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# THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE NOVICE NURSING DEAN:

# EXPLORING THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

By

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1995

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy -- Nursing

School of Nursing
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University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 2013

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UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

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We recommend the dissertation prepared under our supervision by

Melissa Bouws

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**The Lived Experience of the Novice Nursing Dean: Exploring the Meaning and Significance**

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ABSTRACT

**The Lived Experience of the Novice Nursing Dean:
Exploring the Meaning and Significance**

by

Melissa Rae Bouws

Dr. Lori Candela, Examination Committee Chair
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Deans of nursing hold a unique position for the future of the profession. Few others have the potential to bring about change within the academic setting, or hold such a strong influence on the future of nursing and on our students. Current statistics reveal multiple vacancies in nursing dean positions. Further understanding of how nursing deans begin their role, attain their identity as dean, and successfully execute this important position is needed to recruit and retain strong leaders who have the methods and skills to develop and support the advancement of the nursing profession. Understanding the process of becoming nursing dean can advance knowledge development in the profession as it applies to retention and recruitment of nurse administrators.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the essence of the lived experience for those who have recently advanced to academic dean of nursing. Theories of identity, human becoming and role transition were referenced as conceptual underpinnings for the study. The interpretive phenomenological approach of van Manen guided the inquiry and data analysis. The overarching research question was: What is the lived experience of a novice nursing dean?

Purposive and snowball sampling was used to select participants based on their years as dean. The sample included deans that are Registered Nurses, have the title of Dean, have not been in a dean role previously, and have been appointed in their first dean position three years or less. Seven nursing deans participated in the study, and the technique used to gather data was the recording of face-to-face interviews conducted in a semi-structured format. The interviews were transcribed and manual coding was performed on the data to create categories or themes that reflected the data.

The results yielded four major themes and 16 subthemes. The overarching themes of sacrifice, lack of preparation for the role, the uniqueness of the nursing dean role, and highly political environments inform what a nursing dean experiences within the first three years of their role. The information gathered in this study provides more understanding of the complex role of novice nursing deans. It also provides new insight that will be useful as we look to recruit and retain these important leaders.

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# DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to nursing deans. Your tireless efforts, many sacrifices, and commitment to your role do not go unnoticed. Thank you for all you do to advance our profession.

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# CHAPTER I

## PHENOMENON OF INTEREST AND AIM OF THE STUDY

Deans of nursing hold a unique position for the future of the profession. Few others have the potential to bring about change within the academic setting or hold such a strong influence on the future of nursing and on our students. Their ability to place an emphasis on the advancement of the discipline is of pivotal importance.

Current statistics reveal multiple vacancies in nursing dean positions and that nursing deans tend to remain in their position only five to seven years (Quell, 2005). Studies undertaken in the 1990s indicate that early burnout, lack of job satisfaction, role ambiguity, and role stress often occur and may be related to a lack of preparation for the responsibilities of the job (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002). The role of dean is the least studied position in the academy (Blass, 2011; Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002). By revealing aspects of being a dean and discovering the experiences and needs of the novice dean, new knowledge will be generated to better understand those who are nursing deans or may be considering the role.

Further understanding of how nursing deans begin their role, attain their identity as dean, and successfully execute this important position is needed to recruit and retain strong leaders who have the knowledge and skills to develop and support the advancement of the nursing profession (Potempa & Tilden, 2004). The essence of the lived experience of the new dean was examined using the method of interpretive phenomenology. Theories of identity, human becoming, and role transition were used as conceptual underpinnings for the study, as they coincided with prior research findings

and related to the holistic aspect of the dean role. The theories gave a rationale to the research and enabled further understanding of the process of becoming a nursing dean.

## Aim of the Study

New deans of nursing are the center of change in academic leadership that gives faculty and stakeholders new expectations for a school of nursing. The arrival of a new dean, however, can also be a time of stress (Hegyvary & DeTornyay, 1991). Redman (2001) described barriers faced by nursing deans and determined that strong administrative and leadership skills were needed to handle the challenges of integrating aspects of the role. Past studies have revealed aspects of the role and what this administrative position entails (Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1999; Wolverton, Gmelch, & Montez, 2001; Redman, 2001; Green & Ridenour, 2004).

Novice deans risk experiencing role ambiguity and role stress because of these challenges and the lack of preparation (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002). What is not known is how these deans, particularly deans of nursing, experience this new role and how they identify themselves as a nursing dean. The characteristics of the dean's personal journey are important to understand in order to appreciate what may be needed to successfully transition future novice deans.

The aim of this study was to illustrate the lived experience of novice nursing deans and to portray aspects of the role as they are perceived by the dean. The method proposed for this study was interpretive phenomenology, as it revealed an essence of the phenomenon through the everyday lived experience of the novice dean. This methodology was appropriate for the research goal because there is a dearth of studies in this area. An understanding of the lived experiences of the novice dean is needed to

develop further studies and interventions that may answer more specific questions about the role.

The long-term objectives of the proposed research were to discover strategies that facilitated the transition to the nursing dean role to ensure future leadership can be successful as nursing deans. The outcomes of the proposed research revealed the needs that novice deans anticipate to facilitate transitional outcomes and retention for future nursing academic leadership. Nursing education is at a crossroads of transformational change and there are challenges that are specific to the role of nursing dean. It is therefore important to further understand the nursing dean's role, how the nursing dean experiences this role, and how the deanship becomes a part of their identity.

## Phenomenon of Interest

The methodology that was used in this study is hermeneutic phenomenology informed by the work of Max van Manen (1984). This philosophical basis focuses on observing a phenomenon and finding a new interpretation. The objectives of the study were to examine the lived experience of a novice dean and to reveal the total sphere of experiences defined by the people and events encountered. These experiences gave meaning to the phenomenon.

Deans in schools of nursing have little preparation for their role, which can make the transition to dean all the more difficult (Blass, 2011; Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002; Green & Ridenour, 2004; Quell, 2005). Nursing is a profession that has been undervalued and is new to universities (Redman, 2001; Thompson, 2011). Deans of nursing need to navigate around issues of highly political environments, limited human, fiscal and material resources, a rapidly changing health care system, and pressures that include demands for

relevant curricula and advanced technology for education delivery (Potempa & Tilden, 2004; Redman, 2001; Kenner, Pressler, & Loving, 2007; Giddens et al., 2008).

The nursing dean is unique in that this role is comprised of mostly women (Musilli-Cerra, 1991; Blass, 2011). Research conducted with deans in the late 1990s indicated that few women had prior managerial experience as deans or associate deans, and a higher percentage had been department chairs before becoming deans. Few had leadership or administrative experience outside the academy prior to taking the deanship (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002). The most common trajectory to the deanship is that of leaders who begin as faculty and progress to department chair or faculty governance roles. They then realize that the deanship is not just an extension of a faculty role, but rather a complex and challenging position. These individuals quickly discover how great the preparation and obligations are, how unforgiving the schedule, and how varied the activities (Green & Ridenour, 2004). Deanship is a different role from that of department chair, with dissimilar expectations, as many deans come to realize when undertaking its various responsibilities for the first time.

Given all of the challenges that novice deans face, it is essential that their experiences are disclosed. This can be extremely helpful in considering potential strategies to assist future deans to fulfill the role successfully. Nursing deans are the leaders who will shape the future of our profession. Retention and professional growth of these nurse leaders, despite the enormous external challenges, is critical in order to advance nursing education.

## Focus: Specific Context of the Phenomenon

Deans in nursing schools have a tendency to leave the deanship in a relatively short period of time (Quell, 2005). One reason for this concerning trend is that many deans enter a phase of "disenchantment" (Pressler & Kenner, 2008, p. 2) with their role. This is a result of lack of preparation for what this role entails. As this country faces a massive nursing shortage, and the longevity of academic deans is "documented in the literature to be less than seven years" (Quell, 2005, p. 13), there is a need to address the leadership in schools of nursing across the country. In past years, the number of new nursing deans has increased, and longevity in the position has declined (Green & Ridenour, 2004). It is critical to the future of nursing that sufficient numbers of aspiring leaders can successfully make this transition.

A personal perspective on the transition to nursing dean is needed to illuminate unique aspects of the role and to understand what becoming a nursing dean entails. The everyday experiences related by nursing deans allow further understanding of how novice deans self-identify with the role. The role of nursing dean is comprised of not only learning the tasks and becoming familiar with the work role, but a personal lived experience including the way a nursing dean begins to identify him/herself as "dean". This area of research yields a deeper understanding of what this role entails and what may be needed to further support novice nursing deans.

There is a lack of current research into the role of nursing dean; the research that has been published is focused on deans from other disciplines. Some dissertations that have focused on nursing deans have investigated topics such as faculty's perception of the dean, deans' job satisfaction throughout their years in the post, feminism and the role of

dean, the concept of power in the dean role, and aspects of the nursing dean's life course that brought them to the position.

The concept of deanship as it involves identity, human becoming, and role transition has not been previously studied, and these theories were predicted to guide the research as it incorporates a broad aspect of the dean role. The reasons for lack of retention and recruitment of these essential nurse leaders were revealed as aspects of the role were made known.

## Study Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the fundamental nature of the lived experience of a novice nursing dean. The justification for this focus was the lack of existing research into this particular position in the academy and the complexity of the role, which is documented in the literature but not fully understood from the perspective of a novice dean.

Aspects of the nursing dean position documented in the literature correlate with today's challenges in nursing education. These weigh heavily on the shoulders of nursing deans, who operate from a limited power base in academia but are still expected to excel in dealing with pressures from the educational system, the health-care system, and public stakeholders. The frustrations of the role and the lack of job satisfaction create a potential for early burnout (Lamborn, 1991; Quell, 2005).

This study not only provided insight into how novice nursing deans experience the role itself, but how a new dean identified him/herself fulfilling the role. As the personal lived experience was clarified during this time of transition, the insight gained can help

nursing leaders identify and implement strategies for successful transition to the role of nursing dean.

## Operational Definitions

Novice University Dean of Nursing, Dean of Nursing, Nursing Dean, College Dean of Nursing: the program director of a degree program in nursing under the authority of a regionally accredited university or college that has never held the position before and has been in the role three years or less. The degree program offered by a public or private college provides graduates with an Associate of Science Degree in Nursing (ADN) or Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing (BSN) and prepares the student to take the National Council for Licensure Examination for Registered Nursing (NCLEX-RN) to become a registered nurse. The nursing dean reports directly to the president or provost of the university and is the chief executive and academic officer of the nursing program. The nursing dean works collaboratively with deans of the other departments and university vice presidents, and has responsibility for all education, research, service, and administrative functions within the school of nursing (Robillard, 2000).

## Research Questions

### *What is the lived experience for novice deans of nursing?*

This was the overarching question for the research investigation. To set the tone of this question, my role was defined as a learner, not as an expert or authority on this subject. As the methodology for this study was phenomenology, this question allowed an understanding of the deeper significance and structure of this lived experience (Munhall, 2007). The following questions guided the interviews to elicit information from the participants.

***What has your experience been like since becoming a dean?***

Hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on producing rich textual descriptions of experiences in the lives of individuals. As the methodology is concerned with lived experience, this question allowed for the participant to state what first came to mind. As the main focus of phenomenology is with experiences and feelings, this question enabled the exploration of participants' experiences from their perspective, with interpretation by the researcher (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

The move from faculty to administration may involve a considerable amount of stress (DeYoung, 2000). Researchers have found a relationship between this transition and role ambiguity in which new deans do not clearly know what is expected of them (Wild, Ebbers, Shelley, & Gmelch, 2003; Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1999; Robillard, 2000). Women have experienced higher levels of work-related stress after taking a deanship than have men (Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1999). As this literature was published more than 10 years ago, this question captured what the experience is as a novice dean in academia today.

***What in your past experience prepared you for transitioning to the role of dean?***

An objective to this study was to understand the nature of the change in identity that a novice dean experiences. This prediction was based on the literature and the theoretical frameworks of the study. The theory of human becoming describes how someone may initially attempt to find the meaning of a new situation by reflection and confirming what they know from previous experiences (Parse, 1996). This also correlates with identity theory, in which a person is self-reflexive and identifies themselves according to the roles they once filled and how this role relates to society. For example, the initial stage of

identity is concerned with how the new role corresponds to what society expects of it and what is reflected based on past experiences (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Nursing deans often come to the position without any formal training in leadership and management, and learn aspects of the role by trial and error (Kenner & Pressler, 2006; Salewski, 2002; Quell, 2005). Deans have reported that learning what their job entails is usually due to past administrative experience as department chair or in other academic administrative roles.

This question shed light on new deans' past experiences and how they are brought into the new role. This question also determined if the experiences of this initial time period correlated with the theoretical framework and past literature.

***What does a successful transition mean to you as a new dean?***

This question relates to the literature on what a successful or unsuccessful transition means to a dean. Effective role transition occurs when the person at least partially meets the social expectations associated with the role, but may require more knowledge to make the transition most effective (DeYoung, 2000). Wolverton and Gmelch's (2002) studies indicated that a dean is perceived to have settled into the role when there is a sense of commitment and pride in the institution, competence in what the role entails, and ease with the faculty, staff and students as leader of the college and the community. A successful role transition may mean many things, depending on the view of the novice dean.

Successfully transitioning to a new role is a process of identifying oneself as fulfilling that role (DeYoung, 2000). The question being asked determined if there was a defining

moment when the participant truly felt that they were dean, and when "dean" became a part of their identity.

***If you could sum up your experience in a short word or phrase, what would that be?***

The rationale for asking this question was to capture the initial thought that came to the participant's mind when thinking about their new role. It also revealed aspects of the role than can help others in the novice dean position. The role of the nursing dean has been poorly researched and related literature is limited. It was important to highlight aspects of the dean's academic environment in order to make available the necessary resources and ensure a successful role transition for future deans (Quell, 2005).

## Summary

The role of nursing dean entails vast responsibilities for which the novice often has very little preparation. The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experience of new nursing school deans, and to discover how they begin to identify themselves as a dean and fulfill the role. The study's conceptual framework, based on the theories of human becoming, identity and role transition, provided a way of placing the study in the context of how novice nursing deans transition to the identity of dean. The lack of recruitment and retention of nursing deans, as well as the dearth of research into this position, indicated a need for deeper understanding of what is entailed when a new appointee first takes on the role.

# CHAPTER II

## EVOLUTION OF THE STUDY

There are various aspects of the nursing dean role that make it unique and challenging compared to deanships in other disciplines. Deans of nursing bridge the gap between health care and nursing education, are mostly female leaders in a male-dominated sector, and are navigating through a nationwide shortage of nurses and nurse faculty. In addition, novice deans of nursing face specific challenges in learning to fill the position because of a lack of preparation for the role. This transitional phenomenon warrants further study as there is a lack of research on the topic, especially on the role of the nursing dean in a new position. This study was therefore focused on the unique situation of the beginning nursing dean.

The evolution of this study has been developed by a review of the literature pertaining to the nursing dean role and what this leadership position entails. A review of literature was also undertaken into the unique position of the new nursing dean, and what that meant to the role. This chapter is a summary that features characteristics of the dean role, the transition experience, and the involvement of identity and human becoming theories as they apply to the new dean. With a qualitative phenomenological research design, the initial literature review helped to broadly describe what was studied, and gave rationale to the theoretical frameworks that were used as a basis for the study.

### Historical Context: Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review as it relates to the novice nursing dean was twofold; to investigate the nursing dean position itself and to discover what central theories structured the design of the inquiry. The organization of this chapter is

conceptual, as this literature review was built around concepts that pertained to the phenomenon, such as role transition, identity formation, and human becoming. As this study was about the population of new nursing deans, a literature search was also undertaken for information on the position of the academic dean.

The purpose of this synthesis of relevant literature was to delineate the research problem. New lines of inquiry were explored as they related to the dean position, and the appropriateness of the phenomenon was investigated. The review also disclosed what is known about this nursing leadership position, and identified what needed to be studied (Randolph, 2009). The main goal was to understand the uniqueness of this role, and to begin to identify central issues for the novice dean experiencing the role for the first time.

Among the questions that this literature review intended to answer were who the dean is, and what was involved in being a dean. A literature search was performed in 2011 and 2013 on the subject of "deans", "academic deans and role transition", "academic deans and nursing", "dean and nursing", "role transition and college deans", "novice deans", and "academic deans and nursing school". Multiple databases were used, such as WilsonWeb, Google Scholar, the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), the Proquest dissertation and thesis databases, and PubMed. The number of articles found varied from 30 to 939, but 16 articles were found to be relevant for this study. Most of the publications were on the topic of the role of the dean and what it entails, the concept of leadership as it applies to the dean role, and aspects of the interaction with faculty. Most of the literature consisted of narrative descriptions of the role, authored by various nurse administrators.

The publications were limited by inclusion and exclusion criteria. The search was limited to publications in English, and to dates between 1980 and 2012, as seminal articles of research into deans began being published in the early 1990s. I included an additional ten years to the search to include any research that was done prior to the majority of publications on this subject in the early 1990s. Most articles were excluded on the basis of their content or subject matter, to maintain the goal of the review, which was to understand the role of dean. Another focus of the literature review was to understand current relevant issues that face the dean in today's academic environment. This information can be found later in this chapter under the heading Relevance of this Study to Nursing. The literature presented is a representative sample, included to maintain the goal of understanding the role of dean. Inferences were made about the entire population of articles based on the representative sample described. The population of articles that constitute a broader sample of the relevant research into the dean role can be found in Appendix A.

**The Role of Dean**

A survey study that was done more than 20 years ago described the deanship by examining characteristics, functions, and role of nursing deans. The sample included National League of Nursing (NLN) accredited schools, with 306 nursing deans responding to the survey. The survey instrument was intended to collect data about the institution, demographic data, career paths, aspirations, roles and responsibilities, level of satisfaction in the role, and advice to future deans. The purpose of the study was broad, and the use of multivariate and univariate statistics was appropriate for the number of variables with multiple hypotheses. The results indicated that the majority of the deans

were female, tenured, came from a faculty role and planned to stay in the position for less than five years. Their advice to future deans was to develop support networks and to "learn the politics" (Musilli-Cerra, 1991, p. 196).

Although this research is dated, and the lack of current research is evident, this study was included in the literature review as it revealed demographic information about nursing deans. Unfortunately, this survey study revealed little about what these nursing deans experience on a day-to-day basis, and what the role is like in the novice phase.

Del Favero (2006) studied the influence of a particular academic discipline and how this affects the relationship with deans and preparation for their role. The sample was 210 deans in research and doctoral institutions in the US, and used the socialization theory in order to explain how deans experience academic leadership as faculty members and why discipline differences may distinguish their learning. The design was a 128-item survey study. The findings revealed the importance of deans' reliance on past experiences, previous administrative posts, as well as relationships with faculty leaders as the most highly valued approaches to learning what the dean's job entails. How deans understand their role is very much related to the unique experiences they have previously accumulated as faculty members. As this study used the socialization theory to guide the research, it brings a fresh perspective on the role of dean. The main questions of the study focused on experiences and how they contributed to learning the role, and how these experiences are different with each discipline. The research questions that were posed did not directly relate to the socialization theory in this particular study, but this unique aspect of the dean's socialization into the role was significant enough to

incorporate in the theoretical framework for this study, with the inclusion of the identity theory.

Wolverton and Gmelch have published multiple studies that describe the deanship, the background and lifestyle of academic deans, and the leadership quality of deans. The publications written from 1998 to 2000 were based on a sample of 1370 deans of research institutions who completed the 1996 National Survey of Academic Deans in Higher Education. The results of the survey were highlighted through various publications. Some key outcomes were the topics of stress in the dean role, and how institutional and work-defining variables affect stress levels (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002).

The work of Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) paved the way for future research on deans. They identified how stressful the role can be and what aspects of the role affect their personal and professional life. These studies were done on a large population and did not focus on one discipline such as nursing. Nursing deans are unlike other deans in various academic disciplines, and warrant further study.

Another publication utilized the Managerial Stress Model developed by Walter Gmelch, but used the same results from the 1996 survey of the same sample of 1370 deans. This particular focus disclosed that the greatest sources of stress are paperwork, meetings, interruptions and workload, which were described as day-to-day irritants that wear away at deans, disabling and distracting them. The study implies that universities must provide for these deans through continued professional leadership development (Gmelch, Wolverton, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999).

**The dean's job satisfaction.**

The motivational theory of expectancy was used as a theoretical basis for Lamborn's study (1991). It examined factors influencing the job satisfaction of deans in schools of nursing. A sample of 595 deans/directors of baccalaureate and higher degree schools of nursing accredited by the NLN were mailed a survey study, which found significant relationships with each job satisfaction variable, especially the variable of pay and salary. It was noted throughout the responses to the survey that deans need recognition and acknowledgement from their peers, both professional and academic. The study expressed the view that the role of nursing dean needed to be further researched and that educational administrators required mentoring or training for their new duties. The data indicated that historically nursing academic administrators have been promoted to the position of dean through length of tenure, area of personal interest, or persuasion from faculty and university administration. In some instances, the achievement of an advanced academic degree, regardless of the area of specialization, has been enough to designate an individual for the deanship. The research described how, despite this lack of preparation, the nursing dean is expected to administrate and manage their school with the same finesse and business sense used by other deans within the university community (Lamborn, 1991). Although this did not seem to be an objective for Lamborn's (1991) study, the research revealed how nursing deans were actively recruited for their role and rarely sought out the deanship. It also made known how poorly prepared the nursing dean is for the role.

One dissertation focused on why nursing deans now remain in the position for less time than they did in the past. The purpose of this quantitative descriptive survey study

was to determine whether the position of academic dean in schools of nursing has core characteristics associated with job satisfaction, especially in light of the current nursing and faculty shortage. The results indicated that deans reported more skill variety, task significance, autonomy, task identity and positive feedback, indicating high motivation and job satisfaction scores. The research determined that job satisfaction among academic nursing deans is high, and their frequent turnover may be the result of factors other than the tasks associated with the role (Quell, 2005).

This research poses questions of what actually does influence deans' length of time in the position. There is a need for greater exploration of the subject, starting with the novice dean. The influence of other factors, such as self-identification and what fosters smooth role transition needs to be disclosed. Quell's (2005) dissertation study influenced the framework for my research question of the lived experience of the novice dean, indicating that the experience of the novice involves more than knowing and understanding tasks, but holistically "becoming" dean.

One study attempted to measure the existence and intensity of burnout in US colleges of medicine; however, contrary to the implication of its title, it was not just medical schools that were studied. The authors included nursing schools that were led by nursing deans. The sample also included other academic health leaders which were not discipline specific (Mirvis, Graney, Ingram & Tang, 2006). The design took the form of a survey questionnaire, with six parts related to basic demographic and job information, burnout characteristics such as physical and behavioral symptoms, job stressors, personal support systems and job satisfaction. The results were significant in that the deans exhibited a high prevalence of emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment. High

levels of burnout correlated significantly with high levels of personal, job, and environmental stress, and low levels of support or coping resources. The results indicated that deans of medicine experienced a lesser degree of burnout than deans of nursing, which suggests that there is a need for interventions to inhibit the progression of burnout in nursing deans (Mirvis, Graney, Ingram & Tang, 2006).

Unfortunately, the study purpose was not reflected in the sample, as a large number of participants were from nursing schools. This study failed to consider the vast difference between a dean in a school of nursing and a dean of a medical college. For example, demographic data were not included to consider gender. There are unique differences in the struggle that deans of nursing have as the vast majority of this population is women, versus that of medical colleges, which largely consist of men (Redman, 2001).

**Theoretical Underpinnings**

The novice nursing dean brings uniqueness to this research, as the role has not been the focus of previous studies. In order to fill this void in the state of the science, it is important to consider various theories that may apply to the nursing dean who has been recently appointed in the position and how he/she will find the identity as dean. In qualitative research, conceptual frameworks used prior to data collection give direction to the data and rationale for the study (Munhall & Chenail, 2008). These conceptual frameworks give a historical context to the phenomenon, provide theoretical support for the multiple realities that exist for these deans, and create meaning for the various ways they may come to know the dean position. Most importantly, the frameworks are intended to give structure to the design of the study.

