

Rowan University

## Rowan Digital Works

---

Theses and Dissertations

---

12-21-2016

### Students' lived experiences of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)

Dana Carol Kemery  
*Rowan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Kemery, Dana Carol, "Students' lived experiences of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)" (2016). *Theses and Dissertations*. 2339.  
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2339>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact [graduateresearch@rowan.edu](mailto:graduateresearch@rowan.edu).

**STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF THE REALIZATION OF ACADEMIC  
WRONGNESS (RAW)**

by

Dana C. Kemery

A Dissertation

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Leadership  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Doctor of Education  
at  
Rowan University  
August 16, 2016

Dissertation Chair: Monica Kerrigan, Ed D

© 2016 Dana C. Kemery

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my husband, Keith. Through everything you have always known and you will always know. I carry you with me in everything I do. You are my strength.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge some of the people who have made this journey possible. I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee. Dr. Kerrigan, thank you for your support and guidance during this process. You have made this journey meaningful in ways I could have only imagined. Dr. Galbiati and Dr. Lown, thank you both for finding my proposal to be worthwhile and agreeing to work with me. Your feedback as leaders and nurses has been invaluable to this work.

To all of the students I had the privilege and honor to work with, thank you for allowing me to be part of your journey and for being part of mine.

To my family, thank you for understanding my need to take this journey. Your support, love, and encouragement have meant the world to me.

Finally, to the Dream Team, I could not have imagined a more supportive and dynamic group to have been part of my intellectual development. From the first night we have struggled together, prayed together, and laughed together. We have made great strides and have had set backs, but we go on. Thank you for your friendship and your support.

## **Abstract**

Dana C. Kemery  
STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF THE REALIZATION OF ACADEMIC  
WRONGNESS (RAW)  
2015-2016  
Monica Kerrigan, Ed D  
Doctor of Education

Being wrong is a common phenomenon for students in academic environments; however this phenomenon has yet to be described from the student perspective. The purpose of this phenomenologic inquiry is to describe the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) as experienced by senior level nursing students during a high stakes testing period. Observations, class documents, communications, and semi-structured interviews were collected to gain a full description for the realization of academic wrongness within context as this phenomenon unfolded for students. Data were analyzed using Moustakas (1994) 7 step phenomenological process. Fourteen invariant constituents emerged during data analysis which when combined created three themes: stories to tell, powerlessness, and anger. These themes suggested interdependence of perceived cognition, self-beliefs, and social structure of the educational environment with respect to RAW. The students used stories to describe their experiences with the realization of academic wrongness which explained, minimized, and justified their actions and interactions that led to RAW. They expressed feeling powerless and angry during RAW, feelings which did not support students during review and remediation activities. Although students stated the need for content review and remediation, the impact of RAW on these students limited behaviors consistent with engagement in review and remediation activities.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	v
List of Figures .....	xi
List of Tables .....	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Considering Being Wrong .....	2
Being Wrong as a Student .....	4
Considering Nursing Students. ....	4
Nursing Program Considerations.....	8
Nursing Students' Experiences .....	9
Methodology and Research Questions .....	10
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	14
Bandura's Self-Efficacy.....	15
Dweck's Self-Theories of Intelligence .....	19
Affective-Cognitive Consistency Theory .....	21
Cultural Definitions of Wrongness .....	24
Nursing Culture and Nursing Education.....	26
Chapter 3: Methods.....	35
Considering the Phenomenologic Perspective.....	36
Including the Nursing Perspective.....	39

## Table of Contents (Continued)

Operationalization of Phenomenology in Nursing .....	42
Setting .....	47
Units of Analysis .....	49
Sampling Design.....	50
Sampling in Context. ....	51
Participant Engagement and Early Recruitment.....	57
Before the Second Comprehensive HESI Exam Attempt. ....	58
Data Collection .....	59
Semi Structured Interviews.....	60
Participant Observations. ....	65
In Class Activities.....	67
Data Analysis .....	70
Moustakas' Analysis.....	72
Cautions on Othering .....	74
Rigor .....	75
Chapter 4: Data Analysis .....	78
Co-Participant Researchers.....	78
Member Checking.....	80
Changes to Text: Bettina.....	81



## Table of Contents (Continued)

Changes to Text: Bridget.....	82
Clarifications: Bridget.....	85
Clarifications: Fidelma.....	86
RAW and Relationships Revisited.....	87
Data Analysis.....	97
Step 1: Listing and Preliminary Grouping.....	99
Step 2: Reduction and Elimination.....	100
Step 3: Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents.....	100
Step 4: Validation.....	117
Step 5: Individual Textural Description.....	117
Step 6: Individual Structural Description.....	131
Step 7: Individual Textural-Structural Descriptions.....	135
Composite Description.....	138
Analyzing Other Data Sources.....	140
Unsolicited Emails.....	140
Post –It Note Class Activity.....	145
A Story to Tell.....	147
Powerlessness.....	148
Anger.....	150

## Table of Contents (Continued)

Overlap Within Powerlessness. ....	150
Observations. ....	152
Brain Tool. ....	156
Chapter 5: Discussion .....	159
Lived Experiences and Behaviors at the Realization of Academic Wrongness .....	162
A Story to Tell. ....	162
Powerlessness. ....	169
Anger. ....	178
Lived Experiences and Behaviors After the Realization of Academic Wrongness....	184
Content Engagement and Remediation After RAW .....	187
Implications .....	191
Study Limitations.....	194
The Essence of RAW.....	196
Time.....	197
Data Collection. ....	201
Data Analysis.....	205
Conclusion .....	207
References.....	210
Appendix A: Engagement Letter .....	220

## Table of Contents (Continued)

Appendix B: Participant Consent.....	221
Appendix C: Participant Interview Consent .....	222
Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol.....	223
Appendix E: Observation Protocol .....	224
Appendix F: The Handy Dandy How Does My Brain Work Sheet .....	227
Appendix G: Directions for The Handy Dandy How Does My Brain Work Tool.....	228
Appendix H: Member Checking Email .....	229
Appendix I: Member Checking Probes.....	230
Appendix J: Post-It Note Alignment.....	233
Appendix K: Observation Tool Alignment.....	235
Appendix L: Brain Tool Alignment.....	236

## List of Figures

Figure	Page
Figure 1. Post-It Note Activity.....	146

## List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 1. Unsolicited Email Messages Received .....	141
Table 2. Remediation Activity .....	154
Table 3. Time from interview to manuscript delivery to co-participant researcher .....	198
Table 4. Time from second email to member checking response.....	200
Table 5. Total Response Times.....	201

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Being wrong is a common phenomenon, but how we perceive being wrong can be quite a different experience. Most of us can recall vividly examples of times when we were wrong. Conjuring up memories of these times, we use intricate details and descriptions to tell our stories of the times we admit we were absolutely incorrect. There are also times when we cannot clearly remember the context, the implications, or the wrongness. When we are reminded by others, the rich experience of being wrong for some reason eludes our memory. We cannot describe the experience but admit, since others seem to recall our inconsistencies, we were wrong. In other instances, we admit we were wrong but struggle with why and how. We recall being caught between the determined assurance we seek and the questioning perspective, ultimately resulting in us being wrong. We were not quite sure in the moment if we believed we were right or wrong. We may remember thinking we were wrong when we were making a decision, but we made that decision anyway. Our memory of the moment of internal debate and decision may or may not be what actually occurred. This memory of indecisiveness in the face of right and wrong softens the blow of being wrong, making the experience more palatable. We are able to describe our situation as knowing we were wrong, but for some reason which has eluded us, we went forward with our actions anyway (Schulz, 2010). Whether explicitly recalled or tacitly noted, how we frame being wrong is part of who we are and how we make sense of our world. The realization of wrongness, the moment we know we were wrong, holds power for each of us. The meanings we attach to this

realization can move us forward or halt our progress. By better understanding the experiences of wrongness, we can better understand ourselves.

### **Considering Being Wrong**

The act of being wrong, however, is an experience that is seldom explored. In the actual moment of committing the act of being wrong, we are blind to the realization that we are wrong. “We can be wrong, or we can know it, but we can’t be both at the same time” (Schulz, 2010, p 18). This phenomenon, known as error-blindness, allows individuals to continue to act and think in ways that are inconsistent with the current understanding of what is right, accepted as truth, or culturally agreed upon. Error blindness is different from conscious deceit and denial. When we keep insisting we are right even though we know or at least suspect we are wrong, we are not being wrong. In times of conscious deceit and denial, we are aware that we were wrong; we have had the realization of wrongness. We are just unwilling or unable to fully accept that we were wrong and therefore should act, think, or behave in another way. Our attempts at rationalization do not make us any less wrong. We defiantly stand against the accepted perspective and defend our position, applying the assumptions that our dissenters and distractors are ignorant, idiots, or just simply evil (Schulz, 2010).

When our wrongness is exposed, it is at this juncture we become truly aware of our wrongness. At this realization of wrongness, we begin to weave our story that explains why we, relatively intelligent and competent people, were wrong. Whether we are wrong in serious instances or minor things, wrongness is a powerful catalyst. How we process the realization of wrongness is key. Often the realization of wrongness carries negative connotations, limiting our understanding and stopping us in our tracks,

prohibiting growth, learning, and knowledge acquisition. Wrongness realization can also broaden our perspective allowing for learning that transcends our current understanding and propels us toward new insights we never considered (Schulz, 2010). A greater understanding of the experience of the realization of wrongness is essential to attain a more realistic perspective of how and who we are when we realize we were wrong. Rather than being halted by the experience of wrongness, we can harness the realization of wrongness to be productive and forward thinking (Schulz, 2010). A more explicit understanding of our responses during the realization of wrongness is instrumental in allowing us to move forward rather than remaining in a state of wrongness where we deny the realization of our wrongness and seek to redefine our experience.

Our intuitions, the realm of in-between where our tacit and explicit understandings of our experiences converge, allow us to construct our individual realities based in the inferences we make (Moustakas, 1990, 1994). These responses to being wrong, having the wrongness revealed, and having the realization of the wrongness serve some purpose for each of us, depend on the context and meaning of the realization of wrongness within that context. In the context of an academic environment, wrongness has implications and meanings that may not exist outside the academic environment. Academic wrongness invokes a variety of feelings and meanings from the student perspective. These experiences need to be interrogated from that same perspective to fully and completely understand the meaning of the realization of wrongness in academic environments for students.



## **Being Wrong as a Student**

Students have multiple opportunities to experience wrongness when engaged in the academic process. Students answer questions in class, engage in classroom activities, and participate in evaluations which can all result in the students experiencing a realization of wrongness. The realization of wrongness in an academic context, what I call the realization of academic wrongness (RAW), occurs when students realize their responses do not meet the expectations of the faculty or the evaluation criteria. All students have experienced being wrong academically and at the very least have a tacit notion of what it means to them to be wrong in an academic environment. With this inquiry, I move closer to an explicit understanding of the phenomenon of the realization of wrongness in education. By defining the student experience of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW), I move the tacit experience of RAW toward explication, assisting both students and educators to better understand the essence of the realization of academic wrongness for students. A better understanding of how RAW affects students can inform the actions and activities in educational environments after RAW so responses after RAW align with the needs of students rather than the assumptions of educators and administrators. Although my inquiry focused on a specific educational environment and a specific student cohort who had all experienced a similar academic wrongness during the same time frame in a nursing education environment, the phenomenon of RAW transcends educational environments and academic experiences.

**Considering nursing students.** When nursing students do not perform as expected, a period of review and remediation often follows the unsuccessful academic exchange. The current practice in nursing education surrounding content review and

remediation following student academic wrongness is to revisit the misunderstood information immediately or very soon after the event. Review and remediation of misunderstood concepts and content is thought to allow the student to reconceptualize the content and develop an understanding that can allow for success in future evaluations. This process is employed with the current methods of evaluation used in nursing education including simulation and examination. Both of these methods of assessment utilize post evaluation review to assist students in the learning process and to foster clinical judgment development (Tanner, 2006). The realization of academic wrongness for the students often occurs during the review of the concepts and content. When the students realize that their response to the question or situation was not the response anticipated by the faculty, this creates the opportunity for the realization of wrongness (Schulz, 2010). The realization of wrongness in the academic setting signals to the students they are not in line with the expectations of the faculty when providing responses contrary to the existing rationales. Multiple interactions between faculty and students focused on remediating content without considering the implications of wrongness realization add another layer to the multiple factors known to negatively impact nursing student achievement and progression.

Urwin et al. (2010) highlighted the need to understand the multiple factors that inhibit the successful completion of nursing education programs. Understanding the experience of the students during the process of academic wrongness realization may provide significant information to faculty and institutions with respect to remediation, retention, and progression policies and procedures. Limited research is focused on students within programs who must work through the experience of the realization of

academic wrongness while still engaged with programmatic content and concepts which need to be integrated into the students' understanding (Pennington and Spurlock, 2010). Without content and concept integration, students are unprepared for the next evaluation cycle which historically builds on the content and concept knowledge integrated at the prior level. Simply put, the realization of academic wrongness must be interrogated and defined so that this phenomenon can become part of the explicit process of concept and content review. Faculty and administrators need to better understand how the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) affects students. Inquiry surrounding RAW has broad implications. The current process of review and remediation may require restructuring to allow for processing of the affective prior to attempting to extend the cognitive. Attempting to extend the cognitive before supporting and/ or processing the affective may be creating more barriers than we know, adding to student stress and mental fatigue, and perpetuating a negative wrongness mindset.

Concept review after wrongness is used during the debriefing phase of the simulation experience in an attempt to integrate the kinetic experience with the didactic. Debriefing is utilized to increase clinical judgment leveraging the participant's ability to process information with the group members who experienced the simulation (Cantrell, 2008; Dreifurst, 2009; Lasater, 2007; Mariani, Cantrell, Meakim, Prieto, & Dreifuerst, 2013), however, there is little research addressing the experience of students at the moment of wrongness realization during debriefing. Debriefing is defined as an opportunity for reflection and remediation which extends clinical judgment in students (Mariani et al, 2013), therefore a better understanding of the experience of academic wrongness realization may provide insight for supportive interventions for students

experiencing this phenomenon during debriefing. Mariani et al (2013), in their discussion of the need for reflection during debriefing, failed to address the potential barriers presented by the unintended outcomes, namely academic wrongness realization, on the affective domain. Although Cantrell (2008) attempted to address the multidimensional aspects of understanding including the affective domain, a concentrated focus on the student experience is lacking. The lack of focus on the experience of the student is a detriment to prior studies which focus on process, procedures, and outcomes measurements while ignoring those who experience the realization of academic wrongness.

The lack of student perspective is not limited to evaluation methods in simulation. During examination review, each student comes to academic wrongness realization depending on the responses that he or she gave on the exam. The isolatory aspect of exam review and wrongness attached to certain questions, however, may limit the students' abilities to learn from and process the realization of academic wrongness. Students experience similar wrongness realization during classroom activities when questions are posed and responses are not correct. Students respond differently to these realizations of academic wrongness. Nussbaum and Dweck's (2008) research, focused on students' self-theories of intelligence, suggests the difference in students' reactions after wrongness are influenced by their beliefs about how intelligence is constructed. A better understanding of the lived experience of realization of academic wrongness could add to the current discourse. When a student is confronted by wrongness realization, when wrongness does not carry an exploratory meaning for the individual, that student may not be able to assimilate information during that realization of academic wrongness. There seems to be

a delicate balance between the realization of wrongness and the ability to function after wrongness. The meaning of the wrongness to the individual is central to the ability of the individual to process and learn during and after the realization.

**Nursing program considerations.** Nursing programs are compelled to use pretesting before allowing students to progress in programs and before degree completion to secure the continuation of pre-licensure nursing programs. National Counsel Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN) first time pass rates are intrinsically connected to the programmatic meanings of success and failure (Billings & Halstead, 2005). Individual state boards of nursing utilize first time NCLEX-RN pass rates as a measure in determining the validity of individual programs. Programs whose pass rates are below an acceptable standard are put on probation by the state board (Spurlock, 2006). Prospective students may choose not to attend a school based on the pass rates without regard for the student demographic or programmatic rigor or structure. The success or failure of a nursing program is highly dependent on the NCLEX first time pass rate; therefore, the nursing faculty is highly sensitized to the fact that students need to pass the boards the very first time the boards are attempted. High stakes standardized tests that are external to the curricular content of the program are used to identify students who are perhaps not ready to take the board exam, even of these same students have successfully completed all other requirements of the program. The validity and reliability of these exams, specifically the HESI exam, to accurately predict students who will not be successful on the first attempt on the NCLEX board exam have been questioned (English & Gordon, 2008; National League for Nursing, 2012; Nibert, Adamson, Young, Lauchner, Britt, & Newman-Hinds, 2006; Shultz, 2010; Silvestri, 2000; Spurlock, 2006; Spurlock, 2013).

Despite limited research that supports using these exams as a valid reliable filter, nursing programs continue to use the pre-board exams as the benchmark for progression to the NCLEX. By halting progression to the NCLEX, nursing programs have created an environment where students are frozen in progression. Until the students can demonstrate a high probability of passing the NCLEX by successfully completing a comprehensive end of program exam, students are required to actively engage in remediation and review of nursing content until they are able to successfully complete the comprehensive exam. Often, there is no limit to the time that these students are not permitted to progress. They continue to attempt the exam and with each unsuccessful attempt, the students are affected. With each unsuccessful attempt, the students accumulate multiple realizations of academic wrongness as well as requirements for remediation prior to the next attempt at the summative evaluation.

### **Nursing Students' Experiences**

Educators' and administrators' understandings of nursing students' experiences of wrongness are important. The perspectives of the students' at the moment of the realization of academic wrongness can be used to inform various aspects of the academic environment. In order to design environments and develop curriculum that support students during realizations of academic wrongness, we must understand the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness for students within nursing education environments. By asking the students what they are experiencing and looking at the behaviors of these students, the data shared and interrogated by all members of the inquiry team can be used to guide educators when planning remediation activities, utilizing classroom techniques, and demonstrating faculty behaviors. If we do not

validate the experiences of these students, we are losing insights that could lead to valuable tools for engagement.

For example, students who experienced significant programmatic wrongness during a pre-study pilot project progressed from actively avoiding interactions with each other and content remediation, themed shield and negative sword behaviors, to actively engaging with each other and content, themed positive sword behaviors. Students reported that feeling that their wrongness was shared and accepted by the lecture faculty was an important factor in this change, that by supporting them during wrongness and listening to their feelings students were able to use their energy in a positive way verses directing their energy toward negative thoughts and feelings of despair. The students reported both motivating and non-motivating factors with respect to remediation activities after the realization of academic wrongness. These factors were both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature. Several students described the differences in the pre-study educational environment where the academic wrongness was discussed openly. Changing the frame of wrongness from a phenomenon to be avoided to one that could be experienced, processed, and harnessed for success was different from the past experiences these students had with wrongness in the nursing education program. I hope to gain further insight into motivating as well as non-motivating feelings with respect to remediation activities after the realization of wrongness.

