competency-based education: Competency-based education is an educational model designed with a focus on outcomes often used in workplace learning activities and PD (Curry & Docherty, 2017).

Emancipation: Emancipation refers to a young adult's exit from the foster care system, which typically occurs around the age of 18 in most states (Bendeck & Moore, 2024).

Foster care: Foster care is a system designed to provide temporary care to youth and young adults until they can achieve permanency. Permanency can be achieved through reunification, legal guardianship or adoption, or emancipation (Sitjes-Figueras et al., 2025).

Independent Living Program (ILP): An ILP i*s* a set of federally mandated and state-funded service delivery programs for young adults transitioning from foster care. The goal areas are hygiene; education; financial, mental, and physical health; housing; employability; and mentors (Tuyishime et al., 2025).

Transfer of learning: Transfer of learning is the effective application of what adult learners have acquired as a result of attending an education or training program (Daffron & Caffarella, 2021).

Significance of the Study

Chafee Independent Living Skills and Goals Programs are essential to empowering emancipating young adults with the necessary skills to achieve self-

sufficiency. Public child welfare professionals must provide independent living skills programs and services to meet state and federal mandates (Phan & Klurfield, 2024). The delivery of such independent living skills programs and services is of paramount importance to assisting emancipating young adults in successfully transitions from foster care to adulthood (Fung et al., 2023).

The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. This study was significant because I was able to ascertain the perceptions of the social services supervisors and understand how the supervisors described the CILSGP PD training they received and what learning activities they identified as best for facilitating PD of the CILSGP. This study may contribute new knowledge to the PD needs of social service supervisors and provide the program administrators with insight into the specific needs of the social service supervisors to deliver CILSGP services. Furthermore, the study's findings may offer insights to facilitate stakeholders' design of PD course offerings aimed at improving the professional knowledge and skills of the social service supervisors at the study site. Steen et al. (2025) suggested that supervisors in child welfare have an important role in the agency, and they are worthy of the investment into their PD. Hence, the study's findings may guide the stakeholders to make decisions to develop and implement PD, policies, and procedures aimed at individualized systemic PD for social services supervisors to deliver high-quality services to their clientele at the study site.

Moreover, the study's findings may promote change in how social service supervisors provide oversight and training to caseworkers and other social service professionals. The study's findings may lead to social change regarding how the training needs of social service supervisors in a state child welfare agency are viewed. Positive social changes may result from this study, including enhanced supervisory job performance. Furthermore, the local setting may better achieve federal and state benchmark goals in CILSGP. The study's findings may also heighten awareness of social service supervisors' PD training needs and result in increased federal and state funds and support for supervisory CILSGP PD trainings. PD training of CILSGP staff positively impacts responsiveness to societal needs by empowering and improving the life trajectory of emancipating young adults (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020). Finally, the study's findings may promote collaboration among social service supervisors, social workers, and other social service professionals to better deliver CILSGP.

Research Questions

The social service supervisors identified the need to acquire more knowledge and skills in the content area of CILSGP. CILSGP is a federally mandated program for public child welfare organizations; adolescents and young adults in the foster care system receive CILSGP services (Foster Care Independence Act, 1999). The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. The following research questions were developed to address the cited problem in the local setting and aligned with the purpose of this study.

RQ1: How do social service supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive at the study site?

RQ2: How do social service supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive at the study site as supporting their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences?

RQ3: What learning activities do social service supervisors identify as best for facilitating their PD at the study site?

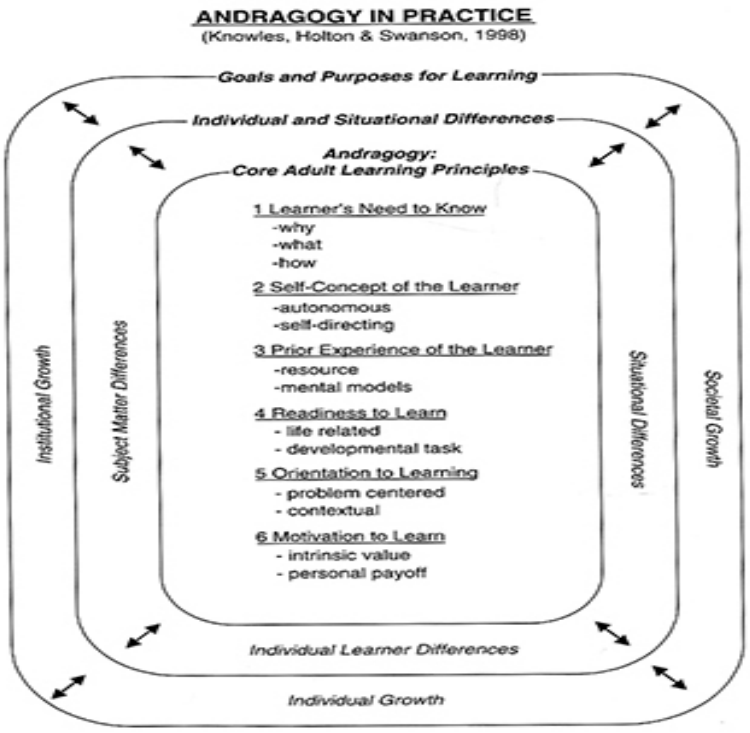
Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this study was Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model (see Figure 1). The andragogy in practice model is a transactional and interactional model of adult learning (Knowles et al., 2020). The andragogy in practice model has three domains. The andragogy in practice model's core is built on the following primary adult learning principles: the learner's (a) need to know, (b) self-concept, (c) prior experiences, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, and (f) motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2020). Figure 1 illustrates the andragogy model and major constructs that are aligned to the phenomenon that was explored in this study.

Figure 1

Andragogy in Practice



Note. From *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development* (9th ed., p. 80), by M. S. Knowles, E. F. Holton III, R. A. Swanson, and P. A. Robinson, 2020, Routledge. Copyright 2020 by Routledge. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix B).

The goals and purposes for learning center around the developmental outcomes of (a) individual growth, (b) institutional growth, and (c) societal growth (Knowles et al., 2020). For example, social service supervisors may choose to engage in CILSGP services' PD trainings to acquire knowledge to achieve a workplace promotion or perhaps apply the knowledge exclusively in their personal lives. Institutional growth is evidenced when effective CILSGP services lead to improvements in meeting organizational performance goals and outcomes. Societal growth occurs when social service supervisors

transfer their learning from the professional skills development training course into their daily work practices with the team of social service professionals who deliver the CILSGP services. The RQ1 interview (Question 1) corresponds to the goals and purposes for learning.

The individual and situational differences of the andragogy in practice model include variables such as (a) subject matter differences, (b) situational differences, and (c) individual learner differences (Knowles et al., 2020). Subject matter differences refer to the complexity of the subject. Subject matter may need to be taught with different teaching and learning strategies; situational differences based on the context of the learning situation influence an individual's learning. For instance, the social service supervisors participate in a CILSGP PD training course within the context of the county nonprofit child welfare organization. Situational differences could influence CILSGP PD trainings, as the trainings could be offered in a traditional face-to-face workshop format or online in the e-learning format. Thus, adult educators must incorporate different instructional strategies depending on the context of the learning and format of course delivery. For example, adult educators in a traditional face-to-face workshop could facilitate and guide adult learners in role play and group discussions to solve problems.

Adult educators in an online or e-learning format might have adult learners view web-based PowerPoint and lecture presentations. The web-based PowerPoint and lecture presentations could be supplemented with learning resources to assist adult learners with understanding new information. Furthermore, adult educators in an online or e-learning course might develop guiding questions for discussions. Adult educators could require

adult learners to maintain a reflective journal, so learners could analyze and synthesize information to develop a deeper understanding. Brieger et al. (2020) argued that adult educators should design relevant courses and be flexible to engage adult learners in online instruction. Therefore, adult educators will need to tailor learning and instructional activities to accommodate the situational differences and facilitate the learning experience for social service supervisors participating in the CILSGP PD training.

Individual learner differences among social service supervisors may exist, as each adult learner is unique. Adult educators should consider how adult learners in PD trainings may have different levels of education, disabilities, and status considerations (Housel, 2020). As a result, adult educators should design and adjust instructional content and learning activities to meet the learning needs of diverse adult learners. The social service supervisors' perceptions of their situational and individual learner differences was addressed in the RQ2 interview (Question 2). I will provide further analysis of the conceptual framework and problem of the study in the review of the broader problem.

Review of the Broader Problem

I conducted the literature review in the Walden University Library. I sought scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles and dissertations from within the past 5 years. I searched electronic research databases including SAGE, ERIC, EBSCOhost, and ProQuest to locate relevant literature. Keyword searches related to the problem of this study were *andragogy, andragogical principles, andragogy in practice model, business leaders, competence, human resource development, managers, organizational learning, professional development supervisor training, role of supervisor in child welfare,*

supervision child welfare, and *transfer of learning.* The following themes emerged during this literature review: (a) role of a supervisor in child welfare and (b) PD training. Furthermore, the following themes emerged and were derived from Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model conceptual framework: (a) goals and purposes of learning, (b) individual and situational differences, (c) learner's need to know, (d) learner's self-concept and self-directed learning, (e) learner's prior experience, (f) readiness to learn, (g) orientation to learning, and (h) motivation to learn.

Role of a Supervisor in Child Welfare

The role of a supervisor in child welfare is to provide caseworkers with effective supervision to accomplish the agency's mission and ensure that caseworkers are following best practices and policies to support good outcomes for children and families. Supervision between the supervisor and caseworker is complex and diverse (Gregory, 2024; Pitt et al., 2022). The primary aim of supervision in the field of human services is to provide staff with the necessary support and guidance to enhance their performance to deliver high-quality services, which in turn promotes positive outcomes for families. (Sewell et al., 2024). Supervisors provide supervision to caseworkers through the following functions: (a) administration, (b) education, (c) emotional support, (d) strengthening their resilience, and (e) promoting professional growth and development to assist caseworkers in delivering quality services to clients (Wilkins, 2024). Thus, supervision is beneficial to the case workers, supervisors, families, and organization.

In child welfare, social service supervisors provide supervision to case workers in a fast-paced environment. Social service supervisors experience and address several

issues while supervising caseworkers, including recognizing and addressing burnout, secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, staff retention, safety planning and decision-making on cases, and caseworkers' PD (Bowman, 2022; Patterson, 2021; Radey & Wilke, 2025; Sewell et al., 2025). In addition to being the link between frontline case workers and administration, social service supervisors balance the competing demands and expectations of organizational values and goals to provide safety and permanency to vulnerable children and families (Patterson & Whincup, 2020; Rankine et al., 2020). PD plays a role in supporting employees to perform in their individual jobs.

Professional Development Training

PD training can benefit employees and the organization. PD training in organizations is designed to assist employees with achieving knowledge and skills to improve their performance and enhance organizational effectiveness (Suravi, 2024). Individuals receive limited training and support to provide oversight and management when they are promoted from direct services to supervisory positions in child welfare (Grenier & Rienks, 2020; Leake et al., 2020). In an exploratory mixed-methods research study, Hudson et al. (2021) examined the PD needs of social work practitioners and managers in remote and regional areas. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. Additionally, the researchers sought to examine the barriers and challenges to accessing and participating in PD training. Quantitative data were collected from 21 research participants via an

online survey. Qualitative study data were collected from eight managers via face-to-face interviews. The study findings revealed that child welfare managers prefer PD training specific to leadership and management in specialized topic areas to improve their professional skills, address complex issues, sustain an effective workforce, and deliver quality services (Hudson et al., 2021). Furthermore, the managers reported the need to balance work demands and implications while colleagues and staff access and participate in PD trainings. It is also significant to understand the social service supervisors' goals and purposes for learning.

Goals and Purpose for Learning

Individuals seek and participate in PD for a variety of reasons. Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model of human resource development indicates that the goals and purposes for adult learning shape the learning experience and provide developmental outcomes categorized as individual, institutional, and societal growth. Individual growth is closely associated with the notion of andragogy because of the emphasis on the individual adult learner's growth (Knowles et al., 2020). Similarly, professionals seek PD to become experts in their chosen fields (Coady, 2023).

Institutional Growth

Adult learning within the organization's context can stimulate institutional growth. Learning within the organization's context is a shared responsibility between the individual employees and the institution to improve the employees' job performance and enhance the organization's effectiveness (Githuku et al., 2022). Organizations in the 21st century must promote and foster individual and collaborative learning to achieve optimal

organizational performance (Githuku et al., 2022). Moreover, Bratianu et al. (2020) asserted that the following variables support learning organizations: vision, knowledge transfer, employee training programs, organizational analyses, and innovation support. By fostering and supporting a learning environment, organizations can evolve into learning organizations where learning goals and purpose become a shared vision between the employees and organization (Bayraktar, 2020). Therefore, adult learners within organizations acquire knowledge and skills through PD training. Thus, the adult learner has a higher level of productivity, contributes to institutional growth, and fosters societal growth.

Societal Growth

Adult learners' participation in educational activities is intended to improve society. According to Friere (1970), adult learning activities embedded within the organization's context aim to empower adult learners to use their knowledge to transform society (Knowles et al., 2020). For example, educators engage in PD training to acquire skills to become effective practitioners; however, this facilitates opportunities to enhance their professional skills to improve students' learning and outcomes and ultimately stimulate societal growth (Harper-Hill et al., 2020). Adult learning can enhance the individual, institution, and society, so it is necessary to understand how individual and situational differences among adult learners impact the learning process.

Individual and Situational Differences

Individual and situational differences are variables that affect adult learners and impact their learning processes (Zia et al., 2020). There are three key differences that

impact adult learning: subject matter differences and individual and situational differences (Fallahi, 2021; Knowles et al., 2020). Subject matter differences imply that not all subject matter can be taught and learned the same way (Knowles et al., 2020); thus, adult educators must use varying instructional techniques to engage adult learners (Fallahi, 2021). Therefore, PD facilitators can develop PD to meet their individual learning needs.

Individual differences account for the uniqueness of each adult learner and the application of the andragogy in practice model (Knowles et al., 2020). Cognitive skills, abilities, personality, motivation, and interest are individual differences adult learners bring to PD training (Gegenfurtner et al., 2020). Housel (2020) examined the literature on co-occurring factors that impact adult learners in PD training. Housel identified learning disabilities, varying educational backgrounds, traumatic experiences, cultural sensitivities, status considerations, and mental health as co-occurring factors that adult learners may bring to the PD setting. Housel recommended that adult educators integrate Knowles's andragogy theory into adult education PD curriculum to meet the diverse needs of adult learners. Because adult learners have individual differences, they learn new information and acquire knowledge and skills at varying levels (Knowles et al., 2020). Thus, the learning process is multifaceted, and complex based on the individual differences among adult learners. In addition to understanding adult learners' individual differences, PD facilitators need to understand the situational differences that influence adult learners' experiences.

Situational differences impact the learning environment. Situational differences occur in the learning environment and include social, cultural, and setting factors such as learning in a collaborative environment and the organization's culture (Knowles et al., 2020). Brion (2020) found that culture impacts PD as adult learners in PD trainings have diverse cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and language and writing differences. Therefore, PD facilitators must consider the situational differences that influence adult learners and implement strategies to create a positive learning environment. In addition, PD facilitators must consider the adult learner's need to know.

The Learner's Need to Know

Adult learners want to participate in identifying their learning needs. Adult learners must understand the benefits and value of learning new knowledge and skills before participating in adult education learning activities (Korstange et al., 2020). Adult learning facilitators can use diagnostic assessment tools to help adult learners identify their learning needs (Sork & Newman, 2020). In a qualitative study, the perceptions of teachers on in-service PD were examined using semi-structured interviews and focus groups by Ajani (2021), who found that teachers need to be assessed to identify their PD needs and the learning activities that will enhance their classroom practices. Therefore, it is the role of the PD facilitator to assist adult learners' with identifying what it is they want to know and help them understand the value of acquiring new knowledge and skills.

Adult learning facilitators can utilize diagnostic assessment tools to assist adult learners' with identifying their learning needs in human resource development and PD training. Adult learning facilitators use training needs assessment to assist with

identifying the learning needs of adult learners and designing PD. A training needs assessment can be utilized to identify gaps in their current knowledge and skills (Adewole et al., 2020). A training needs assessment would allow adult learners to provide insight into the learning content and course delivery method to help adult educators meet learners' identified learning needs and understand how the professional training development course can benefit the learner (Hainline & Smalley, 2021; Jones, 2020). Therefore, adult learners' perspectives and explanations of the benefits of PD training help adult learning facilitators develop PD training courses. Also, adult learning facilitators must acknowledge the importance of adult learners' self-concepts.

Self-Concept

Adult learners are mature and responsible for making their own decisions. An adult learner's self-concept matures based on their experiences and roles throughout life (Livingston, 2020). According to Knowles (as cited in Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020), adult learners develop a "deep psychological need and begin to take the primary responsibility for their learning" (p. 120). However, Knowles et al. (2020) noted that adult learners tend to regress when in educational settings and want the adult educator to teach them. Knowles et al. suggested adult educators guide adult learners toward independence to become self-directed learners. Thus, the role of the adult learning facilitator is to acknowledge the adult learners' self-concept and create PD learning experiences that transition the adult learner towards being more self-directed.

Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning was a prevalent theme throughout the literature review on learners' self-concepts. Self-directed learning was defined as the adult learner taking initiative for their own learning by identifying and setting goals for their learning (Loeng, 2020). Houle (1961) conducted one of the earliest studies related to the concept of self-directed learning. Houle interviewed adult learners who participated in continuing PD to understand their learning experiences. Houle was interested in exploring the factors that compelled adult learners to participate in continuous PD and view themselves as adult learners. Houle found that adult learners participate in continuous PD to achieve their goals, engage in learning activities, interact with others, and acquire new knowledge. These findings are categorized as the three learning orientations: (a) goal-oriented, (b) activity-oriented, and (c) learning-oriented. The foundation for the concept of self-directed learning rests on adult learners' participation in learning activities for the sole purpose of acquiring new knowledge.

Building on the foundation of Houle (1961), Tough (1979) further examined adult learners' learning orientations to better understand self-directed instructional activities. Tough found that self-directed learners initiate and plan their learning activities and are solely responsible for their learning, even when support is available. Based on earlier research in self-directed learning, Knowles (1980) identified five assumptions of adult learners' characteristics: (a) their self-concept, (b) experiences, (c) readiness to learn, (d) orientation to learn, and (e) motivation to learn. Specifically, Knowles's self-concept of the learner illustrated the adult learner's significance over their learning. Self-directed

learning is the process in which the adult learner takes the primary initiative to diagnose their learning needs, devise their learning goals, identify learning resources, select the learning strategies, and evaluate the outcomes of their learning (Knowles et al., 2020).

Conversely, Brookfield (1985) argued that individuals might not be solely autonomous as a self-directed learner; instead, it is crucial to understand that self-directed learning is a process that occurs when adult learners engage in critical reflection (as cited in Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Overall, these earlier studies provide a foundation to understand how the adult learner's self-concept and ideals of self-directed learning connect to facilitate learning.

Collaboration

Collaboration is an important attribute of adult learners' self-concepts and self-directed learning. In an earlier work, Guskey (1991) discussed the importance of working in collaborative teams in PD training. Guskey (1991) postulated that working in teams is beneficial to adult learners because they can interact with colleagues and share perspectives to solve problems. In a recent study, Bordonaro (2020) examined the adult learning theories of self-directed learning and lifelong learning in the practice of information literacy with adult learners. Bordonaro (2020) conducted a qualitative autoethnography research study, which examined lived experiences through self-reflection. Bordonaro was the sole research study participant. The findings revealed that the practice of information literacy could be an individualized or group experience. Bordonaro stated, “my own personal engagement took two forms: working alone or working with others in a group” (p. 168). Individualized practices center around self-

initiated activities, whereas group practices center around activities where peers engage in teamwork, coaching, and mentoring. Bordonaro (2020) suggested adult learners should have options and various learning formats to participate in PD learning. Additionally, adult learning facilitators must consider the adult learners prior experiences to plan PD. and select the appropriate learning methods strategies, activities, and resources.

The Learner's Prior Experiences

Adult learners have a wealth of and experiences that is the foundation for their learning. Each adult learner brings a wealth of diverse prior experiences to the learning environment (Korstange et al., 2020). Learners' life experiences are a resource for their learning (Korstange et al., 2020). Previous experience plays an important role and contributes to how adult learners approach learning and engage in activities in the workplace (Brieger et al., 2020). Therefore, adult learning facilitators can use instructional techniques and learning activities such as group discussions, simulated exercises, and case studies to promote collaboration and facilitate critical thinking and problem-solving (Brieger et al., 2020). Therefore, adult learning facilitators can select the appropriate learning methods, strategies, activities, and resources to engage adult learners. Thus, adult learners' prior experiences provides a foundation to assess their readiness to learn.