**The theory of human becoming.**

In 1981 Rosemarie Parse established the theory of human becoming, which was then known as "Man-living-health: A theory of nursing" (Doucet & Bournes, 2007). Since then, this theory has become a school of thought and research method. Parse created two basic human becoming research methods and a human becoming applied research method that incorporates aspects of the theory in research practice. As my research was based on phenomenology using the methodology of van Manen (1984), this review was focused on the Parse theory of human becoming as it applies to the process of becoming nursing dean, and how this was applicable as a theoretical framework for the study question.

The process of human becoming focuses on universal phenomena that involve reflection, being and becoming, and shaping values and priorities (Parse, 1996). In the process of becoming, there are natural rhythms of life that help to create meaning and define what is real, lived, and cherished (Parse, 1997). There are three main themes that guide the theory, which are "meaning, rhythmicity, and co-transcendence" (Parse, 1996, p. 56). Parse makes clear that these themes are not problems to be solved or minimized, but should be accepted as ways that others actually live the meaning of a phenomenon (Parse, 1996).

The first theme, meaning, is guided by various principles that give definition to it. Meaning is understood when someone values a certain reality through imaging, being pre-reflective on what is unspoken, inferred or tacit, and reflective on what is explicit, known or overt. Living out certain values are cherished beliefs, and these are described by the person through speaking and being silent, moving and being still. The speaking

and being silent, moving and being still are ways that humans live out values. What is interesting about this first theme is that the principles are active all at once. The person going through the phenomenon does not process these principles in phases, but as a single event. The meaning and understanding of an event, with the pre-reflection of what is inferred as well as the moving and confirming what is known, is simultaneous (Parse, 1996).

Parse (1996) describes the second theme, rhythmicity, as rhythmical patterns of relating a meaning. This concept means that humans disclose and conceal meaning at the same time. When opportunities arise in everyday life, these patterns either enable or limit the prospect by connecting or separating from others, ideas, objects, or events. These paradoxical rhythms are patterns of relating meaning for human becoming.

The last theme, co-transcending, empowers unique ways of being original in the process of becoming. It is what Parse (1996) describes as the "creation of the new" (p. 57). The principle of pushing and resisting is demonstrated as someone forging ahead or holding back as what was unfamiliar becomes a familiar way of being. The principle of conformity and nonconformity relates to how the new self relates to others; either striving to be the unique self or being more like others. Certainty and uncertainty are concurrently questioning decisions during the formation of the new self. Again, these principles are acted out simultaneously through each theme of human becoming.

This theory describes the overall process of becoming, and the paradigm shift that happens during the unique transition. It is unique in that it focuses on the individual's perspective, and is not a process that someone goes through in pre-determined stages (Parse, 1996). It is evident from the literature that a nurse entering his or her new

position as dean will experience paradoxes. The process of human becoming as a conceptual framework links the research question on the lived experience of a nursing dean as it relates to formation of self in the role.

A literature review of the theory of human becoming revealed many studies that utilized Parse's theory as a methodology in the research. These studies focused on a specific universal phenomenon, and used the Parse research method to analyze the particular lived experience. A search of the databases of CINAHL, PubMed, Academic Search Primer and Google Scholar yielded over 50 studies that employed her methodology. Other ways in which this theory was used in research were as a guide for nursing practice and as evaluation measures for nursing education interventions (Parse, 1997; Northrup & Cody, 1998; Letcher & Yancey, 2004). Some studies were made to understand the lived experiences of health and quality of life and to further the concepts of the theory. This literature review will focus on how others have used Parse's study as a theoretical framework rather than a research methodology, as this study does not use her method of qualitative research.

Some examples of phenomenological and qualitative descriptive studies that were guided by the theory of human becoming explored various phenomena such as perseverance through a difficult time, quality of life, waiting, living with AIDS, laughter, and feeling confined (Doucet & Bournes, 2007). Although these studies use other methodologies than Parse's phenomenological hermeneutic method, the research was guided by its concepts in the analysis of each phenomenon that occurred. Two of these studies are further examined as they relate to the phenomenon of the novice in the nursing dean role.

A phenomenological study using van Kaam's research method was undertaken to examine perseverance through a difficult time for patients, family members of patients, nurses, and allied health professionals during a severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak in Toronto, Canada, in 2003. The theoretical perspective of this study was guided by the human becoming theory. Analysis of the data from 63 participants that was gathered during the outbreak gave definition to the lived experience. The essence of hope was clear throughout the participants' stories (Bournes & Ferguson-Paré, 2005).

Although the purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of those involved in the outbreak, the research question was to find a "structural definition of the experience of persevering through a difficult time" (Bournes & Ferguson-Paré, 2005, p. 325). As phenomenology focuses more on the essence of the lived experience, this study may have benefited from a grounded theory methodology. Researchers benefit from grounded theory when they wish to explain a given social situation by identifying social experiences such as this. Phenomenology generally has one source of data, the person experiencing the phenomenon. With the sample used in this study, the researchers included health care providers, patients, patient families and nurses. These different perspectives serve more as a social experience of this challenging time, in which a grounded theory methodology may be more appropriate (Baker, Wuest, Noerager-Stern, 1992).

The correlations to the human becoming themes were described through meaning, rhythmicity and co-transcendence. The participant descriptions of persevering through a difficult time led to the meaning of the experience. The personal meaning was described

by these participants using words such as “frightening”, “overwhelming”, “discomfort”, and “uncertainty” (Bournes & Ferguson-Paré, 2005, p. 332).

Rhythmicity was portrayed by the participant’s feelings of what it was like to be separated from valued people or places, and finding new ways to connect with their cherished relationships. The revealing and concealing principle of this theme was depicted by the participants when they openly shared their experiences with some, but chose not to share these experiences with others in their relationship circle.

The last theme of co-transcendence was evident in the participants’ choices of the risks they took. This revealed ways they forged ahead being the unique new self or holding back and conforming to others. Participants described risking their health to care for or visit others, or holding back when they were fearful of helping. Although the personal protective equipment was unfamiliar, the humor, smiles, caring and comfort that were still present were ways in which they transcended the experience (Bournes & Ferguson-Paré, 2005).

A descriptive exploratory study was undertaken to understand the quality of life of patients receiving acute psychiatric care. A review of data from 24 participants yielded themes such as feelings of loss, shifting value priorities, the influence of relationships, and the hope that sustains these patients (Fisher & Mitchell, 1998).

The themes that emerged through the findings of the study were further discussed in light of the three central themes of the human becoming theory. Meaning was described by the patients as shifting their priorities in life. Certain day-to-day experiences had different meanings, and the participants described new dreams as they looked at themselves in a different way (Fisher & Mitchell, 1998).

Rhythmicity was evident in the participants' personal relationships. They spoke of feeling uncomfortable even with those who were supportive of them. They appreciated help, yet resented it, and wanted to be with others, but didn't have the strength to engage in conversation. These rhythmical patterns of relating shaped their continuous becoming (Fisher & Mitchell, 1998).

The last theme of co-transcending was verbalized by the participants using metaphors such as seeing a "light at the end of the tunnel" or "forcing myself to do what was wanted" (Fisher & Mitchell, 1998, p. 102). The unique process of originating was evident in these participants as they willed themselves to move forward through struggle, and maintained hope throughout the process.

These two studies were presented because of their correlation with the experience of a new dean in an unfamiliar role. Both the phenomena of persevering through a difficult time and finding quality of life through personal struggle are relevant to what the new dean experiences as described in the literature. Through these research findings, one can appreciate the process of human becoming as it is depicted with Parse's themes and principles and how it is unique for each individual.

As new nursing deans go through the process of becoming dean and mastering the role, it is important to consider different theoretical frameworks that guided the research. Human becoming is a nursing theory that described contrasting paradoxes that people may experience when they begin a new phase of life. This new phase re-defines who they are as persons. This theory explained the phenomenon of a new self, although it is important to consider the formation of the dean's identity.

**Identity theory.**

Identity theory stems from the discipline of psychology and seeks to explain an individual's role-related behaviors and how they are influenced by society. The theory determines that society has an influence on the self and the roles that are fulfilled. Role identities are defined by each person in their own unique way, and the definition of self is actually a consequence of the roles one occupies. Role identity theorists have focused on the correlation between the individual meanings of occupying a particular role and the behaviors that a person exhibits in that role while interacting with others (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Relationships are an important part of role identity. A person's relationships with others help form their identity through the networks of social roles they interact with (Stryker & Burke, 2000). With the process of identity, expectations of the role are considered in order to relate their role to others (Stets & Burke, 2000).

A concept associated with identity theory is commitment, which is relevant to the preservation of an identity. Identity theory proposes that the salience of a particular identity will be determined by the person's commitment to that role. The more a person is committed to an identity, which is demonstrated in how he/she interacts with others and how he/she value the importance of relationships, the higher the level of identity salience will be (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995).

It is believed that role identities involve action in the role. This action comes from a set of expectations that are considered appropriate by others. Self-identity is the main concept that connects social structure with an individual's action in a role (Hogg, Terry, & White 1995).

Motivation and role action are associated with the commitment to an identity. Performing in a role without identity is empty behavior without motive or incentive. In order to fulfill a role properly, an individual should have full commitment to their identity. When individuals are committed, they do not need to be tied to certain tasks that fulfill the role, but are more concerned with whether they are meeting up to their own personal identity standards (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). This makes the commitment of role identity personal and reflexive.

Enacting a role adequately validates a person's status as a role member and reflects positively on how he/she view themselves, enhancing self-esteem. Alternatively, perceptions of poor role performance may bring doubts about one's self-worth, leading to psychological distress (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995).

Although identity theory stems from social psychology, it has very little representation in the discipline of nursing. A literature search was performed in 2012 and 2013 using the search terms "identity formation and nursing", "identity formation and nursing education", "identity and deans", and "identity formation and roles". The databases utilized were Google Scholar, CINAHL, Academic Search Primer and PubMed. Many of the publications that were found focused on the concepts of gender, adolescent phases of development, gay and lesbian, and race or ethnicity identity formation. These terms were excluded, and the relevant search that was included applied to professional identity as this correlated with the focus of this study.

A search on the topic of professional identity formation brought forth very few articles. For example, using CINAHL and searching for the term "identity formation and professional role" yielded only seven publications. A recent systematic review of the

literature on professional identities and higher education was found. This study identified 20 articles that discussed the topic but failed to make a strong connection to professional identities. The authors of this study discussed how further research is needed to understand the strain between personal and professional values in the higher education setting (Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012).

Another significant study in the literature used a grounded theory design and focused on the process of establishing the professional identity of Japanese nurses. This study mentioned that there was a dearth of research on the topic of professional identity and the nursing profession. The authors studied 18 Japanese nurses using interviews and observations. The themes that emerged from the data stressed the importance of learning from work experiences, recognizing the value of the profession, forming an individual philosophy of nursing, having a commitment to nursing, using the influence of their education, and the process of integration of the role of nurse into self (Gregg & Magilvy, 2001).

This study is important to the profession because it served as a model in how nurses identify themselves into the role, and the importance of the work environment. It called for administration to create an environment for nurses to continue to find identification with their role through increased education and mentoring.

These two studies related to the topics of higher education and professional role identity, and brought to light the need for further research on this topic. The nursing dean is a unique position that involves aspects of identity formation in the professional realm. Although identity theory has its place in the literature under the discipline of psychology,

there is a need to apply these concepts to the nursing profession and the professional role of nursing dean.

In summary, identity theory has principles that are applicable to the phenomenon of the new dean. As the dean learns the tasks of the position, this theory recognized their inner process of understanding how the role fits into society and how his/her self-appraisal yield success or distress in the role. This theory offered an applicable framework that gave direction to the results of this study.

**Role transition theory.**

In the literature, the term role transition is delineated from role theory, which has been an integral part of modern social science (Kain, 1985). The anthropologist Van Gennep started the work on transitions in 1908, using recordings of religious rituals that characterized life-cycle transitions. He described the process of obtaining a new status in three phases defined as separation, transition, and incorporation. His perspective was not that of the individual going through the transition, but of someone observing the transition (Wilkins & Woodgate, 2006).

Utilizing a dictionary and thesaurus demonstrated that the term "transition" had more concrete operational uses than that of "role transition". Therefore, in a search using a dictionary and thesaurus on this concept, emphasis remained on the term "transition". In a general definition, transition is defined as "passage from one form, state, style, or place to another" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2013). The word "transition" can be traced to its Latin origin in 1551 of "transire" which means "to go across".

In addition to searching for the term "role transition" using dictionary and thesaurus references, a literature search was conducted. Computerized searches in the CINAHL,

PubMed and WilsonSelectPlus were performed. This produced many results, most of which pertained to nursing student transitioning to registered nurse role. After reviewing the abstracts, the 49 initial articles were narrowed down to seven that pertained to this study. Another search using the terms "role transition" and "work role transition" produced 19 relevant articles that related to role transition in disciplines other than nursing.

The field of social work brings out aspects of role transition that help to define the concept. Silver (1996) defines role transition as major turning points in the life course, which primarily occur when people move between different sets of social networks, and how certain objects play a central role with the construction of a person's identity. Her study challenges some assumptions about different processes of identity formation and opens up the possibilities of how people relate to objects during role transition.

Another study by Rankin and Kenyon (2008) also focused on the symbolic interaction of role transition. Their study examined the transition into adulthood where people come to define themselves based on cultural influences and established cultural norms. This particular study used a survey to ask college students what they felt were important markers of transition into adulthood. These two studies are relevant to how transitions occur into adulthood and how it pertains to symbolism in culture.

Symbolic interactionism is based on the assumption that people actively shape the world they live in through symbolism in cultural norms. Research that focuses on symbolic interactionism delineates life as characterized by variability, complexity, change and process (Munhall, 2007). Nursing deans are at the heart of change and variability. Their role as academic administrator stands out against the cultural norm of

higher education because they have both personal and professional variability. There is a transition that happens as novice dean, and this affects the nursing dean's worldview and identification of symbolism in their new work culture (Redman, 2001; Nicholson, 1984).

Gender role transitions are also an important aspect of the concept, utilized in the field of psychology and social work. In a qualitative study of homeless fathers, the men experienced a gender role transition that was greatly hindered by their homeless status. Unemployment, the psychological restrictions of shelters, and new parenting roles led men to reassess their parental and masculine role identities (Schindler & Coley, 2007).

The maternal role transition experiences of women close to childbirth were also studied, with themes that identified safety of the fetus, identification of the maternal roles, and the process of maternal role-making (Mu, 2004). The results of this study indicated a model of transition and how mothers move from one phase to another in a time of crisis. As nursing deans are mostly female and experience stressful work environments, this study of transition can be used as a reference for how a novice dean moves through a difficult time, transitioning through various phases.

The topic of gender role transitions also reflects what is entailed in the role of nursing dean, since the majority of deans in schools of nursing are female (Blass, 2011). Wolverton and Gmelch's (2002) studies into the academic dean revealed that some of the stressors for female deans included commitments that must be attended to outside the regular working day. These included conflict with personal activities such as attending to children at home and their school activities. These deans are less able to achieve a balance between work and personal life, which gives rise to role conflict and role stress.

The development of role transition into the work environment is also evident in the literature. Nicholson (1984) presented a theory that stated that a work-role transition can have profound significance for the future development of individuals and their organizations. Nicholson proposes that the process of adjustment to a new work role can take place through two forms of adaptation: adaptation of the person in response to the environment, or manipulation of the environment to meet personal needs (West & Rushton, 1989).

There are two outcomes presented in this theory for the work-role transition. One is that a person's adjustment to role transition can be considered a personal development, in which change is absorbed through the person altering his or her worldview. The other outcome can be that the person's adjustment is more pro-active, as when the person tries to change role requirements so that they better match his or her needs, abilities, and identity. Both of these outcomes can be integrated and divided into classes of high or low. Integration and various degrees of role development and personal development are defined as replication, absorption, determination, and exploration (Nicholson, 1984).

This theory was applicable to nursing deans, but further studies need to be done on the extent to which integration of this role is personal to nursing deans, with the deans adjusting their worldview to integrate with the role, or whether nursing deans tend to change characteristics of the role to match their personal worldview.

***Role transition in nursing.***

The concept of transition as it applies to nursing was introduced by Meleis. Her work defined transitions as periods of time between fairly stable states in a patient's life. She determined that transitions fall within the realm of nursing when they use therapeutic

interventions in order to facilitate successful life and health transitions for patients (Schumacher & Meleis, 1994).

The transition shock theory was developed using qualitative methods that focused on the aspects of the new graduate's early stage of professional role transition (Duchscher, 2009). Her transition theory described novice nurses moving through stages of transition categorized as "doing, being, and knowing" (Duchscher, 2008). These stages allow graduates time to adjust to their role with some support that permits them to develop their thinking and practice. The theory was developed specifically for new graduates in nursing, and would be beneficial if it was further developed in order to be used in other aspects of role transition in the nursing profession, such as transition to nursing dean.

Another theory was generated by Shoening (2009), which describes the process of how nurses make the transition to the role of nurse educator. From the data, the nurse educator transition theory (NETT) model was created. The model identified four phases in the role transition from nurse to educator. They are the anticipatory/expectation phase, the disorientation phase, the information-seeking phase, and the identity formation phase. This theory captures the vast transition between the experiences of a clinician to that of the nurse in academia. The four phases of the transition model may have the potential to capture the essence of a broader scope of nurse educator transitions other than that of clinician to educator alone.

The concept of role transition offered a different lens through which to study the beginning nursing dean. There is a cognitive process of forming a dean identity and becoming dean. The conceptual frameworks of the human becoming, role transition, and identity theories all attributed to the overarching question of the lived experience of a

novice dean. These theories together enlightened the concept of being a new dean, and gave a framework to base this study on.

In summary, these three conceptual frameworks brought different foci into the analysis of the novice dean. As each framework was just a portion of what nursing deans experience as they encounter a new role, the conceptual models together guided the analysis of the research and gave direction to the data. The limited search results on the phenomenon being studied also highlighted the need for further research into this topic.

## Research Method

It was important to consider the fundamental theoretical framework that was developed into a methodology to conduct and analyze qualitative phenomenological research. In choosing to use the phenomenological approach with interpretive methods, I was committing to an ontological approach. The influence of Husserl's philosophical ideas gave an epistemological perspective to the research questions that were asked and the concepts that were explained (Mackey, 2005). Given the overall guiding questions of this inquiry, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenological interpretive research philosophy was chosen as the methodology for the research, informed by the work of Max van Manen (1984).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on producing rich textual descriptions of an experience in the life of individuals. Phenomenology is concerned with lived experience, and is ideal for investigating personal transitions. The main focus of phenomenology is on experiences and feelings and enables the exploration of participants' experiences with interpretation by the researcher (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

The use of phenomenology is a process, a sequence of steps that van Manen describes to investigate the meaning of an experience. Turning to a phenomenon which not only captured my interest, but also furthered the development of nursing knowledge, was the first step. The reflection of the essential themes that characterized the phenomenon continued with a current literature review. In the course of the research, it was important to remain focused on investigating the novice dean experience as the dean lives it, rather than as it was conceptualized. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting granted full immersion in the data and allowed for validity. Through reflective journaling, I maintained a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon being studied as well as balancing the research context by considering the parts of the phenomenon, and the phenomenon as a whole (Van Manen, 1984).

Phenomenology is used to describe and analyze lived experiences and how there is meaning in these experiences. There was an embodied experience in a role change and formation of a new identity. The intention was to capture the reality of this experience through close examination in order to elicit the participants' stories (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

## Relevance of this Study to Nursing

As the evolution of the study was summarized in the literature review, it was important to draw attention to the scope of the role of nursing dean. Nursing deans operate from a limited power base in academia but are still expected to excel under pressure from the educational system, the health care system, and public stakeholders. The potential for early burnout is real, due to frustrations with the job role and lack of job satisfaction (Lamborn, 1991; Quell, 2005).

## Highly Political Environments

Nursing in the academic world is at the crossroads between higher education and health. Both of these sectors are male dominated and highly conservative and neither see nursing as a full contributor with regard to most public policy regulation and direction (Redman, 2001). Universities are also patriarchal, and have made little effort to challenge the cultural norm of gender relationships (Redman, 2001; Kenner & Pressler, 2006; Kenner & Pressler, 2009). Women are less likely to gain tenure, receive recognition for their scholarship, and earn comparable economic rewards. Nursing deans face higher costs of negotiation and often experience exclusion and suppression within the male dominated sector (Redman, 2001).

## Nursing Faculty Shortage

The nursing dean is at the forefront of today's shortage of nurses and the nationwide problem of nursing schools turning away qualified applicants due to an unprecedented shortage of nursing faculty. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) reports that in 2010, United States nursing schools have turned away 67,563 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs because of an insufficient number of nursing faculty, classroom space or clinical sites, clinical preceptors and budget constraints. The majority of nursing programs admitted that faculty shortages were the reason for turning away qualified applicants (AACN, 2012). Deans of schools of nursing face the daunting challenge of recruiting new nursing faculty just as competition for the limited supply of nurses has forced hospitals to dramatically increase salaries. Many graduates of nursing PhD programs are in their 30s and 40s, and have mortgages, children, and student loans, making the salary of a position an important

factor in deciding whether to pursue a career in academia (Kuehn, 2007). Resolution of the nursing faculty shortage will require strategies designed to recruit new faculty from the ranks of practicing nurses and retain the current nursing faculty workforce (Roberts, 2008).

**Strained Fiscal Resources for Research**

The nursing profession is at the point where the advancement of nursing knowledge through scientific research is disadvantaged by the tradition of grant monies being awarded to high-impact sciences such as medicine, public health and pharmacy. Compared with other health disciplines, schools of nursing are among the lowest funded for research (NIH, Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools, 2012). This continues to hinder the research productivity of the nursing profession. The amount of funding depends on research productivity, and the nursing profession's relatively low level of funded research puts its capacity to influence practice and policy based on scientific evidence at a disadvantage. If nursing is to compete effectively with other health-related disciplines, nursing leaders must find ways for a greater proportion of nursing faculty to excel as scientists, producing sufficient volume and quality of work. The academic sphere that is led by the nursing dean needs to foster the innovation and cultural environment needed to support research goals (Potempa & Tilden, 2004).

**Economic Crisis**

Although a number of significant challenges face the nursing dean, the one that may have the greatest impact on the growth and development of a nursing program is the barriers imposed by the current economic crisis. According to the National Association of State Budget Officers (2012), most states' fiscal situations have changed dramatically

in recent years because of the impact of the recession. State budgets have faltered and funding for higher education has been cut. Higher education is often a target during economic downturns and budget cuts at public institutions in some states are now averaging 15 to 20 percent, with 48 states projecting continued budget deficits (Jones & Wellman, 2010). A challenge for the nursing dean is that nursing programs are among the most expensive programs for colleges and universities to operate (Hoover, 2009). This high cost is due to mandated student-to-faculty ratios in clinical settings. For example, the current student-to-faculty ratio for clinical experiences is stated in the Michigan Board of Nursing (MBON) as "no greater than 10:1" (Clark & Mundt, 2009, p. 16), but the MBON actually recommends a maximum ratio of 8:1 (Clark & Mundt, 2009). This makes it increasingly difficult to admit more students without sufficient faculty numbers and proper funding.

**Demands for Relevant Curricula and Programs**

There is a new vision to transform the education of nurses to be relevant to the current advancement of science, technology, patient activism, the market-driven health care environment, and the nature and settings of nursing practice (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010). Transformation of curriculum needs to employ innovative approaches to nursing education instead of the current practice that is saturated in content (Giddens et al., 2008). Clearly, this requires thoughtful time for deans to not only consider curriculum transformation, but the influence this has on the workload assignments of nursing faculty.

Curriculum drivers such as the 2005 Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN), the Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice

(BSN essentials) established by the AACN (2008), the 2010 National Council for Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX) test plan, and the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) 2010 report *The Future of Nursing* are compelling schools of nursing to update their curriculum to comply with current standards in nursing practice. The nursing dean faces the challenge of motivating and leading in a culture of change for nursing faculty. The challenge is to create educational environments that foster professional attentiveness, responsibility and excellence, where students learn and have salient nursing practice (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010).