### **Methodology and Research Questions**

Nursing student academic wrongness seems to be a painful and sometimes debilitating experience. To better support nursing students, the phenomenon of the realization of academic wrongness during a nursing education program needs to be

explored while students are still engaged with nursing programs. The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to better understand the lived experiences of nursing students in a baccalaureate nursing program with respect to significant programmatic wrongness and post wrongness content engagement. I sought to better understand the meaning, structure, and essence of wrongness within nursing education through the voices of student nurses as it is only the students who can articulate this perspective, what programmatic wrongness in nursing education is like for the student. The following questions were used to frame the exploration of the experience in an effort to conceptualize the essence of wrongness:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of nursing students at the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ2: What are the lived experiences of nursing students after the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ 3: What are the behaviors of nursing students at the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ4: What are the behaviors of nursing students after the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ 5: What are the meanings of the identified nursing student behaviors and lived experiences after times of realizations of academic wrongness (RAW) as described by the co-research participants with respect to content engagement and remediation?



Through the use of in-depth interviews and observations, the nursing students became my co-participant researchers. These co-participant researchers were encouraged to share their lived experiences of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) while still actively engaged with their nursing program. By interviewing the co-participant researchers within the context of their educational trajectory, the effect of time and reflection from the actual realization of the lived experience was minimized so the essence of the lived experience could be articulated and described. In considering how RAW could be experienced by the co-participant researchers, I proposed a conceptual framework that included theories which allowed for the integration of the co-participant researchers' beliefs in their abilities, how those abilities are constructed, and cognitive dissonance when experiencing the realization of academic wrongness. I found the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness to be a complex experience which impacted the thoughts and behaviors of my co-participant researchers. RAW was experienced as both an opportunity and as a barrier, in some cases simultaneously. Not always centered on the current experience with RAW, wrongness realization becomes part of each co-participant researcher's story to tell, creating more connections with the individual's historic beliefs surrounding her abilities in the current context. Simply put, the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) is not just knowing you were wrong and addressing your misconceptions. RAW acts to make you something you were not before. It causes you to define and redefine your story, makes you vulnerable, and creates tension within yourself and between those around you. RAW's impact was not based on the contextual meanings of particular wrongness events. RAW was aligned with the

meanings each co-participant researcher attached to themselves within the academic environment.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Wrongness is a phenomena experienced by everyone, but poorly understood. Schulz (2010) frames wrongness as having potential for catharsis and growth; however, being wrong generally has a negative connotation, often perceived closely aligned with failure. Wrongness can be separated from and defined as different from failure. Failure is explicit, easy to identify. There is an inherent finality in failure signifying an end to the process. I see the perception of wrongness as multidimensional with various implications, especially in the educational trajectory of students. Wrongness can be framed as insidious; seemingly harmless and inconspicuous but with the potential for grave consequences. Wrongness can also be framed as opportunity; with wrongness there is a chance for remediation and understanding on a much deeper level than if you were simply right and continue on without interrogating your understanding. Rightness carries with it a finality; wrongness is inconclusive and can encourage reflection and critical thought on levels not cultivated by being right. Left as an implicit phenomenon, the power of the realization of wrongness cannot be harnessed by educators and students. Although this inquiry was limited to students' lived experiences of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW), the experiences of all stakeholders who share the students' educational journeys will be helpful in future research that extends the understanding of the phenomenon of the realization of academic wrongness into all levels of various educational environments.

The realization of academic wrongness (RAW) is a phenomenon that can be applicable to any academic endeavor. Students engaged in the academic process,

regardless of the academic milieu, are faced with the potential for academic disappointment. That disappointment can be different for each student based on factors unique to that student; however, the experience of the realization of academic wrongness is a common phenomenon. What happens when students experience the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) and how their experiences supported or limited subsequent academic experiences were the specific aspects of the phenomena of RAW I endeavored to explore with the students in this inquiry.

I selected three distinct theories which assisted me in describing and providing a better understanding of the student experience of the realization of academic wrongness to the academic community. Along with the definition of the realization of academic wrongness as influenced by the work on wrongness presented in Schulz (2010), an understanding of the culture of wrongness and rightness in nursing education was important to this inquiry, therefore I have selected theories that not only suggest internal factors but external stimuli as important to a person's responses to adverse and difficult situations. My theoretical framework connected Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1997), Dweck's self-theories of intelligence (1999), and Rosenberg's Affective-Cognitive Consistency Theory (1956,1968) in an effort to align the experiences shared by the co-participant researchers to theories further extending the lived experience and providing a vehicle for dissemination within the academic community.

### **Bandura's Self-Efficacy**

A construct in Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), particularly the development of the concept of self-efficacy (1997), provides part of the conceptual framework that guided this inquiry. Bandura considered the internal, subjective stimuli

when accounting for a person's ability to conceptualize potential for success or failure. Termed self-efficacy, this ability to believe that one could succeed or would fail is built through interaction with the environment, external reinforcement, and internal responses and beliefs. As a component of Social Learning Theory, the participant learner assimilates the social constructs which either encourage or discourage certain actions and results. Based on this theory when faced with an academic challenge, the participant learner's beliefs in his or her own abilities may have significant influence on the experiences the learner will perceive and the behaviors that the learner will exhibit. Using a semi-structured interview approach which allows for the evolution of a co-participant researcher's description with minimal intrusion by the researcher (Seidman, 2006), I encouraged the co-participant researchers to share their unique perspectives with respect to the realization of academic wrongness (RAW). Unlike a strict interview protocol where all questions are presented without deviation to all participants, a semi-structured interview protocol allows for the use of prompts by the researcher to support the participant in his or her descriptive process. This method of interviewing supported the co-participant researcher in the development of a description of her unique lived experience. By allowing the co-participant researchers to describe their unique perspective surrounding RAW, I gained insight into each co-participant researcher's unique beliefs concerning her abilities during the lived experience of RAW. I observed co-participant researcher's behaviors at the moment of the realization of academic wrongness and for a specified time following the realization as self-efficacy theory considers not simply a person's beliefs but also behaviors with respect to those beliefs (Bandura, 1997). I collected co-participant researcher's written responses to the

experience of seeing each individual incorrect response and to an in class activity in an effort to triangulate or crystalize (Tobin & Begley, 2004) the data from the interview findings, the observations, and the written responses to describe the multidimensional lived experiences of the co-participant researchers.

In the discussion of cognitive functioning, Bandura (1997) asserts that perceived self-efficacy exerts more influence on an individual's perception of situations than "perceived skill acquisition" (p. 216). Individuals may have similar environmental experiences, successes, and failures, however, these individuals will perceive the impact of these experiences differently based on their self-efficacy at the time of the event. Using the terminology of wrongness, when a student is faced with the realization of academic wrongness, the student's self-efficacy is an important component when considering the student's perception and response to the experience. Not to be forgotten, Bandura included environmental response as an important component in self-efficacy as self-efficacy is both structured and catabolized in part by environmental cues. Here I find an implied reciprocity in self-efficacy theory between self and social structure. I used the implied reciprocity to examine RAW in a specific educational environment with a defined social structure, namely a face to face nursing education program.

Drawing together the student's perceived self-efficacy and environmental cues during and after RAW, I posit if RAW is met with supportive environmental cues, wrongness is perceived as a learning opportunity. If this is true, that environmental cues have an identifiable impact on students at the realization of academic wrongness, the co-participant researchers' responses to and discussions of RAW will reflect this theme, that either the co-participant researchers found support or lack of support both at the

realization of academic wrongness and in the period immediately following RAW. At the very least, the participants may identify a longing for supportive environmental cues if support is perceived as lacking in the educational environment. The impact of the environmental response on the student participants' perceived self-efficacy during and immediately following RAW is best determined by the student participants themselves. Although in the moments immediately following RAW participants may not be fully cognizant of the educational environment's impact, their behaviors and descriptions of the experience of RAW will provide intimations of the impact of the environment on the essence of RAW.

Bandura's self-efficacy construct is not without dissenters. Questions concerning self-efficacy as a unifying construct include both theoretical and methodological inconsistencies (Eastman & Marzillier, 1984). Of primary concern is that self-efficacy theory does not fully consider adverse events which could have a wide variety of potential outcomes and that these potential outcomes could therefore affect behavior in complex adverse situations. The aspects of self-efficacy questioned by Eastman and Marzillier (1984) although thought provoking, do not dissuade me from considering self-efficacy theory. The debate surrounding the inconsistencies in question seems to have been adequately addressed by Bandura (1984) when he asserts that "If thoughts are simply epiphenomenal residues of conditioned responses, and proponents apply this analysis to their own thoughts, they can hardly argue the truth value of their view" (p. 232). In addition, I am not concerned with outcomes, but with behavior patterns. Since behavior patterns are central to Bandura's work (1978) and not questioned by the critics of self-efficacy theory, I can find no issue with using the theory for this inquiry.

I used the debate surrounding self-efficacy to inform the next part of the framework for this inquiry. In the response to Eastman and Marzillier's (1984) critique, Bandura (1984) references Collins' work with students of varying math abilities and self-efficacy levels to support his premise that self-efficacy should be considered when evaluating students' behaviors with respect to academic endeavors. From this example, I considered the work of Collins (1985) for inclusion; however, I found the described work to be too narrow in focus to include as part of the broader framework required for this inquiry. The work of Collins (as cited in Bandura, 1984; Fletcher, 2010) however, was suggestive of the broader work of Dweck (1999), specifically self-theories of intelligence, which I found to be broad enough in scope to include as the next component of my framework. Dweck's self-theories of intelligence allow for the inclusion of the student participants' beliefs, be these tacit or explicit, of their own intelligence. The ways in which students believe that intelligence is constructed or central to their being will impact the way that the realization of academic wrongness is perceived.

### **Dweck's Self-Theories of Intelligence**

Dweck's self-theories of intelligence (1999) identify two implicit paradigms of intelligence. In Dweck's work, intelligence is framed as ability; however, an individual's beliefs concerning the origin of ability are what create differences in the responses to educational endeavors. Individuals can believe that their abilities are either entity or incremental in nature. Entity or fixed intelligence individuals hold the belief that they are inherently intelligent. Incremental or building intelligence individuals hold the belief that they can increase their intelligence by studying and working. Working with these self-theories, Nussbaum and Dweck (2008) found that by suggesting that one self-theory of



intelligence was dominant, students would respond to failure following an educational endeavor according to the suggested theory. How these self-theories support adaptive or defensive behaviors is the focus of Nussbaum & Dweck's research (2008). What this inquiry describes as "difficulties and setbacks" (Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008, p 599), is consistent with my definition of academic wrongness, therefore theories of intelligence may become an important theme in the description of the phenomenon of the realization of academic wrongness. Given the characteristics of high and low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), the characteristics of low self-efficacy seem to mirror the responses to wrongness when internalized. Fear of risk, uncertainty, failure, and wrongness along with an attempt to preserve self-esteem seen in entity theory participants (Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008) are all characteristics of low self-efficacy. When faced with RAW, those students with low self-efficacy who also receive environmental validation that they are not able to achieve have another assault to their perceived self-efficacy. The educational environment, in these cases, validates the students' internally held beliefs that they cannot succeed which in turn lowers self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Inconsistent with my inquiry, Nussbaum and Dweck (2008) influenced their study participants' frame by suggesting one theory of intelligence over the other. By doing so, the researchers did not extract a true understanding of the participants' standard beliefs about the origin of intelligence. Although the findings suggest that students will respond to remediation efforts if the environment suggests that their intelligence is incremental in the short term, the study does not address the long term outcomes of this manipulation. Merely suggesting that intelligence is incremental may be sufficient if seeking to measure participant responses in the short term or when focusing on a singular incident of RAW,

however, when students are facing multiple realizations of academic wrongness at various times in a program of study, students held beliefs should have more influence. During the interview process with the co-participant researchers, the held beliefs of the themes of entity and incremental intelligence became apparent. Dweck's self-theories of intelligence (1999) became useful in describing a part of the lived experience of RAW for students.

The description of the phenomena of the realization of academic wrongness required a framework that addressed the affective and cognitive disconnect during and after RAW. How students managed the unanticipated academic outcome and attempted to minimize the internal conflict created by an outcome inconsistent with their expectations provided further understanding of RAW. Affective-Cognitive Consistency theory provided a basis for understanding the various responses of individuals when beliefs and reality diverge. The various disconnects between what the students believed about their implicit theory of intelligence, their behavior, their self-efficacy, and the educational environment's social structure were better understood informed by this theory's connections of cognition, emotion, and unanticipated outcomes.

### **Affective-Cognitive Consistency Theory**

The Affective-Cognitive Consistency theory has its foundation in the work of Rosenberg (1956, 1968) whose model suggested that individuals respond to inconsistencies in cognitive beliefs from both an internal and external frame. By examining the relationship between attitudes and beliefs and knowledge surrounding events, people, and things and the dissonance that occurs when these things are incongruent, individuals faced with cognitive dissonance, such as the realization of

academic wrongness (RAW), would not only consider their individual thought process with respect to the RAW, they would also consider the responses of individuals in the environment with respect to the cognitive dissonance. Depending on the perceived resultant effects on others, individuals may choose not to confront the dissonance in a productive, positive fashion but to rather extend the disconnect to maintain social balance. Norman (1975) furthered this understanding noting that although the level of affective-cognitive consistency had little long term effect on individuals conforming to group social behaviors, individuals with high consistency would initially act on their espoused beliefs. The level of consistency does seem to work to limit social influences in the short term that are not congruent with an individual's affective-cognitive consistency frame, however, some social influences on individuals can change the behavioral responses to the disconnect with respect to social expectations (Chaiken & Baldwin, 1981; Chaiken, 1982). Simply put, if individuals think they know something and structure their beliefs based on that knowledge, their statements concerning their behavior will be consistent with the way that they will initially behave unless or until there is a disconnect with the social order. It is unclear in these studies how the strength of the influence of social expectations was perceived by the participants or what components of influence challenged the participants in a way that allowed for a shift in behaviors away from the espoused beliefs of the participants.

There is no evidence that suggests general tendency of tenacity toward beliefs in general (Chaiken & Baldwin, 1981) although in instances where topics and attitudes are closely related but not specifically linked, individuals may respond in a similar fashion to different instances of related topics (Chaiken & Yates, 1985). Limiting inconsistency,

rather than eliminating inconsistency, seems to be preferable when paradigms are challenged (Fletcher, 2010). Individuals with high levels of affective-cognitive consistency tend to identify arguments that only slightly refute their held frame, tending to ignore those arguments that would significantly challenge their paradigm (Chaiken & Yates, 1985). Doing so would significantly destabilize the balance of feeling and knowledge (Rosenberg, 1968), lowering the consistency level, creating chaos and initiating the need for behaviors to limit or eliminate the dissonance. “What is considered a large or small inconsistency is relative and contextual” (Fletcher, 2010, p 56.), clearly connecting both internal and external catalysts of behavior with individual meaning. Based in the findings of the prior inquiries, in a social environment such as an educational environment, when individuals make connections correlating differing topics, the behaviors by the individuals to limit the inconsistencies may be based on those correlations rather than the other behavior options available to the individuals. To fully explain the inconsistencies at the realization of academic wrongness, the theories of self-efficacy, self-theories of intelligence and affective-cognitive consistency are needed to complete the framework to define the relative and contextual components found during the inquiry.

Since the focus of this inquiry was to seek a better understanding of the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness, how the participants think and feel about the realization of academic wrongness is essential. These theories not only provide a lens to examine feelings, they also provide for the connection between cognition, feeling, and social considerations that help to describe the broader impact of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW). As themes emerged that suggested

interdependence of perceived cognition, self-beliefs, and social structure of the educational environment with respect to RAW, these theories were important in the processing of the interviews, observations, and written artifacts supporting the extraction and description of the essence of the realization of academic wrongness for the student participants.

### **Cultural Definitions of Wrongness**

Being wrong carries a generally negative connotation. Closely linked to failure and error, the broader culture sees wrongness as an unexpected and shameful event that should be avoided and hidden away. Wrongness signifies that we have not processed correctly, that our basic understandings in a situation are not consistent with the rest of the group. When we are wrong, we feel separated and alone, we are vulnerable. In big things and small things, we want to be right. When we are right, we can remain constant and consistent with our positions holding fast in our rightness and not reaching beyond our current understanding. If wrongness is framed as a more positive cultural experience, however, being wrong gives us an opportunity to review and revise our perspective. When our beliefs are challenged by wrongness, we can choose to reach beyond our understanding to learn different ways of navigating the environment and understanding the world (Schulz, 2010).

Students' perceptions and definitions of wrongness are fundamental in understanding the broader influence of wrongness in educational environments. In the culture of the educational environment, wrongness can be framed as a positive or negative experience depending on the context in which the wrongness occurred. When students are faced with wrongness during their educational trajectory, the frame in which

the students understand wrongness will affect the students' abilities to interact with and assimilate the concepts within a program of study. The societal norms surrounding wrongness have an impact on students' beliefs concerning the meaning of wrongness in all aspects of their lives (Schulz, 2010), including their educational endeavors. Students' perceptions of the ability to be successful or unsuccessful after wrongness in educational endeavors are intricately linked to students' self-efficacy and self-theory of intelligence (Bandura, 1993; Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008), more specifically individuals' beliefs concerning their abilities to elicit control over traumatic experiences (Benight & Bandura, 2004) such as the realization of academic wrongness, as well as the contextual and relational frames (Fletcher, 2010) created, supported, and advanced by the educational environment.

By defining wrongness as a negative cultural experience in an educational environment, self-efficacy may be challenged. Conversely, framing wrongness as an opportunity to grow, self-efficacy can be validated and supported. Aligning the latter definition of wrongness with self-efficacy and self-theory of intelligence, students who experience wrongness but believe that they have abilities that will allow them to behave in ways consistent with successful content mastery are more likely to interact with content. Students who experience wrongness but do not believe in their abilities to manipulate content for mastery are more likely to avoid interactions with content. My hope to gain insight into motivating as well as non-motivating feelings and behaviors with respect to remediation activities after wrongness was achieved finding connections during data analysis to the theories combined into this inquiry's framework.

The students' experiences at the realization of academic wrongness provide part of the foundation for future academic endeavors. Should these experiences remain tacit, both students and educators lose the benefit of understanding the experience of RAW. Although my focus was limited to a specific group of students, the context for this inquiry includes the culture of nursing education and the impact of wrongness within that culture, my hope is that the essence of the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness as explained and examined by all the study participants will provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of the realization of academic wrongness. By better understanding the student perspective of the realization of academic wrongness, educators, administrators, and policy makers will have more information concerning what elements could be potentially helpful or harmful to students during the academic process in a variety of educational environments. Attempting to create academic environments that contain elements that support and sustain students throughout the process of the realization of academic wrongness and remediation without interrogating the underpinnings of the essence of RAW would be ineffective. Without an understanding of RAW, educators and administrators merely assume that the environments constructed for student engagement contain elements that are both engaging and supportive when students are challenged by wrongness during their educational endeavors.

**Nursing culture and nursing education.** Implications of wrongness in education are contextualized within nursing culture and practice. Hughes (2008) describes how wrongness is viewed in the culture of nursing. In theory, error and wrongness are to be identified and processed in a nonjudgmental and supportive way so that the process that enabled the error can be identified and changed to reduce the potential for error and

wrongness. In practice, wrongness is framed as a negative occurrence that is to be avoided or hidden. Wrongness when exposed is often met with punitive results. The person or persons identified as being wrong are punished and ridiculed, regardless of the patient outcome or situation that surrounded the wrongness. This disconnect between theory and actions is described by Argyris and Schon (1974) who discuss theory in practice as having two distinct operations, espoused theory versus theory in use; the disconnect between what organizations and individuals say and what is actually done. The implications of this disconnect are that the individual or organization carry false beliefs surrounding actions in response to situations, propelling them further into historic responses that do not meet the current situational needs. In short, nursing culture and practice continue to operate under the false espousal that error and wrongness are met with cultural responses that support change and growth when in actuality nursing culture continues an obsession with the need to be right and avoid being wrong (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010; Hughes, 2008).