Readiness to Learn

Adult learners have a readiness to learn when learning applies to real life situations and tasks. Adult educators should include opportunities for adult learners to practice and simulate the hands-on application of newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, learner readiness was defined as the extent to which learners are psychologically ready to engage and participate in PD training (Testers et al., 2020). Testers et al. (2020) investigated the affective learner training characteristics from the transfer of learning literature. Testers et al. (2020) surveyed 366 adult learner trainees to identify learning readiness on pretraining transfer intentions. The findings from the study indicated that adult learners' learning readiness is a strong predictor of the transfer of training and application of new knowledge and skills. In addition to understanding the employee as an adult and their learner readiness to participate in PD training, adult learning facilitators must also consider the employee's orientation to learning.

Orientation to Learning

The adult learners' orientation to learning is centered on acquiring new knowledge and skills to assist them with solving problems and performing tasks directly related to their lives. Adults learn best when learning is focused on practical application in the context of real-life situations (Knowles et al., 2020). Gegenfurtner et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative factor analyses study to examine the extent to which trainees' interests in training influence the transfer of training. The researchers surveyed 203 PD trainees in the workplace using a transfer-of-training questionnaire tool. Gegenfurtner et al. (2020) found that adult learners can transfer training and apply new skills when the training content aligns with their interests in the workplace. Therefore, adult learners can transfer new knowledge and skills acquired in PD training to real-life situations and increase their professional expertise. Thus, adult learners are motivated to acquire new knowledge and skills.

Motivation to Learn

Adult learners are internally motivated to learn. The motivation to learn implies that adult learners have extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to learn (Brieger et al., 2020; Knowles et al., 2020). Extrinsic motivation to learn suggests that adult learners participate in learning activities to acquire salary increases and career advances (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Intrinsic motivation to learn suggests that the primary reason adult learners participate in PD training is to acquire new knowledge and skills to meet their personal goals and for their enjoyment (Brieger et al., 2020; Knowles et al., 2020; Roessger et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Wozniak, 2020). Therefore, adult learning facilitators should be knowledgeable about the motivations of adult learners to engage on PD.

Implications

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. The local setting is a non-profit public child welfare agency in Midwestern U.S. is required to deliver CILSGP to youth and emancipating young adults. The social service supervisors, study site leadership and program administrators may be interested in the outcomes of this study. Based on the study's findings, a white paper with recommendations was created to inform and persuade the study site leadership and program administrators. The goal of this white paper is to inform and persuade the study site leadership and programs administrators of the PD needs of the social service supervisors to deliver CILSGP.

Summary

The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. The review of literature explored the role of a supervisor in child welfare, PD, and the elements of the Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model that served as the conceptual framework for the study.

In Section 1 of this basic qualitative study, I discussed the problem and gap in practice at the study site that prompted this study. I provided a scholarly rationale and evidence of the problem that supports the problem of the study in the local setting and professional literature. Next, I identified definitions of terms. Additionally, I discussed the significance of the project study, guiding research questions, Finally, I presented a scholarly review of literature and implications of the study.

In Section 2, I discuss the basic qualitative research methodology, the selection of study participants, protection of participants and ethical issues, data collection, evidence of quality and credibility, data analysis procedures, the study's findings, and project genre.

In Section 3, I explain the project genre, a white paper. I discuss the rationale for selecting a white paper for the project genre related to the study findings. I also present a scholarly review of the literature related to the project genre, project description and project evaluation plan and social change implications. I also discuss J. M. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) transformational leadership theory as the conceptual framework to guide

the development of the project genre a white paper (see Appendix A). In Section 4, I provide reflections and conclusions, project strengths and limitations. In addition, I provide recommendations for alternative approaches, project development, and leadership and change. Then, I discuss the reflection on the importance of the work, and implications, anticipation, and directions for future research.

Section 2: The Methodology

The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. Federal legislation mandates that local child welfare agencies provide independent living skills and goals services (Doucet et al., 2022; Scott & White, 2023). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. The research design was derived from the study's problem and research questions. Three research questions were used to guide this study:

RQ1: How do social service supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive at the study site?

RQ2: How do social service supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive at the study site as supporting their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences?

RQ3: What learning activities do social service supervisors identify as best for facilitating their PD of the study site?

In this section, I present the qualitative research design and approach; justify the choice of the basic qualitative design selected; and describe the setting, participants, inclusion criteria, sampling, procedures for access, establishing a researcher-participant

relationship, and participants' rights and confidentiality. I also discuss the methods for data collection and data analysis plan, and I provide a summary of the section.

Research Design and Approach

Qualitative research designs can be used to understand how individuals interpret and make meaning out of their experiences (Chivanga & Monyai, 2021; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I selected a qualitative research design because it will allow me to understand the social service supervisors' perceptions of the PD training social service supervisors receive at the study site. Qualitative research relies on assumptions and uses a conceptual framework to investigate phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used Knowles's (1980) andragogy in practice model's conceptual framework to develop the guiding research questions and semistructured interview questions. Researchers using a qualitative research design employ inductive methods to investigate small groups within their natural setting and understand individuals' experiences (Busetto et al., 2020; Chivanga & Monyai, 2021; Doyle et al., 2020).

Description of Qualitative Design Used

I used a basic qualitative approach for this qualitative study. A basic qualitative research approach is popular and "does not fit into other types of qualitative research" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 23). Qualitative researchers collect data through interviews and observation when using a basic qualitative research design (Yin, 2018). Overall, a basic qualitative design was the most appropriate design for this study because the design allowed me to understand the social service supervisors' perceptions of the CILSGP PD trainings at the study site. In basic qualitative design, one data collection instrument is

used (Mihas, 2019). In basic qualitative research, the objective is to solicit the thoughts, or perspectives of a group of participants related to a phenomenon (see Mihas, 2019). In this study, I used a survey to extract the perceptions of social service supervisors at the study site regarding their PD needs. Thus, a basic qualitative study was aligned to my research purpose. In the following section, I justify the selection of the research design employed in this study and critically examine alternative methodological approaches, providing a rationale for their exclusion based on the study's purpose and research questions.

Justification for Research Design

I examined other research designs to use for this study. Quantitative research designs seeks to test a theory or hypothesis (see Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Deductive approaches associated with quantitative methods rely on hypotheses and testing for theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), yielding causation, comparisons, and relationship findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this study, I did not aim to infer causation, comparisons, or relationships. Also, data from the study were not presented in a numerical format for quantitative analysis. My focus in this study was to explore the perceptions of the participants related to their PD needs and as such, a quantitative study was not an appropriate method to employ for this this study.

A qualitative research design has a variety of approaches. I considered different qualitative research designs to investigate the phenomena for this study. Ethnography, for example, involves investigating groups of people and their cultures (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). In this study, I could have examined social service supervisors who work at the

study site, a public nonprofit child welfare agency in an urban metropolitan area, and document these supervisors' experiences. The grounded theory seeks to build new theory based on the data (Chun et al., 2019). Similarly, I could have examined the PD training experiences of social service supervisors who work at the study site analyzed the data and then considered possible theoretical explanations of the phenomenon; however, I was not exploring the culture of people or aiming to develop a theory. Thus, an ethnographic and grounded theory approach were not an appropriate match to fulfill the purpose of the study and answer the research questions. The basic qualitative research design aligned best with the purpose and aim of this research study.

Participants

This section outlines the participant population for this qualitative research study, including the selection criteria and recruitment procedures. Clearly identifying the target population is a critical aspect of qualitative research, as it ensures the inclusion of participants who can offer meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation. For this study, participants were purposefully selected from a single site based on their relevant knowledge and experience with the research topic.

Setting of the Study

The study site was a nonprofit government child welfare agency in the Midwestern United States. The child welfare agency was governed by state regulatory rules that were administered at the local county government level. Child welfare agencies have the responsibility to understand and meet the needs of their workforce (Trawver et al., 2021). Qualitative researchers provide a thorough description of the study setting to

understand the phenomena under investigation in the natural setting (Cypress, 2019; Delgado-Hito & Romero-García, 2021).

Population

I included demographic questions in the survey qualitative web-based surveys to understand the demographics of the study participants. Initially, 12 participants agreed to participate in the study. However, a total of nine participants completed survey interviews. The study participants had a wealth of knowledge and years of experience in supervision. The participants' years of experience in social work supervision ranged from 5 to 22 years with 13.8 being the median years of experience. Furthermore, all the study participants held either undergraduate or graduate degrees in social sciences, and their role in the agency provided insight into the direct-services program areas in the local setting. Therefore, the study participants were able to provide a detailed and rich description of the phenomenon under investigation. Table 1 reflects the pseudonym assigned participant inclusion criteria.

Table 1

Participant Demographics and Eligibility Criteria

Participant	Years in role	Years of experience in the field of child welfare	Academic background & discipline	Social services supervisor position at study site, years in role, and in community-based direct services unit
P1	18	31	BA, Psychology & Sociology	yes
P2	19	29	MA, Counseling	yes
P3	22	31	BA	yes
P4	5	21	BA, Psychology & Sociology	yes
P5	22	26	BSW	yes
P6	7	24	BA, Sociology	yes
P7	5	15	MSSA	yes
P8	10	25	MSW	yes
P9	17	24	BA, Sociology	yes

Criteria for Selecting Participants

To be included in this study, participants met the inclusion criteria of (a) being employed as a social service supervisor in a community-based direct service unit at the study site, and (b) having 3 years of supervisory experience. The study sample was composed of nine social service supervisors. Qualitative researchers use small sample sizes to investigate phenomena; small sample sizes allow for a more detailed and in-depth report, whereas a large sample size could result in superficial perceptions (Busetto et al., 2020; Doyle et al., 2020). Social service supervisors were able to provide rich and detailed information to address the research questions and understand the phenomena under investigation.

Sampling Procedure

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit study participants. The goal of purposeful sampling is to acquire and gain knowledge from information-rich study participants (Busetto et al., 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In qualitative research, the selection of the participants or study site is key to acquiring insight and developing an understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Busetto et al., 2020; Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Sample sizes for a qualitative research study vary depending on the purpose of the study (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Criterion sampling is a purposive sampling technique that allows researchers to set criteria and select participants to participate in the study who meet the inclusion criterion (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Criterion purposeful sampling was utilized to recruit study participants based on the inclusion criteria. If the social service supervisor agreed to participate in the study, I emailed them the information and consent, gave the participant the link to the electronic survey interview in SurveyMonkey, and provided them with my name and contact information from my Walden University email account.

Justification for the Number of Study Participants

The social service supervisors selected as participants were employed as a social service supervisor in a community-based direct services unit in the local setting. In qualitative research, it is important to provide a descriptive analysis and reach the point of saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018) and redundancy where no new information is likely to emerge. Qualitative researchers do not use large sample sizes to make generalizations to the larger population (Glesne, 2016); rather,

sample sizes in qualitative research are small (Flick, 2022). Qualitative researchers aim to acquire an understanding of the study participants' perceptions and describe the context of the social phenomena and problem under study rather than make generalizations to the larger population (Glesne, 2016; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In this basic qualitative study, I recruited nine participants who met the inclusion criteria, and I met saturation during the data analysis phase. Data saturation can be achieved in a qualitative research study when researchers cannot derive any new insights or emerging themes from the data about the phenomena under investigation (Ahmed et al., 2025; Rahimi, 2024).

Gaining Access to Participants

To begin the data collection process, I acquired Walden University Institutional Review Board, (IRB), upon receiving approval, I completed the local setting's law department review process. I contacted the study site director's special assistant to gain access to the study participants. Establishing trust and a transparent relationship with a gatekeeper can be instrumental in acquiring access to the local setting and study participants (Flick, 2022). I received the email and phone listing from the director's special assistant; however, the director's special assistant wanted to email the proposed study participants to let them know that the director had approved the social services supervisors to participate in the study. The director's special assistant emailed the staff that participation in the study was approved by the director of the study site. A researcher's initial contact with participants is important for establishing a researcher–participant working relationship and having more than one method of contact can make the process easier (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Initial contact methods can include

telephone, e-mail, and regular mail (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). My initial contact to recruit study participants was by contacting the prospective study participants on the telephone.

In the phone conference, if the participant indicated an interest in the study, I sent them the letter of invitation and consent form from my Walden email account. I explained the letter of invitation and informed consent electronic format. In addition, I explained the following to each study participant in an email: (a) the rationale and purpose of the study, (b) potential risk of harm in the study, (c) that participation in the study was voluntary, (d) the role of the researcher, (e) the supervisors' role as study participants, (f) measures taken to protect participants from harm and protect their identities, (g) participants' rights to confidentiality, and (h) methods of data collection. The consent form and process ensure the researcher meets ethical standards, protects study participants from harm, and complies with informed consent and confidentiality (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Each participant was given the opportunity to ask questions. If the participant agreed to participate in the study, I emailed the participant the link to the electronic survey interview in SurveyMonkey. I verified that participants met the inclusion criteria before sending the interview link to the participant. Initially, 12 participants agreed to participate in the study. Over the next 2 weeks, the response rate was low, therefore, I then made follow-up calls to study participants and explained the survey interview would close shortly. I thanked the participants for their time. The electronic survey interview closed in Survey Monkey with nine participants having completed and returned the

electronic survey interviews. Once access to the participants was granted, I continued to build and maintain a professional researcher-participant relationship with each individual.

Establishing a Researcher–Participant Working Relationship

A researcher–participant working relationship was established through the initial invitation to participate in the study and subsequent electronic communications. Researchers should examine their own values, bias, and role in the researcher–participant working relationship prior to undertaking a qualitative research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, qualitative researchers should ensure that (a) the study complies with IRB ethical standards and (b) participants are provided with informed consent and treated ethically as individuals and not research subjects (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As the key instrument in data collection, I understood the importance of building and maintaining a rapport with the participants and I strived to help the participants understand their rights and protections (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Protection of Participants and Ethical Issues

Measures were taken to protect the participants' rights, including providing participants with informed consent in writing and face-to-face prior to conducting interviews. Qualitative researchers should examine the protection of participants and ethical issues prior to the study and throughout the research process to ensure the participants are protected from harm and that the study accurately reflects participants' perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I introduced myself in a letter to the participants detailing my role as a researcher, the purpose and benefits of the study, the potential risk of harm, and the measures to ensure confidentiality. Study participants were informed

that their participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I explained the procedures that would be used to conduct the study to the study participants and confirmed they had a copy of the informed consent.

To ensure participants' confidentiality, I kept a separate computer file with the personal identifying information of each study participant. Pseudonyms were assigned to each study participant. Confidentiality was achieved by assigning numeric pseudonyms to individual participants' interview responses (i.e., Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on). I was the only individual with access to the coding key and computer-protected hard drive. Protecting participants from physical and emotional harm is an important ethical consideration (Chivanga & Monyai, 2021; Gaudet & Robert, 2018).

All study data are stored in a secure password-protected personal computer hard drive. Both the study data and audio recordings are stored in a locked file cabinet at my residence. I am the only person with access to the password-protected computer hard drive and key to the locked file cabinet. Raw data will be maintained for 5 years. Study data will be destroyed after 5 years per Walden IRB procedures.

Data Collection

Data collection for this basic qualitative study was conducted through electronic surveys of nine participants who met the predefined inclusion criteria. In qualitative research, the researcher plays an active and central role throughout the entire process, making decisions grounded in personal judgment and contextual understanding (Fossey et al., 2002) proffered that

> To evaluate the adequacy of data collection, researchers should consider the data collection technique … and whether it has enabled the researcher to explore the subjective meaning, actions, and social context relevant to the research questions. (p. 728)

Methodological decisions should be clearly traceable through an audit trail. The qualitative researcher must show the reader the transparent, reflective and reflexive process they engaged in to collect data, and make decisions about the data collected (see Fossey et al., 2002). The reporting of the methodological decisions made during research is called an "audit trail and use of an audit trail makes the processes explicit" (p.728) and consequently transparent. In the next section, I justify the data collection method, electronic surveys.

Justification of the Data Collection

The data-collection methods for the study aligned with the qualitative research tradition. The research questions were developed to gain and acquire a deeper understanding of social service supervisors' perceptions of the PD training supervisors receive at the study site to provide oversight of CILSGP. Furthermore, the conceptual framework helped develop and guide the interview questions. Researchers conducting qualitative research studies use interviews, observations, or document analysis to collect data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The electronic survey was used as the data collection tool because the Director of the local setting indicated that the agency policies do not permit the audio recording of staff discussing official business. In addition, the agency staff were not engaging in face-to-face contact due to the COVID-19 pandemic policies

and procedures. Qualitative electronic surveys provide participants with convenience, flexibility, and space to reflect and respond to the survey interview questions (Braun et al., 2021). Furthermore, electronic surveys are beneficial to qualitative researchers as electronic surveys can reach a diverse study sample and even perhaps study participants who may prefer not to participate in a face-to-face interview and still provide rich data and insight into the phenomena under investigation (Braun et al., 2021). Based on the local settings policies and procedures, I determined that an electronic survey was the most appropriate data collection tool.

Data Collection Instrument

I was the primary researcher and sole data collector for this study. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interview questions were derived from a review of the literature and the conceptual framework used to guide this study. I aligned the development of the electronic survey questions to the research questions.

The electronic survey protocol consisted of six sections and 17 interview questions. The interview questions were designed to correspond and provided answers to RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. The number of interview questions was sufficient to provide answers to each of the research questions. My committee members, both of whom are methodologists, reviewed my survey protocol confirming the clarity of the protocol survey questions and alignment to the research questions. Table 2 reflects the crosswalk

of the research questions, interview questions and alignment to the andragogy in practice conceptual framework core constructs.

RQ1 addresses how social service supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive at the study site. RQ2 addresses how social service supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive at the study site as supporting their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences. RQ3 addresses the learning activities the social service supervisors describe as facilitating their PD of the CILSGP. The RQ1 interview (Question 1) corresponds to the goals and purposes for learning. The RQ1 interview (Questions 2, 3, and 4) and RQ2 (Questions 6) corresponds to the learners' needs to know. The RQ2 interview (Question 1) and RQ3 interview (Question 4) correspond to the learners' self-concepts. The RQ2 interview (Questions 4) and RQ3 interview (Question 5) correspond to the learners' prior experiences. The RQ2 interview (Question 3) correspond to goals and purposes for learning. The RQ1 interview (Question 5) and RQ3 interview (Question 6) correspond to the learners' readiness to learn. The RQ3 interview (Questions 1 and 2) corresponds to the learners' orientations to learn. The RQ2 interview (Question 2) corresponds to the learners' motivations to learn.

Table 2

Crosswalk of Research Questions, Interview Questions, and Andragogy in Practice Model Core Constructs

Research questions	Interview questions	Andragogy in practice model's conceptual framework
RQ1. How do social service	1.What are your goals and purpose for learning CILSGP services?	Goals & purposes for learning

Research questions	Interview questions	Andragogy in practice model's conceptual framework
supervisors describe CILSGP PD training they receive at the study site?	2. Why do you need to learn about CILSGP services? Please explain.	Learners need to know
	3. What do you need to know about CILSGP services? Please explain.	Learners need to know
	4. How do you plan to utilize the CILSGP service PD training?	Learners need to know
	5. How would you describe your readiness to learn new CILSGP services skills at this time?	Readiness to learn
RQ2. How do social service supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive at the study site as supporting their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences?	1. How do you plan to utilize the CILSGP service PD training?	Self-concept of the learner
	2. How would you describe your motivation to learn CILSGP services?	Motivation to learn
	3. What PD skills in CILSGP services are you looking to improve.	Goals & Purposes for learning
	4. What prior experiences have shaped your understanding of CISLGP services?	Prior experiences
	5. To what extent did the CILSGP training meet your learning need and goals?	Goals & Purposes for learning
	6. What area of CILSGP do you feel you would like future PD trainings to include?	Learners need to know
RQ3. What learning activities do social service supervisors identify as best for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP?	1.What simulated learning activities facilitated your PD?	Orientation to learning
	2. What learning activities would you like to see or participate in future CILSGP training?	Orientation to learning
	3. How are you able to share your knowledge and prior experiences of CILSGP service? With case workers? Other social service professionals. Please explain	Prior experiences of the learner
	4. How would you describe your experience engaging a team of professionals to facilitate the CILSGP?	Self-concept of the learner
	5. What team building strategies or techniques do you find most effective while engaging the team of professionals to deliver CILSGP services?	Prior experiences of the learner
	6. How prepared do you feel as a learner to engage in CILSGP PD training?	Readiness to learn

Systems for Keeping Track of the Data

I systematically kept track of study data using a systemic process, Excel spreadsheets, and a reflective field journal. Researchers are responsible for maintaining sensitive data and must ensure that data is secure and protected (Bentancur, 2024). All electronic files are stored on my researcher password-protected computer. The SurveyMonkey data is electronically stored, my researcher's password is protected, and the Survey Monkey account is encrypted. I downloaded the participant data responses onto my researcher's password-protected, electronically stored USB drive. In addition, the Excel spreadsheet containing the social service supervisors list with contact information is electronically stored on my password-protected USB drive. My codebook is stored electronically on a password-protected USB drive. I also electronically created and stored an Excel spreadsheet with participant names and pseudonyms on the password-protected USB drive.