**Advanced Technology for Educational Delivery**

Deans today face external stressors such as advances in technology that were once nonexistent. Industries specializing in computer-related technology increasingly place demands on universities for curricular reform that focuses on the integration of technology (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002). The current generation of students is much more technologically savvy and students expect their education to be engaging, stimulating, and technologically current (Wolverton, Gmelch, & Montez, 2001). The standards in nursing education such as the BSN Essentials and QSEN include informatics as part of the nursing curriculum. Nursing programs are now making education accessible to very rural communities and in distant locations around the world. These advances emphasize the importance to the nursing dean of familiarity with the technological progress in nursing education and the need to prepare students to use clinical information systems (Kenner, Pressler, & Loving, 2007).

**Student Diversity**

Deans in schools of nursing are finding that although the majority of students are female, the student population is not as homogeneous as it was years ago. Although diversity is a desired outcome for the nursing profession, it can complicate the role of dean as schools serve students with a variety of learning needs. Some nursing students are older, and quite often the newer entrants attend part-time, work full-time and have family responsibilities (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002).

Nursing programs also report increases in the number of students from minority backgrounds. Data from an AACN survey indicated that the percentage of students from underrepresented backgrounds remained high in the entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs at 26.6 percent, and the proportion of minority students in master's programs increased to 26.3 percent. In research-focused doctoral programs, 23.3 percent of students were from minority populations (Rosseter, 2010). With these student population changes, deans in schools of nursing are called to meet the needs of a more diverse nursing student population, preparing these students to deliver high-quality care to an ever-changing patient population.

The leadership qualities of the nursing dean are pivotal for the future of the profession. There is a need for transformation in the education of nursing students, and the nursing dean has a strong influence on change within nursing education. As the dean has a unique role involving many challenges, further understanding of the role will help to recruit and retain strong leaders who have the methods and skills to develop and support the advancement of the profession.

In summary, the challenges that are described in the previous sections are prevalent in the everyday experiences of the nursing dean. The unprecedented changes that are occurring in nursing schools across the country increase the urgency for research on the experiences of the nursing school dean.

## Experiential Context: Background of the Researcher

Throughout different phases of both my personal and professional development, my memories of transition into a role are distinct. There have been times when I have encountered a very difficult life transition but was successful, thanks to my support systems and relationships. This study, with its theoretical frameworks of human becoming, identity theory, and role transition concepts, is an accumulation of what those transitions involved. This was not only a matter of learning a new role and accomplishing the tasks at hand successfully; it was a case of adopting a new identity. When I came to the moment where I knew I was a "college student", "nursing student", "registered nurse", "wife", "mother", "graduate student", "nurse faculty" and finally "doctoral student", I knew I was succeeding in that new role because of my newly found identity.

My focus of the novice nursing dean began to weigh on my mind as I encountered the coursework for my doctoral program. At that time, the university where I was employed as nurse faculty had an open dean position for two years and a novice dean who had never held a dean role before was hired into the position. Through conversations with her, I began to realize the vast array of tasks that were solely her responsibility. Throughout my work in doctoral study, I began to understand the realm of accountability that came with a nursing dean position, in an academic arena where nursing schools are

new to the universities and women are the minority in academic administration. My main hope for this study was to determine what these deans stand in need of and how these needs can be met in order for them to be successful in their role.

## Summary

This chapter was a summary of the many influences that have shaped the development of this study. As the literature reveals, the new dean faces many challenges and responsibilities for which they may not be prepared. The concepts of identity formation, human becoming, and role transition have different foci in relation to how the novice begins to identify his/herself as a nursing dean.

In order for nursing research to be useful and meaningful, it should be a cumulative effort, building on the scholarship and research of those who have already disseminated their knowledge through publications (Boote & Beile, 2005). Through a critique and synthesis of the science, further knowledge can be obtained by understanding what is missing and needed to further nursing science.

This literature review was an initial step towards advance the collective understanding of the experience of the novice dean. It portrayed different facets of what has been previously studied about deans, role transition, identity theory, and human becoming. Most importantly, this literature review has revealed what research is needed to further knowledge of the subject.

# CHAPTER III

# METHOD OF INQUIRY: GENERAL

This chapter will describe the research method of interpretive phenomenology and the rationale for its use in this study. The approach that was used is based on the phenomenological methods of Max van Manen (1984). Van Manen's interpretive methodology is derived from Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy. The true nature of being a novice nursing dean was explored in this study, which coincides with the heideggerian interpretive ontological approach of experiencing a phenomenon. Through these methodological approaches, the lived experience of the novice dean was examined holistically in an effort to grasp the essential meaning of the experience through the participants' descriptions.

## Description of the Research Method

The methodology of this study was a qualitative approach using the philosophy of Heidegger and the interpretive techniques of van Manen. This specific method was derived by examining the philosophical underpinnings and overarching question for this research. As the main research question inquired what a lived experience of being dean entailed, this focused on a situation or experience which is not just one meaning, but the whole essence of being dean. The theoretical foundation involved the identity of a dean, becoming dean, and the process of role transition. This comprehensive look at being dean called for a methodological approach that interpreted meanings with a level of depth and richness. The interpretive approach was more likely to reveal the diversity of a phenomenon versus that of descriptive phenomenology or a positivist approach. It allowed for an understanding, rather an explanation, of being a new dean in a natural and

uncontrolled setting. This embodied the experience, yielding knowledge by interpretation for additional understanding (Mackey, 2005).

Qualitative research was appropriate for this study because relatively little is known about this phenomenon and an in-depth understanding was desired. The main strength of this qualitative research was that it yields data that provided depth and detail in order to understand a certain lived experience (Bowen, 2005). When a phenomenon that is often subconscious to the participant is studied, qualitative research methodology is useful as it looks at the whole essence of a lived experience. "Qualitative research methods enable researchers to understand questions of meaning, examine institutional and social practices and processes, identify barriers and be facilitators of change" (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1372). This definition describes the foundation of the research method, but more specifically there needed to be an understanding of the aspect of interpretive phenomenology, as this specific methodology captured the essence of the lived experience, and utilized my interpretations as part of the research process.

Phenomenology was used to describe and analyze a lived experience and how meaning was derived by the participants in the experience. Hermeneutic phenomenology is the theory of interpretation, a process of repeatedly returning to a participant's story in order to find new interpretation. With this methodology, the perception of the researcher is just as important as the stories of the participants compared to Husserl's philosophy of examining a phenomenon solely on how they appear, without influence of the researcher. One aim of a phenomenological study is the rigorous examination of a phenomenon as it appears and how the participant describes it. This enables an understanding of the human consciousness of that specific experience (Dowling, 2007).

Interpretation began with immersion in the data. According to van Manen, themes are derived from listening and observing along with reading and rereading transcripts of the interviews while reflecting on themes inherent to them. Through writing and rewriting of emerging themes, I was a part of the process using reflection which allowed for a deeper meaning to be revealed (Van Manen, 1984). This methodology allowed full immersion in the data in order to understand the lived experience of being a novice nursing dean.

Many researchers have implemented the interpretive methods derived from the phenomenological philosophy of Heidegger. In his work, Heidegger sought to expand phenomenological philosophy from the epistemological perspective into the realm of "Being", or the ontological nature of existence. He aimed for understanding of "Being" itself (Mackey, 2005). The phenomenological research approach involves looking at an experience as "Being" in the world and having a presence in the world (Dowling, 2007, p. 133). To understand the "Being" of something is to understand fully the nature of that phenomenon. This philosophical foundation is ontological, and uses hermeneutics as a research method that is based on the interpretation of the lived experience. The heiddeggarian approach emphasizes the rich description that is found in everyday living, being in the world. Using an interpretive approach, I accepted and valued the descriptions given by the participant as their reality and understanding of this phenomenon. I was engaged and immersed in their stories in order to understand the phenomenon of being a new dean. This correlated well with the theoretical underpinnings of identity and human becoming, because looking at this phenomenon through the theoretical lens allowed a holistic view of the phenomenon of "Being" in the experience of the novice dean (Mackey, 2005).

Examples of nursing research that have used this methodology are evident in the literature and serve as exemplars for the manner to conduct interpretive phenomenological research. Kohn and Truglio-Londrigan (2007) studied the lived experience of being a second degree baccalaureate nursing student. They used the interpretive phenomenology and the data analysis method of van Manen. Multiple interviews were conducted with students and the interview transcripts were "analyzed by listening and observing" (p. 398) reflecting on themes inherent to them. The authors affirm that the process of this methodology helped them see these students' needs in another way, "within a more deliberate context" (p. 398). They discovered the need for order in the curriculum and involving these students with curriculum planning. More consideration with assignment of clinical faculty to this population of students, and the necessity for a more extensive orientation to the nursing program was also recognized through this method of inquiry. The use of interpretive phenomenology with data immersion and self-reflection described by van Manen enabled these faculty members to fully understand the phenomenon, and be able to relate to these students in this situation.

The role transition from graduate nurse practitioner (NP) to practicing NP in a hospital environment was investigated using interpretive phenomenology informed by van Manen. The author aimed to gain a renewed sense of the original experience with transitioning from newly graduated NP to a position in a hospital based setting. Nurse practitioners that were in the position from 1 to 3 years were interviewed and the transcripts were reviewed for themes. This process of interpretive methodology brought forth themes that revealed multiple obstacles and challenges that faced these nurse practitioners that previously had not been studied. The purpose was to gain insight into

the meaning and lived experience with the initial transition, and through this research methodology, NP's were able to understand their experience from their own perspective. With that understanding, there is a potential for further improvement with the assistance and support these groups of nurses need during this stage in their careers (Duke, 2010).

In summary, it was important to consider the fundamental theoretical framework that underpins a methodology in performing and analyzing qualitative phenomenological research. In choosing to use a heideggerian approach with interpretive methods, I used an ontological approach. This specific phenomenological method is concerned with lived experience, incorporates the ontological approach of being in the experience, and utilizes interpretations from the researcher's knowledge of the phenomenon (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Therefore, this methodology was ideal for investigating personal transitions such as becoming a nursing dean.

## Rationale for Choosing the Phenomenological Inquiry Method

The framework for hermeneutic phenomenology based on the philosophy of Heidegger portrays the true nature of the lived experience. Van Manen views phenomenology as a philosophy of "being" as well as "practice" a system of interpretation that helps us to perceive ourselves. These perceptions are used in the research findings in order to find themes and patterns within the participant's stories. By acknowledging the experience of a phenomenon that includes the researcher's role in the process, van Manen brings out the importance of reflexology in the research method. Reflexology added to the interpretation of the phenomenon in order to make meaning of the experience in a way that is trustworthy and maintains authenticity to the participants and their interpretation of being dean. Using the interpretive paradigm enabled

understanding of the research phenomenon in the context of the experiences of the participants. This research strategy, through its reflexivity, enabled me to engage in my own learning journey toward a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and to revisit this experience independently of my preconceived ideas (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

In addition to being reflexive, this methodology is holistic. It takes into account the total sphere of experiences of an individual who is defined by the objects, persons, and events encountered in the experience. These things give meaning to the phenomenon. The goal is to achieve a unity of meaning that combines the identification of the essence of a phenomenon an accurate description of the everyday lived experience. Van Manen's method allows the themes of the experience to be brought out through looking at the experience as a whole, capturing its meanings (Polit & Beck, 2008). The point of phenomenological research is to "borrow" other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning (van Manen, 1984, p. 16). The experience of transitioning into the role of dean is one small aspect of the whole human experience of being or becoming dean.

Blass (2011) focused on nursing deans using interpretive phenomenology. This study indicated that there was more to being a nursing dean than trying to overcome the challenges the role brings. The stories of the participants indicated that in their minds, they were a "nurse at heart" then a dean. The results demonstrate that the role of nursing dean is one that is unique, not only with the unique challenges it brings, but nurses in these positions bring a vast amount of professional knowledge that make the lived experience of being a nursing dean something that is indeed a phenomenon that needs to be explored (Blass, 2011).

Walline (2008) used a historical perspective to describe and analyze the life of a nursing dean. The dissertation brought out concepts of women in leadership, mentoring academic administrators, and recognition of the role of nursing leaders and gender in leadership. Interviews and coding of salient themes were used in order to highlight six concepts: the importance of family support as it relates to self-confidence, knowing oneself, passion and caring, mentoring and networking, leadership, and gender. This study brings out concepts that are not solely focused on the tasks of a dean, but that are influential in the lifespan of a nursing dean. The themes of knowing oneself and self-confidence that emerged from this study both influenced my conceptual framework of human becoming and identity. The process of developing self-confidence in a role and becoming more aware of the changes this role as novice nursing dean makes to the personal self is a phenomenon that deserves further study. With further investigation of this topic, a more holistic approach to the lived experience of the novice dean was explored.

This study enabled a better understanding of the lived experience of a novice dean. The phenomenological method was appropriate to research into the lived experience of a novice dean because, in some sense, all phenomenology is oriented to a certain way of living, how to act in everyday situations, and to relations in the phenomenon. A lived experience can be highly reflective. Through these reflections we can sort out aspects of the lived experience, forming connections between who we are and who we may become, between how we think or feel and how we act (Van Manen, 2007). These connections are much like the themes and principles used in Parse's (1996) human becoming theory, as well as the transitional aspects of identity theory and role transitions.

The process of human becoming gave meaning to reflections on what is common in everyday life. When opportunities arise in everyday life, these patterns of relating meaning either help or inhibit bringing some connection to others, ideas, objects, or events. These paradoxical rhythms are patterns of relating meaning to things in everyday life is an example of human becoming, and can be achieved from self-reflection (Parse, 1996).

The influence on relating to others through reflection correlates with the identity theory. A person's relationships with others help form their identity through the networks of social roles in which they interact with (Stets & Burke, 2000). Finding self-identity through reflection is a main concept in this theory. Self-identity connects a social structure with individual's action in a role (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995).

Role transition also has a component of self-reflection with interpretation. With the examples of role transition theories described in Chapter 2, there is a part of the process that involves the reflection and personal growth of the individual as they go through the stages of transition. These stages allow time to adjust to their role with some support that permits them to develop their thinking and practice. A person's adjustment to role transition can be considered a personal development, in which change is absorbed through the person altering his or her worldview. This personal development is a part of the reflective process (Nicholson, 1994; Duchscher, 2008; Shoening, 2009).

The reflective process is an integral component of interpretive phenomenology, and is a vital part of the three theories that guided this study. Because of these correlations to the theoretical underpinnings of the study, the interpretive phenomenological method was appropriate to the investigation of this phenomenon.

As little is known about the experience of being nursing dean and the experience that is lived by these deans, this methodology guided research into finding the essence of being dean through these lived experiences. There are components to being dean that involve role tasks and challenges, development of personal self, and identifying themselves as dean. The interpretive phenomenological approach guided the holistic aspect of discovering the lived experience of being a new nursing dean.

## Method of Data Analysis

The exploration of a human experience is increasingly being embraced by nurse researchers. Phenomenology as an interpretive approach provided the structure for an increasing number of research studies (Mackey, 2005). There are some challenges to the phenomenological method that were considered in order to have a research study that was sound in methodology and correlated with the research aim and purpose.

One challenge was the potential to adapt phenomenological methods without regard to the philosophical underpinnings and overall research aim of the study. The use of phenomenological techniques for research without justifying their appropriateness may lead to the misuse of methodological techniques. With interpretive phenomenology, the general aim is to describe, analyze, and reflect on the participant and the experience, which brings together the phenomenological method with the philosophical concepts. The exploration of the theoretical concepts and how they relate to the methodology was important to avoid contradictions with methodology (Koch, 1995). This challenge has been addressed by investigating the three theoretical concepts that are used in this research and how each directly related to the interpretive phenomenology of Heidegger.

Another challenge to the phenomenological methodology was to ensure trustworthiness of the study. The interpretations of others have the potential to be skewed and biased and it is important that the researcher has set criteria that must be followed to address this. Methods for increasing the trustworthiness of interpreting the stories of others include making upfront acknowledgements of subjective judgments, having prolonged engagement with the data, verification with the participant, using verbatim accounts from the participant, and ongoing analysis with peer debriefing (Saunders, 2003). These methods are further described in the "methodological rigor" section of this chapter.

The use of phenomenology is a process, a sequence of steps that van Manen describes to investigate the meaning of an experience. This approach allowed for accurate interpretations of rich data stemming from interviews as well as written language, art and observations (Baker, Wuest, & Noerager-Stern, 1992). Van Manen describes hermeneutic phenomenological research as investigating experiences as we live them rather than conceptualizing them, reflecting on essential themes that characterize the phenomenon, describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting, and maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1984). Specifically, his framework for hermeneutic research involves six research activities:

1. Turn to a phenomenon that seriously interests us and commits us to the world (Van Manen, 1984, p. 2). Turning to a phenomenon that not only captured my interest, but would also further the development of nursing knowledge was important to begin the investigation. A deep questioning of the lived experience

of dean began as I reflected on my own personal transitions and how they came to form my identity. I also became interested in the lack of retention and recruitment in the nursing dean position. Through the combination of these interests, commitment to this research subject began to develop. By understanding how a dean experiences the initial years in the position, further knowledge can be disseminated for future novice deans.

2. Investigating experiences as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it (Van Manen, 1984, p. 2). This incorporates the reflexology of the researcher, and how his/her personal lived experience relates to the lived experience being studied. The process of this methodology is to "re-learn" (Van Manen, 1984, p. 3) a basic experience, apart from preconceived ideas and open to new perceptions.
3. Reflecting on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1984, p. 2). The reflection of essential themes was continued after each interview to bring a thoughtful reflective grasp on what it was that made the described experience of being a new dean significant. This was done by reflective journaling and continued literature reviews.
4. Describe the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting (Van Manen, 1984, p. 3). To do research in a phenomenological way is to bring communication of the lived experience via speech and language into the writing activity, applying the language to the lived experience. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting enabled full immersion in the data and allowed for validity. The art of writing and rewriting as a validity technique also came into play as I transcribed interviews.

5. Maintain a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1984, p. 3). Van Manen explains that a phenomenological study does not simply entail a recollection of experiences that participants or the researcher have had. Instead, it is important to see the experiences in such a way that the essential aspects bring meaning to the phenomenon and there is an interpretation of these essential aspects (van Manen, 1984, p. 3).
6. Balance the research context by considering parts and whole (Van Manen, 1984, p. 3). Phenomenological research brings awareness to integrating part and whole, the conditional and the essential, and supports awareness of the details and what may seem to be the unimportant dimension of our everyday lives. It makes us aware of the consequential in the inconsequential, the significant and the taken-for-granted lived experiences. This balance enables the researcher to step back, look at the whole, and how the phenomenon is placed in the context of the whole.

## Methodological Rigor

The rigor of the qualitative method demonstrates the elements of integrity and competence that safeguard the legitimacy of the research process (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Rigor is described by Burns & Grove (2009) as "striving for excellence in research through the use of discipline, scrupulous adherence to detail, and strict accuracy" (p. 720). The attributes of rigor are inclusive of all research methods, but in qualitative research, some think that the term should include the originality and creativity of a naturalistic method. Although the terms differ, I felt there needed to be a structure to how I adhered to rigor in this qualitative study. I felt a process was needed to explain the technique for ensuring this study was valid, ensuring rigor. For example, Lincoln and

Guba (as cited in Polit & Beck, 2008) developed the standards of trustworthiness of qualitative research that parallel the standards of reliability and validity in quantitative research. Trustworthiness was demonstrated through credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Credibility addresses whether the data from the respondents' views and the researcher's description of them are truthful. Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Polit & Beck, 2008) describe the two aspects of creditability as carrying out the study in a way that enhances the believability of the findings and taking steps to demonstrate credibility to external readers. A researcher can ensure credibility in a qualitative study in various ways. One is through member-checking. This is an important technique in which researchers give feedback to participants about emerging interpretations and obtain their input on thematic summaries. The data analysis method used in this study checked for credibility by returning the transcripts to those interviewed. I asked them to read through the transcript of their interview as well as the evolved themes that emerged. The evolved themes from their interview were categorized on an Excel spreadsheet. In this study, I asked the participants to review the findings, along with the emerging themes, and used their feedback to validate the findings.

Another way to ensure credibility is to use reflexive validity. Reflexive validity is described by Speziale and Carpenter (2007) as an "attempt by the researcher to constantly be examining the biases, suppositions, and presuppositions of the research, being certain that in the end, the story of the insider is told" (p. 343). In other types of phenomenology such as descriptive phenomenology, this is termed as bracketing. Although various theorists have different methodologies for disclosing the researcher's thoughts, emotions

and biases, and may use various terms, it is important to devote time and energy to carefully analyzing and documenting presuppositions, biases and ongoing emotions (Polit & Beck, 2008). This reflexive process is part of the research investigation and was included in the form of journal entries, or an audit trail.

Peer debriefing is also described by Burnard (1991) as a way to ensure credibility. This involves assembling peers to analyze various aspects of the inquiry to check for any bias on the part of the researcher, if there was sufficient reflexivity, if the data adequately portrays the phenomenon, or if there are errors with interpretation (Polit & Beck, 2008). This was done by my undergraduate research student and the dissertation committee, specifically Dr. Lori Candela, ensuring scholarly guidance as dissertation committee chair, and Dr. LeAnn Putney, qualitative research expert.

Transferability refers to whether the findings can be applicable to other situations. The word was originally termed "fittingness" by Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Polit & Beck, 2008 p. 539). If the findings of the research are applicable to other similar conditions, it makes them more credible. In order for the research to be transferable, it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide enough descriptive data in the results so others interested in the phenomenon may determine if the results can be applied to other circumstances (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The readers are the ones determining if the study is transferable, but it was my obligation to include highly specific detail of the methodology and results to ensure transferability.

Dependability is achieved through a process of an audit trail. To achieve dependability, inquiries were made to ensure that the research process was logical, traceable, and clearly documented. The process of an audit trail was also important to

ensure credibility. An audit trail ensured that the study was useful to others beyond those who have participated in it. If there is a clear audit trail in which the researcher has described the sequence of decisions in the data collection, a process of analysis and reflection will ensure the credibility of the study (Sanders, 2003).

Confirmability is concerned with ensuring that the results are clearly derived from the data itself. It is important for the researcher to maintain objectivity and have the agreement of two or more peers that the data are accurate, relevant and meaningful (Polit & Beck, 2008). This can be achieved through member-checking, but another approach to confirmability is through triangulation of the research. This research used person triangulation, where the use of multiple participants validated conclusions. Person triangulation involved collecting data from different types of people in different situations to give multiple perspectives on the phenomenon under study. The variations in the academic environments from which the deans originated achieved the person triangulation necessary for confirmability of this study.

Authenticity is the final criterion in Lincoln and Guba's (as cited in Polit & Beck, 2008) framework to ensure trustworthiness. Authenticity refers to the extent to which the researchers show the realities of the participants, including feelings, emotions, full experiences and context, in order that the reader may have a heightened sensibility toward the issues being portrayed. To ensure authenticity, I included verbatim excerpts from the participants' stories in the research results that illustrated key concepts and themes.

## Translation of Concepts and Terms

The heideggerian approach of phenomenology using the method of van Manen is derived from the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Husserl believed in the development of the participant's consciousness on subject matters as a rigorous science, with its own method of inquiry. As various methods were expanded from Husserl's philosophy of phenomenological science, such as Heidegger's methodology of phenomenology, there are still some basic concepts developed by Husserl that are foundations to any phenomenological research study. The four concepts of intentionality, description, reduction, and essence are the philosophical roots of the methodology that were used in this research (Baker, Wuest, & Noerager-Stern, 1992). Although Husserl's philosophy of descriptive phenomenology varies from the heideggerian method of interpretation, the fundamental concepts of the philosophy of phenomenology were important to include as the methodological techniques of van Manen were originally derived from these philosophical concepts.

### Intentionality

The aim of phenomenology, according to Husserl's philosophy, is to study things as they appear to come to an understanding of the experience, which stems from the human consciousness. Consciousness is intentional, and the concept of intentionality is the consciousness of the participants as a result of experiences in the world they live in. The conscious perceptions of things are a result of the exterior experiences that are lived (Dowling, 2007). The phenomenology employed in this study made use of intentionality to explore the consciousness of the novice dean and the lived experience of this phenomenon. With the understanding that all perceptions have meaning, the

transcription of the data was verbatim without discounting any insights from the participant. Intentionality involved the intersubjective views of other participants. By ensuring intentionality, I gave the opportunity for the participants' stories to unfold. With multiple transcriptions, there may be interplay between the subjective worlds of two or more participants where one person's reality may in fact reflect that of another participant (Munhall, 2007). Without intentionality, the potential for intersubjectivity would not be possible.

