THE DEVELOPMENT OF COGNITIVE MORAL REASONING
IN AN ADULT DEGREE COMPLETION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare the development of cognitive moral reasoning of nontraditional seniors enrolled in an adult, degree completion program with traditional seniors enrolled at the same university. A second comparison group consisted of a national group of traditional seniors. The moral development of all three groups was measured through the administration of the Defining Issues Test 2 (DIT2). The DIT2 is a standardized psychometric instrument that measures an individual’s level of moral reasoning according to one of three schemas, ranging from the simplest to the most complex. According to the developers of the test, the most significant variable in the development of moral reasoning is level of formal education. In this cross-sectional study, the nontraditional seniors scored significantly lower than either comparison group when measuring for the most complex schema. Discussion of the results considers possible reasons why.