Furthermore, I maintained a reflective field journal throughout the study to become aware of and mitigate personal bias throughout the research study and data analysis process (see Ravitch & Carl, 2019). All data, including the USB drive is electronically stored on my password-protected USB drive I am the only person who has a key. I will maintain all data in a secure file cabinet for 5 years. After 5 years, I will destroy and shred all data.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

Initially, I acquired approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board, IRB, the local settings law department, the inspector general’s office, and the Director of

the study site. The IRB granted approval for me to conduct research and provided the approval number for the study (10-15-21-0378083). Next, I contacted the Director's special assistant via telephone to acquire a list of names and contact information of the social service supervisors who met the inclusion criteria. The Director's special assistant sent the initial email to potential participants because the agency policy prohibited agency staff from discussing official agency business without permission and advised them that participation in the study was voluntary. The director's special assistant emailed me a list of social service supervisors, who were the targeted potential participants, and I was able to reach out to potential participants on the list of names provided once the assistant had informed them that this study had been approved.

Once I received and reviewed the social service supervisor list, I contacted the prospective participants via telephone. My initial contact to recruit study participants was via telephone with the social service supervisors. When I asked the social services supervisors if they would like to participate, I explained the study and gave them informed consent. The participants were allowed to ask questions. I verified that the social service supervisor met the inclusion criteria for participation in the study in my initial phone contact.

If the social service supervisor agreed to participate in the study, I emailed them the information and consent, gave the participant the link to the electronic survey interview in SurveyMonkey, and provided them with my name and contact information from my Walden University email account.

Role of the Researcher

In this qualitative research study, I assumed the role of the researcher. I was the primary data collection instrument. The role of the researcher is complex and involves systematically conducting a robust investigation of phenomena that entails participant recruitment and selection, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, establishing credibility and trustworthiness, and dissemination of findings processes (Lim, 2025). My role as the researcher in this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of the social service supervisors to understand how supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive and what learning activities they identify as best for facilitating the PD of the CILSGP. I developed a qualitative electronic survey interview tool with open-ended interview questions that allowed me to gather insight into the phenomena under investigation. In addition, I was able to recruit and select participants, collect and analyze data to address the problem, purpose, and answer the study's research questions.

Qualitative researchers must be cognizant of the potential for researcher bias and take measures to mitigate researcher bias (Lim, 2025). To mitigate the influence of researcher bias, I took several measures. First, I used purposeful sampling to recruit and select participants who met the study criteria. When researchers employ purposeful sampling, they select participants who meet the study criteria and are able to provide a rich and detailed account of the phenomena under investigation (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Nine social service supervisors participated in this basic qualitative project study who met the inclusion criteria of (a) being employed as a social service supervisor in a

community-based direct service unit at the study site and (b) having 3 years of supervisory experience.

Positionality involves examining one's social role and values and how they influence the research process and interpretation of the study findings (Goundar, 2025; Kennedy et al., 2024). Researchers must conduct an unbiased investigation and provide transparency by engaging in reflexivity (Gurr et al., 2024; Kennedy et al., 2024). I have over 18 years of experience in the field of child welfare. Previously, I was a social service supervisor in the local setting. However, I am not a current employee in the local setting. In addition, I was not employed in the local setting while conducting this basic qualitative study. A few study participants were employed as social service supervisors in the local setting during my tenure; however, the study participants were employed in various capacities, units, departments, and work sites. Furthermore, I was not the immediate supervisor of any of the study participants.

Second, to mitigate bias in the study, I engaged in bracketing and reflexivity by reflecting on and documenting my prior knowledge and experiences in my reflective field journal. Bracketing is the process of acknowledging one's prior knowledge, experiences, and assumptions about the phenomena under investigation and setting them aside to allow the study to reflect the participant’s experiences (Charron & Singh, 2022). My prior knowledge and experiences helped me identify and understand the phenomena under investigation. Qualitative researchers use bracketing throughout the research process, which is especially crucial in data collection and analysis (Lim, 2025). Reflexivity is the process of examining one's positionality, values, and assumptions about

the phenomena under investigation (Saber, 2024). I also reflected on and documented my prior experiences and knowledge throughout the study experiences in my reflective field journal. Researchers use reflective field journals to document their observations, experiences, and impressions (Karcher et al., 2024).

Finally, another measure I took to mitigate bias; I used member checking to enhance the validity, credibility and trustworthiness of my study. Member checks are a tool researchers can use to ensure the validity and accuracy of the study's findings (Rahal, 2025). I provided the study participants with a draft summary of my interpretation of the study's findings. Therefore, I was able to validate my interpretation of the study's findings.

Data Analysis Methods

The data were coded and analyzed thematically using Yin's (2017) five phase approach to conducting qualitative data analysis: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. I reviewed my reflective journal, field notes, as I reviewed and reflected on each electronic survey. Researchers use member-checking to establish accuracy and credibility in a study (Urry et al., 2024). The member-checking process involves sharing with each study participant the researcher's findings of the emerging themes and a draft copy of the researcher's report (J. L. Johnson et al., 2020). I provided the study participants with a draft summary of my interpretation of the study's findings. Therefore, I was able to validate my interpretation of the study's findings. Participants were provided 7 days to request any modifications or changes they wanted to the draft summary of the study findings.

Data Generation, Gathering, and Recording

In this basic qualitative study, I sought to understand how supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive and what learning activities they identify as best for facilitating the PD of the CILSGP. Qualitative researchers aim to acquire an in-depth understanding of the participants and phenomena under investigation; therefore, participant selection is important (Dahal et al., 2024). Initially, 12 study participants agreed to participate; however, only 9 returned the electronic qualitative interview surveys. Data were collected utilizing electronic qualitative interview surveys via Survey Monkey.

Data Analysis Results

I used Yin's (2017) five phases of data analyses: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. In this section, I provide a detailed outline of the coding and data analysis process. I explain how I developed codes, categories, and themes. I discuss the data analysis processes I used to ensure the trustworthiness and dependability of the study. I provide tables and figures to illustrate the content data analysis process and connections to the purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, and study findings. I conclude this section by describing the themes per research question and then summarizing the study findings logically and systematically related to the problem, research questions, scholarly literature, and conceptual framework. Finally, I describe the project deliverable as a white paper.

Compiling

I downloaded the transcripts from the nine completed SurveyMonkey responses onto my laptop and saved them in a password-protected file. I also saved survey interviews on a password-protected USB jump drive. Survey interview responses were marked by SurveyMonkey with each study participant's number and the corresponding weblink number to their downloaded survey. To ensure confidentiality, I renamed each participant with a pseudonym. No new information was added, excluded, or deleted from the downloaded survey interviews.

I organized the data by immersing myself in the data. I downloaded and read each of the survey interviews line by line and made notes in the margins. I began to make connections with the problem and purpose of the study, research questions, participants survey interviews, and Knowles et al.'s (2020) the conceptual framework. I repeated this process multiple times. Qualitative data collection and analysis is an iterative and rigorous process (Lim, 2025). I documented the participant number, research question, and participants data excerpts in the excel spreadsheet. I recorded my thoughts and memos in my reflective field journal.

Disassembling

Disassembling data involves dissecting data, creating codes and assigning labels. I began to disassemble the study data into small segments (Yin, 2018; Zinyama et al., 2022). The aim of qualitative content analysis is to systematically analyze text data to identify themes. Content analysis is a systematic coding and classification approach used to identify patterns and trends in data (Özden, 2024; Yin, 2018). Coding is the process of

interpreting textual evidence and assigning a word that the researcher determines accurately conveys the meaning of the textual evidence in relation to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Codes are short words or phrases that show a pattern or connection to researcher's data analysis (Lochmiller, 2021; Yin, 2018). As I coded, I focused on keywords and phrases in the participant interviews. Coding is a challenging process for novice researchers because it requires them to identify segments of text and assign labels and categories (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019; Yin, 2017). I initially conducted a priori coding code, a deductive approach, where I initiated coding using started predetermined codes associated with the conceptual framework.

I used Knowles et al.'s (2020) adult learning theory served as the conceptual framework that guided the study and thematic analysis. I utilized a total of seven a priori codes that correspond to Knowles et al.'s adult learning theory (2020). The following a priori codes were used: (a) goals and purposes for learning, (b) learners need to know, (c) motivation to learn, (d) orientation to learning, (e) prior experiences, (f) readiness to learn, and self-concept of the learner. Table 3 reflects the a priori codes and scholarly definition for each term derived from Knowles et al.'s (2020) adult learning theory.

Table 3

A Priori Codes Derived From Knowles's Adult Learning Theory

A priori code	Definition
Goals and purposes for learning	Adult learners engage in professional learning to be more competitive in the workplace (Knapke et al., 2024)
Learners need to know	Adults engage in learning because they want to understand how learning something new will benefit them (Knapke et al., 2024).

Self-Concept of the Learner	Adult learners self -concept evolves from dependent to self-directed (Knapke et al., 2024)
Prior experiences of the Learner	Adults have accumulated a rich reservoir of life experiences which are the foundation for their learning (Knapke et al., 2024)
Readiness to Learn	Adult learners' readiness to learn often times ascribes to their social roles at work and/or home (Knapke et al., 2024)
Orientation to Learning	Adults approach learning with a problem-solving approach (Knapke et al., 2024)
Motivation to Learn	Adult learners are intrinsically motivated to learn (Knowles et al., 2020). Intrinsic motivators are desire for enhanced job satisfaction and personal growth (Knapke et al., 2024)

A priori coding was conducted by utilizing the conceptual framework of the study and applying the conceptual framework to the data collected. I conducted a priori coding of the survey responses and extracted 233 pieces of textual data excerpts that were associated with Knowles et al.'s (2020) adult learning theory. I pasted the textual excerpts into an Excel spreadsheet and assigned the a priori, deductive code in the corresponding column. Next, I created a pivot table to analyze the frequency of the a priori, deductive codes. Pivot tables were created using the data set from Excel spreadsheet and they enabled me to generate a robust summary and visual image of the data placed into the spreadsheet (see Domino et al., 2021). Qualitative researchers utilize tables to illustrate meaningful data and insight into the phenomena under investigation (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2021). Table 4 reflects a priori codes using Knowles et al.'s (2020) adult learning theory and the count, or frequency, of raw text data excerpts that correspond to each a priori, deductive code.

Table 4

A Priori Codes and Count of Text Excerpts by A Priori Code

A priori codes	Count of interview raw data text excerpts
Goals & purposes for learning	41
Learners need to know	71
Motivation to learn	9
Orientation to learning	17
Prior experiences	47
Readiness to learn	17
Self-concept of the learner	31

I kept a code book and compared the coding of each a priori code for consistency and fit to maintain the integrity of the coding process. Table 5 illustrates a sampling of the a priori codes utilizing Knowles's adult learning theory and text excerpts by Participant.

Table 5

Sampling of A Priori Codes Using Knowles's Adult Learning Theory and Text Excerpts

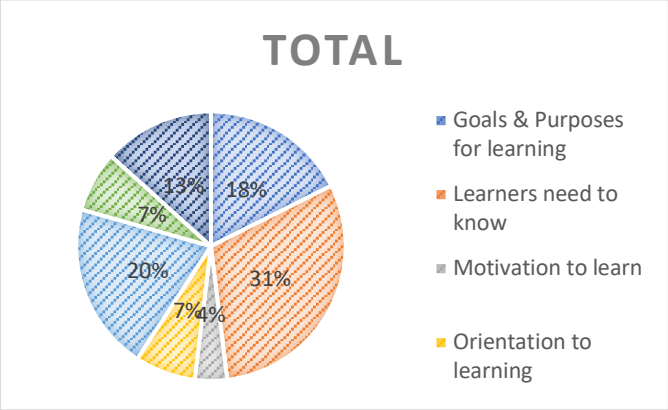
Participant	A priori code	Text excerpt representing a priori code
P8	Goals and purposes for learning	[I want to learn about CISLGP] for my personal knowledge and growth.
P1	Goals and purposes for learning	[I want to understand] how CILSGP services relate to my position.
P1	Goals and purposes for learning	Since I work on the front end of a case, I generally do not get a chance to work with youth regarding these services. Could I do something better to help youth at the beginning of a case?
P1	Learners need to know	How can intake and investigation help get cases set up with services or prepare youth for services in the future?
P3	Learners need to know	[I need training] no real training has been offered since the new model was put in place.
P4	Learners need to know	We need to understand IL services in order to ensure youth get what they need. Since we no longer have an IL department, I see big issues around what staff know and don't know about IL plans, process, and legally required actions.
P6	Motivation to learn	[I'm] fully motivated to learn CILSGP services.
P8	Motivation to learn	[I am] very motivated to learn CILSGP services.
P4	Motivation to learn	[I am] motivated to learn CILSGP services. I want to do a better job to ensure we are addressing the needs of youth.
P4	Orientation to learning	[I want to participate in] active training. Not just walking through a power point presentation or listening to a lecture. Doing is best.
P5	Prior experiences	[I have] no [prior experience that shaped my understanding of CILSGP.]

P9	Prior experiences	I believe professionals need to engage one another and discuss things from their past.
P2	Prior experiences	I would want current /new knowledge before sharing past experiences as my knowledge may be obsolete.
P7	Readiness to learn	[I feel prepared as a learner to engage in CILSGP PD] I am ready to participate when training becomes available.
P8	Readiness to learn	I am eager to apply new knowledge and skills.
P4	Self-concept of the learner	[My experience engaging a team of professionals to deliver CILSGP has been] difficult. We have not had any real training in this [CILSGP] area. I have been trying to get training for years without success.
P2	Self-concept of the learner	[My] new knowledge would be shared with caseworkers and relevant partners.

In further analyzing the coding in relation to the conceptual framework, I examined the overall percentage of coded text by a priori code. Figure 2 displays the a priori coding by percent of each deductive code using Knowles et al.'s (2020) adult learning theory. It should be noted that 31% of data reflected the "Learners need to know." Hence, one-third of the textual evidence aligned with the construct of the learners need to know. The study participants voiced wanting CILSGP PD to enhance their knowledge and skillset. This is in alignment with Knowles et al. (1998) andragogy in practice model.

Figure 2

A Priori Codes and Percent of Coded Text by A Priori Code



After I completed the deductive phase of disassembling the data, I continued the iterative process of disassembling and began the inductive analysis process of descriptive open coding the raw data.

Open descriptive coding is assigning a description based on the researcher's interpretation of the textual evidence to convey the participants' intended meaning of the information shared (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In Open coding, qualitative researchers are

seeking to interpret and identify emergent concepts from the data (Bingham, 2023; Lim, 2025). To initiate the open descriptive coding, I immersed myself in the data again. I reread the participant survey responses and made notes in my reflective field journal. As I re-read the surveys, I used highlighters and sticky notes to identify possible open descriptive codes. I pasted the textual excerpts highlighted in the surveys into an Excel spreadsheet and assigned the open descriptive code in the corresponding column. I analyzed the same textual evidence from the surveys using a different coding approach. As this was Round 1 of Open coding, I was curious to see the frequency of the assigned open descriptive codes. So, I created a pivot table to analyze the frequency of the open descriptive, inductive codes. Table 6 reflects the Round 1 open descriptive coding and count of textual excerpts by code. In Round 1 of Open descriptive coding, I identified seven codes based on the 233 pieces of raw data text excerpts.

Table 6

Round 1 Open Descriptive Coding and Count of Codes

Round 1 open descriptive code	Count of interview raw data text excerpts
Best practice: PD content	9
Best practice: Strategy	66
Perceive: Does not need to know	1
Perceive: Motivation	9
Perceive: Prior experience	3
Perceive: Readiness to learn	18
Perceive: Systemic issue—lack of CILSGP PD	127
Grand total	233

Further analysis, I examined segments of text and highlighted excerpts that reflect similarities, differences, and connections to the identify round 1 coding and text excerpts. Table 7 shows Round 1 open descriptive coding and text excerpts. I included the

participants, open descriptive codes, and examples of participants excerpts. I continued to add my open descriptive codes to my code book and compared the coding of each an open descriptive code for consistency and fit to maintain the integrity of the coding process. Table 7 illustrates a sampling of the Round 1 Open descriptive codes and text excerpts by Participant.

Table 7

Sampling of Round 1 Open Descriptive Codes and Text Excerpts

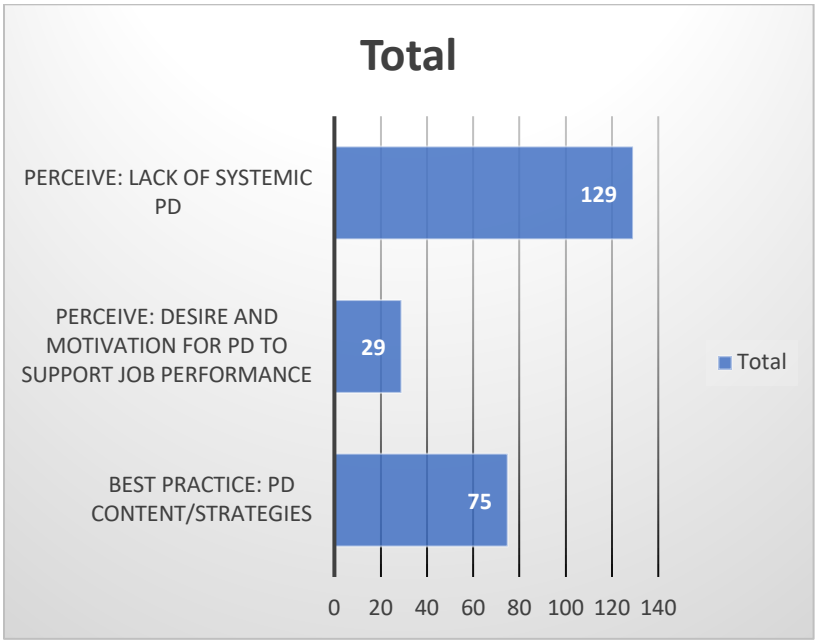
Participant	Open descriptive code	Text excerpt representing open descriptive code
P2	Best practice: PD content	[I would like to see future CISLGP PD training in all areas i.e.] assessments, development of IL plans, post-emancipation benefits, and CILSGP transition planning.
P9	Best practice: Strategy	[The simulated learning activities that facilitated my PD is] I find the mock interviews and role-playing assist with gaining a solid understanding of what is expected.
P4	Best practice: Strategy	I learn best from doing things, sometimes reading instructions and doing them so practicing writing IL case plans and actively working in test environments etc.
P4	Best practice: Strategy	Active training. Not just walking through power point presentation or listening to a lecture doing is best.
P6	Best practice: Strategy	The team building strategies or techniques most effective to engage a team of professionals to deliver CILSGP services] is group work.
P8	Best practice: Strategy	[I'm able to share my knowledge and prior experiences of CILSGP services]: by providing supervision, mentoring, and coaching to case workers and other social service professionals.
P5	Perceive: Does not need to know	[I don't need to know] nothing about CILSGP services.
P6	Perceive: Motivation	[I'm] fully motivated to learn CILSGP services.
P4	Perceive: Motivation	[I am motivated]. I want to do better to ensure we address the needs of youth.
P7	Perceive: Prior experience	[The prior experiences that shaped my understanding of CILSGP is] I've witnessed children aging out of custody with very limited resources.
P3	Perceive: Prior experience	[I find it] difficult [to engage a team of professionals to facilitate CILSGP services].
P6	Perceive: Readiness to learn	[I feel that as a learner I'm prepared to engage in CILSGP PD training as] I would love to take it [CILSGP PD training].
P4	Perceive: Readiness to learn	[I am] very ready to learn CILSGP. I am always looking on how to improve in this area so we can assist staff in understanding what we (as an agency) need to do to ensure they are leaving care prepared for starting life as an adult.
P8	Perceive: Readiness to learn	[My readiness to learn new CISLGP services is that] I am eager to apply new skills and apply them with already learned knowledge.
P1	Perceive: Systemic issue—lack of CILSGP PD	CILSGP has really has not been the focus of intake/investigations during my entire career.
P3	Perceive: Systemic issue—lack of CILSGP PD	No real training has been offered since the new model was out in place.
P2	Perceive: Systemic issue—lack of CILSGP PD	I don't recall any training. It would have been more than 10 years ago.