**Description**

Descriptions are important to the meaning of the research. The lived experience of the novice dean can be explored and analyzed by examining the thick descriptions of the participants' lived experiences. A description is a personal account of an event by the participant that yields data and is a foundation of any phenomenological study. Themes were generated from the descriptive data to understand the lived experience fully (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). The descriptive process employed van Manen's technique of reading and re-reading the data to ensure I was fully immersed in the accounts of the participant, which yielded rich descriptions by interpretation.

**Reduction**

Reduction in phenomenological research is an attempt to look at things without bias or preconceived ideas. It offers a fresh approach to frequently experienced phenomena, as free as possible from conceptual ideas to be able to describe them as faithfully as possible. Isolating the phenomenon from what is already known about it is the main goal of reduction (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Husserl described a way to execute reduction by bracketing, but this study isolated the phenomenon from what is already known by

using reflexive validity with journal entries. Although the term bracketing is used with descriptive phenomenology, the reflective practice of journaling included writing my thoughts, feelings, and subjective information about the data. This set aside potential biases during the process of interpretation. This is described by Munhall (2007) as "unknowing" (p. 172). It is a process of decentering what is known about something in an attempt to achieve the essential state of mind that is open to other worldviews.

**Essence**

Essence is what makes something what it is (Dowling, 2007). The appearance of things and the description of their essence is another goal of phenomenological research (Baker, Wuest, & Noerager-Stern, 1992). To ensure the essence of a description was captured in this phenomenological study, I went through the data to search for common themes and established patterns or relationships that were shared by the various descriptions of being a new dean.

## Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the rationale for the heideggerian approach to interpretive phenomenological research that was used in this study. This type of method was useful to disseminate further knowledge on the lived experience of a novice dean. Methodological rigor was described as it applied to the research, understanding the importance that rigor had in this research to ensure validity. The concepts that applied to the foundation of this phenomenological method were explained. The holistic approach of examining the lived experience of the nursing dean, determining themes through their descriptions, and capturing the meaning of these experiences in a credible manner was the motivation for the methodology of this investigation.

# CHAPTER IV

# METHOD OF INQUIRY: APPLIED

An understanding of the lived experience of the new nursing dean was the central objective of this study, and inquired how a dean experiences day-to-day living in this new professional position. The theoretical underpinnings of human becoming, identity theory, and role transition guided the conceptual framework for this phenomenon. Qualitative inquiry was appropriate for this research, as there is limited research on this topic and the overarching question sought a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

This chapter describes the specific methodology of how the study was executed, and will portray aspects of the sample, methods for data collection, ethical considerations, the procedure of the data analysis, and the strengths and limitations of the study. The qualitative paradigm guided the applied methodology of the study. The techniques of data collection and analysis informed by van Manen (1984) and the hermeneutic interpretative philosophical basis for phenomenology guided the inquiry process.

## Sample

The participants for this study have the title of University Dean of Nursing, Dean of Nursing, Nursing Dean, or College Dean of Nursing. The rationale for this is explained by the difference between a director of a nursing program and a dean. Directors often report to a dean, whether that is a dean of science or another discipline. As the role of dean reports to the provost, there are inherent differences in hierarchy with the dean and director role. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of nursing

deans, so the participants selected were those holding that title, who were in the position for three years or less, and have never held the position of before.

The reason the sample consisted of nursing deans who have been in post for three years or less is because, on average, nursing deans remain in the position for five to seven years (Pressler & Kenner, 2008; Blass, 2011; Quell, 2005). Pressler and Kenner (2008) describe the first few years as a transition period; at three years, a new dean starts to be familiar with the organization. They describe the deanship in five phases. The first is the honeymoon phase, which lasts six months to a year. In this phase, the dean experiences euphoria and excitement. The next is the disenchantment phase. This is when the dean is first confronted with the struggles of the transition. The reality phase follows, where the dean settles into the role. The phase of maturity follows once they have adapted to the role. Finally, the golden phase is when they are finishing tasks and may be preparing to leave the position.

Interviewing these deans in the first three years captured the honeymoon, disenchantment, or reality phases, and yielded rich data on the actual lived experience. Deans may or may not go through these phases in a set amount of months or years, but the data demonstrated a variety of lived experiences in various phases of the dean transition. Pressler and Kenner (2008) state that a concerning trend is that the deans are leaving their positions only after "three to five years and may or may not transfer to another deanship" (p. 2). They believe it is because these deans are moving out of the honeymoon phase and into the disenchantment phase, where the realities of the position are becoming evident. When collecting data during this phase of the deanship, I sought out the participants' stories about the experiences during this transition time.

The rationale for interviewing those who have never been in the position before was derived from the concept of homogenous sampling, and intended to reduce variation and permit a more focused inquiry. My purpose was to understand a particular group of people especially well, i.e. novice deans of nursing.

Many academic settings, whether research institutions, liberal arts colleges, or community colleges have a position of nursing dean. Maximum variation sampling was therefore used in order not to limit this phenomenon to one type of academic institution. Too little is known about this phenomenon to focus on just one group of nursing deans in one type of academic setting. I attempted to include nursing deans with different viewpoints about the phenomenon to achieve data saturation with a variation in academic settings, because they all in fact held the title of nursing dean.

Maximum variation sampling strategy described by Patton (2002) was implemented with the source of variation being the academic environment. The nursing school deans selected for this study were not limited to baccalaureate and graduate programs, but included regionally accredited liberal arts colleges, universities, and community colleges that prepared graduates to take the NCLEX-RN and continue toward advanced degrees in nursing. Any common patterns that emerged from the variety of academic settings were of particular interest because they captured the core experiences and shared dimensions of the phenomenon (List, 2004).

The sample size focused on the quality and depth of information obtained from the participants to gain insight into the phenomenon. The number of participants in this study was adequate when saturation of information was achieved. This occurred when additional sampling provided no new information, only redundancy of previously

collected data (Burns & Grove, 2009). Creswell (as cited in Mason, 2010) states data saturation could be reached with anything from five to 25 participants when using phenomenology as a methodology. Morse (as cited in Mason, 2010) states this could be achieved with at least six participants.

In order to gather data for individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, this study used a purposeful sampling strategy with a combination of criterion and snowball sampling. Criterion sampling involves selecting participants who meet pre-established criteria (Creswell, 2009). Snowball sampling involves identifying participants based on information obtained from other people (Creswell, 2009). This was achieved by asking for suggestions from the participants about other deans who fit the criteria and might be interested in participating in the study.

## Setting for Data Collection

The plan for entry into the site consisted of consultation with a nursing dean at a university where I was previously employed. This dean had been in her position for three years as of 2012, and had never held the position before. She agreed to assist in identifying novice nursing deans at other colleges and universities, and gave me a list of BSN and ADN program deans, which was publically available. Through this information and an internet search on newly appointed deans, eight new nursing deans were identified as potential participants.

Initial contact was made either by email, and I developed a recruitment script that was used when emailing the potential participants. I initially contacted the participant by email, and if there was a lack of response after a week I followed up with a phone call. Participation was solicited after explicating the purpose of the study and my role as

researcher. Details on their voluntary participation, confidentiality, and my intention to audio-record the face-to-face interviews was also explained.

Various means of gathering data through interviews are gaining popularity such as instant message, videoconferencing, email, and phone interviews. Some advantages of these techniques are that it saves time and the financial burdens of travel. Being a novice researcher, it was my choice to forgo these methods and interview the participants face-to-face. A face-to-face interview has synchronous communication with participant and researcher and can take advantage of social cues that come into play with answering a question. The participant may give social cues such as voice, intonation, and body language that provide the researcher with additional information about a topic (Opdenakker, 2006).

The observation of the setting and milieu of the environment can also inform the researcher when conducting a face-to-face interview. Being in the presence of the participant, the researcher has the advantage to set the tone of the interview and establish trust. Although this is done in any type of interview method, face-to-face contact enables the novice researcher to read nonverbal cues that indicate an altered comfort level or anxiety, and intervene if necessary to establish a comfortable setting in which to converse.

Travel to various sites was a consideration with this method. When investigating the logistics of travel and potential participants, it was discovered that there were multiple nursing deans who met the criteria of the study within a reasonable distance for travel. The furthest distance was 250 miles, which was approximately a four hour drive from my location. Although face-to-face interviews can be time consuming and financially taxing

with travel, the benefits for gathering data outweighed the disadvantages with travel costs and time commitment.

Each nursing dean who agreed to participate was informed that a follow-up email was sent an informed consent to review prior to the interview. Scheduling the interviews was done during the initial email, with follow-up emails to remind interviewees of the date and time. The average duration of the interview was one hour. The place where the interview was conducted was determined by the participant, being mindful of the environment where the participant felt most comfortable verbalizing experiences that may contain sensitive information.

## Human Subjects' Considerations

Consideration for the research participants is especially important in order to maintain the ethical standards established by the Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical Behavior Research in 1978 (as cited in Polit & Beck, 2008). The commission developed the Belmont Report, which served as a basis for regulations affecting research sponsored by the United States government, including studies supported by the National Institute of Nursing Research. The Belmont Report is a summary of three ethical principles that are deemed important to conduct research on human subjects (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Beneficence ensures that the researcher will do no harm. The principle of beneficence was implemented by minimizing emotional harm and preventing stress or fears. Some of the questions may have caused discomfort for the participant, and it was my responsibility to be vigilant with anticipating the risk of emotional discomfort, and ensure close attention and sensitivity to prevent undue emotional stress (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Respect for persons permits the participants to have self-determination. This allows the participant to decide to participate in the study, ask questions, and withdraw from the study at any time. These rights were explained to the nursing dean prior to their consent to participate in the study, which involved full disclosure (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Justice preserves the rights of the participants to be treated fairly. The selection of the participants was based on the research study criteria, and all agreements made with the participants were honored. If a participant chose to withdraw from the study, a nonjudgmental tactful treatment was ensured (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Another ethical principle that was especially important to this study was the confidentiality of the nursing deans. Nursing deans are high profile leaders, and they were discussing sensitive data about their positions during the interview. It was imperative that there were no identifiers in the transcription and that the transcription was stored in a protected environment. There was not only an informed consent to conduct the interview, but a consent form was given to have the interview taped. It was also important to maintain transparency by informing them of peer debriefing and the potential for a shorter follow-up interview by phone to clarify some concepts. Confidentiality and transparency were also effective ways to establish the trust of the participants.

The Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical Behavior Research instituted the process of informed consent for study in educational settings. The informed consent was drafted after approval of the research proposal defense. Approval of the research study began with the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research proposal and informed consent was submitted to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas

IRB board to determine if the proposal was acceptable for research. Upon approval from the IRB, the data recruitment for the study commenced.

## Data Collection Procedure

In hermeneutic phenomenology, the interview serves as a means for exploring and gathering stories of lived experiences. It is also a way to develop a conversational relationship with the participant about the meaning of the experience, and allows the participants to share their stories in their own words (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). The technique that was employed to gather data was recording of face-to-face interviews using an RCA digital recorder. This particular voice recorder labeled various sessions which were stored on my home computer with a USB connection. The software that was installed on my computer has variable-speed playback, which enabled transcription at a modified pace. Research participants have various comfort levels when being audio recorded (Glesne, 2006). It was essential that full disclosure of the recording device and consent to be recorded was implemented.

Merriam (1998) describes interviewing as having a conversation with a purpose. "Finding out what is in and on someone else's mind" (p. 71) is how the interview should yield data. The interviews consisted of a script for the introduction (Appendix C) that ensured accurate ethical considerations. The ethical considerations in the script included aspects of confidentiality and the use of a pseudonym for the dean, the assurance that the dean can back out of the study at any time, and the confidentiality of the consent form. The consent form was the only identifier linking the participant's real name to the pseudonym. One original copy with their real name was locked in a cabinet in my secured work office, and a copy was given to the participant.

The interview questions were used as a guide for me to stay on task and include all the topics listed for discussion. The interviews were more fluid and more informal than the script, as I anticipated the use of a semi-structured interview. This type of interview was appropriate for this setting, as I was aware of the topics that I wanted to discuss as the researcher, but was unaware of what the participants' responses would be and how they might lead into other questions. A written interview guide was prepared and brought to the interview that included the interview questions (see Appendix B). The semi-structured interview process enabled the interviewee to talk freely about his/her experience, and openly relay stories (Polit & Beck, 2008). The wording of the questions was open-ended to avoid leading or biased questions (Glesne, 2006).

Some researchers indicate that the transcription of the interviews takes approximately three hours for every ten minutes of recorded data, which I found to be accurate when transcribing previous interviews (Glesne, 2006; Opdenakker, 2006). After transcription, the interviews with deans continued until data saturation occurred.

## Analysis Procedure

The first step in the data analysis procedure was to gain full awareness of my personal preconceptions and bias, regarding the experience of being a new dean, through the process of epoché, or unknowing (Munhall, 2007). This was implemented prior to the data collection (Patton, 1990). Before I collected any data, I transcribed and coded two pilot interviews. Upon gaining that experience, and reviewing the information that had been shared in these interviews, I questioned whether either interview could potentially influence my bias as a researcher. Prior to the data collection, I had also performed an extensive literature review on the role of dean, which also had the potential to influence

my ideas with the formulations of themes. As part of the epoché phase, I was able to fully describe each of these two potentially influential factors in my audit trail.

## Analysis Using the Methodology of van Manen

The implementation of data analysis involved a set of activities described by van Manen as "interwoven" (Van Manen, 1984, p. 12). Although the data analysis procedure in this research is described as steps, the process was reciprocal, following the hermeneutic philosophical method.

### Exploring the phenomenon: generating data.

All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, which yields "the essential raw data for analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 379). I transcribed five of the seven interviews; the final two were transcribed by my undergraduate research student. As I transcribed the interviews, I added thoughts that came to mind as a "new comment," using the "track changes" feature in Microsoft Word. At first, these thoughts were placed in the margins of the Word document; later on, they were transferred to the audit trail.

Each interview was read and re-read, spending additional time on the two interviews that I did not transcribe. Using a holistic approach to capture the main significance (Thormé, Esbensen, Dykes & Hallberg, 2004), I wrote comments in the text's margins, as well as the audit trail.

### Consulting phenomenological literature.

My role in the process was also acknowledged through further understanding of the phenomenon. The hermeneutic circle (Figure 1) illustrates understanding and interpretation by moving between the transcribed interviews and reflecting on themes, resulting in a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, on the part of the researcher.

*Figure 1.* A Basic Form of the Hermeneutic Circle

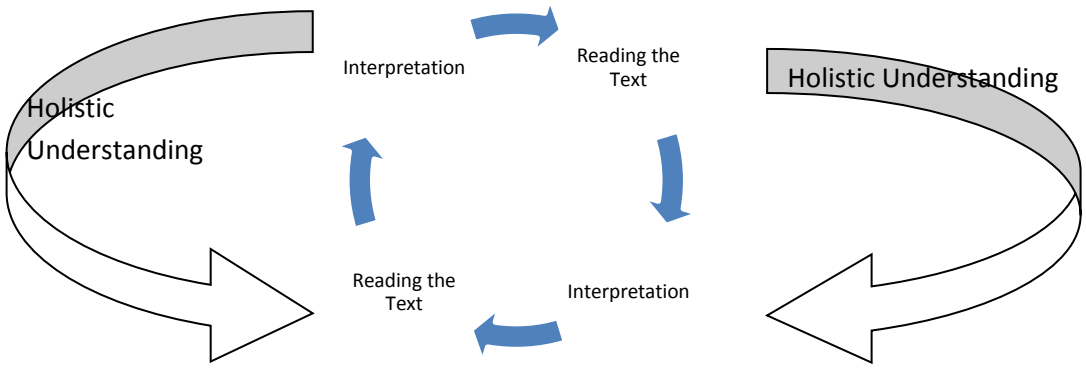


*Figure 1*. Reading and interpretation gave meaning to the other; as a result, understanding the phenomenon is circular between the data and researcher (Bontekoe, as cited in Ajjawi and Higgs, 2007).

**Conducting thematic analysis.**

Essential themes were gleaned out of the interview texts by a selective reading approach (Thormé, Esbensen, Dykes & Hallberg, 2004). Statements or phrases that seemed to reveal aspects of the lived experience were highlighted and also written on an index card. All data written on the index cards were treated with equal value, "horizontalized" (Patton, 1990, p. 408), spread out for examination, and then organized into meaningful rows. Each row, which Marshall and Rossman (1989) describe as "buckets or baskets" (p. 154) into which segments of text are placed, depending on their subject matter, had similar topics. Every index card that contained significant statements was grouped together by theme row and given a "descriptive label." The index cards were then categorized in a small file box, according to their respective descriptive labels.

Afterwards, the significant statements and descriptive labels were transcribed into an Excel spreadsheet. A research team, including my undergraduate research student and two committee members, then reviewed the significant statements and descriptive labels

and compared them to the content of the interviews. At the same time, the participants were also given the opportunity to review the significant statements and descriptive labels and compare them to the content of their transcribed interviews. This process reflects the methodological rigor of peer debriefing and member checking procedure.

## Methodological Rigor

Although Chapter 3 described various aspects of rigor in qualitative research with van Manen's method (1984) and Lincoln and Guba's criteria for trustworthiness (Lincoln, 1995), there were other methods of achieving rigor that are specifically applicable to data analysis.

Nancy Burns (as cited in Munhall, 2007) was one of the first nurse researchers to set criteria by which to evaluate nursing research. She proposed five characteristics that evaluate the rigor of qualitative research and are applicable to the data analysis procedure.

The first characteristic concerns the quality of written description. Descriptive vividness ensures that the study gives a valid portrayal of the research site, participants, and the reflexivity of the researcher's thoughts during the analysis process, which should be presented in such a way that the reader has "a sense of personally experiencing the event" (Burns & Grove, 2009, p. 696).

Methodological congruence is a standard for ensuring that the research is rigorous in the way it is documented, the way procedures are carried out, in maintaining ethical standards, and having "auditability" (Burns & Grove, 2009, p. 709). This research study had evidence of consistent rigor throughout the data collection and analysis procedures. Rigor was represented with procedural thoroughness, implementing the methods van

Manen and allowing for immersion with the data, and applying the ethical principles of beneficence, justice, and respect for persons throughout the data collection and analysis.

Analytic preciseness is having the data transform to a theoretical schema after careful analysis and thematic coding. The transformation of data is from abstract thoughts to concrete themes. These themes should further develop a theoretical basis that gives meaning to the phenomenon under study. This leads to the next characteristic by which to evaluate qualitative data analysis, which is the importance of having a theoretical schema consistent with and reflective of the data. Burns & Grove (2009) term this as "theoretical connectedness" (p. 725). The theoretical basis that is derived from the qualitative data should be clear and logical, correlate with the data, and further the knowledge base of the nursing profession.

The final characteristic is heuristic relevance. Burns & Grove (2009) describe this as a standard for evaluating a qualitative study in which the reader can recognize the importance of the study to further nursing knowledge, the theoretical significance of the phenomenon, and the way the phenomenon applies to future research in nursing.

In order to implement these standards to ensure both validity and merit is being met for this study, I have applied these principles by ensuring methodological rigor, adherence to ethical principles, identifying the importance the study's theoretical concepts, and full immersion of the data using vivid descriptions. These standards facilitated the quality of the data analysis procedure in phenomenological nursing research.

## Strength and Limitations

The strength of this research was that it contributed new knowledge that had not been explored before. The nursing dean, especially the novice in the position, occupies a leadership role that is relevant to the nursing profession and the future of nursing education. The nursing dean is challenged to meet not only the demands of educational administration, but the changing clinical practice setting, the changing population of today's nursing student, the demands for relevant curriculum and an unprecedented shortage of nurses and nurse faculty. This role of leadership has great influence on the future of nurses due to the responsibilities the nursing dean encounters. There is a need for further understanding of the significance of this unique lived experience to develop not only the nursing dean position, but to also to advance the nursing profession.

There were several assumptions and limitations to this study. The first assumption was that the qualitative methodology would bring out true, insightful and detailed stories of the lived experiences of novice deans. It was also assumed that I would be able to elicit information from the participants using open-ended questions, despite being a novice as a phenomenological investigator. The need to remain neutral during the investigation, free of the influence of bias, personal beliefs, or practices, was also assumed. While the nursing school deans in this study all had the title "dean", it was also assumed that they function in a similar capacity, whether in the setting of a liberal arts college, community college or large university.

Some limitations of this study were the potential to interpret the results based on the findings of the literature; using the lived experience of deans to "fit" into one of the three theories that are presented in the literature review. When investigating the state of the

science with nursing deans, the literature described the dean role as one that is challenging and hard to recruit and retain (Lamborn, 1991; Redman, 2001; Quell, 2005; Blass, 2011). Previous studies on the academic dean described role stress, ambiguity, and lack of fit with the environment (Gmelch, Wolverton, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999; Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1999). Through the audit trail and reflective journaling, I was able to set aside my previous knowledge of this role, and I enabled the process of unknowing and epoché (Munhall, 2007). Another limitation was that there were no gender specifics in the sample, which may have affected the heterogeneity of the results, given that the majority of nursing deans are women. Other factors that should be considered as limitations were the potential time constraints on interviews, travel time for the face-to-face interviews, and the number of participants available who met the inclusion criteria.

## Summary

The methods of inquiry applied for this study were explained, with details of how the participants will be recruited, the procedure of IRB approval and informed consent, and the process of data collection and analysis. The ethical principles that pertain to this study were identified as well as the need to maintain integrity in data collection and analysis.

Nursing schools in the United States are at the crossroads of transformational change. This change requires leadership that stresses the importance of supporting and revitalizing faculty to teach in the midst of the challenges of nursing education. Exploring the lived experiences of the novice nursing dean is a starting point for a phenomenon that has not been studied before and needs to be investigated to more fully

understand what these nurses experience in their first few years in this leadership role. With this investigation, further research was indicated to implement strategies that foster this population of nurse leaders and their transition to the role. Insights gained provided a deeper understanding of the influences of their experiences which will benefit other nursing academic leaders. Nursing education is in the midst of change, but understanding the lived experience of the leaders of nursing education is a start to better the future of the nursing profession.

# CHAPTER V

# RESULTS

The purpose of this research investigation was to answer one overarching question: What is the essence of the lived experience for novice deans of nursing? The investigation had two vital research goals in mind – to understand what novice nursing deans experience when they first encounter their roles and to learn which aspects of their careers ultimately contribute to the essence of being a nursing dean.

This chapter describes the investigation's participants and their stories, while also examining the themes and subthemes that have evolved during the data analysis. Themes and subthemes that emerged ranged from characteristics of their personal stories, such as their past professional experiences and relationships with others, to the personal and professional sacrifices they have made for their roles, as well as the positive and negative attributes of their work environments. A model that depicts the overarching themes and their subthemes will be presented at the end of the chapter that captures a visual summary of the results.

## Description of Study Participants

A total of seven female nursing deans were interviewed. Two deans were from private, not-for-profit universities that had student populations ranging from 2,000 to 5,000. Two deans presided over nursing, as well as a college of human services or health professions, working for public universities with approximately 11,000 students. Three deans were employed at associate degree granting institutions; one worked at a private university, while the other two were employed at public institutions with student populations ranging from 2,000 to 4,000. The general age of the participants ranged from

late 30s to mid-60s. As the inclusion criteria for this study included the appointment within three years or less, the time of appointment with the participants also varied, from six months to two and a half years.

## Method of Data Analysis and Processes

My research investigation utilized van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological method to transform personal meaning from the interview texts. Interpretive phenomenology was also used as I considered themes that emerged from the data (Thormé, Esbensen, Dykes & Hallberg, 2004).

## Interview Results and Emergence of Themes/Subthemes

The interviews yielded four overarching themes and 16 subthemes. These overarching themes included sacrifice, lack of preparation for the role, the uniqueness of the nursing dean role, and highly political environments. Through the participants' stories, various subthemes emerged that related to the overarching themes. The subthemes for the overarching theme of sacrifice were loss of research or practice, transformational leadership, number of hours, lonely position, and faculty development. The theme of lack of preparation included "why am I here", actively recruited, students' entitlement, and "the darn budget" as subthemes. The uniqueness of the nursing dean role has the subthemes of community partners, faculty shortage, accreditation process, and interprofessional. Finally, the theme of highly political environments has "mean girls", "big boys win out", and connecting with others as subthemes.