The actions and behaviors of members of a profession or group serve to teach individuals new to the organization the culture and the expectations of the group to allow the work of the organization to continue (Argyris, 1990). Professional education, including nursing education, “consists not only in teaching technique but in teaching the methods by which behavioral worlds in which techniques can work can be created” (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p. 149). The behaviors taught during professional education can be both tacit and explicit; often educators are teaching both the espoused theories and theories in use simultaneously, especially when the theories in use are different from the espoused theory of practice. Since educators are guiding future professionals not only in



skill and knowledge acquisition but in behavioral norms for professional practice, the behaviors of the nursing educators and the environments created by nursing educators present concrete examples for nursing students that can be significantly different from the nursing theories presented in the classroom.

One espoused theory (Argyris & Schon, 1974) of nursing practice is an overarching caring paradigm that focuses on patient, practitioner and environment so that safe and efficacious care can be provided (Koloroutis, 2004; Swanson, 1999; Tonges & Ray, 2011; Watson, 2005). Due to the importance of the construct of caring in professional nursing practice, nursing educators need to assess nursing students' knowledge and abilities with respect to caring as well as all of the concepts that intersect with the caring paradigm such as safety and communication. Caring has both physical and emotional components, as nursing students, nursing faculty, and nurses should care for and about patients, peers, and the practice environment. Caring professionals also must determine through sound clinical judgment what constitutes caring for each individual patient in a variety of situations (Tanner, 2006), so there are strong links between the theoretical and practical components of caring in nursing practice. To care for and care about patient, practitioner, and environment, the nurse must make intricate and meaningful connections between practice and theory, assessment and intervention, and outcomes and evaluations hopefully gaining a sense of salience during each interaction that will lead to positive outcomes for all stakeholders (Benner et al., 2010). During the complex process of nursing practice, nurses seeking to correctly identify assessment findings and patient specific interventions that will support positive patient

outcomes follow established practice guidelines, guidelines that are thought to be right and are taught to be right during the nursing education process.

Caring theories emphasize the need for patient centered nursing responses (Koloroutis, 2004; Swanson, 1999; Tonges & Ray, 2011; Watson, 2005) which can be difficult to evaluate using the multiple item testing format most frequently used in nursing education programs. An understanding of the construct of caring may be effectively evaluated by using written exams as is the case with most theory based information, however, caring as a practice is more difficult to fully evaluate using written exams. Although the use of written exams does not fully allow for an evaluation of the entire construct of caring as practice in nursing, nursing students are consistently evaluated through the use of written exams. These programmatic examinations are most frequently constructed of multiple choice items as this is the format used for the national licensure exam. Student nurses are evaluated as competent to continue in programs of study based on the items in these exams with little or no regard to the students' clinical abilities when the students are able to operationalize theory into practice. Exam items are developed that simulate the items used on the National Counsel Licensure Examination (NCLEX). The NCLEX is used to evaluate graduate nurses as sufficiently safe to continue on to full nursing licensure and practice by the state boards of nursing without evaluating the actual clinical competence of the graduates. The disconnect between the evaluation of theory and practice, classroom and clinical, clearly violates the espoused theory of caring in nursing practice which deems central the validation of the students' connection of theory and action (Swanson, 2011).

To paraphrase McPike (2002) “In the (nursing) world of standards, grades, and positions lies the science of (nursing education) evaluation under which lies hidden the assumed rationality of (wrongness)... as a necessary end of a continuum.” (para 7). The theory in use (Argyris & Schon, 1974) in nursing education focused on written examinations and standardized testing for progression and licensure is much different than the caring paradigm noted. Diekelmann (1992) noted that as testing nursing practice becomes the focus over learning nursing practice, some aspects of learning to become a nurse are minimized while others are accentuated. Testing creates a dichotomous relationship between right and wrong leaving very little room for learning from experiencing the confuting of previously understood material (Diekelmann, 1992).

To continue to create the current culture of rightness and control in nursing, rightness and wrongness need to continue to be framed in a dichotomous relationship in nursing education where wrongness is negative and dangerous and rightness is desired. The negative connotation and punitive nature of wrongness in nursing practice extends to nursing education environments. Although calling for radical transformations in nursing and nursing education, the promulgation of rightness as a cultural norm in nursing and nursing education continues. By proposing significant contextual changes to nursing education and practice without addressing the overwhelming focus on being right, this current call to action changes little with regard to the implications of wrongness for student and practicing nurses. The inattention to the culture of rightness in nursing does nothing to address the overwhelming focus on being correct and safe over being inquisitive and willing to think in ways that are not deemed correct. Noting the challenge made by Benner et al. (2010) that the rigor in nursing education needs to increase, a

better understanding of the implications of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) for nursing students becomes more acute.

The potential for students to be wrong increases as students and educators are confronted with increased expectations of concept and construct mastery and increasingly difficult summative and formative assessments. By increasing rigor within nursing education to meet current and future healthcare needs without reevaluating the types of assessment used, the opportunities for nursing students to experience RAW increases while at the same time the expectations of the faculty surrounding students' knowledge acquisition increases. Without considering the implications of RAW in an educational environment that is focused on being right, educators cannot effectively meet the needs of the students who experience RAW. The potential for students to experience increasing RAW in an educational and cultural environment that focuses on being right can increase the negative outcomes of RAW, decreasing self-efficacy and increasing maladaptive behaviors with respect to the affective-cognitive disconnect perceived by the students experiencing RAW.

The theory in use (Argyris & Schon, 1974) in nursing education, that being right is the expectation, appears to be aligned with the consistent use and overuse of testing, including high stakes testing, throughout entry level nursing programs culminating in the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) exam (Diekelmann, 1992; Griffiths, Papastrat, Czekanski, & Hagan, 2004; Poorman & Webb, 2000; Shultz, 2010; Spurlock, 2006; Spurlock, 2013). These evaluations both collectively and separately have the potential to create pivotal and painful realizations of academic wrongness for nursing students. Although many researchers have debated and discussed the emphasis in nursing

education on summative high stakes testing and the implications for students and the profession (English & Gordon, 2008; Griffiths et al. 2004; Nibert, Adamson, Young, Lauchner, Britt, & Newman-Hinds, 2006; Poorman & Webb, 2000; Shultz, 2010; Spurlock, 2006; Spurlock, 2013; Urwin, Stanley, Jones, Gallagher, Wainwright, & Perkins, 2010; Vance & Davidhizar, 1997), increasingly students and faculty report high levels of various individual and programmatic stress related responses based on the applied implications of the outcomes of these high stakes assessments including but not limited to increased academic incivility and bullying, increased use of high stakes testing, and continued focus on NCLEX pass rates rather than other programmatic outcome data (Sprunk, LaSala & Wilson, 2014; Spurlock, 2006; Spurlock, 2013). This focus on high stakes testing in nursing education environments has been questioned and denounced as contrary to the true nature of nursing education, supporting the development of clinical judgment and sound reasoning (Diekelmann, 1992; Benner et al, 2010; National League for Nursing, 2012; Tanner, 2006) and the espoused overarching caring paradigm (Koloroutis, 2004; Swanson, 1999; Tonges & Ray, 2011; Watson, 2005). The tension created between the caring paradigm and focus on testing helps to extenuate an unspoken curriculum in nursing, the close relationship between rightness, nursing, and the fear of being wrong.

Despite questioning the use and overuse of high stakes testing, high stakes exams are used extensively at all levels in nursing education programs. High stakes exams are used at various points during a student's educational journey throughout the nursing education process including during the application process, programmatic progression, and to assess readiness for degree completion (Shultz, 2010; Spurlock, 2013; Urwin et

al., 2010). Failing an exam, one extreme event that will present the student with an interaction with the realization of academic wrongness, can have dire consequences in a nursing program. Failure can result in a variety of outcomes including non-admittance to a program, removal from the educational program or immediate remediation and retesting depending on the programmatic significance of the exam failure. After the wrongness, remediation focuses on content related issues, not psychological aspects of being wrong. Currently lacking in the academic discourse surrounding academic wrongness are studies that discuss the psychological aspects of academic wrongness realization on students. Although psychological interventions such as visualization and guided imagery have been used in conjunction with content remediation in nursing programs (English and Gordon, 2008), these techniques were not the focus of the inquiry. The paucity of studies addressing psychological issues and impact of wrongness while nursing students remain in the program seems counterintuitive. Examinations of student experiences of academic failure (McPike, 2002) may provide some indications of the experience of RAW; however, failure as a construct has distinctly different qualia from academic wrongness. Felt reactions and moods possess qualia, subjective experiences with phenomenal character (Tye, 2015), however in each instance the qualia is distinct for the particular reaction or mood. If qualia were the same, the phenomenal character would be indiscernible. Academic wrongness and failure hold different phenomenologic consciousness with distinct qualia. Inherent in failure is a distinct finality signifying an end to the process. Academic wrongness can be framed on a spectrum from an insidious process to opportunity for change.

As one of the constructs of caring, the preservation of human dignity (Swanson, 1999) may be most connected to RAW. When a student experiences RAW and cannot fully process the RAW due to environmental factors, the student can feel worthless and almost subhuman. Without a supportive environment in which to process RAW, students are left to navigate their responses that may be harmful to their continued academic interactions. For example, if a student answers a question in class and receives a response that does not support further inquiry into the concept, that same student has a variety of behavioral responses that can occur. The student may select not to answer questions because being wrong was met with a less than supportive response.

Returning back to espoused theories of caring versus theories in use of rightness (Argyris & Schon, 1974), the strong focus on testing, results, and NCLEX-RN pass rates creates tensions within nursing education and practice environments. Nursing practice and education remains in a rightness focused paradigm no matter how often claims are made to the contrary. Perhaps by exposing RAW from the students' perspective, nursing educators, administrators and leaders will begin to realize the implications of continuing this dichotomous relationship and reevaluate the implications of RAW on our practice, our profession and our patients.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

Being wrong, although a common phenomenon, is not easy to define or describe. We realize that we all have had the experience of being wrong, but we find the actual experience hard to explain to others and to share as a common experience. We spend little time thinking about what it feels like in the moment that we realize we are wrong (Schulz, 2010). When we realize we are wrong, the common experience seems implied. Since we have all been wrong, we seem to believe that we should all understand what it is like to be wrong and what the realization of wrongness means for an individual other than ourselves. The tacit nature of the realization of wrongness, in this specific case the realization of academic wrongness (RAW), requires a research method that allows for discovery, expression, and reflection on the lived experience by the student participant researchers with limited intrusion from the experience and perspective of the researcher. A clear approach for the process of removing my perspective while remaining engaged with the student research participants and hearing their perspective with limited bias is fundamental to describing the essence of the participants. Data collection techniques that allow for the lived experiences of the student participant researchers to be expressed with limited subjective and objective input from my perspective will serve to produce the closest description possible of the true essence of the realization of academic wrongness for the student participant researchers. The method must also allow for the inclusion of context, since the context of an experience is important to the meaning of the lived experience of an individual (Fletcher, 2010).



Because of the tacit nature of lived experiences, the research questions for this inquiry focus the co-participant researchers and me on describing the unique lived experience. The research questions that frame this inquiry are the following:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of nursing students at the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ2: What are the lived experiences of nursing students after the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ 3: What are the behaviors of nursing students at the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ4: What are the behaviors of nursing students after the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ 5: What are the meanings of the identified nursing student behaviors and lived experiences after times of realizations of academic wrongness (RAW) as described by the co-participant researchers with respect to content engagement and remediation?

### **Considering the Phenomenologic Perspective**

Qualitative inquiry methods allow for the development of complex, holistic understandings from the participant perspective, the subjective experiences of those living with and in the experience (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009, 2013) defines qualitative research approaches as those constructed using processes that provide the researcher with the ability to build integrated descriptions and explanations of comprehensive integrated environments. The iterative research process requires

flexibility in data management to allow for adjustments as required by the unfolding participant researchers' perceptions of the experience (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Patton, 1990). In short, qualitative methods allow for an unfolding understanding of participant experience over time based on participant responses and reflection on the meaning of such responses by all the stakeholders involved in the inquiry process.

The qualitative research method which allows for a deep and meaningful description to emerge from the participant researcher with minimal intrusion by the researcher allowing the truest essence of the lived experience to be shown and known is phenomenology, specifically descriptive phenomenology (Creswell, 2009, 2013). To be able to fully and accurately describe the perspectives of students when they experience the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) requires a research approach that affords me not only the ability to collect data for the inquiry in an authentic educational setting at the time of academic wrongness realization, but that also supports the construction of the essence of the lived experience by the research subjects themselves using their subjective textual and structural assessments of the experience of RAW (Creswell, 2013). Capturing the contextual meaning of the lived experience for the student participant researchers (Fletcher, 2010) requires proximity to the environment and the occasion of the experience. By selecting a phenomenologic approach to this inquiry, student participant researchers were encouraged to subjectively consider the lived experience of RAW in a more explicit way and to also consider the common experiences of others who also experienced a similar RAW in the same context (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenologic inquiry requires the participants to interrogate through the interview process and reflection on their responses how events and objects appear to the consciousness. The

participants are not simply being aware of a phenomenon but, along with the participant researcher, are connecting the external activities and context to explicate meaning for the participants (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Moustakas, 1990). Through profound conscious engagement with the phenomenon, the participants and the researcher can identify aspects of the lived experience that help to fully describe the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990, 1994). Using methods identified to extract data without unduly limiting the participants' potential descriptions of conscious phenomena (Moustakas, 1990, 1994), rich descriptions can be presented by the participants that the inquirer can align into thematic units to attempt to describe the essence of the participant experience (Colaizzi, 1973) without the need to quantify the experience (Moustakas, 1990).

Crabtree and Miller (1992) posit that identifying a phenomenon is the most neglected area of inquiry, leading to a variety of errors which culminate in the lack of true interrogation and subsequent understanding of the fundamental phenomenon. This lack of questioning the actual existence before asking questions to develop a rich and thick description of the phenomenon born from the investigator's perspective demands inquiry into the essence of the phenomenon, hence phenomenology as a methodological choice for this inquiry. In simple terms inquiry surrounding a phenomenon, whether that be qualitative or quantitative, cannot be undertaken unless or until the phenomenon itself is identified and described as experienced, not simply as perceived by the researcher. Van Kaam (1966) extends this perspective positing that phenomenologic inquiry should be the first foray into research as the method allows for the types of description necessary for the foundational understanding that will be needed when developing subsequent inquiry into the phenomenon using empirical methodologies (p 295) or alternative methods of

qualitative study. For this specific inquiry, an understanding of the essence of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) as experienced by nursing students was lacking. The beginning of an inquiry process that can be used to inform nursing faculty and nursing educational leaders in the areas of staff development, classroom engagement techniques, remediation curriculum development, programmatic policy and procedural development, and student retention and recruitment programs must begin with a better understanding of the lived experience of students in nursing programs. This inquiry is simply the beginning of the journey.

**Including the nursing perspective.** A nursing perspective for qualitative inquiry has to be clearly established. Nursing adopted various methods of qualitative inquiry unlike other disciplines who sought to develop individualized methods of qualitative inquiry based in the epistemological foundations of the discipline. The reasons for the absence of a nursing generated qualitative methodology may be based in the historic medical bias against qualitative inquiry in favor of the empirical or hard science quantitative research approach. Psychology, anthropology, and sociology all identify with a specific qualitative method which was developed using the theoretical foundations of the discipline as a basis for the methodology (Creswell, 2013). Although the various qualitative methods are used across disciplines, having a qualitative approach sprung from the perspective of a discipline is an important step in the foundations of inquiry into specific aspects of that particular discipline. The values and beliefs embedded into the profession are also embedded into the theories and methodological foundations of inquiry. A profession without a practice of inquiry based in its epistemological traditions does not have a unique method for inquiry grounded in the specific practice and theories

of that discipline. The difficulty for the discipline of nursing is to claim traditions unique to itself without specific methods of inquiry based solely in those traditions. These are certainly concerns I considered when selecting the methodological approach for this inquiry.

Although there are seven different phenomenologic perspectives, nursing practice has historically utilized the descriptive and interpretative (hermeneutic) perspectives to understand phenomena. Wojnar and Swanson (2007) provide nursing researchers a comparison of the different phenomenological frames, descriptive and hermeneutic, augmenting the understanding of the distinct strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Philosophical underpinnings, assumptions, and methodological applications are described. Several notable nurse researchers have chosen phenomenology as their method of inquiry, however, caution should be used when planning and structuring the inquiry using phenomenology. Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a methodology, requiring more than a cursory approach to research design and data analysis. While transparent processes for practices such as bracketing may limit the negative critiques and analysis of the use of phenomenologic methods by nurse researchers (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010), the “doing” of phenomenology can be seen as superficial by those steeped in the phenomenologic traditions. In the phenomenologic community, the use of phenomenology by the nursing community is more aligned with a phenomenology of practice rather than phenomenology based in the philosophical ontology and epistemology of the phenomenologic traditions (van Manen, 2010).

***Bracketing.*** Bracketing must be undertaken as a serious concern in phenomenology as the continuous infusion of the activity is fundamental in phenomenology. The general use of the term bracketing in several methodological approaches distills the true importance of the activity as researchers do not fully comprehend the serious nature of the activity (Gearing, 2004). Bracketing is not simply an open mind, but an intensive process of examination of the thoughts and biases of the participant researcher towards the phenomenon of inquiry (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Husserl, 1964, 1970; Melle, 2008; Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Tufford & Newman, 2010). Without clearly describing the process by which the researcher attempts to limit biases and assumptions, the inquiry validity can be challenged. For example, Wolff (2011) in her discussion of bracketing presents a superficial explanation of the process, reducing this key element of the descriptive phenomenologic method to reflection on the phenomenon and processing the researcher's beliefs and biases through writing to create an open mind. This vague treatment of the bracketing process is not limited to nursing inquiry. Even within the phenomenological perspectives, there is debate surrounding what is considered bracketing and how that process needs to be executed by the researcher to be able to fully and completely describe the essence as experienced by the research participants (Chan et al., 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2010). The perspective that our minds can be separated out as in ego and id or mind and soul or that the evidence we consider is not influenced by the beliefs we have formed from prior evidence (Schulz, 2010), all dualistic perspectives, is strongly rejected as a component of most of the phenomenologic perspectives (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Husserl, 1964, 1970; Melle, 2008; Moustakas, 1994), however, the requirement for

bracketing when applying a phenomenologic perspective exists. The belief that as researcher I can and must fully separate out and set aside my thoughts and experiences in order to assist others to define their experience without tainting or influencing the outcome is questionable based on the phenomenologic rejection of dualism (Husserl, 1964, 1970; Melle, 2008) and the holistic perspective of the theories of nursing science. Recognizing that all human interactions are based in holistic understanding of human existence, the integration of mind, body, spirit, relationships, culture, context, and environment, is an almost universally held nursing philosophy and is emphasized in the predominate nursing theories (Nicoll, 1997). Although simply thinking about and identifying my beliefs and biases is insufficient, just as problematic would be to operate under the assumption that I can totally remove myself from the research process. Since I cannot separate a predominate philosophy of nursing science from an inquiry into nursing education, claiming full and total bracketing of noumenon and phenomena would be ill-advised based on the epistemologic and ontologic underpinnings of the holistic philosophy of nursing science.