Reassembling

Reassembling the data involved the iterative process of deconstructing the data , refining the data in a meaningful way, and developing categories. Next, I began Yin's (2017) third step of data analysis that involves reassembling the data. Reassembling data is a higher level of analysis and inference to sort data (Reyes et al., 2024). I reviewed the Round 1 descriptive open codes and Round 1descriptive codes with text excerpts. I immersed myself in the data in relation to the purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, a priori coding, Round 1 open descriptive codes and text excerpts. I identified emergent patterns. I documented in the excel spreadsheet, filtered, and created a pivot table. Figure 3 depicts displays Round 2 Open Descriptive Codes by Percentage of Codes

Figure 3

Round 2 Open Descriptive Codes and Count of Codes Displayed



I consolidated from eight Round one codes and identified three categories for Round 2 open descriptive coding. Table 8 reflects Round 1 to Round 2 open descriptive codes and count of text excerpts. Thus, Table 9 displays the way in which I collapsed the Round 1 open codes into Round 2 open codes.

Table 8

Round 1 to Round 2 Open Descriptive Codes and Count of Text Excerpts

Round 1 or Round 2 code	Round 1 to Round 2 open descriptive codes	Count of interview raw data text excerpt
Round 2	Best practice: PD content/strategies	75
Round 1 code	Best practice: PD content	9
Round 1 code	Best practice: Strategy	66
Round 2 code	Perceive: Desire and motivation for PD to support job performance	29
Round 1 code	Perceive: Motivation	9
Round 1 code	Perceive: Readiness to learn	18
Round 1 code	Perceive: Systemic issue—lack of CILSGP PD	2
Round 2 code	Perceive: Lack of systemic PD	129
Round 1 code	Perceive: Does not need to know	1
Round 1 code	Perceive: Prior experience	3
Round 1 code	Perceive: Systemic issue—lack of CILSGP PD	125
Grand total		233

I immersed myself in the data by reexamining the data, researcher codebook, text excerpts, open descriptive codes, pivot tables, and my reflective field journal. I reexamined my Round 2 open descriptive codes and the study's research questions. I sought out patterns and themes that made connections to my research questions. Ahmed et al. (2025) suggested that researchers engage in reflexivity in this reiterative process of

disassembling, reassembling, and coding data. I utilized my reflexive field journal to document my interpretations and how the data relates to research questions and Round 1 open descriptive codes to Round 2 open descriptive codes. Nicmanis (2024) noted that the highest abstract description level of data is identifying categories. After reassembling the data, I closely aligned and coded my Round 2 open descriptive codes and identified 3 categories. Nicmanis (2024) stated “categories, therefore, represent the end point of the data reduction and description process” (p.5). Figure 4 represent the Round 2 Open Descriptive Codes by Percentage of Codes. I reexamined the Round 1 Open Descriptive Codes and Round 2 Open Descriptive Codes. I tightly coded the data and percentage of coded text by code to identify 3 categories.

Figure 4

Round 2 Open Descriptive Codes by Percentage of Codes

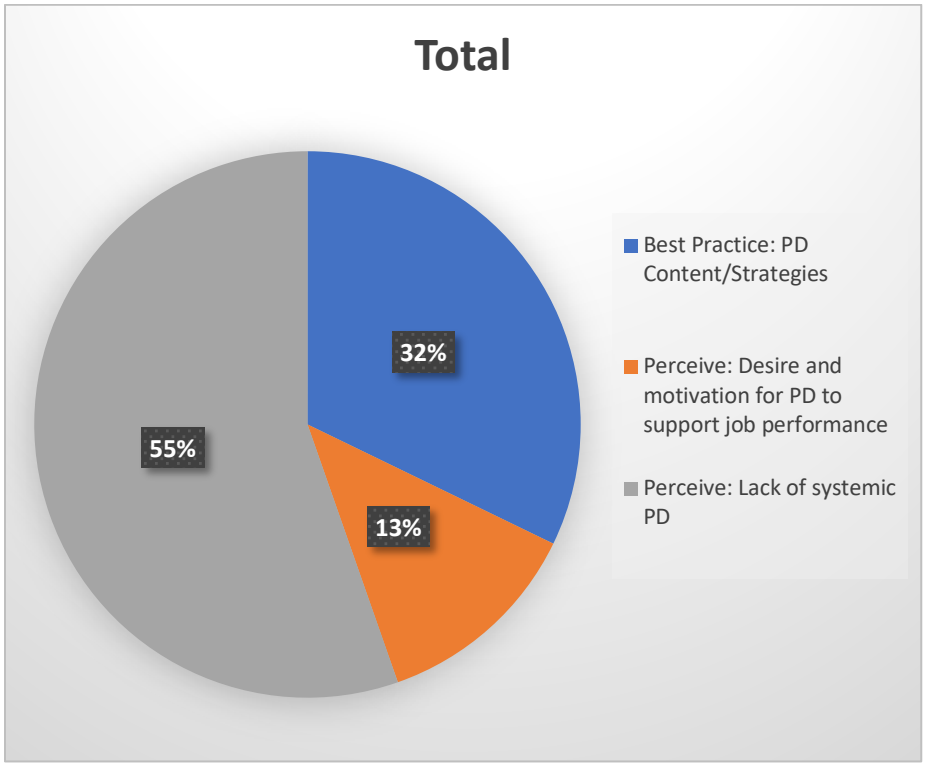


Table 9 reflects Round 2 open descriptive codes and categories and count of codes. I began to disassemble the data and then reassemble the data. I considered the research questions and the problem of the study. I began to filter, refine, and synthesize the data. I identified patterns and made connections in the data that addressed the research questions and problem of the study. I collapsed Round 2 open descriptive codes and identified three categories. Table 10 reflects the process of moving from the Round 2 codes to three categories.

Table 9

Round 2 Open Descriptive Codes to Categories and Count of Text Excerpts by Code

Round 2 Open descriptive code or category	Round 2 Open descriptive code to category	Count of interview raw data text excerpts
Category	**Absence of systemic PD**	**129**
Round 2 open descriptive code	Perceive: Lack of systemic PD	129
Category	**Best practice: Content/Strategies**	76
Round 2 open descriptive code	Best practice: PD Content/Strategies	76
Category	**Perceive: Desire and motivation for PD to support job performance**	28
Round 2 open descriptive code	Perceive: Desire and motivation for PD to support job performance	28
Grand total		**233**

I identified three categories. These categories are tightly coded and aligned with the Round 2 open descriptive codes. I analyzed and coded a total of 233 text excerpts that corresponded to the categories. Table 10 reflects the categories and count of text excerpts by category. Figure 5 is a pie chart that reflects the categories and percentage of coded text excerpts by category.

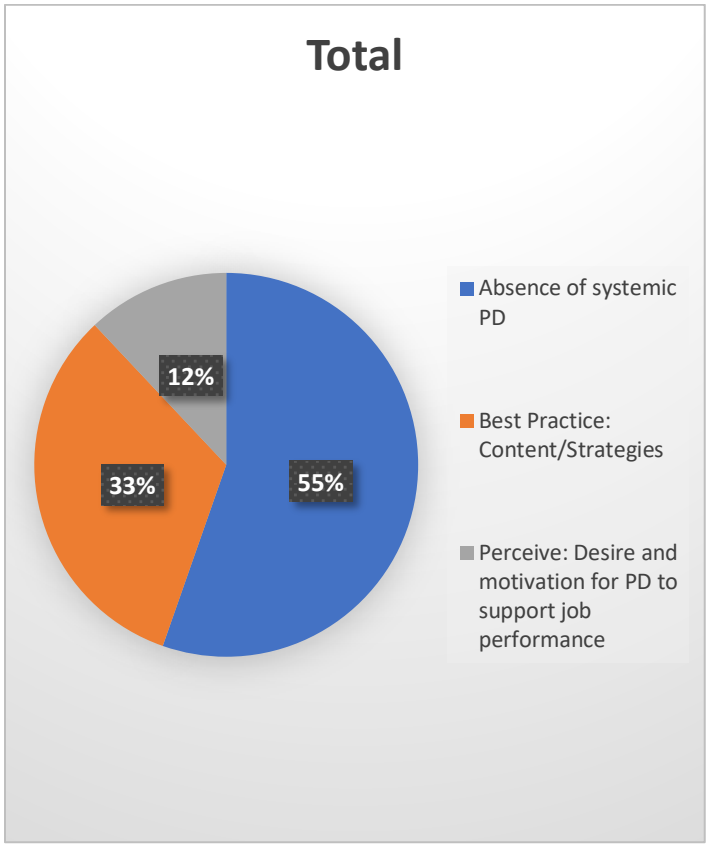
Table 10

Categories and Count of Text Excerpts by Category

Categories	Count of interview raw data text excerpt
Absence of systemic PD	129
Best practice: Content/Strategies	76
Perceive: Desire and motivation for PD to support job performance	28
Grand total	**233**

Figure 5

Categories and Percentage of Coded Text by Category



Interpreting

In the next data analysis phase, I interpreted the data. Interpreting the data is a reiterative process of disassembling and reassembling the data to account for all study data (Yin, 2018). I accounted for all of the data. I carefully examined the data to see if I could identify any discrepant cases. I refined the three categories and identified three themes. I accounted for all study data. Interpretation of the data entails conducting a thorough analysis of data to seek the underlying meaning of textual data (Lindgren et al., 2020). Themes are designed to address the study's primary research questions and are

aligned with the conceptual and analytical framework of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Lester et al., 2020). Thompson-Burdine et al. (2021) noted that themes are developed using an inductive approach and are based on their key relevance to the research questions.

The three themes are my interpretation of the data. A theme is a pattern that reflects the uniqueness of the participants' experiences and provides answers to the research questions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). I identified three themes that correlated to one theme for each research question. The three themes that emerged are (a) Theme 1: Social service supervisors perceive the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP, (b) Theme 2: Social service supervisors perceive they are motivated to have PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP, and (c) Theme 3: Social service supervisors perceive PD content focused on CILSGP independent living and best practices include active learning strategies to facilitate PD of the CILSGP. Table 11 reflects categories to themes and count of interview raw data text excerpts by theme. Table 12 themes and count of coded text excerpts by theme. Figure 6 presents the themes and percentage of coded text by category.

Table 11

*Ca**te**gories to Themes and Count of Interview Text Excerpts by Theme*

Theme or category identified	Theme or category identified	Count of interview raw data text excerpts by theme
Theme	**Theme 1: Social service supervisors perceive the absence of systemic PD at** the study site **to support CILSGP**	**129**
Category	Absence of systemic PD	129
Theme	**Theme 2: Social service supervisors perceive they are motivated to have PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP**	**28**
Category	Perceive: Desire and motivation for PD to support job performance	28
Theme	**Theme 3: Social service supervisors perceive PD content focused on CILSGP independent living and best practices include active learning strategies to facilitate PD of the CILSGP**	**76**
Category	Best practice: Content/Strategies	76
Grand total		**233**

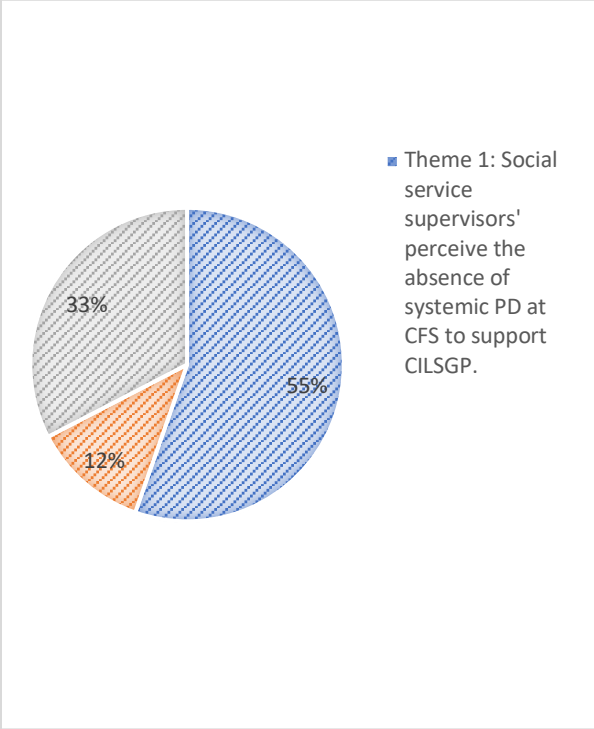
Table 12

Themes and Count of Coded Text Excerpts by Theme

Themes	Count of interview raw data text excerpts
Theme 1: Social service supervisors' perceive the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP.	129
Theme 2: Social service supervisors perceive they are motivated to have PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP.	28
Theme 3: Social service supervisors perceive PD content focused on CILSGP independent living and best practices include active learning strategies to facilitate PD of the CILSGP.	76
Grand total	**233**

Figure 6

Themes and Percentage of Coded Text by Theme



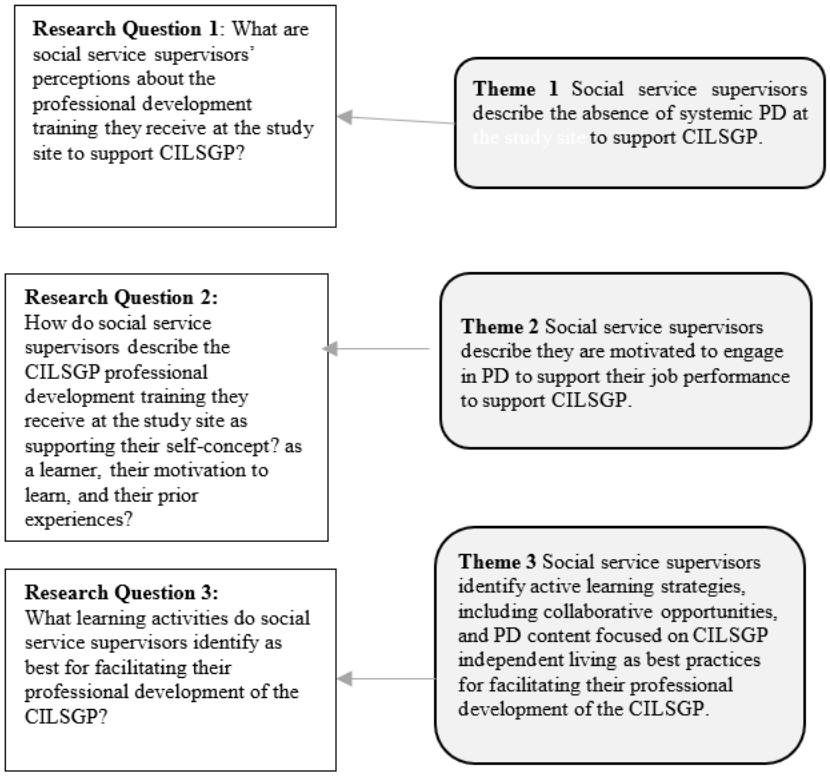
Concluding

Concluding is the final step in Yin's (2017) data analysis process. Concluding in data analysis is when researchers connect their interpretation of the data to address the purpose and research questions of the study (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2018). I conducted a content analysis of each participant's survey interview. I used my field journal to document my reflections (Komalasari et al., 2022; Saldaña, 2021). I conducted a priori coding using key attributes from the conceptual framework, Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model, in the data analysis process. I used my field journal throughout the data coding and analysis processes to document my thoughts and

reflections related to the coding and analysis process and to bracket my own personal biases (Grajzel, 2025; Partridge, 2021; Saldaña, 2021). Researchers use memos to document ideas and evidence and answer research questions (Bingham, 2023). I conducted two rounds of open descriptive coding. In Round 1 of open descriptive coding, I identified eight codes. Then, in Round 2 of open descriptive coding, I consolidated the eight Round 1 codes into three Round 2 open descriptive codes. Thereafter, I reexamined the Round 2 open coding to discern categories. I identified three categories and subsequently identified three themes that emerged from the categories. The three emerging themes address each of the three research questions. Figure 7 displays the themes by research questions.

Figure 7

Themes by Research Question



The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. I completed a priori and open descriptive coding to analyze the study data. I identified codes, categories, patterns, and themes. Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model served as the conceptual framework that guided the study. Overall, three themes emerged from these data. One theme emerged for each of the three research questions. Participants responded to a detailed survey administered

through survey monkey to address the purpose of the study and answer the research questions (RQs). The three themes that emerged are as follows:

- Theme 1: Social service supervisors describe the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP.
- Theme 2: Social service supervisors describe they are motivated to engage in PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP.
- Theme 3: Social service supervisors identify active learning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP.

In the following section, I describe the three themes that emerged using text excerpts to support themes. I discuss the themes by each of the three research questions.

Findings Aligned With Research Problem and Questions

The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. Knowles et al.'s (2020) adult learning theory served as the conceptual framework that guided the study. Using adult learning theory as the conceptual lens, I was interested in understanding the adult learning needs of the CILSGP supervisors to best support the clients who they served in the foster care independent living program. Participants were motivated to develop their knowledge and skills, and the program administrators were uncertain of the specific PD needs of the participants. Therefore, I developed a detailed survey, using attributes of adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 2020) to discern the PD training they receive and

what learning activities they identify as best for facilitating PD of the CILSGP supervisors. Nine participants returned the detailed surveys. I analyzed the surveys using qualitative content analysis and employed both a priori and open descriptive coding. Initially, I identified the a priori codes based on my review of the surveys returned by participants. I conducted two rounds of open descriptive coding and then identified the categories and emerging themes. I used a spreadsheet with pivot tables to discern the patterns between the Round 1 and Round 2 coding. My analysis revealed one theme for each of the three RQs. In the following section, I review each theme by RQ.

Thematic Results for Research Question 1

Theme 1 emerged for RQ1 which was, “What are social service supervisors’ perceptions about the PD training they receive at the study site to support CILSGP. The first theme that emerged from the data was that social service supervisors’ described the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP. All study participants discussed the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP. The participants indicated that they did not receive any CILSGP PD training. For example, P1 stated, “CILSGP has really not been the focus of intake/investigations during my entire career.” Likewise, P3 stated, “No real training has been offered since the new model was put in place.” Moreover, P4 stated, “We haven't had any real training in this area.” Accordingly, P4 further expressed, “I have been trying to get professional agency training in this area for years without success.” P5 shared, “I did not have any training.” Likewise, P6 said, “I did not receive any training in these areas. Participant 2 was explicit in their response and shared, “I don’t recall CILSGP training. It may have been more than 10

years ago." Moreover, P7 adamantly stated, "I did not receive any CILSGP training in the 5 years I have been a supervisor." All study participants acknowledged that the study site did not offer CILSGP PD training to support their role. This theme underscored the problem that was the focus of this study that included investigating the lack of PD provided to social service supervisors. Accordingly, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. Theme 1 clearly established the absence of any systemic PD for CILSGP staff over approximately a decade or more. Theme 2 emerged to address RQ 2. In Theme 2, CILSGP supervisors articulated their motivation and desire to engage in PD to effectively function in their jobs and to serve their clients. RQ 2 examined how social services supervisors described the PD they receive at the study site related to supporting their self-concept, motivation and prior experiences. Since there was no PD that was provided as established in Theme 1, the participants described how they would feel about PD that might have afforded them the needed support their roles at the study site.

Thematic Results for Research Question 2

Theme 2 emerged for RQ 2 which was "How do social service supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive at the study SITE as supporting their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences?" The second theme that emerged from the data and only theme that emerged from the data for RQ 2 was, "Social service supervisors' describe they are motivated to engage in PD to support

their job performance to support CILSGP." All participants contributed to Theme 2. Participants voiced the clear need for a CILSGP PD training explicitly for social service supervisors as all of the social service supervisors indicated that they did not receive CILSGP PD and felt unprepared to effectively deliver supervision of CILSGP as reflected in Theme 1. The study participants shared that their goals and purpose for wanting to learn CILSGP services was to enhance their knowledge base and professional skills. Supervisors shared that they were motivated to engage in systemic PD and to grow personally in terms of their knowledge and skills to support their clients. P8 described desiring PD "for my educational growth and knowledge." The participants reflected on the absence of training and how this may have influenced their skills and services to clients. Specifically, P1 explained,

> Since I work at the front end of a case, I generally do not get a chance to work with youth regarding these services. Am I missing something? Could I do something to better help the youth at the beginning of an investigation? Can I do better to assist youths at the beginning of an investigation?

All participants, except P5, shared they were motivated and ready to engage in PD to support the youth they served and their families. P6 conveyed, "I am completing ready to learn new CILSGP service skills at this time." Accordingly, other participants noted that they were prepared to participate and would love to engage in the training as soon as it becomes available. Participants described that they were "eager" (P8) to learn and apply new skills by attending PD. Even though participants reported they were busy with

heavy caseloads, they shared that they were committed to the training and "could use the new skills (P9).

Participants shared that PD supporting their jobs would likely lead to improved outcomes for the clients they served. For example, P6 and P7 expressed that their desire for wanting PD would be to "better assist the youth on our caseloads." Furthermore, participants reiterated how focused PD that aimed to increase their understanding of the clients' needs would benefit the families on their caseloads. For example, P9 explained, "When I learn about CILSGP, it assists with expanding my knowledge base as well as benefit the families."