### Theme: Sacrifice

Three of the seven dean interviewees described their positions as being a "servant to the work." As Dean A stated, "my style is a servant leader". Dean D affirmed this theme

as she desired to "help people achieve their highest potential". This overarching theme is pictured in the trunk of the tree, because of the importance of this theme and how it connects to the dean's giving of their time and efforts for the role. These women identify themselves as surrendering to the work of dean. They described what they have sacrificed for the role, including their prioritization of student and faculty development before their own needs, as the role of dean requires a commitment to an institution and a profession, as well as an obligation to faculty and students. This commitment, of course, leads to sacrifices, particularly with regards to the dean's personal and professional life, as described in the subthemes.

**Subtheme: Loss of research or practice.**

First, five of the seven deans discussed how they either missed practicing as a registered nurse or nurse practitioner, or how they wished they had more time for thinking and writing to further the profession. One dean described her loss with the following statement: "you can't have your foot in both camps; you have to do one or the other." The fact that they did not have time to practice, write, or research was a loss to their identity.

Dean B described it as "thinking time":

> …but one of the things that I've found already, [which] I discovered in my first semester, is that I don't have… what I call 'thinking time.' I have a calendar that is so full of meetings, that, you know, my world is, you know, making sure that I am prepared for the first meeting, so that, while I have a half hour break, I have half an hour time to prepare for the next meeting, to prepare for the next meeting, to prepare for the next meeting…

Dean C is a nurse practitioner who also feels a sense of loss, as she is unable to practice, nor "keep her research alive":

> …I'm a nurse practitioner, so [I'm] a very hands-on clinician, and that part of me has been very difficult to keep alive. And I hate it. I hate the fact that I can't do it… I get the Chronicle every week, and read [it], and look at what's going on in higher ed. as opposed to pulling out my Nurse Practitioner journal and keeping up to date on the clinical stuff. I mean it's that dichotomy that's really hard to, um, to deal with. And it's getting harder and harder…it's like am I going to do one or the other because I cannot do both…

She went on to say:

> …I finally decided I can't be a clinician anymore because you can't have a foot in both camps and do this job. You can do it as a faculty, or [as a] program director, but not as a dean. And I'm going oh man…and I envy the deans that can keep their research alive because I don't know how you do that without a major machine underneath you. Or minions to help you get that stuff done. Yah, so if somebody could tell me how to do that I would be really happy…

Dean E missed the clinical aspect of her role and "knowing the new." She stated that she loved her former job and misses the interaction of others in the clinical setting. Dean D also wished she had more time to write and publish.

> …it would be the ability to have more time in my everyday schedule for thought. I don't have that as much as I would like. Right now it feels like I'm running on a treadmill most of the day, so I don't feel like I yet have time to go through…even to quietly be here and go through my emails, and have the opportunity to think thoughtfully about bigger issues, things that the university and the college need, and I'm not there yet, and I'd like to be there. I'd like to be at a place where I sit and write about what I'm doing and get some pieces published about what I'm doing, get back to center on that, and I'm not there yet, and I need to get back to that place, where I feel I'm contributing to the bigger field and contributing to what is happening in the state, to what's happening nationally, and right now I'm just running as fast as I can every day.

**Subtheme: Transformational leadership.**

Dean A took the time to investigate how her faculty personnel view leadership prior to coming on board as dean. She also described herself as a "servant leader."

> …And I also had them tell me in a few paragraphs what they think… are important attributes of a leader…my style is a servant leader, so I feel like sometimes I am walking ahead, and sometimes I am walking behind and sometimes beside them…I learned about the wishes of the people, so it was a learning time for me.

> And I think the best thing…there are two things that a new dean needs to know. It is a different role, and you think, 'Oh, I was a great teacher, I want to teach this and teach that,' and you can't. You can't let yourself be loaded down because then you're not there for people who need you, because you're working on this other project.

Dean D also waited until she was acquainted with the faculty before she made any changes to the infrastructure of the department.

> …when I got here I told them all I was going to wait to tell them how I was going to structure my organization until after I had been here for a bit. So I waited for months 'til I appointed my assistant dean for the other departments. Then I waited until just this past summer until I appointed…to my assistant dean.

> …and I say to them I'm here to find out what we can do for you and what you'd like to hear from us…

Dean E also described how she interacted with the students and faculty, which emulated characteristics of transformational leadership.

> …but one thing I know is I have to be honest with people. Completely honest, and um…be willing to listen, and um…it's not about me or my ego or any...it's about the students and their success. And I know that because they're our future.

Dean F described herself as a transformational leader.

> …I am absolutely transformational. It is more difficult to be a transformational leader when there are behaviors that aren't nurturing…

Dean G gave a specific example of her transformational leadership qualities:

> …I had a faculty member leave, again we're in that transition, and she chose to leave two weeks before the semester started, so then you have all these students in programs, that needed that particular class in order to graduate, and I couldn't load the current faculty because they had no time in their schedules. So I ended up teaching two clinical groups…Plus try to learn a new role, plus, yah, my program chair and I laugh now, and say, well, they told us to give it a year, and it sure as heck [has] been a year. And yah, so if I didn't quit last semester, I think I [can] pretty much handle [just] about anything.

**Subtheme: Faculty development.**

A part of the overarching theme of sacrifice relates to the ways in which the deans invest a lot of time with their faculty in order to achieve the best outcomes for their students.

Dean A stated:

> …so I've always had a respect for what the other person's load is, and I put myself as kind of a backup. And, in this situation, I've had to sometimes be kind of a consultant to problem solve, and then put them to work on it, and then be the person who kind of brings them up and works with them.

She went on to say:

> …it is my belief that the students can only be as good as the faculty. So unless we are developing the faculty, the students can't get better.
>
> …I try not to get bogged down with a lot of writing and developing work, but I delegate it to the faculty and I hold their hand so they can grow.

Dean D described how she invested hours getting to know the faculty.

> …I met with every single person in my college, and I started with the faculty and I asked them to all make an appointment to see me in the office, and each one took about an hour, and that was about 75 hours that I devoted to the faculty…

Dean F related how faculty development directly affects her involvement with the students.

> …I'll answer that in this way: it depends on how strong the faculty person is ok? When you have, I, it's in my experience that when I have a faculty person that is very good at making relationships with students, then having to talk to those students is much less, whereas when I have a faculty person that has more of an authoritarian kind of leadership style, then absolutely I'm far more involved with those students, because that faculty member doesn't understand the student role as well, so then, yes, there's more involvement. But so, a huge part, here at this college, the dean role in the job description says sixty percent of your time will be developing faculty and I value that statement. I think it's absolutely true, because the more I help faculty develop, then the less I'm involved in their students.

Dean E portrayed the way the dean "coaches" the faculty:

> …and she does a great job, it's just I'm gonna have to coach her to say, 'Hey look,' you know, we gotta…I want you to be a great teacher, (whispers) but you gotta be here! So I'm going to have to coach her. I mean my job is being a people developer!

Dean G is a dean at a community college and was surprised by the lack of knowledge the faculty had about basic policies:

> Like one of the first things I ever did when I started was that we had adjunct orientation, and one of the things that I did at the adjunct orientation is going through our nursing handbook. No one had ever gone through it with the full time faculty. And they're like, 'we don't know that,' and I'm like, 'no one's ever had you go through the handbook?' 'Well, we know it's there but nobody ever explained the reason why this policy is in place.' So it was like I was starting essentially at ground zero. The basics.

Another aspect of faculty development also resounded with the deans – how their aim was to develop the faculty enough so that they "work themselves out of a job." A common goal that was relayed was being able to sit back and "let the wheels turn" like a well-oiled machine. Dean D stated it as:

> …and I'd like to move a little more away from that and let nursing begin to run a little more on its own. And have a bigger, more macro picture of the whole college and how we can do things as a whole, and let the parts run more on their own.

Dean C felt that, during the whole first year she was in her position, there was "nothing but H.R. [human resources] issues," as she discovered one important attribute of successful deans: "when I can sit back and watch the wheels turn and it really doesn't take me to do it":

> …I guess that's when I know that I could walk away for months and hopefully that would still continue. My job is to sort of work myself out of a job. Kind of like the best teaching you ever had…you don't need them anymore.

**Subtheme: Lonely position.**

As the phrase goes, "it's lonely at the top"; the nursing deans shared that concept in various ways. Some felt they could not converse with their faculty, since they had to "be careful" about what they said. Dean B mentioned:

> …As the 'dean,' as the administrative head, I can't do those things and I have to separate myself from nursing because I am the dean of the college of nursing and health professions. Now that doesn't mean that I have to, you know, chop it off, so it's been very different for me, and I think it's been very different for them as well. I have an open door policy. I don't keep people out, but it's still different. You know, I am cautious about going to lunch with them now. You know, I feel like I have to be because, before, it wouldn't have been a problem, but now it feels like, are you spending too much time with nursing and are you going to spend this time with health professions? And it's not, that sounds at a greater division than what it really is, but you become very sensitive to some of these types of things that you didn't have to before. So, I think that it truly has changed my relationship, you know…

> …Where I felt comfortable sharing pieces…not everything…obviously not everything…but where I felt comfortable sharing information with fellow people in my college, uh, this is a different level. This is a very different level, and I have to be careful and have a lot of filters on to sort out what I can or what I cannot share.

Dean E came from a very social position in a clinical setting, and she stated how this role was different, as far as interaction with others is concerned.

> …but I feel very isolated. As you know, like when they say you're alone at the top, and I'm not at the top by any means, but I, I am a very people-oriented person, um, I talked to, when I would be at the hospital, when I would make my rounds, I knew everybody, from the people that cleaned, because they did an important job, to the people that I answered to, um, and here, it's like I'm, I'm consumed by my work at my desk and that was a tough transition, and that was, uh, that's challenging for me.

Dean C described how saying something "as dean" was far different than it had been in her previous roles:

> …once you transition to that dean level, and you speak, it comes from the mouth of the dean. It doesn't come from me or [a] fellow faculty member. It's like 'well, [her name] said this' and the stuff that I hear people say…and they go, 'Well, [her name] said that' …and yah, I said it, but not like *you're* saying it. Uh, cuz you know it's totally out of context, with this authority kind of thing, that all of a sudden you don't, I don't know, it took me a month or two to really realize I have to be careful about how I say what I say and who I say it to.

She also felt there was a distinct difference in how she communicated with others in the clinical setting, in comparison to her communication style as dean. She likened it to the ways in which patients talked with her.

> …I can talk to a patient, and they say thank you, and I know they mean it. Instead of OK, what did you mean? What do you need from me? So there's no double talk there…it's genuine, it's authentic, and real, and I don't have to think twice about it.

Dean D found it difficult to be in a position where the faculty wanted her to come to the university as dean, but, once she took the role, things changed.

> I decided to apply for the deanship and, when I came on board, they wanted me to come. But almost as soon as I got here as the authority of dean, there was a transition on the part of a small number of faculty in the department who didn't see me as their cheerleader any longer. And all of a sudden I was the 'dean'…I like to be liked, and it was hard to move from this position of being very much liked, and very much wanted, to this position of distrust…

**Subtheme: Number of hours.**

Another sacrifice of the deanship position was also revealed: the number of hours they work, at times, to the expense of their family and personal well-being. Dean F described it as "the number of hours you put in is incredible." Dean D stated that she often does not leave the office until 7:30 or 8:00 at night, and still "carries a bag home, thinking I will do something." Dean G stated that "she works at home constantly." She continued to explain that, in education, as a faculty member, "you can't turn it off", but even in her role now, as dean, she "really can't turn it off." She described how she had a couple days off for other professional requirements, and was overwhelmed with the number of emails that requested her "immediate" response, although she had an "out of the office" automated reply. Dean B felt that she couldn't keep up:

> …it's like, 'oh my gosh.' I feel like what I am doing right now is traveling as fast as I can and I'm not keeping up. That's what I'm feeling right now, and I'm just

> going…and I am putting in…like everybody else, I'm putting in 12 hour workdays and I'm working Saturday and Sunday to try and just keep up with everything, and I'm not drowning, but I'm not where I'd like to be.

Dean C wondered if it was the result of simply being disorganized, or if the role's responsibilities had any influence. She described her acceptance of the dean position as "coming to the dark side," due to the level of responsibility:

> …it's been crazy busy. And I guess the other piece of it is [that] it's 12 to 16 hour days, seven days a week. I now have a routine, and it's been three years, but I take Saturday off...it's my day off, and I don't do work…work. I work around the house. I do grocery shopping, and that kind of stuff, but, [on] Sunday, it's typically seven to eight hours. I got here [at] seven today, and will probably get home at six or seven tonight. And I don't know and I don't think it's a function of me… but we joke about 'coming over to the dark side.' I don't know if you have heard that or not, but the hours are incredible."

In summary of the overarching theme of sacrifice, each of these women gave up research, clinical practice, casual conversations with others, and time with family, upon acceptance of their deanships. They came from prestigious positions in the clinical sector, as well as administrative academic roles, to serve the profession. The theme of sacrifice is directly related to who they are as people with transformational leadership qualities, who invest in countless hours with their faculty, and give to the profession by filling these roles and serving their faculty and students.

**Theme: Little Preparation for the Role**

All nursing deans come from various areas within the healthcare industry and often do not have mentorship or preparation for their roles. Out of the seven participants, six were actively recruited by the provost and faculty. Dean B stated that "a lot of faculty came to me and said, 'you've got to do this,'" while Dean E was asked on multiple occasions to apply for her position. She said she "was not looking for the job," Many were very content in their previous roles and were not looking for other opportunities. They

questioned why they came to the position on occasion. Dean E questioned, "Why, why, why, am I doing this?" The deans felt they were not prepared for different aspects of the dean role, such as the budget, and the current generation of students who surprisingly seemed to have a sense of entitlement.

**Subtheme: Actively recruited.**

A majority of interviewees often described how they came to the position by "much coercion." Dean C stated that the "provost asked me to interview for this job, and I'm sitting here thinking…I don't really want it." Dean D was also actively recruited by the provost, as well as the faculty, which "wanted [her] to come." She went on to say:

> …but the difference is they want me, so it's not like I have to go hunt down a job, and it's not like I'm looking for a job. They want me to come, and it's been, from that perspective, they did want me to come, and from a dean that makes a big difference. So, to come to a place where people are very excited to have you come, it makes a big difference as a new dean.

Dean E described:

> …I know the H.R. [human resources] director here…and she would always say, 'Oh come teach, come teach!' And I said, 'No, I'm just so busy, I, I wouldn't give it fair justice.' So then she said, 'I have a job for you' and I said, 'I am just not interested. I really love what I'm doing.' And um, she [told me to] 'think about it' and gave me her card and I didn't think about it. About two weeks later she called, and said, 'Would you just come and have coffee and talk to me and the VP of Instruction?' and I said, 'What can it hurt?' My husband said, 'What can it hurt?' So I came and did that. And she called and said, 'We'd like for you to put your application in,' and then they brought me up here for an interview and I thought 'What would it hurt to interview?' Well, I got the job.

**Subtheme: "Why am I here?"**

With six months to three years of full-time service already completed, some deans began to question why they took the position in the first place, as they did not feel any affirmation of fulfillment within the role. Dean B stated, "…and why am I doing this

again?" She led into that question by describing how she had "no clue" what the role entailed:

> …I'm thinking, well, I've sort of been there, I sort of know…and, to some extent, I think that's probably true, but I had no clue. I mean, really, the bottom line of the whole thing is that I really, really, had no clue…I really did not have a level of understanding that I thought I did. And so it's been, what I refer it back, is kind of that 'novice to expert,' you know Benner? I mean, boy, I felt it. I went right back to novice, and you're sitting there and you're, you know, you have to content with this situation, or that situation, and whatever it is…and you're going 'and why did I want to do this again?'

She went on to say, "I am sitting here thinking, as I am talking here, I'm thinking, 'Oh my gosh, I can't believe I'm here.'" She described herself as intellectually knowing the dean role, but not being prepared for the affective side:

> …Because I knew, I knew it was the college of nursing and health professions, and there are so many programs, and there are ultimately these programs reporting to me, and I knew, that…intellectually, I knew all of that. But I think it was the other part of that…the affective, the emotional, and that 'holy cow' kind of part I was not prepared for…

Dean C also described how she was not prepared for the role and questioned why she had accepted it:

> …Yeah, because I never came here to do this. Ever. Ever. And if anybody ever asked me if I wanted a deanship, I would tell them they were absolutely nuts…I didn't really want it, I never came here to be the dean…and I look back and I think 'what the hell was I thinking?'

Dean G tried to prepare herself for the role, but stated that:

> …there are things that yes, I expected, and there's things that no matter how much I tried to prepare myself for, I could not see it coming. You don't expect people to quit out of the blue, and to have to carry a lot more than the full load, but it's like anything. You do it, and you're stronger for it…"

She also went on to describe how she has a higher anxiety level since taking the position, because "you're constantly afraid that you're missing something" and lacking control, which "people don't understand":

> …but it's like, I feel like I move from task to task to task and I'm just now starting to get the bigger picture of where I fit in, as far as the college, and my role of dean in this particular region. How that affects the whole college, as far as their expectations, the nursing program, the viability of the college itself, it was more task-oriented initially, and I think, to feel less anxious and be able to get the bigger picture and get the tasks done, but also understand the reason why I am doing what I'm doing and not be so focused on deadlines and things like that. Not that the tasks are not important, but to really just figure out what my place is, and long term…because it had been kind of a negative transition. It varies. It's like, do I want to do this or do I want to go back to the faculty role where I know I have control in the classroom and the concept of teaching? I can control that. I can control the lesson that I give. I can control the activities that I do, because there is a curriculum. But there are so many things that are outside your control, which people don't understand.

**Subtheme: "The darn budget".**

Deans of nursing also have little preparation for the aspect of economics. This fact was conveyed in three interviews, with the deans expressing their frustration concerning their lack of preparation for that particular aspect of their roles. Dean G stated, "I just now got a handle on the budget." Dean C described it as: "if I could just keep the darn budget in line…" Dean B described in more detail how she was ill prepared:

> …there have been other parts that I was really not prepared for. Um…and so I think some of those things that I was not prepared for [were]…uh, I think the budget is a huge issue that I am contending with. Not that it is, that I don't understand the budget. I understand [it]. What I didn't have a good understanding of was the number of accounts that this college has, and the restrictions of what I can do…move money to and from so that I can identify something and I know we need some money to support it; now I've got to figure out where to find that money so that I can in fact support it. And that has been an eye-opening experience (laughing)…and I've walked myself right into some issues because I thought I knew what I was doing…

Dean F described the budget in her nursing program as "absurd":

> …So that was difficult. If I had more experience in economics before I took on this role, then I would have known that it's absolutely absurd not to have a set budget before I accept this position. So I think that it is true; as nurses, we aren't skilled in economics… we haven't thought that way traditionally. So, absolutely, that would be something that I found to be more difficult. And, even though I [have] a Master's in nursing administration, still…that budget piece was something that I continued to see myself struggling with. Because, in a new program, you don't have a lot of income in

> a new program, so then, you know, from other administrators, how can you justify this expense when your program is not making money yet? So that's a struggle.

She went on to describe that the nursing department was the larger expense of the college, and wondered about the economic viability of the program:

> …but how long will this program be funded before, you know, they decide that 'no, we're not gonna do it' or…you know? And I think, for me, that stability of the position is very well tied into the economic ability.

Other deans were focused on what they needed to "beat the drum for nursing" in order to receive funding for the things the department needed, which was a process they were learning in their new roles.

**Subtheme: Students' entitlement.**

Another aspect of the position that these nursing deans were not prepared for was the sense of entitlement that nursing students currently have. All of the seven deans mentioned, at some point in their interviews, how students in this day and age think nothing of going directly to the dean, or even the university president, for concerns they have about various aspects of the academic life. The deans remarked that they have to teach the students that there is a "chain of command"; many even wonder how students will perform in their future workplace environments.

Dean E stated that it was "so frustrating," and "there is an entitlement that we never had." She went on to say that "there's such a sense of entitlement, and wanting to blame someone else for them getting a bad grade, oh my goodness! You know, we never thought that way!" She also described how they email the president:

> Or they email the president and of course I get the letter, or, they'll…the first thing they want to do is come in and see me! Now, when did you ever go in and see your dean? Hello! I- I didn't! That was, you know…oh my gosh! That's the first thing they want to do. So that's one of the first things we tell them, is the chain of

command is your faculty person, then the chair of the nursing department, then me, and if you want to go above me, it's just gonna come back to me.

Dean A also stated:

> …When I first came here, most of the students with problems were always coming to the dean. It was like 'you have to see the dean' and so I said, but that's taking an opportunity to be a problem solver away from you. And that's part of what you should know, and so they have to see the instructor first. And quite often, they can tell it. I've had students that have come to me and said, 'she doesn't understand me, I don't want to talk to her again, or see her again; I don't like her hair, or what she wears,' and what I tell the student is that's taking an opportunity for learning away from you.

Dean G described it as a lack of communication on the part of the students, and mentioned that she, just as Dean A, tries to teach them the "chain of command":

> …because that was one of the things that I have tried to establish is that chain of command. And it's not that I don't want to talk to students, because I've set up other avenues to communicate with them, such as discussion forums, and I'm working up a newsletter, and other things to communicate with them with their programs, but there is still that chain of command. And I, you know, in the end, they don't want to communicate with me until the end, and then they email me and blame it all on the instructor. And so I've tried to really nip that in the bud…and I just give them an example. A nurse working on the floor does not go to the CNO before going to their coworkers, or the charge nurse, or the house supervisors. There is a process. So you need to go to the faculty member, then your adviser, then the program chair, and then come to me. And again, I'll intervene, I'll engage when I need to engage, but they gotta work through the process.

The overarching theme of little preparation encompasses some surprises that the deans were not prepared for, such as learning the budget and contending with students who do not understand the proper channels of communication. The majority of the deans were actively recruited on much coercion, and, at times, question why they took the position due to the little preparation they actually had for their roles.

**Theme: The Uniqueness of the Nursing Dean Role**

The role of nursing dean is not like that of other deans in academia. These deans have particular aspects of their positions that are unique to nursing, and bring additional stressors to the novice. Such aspects include the importance of their community partner relationships, the current faculty shortage that is present nationwide, the intensive accreditation process most colleges of nursing require, and the incorporation of other disciplines in the practice of nursing instruction. Dean D states that the faculty shortage has "all of us deans in positions of feeling strangled right now, that we spend a lot of our time trying to get that accomplished", which reflected the issue of the nurse faculty shortage. The importance of involvement with community partners was reflected in what Dean B stated. She is included in many more projects with the community hospitals, and wants that connection with the college of nursing, as she enjoys being involved in this "other level."

**Subtheme: Community partners.**

The deans of nursing interviewees stressed how important it was to utilize community connections for clinical placements and collaboration purposes. Dean C described how the reputation of the nursing school being "clinically proficient" is important for the negotiation of clinical placements and contracts. She stated that it gives the schools credibility when their faculty is clinically active and practicing within the hospitals that their students are placed in.

Dean F takes one day a week to be out of her office on campus, as well as "out in the community." She stated, "because, in the role of dean, for me, I'm doing a lot of community service things, and it's difficult to do those community service things when

you're exhausted with things going down on campus." She believed there was an importance in having a "presence in the community" as a leader in academia.

Dean D thought that the "most important thing I can do here is reestablish those community connections." She said that she goes out to all the community partners and asks them what the school of nursing can do for them. She had a faculty member take her out into the local hospitals, believing that was one of her "highest priorities" since accepting the dean position. She also thought it was important to establish relationships with local community colleges. When she first accepted the position, she thought she would probably work for five years, but she soon realized she could not establish the community connections she desired in less than five years, and wished to have those "cemented."

**Subtheme: Interprofessional.**

Another aspect of collaboration that is important to the deans of nursing is working partnerships with other departments within the university. Some of the aspects of this subtheme involve the ways in which nursing is viewed by other departments. Dean D has a new building where health professions are brought in together to have a model of interprofessional education. She believes it is an opportunity for the students to offer simulation and collaboration with physical and occupational therapy, social work, and nursing. She felt this was an asset to taking the deanship because of the model that was in place.