**Operationalization of phenomenology in nursing.** Several authors question the use of phenomenology in nursing research, not due to the epistemological disconnect from the holistic perspective of nursing science, but due to ineffective use and/or limited understanding of the methodology (McNamara, 2005; Porter, 2008). Porter (2008) questions the need for nursing researchers to agonize over the various theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology, asking if busy nursing researchers need to spend time vetting the philosophical ontologic and epistemologic basis of the perspectives and not simply the methodological processes. He suggests that these theories are too difficult to

conceptualize and that nurse researchers “jettison the baroque intricacies of high phenomenology” (Porter, 2008, p. 268) and instead attempt to simply unveil and explain the essence of interest. Since poorly contrived and executed nursing research using phenomenological perspectives precipitated this suggestion, Porter’s critique of the use of phenomenology in nursing research must be considered. Nursing researchers must consider the professional and ethical implications when using a process of inquiry that they do not fully understand. The assumption that seems to permeate several nursing studies is that the inquirer’s process would be unaffected by a limited understanding of the epistemologic and ontologic underpinnings of the type of phenomenologic inquiry chosen. Phenomenology cannot be simply seen as looking at an experience through the perspective of others. Simply because understanding the theory and methodology takes time is not a logical explanation for a researcher to present as to why the researcher cannot fully articulate the process by which the data were collected and processed. To ensure “specific data collection methods, sampling procedures, and analysis styles are used to create unique, question-specific designs that evolve throughout the research process” (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p.5), more than a superficial understanding of the qualitative methodology selected for inquiry is needed. Calls such as Porter’s (2008) continue to plague qualitative research paradigms as well as nursing research. Nursing education researchers cannot logically expect that their research will be accepted as valid and relevant if we posit that understanding the nature of the method, the why of what we are doing, is unimportant.

There are, however, sufficient commonalities in theoretical underpinnings of nursing and phenomenology, allowing for the use of phenomenology as a method in



nursing inquiry. For example, the rejection of dualism, specifically espousing that the mind and body are not separate and distinct, is an underpinning of both phenomenology and nursing philosophy. Although Holden (1991) posits that to be considered an art aligned with a caring philosophy nursing must hold a dualist perspective based in interactionism and consider mind and body as distinct and independent, nursing philosophy is based in a holistic perspective that strongly considers the mind body connection. This connection is not simply seen as an interaction between two distinct entities, one physical and the other nonphysical, but as the foundation of human experience. In a related argument, Holden's contention that caring cannot be empirically considered is inconsistent with the current theories of caring in nursing practice (Koloroutis, 2004; Swanson, 1991, 1999; Watson, 2005). Dichotomous perspectives such as Holden's are limiting to nursing inquiry, theory, and practice.

*Choosing descriptive phenomenology.* Since my goal is to better understand the meaning, structure, and essence of wrongness, a phenomenon that has yet to be fully understood within nursing education through the voices of student nurses, the methodology I utilized was descriptive phenomenology. Descriptive phenomenology "is more useful for inquiry that aims to discover universal aspects of a phenomenon that were never conceptualized or incompletely conceptualized in prior research" (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p 177). It is only the students who can articulate this perspective, what programmatic experience with the realization of academic wrongness in nursing education is like for the student. I contend that Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach will allow for the conscious bracketing of my perspective with respect to the experience of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) while

allowing me to assist and guide the student participant researchers in centralizing and explicating the perspective of the student participant researchers. As a faculty member, the integration of my understanding of the realization of wrongness in general and RAW specifically into the description of the phenomena could significantly change the perspective. Since Moustakas' methodology is descriptive, the method will allow for discovery of the essence of the phenomenon within a structured format. The goal is to allow the students to engage in the process of the research, to be more than simply subjects, but to enter into the research as participant researchers to describe the phenomenon without the intrusion of the researcher's bias and beliefs overshadowing the phenomenon through the process of transcendence. In this way, my understanding and assumptions can be identified and removed from the lived experiences of the students. I seek to describe rather than explain, so my framing the essence using my understanding is not required or expected. This is a concern due to the hierarchical relationship between student and professor, where my position within the educational environment could have significant implications to the validity of the essence of the realization of academic wrongness as experienced by the students (Creswell, 2009, 2013). Moustakas (1994) posits that experiences felt and behaviors elicited by an individual when that individual is engaged with the phenomenon are inseparable from the phenomenon itself. Closely related to constructivism, the individual's perception of the phenomenon becomes the phenomenon for that individual. Since intentionality and consciousness can be treated as separate and distinct (Searle, 1983), the tacit nature of the realization of academic wrongness should not limit the inquiry or the description of the essence.

Although discussion surrounds this approach, which questions Moustakas' claim that his work is based in Husserl's abstract concept of transcendence (Applebaum, 2013), the bracketing technique described is straight forward and conceptually clear. Unlike van Manen's interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology (1990), where the focus of the inquiry lies in defining the phenomenon extracted from the participants and arguably places the researcher in an authoritative position over the research participants, Moustakas' (1994) approach allows for participant definition through exposure of the essence by the researcher without placing the perspective of the researcher above that of the participants. Although focused, personal attention to the phenomena is expected, operationalizing Moustakas' (1994) seven step analysis process needs to also be a focus. The seven step analysis process provides the researcher with scaffolding on which to build the descriptions of the essence of the phenomenon after the researcher has focused on the descriptions. A structured analysis process allows the researcher to explore the participant lived experience of the phenomenon, question and identify the researcher's beliefs and biases, and finally to explicate clear descriptions from the participants' perspectives (Patton, 1990). Without a process, the researcher can easily become lost in the descriptions provided by the co-participant researchers and simply report statements rather than illuminating, explicating, and synthesizing descriptions of the phenomenon.

Those who seek to engage in Heuristic inquiry must be resigned to remain with the questions surrounding the inquiry until the questions are totally satisfied (Moustakas, 1994). Through Heuristic inquiry, all research participants are enabled to discover and learn about the phenomenon. The process can be all encompassing for the researcher as for the co researcher participants who may tire of the inquiry much sooner than the

participant researcher. By being sensitive to times of waning interest of my co researchers and continuing to place their perspectives at the forefront of the inquiry, my perspective will not dominate this inquiry allowing me to depict rather than interpret the data extracted from the interview transcripts and observations.

### **Setting**

The setting for this inquiry was a college of nursing within a private, nonprofit Research University, Progressively Practical University (PPU). The university is located in an urban setting on the east coast of the United States. Observations and in class activities took place during normal class meeting times in a classroom and timeframe designated by the registrar's office of the university. The setting was the natural location for the in class activities and no changes to the typical in class meeting location or times were made for the purposes of this inquiry. The semi-structured interviews took place in locations and at times selected by each co-participant researcher. The location of the semi-structured interviews needed to provide comfort for the co-participant researcher; both physical and emotional comfort was considered (Seidman, 2006). Each co-participant researcher selected the location of the interview based on available environments. Although interview rooms were available on the university campus, none of the co-participant researchers elected to use these rooms.

Originally, I planned no interviews would take place in my campus office due to the potential perception of an inconsistent power dynamic. I am a faculty member and my co-participant researchers were students at PPU during the timeframe of the initial interviews. The impact of the environment of my faculty office could have served to inhibit the co-participant researchers and emphasized the power dynamic rather than

allow for exploration into the realization of academic wrongness (Seidman, 2006). One of the co-participant researchers did however request her interview take place on campus in my office. Another requested meeting in a public location and two requested meeting in a virtual meeting environment.

The use of alternative interview techniques is acceptable in qualitative inquiry; however consideration must be given to the data required for the study as each technique has advantages and disadvantages inherent in the technique (Opdenakker, 2006). Although Opdenakker (2006) contends interviewing participants in a face to face environment has the distinct advantages of synchronous time and place not found in other techniques, the use of the available virtual environment rather than telephone or email interviewing provided both a synchronous time and place, that place being the virtual classroom environment. The virtual environment provided an asynchronous physical space but a synchronous virtual place in which not only verbal communication but visual cues were received. Visual cues were observed by using the web camera feature in the virtual meeting system, allowing two way visual communications with the co-participant researcher in real time. In this way the limitations of asynchronous place, including inability to visualize social cues, is reduced although not eliminated. Arguably, the web camera feature does not give the exact same visual access to the co-participant researcher as in the face to face interview. In a face to face environment however there are other foci within the environment to distract the visual field during the interview. By using a web camera, both the co-participant researcher and I placed our focus on the visual projections of each of our images on the screen in real time. This focus reduced the amount of distractions during the interview and created a space in which the co-participant

researcher felt both physically and emotionally comfortable, a key factor in successful interviewing (Seidman, 2006).

### **Units of Analysis**

A study of a diverse population of students engaged in various learning environments at all academic levels was much too broad a study for this undertaking. Given that the variables of age, developmental level, educational environment, curriculum, and educators' pedagogical perspective all have different impacts on the realization of academic wrongness and thereby the lived experience of the student with respect to that phenomenon; I focused on nursing students in a prelicensure baccalaureate program at the end of the curriculum who were unsuccessful in their second attempt at the final comprehensive HESI evaluation. The unit of analysis for this study was senior level prelicensure nursing students who have experienced the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) surrounding the final comprehensive evaluation and who remain in the nursing program due to being unsuccessful on this evaluation. These students could not continue on to degree conferment until they successfully completed the comprehensive evaluation and were required to engage in remediation activities to prepare for the next evaluation attempt. I am not interested in the historical perspective of students who had been unsuccessful in the past and are no longer part of the program therefore students who had been unsuccessful in prior quarters were not part of my population of interest. The data collection techniques selected for inclusion in this study allowed for the lived experiences of each individual in the context of the nursing educational environment to be consciously considered by each student participant (Patton, 1990) so that the full, rich essence of the realization of academic wrongness

(RAW) could be described. These students were actively enrolled in a remedial course following two unsuccessful attempts at the comprehensive HESI exam. The participants were enrolled by the program advisors as was the current process at the college. All participants had unsuccessfully attempted the summative exam twice in senior seminar, thereby having a similar, singular experience that preceded the realization of academic wrongness by the nursing students. Presenting the experiences of academic wrongness realization of the students at the end point in the program was important for this inquiry. The timing of the experience, when both academic wrongness realization and high stakes testing converge to create an environment that heightened feelings and behaviors of all types, potentially in all stakeholders, provided a rich environment for this first inquiry into the phenomenon of RAW.

### **Sampling Design**

The population for this inquiry was all senior level nursing students who took a total of three comprehensive end of program exams and were unsuccessful on all three attempts. I drew my sample by including all of the students in the recruitment process who had experienced three unsuccessful attempts at the comprehensive exams. These students experienced the identical catalyst for the realization of academic wrongness, significant unsuccessful comprehensive exam attempts in the weeks prior to the in class review session. The in class review session was the catalyst for the realization of academic wrongness for this inquiry, when students first saw the incorrect responses as well as the correct responses and rationales for each response. It was during this in class review and remediation session I began to capture the essence of the realization of academic wrongness in the context of this particular academic wrongness.

**Sampling in context.** Being unsuccessful on three consecutive attempts on the comprehensive end of program exam had significant impact on the students. These students were still in the nursing program as successful completion of a comprehensive end of program exam is one of the outcome criteria for the final senior level course where students must demonstrate comprehensive clinical and didactic knowledge. These students had not completed the required course work for degree conferment without successful completion of the comprehensive exam; therefore these students were placed into a transitional remediation course to prepare them for the fourth attempt on the comprehensive end of program exam.

The requirement to repeat the comprehensive exam after the fourth attempt has financial as well as programmatic and personal implications for students. Unlike the prior three attempts, students who are unsuccessful on attempt four are required to attend a remediation course which spans several weeks to months until the student has demonstrated content mastery using an outside vendor course. After attempt three, students review exam rationales with nursing faculty using a tool to determine testing irregularities and to identify concept misunderstandings (Thiel-Barrett & Kemery, 2013), requiring the students to be consciously aware of academic wrongness. This circumstance creates an environment when the students experience what I have defined as the realization of academic wrongness (RAW), where the students are required to engage with the actual questions and answers that were presented on the exam in the exact order of the exam and focus on the inconsistencies in their answers and the correct answers.

The intensity of the experience needs to be robust to be meaningful, but not extreme so a full rich understanding of the phenomenon can be described by the



participants (Patton, 1990). The intensity of the experience of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) potentially increases not only due to the timing of the data collection, final senior quarter, but also with the number of interactions that the students have had with the exam. The cumulative interactions with the realizations of academic wrongness in the context of a summative evaluation of nursing content can increase the intensity of the responses of the students with regard to the exam and the review. With each subsequent unsuccessful attempt on the exam as well as with the focused, conscious review of the rationales, academic wrongness is made explicit to the student increasing the exposure of the student to the phenomenon of RAW. Increasing the sense of urgency, students and faculty are aware that multiple attempts on comprehensive exams have been correlated with a decrease in the NCLEX pass rate, even when the students eventually successfully passed the comprehensive exam (Adamson & Britt, 2009). Since the students are not being removed from the program due to their unsuccessful attempts nor are they being required to repeat the entire senior level course, the implications of RAW are onerous but not severe. These students are required to participate in review and remediation activities and retest at a later date and time, extending the time and effort required to complete their nursing degree but not preventing the students from attaining their ultimate goal of becoming a registered nurse.

Adding to the intensity of the experience, since the original conception of this study, the trajectory of the students after unsuccessful HESI attempts has changed, increasing ambiguity and inconsistency to the time frame between the catalyst experience and the next exam attempt. Students were aware of the historic trajectory of this process, however changes occurred immediately prior to and during the inquiry. Students were

placed immediately into a virtual remediation program and progression of each student was to be determined by the results of the individual student's activity with respect to the virtual remediation course, not by specific dates for exam attempts. Students were then notified two days later that they would be expected, but not required, to test on July 6, 2015. Virtual remediation would continue to be supplemented with asynchronous tutoring and support in this 19 day time frame, however the students would not have another face to face meeting prior to the next exam attempt. Additionally, the passing score for the exam became fluid. The administration lowered the passing score for the exam from 950 to 900. This decrease in passing score did not positively affect the students in the population as their scores remained below the new passing standard, potentially creating another dimension to this current realization of academic wrongness.

Another changing factor in the educational environment was the addition of a second comprehensive exam from another vendor, ATI's comprehensive nursing exam. If students were successful on this secondary vendor's exam, the students would have fulfilled the requirement for didactic content mastery. The addition of this secondary vendor exam was communicated to the students while they were in the senior seminar course and before they took the initial HESI at the end of the coursework.

The number of students living the particular experience of the realization of academic wrongness, three unsuccessful exam attempts, within the program varied each quarter based on the single vendor (HESI) exam; however, the mean from the academics year 2010-2013 was approximately 8 students per cycle prior to the proposed programmatic change which eliminated the third HESI attempt and added the ATI attempt in place of the second HESI exam before intensive remediation began (Drexel

University, 2013). Looking at this historic data, the number of students who are unsuccessful on the second HESI attempt had been approximately 27.3 % of the cohort total (Drexel, 2013). It was impossible to determine the number of students who would be unsuccessful in the second exam, now the secondary vendor exam (ATI), for this inquiry as there was no historic data concerning the ATI exam in this academic context. Due to the proposed changes, however, using the historic data as a predictor, I assumed that the number of students experiencing RAW during the study time frame might be significantly greater than 10, approximately 49 students based on a cohort of 180 students. Since the implications of being unsuccessful had not changed, the potentially large number of students was a variable I would have needed to limit as it would be impractical to attempt to interview such a large number of participants given the time constraints and financial limitations for this inquiry (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The limiting of the participant number, however, must be done in such a way as to not limit the description of the full essence of RAW (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Mason, 2010). To that end, I devised two sample designs for this inquiry. The first sample design was created for a population of 10 or less and the second sample design was created for a population of greater than 10 unsuccessful students. I ultimately utilized the first sample design. The first sample design was used as the actual number of students was six after the third comprehensive exam attempt.

The students participants described above were therefore the appropriate group to query having fit the purpose of the research and experiencing the phenomenon of interest (Kuzel, 1999). To ensure adequacy of data with respect to amount, variety, interpretation, and opposing perspectives (Morrow, 2005), I encouraged all students who were

unsuccessful on attempt three of the comprehensive exam to participate in the inquiry. Collecting data as close to the realization of academic wrongness was essential to this inquiry as the implications and understandings of wrongness tend to change over time (Schulz, 2010), making time sampling an important component of the sampling design (Patton, 1990).

All students who were unsuccessful on the second HESI, the third comprehensive exam, were the population for this inquiry and were approached to be part of the sample for the study to provide for a wide range of “*information-rich cases*” (Patton, 1990, p 169.). My ideal sample would have been the entire population experiencing the designated academic wrongness within the study timeframe. The inclusion of the entire population of students was realistic and manageable since the entire population was less than 10 students. Exactly six students were unsuccessful on the third attempt of the comprehensive exam. In Patton’s (1990) description of 16 purposeful sampling strategies, the type of sampling described above is purposive criterion based sampling. Purposive criterion based sampling will allow for the inclusion of all students who experienced this particular academic wrongness in the designated study time frame. Creswell (2013) presents that phenomenology is best served by using criterion based purposeful sampling. Quality assurance is also an off shoot of criterion sampling due to the inclusion of all members of the group of interest. The depth of understanding for phenomenology is important therefore selecting information-rich cases that would serve to inform the research questions (Patton, 1990) was necessary for this inquiry. However, not all of the students in the population of interest agreed to be part of the inquiry. Two of the six students declined to participate. Since these students declined to participate, this

prohibited the inclusion of the total population, potentially affecting the breadth and depth of the essence of RAW. To counter the issues inherent in missing individuals from the population of interest, I remained focused in and within the interview manuscripts to be sure data saturation was achieved and the description I presented would be accepted as dependable and trustworthy (Golafshani, 2003).

Mason (2010) advises that “a pre-meditated approach that is not wholly congruent with the principles of qualitative research” (para 1) and that the researcher needs to determine when saturation has occurred based on obtaining data pieces more than once. This requires a comprehensive understanding of the research questions and research method as well as in-depth analysis of the data at multiple points during the data collection process. In qualitative inquiry, there is less emphasis placed on the frequency of a datum. The mere existence of that datum within the context is what the researcher seeks (Mason, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). Mason (2010) addresses the question of how many participants qualitative researchers need to include in the sample. He does this by identifying the number of participants in 560 qualitative studies that used interviews as the primary data collection method and calculating the mean of those numbers. Although Mason (2010) fails to identify and distinguish the methodological differences in the studies selected, a strong case is made that no preset number is expected or the gold standard for validity, rigor, and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003) in qualitative interview samples (Baker & Edwards, 2012).

## **Participant Engagement and Early Recruitment**

Wanting to capture the experience of the realization of academic wrongness as close to the event as possible required that data collection begin immediately following the unsuccessful second exam attempt. A plan was designed for meeting with potential student participants prior to asking for their involvement in the inquiry to help initiate a level of comfort with the researcher, however due to the need for rapid programmatic shifts this meeting did not occur. The early introduction of both the study and researcher may have encouraged more students to consider working with me as well as encouraged candid responses during the semi-structured interview process (Roller, 2013; Seidman, 2006). As an alternative to the live session meeting, I began the process of participant recruitment prior to the exam process in the senior level nursing course via hard copy letter and email messages to all of the students in the senior seminar course.