Participants shared that the CILSLGP had been reorganized. P3, P4, P5 and P6 shared frustration over the reorganization and how this further confused their ability to effectively serve youth and their families. Participant 4 shared,

We need to understand IL services in order to ensure that youth get what they need. Since we no longer have an IL department, I see big issues around what staff knows and don't know about IL, the IL process including legal actions.

The participants voiced concerns about organizational structure issues within the local setting that prevented them from having the proper knowledge about CILSGP services. The organizational changes also contributed to their focused motivation to receive timely and focused PD to serve the youth and families. Participants explained that due to the organizational structure changes, the caseloads within the agency increased. P6 stated, "[Due to the organizational changes,] we have large amounts of teens on our caseloads; We need to know what is out there for them." P3 confirmed that the

organizational structure changes increased the need for CILSGP PD. Likewise, P5 shared a frustration that "the modified one worker model change has ongoing workers completing IL work. Staff need to learn about IL services since the specialized unit is no longer available to assist."

Participants proclaimed they needed to know all facets of CILSGP. For example, P1 stated, "I need to learn basically everything." The phrasing and comments from the survey, reflected the frustration and concurrently motivation of the participants to learn as much as they could through timely, effectively structured PD. Likewise, P5 shared a frustration that "the modified one worker model change has ongoing workers completing IL work. Staff need to learn about IL services since the specialized unit is no longer available to assist." The social service supervisors voiced concerns about organizational structure issues within the local setting that prevented them from having the proper knowledge about CILSGP services.

Two participants, P4 and P9, reflected on their motivation to serve the youth and their families and conveyed how PD could help them in providing the services needed to their clients. Participants reiterated how their learning more about CILSGP would benefit the families on their caseloads. For example, P4 commented:

I am always looking on how to improve in this area so we can assist staff in understanding what we as an agency need to do to ensure young adults are leaving care prepared for starting life as a young adult.

Likewise, P9 explained, "When I learn about CILSGP, it assists with expanding my knowledge base as well as benefit the families." Participants connected some of the

overarching goals for their support of the youth and their families, such as emancipation, to specific PD needs.

Participants were concerned with helping young adults successfully emancipate from custody of the study site and the foster care system and transition into adulthood. P5 indicated that their goal for learning was to "prepare teens and young adults for emancipation and adulthood." Additionally, P3 noted that their goal was "to help young adults coming out of county custody have a chance to be successful." Participants voiced wanting to a better job engaging youth and emancipating young adults. The participants explained that they believed that enhancing their knowledge and skills would better support them in emancipating young adults and families. All participants, except one, conveyed a motivation, sense of urgency and responsibility to learn more about serving the youth and their families to support the transition and life goals for their clients.

The participants revealed that they had either no experience or limited prior experiences shaping their understanding of CILSGP. P1, P5, and P6 acknowledged that they have no prior experience with CILSGP. For example, P1 stated that they have "no real prior experiences. Regarding prior experience, P5 remarked that they have "None." P6 indicated that they were "Not completely familiar with CILSGP, so not really sure." These participant perceptions reflected their lack of prior experience and limited familiarity with CILSGP.

Other participants could draw upon earlier experiences in their careers as social workers and social service supervisors. For example, P2 recalled their "prior experiences

as a supervisor of social services workers and case management of teens." P3 recalled their "prior involvement with CILSGP." P4 shared the following account:

I have worked in the study site IL department and keep up on some of the state changes. I am somewhat of a go to person in the agency and assist, when possible, with educating staff around IL requirements and the importance of them.

P9 disclosed, "I've worked with many teens during my tenure. I have witnessed children aging out of custody with very limited resources." The study findings revealed that social services supervisors share their prior knowledge and experiences through staff supervision and collaboration with colleagues and other social services professionals. For example, P4 provided the following examples of sharing and collaborating with others:

I was in the IL department for several years. I have conducted intro to IL training with agency supervisors. I try to attend state update meetings whenever I can on what processes have changed and what resources are or will be becoming available.

Likewise, P2 expressed, "I would want current /new knowledge before sharing past experiences as my knowledge may be obsolete … it would be shared with other relevant partners and with caseworkers." P6 indicated that knowledge could be shared in "unit and department meetings."

P8 and P9 shared ways to convey and transfer CILSGP knowledge. P8 noted that knowledge can be conveyed "by coaching, mentoring, and during supervision with staff." P9 explained, "I am very limited in my ability to share my knowledge. I usually email articles to my staff, unit, and department to ensure valuable information to share. I also share information in team decision-making meetings."

The study findings revealed that social services supervisors had either no experience or limited experience engaging a team of professionals to deliver CILSGP. Two participants shared prior experiences. P2 shared, “I have engaged youth, their placement provider, [and] service providers in the past so that they could assist the youth in developing skills.” P4 articulated that engaging a team is “difficult. We have not had any real training in this area. I have been trying to get professional agency training in this area for years with no success”. Conversely, P9 explained, “I have not had much experience with sharing information with other professionals.”

Overall, the social services supervisors had differing perceptions of the prior experiences that shaped their understanding of CILSGP. The social service supervisors limited prior experiences shaped their perceptions of CILSGP and CILSGP PD. Therefore, social service supervisors can benefit from a CILSGP PD infused with learning activities that allow them to build upon those limited prior experiences and support the opportunity to create new CILSGP experiences.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors’ perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. Theme 1 clearly established the absence of any systemic PD for CILSGP staff over approximately a decade or more. In Theme 2, the social service supervisors articulated their motivation and desire to engage in PD to effectively function in their jobs and to serve their clients. In addition, the program administrators can acquire insight into the PD development needs of the social service

supervisors to deliver CILSGP. In Theme 3, the social service supervisors identify active learning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP.

Thematic Results for Research Question 3

The third RQ was, "What learning activities do social service supervisors identify as best for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP?" The third and only theme that emerged for RQ 3 was "Social service supervisors identify active learning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP." All nine study participants contributed to this theme describing their learning needs to fulfill their position and job role. The social service supervisors wanted to understand and focus on the specifics of CILSGP that correlated to their position and program area within the local setting. Thus, the social service supervisors had identified clear CILSGP learning goals. The social services supervisors identified that they would like to develop a basic understanding of CILSGP and receive future CILSGP PD training. For example, P1stated, "I want to learn how intake and investigations can help get CILSGP services set up." Similarly, P6 commented, "I want to learn about CILSGP programs, benefits, and community support." P8 indicated, "I want to know what CILSGP services are available, who is the target population for CILSGP, and suspected CILSGP outcomes/goals for services." Furthermore, study participants identified specific CILSGP measurable learning goals they would like to address to improve their professional skills, such as developing a clear understanding of CISLGP legislation, independent living services, and independent living

plans. All participants shared their motivation for learning new skills and knowledge is anchored in better serving youth, and their families.

The social services supervisors revealed that they planned to utilize their knowledge to supervise and collaborate with staff and others effectively. Participants described best practices for PD as actively engaging and allowing time for collaboration. All Participants expressed that they wanted PD opportunities to collaborate and dialogue with colleagues. For example, P1 stated, “I want to share CILSGP information with my team and co-supervisors.” Furthermore, study participants expressed that collaborating with others in CILSGP PD training could facilitate the transfer of knowledge to their staff. For example, P2 stated that PD training would be beneficial “by informing expectations, procedures, assessments, and the development of IL plans.” Similarly, P8 indicated, “I will share my skills learned by coaching and mentoring staff.” Participants also viewed training as a means to transfer learning to support other employees, and the youth and families who they served.

P1, P2, P3, and P4 noted that they wanted CILSGP learning experiences that facilitate the transfer of learning. For example, P1 stated, “I want to transfer my knowledge to staff the minute we get involved to start helping youth.” P2 explained, “IL skills fit with high school students and career planning.” P3 expressed the desire to “transfer the knowledge to my employees.” Furthermore, P4 communicated that it is important to “inform facilitators to be more vigilant so that we have something to reference to new staff and staff struggling in the area of CILSGP areas.” P5 voiced how social services supervisors should “attend CILSGP training to learn about services and

transfer the learning to staff." P6 vocalized that, through training, it was possible to "teach my workers if they are not offered CILSGP PD training." P8 indicated that training could occur "with current staff in conferences, meetings, and during supervision." Finally, P9 noted, "I will share my newly acquired CILSGP skills with my co-workers." Therefore, social service supervisors preferred PD opportunities and activities that would allow them to develop skills to engage and interact with colleagues and transfer the learning to social service workers.

When asked what PD skills in CILSGP the social services supervisors would like to improve or example, P6 explained, "I am not sure what are all of the he CILSGP skills and goals." Similarly, P5 stated, "I want [to] improve my overall CILSGP knowledge base." Furthermore, participants indicated that they would like to improve their CILSGP skills in networking with the independent living services providers to deliver CILSGP program. P9 expressed the challenges and frustration working with independent living providers and staff to deliver CILSGP in the following account:

I am looking forward to improving my skill set networking with IL providers. I am looking forward to increasing productivity for myself and my staff working with IL teenagers and young adults. I find that the study site staff does not have a good understanding of CILSGP for custody youth and young adults.

In addition, participants expressed a desire to improve their skillset in incorporating and planning for independent living teenagers and young adults. P4 provided the following account:

I have a fairly good understanding of IL goals. I haven't actually done CILSGP planning in years, but I have assisted. I would like to learn ways to help others understand CILSGP and the importance and proper usage of CILSGP.

Overall, the social services supervisors expressed a desire to acquire knowledge and skills in all facets of CILSGP content. The social service supervisors perceived that simulated learning activities facilitate their PD and provide the opportunity for real-life application and collaboration with others.

Participants indicated that active learning processes involving role-playing, simulated activities and collaboration were preferred as best practices to support their learning. Participants shared how social service supervisors learn by performing tasks specific to their roles. P4 commented, "I learn best from doing things, sometimes reading instructions, and doing them. So, practicing writing IL plans, case plans etc. and actively working in a test environment." Finally, participants preferred simulated activities that allowed them to work and collaborate with colleagues. For example, P9 shared, "I find mock interviews and role plays assists with gaining a solid understanding of what is expected." The participants identified wanting real-life learning experiences and opportunities to apply knowledge. P4 suggested that CILSGP "training [should] include active training, not just walking through a power point presentation or listening to a lecture. Doing is best." P2 suggested implementing "formal training with practice models," and P6 commented that "group work" is helpful. The participants want the opportunity to engage active learning, dialogue and feedback.

The study findings revealed that social service supervisors utilize dialogue with others, active involvement of others, and collaborative opportunities as techniques and strategies to engage and build a team to deliver CILSGP. For example, P2 explained, "Youth engagement voice in the process. Realistic opportunities." P3 described how information could be shared throughout the department and agency via a "department meeting." P6 noted that "group discussions" could facilitate dialogue about CILSGP. Similarly, P4 expressed the following challenge to engaging a team to deliver CILSGP:

The team has to be on the same page regarding the "why" for each goal. If the case workers don't get that piece, everything else seems to fall apart. Also understanding that it isn't about what is easiest for staff but what is in the best interest of youth.

Furthermore, P9 explained, "I believe professionals need to engage one another and discuss things from their past experiences. Real-life stories are the greatest teacher in my opinion." The social services supervisors indicated they experience frustration and challenges when engaging a team of social workers and other social service professionals to deliver CILSGP.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. Three themes emerged from the study. The three themes that emerged from the study are: (a) social service supervisors describe the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP; (b) social service supervisors describe they are motivated to engage in PD to support their job performance

to support CILSGP (c) social service supervisors identify active leaning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases can occur in data analysis when there is a conflicting case that is not aligned with the coded data categories and themes. When discrepant cases are identified in data analysis, it is the researcher's responsibility to reexamine the data and refine their categories to account for all data (Tabuena & Hilario, 2021). I did not find any salient or discrepant data in this project study.

Evidence of Quality and Accuracy of Data

To ensure evidence of quality and accuracy in qualitative research, researchers establish trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is vital to research and methods to ensure the integrity of the study; therefore, steps are taken in the data collection and analysis process of qualitative research (Adler, 2022). I established trustworthiness in this basic qualitative project study by ensuring that the findings have credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Reio, 2021; Singh et al., 2021). Researchers ensure trustworthiness in the study in how they present accurate and detailed information to the reader (J. L. Johnson et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). I provided a rich description of the setting, population, events, and activities of the basic qualitative project study.

I used member checking as a strategy to ensure credibility in the study. Member checking is also referred to as participant validation (Urry et al., 2024). After data analysis, I conducted member checking by sending each participant a copy of my draft of

findings via email. I asked participants to provide me with any feedback and clarifications within 7 days. This provided participants with the opportunity to review a copy of my draft of findings and make any clarifications or changes. P2 responded to my initial draft of findings. P2 confirmed the accuracy of my initial draft findings and reiterated that the problem of the study still exist in the local setting. Participant validation process occurs when researchers provide study participants with a copy of their draft of findings to review and provide feedback; furthermore, it ensures that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflect the study participants' views (Lloyd et al., 2024; Motulsky, 2021; Urry et al., 2024). I received no feedback requests for changes or clarifications from study participants. Member checking ensured that the study findings aligned with the participants' views reinforced the study's credibility.

Dependability is defined as the extent that other researchers could replicate the study in similar settings. I provided a clear and detailed audit trail of the steps I took to collect, record, and analyze data. Thus, other researchers may follow the steps I outlined to undertake a similar study in similar settings. Confirmability is defined as the process and procedures taken to establish a connection between the study data and the study findings free of the researcher's bias (McGinley et al., 2021). I established confirmability by using in-vivo coding and presenting direct quotes from the research participants. In-vivo coding is the process of using the participant's exact words (Rogers, 2018; Saldaña, 2021). Reflexivity is defined as the process of continuous and deep self-reflection in the data collection and analysis process (Dodgson, 2019). To demonstrate reflexivity, I used a reflective field journal to document and reflect on my experiences throughout the study.

I also engaged in reflexivity and bracketing to control researcher bias. Bracketing is a technique qualitative researchers employ to identify any potential bias and set aside their own personal beliefs, values, ideals, assumptions, and prior knowledge about the phenomena under investigation (Habibullah et al., 2023; Lim, 2025). During the data collection and analysis, I used bracketing to document and reflect in my reflective field journal on my prior knowledge, experiences, and the phenomena under investigation. In this section, I presented the themes that emerged from the data collected. In addition, I provided evidence and the strategies I used to ensure credibility and dependability in this study.

Summary of Findings

The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. This study was guided by Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. Data were collected using electronic survey interviews via SurveyMonkey. Nine social service supervisors participated in this basic qualitative project study who met the inclusion criteria of (a) being employed as a social service supervisor in a community-based direct service unit at the study site, and (b) having 3 years of supervisory experience. The research questions and interview survey protocol were designed based on Knowles et

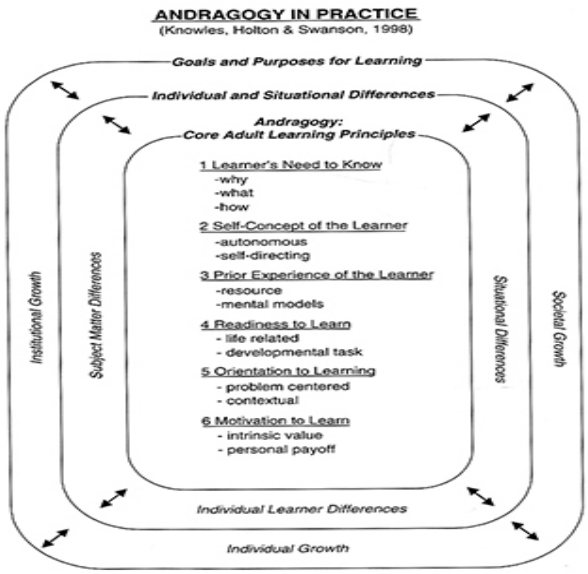
al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model. The research questions and interview survey protocol examined the goals and purpose for learning and the core principles of andragogy. The data gathered from the participants were in alignment with Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model. Data were analyzed using content analysis employing both a priori coding, and open coding to identify codes, categories and themes. The study findings revealed that social service supervisors' describe (a) the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP; (b) their motivation to engage in PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP; and (c) active leaning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP. Overall, three themes emerged from the data analysis accounting for one theme per research question.

The conceptual framework guiding this research project study was Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model. The andragogy in practice model is a transactional and interactional conceptual framework to systematically apply andragogy across multiple disciples of adult learning experiences (Knowles et al., 2020). The goals and purposes for learning, individual and situational differences, and the core principles of andragogy are the three domains. These variables influence the application of the core principles of andragogy (Knowles et al., 2020). The core of the andragogy in practice model is built on the following adult learning principles of the learners' (a) need to know, (b) self-concept, (c) prior experiences, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, and (f) motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2020). The core principles of andragogy

provide a basis for planning adult experiences (Knowles et al., 2020). Researchers have indicated that Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model can be used to guide PD across various disciplines (Knapke et al., 2024). Knowles andragogy in practice model is depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 8

Andragogy in Practice



Note. From *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development* (9th ed., p. 80), by M. S. Knowles, E. F. Holton III, R. A. Swanson, and P. A. Robinson, 2020, Routledge. Copyright 2020 by Routledge. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix B).

In the following section, I summarize the outcomes in relation to the literature and conceptual framework. I specifically answer each of the three research questions. In addition, I also describe the project genre, a white paper, that emerged as the appropriate project given the study findings.

Findings for Research Question 1

The first Research Question, RQ, was the following: How do social service supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive at the study site? Theme 1 was that social service supervisors describe the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP. All the participants discussed the study site's failure to offer CILSGP PD training specifically for social services supervisors to deliver CILSGP. The child welfare supervisor role is unique because they provide direct services to children and families, support to frontline child welfare staff, and have oversight responsibilities (Griffiths et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2022). Participants acknowledged that the study site did not offer CILSGP PD training specifically to their role. Falk (2021) noted that social service supervisors are underprepared to meet the challenging demands of child welfare supervision. Social services supervisors in child welfare lack training and supervision to effectively perform their role (Zhou & Semanchin Jones, 2024). Thibodeau et al. (2023) found that child welfare professionals need access to training to prepare for careers in the child welfare workforce and sustained PD throughout their careers to improve their child welfare skills and knowledge. PD can help the social service supervisors acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their job and serve effectively. Moreover, the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP hinders the delivery of CILSGP to young adults emancipating from the foster care system.

Chafee independent living skills and goals programs assist youth and young adults emancipating from the foster care system acquire the necessary skills to achieve self-sufficiency. According to Schelbe et al. (2023) child welfare professionals must

ensure that youth and emancipating young adults receive IL services. Quality supervision positively influences the quality of practices and service delivery to children and families (Bostock et al., 2019; Forrester et al., 2019). Social service supervisors perform a complex role, yet they receive minimal preparation and PD to support their role (Radey & Wilke, 2023; Stapleton et al., 2022; Zhou & Semanchin Jones, 2024). Alaslawi and Garrett (2023) highlighted the importance of developing relevant PD training for social work administrators to build their capacity to adapt to the changing needs of the social workers, diverse populations they serve, and the organization. The absence of systemic PD creates a need for social service supervisors to acquire relevant knowledge and skills to support their role.

The participants described their goals and purpose for desiring CILSGP PD was for professional growth. Tezcan (2022) found that adult learners participated in PD for personal knowledge and growth. Knowles implied that adult learners participate in learning because they want to acquire new knowledge and understand how it might benefit them and or the consequences for not learning (Knapke et al., 2024). Likewise, MacLellan et al. (2019) found that the need to know was situated in acquiring new knowledge on proper execution skills. The participants voiced frustration with delivering the CILSGP services noting that the specialized IL unit was dismantled, and their role was delegated to the direct services staff. Thus, the study participants described the challenges they encounter delivering CILSGP services.

The study participants expressed a strong desire to participate in PD to enhance their personal and professional knowledge and skills working with youth in foster care

and emancipating young adults to deliver CILSGP. Arnau-Sabatés et al. (2021) found that child welfare agencies must ensure that the child welfare workforce has professionals with knowledge and skills to supervise child welfare workers and other social service professionals to deliver CILSGP services to emancipating youth and young adults who have experienced a multitude of traumas. All of the study participants voiced wanting to do a better job engaging youth and emancipating young adults. Bahrani (2024) noted that corporate PD training that lacks relevant content hinders adult learners and creates a disconnect to their ability to perform their responsibilities. Accordingly, D. D. Burns et al. (2023) examined child welfare case workers and found that there is a lack of continuity between training content and the actual job responsibilities and role of child welfare case workers thus many caseworkers feel unprepared to provide direct services to children, young adults, and families. The purpose for professional learning is rooted in personal fulfillment that is achieved through professional growth and the ability to acquire skills for career advancement in the organization (Karim et al., 2019; Thibodeau et al., 2023). The study findings of this basic qualitative study are consistent with the Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model and literature.