Some aspects of the interprofessional concept are directly related to the fact that nursing is often the "guinea pig" to try new policies and procedures within the university. Dean F described it as:

> …When you are the dean of nursing, nursing encompasses so much that you know, you find yourself on [a] committee that no one would ever have thought nursing played a role in, but, because nurses bring so many talents to the table, 'well the dean of nursing would be really good at that'…and then here you are on another committee (laughs), wondering, 'Okay, wait a second, how did this happen?' (laughing)…"

Dean C designated the collaboration with other disciplines as the future "forward thinking" of nursing. She defined this model of nursing in academia as "this collaborative, social media, sim lab, online, different ways to explore." She also went on to describe how nursing is the one department to try new things, such as Dean F explained.

Dean C stated:

> …but anytime something new comes up, or they want guinea pigs, they'll call me up. And it's like, 'what do you need?' And they would say, 'well, we need this class taught this way,' or whatever, and it's like 'sure,' because we're always ready to take that jump, the nursing faculty, and me included, are ready to make those leaps really quickly, whereas some of the folks, in the college of arts and sciences, may come around in five years. So it's a lot of piloting things, and it's a lot of creativity, and collaboration with other departments.

Unfortunately, sometimes nursing is viewed negatively by other departments within the college or university. A dean from a large university, as well as one dean from an associate degree granting college, stated that other departments viewed them as elitist. Dean D mentioned that the nursing department has a "terrible reputation of eliticism." Dean E described it as:

> …nursing is not the 'be all, end all.' We all need to work together. We just have to. I mean, maybe some things the business department does would be good for nursing, or the arts and sciences; you know, we've all got to work together. So I know nursing is different with the clinical and lab, but that doesn't mean we are better than anyone else."

**Subtheme: Faculty shortage.**

Deans in schools of nursing face the challenge of recruiting new nursing faculty, as the majority of nursing faculty are presently approaching their retirement years. Dean D stated:

> …Right now we have four positions open. I have a position for an endowed chair which is fully funded, which is very unusual, but I haven't had one application. So that needs to change. I have the luxury of three faculty lines right now, plus this endowed chair; with that, I could change nursing. But not if I can't get people who are doctorally prepared and from a locale other than right here…

Dean E felt that they were competing with other areas in nursing for Masters prepared faculty, as she was in her role at an associate degree granting institution. When Dean G was discussing her school's faculty shortage, she described it as "having to do so much with so little":

> …And the other problem that we were having college wide, and all across the region, was the lack of credentialed educators, because the NLNAC sent out a little report about the credentialing, which is a struggle for every college, to find enough MSN to teach, even your PN, your practical nurses are required to be taught by the MSN…but I have junior faculty [and] faculty in school trying to finish out their MSNs and transition to the role of educator, which is so much different than being just clinically based. We have to do so much with so little…

Dean C was concerned about the age of the faculty at her institution. She stated that a lot of her faculty are in their 50s or older, and a quarter of them will be retiring within the next three to four years. She went on to say that the nation's nursing faculty, as a whole, is older, and the general sciences have younger faculty in their roles. She felt it was a disadvantage to nursing that the pinnacle age of nursing faculty is in their 60s. She was also concerned about the future of the deanship role in nursing, stating, "A lot of folks will retire, and there is some younger faculty, but none that are able to scoot into the deanship. There needs to be a lot more succession planning." Dean G questioned, as a

younger dean, "Where are these new deans going to come from?" She mentioned that she often attended regional meetings in which the average age of fellow deans was 55 to 57, with some that were even in their 70s.

**Subtheme: Accreditation process.**

Another unique aspect of nursing departments and schools of nursing is the accreditation procedures and processes that are required. Nursing deans in larger universities may have these tasks delegated, depending on the infrastructure of their college of nursing, but the deans that participated in this study were from smaller colleges and universities. Each dean that I interviewed either just completed the accreditation for their department or was in the midst of the process. Dean F stated that "all those accreditation things that I was trying to do meant I had to work at home and on the weekend." She did feel it was an asset, though, when negotiating for resources for the department. She stated that she "learned to say, 'our accreditation process demand that we do this' and the words 'accreditation' and 'demand' seem to work really well to get what we need!"

Dean A, meanwhile, described the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) accreditation process as "painful." The faculty was unsure of the standards and she had to take a lot of time to guide them through the process. Dean E was just starting the process of accreditation, which was an added stressor, because she was having "weekly meetings about it to keep everybody on track." Dean D thought the accreditation was an "essential part of what gets the college out and about." She saw it as an opportunity for national and statewide involvement and felt it was important for her department to "stay in line with the standards":

> …CCNE [is] very important, [as] it keeps you in line to be able to go back to your own college and say where are you on this? And where are you on this?…because it is important for me to be able to say to them 'these are the standards, and you need to adhere to them in the following way.' Those are important to me; those are the things that help me know if I've become or not.

In summary, this overarching theme concerning the uniqueness of the nursing dean role quickly results in unusual additional responsibilities that deans in other departments simply do not have. With that in mind, there is also a stigma that can be formed within the community and the university, but the main aspect of this overarching theme is the importance of relationships with others in order to further the profession of nursing dean as a whole.

**Theme: Highly Political Environments**

The work environment that nursing deans perform in are highly political, which was addressed in Chapter 2. Not only do nursing deans have to encounter gender issues, with male versus female academic professional advancement, but they also have to contend with what was described as "mean girls." Dean D described her colleagues as a "very, very dysfunctional work group." She stated they "are not so nice to each other." Unfortunately, new nursing deans work among nursing faculty who are resistant to change, and seem to have a manner of hostility toward the novice dean. These deans found that connecting with other nurse executives, while also finding a mentor and others to "commiserate with," was invaluable to them. Dean A stated a lot of her role is "all about relationships." She relayed the importance of an effort to get out and get to know others in the community better because then you will find "what your common ground is," and become "good acquaintances." She felt in those relationships, you are "nourished."

**Subtheme: "Mean girls."**

There is a presence of hostility in the workplace within the profession of nursing. In fact, the phrase that "nurses eat their young" is present in nursing literature (Goodwin & Candela, 2013 p. 617). A qualitative study of holistic comfort, completed with nursing students in an accelerated nursing program, designated a subtheme of "teamwork versus hostility" (p. 617). One nurse described it as "It's ridiculous to create this discomfort between your fellow workers" (p. 618).

The presence of hostility in the workplace is not only evident with nurses in the clinical setting, but in the academic environment as well. Six of the seven novice dean interviewees mentioned that they received some aspect of hostility from the nursing faculty. The workplace environment was described by Dean D as:

> …you could be here and walk down the hall and no one would even speak to each other. Their doors were closed, and they were afraid to talk, and there was the 'in group' and the 'out group'…they were all that thwarted by each other.

Unfortunately, the faculty personnel that were "mean spirited" were not only this way toward each other, but toward Dean D, as nursing dean. She questioned taking the position because of this group of faculty.

> …this is the department who continues to bully each other for so long…who would ever want to work with them?…but I knew that coming in. Taking the job, I said to people, 'do I really want to go to work with a group of mean girls?' Nursing should be revered here…not the negative department…when they all get together, they can have their issues.

Two of the seven deans were regularly greeted by the faculty with one statement: "we don't like change." These two particular deans stated it was "older faculty" who felt this way, but Dean E mentioned:

> …I can tell you that the younger faculty [members] here very supportive of me, but there [are] a couple older ones that, when they were interviewing me, the first thing

> they said to me was 'we don't like change.' So I knew from the beginning, you know, that they would not [be very] supportive, [and] I would have some work to do there.

Dean A also mentioned there is a difference between the older and younger faculty, categorizing the older faculty group as 'nay-sayers.' She also described them as being resistant to new things, as they "won't let things move" and are the "most resistant to any changes" in the department. Dean F stated, "I think that nurses are tough on other nurses sometimes, you know?" She described a particular relationship as being very difficult:

> …I think the relationship with that person has been the most difficult thing in this whole role, and I think it's because maybe…the competition that the person sees me as? I think that some of that has to do with the fact that I have continued to go to school and I'm working on my doctorate and that person doesn't have their doctorate…that creates tension…

Another aspect of the "mean girls" subtheme is how this concept is also evident with other nursing deans. Dean D mentioned the dynamic of how nursing deans relate to each other at AACN meetings:

> …most of the deans are very nice, but you can feel a little bit of the kind of 'good ole girl' business…there are some folks who are kind of…come from the smaller colleges or proprietary schools who feel like there is a little prejudice against them, and they talk to me a lot about it, I don't know why, the girls that are…they like me and we chat, and they feel you know…but the good ole girls, you know, they treat me nicely, but I think there is prejudice against the smaller schools or college deans who don't have their doctorate yet, and so they're kind of viewing them in that way. It's a different feeling, the way they view them…

**Subtheme: "Big boys win out."**

In Chapter 2, under the heading "Relevance of this Study to Nursing," the issue of the nursing dean being mostly female in a male dominated academic world was mentioned. The aspect of gender relationships was found in the data, as the deans defined it in their interviews. Dean C described it as "the big boys win out" on a campus university. She

was the "token female, and it's like…oh, god." Dean B described how the other deans at her university were all male and the dynamic of "one of the boys":

> …Well, they're all men…which, again, I knew that going in. And that has taken me a bit of time to kind of get myself acclimated. Two of the deans have been here for a considerable amount of time, in the role of dean…so, well, I knew them, now I'm different again. Because they knew me as the associate dean, different role, different level of responsibility, now you know…and again, one of the things that I discovered that is kind of interesting is that they meet for lunch. And what I discovered was that they never included the previous dean, and they just kept in the same kind of mindset, so I wasn't included in these lunches, and that's critically important. That informal processing that you have to be 'one of the boys' kind of thing. So, I've kind of taken care of that (laughing). And what I had to do is say, 'Oh, and I'm going to join you today.' And you know, they kind of looked at me, like 'oh, yah,' and they were fine with it, so it wasn't like…I think it was like I had to make a point of it, of making that happen. And it's uh, that's different. And I think that is a gender thing. I really do think it's a gender thing…

Dean F compared the difference between career advancement with men versus women, and how others perceive it:

> …when women are climbing the ladder, wherever that ladder is, and they get this reputation about being 'bull-doggish' or, you know, kind of um…I guess authoritarian, but really after the goal? [Whereas] a man, having those same roles and having that same behavior – they wouldn't be called 'bull-doggish'; they would be called, you know, gosh, they're making the goals and they're really going after it…good for them! So I think it's interesting how…that is different.

**Subtheme: Connecting with others.**

In the interviews, the majority of the deans relayed how vital it was to establish a network of other nurse administrators in order to find support in their new role. One of them described it as "my 'go-to' girls." The deans expressed various ways they connected with others, whether through an established mentor via AACN's new dean mentorship program, an informal mentor at a neighboring school, or even nurse executives at local hospitals and clinical settings. Dean D had a network that she utilized when "I can't bear this group here in nursing." She stated that:

> …The four of us get together about once a month, sometimes [for] breakfast or afternoon drinks, but the four of us have this little group and we just call it our 'leadership support group' and we just talk about anything and everything. Sometimes not work, but mostly work. But we just give each other the support of an opportunity to talk about things that are not formal…it's given us this other level of intricate support that is important, and, uh, so it's good.

Dean E desired mentorship, and did not have a network of support at the time of her interview:

> …there was no mentoring for me. So that, I think, was the most difficult part. I have sought out, sought out that mentoring from other deans, but…probably the biggest hurdle is the no mentoring, and I kinda feel like, you know, walking in the dark.

Dean B also did not have a mentor, and felt she was in "isolation":

> …And so, that is the one thing that the previous dean and I had – kind of a different relationship in that we were comfortable with each other. We worked together for a long period of time, and we could do that; we could sit down and just talk. And sometimes talking out loud, to hear something different, it looks different, it jells different, and I don't have that right now. And again, I think that is the newness of all of us. You know, and so, I didn't realize how important it was, until I don't have it. And how critical that piece is, because you really don't want to be in isolation, because, if you are in isolation, then you're not making good decision[s]. Or I'm concerned that I'm not making good decisions…

Dean C addressed the lack of mentorship as "there is no one to tell you the job," but she described how she ultimately found her own resources, even without formal mentorship assistance:

> …so you have to sort of sort that out on your own. There are resources, you know. AACN has a dean mentorship program; there are other resources around, and, you know, you find your own. We have a group of us that are female deans that get together once a month and kind of commiserate. You have to have that network…

Dean G also described how she had a lack of mentorship:

> …so there's turnover, lack of orientation, because I've got this lady who is fairly new in her role, and she needs to figure out her bearings, so she's not in a position where she can orient me, because she's still trying to figure out her role…and then you have the complication of previous deans, who have been promoted, but I would get bits and pieces, as far as orientation, but you know the things I really, that I thought would

> be really helpful to know, and maybe this was over thinking but was intentional, it was pieces and parts…

She went on to describe how she had to reach out on her own to connect with others and find that "unofficial" mentor, just as Dean C found her own resources:

> …There's really, I will say that I have a, I guess, an unofficial mentor…and I have a close relationship with her. I can call her and ask her anything, but there's not that …check in…that official mentorship…it's OK if you have questions…sometimes I don't know that I have questions until I've done it wrong.

As these themes as subthemes were described by exemplar quotations, it is helpful to construct a model to portray the experience as a whole. The model of a tree was chosen in order to depict the essence of the lived experience of a novice dean. This model was chosen because a tree is a living growing object, with the center, or trunk, surrounding the theme of sacrifice. The lived experience of a nursing dean is someone who is growing in their position and giving up various aspects of their personal and professional life in order to serve the nursing education. The subthemes of sacrifice are pictured as the roots of the tree. These are subthemes directly related to what they sacrifice, and who they are as a person.

The other themes along with their subthemes are represented as the leaves of the tree. These are concerns that the deans are contending with during this beginner phase, but as the deans grow into the role, they may change.

*Figure 2.* A Model of the Lived Experience of the Novice Nursing Dean

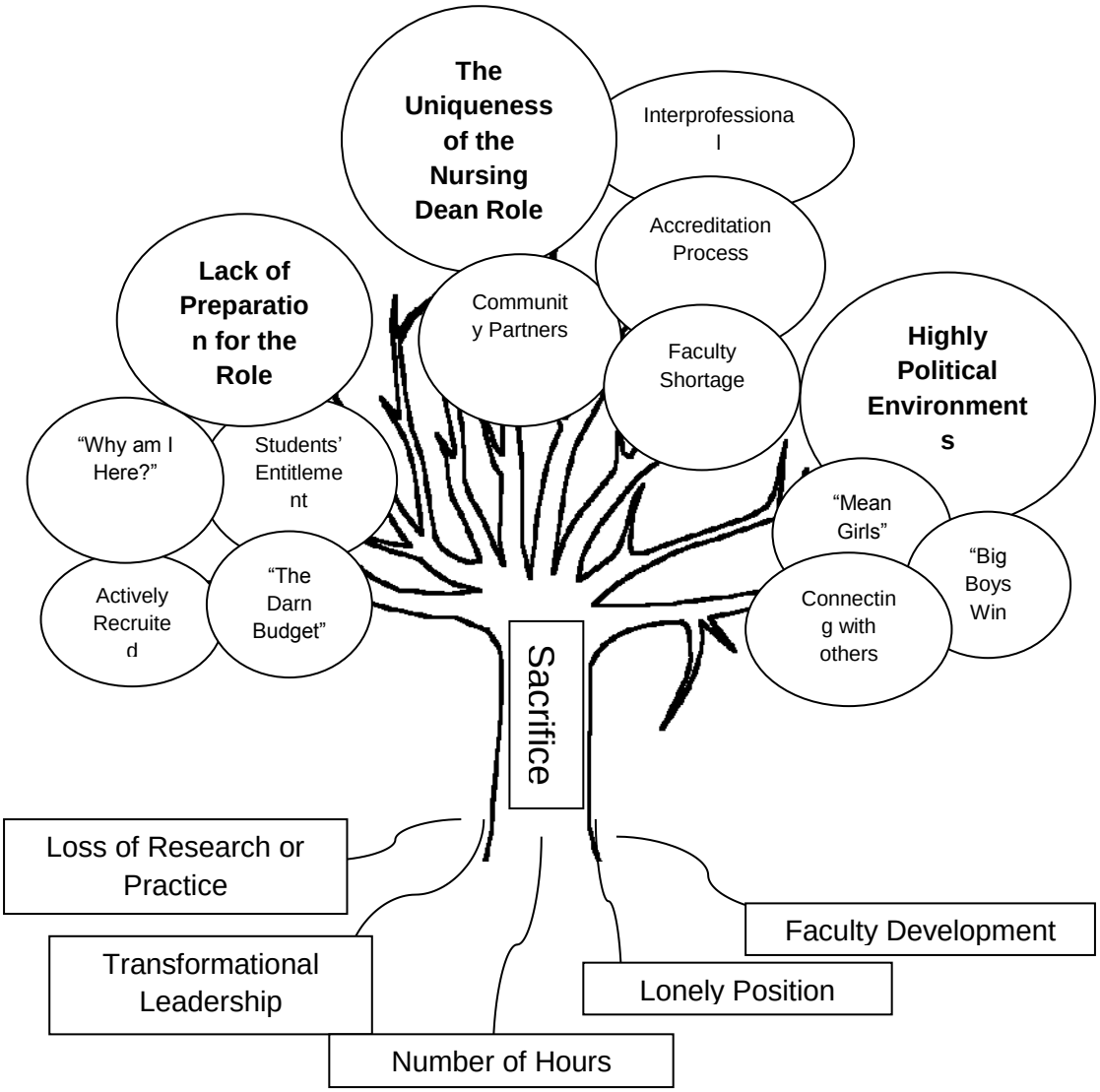


*Figure 2.* The trunk of the tree illustrates sacrifice, with the roots depicting subthemes. The daily work or role of dean is represented in bold text as the leaves of the tree, while the subthemes are connected to the overarching theme.

## Summary

This chapter described the participants and their interview results, as well as the themes and subthemes I discovered after the interviews concluded. The overarching themes and their subthemes were a summary of the rich descriptions that the participants

relayed as they told their personal stories of being a novice dean. The themes that emerged were sacrifice, lack of preparation for the role, the uniqueness of the nursing dean role, and highly political environments. The subthemes of loss of research or practice, transformational leadership, number of hours, lonely position, and faculty development supported the theme of sacrifice. The overarching theme of lack of preparation for the role was sustained by "why am I here", actively recruited, students' entitlement, and "the darn budget". The subthemes of community partners, interprofessional, accreditation process, and faculty shortage correlated with the theme of the uniqueness of the nursing dean role. Finally, the overarching theme of highly political environments included subthemes of "mean girls", "big boys win out", and connecting with others. A model (Figure 2) depicting the lived experience of being dean, illustrated each of the themes and subthemes.

# CHAPTER VI

## DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a brief review of the study purpose and methodological processes followed by a discussion and interpretation of the four themes and 16 subthemes presented in Chapter 5. These are analyzed and interpreted in relationship to the literature reviewed for this study. Some of the themes and subthemes correlate with what is in the literature, but others exposed new aspects about the role of dean. The implications and limitations as well as recommendations for further study will also be addressed in this chapter.

As mentioned earlier, I have conducted this research study with one overarching question in mind: "what is the lived experience for novice deans of nursing?" Intrigued by the prior lack of research on the topic, as well as the uniqueness and complexity of the novice nursing dean role, I decided to explore and illustrate the fundamental nature of the role, while also portraying its distinct aspects, as perceived by seven deans I interviewed from December 2012 to March 2013.

Interpretive phenomenology was chosen as the study's methodological approach, as it reveals an essence of the phenomenon, through the everyday lived experience of the novice dean. This methodology was appropriate for the research goal, because inquiry in this area is lacking. An initial understanding of the everyday lived experience of the novice dean enables the dissemination of new knowledge for the science of nursing, as well as the education of students.

Data analysis was executed through methods of hermeneutic phenomenology, as informed by the work of van Manen (1984), which allows for an understanding, rather than an explanation, of the nursing dean profession. This process was completed through

consultation of phenomenological literature, to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon between the researcher and the data, conduct thematic analysis through selective reading and identification of significant statements from the interviews, interpret the significant statements through descriptive labels, and summarize the descriptive labels into themes and subthemes.

Essences of the experiences were described with themes and subthemes. Overarching themes were derived from the descriptive labels, using the hermeneutic circle and referencing the interviews, significant statements, and descriptive labels themselves. As a whole, the seven interviews described the novice deans' unique lived experiences through four themes and 16 subthemes. The full expression of the lived experience of a novice dean is depicted in Figure 2.

Methodological rigor was applied in order to ensure the legitimacy of the research process, as trustworthiness was demonstrated through credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity. Credibility was assured by returning the transcript, significant statements, and descriptive labels to the participant for review. These items were also reviewed by peer debriefing. The transcripts and the significant statements with their descriptive labels were reviewed by my undergraduate research student and two members of my dissertation committee to ensure consistency with emerging themes. In order to achieve reflexive validity, as the researcher, I examined all biases and suppositions through an audit trail. Meanwhile, confirmability was assured by the triangulation of deans in various academic settings, such as community colleges, private liberal arts institutions, and larger universities. Furthermore, authenticity was

ensured by including verbatim excerpts from the participants' stories in the finalized research results.

## Interpretation of Results

This study has provided insight into the ways in which novice nursing deans experience their roles, while also identifying which aspects of their roles are presently considered the most important to them during this time of uncertainty. The results of this study, comprising data retrieved during each of the interviews, are represented in Figure 2. As revealed during the study, novice nursing deans fulfill their roles by making sacrifices, a theme central to who they are as people. Therefore, this theme, of sacrifices, is referenced as the trunk in the image of the tree. The subthemes, depicted as the tree roots, are the deans' reasons for sacrifices. Furthermore, the following choices or negative consequences, as mentioned by the dean interviewees, all contribute to the theme of sacrifice: losing their ability to research or practice; their actions of transformational leadership; the long hours they put in; the lack of personal connection with their faculty; and their commitment to developing their faculty for the betterment of their students.

As novices, each of the nursing dean interviewees generally prioritizes certain aspects of their roles, as they continue to learn the ins and outs of their positions. The aspects that are viewed in highest merit, referenced as the leaves of the tree in bold print, are the main themes. All of the subthemes that support the main themes are pictured as leaves, connecting to the primary theme. The main themes include, but are not limited to, navigation through highly political environments; working through aspects of the role in

which they were not prepared or mentored for; and the uniqueness of the nursing dean role, particularly when compared to deanships in other academic disciplines.

A working definition was obtained from each of these recurring themes, revealed during the participants' interviews, in order to answer the overarching question of "what is the lived experience of novice deans of nursing?" In summary, novice nursing deans dedicate themselves to further developing their faculty and students through sacrifices they have made personally and professionally, and are willing to navigate through the challenges of their positions, despite a lack of mentorship, the unique demands of nursing education, and the highly political work environments they regularly encounter.

## Literature Review in Relation to the Findings

Some findings of this study replicate what has already been revealed in the literature, with regards to the topic of the nursing dean role. The lack of mentorship and preparation for the role as well as the nurse faculty shortage that is affecting deans nationally was represented in the literature referenced in Chapter 2 (AACN, 2012). The uniqueness of the nursing dean role versus a dean role in another discipline was also represented. The demands of accreditation, community partnerships, and collaborating with other professions in health care are factors that are weighing on the role of nursing dean, and are also evident in various publications.

The findings of this research study are significant nonetheless, as some of the themes, as well as their subthemes, challenge the pre-established understanding of the phenomenon. For example, aspects of the highly political environment, including the hostile attitudes of faculty, the unexpected sense of entitlement that nursing students have, and the challenges female deans encounter in a male dominated sector, are

particular concerns – and unexpected themes – that each of the nursing deans mentioned during their interviews.

However, interestingly, some of the typical stressors of the dean role, as stated in Chapter 2, under Relevance to Nursing were not even mentioned by the study's participants. For instance, most of the participants did not discuss the current economic crisis, the fiscal restraints for nursing research, the demand for advanced technology, or the diversity of the nursing students during their interviews.