Understanding that the realization of academic wrongness may be stressful for the students, engagement with potential participants needed to begin prior to the exam event. By introducing the idea of study engagement prior to the exam process, I attempted to limit the negative implications of unsuccessful exam results on participant consideration. Although prior knowledge of this inquiry did not totally exclude the negative implications of an unsuccessful exam attempt, students had time to consider participating in the inquiry without the added stress of an unsuccessful exam attempt in this course. In addition, this inquiry depended on engaging students in dialogue that required a level of comfort with the researcher. While working with this particular population of students was part of my normal faculty role, I had only worked with one student in this particular cohort of students in prior course work in the nursing program.

As part of the normal transition into the remediation course, I traditionally make contact with the student cohort during the final weeks of the senior seminar course so that if a student is not successful on the first comprehensive HESI exam, the student would know how to contact me. The student would also have a general idea of the process going forward in the remedial course. In addition to the live in class meeting, I also provide transitional letters to all students taking the second attempt HESI with instructions to open the letters only if they are not successful on the attempt. These letters provide the unsuccessful student a plan for the timeframe between the unsuccessful attempt and our first class meeting, typically three to four days. The letter includes my contact information as well as the date, time, and location of our first in class meeting. As these activities were historically part of the normal progression of the transition into the remedial course, however due to significant programmatic changes, the normal transition process was not followed. The instructor teaching the senior level course tied to the comprehensive exam did not provide me with access to the students in the classroom environment. Although the live meeting was canceled, the students were still provided with the transition letter for remediation as well as a letter and email introducing the study and asking for participant consideration if the student met the study criteria (Appendix A).

**Before the second comprehensive HESI exam attempt.** After the first HESI attempt, but prior to the second HESI attempt, I began to recruit the participants for the inquiry. I asked all students who had been unsuccessful on the first attempt to consider being part of the inquiry prior to taking the second exam attempt. Should the students be unsuccessful in the second attempt, they would meet the criteria to be eligible to be part

of the inquiry. As part of the participant form (Appendix B), I asked students consider consenting to being observed in the classroom environment. I clarified that the students could choose not to participate at any time during the process. For example, if a student signed the consent form prior to testing and then after the unsuccessful attempt did not want to be part of the study, the student could decline to participate. If a student elected to withdraw consent, the refusal was significant to the data and the nature of the refusal would require follow-up (Roller, 2013). A student could also elect to participate after that student initially declined. The fluidity of the data collection was necessary due to the perceived emotional toll of the wrongness and the comfort level of the participants. The actions of the students whether actively participating in the study or not, speaks to wrongness and the ability to interact. For this inquiry nonresponse bias, usually a concern reserved for quantitative research especially survey data (Fink, 2012), added to understanding of the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness in significant ways. Two students declined to participate in the inquiry process. These students' perspectives as shared will be presented as nonresponse bias in chapter 4 and discussed in chapter 5.

### **Data Collection**

In order to have the essence of the phenomenon evolve from the descriptions and contextual meanings of the participant experience, multiple data collection techniques were used. Data collection techniques included the use of semi-structured interviews, asynchronous conversations, participant observations, class room activities, and course documents. Behaviors elicited by the interaction with the realization of academic wrongness as well as the thoughts and feelings when individuals are engaged with this



phenomenon are inseparable from the phenomenon itself (Moustakas, 1994). The variety of data collection techniques provided a rich and varied pool of co-participant researcher driven data from which a clear description of the essence of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) as lived by the students can be constructed. Given the variety of data points available, thematic units would be constructed not solely from interview data, but also from a contextual basis, a key construct in the development of a description of the essence of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Fletcher, 2010; Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008; Patton, 1990).

**Semi structured interviews.** Semi structured interviews were used to provide a flexible framework that encouraged the co-participant researchers to express their unique lived experiences (Patton, 1990; Seidman, 2006), those experiences only becoming evident to others through the sharing of personal information (Weiss, 1994). By interviewing the co-participant researchers as soon as possible after the realization of academic wrongness (RAW), the shared descriptions of the experience of RAW will be as close as possible to the context of the initial realization of academic wrongness. Since RAW is primarily a tacit event, interviewing also provides the co-participant researchers opportunities to explicate the experience of RAW and provided the opportunity for the development of the research partnership between the co-participant researchers and myself (Weiss, 1994). Through horizontalization during the semi-structured interview process through being receptive to what each participant was saying and coding certain statements in real-time (Given, 2008; Moustakas, 1994), I was able to remain mindful of the phenomena of RAW without unduly inserting my perspective of the essence, the co-participant researchers' statements were the central focus of the codes, not my reflection

on the statements, but reflection in the moment of the unfolding of the co-participants' descriptions. Interview data can be biased and lack depth due to the limiting nature of questions posed by the researcher regardless of how open-ended the questions may be (Silverman, 2011). By coding certain statements in real time, I was afforded the opportunity to clarify meanings intermittently with my co-participant researchers and be certain the codes I was considering were valid for the co-participant researcher, at least in that moment. It is interesting to note that I did not memorize codes for this process. As the interviews progressed, I allowed the codes to organically form. This resulted in a variety of codes, many of which were compared and combined during the later data analysis process.

Semi structured interviews were held with the total number of participants as previously described in the sampling design section based on total number of unsuccessful students on the second HESI attempt. Each co-participant researcher was provided with a consent letter which included consent for the semi structured interview during the first in class meeting. This meeting was prior to the interview and described the interview process as well as the intention to voice record all interviews for subsequent full transcription and data analysis (Patton, 1990). Semi structured interviews were held in three formats as selected by each co-participant researcher. Interviews were held from six days to two days prior to the next comprehensive exam attempt. The time frame for each interview was no more than 60 minutes. Care was taken to provide each participant time to fully express thoughts and feelings surrounding the wrongness. Being careful to allow for enough time with the participants to percolate the experience was an issue (Lester, 1999) as some co-participant researchers needed more time to articulate the

experience; others attempted to provide superficial information concerning their experiences and longer pauses were noted. Overcoming the short falls of the interview process was fundamental to obtaining a comprehensive interview with the adequate depth and breadth required for a true sense of the essence of the experience of the realization of academic wrongness. Seidman (2006) considers “second level” (p. 78) listening by the interviewer to be an essential interviewing skill that allows the participant interviewer to recognize the participant’s restrained or guarded response. Guarded responses did occur with each co-participant researcher and required encouragement to continue the description. Emotional responses occurred with each co-participant researcher which required a halt to the interview and a short time period for the co-participant researcher to reflect and be able to continue with the interview process.

The semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix D) was used with all co-participant researchers. Since I focused on the second unsuccessful HESI attempt as the unifying co-researcher experience for inquiry into the realization of academic wrongness in the context of a nursing program, my interview questions were constructed to initiate the descriptive and reflective process with respect to RAW in this specific context. Prompts and probes were included during the interviews when the co-participant researchers required assistance to redirect and refocus on the lived experience of RAW. The questions, probes, and prompts developed for the interview protocol encouraged the co-participant researchers to share their unique perspective surrounding their lived experiences with RAW and guided both the co-participant researchers and myself toward a deeper understanding of the realization of academic wrongness. The interview questions were designed to flow from the co-participant researchers’ general feelings

surrounding being wrong, to the description of the experience of seeing the unsuccessful grade on the HESI, and finally to the description of the review process where the unique experience of RAW for this inquiry was experienced. The flow of the interview questions is based on the three-interview series from Seidman (2006) which includes focused life history, details, and reflection on the phenomenon of inquiry. As the co-participant researchers shared their lived experiences through description, their beliefs in their current unique abilities (Bandura, 1997), whether those abilities are malleable (Dweck, 1999), and considerations of the inconsistencies between the outcome of the HESI, their perception of self, and their perceived expectations of others (Rosenberg, 1956, 1968) began to emerge.

All planned interview questions were presented to all participants; however, specific probes were required in certain interviews to ensure clarity of the participant response, to redirect and refocus the participant, or to encourage more depth and exploration from the participant (Seidman, 2006). When probes were required, the probes indicated on the protocol were used first. Prompts were required other than those noted on the protocol in two instances and the prompts were recorded in the protocol for use in subsequent interviews, however the added prompts were only used in those two interviews. The use of probes and prompts during the data collection were recorded, noted during data coding and interrogated during data analysis. Should probes have been required consistently, this finding would suggest a gap in the interview protocol that would have been addressed in the discussion and limitations sections. Consistency in the interviews is a concern as each co-participant researchers needed to be presented with similar questions so that distinct differences in responses could be attributed to

differences in experience not differences in questions asked by the researcher. This was accomplished by using the same questions for all co-participant researchers with limited use of predetermined probes and prompts.

Each interview was recorded in its entirety. No co-participant researcher requested the recording be discontinued; however the recordings were halted due to emotional responses of the co-participant researchers during various times in the interview process. The breaks in the session were noted in my memo notes as well as the reason for the break in the session. Permission to record the reason for the break was obtained from each co-participant researcher with the understanding the reason would not be described in such a way as to identify the co-participant researcher.

After the completion of each interview day, the taped session was taken to a professional transcriptionist for full transcription. This process did not serve to provide completed manuscripts in a timely manner as there was a significant time lapse between the sending of the tape and a written document. Once received, the manuscript was not accurate, requiring the use of an alternative transcription service. Once all of the tapes were delivered to the second transcription service, complete manuscripts were received within 48 hours of the request. The impact of the delay caused by the original transcriptionist will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Once each tape was transcribed, the tape and the written documents were be compared for accuracy. Although the manuscripts were essentially consistent with the recordings, certain inconsistencies were noted. These inconsistencies centered around elements inherent to the contextual environment and certain processes within the context. Care should be taken by the researcher to ensure the transcriptions correctly represent the

actual interview content when terms used by the interviewer and interviewees are not commonly used outside of the context of the study.

The documents were analyzed using Moustakas' methodological process of immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and synthesis (1994). As the process evolved, the use of member checking kept the co-participant researcher's perspective in the forefront of the analysis. Member checking during the analysis of the transcribed documents ensured the descriptions provided by the co-participant researchers were transferred accurately, the data were valid with respect to the co-participant researchers' lived experiences, and the inclusion of the co-participant researchers' perspectives lent credibility to the research (Creswell, 2014; Harper & Cole, 2012).

**Participant observations.** By observing the co-participant researchers in context during RAW, I was able to see interactions between the co-participant researchers and responses to the process of review. Observations allow for the researcher to “directly access processes of interaction or practice” (Flick, 2007, p.). The behaviors of the co-participant researchers during the comprehensive exam review provided insight into the essence of the realization of academic wrongness. Behaviors during the exam review were often unfiltered raw responses to the current situation and provided a different perspective into the thoughts and feelings of the students as well as helped to bring the tacit understanding of wrongness realization into the conscious process. The purpose of observing the co-participant researchers during the exam review was to note and record the co-participant researchers' behaviors at the realization of academic wrongness. As the students viewed each question that was answered incorrectly, the incorrect response as well as the correct response were revealed to the students at individual computers but in a

group setting. Participant observations also included class room activities during structured and unstructured class time. The timing of the observations, during tin class review session, was instrumental in capturing student responses at the exact moment of the realization of academic wrongness in context (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

An observation tool, piloted in a pre-study assignment, was used to more effectively capture behaviors over time (Appendix E). The observation tool was used for each in class observation. The use of a pre-developed observation tool based on prior student behaviors surrounding incidences of academic wrongness helped me to quickly record observed behaviors and also to have a mechanism on which to record unanticipated behaviors during the educational exchange (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Additionally, the observation tool provided space to quickly record field notes in real time which proved helpful when addressing the research questions focused on behaviors (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Each in class observation spanned one (1) hour. The session received a number based on the date, time, and location of the observation. For example, an observation on September 24, 2012 starting at 5 pm in classroom 205 would receive the observation number: 92420121700205. Students in attendance at each session did not vary. All four of the study co-participant researchers were in attendance for each observation. The number of students in attendance was recorded for each observation; however each student in the course received a unique identifier prior to the start of the study time frame. All students received a code for observation purposes. The two students who denied study consent were easily excluded from the observation data. Students who denied study consent for observation from the start of the study time frame did not have their

behaviors recorded; however, the behaviors of study participants who interacted with students who did not grant consent were recorded. The coded list with the actual students' names was kept separate from the data collection documents in a locked file cabinet. This list was kept for the duration of the study for reference purposes. This list was shredded after data analysis in an attempt to keep the identities of the student participants confidential. The total number of students with a coded student letter/number for identification (example: John Smith would be given the letter/number ID of JS1, Jessica Simpson: JS2) was recorded on the individual sheet(s) for each observational period. Positioning of the observer within the environment changed to capture various observational vantage points. The research questions were printed on the top of each observation protocol sheet and served as a guide for the observer.

Notes were taken of all observations and were completed as soon as possible after the observation, but never longer than two hours after an observation opportunity ended (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 1990). Each entry was coded with the same code as the observation and was catalogued using date, time and location and recorded in an electronic file. The observation tool for each observation was labeled using the same date, time, and location format. The document was scanned into a PDF document and placed in an electronic file. The hard copy of the observation tool was placed in a coded file and locked in a file cabinet until data analysis was completed. Upon completion of data analysis, these hard copy documents were shredded.

**In class activities.** In class activities during the study time frame included a Post-It Note activity and the use of a test taking evaluation tool. I use both of these activities to support students during the period of review and remediation after the second



unsuccessful comprehensive exam attempt, so the use of these activities was not unique to this inquiry. The use of these in class activities as data collection techniques, however, was unique to the inquiry. Both of these in class activities are based in the processes of graphic elicitation. Normally aligned with pictorial representations of concepts or diagrams (Copeland & Agosto, 2012; Umoquit, Tso, Burchett, & Dobrow, 2011), the use of tables and lists is also considered a type of graphic elicitation (Umoquit, Tso, Varga-Atkins, O'Brien, & Wheeldon, 2013). Graphic elicitation helps participants to conceptualize difficult and painful constructs in meaningful ways and can help to make the tacit explicit. By encouraging the participants to write any terms they find necessary to describe their experience, including the use of derogatory or profane terminology, the participants do not have the added stress of verbalizing the terms and can be more explicit in their descriptions. Deeper meaning can be extracted by the participants when the need to verbalize is removed (Green, Campbell, & Grimshaw, 2011).

*Describe yourself Post Its.* Students were given Post It Notes during the first in class session following the unsuccessful comprehensive exam attempt. The students were then asked to write one word on each Post It Note that describes how they feel about themselves. The students could use any words they chose to describe themselves and how they currently felt. The Post It Notes were then shared with the class. The class as a group categorized the words into thematic units. This process was used with all of the students in the class, co-participant researchers as well as those students who did not elect to participate in the inquiry. Once the Post It Notes were grouped together, I recorded the groupings by taking a picture of each grouping. These group informed themes were similar but not the same as the themes provided by the interview data. The deviations are

further described in chapters 4 and 5. This process, known as participatory diagramming, allowed for the co-participant researchers to express their opinions without having to verbalize and to construct meaning within the peer group (Hopkins, 2006). The ability to write words and not verbalize the terms that hold a negative connotation and are perhaps socially questionable in an academic environment allows the co-participant researchers to express their true feelings in ways that are most comfortable to them without concern for social mores (Green, Campbell, & Grimshaw, 2011), presenting the opportunity to extract tacit affective-cognitive inconstancies (Rosenberg, 1956, 1968).

*Test taking tool.* Currently, a test taking tool (Thiel-Barrett & Kemery, 2013, Appendix F; Thiel-Barrett & Kemery, 2013, Appendix G) is used with unsuccessful students after the unsuccessful comprehensive exam attempt. This tool was designed to help students process test taking behaviors and to identify test taking strategies to help students prepare for the next exam attempt. As the students review each exam question, they record specific details for each incorrect question as directed by the faculty and the explanation of the tool supplemental sheet (Thiel-Barrett & Kemery, 2013, Appendix G). Students are encouraged to write additional comments on the tools for test processing purposes such as content or concept confusion. The students are also encouraged to write any responses they have to seeing their wrong answers and the correct answer during the review process in the column labeled “Thoughts?”. In piloting this technique, students wrote a wide variety of feeling words and action words as they processed the remediation tool such as “stupid”, “crazy”, “hate this”, and “could just cry”. Encouraging writing on the tool will present an opportunity to collect data when the participants are confronted with the wrongness, looking at the wrong answer and seeing the correct one. The students

are also presented with the reason why their response is wrong, an additional realization of wrongness that can be added to their perception. This activity is similar to the Post It Note activity, but occurs in real time and context when the co-researchers are activity engaged with the realization of academic wrongness as the tool is used in conjunction with the review process. Participatory diagramming is different using this tool than the Post It Notes as the tool is processed singularly, however, the tool still takes advantage of loose materials such as pencils and paper and limits inhibitions of the co-researchers by not requiring specific terms for descriptions of thoughts or feelings (Hopkins, 2006).

These tools are normally collected after the students complete the review and analyzed by the faculty so that test taking strategies can be operationalized for each student. The tools are placed in locked files after reviewing the exam rationales for test security purposes. The normal process for the test taking tool was continued with an addition for data collection for this study. I collected the tools and photo copied each document. From the copied documents, I identified the test on the documents that corresponded with meaning units germane to this inquiry, those describing thoughts and feelings surrounding each student's realization of academic wrongness. The copied tools were stored in a locked file cabinet in my office until the data analysis process was completed. These documents were destroyed after the data analysis was completed; however the original tool documents were kept in a file used for this purpose.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed the five systematic phases of heuristic inquiry (Patton, 1990) while operationalizing the seven step process of the modified van Kaam method of data analysis found in Moustakas (1994). The use of this method of analysis provides

structure for the novice phenomenologist but requires more than a basic understanding of the epistemology and ontology of phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). Immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis are used in Moustakas' approach to provide depth to the co-participant researchers' textural and structural descriptions of the what and how of the lived experience (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). To use this analysis process, the researcher's presumptions that led to the focused inquiry and initial engagement (Kenny, 2012) become a concern. Moustakas describes his inquiries as becoming central to his being during the timeframe of the inquiry, where all events and lived experiences seem to converge toward the phenomenon of interest (2001), a process that I currently experience. I have been engaged with the concept of wrongness as well as the questions surrounding the lived experiences of students with respect to academic wrongness for at least 3 years. This is a concern as epoche and bracketing required for phenomenologic reduction (Husserl, 1964; Moustakas, 1994) necessitate that I clearly and explicitly articulate my perspective so that I do not unduly impose my descriptions onto the lived experience of my co-research participants. An integral part of the data analysis process, bracketing my presumptions and past assumptions needed to be clearly identified and employed during analysis.