The participants expressed how organizational changes such as the elimination of the Independent Living department, IL specialized staff, and modified one worker model affected their ability to provide CILSGP services. The middle layer of the andragogy in practice model are the variables individual learner, subject matter, and situational differences and therefore require adult educators to use different teaching and learning strategies (Knowles et al., 1998, see Figure 1). Thibodeau et al. (2023) found that child

welfare agencies should offer relevant PD training. Similarly, Washburn et al. (2024) noted that child welfare professionals prefer PD that is relevant to their skill level and areas of expertise. Adult learners are often not consulted about the content or format of PD (Fairman et al., 2022). For this reason, adult learners do not engage nor participate in PD. Therefore, adult learners feel that PD does not meet their learning needs, fosters ambiguity, and lacks relevancy to their role (Fairman et al., 2022). These findings related to the PD needs of adult learners are consistent with Knowles's adult learning theory and the literature.

Findings for Research Question 2

The second RQ was "How do social service supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive at the study site as supporting their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences?" The second theme was that "Social service supervisors describe they are motivated to engage in PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP." The study findings highlighted the participants self-concept as a learner, motivation to learn, and their prior experiences. Participants described their motivation in terms of how PD would support their self-concept, how motivated they were to learn new skills and knowledge that could be used in their work, and their prior life experiences and how these influenced the desire and need for additional PD. Self-concept is strengthened in adults through well-developed and delivered PD.

Self-Concept

The participants are self-directed and a desire and motivation to engage in CILSGP PD. Knowles asserted that the self-concept of adult learners evolves from being reliant on facilitators to guide their learning to becoming self-directed and independent (Chaipidech et al., 2021; Knapke et al., 2024). Adult learners are self-governing and can self-direct their own learning (Burleigh et al., 2021; Namaganda & Walter, 2020). Self-directed refers to the notion that adult learners want to take responsibility for planning, evaluating, and implementing their own learning (Linkous, 2021; Morris, 2021). The practice of self-directed learning has changed the process of learning from being facilitator-based to being individual based (Samah et al., 2021). Rentea et al. (2021) found that child welfare professionals reported that their training needs were unmet and lack PD opportunities in job specific content areas. The participants voiced that they would like to engage in CILSGP PD and acquire new knowledge and skills to deliver CILSGP. This finding supports Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model and the previous literature on the self-concept of the learner, self-direction, and self-directed learning. In the next section, I discuss how the participants' intrinsic motivation to learn was reflected in their responses and how the literature and conceptual framework relate to this theme.

Motivation to Learn

The study findings highlight that the participants are intrinsically motivated to learn and participate in CILSGP PD to enhance their personal and professional skills. Knowles suggested that adult learners have an intrinsic motivation to engage in learning

to enhance their knowledge, quality of life, and job satisfaction (Knapke et al., 2024) Researchers have found the motivation to participate in PD is intrinsic and assists individuals with personal and professional growth (Fütterer et al., 2023). Phillips et al. (2022) examined the child welfare workforce and found that specialized training and career development programs should be aimed at social service supervisors to enhance their skills and set clear performance expectations. The study findings highlighted that the participants are motivated to engage in CILSGP PD training. The study findings are consistent with Knowles's adult learning theory and literature on motivation to learn.

Prior Experiences

The study findings indicated that the participants had either no experiences or limited experiences that shaped their understanding of CILSGP. Knowles stated that adults have a reservoir of experiences that becomes the premise for learning (Knapke et al., 2024) The participants described experiences aligned with Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model because they describe how real-life experiences shape an adult learner's foundation to engage in PD. Prior experience of adult learners should be considered when developing adult educational activities such as PD training. Learner's prior experiences may influence the selection of learning strategies and techniques that adult educators employ to engage adult learners (Abedini et al., 2021; Cocquyt et al., 2019). In the next section, I discuss the final theme, Theme 3, and how this theme addresses Research Question 3.

Findings for Research Question 3

The third RQ was, “What learning activities do social service supervisors identify as best for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP?” The third theme was that “Social service supervisors identify active learning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP.” The study findings highlighted the learning activities that the social service supervisors identified as best facilitating their PD of CILSGP. The participants expressed wanting CILSGP PD that includes active learning strategies and collaborative opportunities. Furthermore, the participants described their desire to engage in PD with PD content focused specifically on CILSGP.

Active Learning Strategies

The participants described wanting simulated learning activities facilitate their PD and provide the opportunity for real-life application and collaboration with others. Knowles defined the orientation to learning as adults approach learning with a problem based- approach (Knapke et al., 2024). Adults want knowledge that helps them to address real-life situations (Chaipidech et al., 2021; Lewis & Bryan, 2021). Active learning is a complex process requiring a holistic approach to engage individuals in learning experiences to bring about knowledge and skill transformation (Patil et al., 2020). The study participants identified wanting real-life learning experiences and opportunities to apply knowledge. Participants also noted they valued collaborative learning opportunities. These findings support Knowles adult learning theory and literature on active learning strategies.

Collaborative Opportunities

The participants expressed a desire to collaborate with others in CILSGP PD. Admiraal et al. (2021) noted that organizations should offer professional learning that facilitates team learning and collaboration. Collaboration facilitates collegiality and allows participants to receive peer feedback and reflection which in turn creates a shared learning and vision. The participants wanted the opportunity to collaborate with other and learn effective strategies to engage a team to deliver CILSGP. The study participants voiced wanting CILSGP PD that included the voice of youth and emancipating young adults to understand their unique and diverse perspectives. Furthermore, the participants discussed ways to share their newly acquired knowledge and skills with others. Participants shared how group discussions and department meetings help facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills. Kaplan et al. (2023) found that social work supervisors in the field of gerontology prefer PD curriculum that incorporates interaction and small group learning activities to enhance their supervisory skills. The participants indicated they experienced challenges when engaging a team of social workers and other social service professionals to deliver CILSGP. The participants expressed that they needed to receive team building PD training. Therefore, participants can benefit from CILSGP PD by incorporating team-building content and skills.

PD is a dual learning process achieved by engaging in PD activities and interactions with others in the workplace in child welfare. Lwin et al. (2018) suggested that the transfer of learning is essential to connecting newly acquired knowledge and skills to practices in child welfare. “Training transfer is the degree to which trainees

effectively apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in a training context to the job" (Baldwin & Ford, 1988, p.63; Stepanek & Paul, 2022). Supervisors are able to transfer learning to child welfare case workers by providing opportunities to move from classroom learning to experiential real-life opportunities, receive guidance and feedback, and build a meaningful supervisory -case worker relationship (Osborne et al., 2020). Collaboration is a critical aspect in PD and learning (He & Bagwell, 2023). Keay et al. (2019) suggested that professional learning is successful when adult learners are afforded the opportunity to self-organize, engage in self-reflection and reflect with others. Therefore, the participants preferred PD opportunities and activities that will allow them to develop skills to engage and interact with colleagues and transfer the learning to social service workers.

Collaboration can enhance PD. Collaboration is defined as shared and sustained learning among two or more adult learners in a PD setting (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021; Mann & Webb, 2022). Finne et al. (2022) conducted a mixed method study and found that child welfare social workers acquire the knowledge and skills they need from clients, supervisors, and work experiences. Therefore, the education of supervisors is essential to advancing evidence-based practices in child welfare (Finne et al., 2022). Cornelius et al. (2020) found that adult learners improved their instructional practices when they received the evidence-based practices of coaching and mentoring support in PD.

Accordingly, Adults learn best in collaboration with others (Lambirth et al., 2021; Sancar et al., 2021; Schulte, 2021). Participants expressed that they wanted PD opportunities to collaborate and dialogue with colleagues. Prenger et al. (2019) found that

collaboration in professional learning can lead to increased effectiveness and efficiency. Furthermore, study participants expressed that collaborating with others in CILSGP PD training could facilitate the transfer of knowledge to their staff. Professional learning can enhance collaborative relationships, facilitate knowledge and implement best practices (Smith & Robinson, 2020). Participants also shared that coaching and mentoring staff is key to transferring knowledge and skills to staff and others. CILSGP PD could enhance the delivery of CILSGP services and increase staff performance and productivity. In addition, CILSGP PD could support the creation and development of performance expectations and procedures. Accordingly, CILSGP PD could also assist with improving and devising policies, assessments, and IL plans to deliver CILSGP services.

PD Content Focused

The participants voiced wanting CILSGP PD content and opportunities to integrate new knowledge and practice their skills. Participants expressed wanting CILSGP that provides them the opportunity to engage in real life situations in an active test environment and the ability to perform task specific to their role such as developing case plans and independent living plans. Desimone (2023) noted that adult learners desire active learning that incorporate opportunities for practical application and feedback. The study findings highlighted that social service supervisors plan to utilize their knowledge to supervise and collaborate with others effectively.

Project Deliverable

In Section 3, I discuss and describe a deliverable project that is based on the findings, conceptual framework, and current literature in alignment with the purpose and

RQ of the study. Based on the study findings, the most appropriate project genre will be a white paper. The recommendations for this white paper will address the social service supervisors' desire to increase their knowledge and skills in providing oversight of the foster care independent living program for youth. In addition, these recommendations will assist the program administrators in providing sustained PD to meet the needs of the study site staff. The recommendations for the white paper are for the leaders at CILSGP and could also be considered as a blueprint for stakeholders who serve in leadership positions guiding social service organizations. The recommendations are:

- Create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support CILSGP knowledge and skills development.
- Cultivate a social service supervisor CILSGP professional learning community to foster networking and collaboration
- Create and administer systemic CILSGP PD annual needs assessment to all the study site social services supervisors
- Design evidence based and data driven systemic PD for CILSGP, incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop

Conclusion

In Section 2, I described the basic qualitative research design and approach, participants, data collection, data analysis, data analysis results, summary of findings, and project deliverable. The three themes that emerged from the study: (a) social service supervisors describe the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP; (b)

social service supervisors describe they are motivated to engage in PD to support their job performance to support; (c) social service supervisors identify active learning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP. The themes aligned with Knowles's adult learning theory and literature.

In Section 3, I explain the project genre, a white paper. I discuss the rationale for selecting a white paper for the project genre related to the study findings. I also present a scholarly review of the literature related to the project genre, project description and project evaluation plan and social change implications. I also discuss J. M. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) transformational leadership theory as the conceptual framework to guide the development of the project genre a white paper (see Appendix A).

Section 3: The Project

The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. Guided by Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model, I investigated how supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive and what learning activities they identify as best for facilitating PD of the CILSGP. Accordingly, I conducted a basic qualitative study and examined the perceptions of nine social service supervisors to address the three research questions. I conducted content data analysis employing both deductive and inductive coding. I initiated the data analysis process by conducting a priori coding, a form of deductive coding, derived from Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model, that served as the conceptual framework of the study. Subsequently, I conducted open descriptive coding, a form of inductive coding, using Yin's (2018) five step data analysis process to identify codes categories, and themes. Three themes emerged from the study. The outcome of the data analysis results led me to identify recommendations and create a white paper that supports the project study (see Appendix A). The recommendations for this white paper will address the social service supervisors' desire to increase their knowledge and skills in providing oversight of the foster care independent living program for youth. In addition, these recommendations will assist the program administrators in providing sustained PD to meet the needs of the study site staff. The recommendations for the white paper are for the leaders at CILSGP and could also be considered as a blueprint for stakeholders who serve in leadership positions guiding social service

organizations. The overall goals of the white paper are to address the PD needs of CILSGP staff and to cultivate the systems of support at the study site that would strengthen leadership practices aimed at fostering collaboration. at the study site.

In Section 3, I describe the goals for the white paper and the deliverable project of the white paper to inform and persuade stakeholders at the study site about the CILSGP PD needs of the social service supervisors to support the effective delivery of CILSGP. In addition, I share scholarly literature that supports the project and synthesizes the study's findings and recommendations. White papers are influential and can assist with integrating data findings to formulate policy recommendations and to inform and persuade stakeholder towards recommended actions (Erismann et al., 2021; Touloupou et al., 2022). This project, a white paper, is intended to inform and persuade stakeholders regarding the best practice recommendations to address the study findings that emerged from the data analysis.

Project Description and Goals of a White Paper

The project genre for this study is a white paper (see Appendix A). A white paper is a document that is informative and proposes recommendations to solve problems (Purdue OWL, 2025). The goal of this white paper is to provide information and recommendations to the stakeholders to address the problem of the study. The white paper will include the problem, summary analysis of the findings, and key recommendations aligned to the study findings for stakeholder consideration. The white paper will also include the evidence from the literature supporting the recommendations contained in the white paper.

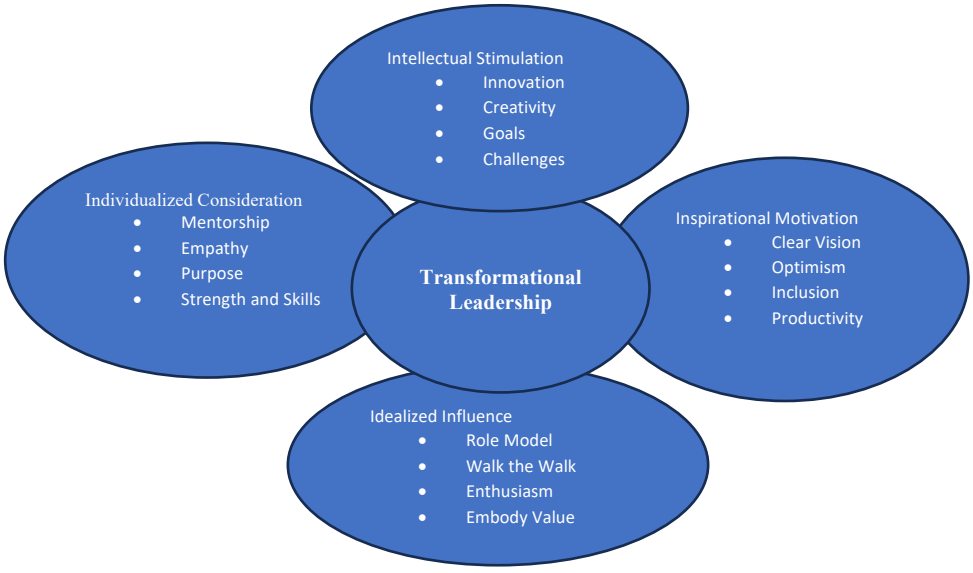
A white paper was developed based on the research study's findings. White papers provide stakeholders with a focused perspective on a complex issue and present recommendations that stakeholders can take to solve the issue (Erismann et al., 2021). In this basic qualitative study, social service supervisors completed survey interviews, and the information obtained from these surveys was analyzed and resulted in three themes. In this white paper, I provide recommendations to the stakeholders based on the study's findings as described by Erismann et al. (2021) who created a white paper to link evidence-based research findings to persuade and influence stakeholders. The recommendations in this white paper are to: (a) create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support CILSGP knowledge and skills development; (b) cultivate a social service supervisor CILSGP professional learning community to foster networking and collaboration; (d) create and administer systemic CILSGP PD annual needs assessment to all the study site social services supervisors; and (e) design evidence-based and data driven systemic PD for CILSGP, incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop.

Conceptual Framework

I selected the transformational leadership theory of J. M. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) to guide the creation of the white paper for this study. J. M. Burns (1978) transformational leadership theory is grounded in Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs theory. Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs theory emphasizes the individual's lower needs and evolves to the individual meeting higher needs, termed self-actualization (Maslow, 1970). J. M. Burns (1978) suggested that leadership is transactional and

transformational. Leaders can relate to and empower followers by validating their wants and needs (J. M. Burns, 1978). Leadership is a reciprocal process where leaders can influence followers in ways that they both acquire higher levels of motivation and moral qualities (J. M. Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders motivate followers to deliver high-quality outcomes for their organizations by connecting with their high-level needs (Eaton et al., 2024). Bass (1985) expanded on J. M. Burns (1978) transformational leadership theory notions by identifying four key attributes of transformational leaders. The four key attributes are (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Bass, 1990). In this white paper, I incorporated the four key attributes related to transformational leadership theory to develop the white paper recommendations.

Figure 9 *Transformational Leadership Framework*



Note. From Leadership and Diplomacy as Effective Tools for Advancing the Principles of Good Governance and Sustainable Economic Development: A Comparative

Examination of Nigeria and Rwanda, by Nwafor, L. C., and Chima, G. I . D., 2023, *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, *8*(11). https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i11.3954 This work is distributed under Creative Commons license attribution, non-commercial 4.0 international (CC by-NC 4.0).

The findings align with the tenets of transformational leadership, therefore using this theory will inform the development of the white paper. In the following section, I discuss the rationale for selecting a white paper as the project genre to provide recommendations to the stakeholders that address the PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site.

Rationale

In this section, I discuss the decision to select and create a white paper to make recommendations to the stakeholders. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. To address the RQs, the perceptions of social service supervisors were explored and three themes emerged and included: (a) social service supervisors' describe the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP; (b) social service supervisors' describe they are motivated to engage in PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP; (c) social service supervisors identify active leaning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their

PD of the CILSGP. I selected a white paper to disseminate the study findings and provide recommendations to the stakeholders.

Review of the Literature

I selected a white paper to address the study findings that emerged to address the problem of the study that is, program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. I developed the white paper to inform and persuade stakeholders at the study site to address the PD needs of CILSGP staff and to cultivate the systems of support at the study site that would strengthen leadership practices aimed at fostering collaboration. at the study site.

In the literature review, I analyze the white paper genre across disciplines in PD and discuss the findings aligned with writing a white paper genre. Furthermore, I provide a research overview of white papers and use to promote organizational change, active instructional learning strategies, effective PD, characteristics of effective PD, adult learning theory and PD, learning needs assessment, task force, and professional learning communities. The purpose of the literature review is to examine the existing research related to the study findings, recommendations, and project genre of the study.

Using the Walden University Library and Google Scholar, I sought scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles and dissertations from within the past 5 years. To locate relevant literature, I searched electronic research databases, including Business Source Complete, SAGE Primer, Education Resource Information Complete, Emerald Insight, and ProQuest. I conducted a literature review focusing on effective and high-quality PD.

The keyword and phrases I searched related to the findings and project genre of the study were *white papers, writing a white paper, policy position papers, and policy recommendation papers, active instructional and learning strategies, designing effective professional development incorporating adult learning, evaluation of professional development training, learning needs assessment, task force, leadership and organizational change, and professional learning communities.* I conducted a thorough search until I reached a point of saturation. In the next section, I review the topics identified in the literature that provide a context for the topics pertaining to the study findings and recommendations.

White Papers and Use to Promote Change

A white paper was selected to provide the study findings and recommendations for this project study. Historically, white papers were classified as government reports (Malone & Wright, 2018; Stelzner, 2006, 2007). Cox (2023) stated that a white paper is a persuasive and detailed report that presents problems and provides a solution. White papers are also termed policy positions paper, policy recommendation paper, and policy brief (Purdue OWL, 2025). Kramer (2023) indicated that a position paper is an academic writing that supports the author's or organization's position on a specific topic based on relevant statistics, research, facts, and evidence. Similarly, Ordway (2022) noted that white papers may advocate for a policy change or a specific position. The purpose of a white paper is to provide stakeholders with an overview of the problem, critical analysis, and recommendations to solve the problem (J. Johnson, 2023). Stakeholders use white

papers to help guide their decisions and implement solutions (Stelzner, 2007). The organization of a white paper is critical and should engage the reader.

The format and content of a white paper are highly organized and contain specific elements. White papers should be written clearly and concisely (Graham, 2013; Kantor, 2009; Kramer, 2023). A clear and concise white paper should contain the following elements: (a) executive summary, specifically a brief overview of the problem, recommendations, and policy implications; (b) introduction; (c) problem statement; (d) analysis; (e) recommendations; (f) implementation strategies; and (g) conclusion (Ndihokubwayo, 2023). Authors of white papers should aim to convey an authoritative tone and perspective on the specified topic (Graham, 2013).

Findings Aligned to White Paper

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. The purpose of a white paper is to provide recommendations to the leaders and stakeholders based on the findings of the study. The study findings revealed that social service supervisors' describe (a) the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP; (b) they are motivated to engage in PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP; and (c) identified active leaning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP. The white

paper genre has been utilized in the field of education, corporate business, and PD to persuade and inform stakeholders.