In the meantime, the lived experience of the novice dean likely could have simulated a transition, moving from one phase to another, as anticipated, upon further application of the human becoming theory and role transition theory. But, neither of these theoretical concepts is actually applicable to the lived experience of novice nursing deans. The lived experience is a moment in time in which they simply live day to day, hoping to eventually feel like they have succeeded in their roles. One dean associated it as "catching dandelion seeds in the wind," while another related it to "running on a treadmill." Therefore, in actuality, the lived experience of new deans is not a transitional phase during their first three years of the role. Rather, it is one whole experience in which they struggle to understand their roles and find companionship and time.

One new way of conceptualizing the phenomenon, as a result of the findings, is to understand who the deans are as individuals. The whole experience of the nursing dean role relates to who these deans are as leaders who invest their time and energy to further the nursing profession. Each dean interviewee is living as a nursing leader, willing to sacrifice their personal and professional lives; after all, sacrifice is one of the main aspects of their roles, as it stems from who they are as people. Each of the interviewees

either identified themselves as "servant leaders" or as "transformational," mentioning that they are serving the profession in a role that is "not a glamorous one." Since the theme of sacrifice relates directly to who the deans are as people, and how they identify themselves, the other aspects of their roles are themes and subthemes of what they actually encounter every day in their roles, as they overcome obstacles by relying on their personal philosophies of servant leadership. As one dean stated, "who else will step up to the plate and do this job?"

**Theme: Sacrifice**

The results of this study indicate a self-identification of nursing deans. Dean A stated that she want to be "the kind of person who kind of brings them up" when discussing the faculty, and followed that statement with her identification of herself as a "servant leader". This relates to the conceptual framework of the identity theory, which is derived from people's personal identities, through meanings bound to particular roles. The deans' personal identities of themselves and their roles are associated with social positions within their respective social structures (Styker & Burke, 2000). Deans must be able to identify themselves as actual nursing deans if they are going to experience have positive and affirmative role fulfillment. This identity will thereby be affirmed through positive, supportive relationships with their peers, community partners, and faculty. As Dean B stated, "I've had a lot of support from faculty, but my relationships with them have changed since I have become dean, and it is very different for them as well. Some faculty are now are very conscious of formally addressing me as dean."

Since the nursing dean interviewees identify themselves as "servants to the work," or as "transformational leaders," they have formed personal identities that are based on

sacrifice. In short, the identity theory claims that commitment to a role actually connects an individual to an identity, as well as self-meaning. Without an identity, nursing deans will not have any motive or incentive to act out their daily responsibilities; after all, role identity and commitment are necessary components for active service within the deanship role (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). This commitment is evident through each of the dean's long work days, as they frequently abandon their practice or research interests, lose their ability to casually converse with their faculty or staff, and spend a significant amount of time professionally developing their nursing faculty. Dean E felt that it was "not about me or my ego", but about "working together" and being a "people developer".

The theme of sacrifice, and its subthemes, has also been mentioned in various publications concerning the role of dean. One particular study, conducted by Mirvis, Graney, Ingram, and Tang (2006), found that deans often exhibit emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of professional and personal accomplishment. The researchers also discovered that deans generally have increased levels of job stress and low levels of coping resources, along with a lack of support from others. Although their study did not focus specifically on nursing deans, their findings closely reflect what most of the seven dean interviewees voiced, as two subthemes, loss of research or practice, as well as loneliness.

Another subtheme, transformational leadership, has also frequently been studied in the past. Transformational leadership reflects relationships established between leaders and their followers. This leadership style has more of an organizational orientation by focusing on the followers and encouraging them to center on the needs of the collective group (Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008). These leaders are inspirational and

challenging to others for high standards, they intellectually stimulate others to find new ways of doing things, and they consider individuals with their unique needs and abilities (Oshea, Foti, Hauenstein, & Bycio, 2009).

One particular study, completed by Shieh, Mills, and Waltz (2001), examined Taiwanese nursing deans' leadership styles and the nurse faculty perceptions of their leadership qualities. The study indicated that a transformational leader capable of inspiring, creating a new vision, developing faculty professionally, and encouraging new approaches to problem solving, is needed to retain nurse faculty. This finding reflects the leadership styles of each of the seven dean interviewees.

Yet another subtheme, faculty development, has also been revealed, during a study of United States academic deans' involvement with their students (Hyun, 2009). The authors indicated that one of the most challenging aspects of a dean's role is hiring well-qualified faculty, while also working with them to enhance their students' academic performances. Although this study did not specifically focus on nursing deans, its application is magnified in light of the nurse faculty shortage, and the aspect of faculty development, as mentioned by the dean interviewees. The authors also discovered a fundamental difference between the ways in which faculty members and deans approach their roles, as faculty members tend to focus on themselves, particularly their tenures and promotions, whereas deans usually focus on other people instead, wondering "what they can do for the students, faculty, staff, and the institution itself" (p. 107).

**Theme: Lack of Preparation for the Role**

Nursing deans do not have a lot of preparation for the role. Dean B was in the position of interim dean prior to taking the dean position, and she was still surprised at

how she “did not have the level of understanding” of the role that she thought she had. She stated, “I thought I knew a lot about not only nursing but the other departments I'm responsible for, but the bottom line of the whole thing is that I really, really had no clue.” Dean E called it a “tough transition”. She stated that her “preconception was something completely different” than what the role actually is.

The position of academic dean, along with the aspects of role stress and the consequence of strain, is well documented in the work of Wolverton and Gmelch (2002). In general, most, if not all, deans have high stress in their roles, as a result of certain aspects of their work environments, from paperwork and meetings to interruptions and workload (Gmelch, Wolverton, Wolverton, & Sarros,1999). Unfortunately, these aspects are also magnified with nursing deans, as they are not properly prepared for the economic or administrative responsibilities of their roles. As a result, some deans even question why they agreed to accept their positions in the first place.

Furthermore, the literature reflected the hiring processes of nursing deans, seeking to better understand how deans actually acquire their positions. In a study completed by Lamborn (1991), nursing academic administrators have often been promoted to their positions through persuasion from faculty and university administration, as is evident in another subtheme: “actively recruited.”

**Theme: The Uniqueness of the Nursing Dean Role**

Dean E stated that “nursing is different”, when discussing her responsibilities compared to other deans in other disciplines. She described it as trying to get out into the community and “beat the drum for nursing”, undertaking the task of the accreditation

process, finding faculty that "are at least master's prepared", and "finding clinical sites for all these students".

Dean D described the importance of being "out there" in relation to community partnerships. She felt it is a "vital piece of who you are as a department" and that the "community perception of you makes a big difference in finding practice sites." She believed this was a unique aspect of her role versus that of other deans at her university.

This theme, discovered during the research study, also stands out – the importance of the nursing dean role itself, due to the increased demands of nursing academia. Although the literature represents various aspects of the academic dean's responsibilities, few publications focus only on the role of the nursing dean. Additionally, the subtheme of the "accreditation process," as reflected in Chapter 2, under the headline, Demands for Relevant Curricula and Programs, was revealed during the study. In particular, the seven participants specifically mentioned accreditation procedures and the stress correlated to them; however, there are other curriculum drivers as well, such as the completion of the QSEN and the NCLEX test plan, and the maintenance of current nursing practice standards. Just as the nursing dean interviewees discussed the importance of being "interprofessional," most nursing deans are also challenged to embrace other health professions, in order to achieve a common goal of collaboration and interdisciplinary study. This collaboration enables nursing students to be salient in their practice, and bridge the gap between the classroom and the clinical setting (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010). Without a doubt, the need for transformation in nursing education is a great responsibility of nursing deans.

**Theme: Highly Political Environments**

The academic environment of a new nursing dean role can be filled with the politics of nurse faculty being resistant to change, some hostility toward the novice dean, and as most nursing deans are female (Blass, 2011), being the sole female in the male dominated academic world.

Dean D entered the role with some resistance from faculty. She stated that "they were shocked and dismayed that I would be the chief executive officer for nursing." She went on to say that "they didn't see me as their cheerleader any longer".

Dean B discovered that other male deans at her university met for lunch regularly, and did not include the previous female nursing dean, nor was she included. She felt it was important to be a part of the "informal processing" that these opportunities can afford, so she "took care of that" and now regularly joins them for lunch.

A study on the influence of deans' academic leadership styles, and the knowledge they have of their own roles, was conducted by Del Favero (2006). The study's results indicated that deans rely on relationships with faculty and other leaders in academia as one of the most highly valued approaches to learning their roles. Lamborn (1991) noted throughout her study that nursing deans need recognition and acknowledgement from their peers, as well as mentoring and training. Walline (2008) completed a qualitative study that indicated the importance of family support, as it relates to self-confidence and self-knowledge, passion and caring, and mentoring and networking, and its impact on nursing deans' longevity.

A strong influence in how others, such as the dean's peers, faculty, and community partners, relate to the nursing dean role has also been recognized, as a reciprocal

relationship between the self and the social structure, and the ways in which it influences deans' commitments to their roles, exists. This commitment is directly influenced by the deans' social structures and the support they receive from others (Styker & Burke, 2000). The stronger deans' supportive relationships are, the more likely they will identify themselves as nursing deans and fully commit to their roles. This social structure influence was also evidenced in the theme of "highly political environments," with its subthemes of "big boys win out, "mean girls," and the importance of "connecting with others."

## Implications for Nursing

According to the AACN's 2010-2011 report on administrative nursing faculty, the average age of doctorally prepared nurse faculty was 50 to 60 years-old in 2010 (AACN, 2012). Although the AACN has published a number of white papers and position statements concerning the shortage of nurse faculty, little mention is made of the influence this deficiency has on the nursing dean role itself. With a majority of nursing deans currently in the average age group of 50 to 60-years-old, many are nearing retirement, along with their faculty. Therefore, the need to address the faculty shortage, as well as the shortage of nursing deans, also exists.

The results of this phenomenological study on the lived experience of the nursing dean draws a significant picture of the role of dean, which includes themes such as a lack of mentorship, a difficult workplace environment, stressors of the dean role that are specific to nursing, and a variety of personal and professional sacrifices. Taking these themes into account, as well as the aging workforce of nursing faculty, a staggering reality exists:

a number of vacant nursing dean positions have yet to be filled and will likely remain unfilled for the foreseeable future.

Another significant concern, which affects the future of nursing education, also exists – the lack of nurses' willingness to accept academic leadership roles. A majority of deans have actively been recruited, including each of the deans that participated in this study. Although they have accepted deanships in the past, some nursing deans understand that many faculty members and students are not as interested in pursuing nursing leadership, within their professional endeavors, as they were. As an example, one dean mentioned a student who demonstrated excellent leadership skills. When she pointed out the possibility of academic leadership as a professional goal, the student replied, "why would I do that and work late every night and all weekend?" Unfortunately, the wide range of sacrifices of nursing deanships tend to sway potential leaders away from the position, as most decide to pursue other avenues in the nursing profession instead.

Nevertheless, certain strategies can still be utilized to enable retention in the deanship role. As the study's results indicated, much like previous studies on the role of academic dean, there is virtually no mentorship or preparation for the role at this time. The future of the nursing dean position would greatly benefit if current nursing deans began to prepare and groom potential "next generation" leaders for the position through a variety of leadership training aspects, including mentorship by an experienced nursing dean (Blass, 2011).

Although the AACN has a program called "Leadership for Academic Nursing," which offers a year-long leadership fellowship for new and aspiring deans, and the Robert

Wood Johnson Foundation has a three-year Executive Nurse Fellows Program, designed to develop nursing leaders' skills (Blass, 2011), faculty and practicing nurses must possess an individual aspiration to become academic leaders in the future. This desire for leadership may even start in the classroom, when discussing leadership and management. Not only should leadership and management be a nurse's central focus in clinical settings, but the opportunities of leadership in academic environments, with both undergraduate and graduate nursing students, can be conveyed in classrooms as well, in order to spark nursing students' interests in academic leadership.

Another strategy to enable longevity and mentorship in the role, connection with others, has been depicted as a subtheme of this study. The discovery of other community-based nurse leaders for support is vital, as it has proven to be a crucial avenue of camaraderie for each of the nursing deans who participated in this study. Even though the AACN has developed a new dean mentorship program, study participants have found that they "barely had time for that," stating that it was more useful to reach out to others in the community, or other area nursing schools, who knew the dynamics of the local area, instead.

The ways in which deans perceive success in their roles is directly associated with the ways in which others relate to them, as illustrated by the identity theory. Unfortunately, novice deans still notice a significant amount of hostility within their work environments on a regular basis. This hostility is not only noticed by novice nurses in the clinical area of the nursing profession (Goodwin & Candela, 2013), but by new nursing deans as well. The nursing profession's age-old philosophy of "eating their young" must end eventually, as the data of this study has indicated just how crucial encouraging relationships are to

the deanship role. Therefore, it is essential for nurse faculty to support new nursing deans, while also enabling an environment of future growth in leadership, in order to steadily reduce workplace hostility. A good example of how this can be implemented was explained by Dean D. She stated that one of her nurse faculty offered to take her out into the community and introduce her to the nurse leaders at the area hospitals. This demonstration of simply introducing the new dean to local community partners is a tangible way nurse faculty can foster encouraging relationships. Another way is to simply have openness for change. The deans found it frustrating when they were greeted with a statement of "we don't like change". Instead, having faculty that approached them with what was working in their environment in an open and positive way was much more affirming. As Dean A stated, it's just a matter of "being nice, understanding, and treating people with respect".

## Limitations of the Study

Findings from this study were limited by the lack of gender diversity, as each of the participants was female. Although recruitment efforts were aimed for any nursing dean who had the title of dean for three years or less, all of the participants who agreed to participate in the study happened to be female. This was unsurprising, as a majority of nursing deans are indeed female (Quell, 2005); consequently, there was an assumption that the subtheme of "big boys win out" would apply to female leadership in academia. Yet, triangulation and maximum variation sampling would likely have been enhanced (Patton, 1990) if a few male nursing deans had participated in this study.

Another limitation of the study may be the influence of having completed two pilot interviews before any data were collected. Since I had transcribed and coded the two

pilot interviews prior to my data collection, I questioned whether or not the coding or transcription would influence my bias as a researcher. As the first step of my data analysis procedure, I had to become aware of what I already knew about the experience of being a new dean, by utilizing the process of epoché, which was implemented through my awareness of preconceptions and personal bias, prior to the data collection (Patton, 1990). In addition, I had performed an extensive literature review on deanships, which also had the potential to influence my ideas, with the formulation of themes. With these two factors in mind, I was able to describe my preconceptions and biases in my audit trail, as the first step of the epoché phase.

Furthermore, the geographical locations of the interviews were focused in one area of the United States. This lack of diverse locale may be a limitation as well, as the process of interview analysis and data organization, into themes and subthemes, was based on the findings of only one geographical region.

With this particular methodology, I did not attempt to generalize the study in order to replicate it. The nature of a phenomenological study is to gain understanding from a limited number of participants, while the goal is to understand a lived experience that would illuminate information, which may be recognizable to others in similar situations. As a result of that goal, this study cannot be generalized, due to the nature of the unique experiences of the participants (Munhall, 2007).

Another limitation of my study may be the actual tones of the interviews. The environment, in which the interviews were conducted, was quite congenial before, during, and after each interview, and the participants were eager to describe their experiences. I attempted to provide an objective perspective during each interview, while

also minimizing subjective statements. I also restrained from validating and clarifying questions that could be perceived as enticers to desirable answers; however, at times, the casual tone of "telling their stories" felt more like casual conversations, rather than research focused interviews. As I became aware of this, I did attempt to stay focused on the guiding questions and natural follow-up questions based on the participants' answers.

The clear majority of the nursing deans that were interviewed were from very small institutions. Although the participants came from diverse academic environments, the sample size was limited in that there was lack of representation from a large Research I institution. With larger universities, the infrastructure can vary with the delegation of nursing dean responsibilities. This was also a limitation of my study.

## Recommendations for Future Research

This study has contributed to the limited research on nursing deans, as well as their personal experiences with their roles. The results of the data analysis indicated that nursing deans are leaders in the profession who sacrifice personal and professional aspirations for their faculty and students. They also contend with highly political work environments, demands for nursing standards and accreditation, and a lack of mentorship. Although this study has revealed what the lived experience of nursing deans resembles, additional studies should be conducted to explore nursing deans' roles, as they transition from novices, to proficient and confident leaders that can serve as mentors to others. A more transitional, longitudinal study using a mixed method design could potentially result in a better understanding of the role, and the ways in which nursing deans can implement more mentorship to facilitate smoother transitions for future novice deans, in later years.

Nursing deans' commitments to their roles correlate directly to their own identities, with regards to their deanships, as described in the literature of identity theory. One of the aspects revealed during the data analysis was the concept of nursing deans' organizational commitments, with regards to the theme of sacrifice. As the literature states, deans tend to only retain their roles for five years or less (Quell, 2005; Pressler & Kenner, 2008; Lamborn, 1991); a research focus on deans' commitments to their roles, and the ways in which such commitments relate to the theme of sacrifice, could potentially provide information for the state of the science, which may ultimately increase the length of nursing dean retention.

Meanwhile, although the term "professional identity" is commonly mentioned in nursing literature, its theoretical origins remain unclear. There are many transitions in a nursing profession, whether it applies to a student becoming a registered nurse, a professional nurse accepting a position in an advanced practice, a clinician shifting to an education position, or a nurse faculty becoming an academic administrator. Since nurses have the potential to transition frequently throughout their professional careers, nursing science could potentially benefit from receiving more empirical evidence with regards to the influence that the identity theory has on nurses' professional identities. This evidence would thereby provide enhanced nursing career support and improved retention in various nursing roles (Johnson, Cowin, Wilson, & Young, 2012).

Another recommendation for further research – to develop a new theory regarding nursing deans' professional identities and organizational commitments – could also be implemented. A grounded theory method, concerning nursing deans' self-identities and commitments to their roles, would likely improve retention and enable a smoother career

transition for future nursing deans. As the goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior (Glaser, as stated in Munhall, 2007), future deans may greatly benefit from a theoretical basis, from which they could identify with their roles and fully commit to them. Since grounded theory captures a social process within a social context, the human behavior of the nursing dean should be explained in the context of identity and organizational commitment (Munhall, 2007). The identity theory sheds some light on the ways in which deans sacrifice their personal lives for their challenging roles; however, as the nursing profession is comprised of various professional transitions, it would likely benefit from a more satisfactory, nursing-specific exploration of a domain of human behavior. Thus, a grounded theory could be framed on the particular process of these transitional behaviors of commitment and identity in the nursing field.

In conclusion, this chapter summarized the study purpose and research methods. The major emphasis of the chapter was the discussion of the various themes and subthemes, as they not only relate to the literature, but also differentiate from research that has previously been published. The implications for the nursing profession, as it relates to the future of nursing leadership, were also reviewed. At the same time, the limitations of the study, in relation to the interviews, the lack of generalizability, and the location and gender of the sample, were also evaluated. Recommendations for further research were also explored, as nursing research is currently lacking empirical studies on nursing deans' professional identities, as they relate to organizational commitment during periods of transition.

## Summary

In summary, the purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of a novice nursing dean. Since minimal research has been published with a principal focus on the novice nursing dean role, I decided to conduct the study in order to illustrate the lived experience of novice nursing deans and to portray various aspects of the deanship role, as they are perceived by full-time nursing deans.

In review, the overarching question for the research investigation was: "what is the lived experience for novice deans of nursing?" The answer to that question lies in the stories that were relayed during each of the seven novice deans' interviews. Novice nursing deans dedicate themselves to further developing their faculty and students, while sacrificing their personal and professional lives. Furthermore, deans are also willing to navigate through each of the challenges of their positions, despite a lack of mentorship, the unique demands of nursing education, and the highly political work environments they encounter on a regular basis.

The results of the study reflected aspects of the identity theory, as it is used in the social sciences, as the identity of a nursing dean directly correlates to his or her social position (Styker & Burke, 2000). In order for deans to completely identify themselves within their roles, they should receive positive support from their peers, community partners, and faculty. The outcome of this research study indicates a need to further support novice deans, especially as they transition into their roles, and to improve workplace environments by enabling mentorship and preparing current nurses for future leadership positions.

Presently, the nursing profession is facing an employment crisis, as there is not only a shortage of nurses at the bedside and nursing faculty, but a lack of nursing leadership in the academic setting as well. As this research study revealed what the lived experience of a novice nursing dean is, it also shed light on the importance of retention and recruitment of nursing deans, and the ways in which new deans can enjoy smoother career transitions, particularly through relationship fostering. In conclusion, similar research should continue in order to explore new methods of smoother career transitions, so that future nursing professionals will continue to accept academic leadership positions.

APPENDIX A

LITERATURE REVIEW ON DEANS

| **Author** | **Andrus, V. (1991).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To identify, describe, and analyze the extent of faculty participation in administrative decision making within a School of Nursing. Style of participation was analyzed. Secondary purpose was to observe whether the dean and faculty shared similar perceptions regarding extent and style of participation |
| **Sample** | Dean and two faculty members from three BSN schools in New England Randomly selected. (n=9) |
| **Concepts** | Faculty participation in administrative decision making, style of participation, similarities with how the dean and the faculty view this. |
| **Design** | Qualitative interviews. |
| **Instruments** | Lawler's classifications of styles of decision making: used as guidelines for coding. Stated that the formulation of these decision making areas was used from a study by O'Kane. |
| **Results** | Administrative decisions fell into budget, policy formulation, facilities utilization, faculty tenure, faculty workload. |
| **Implications** | The extent of input from the deans and faculty members depend upon the type of decision to be made. Parallel perceptions were shown. Style depended on the area of the decision, themes emerged with the direct style of decision making |
| **Comments** | Wondering about the vigor of this qualitative study if she is using previous studies as a guide for coding, but study was in 1984 and was used in part as a guide for forming the areas of decision making. More concerning was the styles of participation emerging as the study was conducted, but she used classifications from 1985 as guidelines. Wondering about previous influence to direct the coding, to have the researcher more impartial? |

| **Author** | **Bray, N. J. (2008).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | As a result of their role being in constant view and review, deans are heavily regulated by social norms and expectations |
| **Sample** | 800 faculty: 32 liberal arts and 12 research public and private, various disciplines |
| **Concepts** | Norms: Proscriptive: behaviors that are considered undesirable and should not be replicated |
| **Design** | Quantitative survey design |
| **Instruments** | None Used |
| **Results** | Deans need to consider all stakeholders other than just faculty, need for boundary spanning behavior. |
| **Implications** | What was important for one school was not for another. |
| **Comments** | Identified differences in the cultures of all the schools and how the study was affected by this. |

| Author | Del Favero, M. (2006). |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To investigate the relationship between academic discipline and the preparation of deans for their leadership role |
| **Sample** | 210 deans in research and doctoral institutions in the US |
| **Concepts** | Socialization theory in order to explain how deans experience academic leadership as faculty members and why discipline differences may distinguish their learning. |
| **Design** | 128 item survey study |
| **Instruments** | None Used |
| **Results** | Reliance on experience in past administrative posts and past relationships with faculty leaders as the most highly valued approaches to learning what the deans' job entails. Deans in pure fields reported relying more on trial and error than deans from applied fields. Academic discipline cannot be discounted in considering the preparation of faculty for leadership roles. |
| **Implications** | How deans understand their role is very much related to the unique experiences they have accumulated as a faculty member. |
| **Comments** | Valid aspects that may support the fact that various disciplines do affect the role transition of dean. |

| Author | Gmelch, W., Wolverton, M., Wolverton, M., Sarros, J. (1999). |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Exploration of the sources of stress experienced by deans in Australia and US |
| **Sample** | 1370 deans of research I and II and Doctoral I and II with Masters I and II or Baccalaureate I and II institutions. |
| **Concepts** | Managerial Stress Model |
| **Design** | Survey Study |
| **Instruments** | 1996 National Survey of Academic Deans in higher Education |
| **Results** | Stress exists among US and Australian deans. Further many personal institutional and work defining variables affect stress levels. Specific variables were identified that can exacerbate the lack of fit to their environment or contribute to situations where the person environment fit is better for deans. |
| **Implications** | Greatest source of stress is from paperwork, meetings, interruptions, and work load. Day to day irritants that wear away at deans, disabling them and distracting them. |
| **Comments** | Universities must provide for continued professional leadership development. |

| Author | Hyun, E. (2009). |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To investigate the way US academic deans in the state of Ohio perceive their involvement in the academic success of the students enrolled in their institutions |
| **Sample** | 101 United States academic deans in Ohio in both public and private universities |
| **Concepts** | Collaboration with K-12 teaching methods and curriculum. |
| **Design** | Web based survey compromised of two parts: demographic information and three sets of quantitative questions to be answered in a likert scale. ANOVA was used to analyze the data weighed by institutional type public or private. Other demographic data was used as independent variables. |
| **Instruments** | None Used |
| **Results** | Most deans associate students' academic success with retention, which they view as more directly linked to individual learner accountability affected by k-12 educational experiences than to the institutional accountability. |
| **Implications** | Future research is needed to get deans to collaborate with k-12 academic systems to help with student success. |
| **Comments** | Number of years experience, institutional type and Carnegie classification affect academic dean's perceptions of leadership that foster students' academic success. One of the most challenging aspects of deans' leadership as it affects students' academic success is hiring well qualified faculty and working with faculty and department chairs to enhance academic advising and promote innovative high quality curriculum. |

| Author | Lamborn, M. (1991). |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To examine factors influencing job satisfaction of deans of schools of nursing. It focused on the expectancy theory of job satisfaction and motivation suing the concepts of valiance, instrumentality, and expectancy. |
| **Sample** | 595 deans/directors of baccalaureate and higher degree schools of nursing accredited by the National League of Nursing. |
| **Concepts** | Motivational theory of expectancy |
| **Design** | A descriptive ex post facto correlational survey approach with mailed questionnaires : 3 part questionnaire consisting of demographic data, motivation and reward scales, and the job description index |
| **Instruments** | Motivation and Reward Scale: measures motivation, (Herrick, 1974), Job Description Index: job satisfaction (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1996). |