Bracketing preconceptions is critical. Husserl and Moustakas have both identified bracketing as a central component in phenomenologic inquiry, however, explicit processes for bracketing are lacking. Tacit statements and vague descriptions of the process for bracketing abound, often resigned to statements such as bracketing was used to limit the researcher's influence on data collection and interpretation. Ashworth (1999) discusses Husserl's early work, claiming that his later works move Husserl's perspective

from a transcendental to an existential premise making bracketing a much more superficial activity rather than a central tenant of phenomenologic inquiry. Tufford and Newman (2012) provide a conceptual framework that extends the understanding of the importance of bracketing to increase rigor and content validity within a study; however, the authors fail to explicate epoche as part of the framework provided. Bednall (2006) clarifies both the process of epoche and bracketing, employing Patton's (1990) description of epoche as integral to the entirety of the research process. The process evolves as brackets employed by the researcher are a result of epoche and utilized during analysis of each datum as well as during the entirety of the research endeavor. Once each datum is identified, epoche is then reinvigorated to allow conceptualization of the essence, to arrange the data in such a way to provide clear, deep, and rich descriptions to emerge. By questioning the meaning found in the epoche on two levels, how my lived experience could extend or limit the lived experience of the co-participant researchers (Bednall, 2006), the essence described by the co-participant researchers remained as untainted as possible by my own perspectives.

**Moustakas' analysis.** Immersion is the process of becoming fully present with the phenomenon so that I can become aware of the various dimensions of meaning and description associated with the realization of academic wrongness. With each interaction and interview, I watched and listened for "narrow units of analysis" (Creswell, 2013, p. 79) that would later emulsify into the rich, thick description of the co-researchers lived experiences of the realization of academic wrongness. To develop the units of analysis into descriptive meaningful units, attentiveness and consideration to the descriptions and meanings of the co-research participants was required. Returning to the transcripts and

tapes and member checking to ensure that the units were consistent with what was described (Harper & Cole, 2012) required an iterative process that continued to involve the co-participant researchers. Incubation (Patton, 1990) allows for the nurturing of the units of analysis to evolve into units of shared meaning. Illumination, as the term suggests, brings light to the process. Unlike immersion and incubation, processes that imply darkness and development, illumination brings “new clarity of knowing” (Patton, 1990, p. 409). With light comes new insights and clear dimensions. By giving time and attention to the phases of immersion and incubation, themes emerge or come to light during illumination. Even as themes emerge, member checking remains an important aspect of the analysis process. Thematic emergence cannot be a solitary activity in descriptive phenomenology as the descriptions should mirror the meanings of the co-research participants, not those of the researcher. Explication, the process of further development of thematic units into fuller descriptions and connected relationships between lived experiences, continues until a full, rich depiction of the realization of academic wrongness is realized. Creative synthesis completes the process, when I was able to communicate the lived experience of the co-research participants by bringing the varied descriptions together to form a cohesive essence of the realization of academic wrongness in such a fashion that a reader can fully appreciate what it is like to experience RAW.

The process of data analysis was an ongoing evolutionary trajectory. Each interaction was evaluated for bits of information that were consistent with the feelings, thoughts, and actions of the participants. Each participant’s interview was transcribed and read through individually. Notes taken during the interview were evaluated along with

the transcribed document. Once each interview was read through and themes within the document were noted and extracted, I confirmed and clarified the meanings of the statements with each individual participant. I did not evaluate the data as a whole until all the data from each participant was fully processed as a unique unit. In this way, each participant voice was given the same opportunity to be noted and heard in the explanation of wrongness realization. The collective voices of the participants began to emerge as more interactions occurred and were processed, providing themes around which concepts could be grouped. Although each individual arguably had a different experience with wrongness, there were distinct similarities within the phenomenon which created the essence of the experience of the realization of academic wrongness.

### **Cautions on Othering**

To know the other in an attempt to give voice to the marginalized is one of the key catalysts to the exploration of qualitative research. In the researcher's attempt to free the other from the limitations and stereotypical bias, however, the other can be fettered to the experience, becoming one-dimensional in the focus of the phenomena completely intertwined with the negative frame of the experience, unable to be seen as having dimension and differentiation within the experience. Dominance and control by the researcher and research process through interpretations and representations transform the participant into an object of the inquiry rather than an individual who experienced an individually unique but common occurrence. Since these students were defined by the wrongness in the educational setting, great caution was taken that Othering of the participants did not occur. Othering portrays the participants as different from the majority and therefore inferior to the majority. Krumer-Nevo & Sidi (2012) identify three

ways to disseminate research about the other without othering. These techniques include narrative, dialog, and reflexivity and were discussed previously. Othering was part of the descriptions provided by the co-participant researchers. Not only did these students describe the experience of othering, they also described othering peers. This will be further discussed in chapters 4 and 5 as part of RAW, however the experience of othering and being othered is not the focus of this inquiry.

### **Rigor**

Concerns of validity, reliability, and rigor in qualitative research paradigms have a basis in quantitative research's empirical approach. Terms such as testing a hypothesis imply that there are solely dichotomous relationships in inquiry, that things need to be confirmed or denied (Golafshani, 2003; Tobin & Begley, 2004). It is concerning that in essence the qualitative academic community continues to translate our philosophical beliefs into the language of quantitative inquiry. The quantitative definition of reliability, replication, is inconsistent with qualitative inquiry where we do not attempt to replicate and explain but to understand (Golafshani, 2003). Even the concept of rigor is questioned in qualitative inquiry as assessing truth and a central reality is not the primary aim of qualitative inquiry (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Validity and reliability, seen as distinct and separate in quantitative research, can be considered simultaneously in qualitative studies. Since "Rigor is the means by which we show integrity and competence" (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 390), processes are required that determine the robustness, credibility, and trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1999; Saumure & Given, 2008; Tobin & Begley, 2004). By providing clear descriptions of the inquiry process, including my co-participant researchers in the discussions that will inform the



progression of the inquiry, and surrounding myself with the co-participant researchers' perspectives, I was able to clearly articulate how the essence of the realization of academic wrongness evolved during the inquiry process.

As I have stated previously, Moustakas' phenomenological methods are not without dissenters including discourse surrounding the very basis of his methods, the concept of transcendence (Applebaum, 2013). When considering the Moustakas' method for this inquiry, I found questions surrounding the rigor of the method were similar to the discourse surrounding qualitative inquiry in general (de Witt & Ploeg, 2006; Golafshani, 2003; Pereira, 2012; Saumare & Given, 2008). I needed to understand the discourse surrounding rigor to develop the plan for my inquiry. I was careful to note using extensive journals, both written and oral, when I seemed to deviate from the descriptions of the co-participant researchers (Hayman, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2012). This occurred most often during steps 2 and 3 of Moustakas' (1994) analysis process. Following In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2009) and using the process of horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994), I remained extremely close to the exact descriptions of the co-participant researchers' experiences. As I worked through steps 2 and 3 however, I realized the potential to bias the raw data toward my perspective and away from the descriptions of my co-participant researchers. By journaling during the analysis process, I could return to my thoughts and feelings and more effectively separate my perspective from what was provided to me by my co-participant researchers.

The entire process of data collection through semi-structured interviews, observations, conversations, and document review continued until data saturation was reached. In Vivo coding kept me as close to the co-participant researchers' perspectives

as possible. Journaling allowed me to keep a record of my thoughts during processing of the data. Member checking was utilized to ensure that the co-participant researchers' perspectives were accurately transcribed and presented and created increased potential for data validity. The co-participant researchers were able to confirm or deny the words and meanings presented were exactly what was meant by the individual. In these ways, the descriptions of the co-participant researchers were utilized to provide a closer look at the essence of the realization of academic wrongness for senior level nursing students.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Data Analysis**

The purpose of this inquiry is to describe the phenomenon of the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) as expressed by senior level pre-licensure nursing students enrolled in a Baccalaureate nursing program. In this chapter, I present the findings of the research. This chapter begins with an abbreviated overview of the co-participant researchers and how they shared their experiences with me during this journey into RAW. Next, I present the interview data using the analysis process suggested in Moustakas (1994). The data from other sources are analyzed and presented using a combination of techniques borrowed from Moustakas (1994) and a variety of selected data specific techniques. The words and actions of the co-participant researchers are used to present a rich multilayered picture of the essence of RAW focusing on their lived experiences as individuals and as a group in both historic and current academic contexts immediately following and shortly after RAW. Finally, I present a creative synthesis of the data constructed from the integration of the co-participant researchers' perspectives of the lived experience of RAW.

#### **Co-Participant Researchers**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the study participants were senior level nursing students who had experienced three unsuccessful attempts on comprehensive end of program standardized exams in a Baccalaureate nursing program. These individuals functioned as co-participant researchers for this inquiry as only individuals who experienced the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) can describe the lived experience of RAW. I interviewed the co-participant researchers for this inquiry

individually using a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of four open ended questions with predetermined probes and prompts utilized when necessary to better understand the perspective of the individual during the interview (Appendix D). The semi-structured interview questions followed the question progression suggested by Seidman (2006) from historic experiences and understandings of the phenomena to the current experience with the phenomena. The co-participant researchers were asked to describe their feelings and thoughts about the realization of wrongness both in a historic self-selected academic context as well as in their daily life. Each was then asked to focus on the current experience with RAW and provide their feelings and thoughts with regard to their current situation. In addition to interviews, data were collected from unsolicited email communications, a Post-It Note class activity, observations, and a test taking assessment tool.

Initially, the target number of co-participant researchers was the total number of students who had experienced RAW during the testing cycle; however two of the six students who experienced the RAW declined to participate. This reduced the number of co-participant researchers to four. All co-participant researchers were provided flexibility in scheduling the individual interview as long as the interview occurred during the two week time frame from the in class review but before the next exam attempt. Interviews were conducted in a variety of settings to achieve the greatest amount of comfort for the co-participant researcher and to allow for open communication and dialogue. All interviews were audio taped with the knowledge and consent of the co-participant researcher. The audio tapes were transcribed verbatim by an online professional transcription service.

## **Member Checking**

I began the process of member checking after analyzing the manuscripts for consistency with the audio tapes as well as for content understanding. I read each manuscript one time through without grouping statements or processing data to get a sense of the total manuscript. Next, I listened to the audio recording of each manuscript while reading the text manuscript to identify any inconsistencies between the audio tape and the transcribed document, noting any questions I had based on the differences between what I read and what I heard. I edited the transcribed document where I found inconsistencies between the transcription and recording to reflect the recorded interview. I listed and preliminarily grouped all of the expressions. This process, horizontalization (Given, 2008; Moustakas, 1994), allowed all meaning units to be noted and considered without eliminating any part of the manuscript. I read the meaning units and wrote questions for the co-participant researcher when I perceived I needed more description to understand the meaning for a particular expression. During this process, I became aware of the consistent mention of relationships during the realization of academic wrongness and wanted to understand the connection between relationships and the realization of academic wrongness to identify if and how relationships are part of the lived experience and essence of RAW.

After vetting each manuscript as described above, I utilized the process of member checking to clarify the experiences shared, to extend my understanding of relationships and RAW, and to allow each co-participant researcher to review and explicate any inconsistencies found in the manuscripts (Creswell, 2014; Harper & Cole, 2012). I contacted each co-participant researcher via email and allowed each co-

participant researcher to decide the communication vehicle she wanted to employ for the member checking process. Co-participant researchers were provided with the options of telephone or email communications for information exchange. Based on the co-participant researchers' responses, all subsequent communications during the member checking process were conducted via email. A complete manuscript of the interview session was attached to each initial email. Each email included a request that the co-participant researcher clarify and expand upon components of the interview as she saw necessary (Appendix H). Additionally, each co-participant researcher was sent particular questions based on her specific manuscript (See Appendix I, Member Checking Probes). The co-participant researchers responded to the emails and contributed feedback during the member checking process based on the probes, however, the timeframes for responding to the emails varied. None of the co-participant researchers responded to the initial email request and a second email request for member checking was sent 4 weeks after the initial email requests. The dates of the emails and responses are included in Appendix H. The changes to the text requested as well as clarifications provided served to further extend the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness for each co-participant researcher.

**Changes to text: Bettina.** Bettina requested minor changes to the manuscript text with respect to how she felt she appeared. This requested change was added to the original manuscript alongside the original response to maintain an exact record of Bettina's responses prior to reflection. In response to a statement made when she was discussing the first experience with RAW in nursing school, Bettina wanted to clarify that she did not believe she was the one being inconsistent.

To me this doesn't make sense to me. I'm not sure where I was going with that, but I don't think that I'm not looked at as consistent. I believe what I was trying to say is that there is a line of consistency that is inconsistent. (personal communication, October 11, 2015)

Bettina went on to explain that the inconsistency she was describing was programmatic in nature and not a fault of her own, “because not the same person is teaching every single thing you learn.” She felt that programmatic inconsistencies had a cumulative impact on her feelings with respect to this particular RAW. I emailed Bettina and asked for her to expand on the inconsistencies, however she did not respond to this request. This sentiment, the impact of programmatic inconsistencies, was supported by the descriptions of other co-participant researchers and will be addressed later in this chapter.

**Changes to text: Bridget.** Bridget questioned the clarity of the manuscript and requested the ability to edit the text in her first email exchange. Her initial statement about the transcript, “The transcript isn’t perfect but the gist is there. It was difficult to re-read” resulted in my asking for clarification of her statement about the difficulty. In her response Bridget noted “I just mean there's some typo errors and bits that didn't get picked up properly since it was recorded” (personal communication, January 8, 2016). If I had not requested Bridget clarify her statement about the manuscript being “difficult to re-read”, I could have misinterpreted her statement, assigning an emotional rather than a structural connection to the datum. Although I considered multiple meanings of her statement, clearly having Bridget respond to my question allowed her unique perspective to be captured rather than my assumption of her meaning.

Bridget asked to edit the manuscript. I encouraged her to make whatever edits she felt were necessary. She responded by returning an edited version of the manuscript via email on January 11, 2016. The edited manuscript contained a total of 10 changes to the original manuscript. The changes Bridget made to the manuscript were not consistent with the audio. In six of the changes to the manuscript, Bridget simply added a word or two to correct sentence structure or grammar. Four of the edits served to add information to Bridget's statements. The first edit concerned the statement "And when I would-- I was like" (personal communication, June 30, 2015). Bridget edited the statement to now read "And when I would ask the teachers" (personal communication, January 11, 2016). Bridget identifies "the teachers" as the people who had not answered her questions during the math exam. She had provided this information during the initial interview using the pronoun "they" instead of the noun "teachers", removing any ambiguity during member checking as to who she meant by "they". By adding "teachers" to this meaning unit, the expression clearly comes under the invariant constituent of *deceived* and is part of the story to tell theme.

In the next edit, Bridget reworded her statement "but after the third one, after the thir-second HESI but third attempt" (personal communication, June 30, 2015) to read "but after the third one, after the third exit but-second HESI, but attempt three" (personal communication, January 11, 2016). In doing this, Bridget more clearly described the exam progression process. She added the words "exit" and "three" to the manuscript; however, these words are not part of the taped interview. Bridget also changed the order of the words she stated in the interview during this edit. Although the edited text helps to



guide readers without prior knowledge of the process, the inclusion of wording not stated during the interview creates a unique condition.

In the final edit that added information to the transcript, Bridget edited these statements “And it was like, what” and “and then when we were like” (personal communication, June 30, 2015) to this, “And it was like, what happens next” and “and then when PPU as like” (personal communication, January 11, 2016). Bridget replaced “we” with PPU, changing the meaning of these statements. Originally, the statements focused on the students in the remediation group and their confusion surrounding programmatic inconsistencies during the wrongness time-frame. Bridget’s edits now directed the focus on the institutional response to the students’ question, “what happens next”? Bridget did not state this question as succinctly during the interview, only saying “what?” during the interview. At no time during this part of the interview had Bridget named the institution, however, she edited her statements to include the institution name. The addition of the name of the institution in this case is similar to adding the word “teachers” in place of the word “they” in the prior edit, clearly naming the group Bridget wants to discuss. Also, Bridget’s edits now present a two entity conversation, the students and the institution, versus the one entity focus of the students questioning “what” and progressing forward “and then we were like” as a group.

Bridget, due to the length of time between the initial interview and her member checking response, was exercising reflection long after RAW. The length of time from initial interview to member checking response was significantly longer than the other co-participant researchers, 195 days inclusive of the response day. The other co-participant researchers’ response time frames were significantly shorter, Bettina 100 days, Fidelma

89 days, and Mackenzie 86 days. Although I considered Bridget's contribution from the edited text, I cannot treat these edits as I did the clarifications and changes provided closer to this experience of RAW from the other three co-participant researchers. Bridget's clarifications and changes have been affected by time from RAW, making her member checking more of a description of histrionic RAW rather than the moment of RAW and or the time frame closer to the current RAW.

**Clarifications: Bridget.** Bridget clarified her intense experience:

The exit exam process I went through still haunts me. I have PTSD like symptoms when I think or talk about it. It has left me bitter toward my graduation. It's a pity. Up till the exit exam I was PPU's biggest fan. I wouldn't wish on an enemy what I went through. (personal communication, January 11, 2016)

Bridget's experience with RAW continued well after she completed the comprehensive exam. Her diploma listed a fall graduation date. "Like, you've finally made it, but because you technically passed in July, your gonna show as a Fall graduation and your diploma will come in September. *You're welcome*" [emphasis added] (personal communication, January 11, 2016). Bridget described this as a "slap in the face" (personal communication, January 11, 2016), a phrase also used by Fidelma to describe her experience with RAW. The clarifications provided by Bridget occurred long after this particular RAW not during RAW. Although part of her historic understanding of this particular RAW, these descriptions are not based in the moment of RAW, what the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness was at the time the wrongness was realized by Bridget. Due to the extended timeframe between Bridget's RAW and her

responses in the member checking process, I viewed her member checking responses as historic, after, rather than at the moment of the realization of academic wrongness.

**Clarifications: Fidelma.** Fidelma did not request changes to her interview manuscript text, however she did clarify what she meant in two sections. The first clarification was related to her being disappointed. Although she framed this feeling as “that was like really disappointing to me” in the interview, upon reflection, she now described the experience as being “disappointment/anger” and that “they didn’t care” about her as an individual, they meaning the program administrators:

So the disappointment/anger that I felt was because they talk about caring and understanding and they are always doing other things for students with technical issues, and when it came to me, she basically didn't care, which was disappointing to me.

The second clarification pertained to the difference in her meanings of “slap in the face” and “big kick in the butt”. In the interview, Fidelma had first described the experience of “talking about reviewing the rationales/questions after the HESI” as a “kick in the butt” but then quickly changed that description. “So I mean, it was kind of a big kick in the butt like, or not a kick in the butt, like a slap in the face.” As part of the member checking process, I asked Fidelma if she would identify how these two things were different for her. Fidelma framed “slap in the face” as describing frustration from RAW when she realized that she got down to two answers and ultimately chose the incorrect response:

I find out the answer was the one my gut told me to pick and it’s more of a slap in the face/frustrating knowing I knew the correct answer but didn't pick it and if I

did pick what my gut was saying, I would of been done and moved on. ( personal communication, September 29, 2015)

Fidelma explained “big kick in the butt” as being “in the wrong context” for the reviews and rationales class activity and the realization of academic wrongness she experienced during the class period. She felt “big kick in the butt” was more aligned with external criteria that she had no control over, such as program policy. A “big kick in the butt” was described by Fidelma as something she did not see coming and as something she could not change, but was hurtful to her.