In a white paper, Stubbs and Watkins (2025) informed administrators, stakeholders, PD developers, and faculty to implement student-centered learning approaches at a community college. Stubbs and Watkins (2025) highlighted the concept of student-centered learning approach, its theoretical framework, strengths and weaknesses of implementing student-centered approaches, and recommendations to implement student-centered learning approaches. Stubbs and Watkins (2025) recommended providing PD opportunities for faculty focused on student-centered approaches, pilot testing student-centered approaches in select courses, and providing incentives and support to faculty who incorporate student-centered approaches into their practice. Likewise, Abraham et al. (2023) created a white paper that was used in the field of corporate business to make recommendations to organizational leadership to address the issues of employee motivation, retention, and preparation for future leadership. Abraham et al. recommended that organizations strengthen employee engagement by understanding the individual and organization's purpose by creating opportunities for the individual to connect with their role, create research-based leadership development programs, and provide leadership development opportunities to all employees to support their current role and build their capacity to move into leadership roles. Therefore, the findings of this study are in alignment with the white paper genre. The recommendations for this white paper are: (a)create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support CILSGP knowledge and skills

development; (b) cultivate a social service supervisor CILSGP professional learning community to foster networking and collaboration; (c) create and administer systemic CILSGP PD annual needs assessment to all the study site social services supervisors; and (d) design evidence based and data driven systemic PD for CILSGP, incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop.

Active Learning and Instructional Strategies

Active learning and instructional strategies facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills. Soto and Marzocchi (2021) examined a PD to increase the implementation of active learning strategies with mathematics faculty at California State University. Soto and Marzocchi (2021) designed PD with active learning strategies to engage faculty. The PD format was faculty learning communities and lesson study and active workshops. Data were collected via the Student Post-Secondary Instructional Practices Survey to ascertain the students' perceptions of instructional classroom practices, observations conducted by observers utilizing the Mathematics Classroom Observation Protocol for Practices and focus groups and interviews with faculty learning communities members to gather their perceptions about the PD and how they planned to implement active learning strategies into their instructional practices. In the workshops, Soto and Marzocchi (2021) utilized the following active learning strategies: wait-time, think-pair-share, and formative assessment. In addition, they utilized instructional videos demonstrating active learning techniques, follow up meeting to provide the opportunity for reflection and feedback, and simulated exercises to apply techniques. Hence, Soto and Marzocchi (2021) found that active learning strategies allow adult learners to build a community,

apply new knowledge and skills, reflect, and provide feedback (Soto & Marzocchi, 2021).

Effective Professional Development

Effective PD can enhance individuals' personal and professional knowledge and skills. PD is essential to adult learners' professional and personal growth (Korsager et al., 2022; Patfield et al., 2023; Salo et al., 2024; Zeggelaar et al., 2022). PD refers to any program, activity, or training to improve instructional practices (Collin & Smith, 2021; Karlberg & Bezzina, 2022; Osman & Warner, 2020). There are a variety of modes of PD, including workshops, in-services, training, seminars, and peer observations (Avidov-Ungar, 2023; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021; Yenen & Yöntem, 2020). Training, a skills-based model, assists adult learners with refining and developing skills with the guidance of an expert facilitator (Perry & Booth, 2024). Effective PD addresses the adult learners' needs and connects to their professional role.

Characteristics of Effective Professional Development

There is a wealth of scholarly research regarding effective PD and the key characteristics of successful PD in the field of teacher PD. Desimone and Garet (2015) identified a conceptual framework for effective PD. The five key attributes of effective PD are: (a) content focus, (b) coherence, (c) active learning, (d) collective participation, and (e) duration. Content focus implies that learning instruction is focused on specific content and how teachers provide instruction to their students. Coherence aligns the PD with the aims of the teacher, administrators, school, and school district. Active learning permits teachers to be participatory in their PD. Collective participation entails providing

teachers with the opportunity to collaborate with peers and create a learning community. Lastly, duration refers to sustained learning and providing PD that extends beyond one PD occurrence (Desimone & Garet, 2015). Adult learning facilitators can use the attributes of effective PD to design PD for adult learners.

Adult Learning Theory and Professional Development

PD developers should include adult learning theories in the design of PD to ensure that PD meets the unique needs of adult learners. Adult learning theory can serve as a guide to develop PD in all contexts (Stokes & Berlacher, 2022). The conceptual framework for this qualitative research study was grounded in adult learning theories that serve as a foundation for understanding how adults learn. Malcolm Knowles's (1978) concept of andragogy distinguishes how adults learn versus how children learn. Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model conceptual framework guided this basic qualitative project study. For example, incorporating the theory of andragogy and principles of adult learning in designing PD highlights the importance of the learner and how their need to know, motivation, prior experiences, and relevancy to their role provide a foundation to their learning (Bahrani, 2024).

I selected the Transformational Leadership theory of J. M. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) to guide the creation of the white paper for this study. Accordingly, principles of transformational leadership can be incorporated into PD. For example, transformational learning theories in designing PD emphasize the importance and role of engaging in critical reflection and discourse and how that shift in thinking assists with acquiring a new perspective and improved practices (Nair et al., 2025). Moreover, PD designers

should incorporate adult learning theories into PD design because it enhances adult learning and influences the selection of curricula, instructional techniques and strategies, and the evaluation of PD (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2022). Therefore, I recommend that the task force create and administer a systemic learner needs assessment to the social services supervisors so that the PD designer can design effective CILSGP PD for the social service supervisors.

Learning Needs Assessment

Learning needs assessment is essential to understanding the needs of adult learners and designing effective PD. The concept of learning needs originates in adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980). In adult learning theory, the process of reflection in the learner is a focus and the adult learner is encouraged to self-identify their gaps in knowledge and skills and to also develop goals to address their individual learning needs (Al-Ismail et al., 2023). In a cross-sectional qualitative study, Munyaneza et al., (2024) examined the continuing PD needs of health care professionals across a healthcare system. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 35 study participants. The study sample composed health care professionals of all disciplines and levels within the healthcare system. Semi structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with the study participants. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data and identify themes. Munyaneza et al., identified key themes that the healthcare

professional perceived that the PD offerings lacked relevancy, were not easily available and accessible to the health care professionals. Additional study findings suggested that health care professionals were not involved in the development and planning of PD. Furthermore, the study findings indicated that health care professionals were motivated to participate in PD and made recommendation for PD and changes to PD courses.

Overall, the study findings indicate that healthcare systems CPD program was not organized and that relevant and accessible CPD programs were unavailable. This contributed to the ineffectiveness of CPD programs. Munyaneza et al. (2024) recommended the following to solve these challenges: (a) create a national council to coordinate CPD programs; (b) recruit CPD coordinators at all levels; (c) ensure that there is an established CPD curriculum for all hospital disciplines; (d) administer a national survey to assess the learning needs of the all health care professionals to assess gaps in CPD programs and implementation; and (e) develop and expand the use of tele-education CPD program to build the health care professionals capacity to use technology. These study findings and recommendations are consistent with my study findings (Munyaneza et al., 2024). Furthermore, the recommendation to assess the learning needs and identify gaps in CPD programming in a health care system to improve CPD programs demonstrates that health care professionals perceptions and experiences of CPD across a healthcare system are similar to the perceptions and experiences of the social service supervisors CILSGP PD in the field of child welfare in the local setting.

An individual adult learner needs assessment is a tool whereby the individual analyzes and identifies the specific gaps between their current level of knowledge and

skills and their desired learning goals to achieve competency (Ford, 2020). Thus, a learning needs assessment can assist stakeholders and PD designers with acquiring the necessary information to design effective PD based on the learner's current knowledge and what the learner identifies as necessary to enhance their knowledge and skills. Additionally, when stakeholders within organizations conduct learning needs assessments, they can understand and prioritize the learning needs of the individuals and create learning opportunities that support individual, team, and organizational growth (Ford, 2020). In summary, learning needs assessments can benefit the individuals, PD designers, and organizations. Task forces are a common vehicle used in organizational change.

Task Force

A task force is composed of stakeholders within an organization to provide their expertise and guidance about a specific issue or problem (Grigsby, 2008). Task forces are temporary established groups within an organization whose purpose is to address a specific problem (Wegmann & Schärrer, 2020). Likewise, Mavrot et al. (2024) noted that task force are flexible short-term groups that are composed of highly qualified individuals and whose aim is to advise policymakers. Conversely, teams and committees are distinctly different from task force; teams are individuals group together to collaborate for a specific purpose, and committees are ongoing and tend to have structured bylaws, and broader long term aims and goals (Grigsby, 2008; Taylor et al., 2021).

Task forces are versatile and can be used across a variety of professions and disciplines. For example, the Governor of Texas created a task force to examine teacher

vacancies and develop a thriving workforce. One of the task force recommendations was training and support. Three recommendations were identified to improve training and support: (a) prepare and expand pathways for professionals entering the workforce and new hire pre-service PD;(b) enhance PD and support by offering leadership and mentoring opportunities; and (c) provide access and support to high-quality instructional resources (Force, T. V. T., 2023).

Similarly, the Ohio Governors Children Services Transformation Task Force examined the foster care system in Ohio. There were recommendations to address the PD of the workforce supervisors. The recommendations were as follows: (a) create pathways to recruit and retain frontline supervisors which was addressed by additional funding and expanding pathways and partnership with agencies and educational institutions and (b) develop a consistent onboarding process for new supervisors which was addressed by developing new curriculum and updating learning platforms for course delivery (Ohio Governor's Office of Children's Initiative Services, 2022). In comparison, both task forces in Texas and Ohio were implemented at the state level. While one task force addressed teacher workforce development with recommendations to address teacher vacancies; the other addressed transforming children services with recommendation which addressed the child welfare supervisory workforce and PD. The recommendations from my study's findings recommend implementing a task force to address the specific PD needs of the stakeholders in the local setting. Once this local level task force implements the recommendations and disperse it is imperative to maintain the focus on the social service supervisors CILSGP PD. This can be accomplished by implementing

the recommendation of this study's findings by establishing a social service supervisor CILSGP professional learning community in the local setting.

Professional Learning Community

Professional learning communities can strengthen individual professional growth and build capacity within organizations. The notion of professional learning communities is popular in education and teacher PD (Moosa et al., 2024). In seminal works, Hord (1997) noted that PLCs involved educator collaboration to enhance student achievement and teacher PD. Moreover, DuFour (2004) noted that PLCs are a collective effort and shared responsibility of educators, focused on learning and data-driven decision-making to transform the educational environment. A professional learning community (PLC) is a collective group of educators who come together regularly to share, reflect, collaborate, and integrate their experiences to promote growth in their teaching practices and student achievement (Christensen, 2025). PLC allows educators to dialogue about the issues they experience in an inclusive environment with a shared commitment to solving problems and challenges (Hudson, 2024; Ikpuri & Peter, 2024). Concina (2023) noted that it is important for music teachers to participate in communities of practice in the early years and stages of their careers because they tend to receive valuable advice and learn skills from teachers with more tenure and experiences. In an exploratory qualitative study, Andrienko-Genin et al. (2023) examined the implementation and benefits of a remote interdisciplinary professional learning community on the PD of university faculty. The study findings revealed that faculty engaged in self-reflection which resulted in sharing knowledge and learning new concepts, innovation, and data driven decision- making.

Additional study findings revealed that all of the study participants learned new techniques and teaching methods (Andrienko-Genin et al., 2023). Finally, the study findings indicated that the faculty were able to build relationships and trust (Andrienko-Genin et al., 2023). Thus, the interdisciplinary PLC fostered networking and collaboration across the university departments (Andrienko-Genin et al., 2023).

Professional learning communities have significance in the field of organizational learning and organizational development. The concept of professional learning communities emerged from theories of organizational learning (Antinluoma et al., 2021; Senge, 1997). Senge (1997) noted five characteristics that shape learning organizations: (a) personal commitment to learning, (b) individual reflection, (c) shared commitment and vision, (d) team learning that supports desired outcomes, and (e) organizations that acknowledge interconnectedness within the organization. Furthermore, Senge (1997) noted that learning organizations continuously prioritize learning, the individual, team collaboration, and have leadership that supports and fosters learning. Thus, the creation of a CILSGP professional learning community can assist the stakeholders with building the capacity of the social service supervisors and organizations to deliver CILSGP.

Project Description

The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. The perceptions of social service supervisors were explored and three themes emerged as include: a) social service supervisors' describe the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support

CILSGP; (b) social service supervisors' describe they are motivated to engage in PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP (c) social service supervisors identify active leaning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP. Based on the study's findings, I determined a white paper would be the most appropriate project genre to provide recommendations to the program administrators and stakeholders. The recommendations for the white paper are: (a)create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support CILSGP knowledge and skills development; (b) cultivate a social service supervisor CILSGP professional learning community to foster networking and collaboration; (c) create and administer systemic CILSGP PD annual needs assessment to all the study site social services supervisors; and (d) design evidence based and data driven systemic PD for CILSGP, incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop.

After creating this white paper, I request approval from the study site director and leadership in the local setting to present the study's findings. Upon approval from the study site director and leadership in the local setting I will present the findings of my study to the stakeholders at the study site.

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

The resources and support needed for this white paper recommendations are the commitment and buy-in from leadership at the study site and the stakeholders. I will

provide the leadership of the study site with a copy of the white paper via email. I will also make myself available to the study site to present the white paper if requested.

Potential Barriers and Potential Barrier Solutions

One potential barrier I foresee implementing this white paper might be the element of time. The study site leadership, administrators, social service supervisors may not be easily accessible and available to implement the white paper given the demands of their schedules and nature of their role and work. The creation of a CILSGP task force and the selection of individuals to serve on the task force will require CILSGP task force members to meet at specified times. One solution to mitigate this barrier is for the Director's special assistant to assist with coordinating schedules and times for the CILSGP task force meetings. Another barrier might be that the task force is not familiar with the nature of a white paper and the recommendations included in the white paper. One solution to this barrier might be that the Director's special assistant could coordinate a meeting for me to present the white paper to the CILSGP task force members. Another solution could be for me to send an executive summary of approximately 1-page that encapsulates the white paper recommendations for efficient access and reading of the critical information contained in the white paper. This 1-page executive summary may entice stakeholders to consider reviewing the white paper.

Implementation Proposal

Upon completion of my doctoral study, I will contact the Director's Special Assistant to disseminate the study findings. I will provide the Director's special assistant a copy of the white paper and formative and summative evaluation tools for the

implementation of the white paper via email. Table 13 reflects an implementation time schedule and roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders. Table 13 represents the roles and responsibilities of others.

Table 13

Project Implementation Plan and Timetable

Date/Phase	Implementation tasks
Week 1	Contact the study site leadership via the Directors special assistant and share white paper and formative and formative evaluation tools for the white paper.
Week 2	Revise the white paper recommendations based upon feedback from the study site leadership.
Week 3	Provide all study participants with a copy of the white paper via email.
Week 4	The study site leadership creates and establish the CILSGP Task Force.
Week 5	Task force meets and establishes meeting schedule.
Week 6	I can present the white paper to the CILSGP task force if necessary. Task force can provide feedback via formative and summative evaluation tools.
Week 7	Task force implements white paper recommendations.

Table 14

Roles and Responsibilities of Others

Role	Responsibilities
Researcher	Contact the study site leadership via the Directors special assistant and share white paper and formative and summative evaluation tools.
	Review white paper based upon feedback from the study site leadership.
	Provide each of the study participants with a copy of the white paper via email.
	Coordinate and schedule a presentation with task force members if needed

Role	Responsibilities
Leadership, administrators, & stakeholders	Review white paper and formative and summative evaluation tools and provide feedback.
	The site leadership commit and prioritize implementing the white paper.
	Create a CILSGP task force
CILSGP Task Force	Coordinate and schedule a presentation of the white paper with researcher if needed
	Complete evaluation and provide feedback of white paper presentation
	Establish a meeting schedule and meet as scheduled
	Review the White paper and implement white recommendations and formative and summative evaluation tools
	Design and create an implementation plan for PD to support CILSGP knowledge skills development
	Cultivate a social service supervisor professional learning community to foster networking and support
	Create and administer a CILSGP PD annual needs assessment to all the study site supervisors
	Design evidence based and data driven systemic PD for CILSGP, incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop
Social Service Supervisors	Attend and participate in the CILSGP task force if a member of CILSGP task force
	Join and participate in the social service supervisor professional learning community
	Complete the CILSGP PD annual needs assessment
	Provide evaluation and feedback on the professional learning community
	Provide evaluation and feedback on the CILSGP PD needs assessment
	Attend CILSGP PD
	Provide formative and summative evaluation of the CILSGP PD

Project Evaluation Plan

This white paper will be used to inform and persuade the study site leadership and program administrators to implement white paper. The recommendations were based upon the review of the scholarly literature and the study's findings. Formative and summative evaluations will be utilized to evaluate this white paper. The recommendations in this white paper are to: (a) create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support CILSGP knowledge and skills development; (b) cultivate a social service supervisor CILSGP professional learning community to foster networking and collaboration; (d) create and

administer systemic CILSGP PD annual needs assessment to all the study site social services supervisors; and (e) design evidence-based and data driven systemic PD for CILSGP, incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop.

Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders in this white paper and implementation of this white paper are the study site leadership, program administrators, task force members, social service supervisors, and stakeholders. Stakeholders are "individuals, organizations, or communities that have a direct interest in the processes and outcomes of a project, research, or policy endeavor" (Boaz et al., 2018, p. 2). Additionally, emancipating youth and young adults, policy makers, and society may be included as stakeholders in this white paper.

Project Implications

Possible Social Change Implications

Walden University defines positive social change as a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies (Walden University Center for Social Change, n.d.). Sharma and Monteiro (2016) noted that education is the key to social change. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. Social change can be fostered through education and sustainability (Cantele et al., 2024).

Wagoner and Power (2022) noted that social change addresses each person's responsibility to others and recognizing that making a situation better for one individual makes society better as a whole. Social change transforms an individual's thinking and influences behaviors in society (Sharma & Monteiro, 2016). Furthermore, social change is aimed at addressing the root cause of a problem and examining the problem in depth beyond the surface level (Wagoner & Power, 2023). The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. Therefore, the outcomes of the implementation of this project may impact social change by heightening awareness about the CILSGP PD needs of social service supervisors in the field of child welfare. It may promote and facilitate the creation of systemic CILSGP PD that supports the social services supervisor to ensure the effective delivery of CILSGP. Social service supervisors may feel that the study site leadership, program administrators, and stakeholders value their role and understand the benefits of CILSGP PD for them. The social service supervisors may feel supported and thereby encouraged to complete the annual needs assessment and actively participate in CILSGP PD and CILSGP professional learning community. Furthermore, the implementation of the white paper may promote and facilitate collaboration among the study site social service supervisors to deliver CILSGP.

Importance of Project in the Larger Context

The importance of the implementation of the white paper in the larger context may contribute to additional research and the scholarly literature on the PD of social

service supervisors in the field of child welfare. The project could lead to the development of CILSGP policies and increase funding for CILSGP PD for social service supervisors. The supervision of child welfare professionals is challenging and important to delivering high-quality services (Yu & Liao, 2023). Yu and Liao (2023) suggested that organizations focus on the PD of social service supervisors to promote high-quality service delivery. Furthermore, the project could impact the emancipating youth and young adults by improving the delivery of CILSGP services. Social service supervisors could provide improved oversight to staff and other social service professionals to deliver high-quality CILSGP services and facilitate the successful transition of emancipating youth and young adults to adulthood and emancipation from the study site custody. In addition, the project could lead to enhanced service delivery and organizational effectiveness to deliver CILSGP.

Conclusion

In Section 3, I presented a white paper genre as the project for this basic qualitative project study. I provided a project description and discussed the goals of a white paper. The goal of this white paper is to inform and persuade the study site leadership and programs administrators of the PD needs of the social service supervisors to deliver CILSGP. I selected the transformational leadership theory of J. M. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) to guide the creation of the white paper for this study. In addition, I provided a scholarly review of the literature to support this white paper and project findings. I shared a detailed description of the project and project evaluation plan. Finally, I discussed the project implications at the local level and in the larger context.

In Section 4, I will provide reflections and conclusions, project strengths and limitations. In addition, I will provide recommendations for alternative approaches, project development, and leadership and change. Then, I will discuss the reflection on the importance of the work, and implications, anticipation, and directions for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. This basic qualitative study and white paper aimed to address the gap in PD practice.

In section 4, I present my reflections and conclusions. I will discuss the importance of this white paper. I share the strengths and limitations of the project. I will present recommendations for alternative approaches. In addition, I will share what I learned throughout the project study in relation to scholarship, project development, leadership and change, and reflect on the importance of the work. Finally, I discuss the implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

This project has strengths and limitations. One strength of this project is based upon the findings of the study derived from the perceptions of the social services supervisors. The supervisors were purposively sampled and met criteria for the study. The participants articulated a detailed description of the phenomena under investigation. The study participants had a wealth of knowledge and years of experience in supervision. The participants' years of experience in social work supervision ranged from 5 to 22

years with 13.8 being the median years of experience. In addition, the participants had extensive years of experience in the field of child welfare. The study participants' years of experience in child welfare ranged from 15 to 31 years with 25.1 years being the median years in child welfare. The study findings revealed that social service supervisors describe (a) the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP; (b) they are motivated to engage in PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP; and (c) identified active leaning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP.