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| **Results** | Significant relationships were found within each job satisfaction variable ($p<.05$) within the variable of pay and salary. Deans with long tenure in their administrative positions and were associated with large universities and schools of nursing were also found to be statistically significant. A direct relationship between the scores of the motivation and reward scale and the scores on the job description index was supported. The individual and collective facets of job satisfaction were positively and significantly correlated with motivation, providing support for the theoretical framework that proposes an interdependent relationship. Motivation is a significant predictor of job satisfaction. |
| **Implications** | Provided reason and rationale for the importance of a critical overview of deans of schools of nursing as evidenced by the response rate (61.6 %). Support of the theoretical view that managers and administrators believe that what they value is likely to be achieved or obtained through personal or group effort. This study also provides support for educational administrators to be educated to administrate not only educated to educate. An implication for present and future deans exists in the relationship established between motivation and job satisfaction, and support for the concept that deans are basically satisfied with their jobs. Another implication concerns the findings that only one half of all deans have had any formal preparation for their deanship role. This would indicate that there is a great need for formal education programs to educate deans and prospective deans. The basics of formal administration should be in the classroom and continued in the mentor/mentee relationship process. |
| **Comments** | Historically nursing academic administrators come into the position of dean through length of tenure, personal interest area, pressure from faculty and university administration, and other social variables. In some instances, the attainment of an advanced academic degree regardless of area of specialization has been enough to designate that individual for the deanship, as with a PhD in nursing. Deans of nursing schools were expected to effectively administrate and manage their schools with the same finesse and business sense that were used by other deans within the university community. Therefore, within the academic administration circles of the nursing community, it has become imperative for the academic leadership to be prepared at the doctoral level and to be desirous of formal education preparation for the role of dean. It was noted throughout the responses that deans are greatly desirous of recognition and acknowledgements from their peers, both professional and academic. |

| **Author** | **Lewis, J. (1991).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To determine if there was a relationship between measurements of power orientation and measurements of organizational climate using deans and faculty in schools of nursing. |
| **Sample** | 149 full time deans 1626 full time faculty members in BSN schools of nursing accredited by NLN |
| **Concepts** | Used social exchange theory and social systems theory. Power orientation and organizational climate |
| **Design** | Survey |

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|---|---|
| **Instruments** | Power orientation Scale (POS): measured power orientation by deans. Organizational Climate description Questionnaire-Higher Education (Partial): used to measure faculty perceptions of organizational climate in schools of nursing. |
| **Results** | No statistically significant relationship was found between the measurements of power orientation and the measurements of organizational climate. Weak correlation between the Autonomy Subscale and the POS. Weak correlation between the disengagement subscale and the organizational climate description questionnaire.(not statistically significant) |
| **Implications** | Study provided information on an instrument for measurement of power orientation and on organizational climate perceived by faculty |
| **Comments** | Interesting to include the faculty as well as the dean, and how it correlated. Would like to know the statistical test used and what the variables were. Not sure what type of study this is. This study kind of answers what the previous dissertation needed. The correlation of power, not role influence, and how faculty perceived it as well. |

| **Author** | **Mirvis, D. M., Graney, M. J., Ingram, L., Tang, J., & Kilpatrick, A. (2006).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To measure the prevalence and intensity of the psychological components of burnout and their correlates among deans in US colleges of medicine. |
| **Sample** | 149 deans: 68 medical schools, 48 nursing schools, 33 other academic health leaders |
| **Concepts** | Aspects of Burnout |
| **Design** | Survey questionnaire that included six parts related to basic demographic and job information, burnout, physical and behavioral symptoms, job stressors, personal support systems, and job satisfaction |
| **Instruments** | None Used |
| **Results** | Medical school deans exhibited a high prevalence of depersonalization emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal accomplishment. High levels of these sub domains and of overall burnout significantly correlated with high levels of personal, job, and environmental stress, low levels of support or coping resources and high prevalence of physical and behavioral symptoms, and reduced job satisfaction. |
| **Implications** | Deans of medicine had lesser burnout than deans of nursing: Suggest interventions to inhibit the progression of burnout to more intense levels. |
| **Comments** | Title does not imply other deans from other disciplines. Nursing school deans are completely different. Gender, different discipline, etc. and should not be included in the study with medical colleges. Med school: Male white non Hispanic. No demographic information given on nursing deans. |

| Author | Musilli-Cerra, M. (1991). |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To examine and analyze the characteristics, functions, and roles of nursing deans and to develop a profile of the position based on demographic and attitudinal variables and the size of the institution. |
| **Sample** | 306 nursing deans from NLN schools of nursing. |
| **Concepts** | role of nursing deans, how the position is influenced by demographic and attitudinal variables as well as size of the institution |
| **Design** | Quantitative survey study |
| **Instruments** | Survey instrument was used to collect data about the institution, demographic data, career paths, aspirations, roles and responsibilities, level of satisfaction in the role, and advice to future deans. |
| **Results** | Majority of deans female, 50 years old, professor with tenure, plan to stay in the position less than 5 years, most came from faculty to dean role. Spends most time with faculty and chairs rather than chairs or central administrations. |
| **Implications** | Advice to future deans was to develop support networks and to learn the politics. |
| **Comments** | A lot of data in description of the role with a quantitative study. Used bonferroni for post hoc analysis with ANOVA as well as multivariate MANOVA with Tukey HSD to analyze the data. Wondering what the variables are that they would need both univariate and multivariate statistics with post hoc analysis. Also wondering what they hypothesized for the .05 significance level. Stated they adjusted this level for Bonferroni, assuming this was for the number of variables? |

| Author | Norman, L. (2001). |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To describe the role sending strategies that dean in schools of nursing use to influence faculty performance/ To describe contextual factors that affect the role sending process |
| **Sample** | 15 experienced deans of research I institutions |
| **Concepts** | Role sending strategies influencing faculty performance. Factors that affect role sending process |
| **Design** | Descriptive qualitative using content analysis and interviews |
| **Instruments** | none, but recommends and instrument be developed for role sending strategies |
| **Results** | Deans used intrinsic rewards as most common, sanctions were used sparingly, most strategies focused on methods to assist faculty to improve their performance. |
| **Implications** | Description of the dean role and how it influences faculty performance. Recommends replication of the study with deans and faculty from the same school of nursing and also to recommend the study redone with different types of institutions, (research versus teaching?) Researcher must not have included the faculty perception in this study. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Comments** | Could incorporate the concept of power, but terminology just describes role sending strategies. Would be interesting to find the difference between role sending strategies and power concepts. Need rationale for why she used research I institutions versus teaching institutions. |

| **Author** | **Phillips, K. (2006).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Feminist analysis of the ways female nursing education administrators (deans) perceive their leadership and subsequent use of power in relation to other female administrators and female faculty |
| **Sample** | Deans of schools and colleges of nursing |
| **Concepts** | Female leadership, Female power, perception of leadership, perception of use of power, interaction with other female co-workers. |
| **Design** | Qualitative using feminist theoretical framework, feminist methodology and analysis |
| **Instruments** | None Used |
| **Results** | Use of themes: empowerment, mentorship, self-reflexivity, self-positioning, stewardship, servant leadership (selflessness), relational aspect/collaboration |
| **Implications** | Seek to understand how female deans of nursing lead, further female leadership, highlight differences between typical leadership and aspects of female perceptions of power and leadership. |
| **Comments** | Methodology is different: feminist. Focus on power and leadership, not on aspects of the role, transitioning from faculty to dean. Comparative analysis may include the importance of the themes and how they coincide together to enable function in the role |

| **Author** | **Quell, T. (2005).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Challenging role of academic dean, short longevity. Due to nursing and faculty shortage, purpose was to ascertain whether the position of the academic dean in schools of nursing contain core characteristics associated with job satisfaction |
| **Sample** | 559 surveys sent out, 46% responded, 216 deans used in the study |
| **Concepts** | Job characteristics in a survey, job satisfaction, aspects of nursing dean job as viewed by the dean. |
| **Design** | Descriptive survey study |
| **Instruments** | Hackman and Oldham Job Diagnostic Survey |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Results** | Deans reported more skill variety, task significance, autonomy, task identity and feedback versus other families of jobs reported by Hackman and Oldham. High motivating potential score. Higher job satisfaction versus any other comparison group. |
| **Implications** | Job satisfaction among academic nursing deans is high, frequent turnover and limited longevity may be the result of other factors versus the role itself. |
| **Comments** | Opens up research for what influences longevity for deans, starts with novice deans, role transition factors, finding out what fosters smooth role transition, in order to maintain longevity in the role. This study did not focus on novice deans, or where they came from and to where they are now in the deanship. Why did they move to the deanship? What past career path influenced them to take this role? |

| **Author** | **Redmond, G. (1991).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To describe deans' perspectives on the life and career relationships and experiences that were significant to them and that influenced them in the assumption of the dean's position. |
| **Sample** | 29 completed the survey, 13 were willing to be interviewed |
| **Concepts** | Erikson, Levinson, Morgan, and Faber models were used. |
| **Design** | Naturalistic: survey, life history interviews, document search of curriculum vitae. Collection of field notes throughout the data collection period. Use of Spradley's ethnographic analysis techniques using domains, taxonomies, components and themes. |
| **Instruments** | None Used |
| **Results** | A pattern of strong valuing by the participants of education and achievement, a pattern of female relationships that provided the deans with role modeling of important leadership behaviors support encouragement and information for making educational and career choices, a pattern of early leadership behavior that included an enjoyment of or desire to be in charge |
| **Implications** | This study is more of a pathway to the deanship and life course catalog of events. |
| **Comments** | My focus is on nurse first role transition of faculty to dean. Different methodology of phenomenology versus naturalistic inquiry. Sample was from various types of schools, public and private with one not having a terminal degree. The schools varied in their degree offerings as well. |

| **Author** | **Salewski, R. (2002).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To describe the role of the contemporary dean in NLN schools. Describe the dean's time commitments to 8 administrative role functions and to compare the nursing education administrator on these variables by time periods. Present trends that nursing deans perceive will influence the emerging role of the deanship. |
| **Sample** | Deans in NLN accredited schools of nursing: random national sample |
| **Concepts** | profile of contemporary nursing deans, perceptions of time commitment from the deans, perceived future trends with role of deanship, difference in nursing education administrator and administrative functions of nursing deans as determined by time periods |
| **Design** | Descriptive analytical study –Use of ANOVA and Pearson product correlation |
| **Instruments** | Self perception survey developed for the study of the role and functions of nursing deans |
| **Results** | Occupational health is major nursing focus, nursing care delivered by BSN or higher. Neither years in present position or type of institution influenced a dean's time commitment to the 8 administrative function categories. |
| **Implications** | Unclear |
| **Comments** | Wondering about the "so what" in this study: what does it mean when she wants to describe the difference in the nursing education administrator and administrative functions of deans determined by time periods? What influence does time periods mean? How is occupational health a major nursing focus? Focus of the dean's health? |

| **Author** | **Shieh, H., Mills, M., Waltz, C. (2001).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Purpose was to examine the influence of nursing deans' and nursing directors' transformational and transactional leadership styles on nursing faculty job satisfaction in baccalaureate and associate degree nursing programs in Taiwan. |
| **Sample** | Convenience sample of 233 nursing faculty participated |
| **Concepts** | Theory of transformational versus transactional leadership style guided this study |
| **Design** | Cross sectional mail survey study |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Instruments** | Measures were selected that were conceptually congruent with the theretical definitions of transformational and transactional leadership styles and job satisfaction. Idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, active management by exception, passive management by exception, laissez-faire, and nursing faculty satisfaction with leadership style were separately measured by each subscale of the 38item multifactor leadership questionnaire form developed by Bass and Avolio (1995). Nursing faculty satisfaction with the extent to which the job met various individual needs was measured by a 40 item Nursing Faculty Satisfaction Questionnaire modified from the original 42 items developed by Martin (1991). |
| **Results** | Idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and contingent reward leadership styles significantly and positively replicated job satisfaction. Active management by exception significantly and negatively predicted job satisfaction. |
| **Implications** | Provides a mechanism by which nursing deans or nursing directors can obtain feedback from nursing faculty about leadership styles. Can serve as the basis for further development of leadership theory across cultures and disciplines. |
| **Comments** | Indicates that the faculty model of the 21st century will be one that promotes leadership and a paradigm shift from the leadership of formal leaders such as deans to the expectations of faculty. Provides guidance for such preparation and helps faculty become effective leaders of the future. Provides a basis for informing developers of leadership training programs that can lead to improved nursing academic leadership. Since most of the existing leadership concepts are transactional, adding transformational concepts to the existing leadership framework may be very useful for advancing knowledge about leadership practice.<br>• Was translated into Chinese: concerns about validity of the cross cultural aspect was addressed with Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each subscale and scale that ranged from .71 to .94. A significant positive relationship was found with the hypotheses of relationships between transformational and transactional leadership styles and job satisfaction with r=.77 p=.000<br>• The authors suggest that a qualitative approach could be used to understand nursing faculty's perceptions and expectations about leadership styles in depth and explore the influence process of leadership styles on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. |

| **Author** | **Walline, L. (2008).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Purpose was to describe and analyze the life of a nursing dean |
| **Sample** | Patricia Morin, Nursing Dean of small liberal arts college |
| **Concepts** | women in leadership, mentorship of academic administrators, recognition of role of nursing leaders, role of gender in leadership |
| **Design** | Qualitative historical study use of interviews and coding for salient themes |
| **Instruments** | None Used |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Results** | 6 Themes emerged: Importance of family support as it relates to self confidence, knowing one's self, passion and caring, mentoring and networking, leadership and followership; and gender |
| **Implications** | Inform and emphasize the concepts written above. |
| **Comments** | Raises some concepts that are influential in the life span of a nursing dean, assumes most nursing deans are women (which they are). Describes things that are important to this particular dean that influenced longevity in the role. |

| **Author** | **Wolverton, M., Gmelch, W., & Wolverton, M. (2000).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Examines the fit between academic deans and their work environments in the US and Australia as it relates to multiple role stress factors affecting deans. |
| **Sample** | 1370 deans of research I and II and Doctoral I and II with Masters I and II or Baccalaureate I and II institutions. |
| **Concepts** | Stress variables, role theory, |
| **Design** | Survey Study |
| **Instruments** | 1996 National Survey of Academic Deans in higher Education |
| **Results** | Stress exists among US and Australian deans. Further many personal institutional and work defining variables affect stress levels. Specific variables were identified that can exacerbate the lack of fit to their environment or contribute to situations where the person environment fit is better for deans. |
| **Implications** | Identification of personal institutional and work defining variables that either increase or decrease dean stress and thereby contribute to or detract from person environment fit. |
| **Comments** | Deans and higher education institutions are accountable for lack of person- fit-environment issues. |

| **Author** | **Wolverton, W., & Wolverton, M. & Gmelch, W. (1999).** |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Focuses on the impact of role conflict and role ambiguity on deans and suggests possible policy implications |
| **Sample** | 1370 deans of research I and II and Doctoral I and II with Masters I and II or Baccalaureate I and II institutions. |
| **Concepts** | Role theory |
| **Design** | Survey Study |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Instruments** | Dean's stress Inventory, Role conflict and role ambiguity questionnaire, dean's task inventory, satisfaction with dean role, dean's leadership inventory, and demographic and contextual variables. |
| **Results** | Role Ambiguity begins with lack of transition to the role and clear definitions of the role. |
| **Implications** | Mentorship programs need to be implemented in order to facilitate role transition and lessen ambiguity and role conflict. |
| **Comments** | Universities must provide for continued professional leadership development. |

# APPENDIX B

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Think back to when you started this role. What has your experience been like since becoming dean?

2. What in your past would you say prepared you for this role?

3. What does a successful transition mean to you as a new dean?

4. If you could sum up your experience in a word or short phrase what would that be?

# APPENDIX C

## INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Thank you for your participation for this research. My topic is the lived experience of being a novice dean. This interview will take no more than an hour and will include questions regarding your experiences on being a nursing dean.

I would like your permission to tape record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. Your identity will be kept completely confidential. I will use a pseudonym for you during the interview and I will be the only one who knows who the pseudonym refers to due to the signature on the informed consent. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, 2003).

## APPENDIX D

## EMAIL RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Dear Dr. _____:

I am a doctoral student at the University Of Nevada Las Vegas School of Nursing and am doing my dissertation research on novice nursing deans. I will be conducting face to face interviews to explore the lived experiences of registered nurses who are nursing deans, are new to the position within three years and have never held the position of dean before.

The interview will be no more than 45 minutes to an hour and will occur in a place of your choosing. The interview will be audio-taped and kept strictly confidential, using a pseudonym in place of your name and title. Within a month of our interview I would be emailing you a hard copy of the typed transcript of the interview and asking you to review it for accuracy and add any other information you would like included.

I hope you will consider this opportunity to share your experiences, as I will be examining themes that emerge from the interviews to discover lived experiences of the novice nursing dean and to further nursing research that will benefit future novice deans.

The principal investigator for this study is Dr. Lori Candela, RN Ed.D, associate professor at the UNLV School of Nursing. Should you be interested, Dr. Candela or I would be happy to discuss this further with you and provide more details. Our contact information is as follows:

Dr. Lori Candela: 702-895-2443
Melissa Bouws: 616-443-0423

Sincerely,

Melissa Bouws, PhD(c) RN

# APPENDIX E

## TELEPHONE SCRIPT

"I am calling to follow-up on an e-mail you received a week or two ago about participating in a research study on novice deans. I am a doctoral student at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, and am interested in interviewing new nursing school deans to learn about how they experience their role. I am hoping the findings will provide a deeper understanding of the novice nursing dean and what they experience. I am wondering if you would agree to participate in one interview that will take about 60 minutes to complete. We can arrange the interview at a time that is convenient for you. Of course, your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. If you do decide to participate, your confidentiality will be strictly maintained. "

If the nursing dean does not agree to participate, I will state the following:

"I understand. Thank you so much for your time."

If the nursing dean agrees to participate, I will state the following:

"I will e-mail you and attach an informed consent for your review. May we arrange a date and time for the interview now or would you prefer that we set up the interview at a later time?

# APPENDIX F

# INFORMED CONSENT

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

## INFORMED CONSENT

**Department of School of Nursing**

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**TITLE OF STUDY: The Lived Experience of the Novice Nursing Dean: Exploring the Meaning and Significance**

**INVESTIGATOR(S): Lori Candela, RN Ed.D & Melissa Bouws MSN RN**

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Lori Candela at 702-895-2443 or Melissa Bouws at 616-772-3495.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.**

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**Purpose of the Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to describe the lived experience of a novice nursing dean. The aim is to more fully understand the lived experience of a novice dean and to reveal aspects of the role as it is lived by the nursing dean who is experiencing this role for the first time.

**Participants**

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit these criteria: You are a registered nurse in an academic administrative position in a nursing school with the title of "dean", you have never held a dean position before, and you have been in this role three years or less.

**Procedures**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: Participate in an interview in which you will have an opportunity to answer questions about your experiences as a new nursing school dean. The study consists of one hour long interview on the date, time, and location we agreed to during our initial conversation. The interview will be audio-taped with your permission only and notes will be taken. Should you agree to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time. During the interview, you will be asked to answer questions related to your current experiences as a dean of nursing. You may also choose to not answer any question without consequence and still complete the interview. You will also have an opportunity to review the interview transcripts before they are finalized to correct any technical or factual inaccuracies. You may also be asked to respond to brief follow-up questions via email or phone to clarify issues.

**Benefits of Participation**

There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. The data will generate new knowledge on the lived experiences of novice nursing deans. It is hoped that this knowledge will be useful as academic leaders look to support novice nursing deans. Also, it is anticipated that this study may generate ideas for further research on nursing deans.



***Deemed exempt by the ORI-HS and/or the UNLV IRB. Protocol 1209-4259M***
***Exempt Date: 10-24-12***

TITLE OF STUDY: **The Lived Experience of the Novice Nursing Dean: Exploring the Meaning and Significance**

**Risks of Participation**

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. There may be a loss of confidentiality or anonymity and discomfort that could result from recalling or revealing uncomfortable or upsetting past experiences with colleagues, supervisors, or subordinates.

**Cost /Compensation**

There may not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take 2 hours total of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

**Confidentiality**

All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at the student investigator's office and at unlv for 3 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with UNLV. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

**Participant Consent:**

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

_____

Participant Name (Please Print)

**Audio Taping:**

I agree to be audio taped for the purpose of this research study.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

_____

Participant Name (Please Print)



***Deemed exempt by the ORI-HS and/or the UNLV IRB. Protocol 1209-4259M***
***Exempt Date: 10-24-12***

APPENDIX G

IRB APPROVAL

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

# Biomedical IRB – Exempt Review
# Deemed Exempt

**DATE:** October 24, 2012

**TO:** **Dr. Lori Candela,** School of Nursing

**FROM:** Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects

**RE:** Notification of IRB Action
Protocol Title: The Lived Experience of the Novice Nursing Dean: Exploring the Meaning and Significance
Protocol # 1209-4259M

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This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45CFR46 and deemed exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b)2.

**PLEASE NOTE:**
Upon Approval, the research team is responsible for conducting the research as stated in the exempt application reviewed by the ORI – HS and/or the IRB which shall include using the most recently submitted Informed Consent/Assent Forms (Information Sheet) and recruitment materials. The official versions of these forms are indicated by footer which contains the date exempted.

*Any* changes to the application may cause this project to require a different level of IRB review. Should any changes need to be made, please submit a **Modification Form**. When the above-referenced project has been completed, please submit a **Continuing Review/Progress Completion report** to notify ORI – HS of its closure.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects at IRB@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 451047 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1047
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# VITA

Graduate College
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Melissa Rae Bouws

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Bouws, M. (2012, April). *The Experience of Transition to Dean of Nursing: Exploring the Meaning and Significance.* Poster Presentation, Midwest Nursing Research Society, Dearborn, Michigan

Funding:

PhD Dissertation Award from the University of Nevada Las Vegas School of Nursing. (2012). "The Lived Experience of the Novice Nursing Dean: Exploring the Meaning and Significance." $1,000.

Sigma Theta Tau Kappa Epsilon chapter: 2013 Research Award, $1300.00

Dissertation Title: The Lived Experience of the Novice Nursing Dean: Exploring the Meaning and Significance

Dissertation Examination Committee:

Chairperson, Lori Candela, Ed.D.
Committee Member, Tish Smyer, DNSc
Committee Member, Carolyn Yucha, Ph.D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, LeAnn Putney, Ph.D.