**RAW and relationships revisited.** The process of member checking did reveal connections not previously made in the initial interviews between the realization of academic wrongness and relationships. Relationships outside of the academic environment and within the academic environment were mentioned by the co-participant researchers during their initial interviews. As a result of these statements, I asked each co-participant researcher to elaborate on the affects RAW had on relationships (Appendix D). In the interviews, each co-participant researcher expressed disconnects in the way they perceived relationships prior to and after RAW. All perceived their relationships within the current academic environment had been significantly impaired. Three of the four co-participant researchers also mentioned relationships outside of academic environments during the initial interview. Only Mackenzie did not discuss relationships outside of the academic environment when she discussed RAW in the initial interview. When responding to the member checking prompts, Mackenzie did mention both family and friends. During member checking, Bridget, Fidelma, Mackenzie, and Bettina went on to clarify the changes and challenges faced within relationships after RAW, specifically the

feelings of “letting people down” and unmet expectations. Each co-participant researcher provided some information concerning the meaning of relationships with regard to RAW during the study timeframe, however, the co-participant researchers while participating in the member checking process provided more detail as to how they would describe their relationships during and after RAW. Consequently, relationships became important to the essence of the realization of academic wrongness as described by these co-participant researchers as each included descriptions of relationships when describing the lived experiences of RAW.

*Bridget.* During member checking, Bridget elaborated on the affects this particular RAW had on her relationships by focusing on the misunderstanding of the process by people outside of the institution. She addressed the question more fully by stating her boyfriend and friends “didn’t understand the concept of PPU’s exit exam.” This statement was similar to statements made during the initial interview such as “and then people who don’t know our standard” and “All they know is you didn’t pass this exit exam, but everybody else does. And I’m like, ‘Yeah, but our standards are much higher,’ and they’re like, they don’t know what that means” (personal communication, June 30, 2015). She went further describing her friends’ and boyfriend’s misunderstanding in the member checking response proposing several questions attributed to her friends and boyfriend concerning the institutional processes.

To them it was like, if your GPA is a 3.21, and you’ve passed synthesis, and you made it to the end of school, why can’t you just take your boards? Why is PPU making you take a “pre-boards” test? Don’t they believe in their own teachers and their own system? And if they want to give pre-boards, shouldn’t it just be a

gauge to see how close you are to passing on your first try? How could they prevent you from taking your boards when you've met all the requirements? How could they steal your joy from graduation and pinning, and make you still work over the summer – for a company (ATI) whose passing score was 65% (or was it 60%?) and you did MUCH better than that – how could PPU ruin all this for you because their standard was so much higher than the rest of the country's? (personal communication, January 10, 2016)

The questions ascribed to her friends and boyfriend are very similar to Bridget's own questioning of the process during the initial interview:

I feel like I shouldn't have the GPA I do at the school I do, with the standards we have and be here. At an Ivy League school down the street. I've been fine on the first go. Like I missed it by a few questions, I could see if somebody was like in the 500's or even the low 700's, I could see if somebody scored at 60 to 65 on the ATI. Which would just be a few points when everyone knows it's just a few questions that you must have guessed right or wrong, and the person that got a 74, 75, 76 just guessed a few right or wrong. It's just arbitrary. (personal communication, June 30, 2015)

Through the questioning of the process, Bridget redirected the focus of RAW from her own actions toward the institutional processes. In questioning the institutional processes, she moved further outward, away from self and this institution, toward other educational environments. Questioning the giving of “pre-boards”, the term Bridget used in this instance for the comprehensive exams is quite interesting. Many nursing programs, as well as other educational endeavors which require a licensure exam for practice,

incorporate comprehensive exams at or near the end of the students' educational journeys.

Bridget offered two other questions, attributed to her friends and boyfriend, which question her abilities and self-efficacy. "... Or is it just that you're not as smart as you think you are? Maybe PPU kept you from all this because you're just not good enough?" (personal communication, January 10, 2016). These questions are mirrored in the original transcript as well when Bridget discussed how her professional relationships had been affected. "My boss just said-- I mean, you know, he was looking at me in a whole new light." The relationship with a professional contact who offered to help Bridget find a nursing position was described:

And this person who said to me, 'I will give your resume to everyone I know, because I think you're great,' is now going, 'Oh, you can't even take your boards yet? You can't even get a code? Because you failed it three times?' (personal communication, June 30, 2015)

In both of these examples, Bridget provided information concerning how she felt she was being perceived by others during RAW. It is interesting to note that in the initial interview, Bridget discussed both personal and professional implications of RAW, whereas during member checking, she chose not to explicate the impact on her professional relationships.

Her last statement in this section, "...it was extremely difficult", described her engagement within her personal relationships. This statement was offset from the other text in the email. Although Bridget did not address her professional relationships during member checking, during the initial interview she described the difficulty she was having

in her professional relationships, including being seen differently by her boss and other professional contacts.

During the initial interview, Bridget had shared that her boyfriend had been less than supportive. “Like he, we're talking like once a week and he's not-- when I'm like tell me something positive. He's like, "I don't know Bridget, book hasn't been written yet. I can't-- I don't have a crystal ball" (personal communication, June 30, 2015). Bridget confirmed the difficulties she described during the initial interview with her boyfriend during member checking. She noted the experience “was very hard on him to be constantly supportive and there for each major fall. He felt a lot of pressure and eventually gave up trying to make me feel like ‘everything is gonna be ok’.” She gave no other information concerning how this pressure and her boyfriend’s distancing of himself affected the relationship nor did she share how the pressure and distance made her feel. In the interview, Bridget shared “on my-- my boyfriend and I, like we broke up twice and got back together. We're like hardly together right now”, information she did not discuss further during member checking. The current status of this relationship is unknown.

***Fidelma.*** During member checking, Fidelma shared that she found her relationships held a sense of support and strength. “In regards to my relationships, my family and my boyfriend are my support system through everything I go through and they are always there for me whether I'm happy, sad, stressed, etc.” (personal communication, September 29, 2015). This description of feelings of support from her family and boyfriend seemed to contrast her feelings during the initial interview process where she expressed that her level of happiness was directly linked to the level of support she felt she received from her personal relationships, that her lack of happiness caused the



individuals in her support system to distance themselves from her. Fidelma had previously stated during the initial interview that she was having difficulty with personal relationships as a result of the academic wrongness and the changes that the RAW had elicited in her.

It's definitely taken a toll on myself, my family relationships, but even my boyfriend because apparently I'm not as happy (pause) I was (pause and looks down) as I used to be. . I'm just so like bummed and (pause) like I see like all my friends taking NCLEX and stuff, and it's like (pause and looks away)it kind of sucks.(personal communication, July 2, 2015)

When specifically discussing her relationship with her boyfriend during the interview, Fidelma expressed frustration. She rolled her eyes and stated, “Apparently I’m not as happy as I used to be and it’s taken a toll on me.” Although the relationship had no significant interruptions, Fidelma did not feel the closeness with her boyfriend that she did prior to the time of RAW.

Fidelma also noted during member checking that RAW had increased her level of isolation when it came to social interactions with her family, friends, peers and boyfriend. She expressed that her time was limited and identified that she spent most of her time studying for the next attempt at the comprehensive exam. She described her isolation as both physical and emotional states.

I found myself to be extremely stressed out trying to meet all the benchmarks and standards. As for the relationship with my peers, boyfriend, and family, (the) nursing program takes dedication and self-organization as well as discipline, I found myself in my room on most days studying my life away that I would go

weeks, not seeing my close peers. The studying took up all my time so I wasn't spending as much time as I would have liked with them. I have also missed some family functions because I would be studying for an exam that was coming up. (personal communication, September 29,2015)

***Mackenzie.*** Mackenzie had expressed very little about her personal relationships during the initial interview, however she did discuss relationships within the academic environment. She mentioned friends giving her exam advice, “Like some of my friends are just like ‘Don’t take the exam until you’re like 100% like more prepared’” (personal communication, July 4, 2015). Mackenzie also described her relationship with certain faculty members and her current peer group although she did not mention her family connections during her initial interview. I asked Mackenzie during the member checking process to describe the people in her life and how this experience affected her relationships with these people.

Mackenzie continued to be extremely guarded about any connection between her personal relationships and her academic career. Even when asked during the member checking process to discuss the affects the experience had on the relationships in her life, Makenzie’s responses remained restrained and cautious. Mackenzie described an increased vigilance that she is applying to all her relationships since her experience with RAW stating, “I guess this experience had made me more cautious in my actions with all my relationships.” (personal communication, September 28, 2015). She was a bit more explicit in her reason for being guarded toward her family during RAW when she shared, “With my family, I try to be very cautious with my actions because I don't want to disappoint them.” (personal communication, September 28, 2015).

**Bettina.** While discussing the memory of the first significant wrongness experience in the nursing program in the initial interview, Bettina shared she had *lost* her mother during the nursing program. The loss of a significant personal relationship was noteworthy not solely because she had *lost* her mother, but the loss of her mother was connected to her first significant academic wrongness in the nursing program. Bettina failed pharmacology immediately following the loss of her mother. Bettina sees these two events as interconnected and conveyed her displeasure with the response she received from the faculty member by comparing other faculty members' responses to the response from this one faculty member during this difficult time.

The rest of my professors, you know, they let me, like some of them let me opt out of the final or others pushed it back. There was just this one teacher and she was like, 'No, like you have to take it' and I'm like okay, *fine* (emphasis noted).

Bettina did not return to her thoughts and feelings surrounding RAW and the loss of her mother during the member checking process. Even when asked to expand on relationships and people who supported or extended the experiences of RAW during the nursing program, Bettina chose not to share her thoughts and feelings surrounding RAW and the loss of her mother. Both the current and historic RAWs Bettina had experienced were included in the query during member checking. Without further description from Bettina, the reason or reasons for her lack of explication remain hidden.

Bettina did include descriptions of her relationships with her boyfriend and grandmother during member checking connected to the current RAW. She described her relationship with her boyfriend as supportive however without practical application to the current situation. Bettina did not provide explicit actions that her boyfriend displayed that

assisted her in processing the anger and insecurity during RAW. “He was always there for me” but “he didn't know how to react because he couldn't really relate.” She did say that she saw her boyfriend daily and she “cried a lot of those days from this frustration”, but made no mention of her boyfriend trying to comfort her during these times.

Bettina described her relationship with her grandmother in quite a more explicit manner. She describes her grandmother as playing “a big role in this process”, helping her to regroup and remain calm.

I would call her whenever the frustration and doubt would begin to overload me during studying to pray with me and refocus my mind. I called her at least twice a day from the time that I failed the first HESI attempt up until I passed the ATI. Before I took the ATI that I passed on I called her and she was driving. I asked her to pull over on the side of the road and to pray with me and she did. (personal communication, October 11, 2015)

Bettina’s relationship with her grandmother helped support her through the frustration and doubt of RAW. By praying with Bettina, her grandmother provided a concrete action which served to center Bettina and allowed her to return to her studying.

Bettina also responded to questions concerning relationships and RAW with an example of a betrayal of trust during the period immediately following RAW. Bettina described how a close friend betrayed her trust after Bettina shared her RAW experience and asked that the information be kept confidential.

One of my closest friends, she had told her family about my experience and her mom and sister would ask me about it. At graduation they both brought it up and wanted to know, and when I went to her graduation party, again they both

mentioned it to me and it was very awkward because inside I was fuming, but I wouldn't dare disrespect them, especially for something that they didn't know they weren't supposed to know about. So that was the only negative experience and it wasn't that they treated me any differently, they were actually very supportive, it was just that this was more of a private matter that I was dealing with and that I had asked my friends not to share but this particular friend did. (personal communication, October 11, 2015)

Given the significant betrayal by the faculty member earlier in the academic program and the implications this historic event continue to have for Bettina, it is interesting that a different betrayal during the experience of RAW was described by Bettina in response to query about relationships and RAW.

In each case, exposure to RAW had challenged the co-participant researchers to consider their relationships in a more explicit way. Although most co-participant researchers did not explicitly link changes and challenges to relationships during the initial interview, comments made during all four interviews mentioned relationships in the context of RAW. Those relationships included self, family, peers, and supervisors as well as casual acquaintances. The perceptions of others seemed to be extremely important to all of the co-participant researchers and there was a common deep concern about the way that these individuals viewed the co-participant researchers after RAW in both the historic and present academic environments.

## **Data Analysis**

Data from the semi structured interviews were extracted, analyzed, and conceptualized using the seven step data analysis process described by Moustakas (1994). This process, modified from Van Kaam (1966), required listing each relevant expression of wrongness, reduction and elimination of expressions, clustering and thematizing, validation, construction of individual textural descriptions, construction of individual structural descriptions, and finally creation of individual textural-structural descriptions. After all of the individual textural-structural descriptions were constructed, the descriptions were merged to create a rich thick description of the essence of the realization of academic wrongness based on the descriptions shared by these co-participant researchers.

Step 1, listing and preliminary grouping, required each interview transcript to be deconstructed into individual statements or phrases, numbering of each statement or phrase, and identification of potential invariant constituents or thematic groupings. No expression was discounted as irrelevant at this step in the process. Step 2, reduction and elimination, required the interrogation of each datum, initially equal to all other units of data in step 1, to determine any and all connections to the central theme of the realization of academic wrongness. Each expression was interrogated using the two questions suggested by Moustakas, crafted to specifically address this inquiry. In step 3, clustering and thematizing, core themes of the experience of the realization of academic wrongness were constructed using the previously identified invariant constituents. In step 4, the invariant constituents were validated by comparing each constituent with both the data base and the central question. Moustakas' three questions were used to determine the

validity of each constituent and theme with respect to either explicit expression or compatible representation found in the manuscript or during the member checking process of each co-participant researcher. During step 5, individual textural descriptions of the clustered data were constructed using quotes of each individual co-participant researcher. Individual structural descriptions in step 6 were crafted using imaginative variation and from each corresponding individual textural description. Using imaginative variation required me to consider all possible ways the consciousness of RAW, the noema, could be accessed, the noesis. I accomplished imaginative variation through thoughtful reflection and return to both the manuscripts and recordings of each interview. In step 7, the construction of textural-structural descriptions required the integration of all of each individual co-participant researcher's textural and structural descriptions into a synthesized description which then informed the creation of the final composite textural-structural description from all co-participant researchers' shared data. The final composite description of the phenomenon is not numbered by Moustakas, but is the final step in the process of data analysis using the modified van Kaam method.

No interview transcripts were analyzed on the same day as another transcript in an attempt to limit the blending of perspectives during the early stages of data analysis. I deliberately focused on one complete interview at a time. Without the deliberate separation of each co-participant researcher's perspective, the horizons found in each individual lived experience become muddied and muddled, potentially losing meaning and essence as experienced by the co-participant researcher. Individual lived experience can provide clarity and meaning of the essence. The essence as perceived by the individual cannot be extracted when the specter of other perspectives looms during

analysis of the statements made by the co-participant researcher. Each interview transcript was analyzed individually to extract the unique perspective of the individual co-participant researcher. Once validated individually during step 4, the themes and invariant constituents were then interrogated as a whole to determine consistency or inconsistency between and among the data.

**Step 1: Listing and preliminary grouping.** After obtaining a complete transcript from the transcription service, checking for errors and omissions against the recorded interview tape, and employing the first round of member checking with the co-participant researchers, I began the analysis process. I processed one interview transcript at a time to ensure that each co-participant researcher's perspective was considered without undue influence of another's. I identified each statement made by the individual co-participant researcher independent of the transcribed statements made by the other members of the inquiry team giving each statement all due credence. Each statement was placed into a table consisting of three columns. The first column contained a number for tracking purposes. The second column contained the verbatim sentence or statement made by the co-participant researcher. The third column was a space I later used for coding of each datum.

Moustakas (1994) terms the outcome of this blanket identification process as horizontalization of the data, a way to keep the focus and perspective of the inquiry clear but as unbiased as possible. By considering each statement and assigning equal value to the data points, I was able to remain reflective and nonjudgmental, considering each statement with equal merit. In this way, descriptions I had not considered as part of RAW were included for consideration such as Bridget's description of RAW as "I think I just



read this exam in Korean.” Each statement was numbered during the first listing session with the transcript. During the second session, each statement was coded to identify descriptions relevant to the phenomenon. Codes were considered during a third session, where I looked for codes within each transcript that were similar and could be combined later to better identify the grouping such as considering placing statements labeled “anger”, “frustrating” and “mad” into one grouping.

**Step 2: Reduction and elimination.** During reduction and elimination, I analyzed each statement based on two criteria suggested by Moustakas (1994). First, did the co-participant researcher share information in this statement that was both necessary and fundamental to the understanding of the essence of RAW? If I found that the statement was integral to the essence, I then attempted to place the statement in a theoretical and conceptual frame and label the abstracted construct. If these two details could not be successfully operationalized, the statement was eliminated from the process. Any potentially interrelated statements were reexamined to identify overarching constructs between statements and to further reduce the essence of RAW into key components as expressed by the co-participant researchers. What remained after these processes were the invariant constituents of RAW. The invariant constituents needed to be collected into the thematic units that would later be used to inform my central research inquiry, the lived experiences of nursing students at and after the realization of academic wrongness.

**Step 3: Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents.** The collection of the invariant constituents into thematic units was completed in step three. The thematic units would later provide insight into the essence of RAW in steps five, six, and

seven of the analysis process. Identifying a total of fourteen invariant constituents led to the development of three thematic units through clustering the elements described by the co-participant researchers. As these themes emerged from the clustering of the invariant constituents, the themes were organized as they pertained to the five research questions. These questions evolved slightly from the proposal questions as the questions informed the themes and in turn the themes informed the questions, reflecting the descriptions provided by the co-participant researchers. The resultant central themes addressed the questions of the lived experiences and behaviors of the co-participant researchers at and after the realization of academic wrongness as well as the behaviors and feelings of the co-participant researchers during the review and remediation period. The review and remediation period was included in the timeframe for consideration of the present RAW which spanned from the revealing of the exam scores on June 12, 2015 through the initial review of the comprehensive exam, June 15, 2015 until 0859 on July 6, 2015.

***Theme 1: A story to tell.*** The first theme, a story to tell, came from five invariant constituents and is linked to behaviors as well as lived experiences at and after RAW. These include descriptions, justifications, and rationalizations of various forms provided by each co-participant researcher. Not only did the co-participant researchers describe their own justification and rationalization during RAW, they also described their observations of peers attempting to explain the realization of academic wrongness. Peers giving vivid accounts of their versions of rightness verses wrongness in class were significant as these accounts were noted by three of the co-participant researchers. Bridget's description of her peers' responses to RAW during the review class was most telling and was used for the name of this theme, "If they got it wrong, they've got a story

to tell.” The five invariant constituents described by the co-participant researchers in presenting their stories were *so close*, *explain it away*, *deceived*, *being wronged*, and *merely a misunderstanding*.

*So close*. An invariant constituent employed by all co-participant researchers was the descriptions of being *so close*. I define *so close* as being on the verge of rightness, being *so close* to being right that RAW is at odds with the beliefs of the individual. The individual holds on to the beliefs that she is close enough to the desired outcome and therefore is not truly wrong. From the descriptions of being down to two answers, being nearly correct but not completely correct, to being only points away from passing the exam, all co-participant researchers attempted to explain why they were not really wrong simply because they were *so close*. They were just close enough to being right that they should be seen as right, that they are literally on the verge of rightness. Exemplars of this invariant constituent were provided by Fidelma “I’m like, ‘Really?’, like I was like right there.” and Bridget “like I missed it by a few questions”. The co-participant researchers all expressed their *so close* status should be considered right, even though the results of the exam did not meet the predetermined criteria.