Based upon the study's findings, I created a white paper. The creation of a white paper based upon the study's findings is another strength to the project. This white paper will inform and persuade stakeholders and provide recommendations to the stakeholders to address the problem and purpose of the study. This white paper may contribute to the local setting by heightening awareness of the problem and purpose of the study. This white paper will address the gap in practice at the study site. The white paper may illuminate the perceptions of the social service supervisors and the white paper with recommendation. The recommendations in this white paper are to: (a) create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support CILSGP knowledge and skills development; (b) cultivate a social service supervisor CILSGP professional learning community to foster networking and collaboration; (d) create and administer systemic CILSGP PD annual needs assessment to all the study site social services supervisors; and (e) design evidence-based and data

driven systemic PD for CILSGP, incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop. I utilized J. M. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) transformational leadership theory to guide the project development to illustrate how implementing this white paper can empower the social service supervisors and positively impact the delivery of CILSGP.

The implementation of this white paper may be considered a strength of this project study. The recommendations of this white paper could increase collaboration and networking at the study site to better deliver CILSGP. Another possible strength is that this white paper will contribute to the scholarly literature and the use of a white paper in the field of PD of social service supervisors in the field of child welfare.

There are limitations to this project study. A project limitation is that this project is based upon one study site; therefore, the study findings cannot be generalized to a larger population nor other sites. Another limitation to this study is that this study was conducted via online survey via SurveyMonkey. I could have conducted face to face interviews with each study participants in the natural study setting. The face-to-face interviews would have allowed me to have a detailed dialogue with participants. This would have permitted the opportunity for me to ask probing questions and participants may have been able to elaborate more. The study participants may have been able to articulate and share more of their thoughts and perceptions about the phenomena under investigation.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. I used a basic qualitative research design to conduct this study. An alternative approach would have been to conduct focus groups and interview the social service supervisors, administrators, and stakeholders to study the phenomena under investigation. The focus group interviews approach would have allowed me to make observations. Alternatively, I could have created a client satisfaction survey and surveyed the youth and emancipating young adults about the CILSGP services they received at the study site. In another alternative approach, I could have conducted a case study. I could have two comparison groups. Group A would be composed of the program administrators. Group B would be composed of the social service supervisors. I could have interviewed the two comparison groups. Then, I could have triangulated their perceptions regarding the phenomena under investigation. I could have conducted a phenomenological study. I could have examined the lived experiences of the social service supervisors and the phenomena under investigation.

Conversely, I could have selected quantitative approaches to conduct this study. I could have conducted a quantitative study or mixed-methods design. I could have created a Likert Scale to survey the social services supervisor about the phenomena under investigation.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

My doctoral journey was a challenging and demanding process. Butcher (2025) noted that "scholarship involves a lifelong commitment to thinking, questioning, and pursuing useful knowledge that advances the discipline and makes a valuable contribution to a profession" (p.8). The idea for this project study is based on my professional experiences and personal aspirations. The primary aim of this basic qualitative study was to understand how supervisors describe the CILSGP PD training they receive and what learning activities they identify as best for facilitating the PD of the CILSGP. In addition, I wanted to fill the gap in practice, make a scholarly contribution, and create positive social change in child welfare and adult education. During my doctoral journey, I learned the difference between scholarship and research. Furthermore, I develop the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct this project study.

I learned that leadership is a perpetual journey. I experienced many challenges on this doctoral journey. These experiences shaped my doctoral journey and motivated me to achieve my goals. While an EdD is a terminal degree, I often reflect on this experience and ponder what the next endeavor is for me academically and professionally. I plan to continue using the educational research skills I learned to advance research in adult education. This doctoral journey has enhanced my leadership skills. This doctoral project study and project development afforded me the opportunity to conduct a basic qualitative research project study and develop a white paper with recommendations. The white paper with recommendations will be used to inform and persuade stakeholders. I am prepared to share my knowledge and skills, inspire others, and promote social change.

As a scholar, I experienced challenges grasping the fundamentals of scholarly writing. According to Heron et al. (2021), “professional academic writing has become high stakes and is often framed as fraught with tension and anxiety” (p. 538). I have spent countless hours writing, receiving feedback, reflecting, and revising drafts. Therefore, I located resources through the Walden University Writing Center. A strategy recommended by my committee chair and the Walden University Writing Center is to follow the MEAL plan. Thus, I learned the significance of scholarly writing, the MEAL plan, and how conciseness and clarity in scholarly writing add value to the study and communicate the study’s findings.

As a practitioner, my biggest strength was methodology. I enjoyed researching and selecting the most appropriate research design to address the problem and guiding the study's research questions. I devised the participant study criteria and used purposeful sampling to select the participants. I also understand how IRB approval, participant rights, informed consent, and protection from harm for study participants are paramount to conducting research and collecting data.

The most challenging process was completing the data analysis. I learned that data analysis was a reiterative process requiring extensive time reexamining data. When researchers engage in critical reflection, it ensures academic rigor and trustworthiness of the study (Lim, 2025). Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I identified patterns and categories that connected to the study's problem, purpose, research questions, and conceptual framework. Data were analyzed using content analysis, deductive, and inductive coding. In addition, I spent extensive time engaging in deep

reflection to interpret the data. I identified the emerging themes that answered the study's research questions. Finally, I identified the study's findings. Thus, I learned that data analysis was critical to determining the most appropriate project genre and developing the project.

As a project developer, I learned that developing the project entailed a lot of careful consideration and attention to detail. The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the PD needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. I was able to conduct a basic qualitative project study and develop a project to address the problem in the local setting. Once I identified the study's findings and after consulting with my committee members, it became evident that a white paper with recommendations was the most appropriate project genre. The purpose of a white paper is to provide recommendations to the leaders and stakeholders based on the study's findings. The white paper with recommendations can provide the study site leadership and stakeholders with valuable insight about the PD needs of the social service supervisors to deliver CILSGP.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

When I reflect on the overall importance of the work, I believe this project will be beneficial to the social service supervisors, the study site leaders and stakeholders. This

project study gives voice to the social service supervisors' and provides insight into their perceptions of the PD they receive at the study site to deliver CILSGP. This project white paper with recommendations provides the study site leadership and stakeholders with insight to understand the PD needs of the social service supervisor to deliver CILSGP and a blueprint to implement the recommendations. This project study contributes to social change by addressing the gap in practice.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. The findings from this study revealed that social service supervisors' describe (a) the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP; (b) their motivation to engage in PD to support their job performance to support CILSGP; and (c) active leaning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD the CILSGP. he social service supervisors. Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model was the conceptual framework for the study.

I created a white paper to inform and persuade the study site leadership and stakeholders. The recommendations in this white paper are to: (a) create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support CILSGP knowledge and skills development; (b) cultivate a social service supervisor CILSGP professional learning community to foster networking and

collaboration; (d) create and administer systemic CILSGP PD annual needs assessment to all the study site social services supervisors; and (e) design evidence-based and data driven systemic PD for CILSGP, incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop.

The white paper with recommendations has the potential for positive social change in individual, organizational, societal levels. The potential for positive for the social service supervisors may have their PD needs met and fill the gap in practice. This will build their capacity to provide oversight and better deliver CILSGP. The white paper with recommendations has the potential for social change at the study site because the white paper provides the study site leadership, program administrators and stakeholders with a blueprint to address the issues of the PD needs of the social service supervisors. The recommendations of the white paper may facilitate collaboration among stakeholders to implement the white paper recommendations. The organization could benefit from the white paper with recommendations as implementing the white paper with recommendations may enhance the social service supervisors' performance and capacity to supervise case workers and thereby improve meeting federal benchmarks. The implementation of the white paper with recommendations could benefit society by delivering quality services to emancipating young adults to improve their life trajectory by promoting self-sufficiency. Lastly, the implementation of this white paper with recommendations could impact positive social change by enhancing service delivery, resources, and responsiveness to the needs of social service supervisors, other social service professionals, emancipating young adults, and society.

This project study and white paper with recommendations has potential theoretical implications. Theoretical implications may be gleaned from this study because this study demonstrates that Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model can be applied as a conceptual framework to the field of child welfare. Furthermore, Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model was utilized to examine the perceptions of the social service supervisors' PD.

Future research could be conducted to expand on this study and white paper with recommendations. A researcher could conduct a qualitative study to explore the perceptions of the social service supervisors of PD after the implementation of the white paper with recommendations. Perhaps a researcher could conduct a project evaluation and evaluate the CILSGP program delivery and outcomes.

Conclusion

The issue this basic qualitative study sought to address was that despite social service supervisors' desire to increase their knowledge and skills in providing oversight of the foster care independent living program for youth, program administrators are unsure of the additional PD needs of the social service supervisors. I utilized purposeful sampling to recruit nine study participants that met the study criteria. The conceptual framework for the study was Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model. Data were collected using online survey interviews. Data were analyzed using content thematic analysis, deductive and inductive coding. Three themes emerged from the data. The social service supervisors: (a) describe the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support CILSGP; (b) they are motivated to engage in PD to support their job performance

to support CILSGP; (c) identified the active learning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on CILSGP independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the CILSGP.

I created a white paper with recommendations to inform and persuade the stakeholders. The recommendations of the white paper are to: (a)create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support CILSGP knowledge and skills development; (b) cultivate a social service supervisor CILSGP professional learning community to foster networking and collaboration; (c) create and administer systemic CILSGP PD annual needs assessment to all the study site social services supervisors; and (d) design evidence based and data driven systemic PD for CILSGP, incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop.

In conclusion, this basic qualitative project study and white paper with recommendations was created to inform and persuade the leadership and stakeholders in the local setting to address the problem of the study and gap in practice by implementing this white paper with recommendations. The benefits of addressing the problem of the study and the gap in practice may empower the social service supervisors by enhancing their professional skillset and building their capacity to deliver CILSGP. Furthermore, the emancipating youth and young adults may benefit by receiving better delivery of CILSGP. Thereby, the emancipating youth and young adults can improve their self-sufficiency skills and life's trajectory. The local setting may benefit from implementation of the white paper with recommendations by ensuring that the social services supervisors

and caseworkers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver CILSGP thereby enhancing organizational effectiveness. Finally, the implementation of this white paper with recommendations may benefit society by the responsiveness of the organization to deliver CILSGP services to meet the citizens and communities needs and promote social change.

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Appendix A: The Project

Social Service Supervisors' Perceptions of Professional Development Training:

A White Paper

By Jaida Patterson

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate social service supervisors' perceptions on the PD they receive; the influence the PD has on their self-concept as a learner, their motivation to learn, and their prior experiences; and the learning activities most useful in the PD. The study site was a nonprofit child welfare agency in the Midwest U.S..

This white paper presents the study's findings of a basic qualitative study that explored the social service supervisors' perceptions of professional development, (PD), training who were employed by the study site and delivered critical services to support the welfare of youth. The study included nine social service supervisors and data were collected using online survey interviews. Data were analyzed using content analysis, employing deductive and inductive coding. The study findings resulted in four recommendations. In this white paper, I will outline the current problem, provide recommendations and the benefits of implementing the white paper. Finally, I will discuss future research recommendations.

Problem Defined

The problem that was addressed through this study was that program administrators are unsure of the additional professional development (PD) needs of the social service supervisors at the study site, a foster care independent living program for youth. The social service supervisors' responses were analyzed using content analysis. The study's findings revealed that the social service supervisors describe: (a) describe the absence of systemic PD at the study site to support the delivery of independent living skills and services; (b) they are motivated to engage in PD to support their job performance to support the delivery of independent living skills and services; (c) identified the active learning strategies, including collaborative opportunities, and PD content focused on independent living as best practices for facilitating their PD of the delivery of independent living skills and services.

To solve the study's findings and achieve the study's purpose, the researchers examined the social service supervisors' perceptions, reviewed the literature, and synthesized the study's findings, with scholarly peer reviewed academic resources. This process led to the identification of these focal areas. Here are the four recommendations derived from the study: The

recommendations of the white paper are to: (a) create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support knowledge and skills development for delivery of CILSGP services; (b) cultivate a social service supervisor professional learning community to foster networking and collaboration; (c) create and administer systemic annual PD needs assessment to all study site social services supervisors to support the delivery of CILSGP services; and (d) design evidence based and data driven systemic PD incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop aimed at the delivery of CILSGP services.

Recommendation #1 Create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support knowledge and skills development delivery of independent and delivery of CILSGP services.

Recommendation #1: Create a task force composed of key stakeholders to design and create an implementation plan for PD to support knowledge and skills development for delivery of independent living skills and services.

A task force is composed of stakeholders within an organization to provide their expertise and guidance about a specific issue or problem (Grigsby, 2008). Task forces are temporary established groups within an organization whose purpose is to address a specific problem (Wegmann & Schärrer, 2020). Likewise, Mavrot et al. (2024) noted that task force are flexible short-term groups that are composed of highly qualified individuals and whose aim is to advise policymakers. Conversely, teams and committees are distinctly different from task force; teams are individuals group together to collaborate for a specific purpose, and committees are ongoing and tend to have structured bylaws, and broader long term aims and goals (Grigsby, 2008; Taylor et al., 2021).

Recommendation #2 Cultivate a social service supervisor professional learning community to foster networking and collaboration.

Professional learning communities can strengthen individual professional growth and build capacity within organizations. The notion of professional learning communities is popular in education and teacher PD (Moosa et al., 2024). In seminal works, Hord (1997) noted that PLCs involved

Recommendation #2 Cultivate a social service supervisor professional learning community to foster networking and collaboration.

educator collaboration to enhance student achievement and teacher PD. Moreover, DuFour (2004) noted that

PLCs are a collective effort and shared responsibility of educators, focused on learning and data-driven decision-making to transform the educational environment. A professional learning community (PLC) is a collective group of educators who come together regularly to share, reflect, collaborate, and integrate their experiences to promote growth in their teaching practices and student achievement (Christensen, 2025). PLC allows educators to dialogue about the issues they experience in an inclusive environment with a shared commitment to solving problems and challenges (Hudson, 2024; Ikpuri & Peter, 2024). Concina (2023) noted that it is important for music teachers to participate in communities of practice in the early years and stages of their careers because they tend to receive valuable advice and learn skills from teachers with more tenure and experiences. In an exploratory qualitative study, Adrienko-Genin et al. (2023) examined the implementation and benefits of a remote interdisciplinary professional learning community on the PD of university faculty. The study findings revealed that faculty engaged in self-reflection which resulted in sharing knowledge and learning new concepts, innovation, and data driven decision- making. Additional study findings revealed that all of the study participants learned new techniques and teaching methods (Andrienko-Genin et al., 2023). Finally, the study findings indicated that the faculty were able to build relationships and trust (Andrienko-Genin et al., 2023). Thus, the interdisciplinary PLC fostered networking and collaboration across the university departments (Andrienko-Genin et al., 2023).

Professional learning communities have significance in the field of organizational learning and organizational development. The concept of professional learning communities' emerged from theories of organizational learning (Antinluoma et al., 2021; Senge, 1997). Senge (1997) noted five characteristics that shape learning organizations: (a) personal commitment to learning, (b) individual reflection, (c) shared commitment and vision, (d) team learning that supports desired outcomes, and (e) organizations that acknowledge interconnectedness within the organization. Furthermore, Senge (1997) noted that learning organizations continuously prioritize learning, the individual, team collaboration, and have leadership that supports and fosters learning. Thus, the creation of a professional learning community can assist the stakeholders with building the capacity of the social service supervisors and organization to deliver CILSGP.

Recommendation #3 Create and administer systemic annual PD needs assessment to all study site supervisors to support the delivery of CILSGP services.

Recommendation #3 Create and administer annual systemic PD needs assessment to all social services supervisors to support the delivery of CILSGP.

Learning needs assessment is essential to understanding the needs of

adult learners and designing effective PD. The concept of learning needs originates in adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980). In adult learning theory, the process of reflection in the learner is a focus and the adult learner is encouraged to self-identify their gaps in knowledge and skills and to also develop goals to address their individual learning needs (Al-Ismail et al., 2023). In a cross-sectional qualitative study, Munyaneza et al., (2024) examined the continuing PD needs of health care professionals across a healthcare system. The purpose of the study was to examine the continuing PD programs offered in the healthcare system. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 35 study participants. The study sample composed health care professionals of all disciplines and levels within the healthcare system. Semistructured interviews and focus groups were conducted with the study participants. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data and identify themes. Munyaneza et al., identified key themes that the healthcare professional perceived that the PD offerings lacked relevancy, were not easily available and accessible to the health care professionals. Additional study findings suggested that health care professionals were not involved in the development and planning of PD. Furthermore, the study findings indicated that health care professional were motivated to participate in PD and made recommendation for PD and changes to PD courses.

Overall, the study findings indicate that healthcare system's comprehensive PD, CPD, program was not organized and that relevant and accessible CPD programs were unavailable. This contributed to the ineffectiveness of CPD programs. Munyanez et al. (2024) recommended the following to solve these challenges: (a) create a national council to coordinate CPD programs; (b) recruit CPD coordinators at all levels; (c) ensure that there is an established CPD curriculum for all hospital disciplines; (d) administer a national survey to assess the learning needs of the all health care professionals to assess gaps in CPD programs and implementation; and (e) develop and expand the use of tele-education CPD program to build the health care professionals capacity to use technology. These study findings and recommendations are consistent with my study findings (see Munyanez et al. 2024). Furthermore, the recommendation to assess the learning needs and identify gaps in CPD programming in a health care system to improve CPD programs demonstrates that health care professionals perceptions and experiences of CPD across a healthcare system are similar to the perceptions and experiences of the social service supervisors' PD in the field of child welfare in the local setting.

An individual adult learner needs assessment is a tool whereby the individual analyzes and identifies the specific gaps between their current level of knowledge and skills and their desired learning goals to achieve competency (Ford, 2020). Thus, a learning needs assessment can assist stakeholders and PD designers with acquiring the necessary information to design effective PD based on the learner's current knowledge and what the learner identifies as necessary to enhance their knowledge and skills. Additionally,

when stakeholders within organizations conduct learning needs assessments, they can understand and prioritize the learning needs of the individuals and create learning opportunities that support individual, team, and organizational growth (Ford, 2020). In summary, learning needs assessments can benefit the individuals, PD designers, and organizations. Task forces are a common vehicle used in organizational change.

Recommendation #4 Design evidence based and data driven systemic PD incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop to support CILSGP services.

Recommendation #4 Design evidence based and data driven systemic PD, incorporating adult learning theory and a systemic feedback loop to support CILSGP services.

PD developers should include adult learning theories in the design of PD to ensure that PD meets the unique needs of adult learners. Adult learning theory can serve as a guide to develop PD in all contexts (Stokes & Berlacher, 2022). The conceptual framework for this qualitative research study was grounded in adult learning theories that serve as a foundation for understanding how adults learn. Malcolm Knowles's (1978) concept of andragogy distinguishes how adults learn versus how children learn. Knowles et al.'s (1998) andragogy in practice model conceptual framework guided this basic qualitative project study. For example, incorporating the theory of andragogy and principles of adult learning in designing PD highlights the importance of the learner and how their need to know, motivation, prior experiences, and relevancy to their role provide a foundation to their learning (Bahrani, 2024).

I selected the Transformational Leadership theory of J. M. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) to guide the creation of the white paper for this study. Accordingly, principles of transformational leadership can be incorporated into PD. For example, transformational learning theories in designing PD emphasize the importance and role of engaging in critical reflection and discourse and how that shift in thinking assists with acquiring a new perspective (Nair et al., 2025). Moreover, PD designers should incorporate adult learning theories into PD design because it enhances adult learning and influences the selection of curricula, instructional techniques and strategies, and the evaluation of PD (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2022). Therefore, I recommend that the task force create and administer a systemic learner needs assessment to the social services supervisors so that the PD designer can design effective PD for the social service supervisors.

Benefits of the Recommendations

In conclusion, this basic qualitative project study and white paper with recommendations was created to inform and persuade the leadership and stakeholders in the local setting to address the problem of the study and gap in practice by implementing this white paper with recommendations. The benefits of addressing the problem of the study and the gap in practice may empower the social service supervisors by enhancing their professional skillset and building their capacity to deliver independent living skills and services.. Furthermore, the emancipating youth and young adults may benefit by receiving better delivery of independent living skills and services. Thereby, the emancipating youth and young adults can improve their self-sufficiency skills and life's trajectory. The local setting may benefit from implementation of the white paper with recommendations by ensuring that the social services supervisors and caseworkers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver independent living skills and services, thereby enhancing organizational effectiveness. Finally, the implementation of this white paper with recommendations may benefit society by the responsiveness of the organization to deliver independent living skills and services to meet the citizens and communities needs and promote social change.

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Appendix B: Approval for Figure 1

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		Rightsholder	Taylor & Francis Informa UK Ltd - Books
Author / Editor	Knowles, Malcolm S., Holton III, Elwood F., Swanson, Richard A., Robinson, Petra A.	Publication Type	e-Book
Date	12/20/2020		

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