*Explain it away*. The second invariant constituent that led to the theme of a story to tell was *explain it away*. *Explain it away* is defined as a vivid often emotional display in which the co-participant researcher attempts to rationalize or excuse the wrongness using contextual details to support the explanation. The co-participant researchers often describe this in a tacit manner, not clearly being able to explicate why RAW should simply not be while explaining circumstances they see as contributing to the wrongness. The individual just knows the cause of the academic wrongness had little to do with

ability and much to do with factors beyond the control of the individual. All co-participant researchers provided examples of their prior work within the academic environment as proof of their knowledge and understanding. All claimed their prior achievements should be considered in the process of determining rightness. Exemplars of *explain it away* include these descriptions from Bridget and Fidelma. Bridget generalizes issues with standardized testing, “I mean, everyone knows tests are bull and they don't really reflect whatever, but we all still use them as a standard of-of-of-of-of a standard.” Fidelma describes how the use of computerized exams in the program led her to become unconcerned about computerized exams and less sensitized to the importance of the exams. She also provides an example of her historic success to augment the explanation:

I mean I have done well in the first HESI and you never do good on your first HESI usually, but I wasn't concerned about like all the HESIs I got. And then I worked out it was like five percent of your grade. (personal communication, July 2, 2015)

Using explanations such as the examples presented above, co-participant researchers seemed to be normalizing their RAW, comparing their current situations to others. This yard-sticking behavior, where they are measuring the current RAW against the behaviors of others, was seen in all of the manuscripts.

*Deceived.* The third invariant constituent is directly tied to the current educational environment and is labeled *deceived*, borrowing from Fidelma's description of her experience. *Deceived* is defined as being duped, betrayed, tricked, or misled by the messages and communications within the educational environment. Fidelma conceded, “I get really annoyed I guess, with the whole process. I hate them. It's very frustrating. I

guess I could say a little bit lied to and like *deceived*.” Bridget also clearly addressed this belief. “I feel cheated. I feel like I shouldn't have the GPA I do at the school I do, with the standards we have and be here.” All of the co-participant researchers described being *deceived* within the current educational environment and having the deception be a factor in the current processing of RAW and how they felt about the academic wrongness. Because they felt *deceived*, part of the impact of RAW was shared with those who *deceived* the co-participant researchers.

*Being wronged.* Closely related to the invariant constituent of *deceived* is the forth invariant constituent, *being wronged*. Co-participant researchers described environmental factors that led to being wrong or increased the potential to be wrong. Inconsistencies in the current environment were noted such as the lowering of the comprehensive exam score from 950 to 900, although the lowering of the score did not impact the co-participant researchers in a negative way. All co-participant researchers described connections to perceived inconsistencies in the educational environments they described and RAW. Blame was assigned to extrinsic sources such as timing of the exams and away from intrinsic sources such as individual knowledge base, understanding of content and concepts, and test taking strategies. Fidelma described the timing of the course she failed when discussing the first RAW she recalled. Discussing a RAW during the summer term, she described the RAW as being expected due to the timing of the course. “And I was just like, "Oh it's summertime. Like everyone's usually lazy during the summertime.” However, she then went on to describe her processing of RAW in a historic context by saying:

But I think it had a lot to do with like, how the program was set up. And there was really honestly like no breaks and it kinda was just like bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, and after a year of that, and like not being used to it, I think it took a little bit of a toll on me. (personal communication, July 2, 2015)

The follow up statement makes this description part of the *being wronged* invariant constituents verses being part of the *explain it away* invariant constituent. Fidelma clearly links the inconsistency in summer academic work and the expected effort in the summer with the academic expectations of the program. She is not merely saying summer is a time for fun and rest; she is making the claim that the academic expectations are not aligned with a known decrease in student effort during the summer months. Whether the decrease in effort is a valid claim is not the issue. Fidelma believes this to be true and bases her perception of this realization of academic wrongness on this belief. Her RAW in this case was not due to her lack of effort but to the timing of the course in the summer when “everyone's usually lazy.”

In contrast, Mackenzie had not processed past a historic RAW and still focused on *being wronged* by extrinsic factors, blaming the institution and faculty member for an act of plagiarism she committed:

I felt I should have defended myself a little bit more, because I felt like, she just like accused me of it, and I just started apologizing right away. But I really I guess, I don't know, I just felt like she just found me as guilty and she made me fill out this form. I think like some kind of training or something, so that I'll-- It was like an hour or online, so that I would never do it again. (personal communication, July 4, 2015)

Mackenzie's description of *being wronged* by this faculty member centers on the faculty member's accusation and finding Mackenzie guilty when Mackenzie does not perceive herself as being guilty of plagiarism. Because Mackenzie feels wronged, her description of the event has more to do with how the faculty member treated her versus the academic wrongness Mackenzie committed. She does contend this incident "was my fault for not reading the instructions, and not paying attention to what I was doing." The academic wrongness described, plagiarism, was not the academic wrongness Mackenzie realized, inattention to detail. Her realization of academic wrongness was based in the processing of the assignment, not her act of plagiarism, therefore her experience of RAW was focused on the processing, not the plagiarism. Mackenzie felt wronged by this faculty member because the faculty member's response was to the act of plagiarism, not to an error based on misunderstanding the instructions.

*Being wronged* due to an ineffective exam preparation course was consistent throughout all of the interviews. The co-participant researchers described lacks in the course work they felt contributed to an overall lack of information and preparation for the comprehensive exam. Bridget described the senior comprehensive course where all prior nursing course content was reviewed in a seminar fashion. "I mean, I think I've told you this before, but I'll say it again for the sake of this, that, like, (the senior seminar course) was the biggest joke, biggest waste of time" (personal communication, June 30, 2015). All co-participant researchers described negative experiences with the senior seminar course and felt over all the course was a waste of time and effort and did not meet the needs of any of the students. "I didn't feel like it was very helpful, when I took it" (Mackenzie, personal communication, July 4, 2010). The co-participant researchers felt

wronged by the process, having to take a course they perceived as “completely useless.” During the timeframe after the review of the exam but prior to the next attempt, co-participant researchers demonstrated and discussed concerns surrounding the remediation process. Stating the process “has not been helpful or onboard with giving me comprehensive exams to practice” (Bridget, personal communication, July 3, 2015), Bridget did not complete assigned remediation as directed and instead continued to practice questions in a simulated exam format. Her behavior was similar to the other three co-participant researchers, although the other co-participants did not communicate their thoughts and feelings as frequently via email during the timeframe between the exam review and the next exam date.

*Merely a misunderstanding.* The fifth invariant constituent is also directly tied to the contextual environment. *Merely a misunderstanding* is defined as incorrectly interpreting the contextual element and as a result responding inappropriately to that element or as Nietzsche described “The text has disappeared under the interpretation” (Nietzsche, 2013). The individual responds not to the written or expressed element but to the perception of the element. Misunderstanding what the question is asking or what is expected when presented with a situation increases the potential for responding incorrectly. Mackenzie gave an example from clinical:

I guess like not only me, like I know a lot of people who are very timid to wake up their patients, especially if it's their first day, so I don't know, she kind of like reprimanded me for not doing what I was supposed to do, but at the same time, I wasn't sure what to do, because she didn't really tell us what to do, she just kind of said, "Okay, go." like the first day.



*Merely a misunderstanding* does not mean the co-participant researcher perceived she lacked the knowledge to respond correctly. Most times, the co-participant researcher went on to describe how she knew the correct action once the misunderstanding was explained. Just one example of this is provided by Bettina, “And if I'd known what the question was asking, I could have gotten it right” (personal communication, July 3, 2010). The perceived lack is not described by the individual as found in the individual herself, but in the information provided to the individual. The individual perceives the confusion stems not from a lack of knowing, but from misdirection by something or someone in the academic environment, for example a faulty member or exam question. By minimizing the lack of understanding by the individual, the realization of academic wrongness is also minimized. The academic wrongness is indeed present and the individual acknowledges the wrongness, however due to the misunderstood information, the individual perceives she was not wrong as she could have been. If she had been given better information, she would have been right because she would have understood the information.

The theme of a story to tell takes many forms. Mostly, the invariant constituents in a story to tell allowed the co-participant researchers the space to try to make sense of the wrongness, to begin to process RAW in an attempt to understand what had happened, why, and how not to have the wrongness occur another time. With the next attempt at the comprehensive exam approaching quickly, the co-participant researchers had little time to fully process RAW and move forward with meaningful remediation activities. The descriptions, explanations, and rationalizations provided by the co-participant researchers provided data that began to provide insight into the thoughts and feelings of the co-

participant researchers as well as the implications of the contextual elements of the academic environment during RAW for these individuals.

**Theme 2: Powerlessness.** The second theme, powerlessness, came from seven invariant constituents and is linked to behaviors as well as lived experiences at and after RAW. I define powerlessness as the perceived lack of ability to act within the context. From perceiving situations from a dichotomous perspective to constructing narratives based in non-caring responses, each co-participant researcher expressed varying degrees of powerlessness within the academic environment both at and after RAW. The seven invariant constituents described by the co-participant researchers which led to the theme of powerlessness are *black and white, not really me, lost, Guinea pigs and pawns, targeted, no voice, and broken.*

*Black and white.* The first invariant constituent that sets the foundation for theme two is *black and white*. *Black and white* is defined as feeling the situation is dichotomous and uncompromising. This experience was described by all co-participant researchers. *Black and white* was used as a key descriptor by two co-participant researchers multiple times in the differentiation between the experience of wrongness in everyday life and in an academic environment. In everyday life, the realization of wrongness provided a means to grow and change as when Bettina stated “In life if you mess up, you have the opportunity to fix it or learn from it and get better” (personal communication, July 3, 2015). In contrast, co-participant researchers used *black and white* to describe the dichotomous nature of the academic environment, “in school it tends to be *black and white*” (Bridget, personal communication, June 30, 2015). Statements with similar meaning are also considered under this constituent such as Bettina’s “when you're wrong

in school, you don't really have much of an opportunity to fix it. It is what it is" (personal communication, July 3, 2015). The co-participant researchers expressed in an academic environment there are only two options, the correct one and the wrong one. If you select the wrong option, you have no recourse. You have no power.

*Not really me.* The second invariant constituent is *not really me*. *Not really me* is defined as not being perceived as the true and unique individual each co-participant researcher believes they are. Not having the academic wrongness reconsidered as a deviation from the "real me" by others within and outside of the academic environment, the co-participant researchers expressed they were powerless to be seen as they truly are. The co-participant researchers felt the situations created by their unseen uniqueness should be considered in the light of the academic wrongness which each co-participant saw as a deviation from their actual abilities and knowledge, "This is not reflective of what I know" (Bridget, personal communication, June 30, 2015). An example from Fidelma ties both of these constructs together, acknowledgment of her unique self and consideration of her unique situation. Fidelma shared in detail several computer issues she had during the exam finally expressing, "and then I wasn't really allowed to do anything about it, and (they) didn't really care." According to Fidelma, the issues she had with the computer removing her from the test and breaking her concentration were not taken into account with respect to her academic wrongness. She connected her current experience with RAW more with her difficulties as an individual with the computer and not with a lack of knowledge and abilities within herself.

*Lost.* The third invariant constituent is *lost*. *Lost* is defined as feeling unable or incapable of navigating or functioning in the environment. *Lost* is also connected with

the feeling the co-participant researcher was in an unfamiliar situation and no direction or plan was given. This does not mean that the co-participant researchers were not given direction or a plan, but rather the co-participant researchers described being unable to be completely involved with or absorb prior information with regard to the next step in the process, often using directional terms to describe the experience. For example, Bridget shared, "What makes you think I see two roads?" Each described this constituent as an inability to operationalize the plan or process, even when a plan or process was provided. Mackenzie provided an example of the inability to operationalize prior information or plans in the clinical environment stating, "I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do", even though she had been in the clinical setting prior to this incident and had successfully accomplished care tasks for assigned patients. Feeling *lost* during RAW was common to all four of the co-participant researchers.

*Guinea pigs and pawns.* The forth invariant constituent is *Guinea Pigs* and *pawns*. Co-participant researchers as part of anger and frustration found in RAW expressed the perspective that they were being used as "*guinea pigs*" and "*pawns* in the game" for the process. *Pawns* are defined as insignificant and manipulated whereas *Guinea pigs* are defined as subject to experimentation and objects of investigation. The meaning of being a *Guinea Pig* or *pawn* was expressed by the co-participant researchers as being used as a means to an end for the needs of the academic institution. Each expressed feeling they were being used and manipulated to achieve program outcomes and increased NCLEX results, not because each had been unsuccessful and could benefit from remediation due to lack of understanding of content, concepts, or test taking skills. Two co-participant researchers who felt more positive about the remediation process still expressed feeling

used by the academic institution which created frustration and resentment toward the program, the administration, and the faculty. Bettina shared “Whereas in this situation you, you know, you're just a *pawn* in the game, like they decide it and you do it” (personal communication, July 3, 2015).

It is interesting to note this invariant constituent was described by the two students who elected not to participate in the inquiry. During the recruitment process, the terms “*Guinea pig*” and “*pawn*” were expressed by the two students who elected not to participate in the inquiry process. In the cases of these two students, this feeling was pivotal in the decision making process to not participate in the inquiry. Both made strong statements against participation, noting that given the choice they chose “not to be a *Guinea pig* anymore.”

*Targeted.* The fifth invariant constitute is *targeted*. I define *targeted* as the feeling that those holding power, perceived and actual, in the environment single out those perceived as lacking in educational preparation and seek to remove or eliminate these individuals. Co-participant researchers expressed that this focused energy was evident to them during various interactions with administrators, peers, and faculty members in the program. Fidelma shared:

And that's great they want us to be prepared and everything, but to keep putting us through this, I think is only making it worse. I think they are like-- it feels like they're trying to like wean me out and wear me down. That's how I felt through the whole program, honestly.

Feeling *targeted* by faculty members, administration, and other students increased during this particular RAW as co-participant researchers described feeling *targeted* even during

the graduation ceremonies which were held in the time-frame between the unsuccessful comprehensive exam attempt and the next attempt.

*No voice.* The sixth invariant constituent under powerlessness is *no voice*. *No voice* is defined as feeling as if the co-participant researchers were not heard or denied the right to be heard at all. Co-participant researchers expressed attempting to speak out would be met with resistance or outright lies from those in the academic environment and therefore attempts at communication with several stakeholders were kept at a minimum or completely avoided. The co-participant researchers' expressed when attempting to communicate, their opinions did not matter. The co-participant researchers felt they were perceived as unsuccessful and therefore lacked any useful knowledge and insight with regard to the current situation. Each felt since they were the only ones with knowledge concerning how the program affects unsuccessful students, the administration should do more than simply move ahead with changes without consulting them. Each expressed attempts at communication with stakeholders were not met with support or acceptance. Co-participant researchers felt as though decisions had already been made, that their perspective did not matter and that to speak out did no good at all, leaving the co-participant researchers frustrated and anxious. "Why would you tell me that if you're not gonna do it?" (Fidelma, personal communication, July 2, 2015)

*Broken.* The final invariant constituent found in powerlessness is *broken*. *Broken* is defined as not able to function normally, fragmented versions of a prior self. Co-participant researchers described being "crushed" and "devastated" by RAW. Bridget described in graphic detail her actions following RAW that strongly suggest *brokenness*, "I was like under the covers and like I didn't want to face the world" (personal

communication, June 30, 2010). Bridget could not function normally immediately after RAW and retreated. Although she eventually did come out from under the covers, even temporarily her retreat was significant for Bridget, “This is not supposed to happen. It stole every positive thing I had to say about myself or this program.” The missing pieces, the parts that were stolen from Bridget, have not returned. “The exit exam process I went through still haunts me. I have PTSD like symptoms when I think or talk about it” (personal communication, January 11, 2016). Even months later, Bridget still cannot reframe RAW. She was successful on the comprehensive exam, passed her nursing boards, and is employed as a nurse in an acute care setting however continued to express *brokenness* as a result of RAW months after the catalyst event.

***Theme 3: Anger.*** The third theme was anger. Each co-participant researcher expressed anger in various forms and of varying degrees. Situated firmly in anger was frustration and irritation both self-directed as well as program directed. Anger responses to RAW ranged from mild anger, such as annoyance and irritation, to rage. The theme of anger developed from two invariant constituents, intrinsic anger and extrinsic anger. The descriptions of these invariant constituents held a distinct directional component, either anger toward the co-participant researcher herself or toward a source outside of herself. The level of anger within the invariant constituent was not used to categorize the descriptions; however each invariant constituent included a wide spectrum of anger. The variations within the spectrum of anger were not expressly defined by the co-participant researchers. They did not state intensity with each description of anger, but rather the spectrum was created from all of the data connected which aligned with the emotion of anger. I used more than just the manuscripts to construct these descriptions. I considered

the behaviors, the voice inflections, and body language during interviews and interactions. As one example, in unsolicited email communication, I was mindful of the use of all capital letters to denote anger as the time frame to testing approached.

*Intrinsic anger.* Intrinsic anger is described as an emotional response to the unexpected and uncontrollable experience of RAW perceived as coming from the co-participant researcher's own actions. Internally focused, the "blame" is placed on the individual due to the individual's actions or inactions. These actions or inactions stem from the very nature of the individual, the product of how each co-participant researcher fundamentally responded to the academic challenge placed before her. The term frustration was most often used by the co-participant researchers to describe anger coming from intrinsically constructed elements although other terms were used to describe intrinsic anger. One example of internally focused intrinsic anger was from Bettina:

Um, I was just annoyed with myself, because some of-- well not some, a great deal of the questions that I had gotten wrong were, like, ones where I pretty much talked myself out of the right answer, and my rationale for not choosing the right answer was the rationale for why I was right. (personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Bettina was annoyed by her own actions and inactions and not at the actions or inactions of someone else or something else that she perceived had caused her to be wrong.

Annoyance is considered as part of the anger spectrum, although with a less intense connotation than a description such as rage or hate.



*Extrinsic anger.* The second invariant constituent found within the theme of anger is extrinsic anger. Extrinsic anger is described as an emotional response to the unexpected and uncontrollable experience of RAW when the catalyst for the RAW is perceived as coming from an external source. The term “hate” was used by all co-participant researchers to describe feelings toward the program, the university, and the program administrators. Two participants used hate to describe their feelings toward individual faculty members the co-participant researchers saw as influencing situations in which the co-participant had experienced RAW. All co-participant researchers described extrinsically focused anger of varying degrees from Fidelma’s clear statement, “I hate them” to Makenzie’s more subtle “I just became a little bit more angry.” Both of these co-participant researchers were describing their feelings about the program administrators as a result of RAW; however the intensity of their descriptions were quite different. Another example of extrinsic anger was more driven by the process surrounding RAW. Bridget noted “It has left me bitter toward my graduation” (personal communication, January 11, 2016). The term bitter has a mid to high connotation on the anger spectrum, more intense than “a little bit more angry” but does not create the same level of meaning as “hate”, a much more intense description of anger. Although terms similar to frustration were used to describe extrinsically focused anger, these terms were not used as often as they were used to describe intrinsically focused anger. Most of the descriptions of extrinsically focused anger used words suggesting strong negative connotations such as hate and furious, suggesting a more intense feeling than simple frustration, upset, or annoyance. The spectrum of anger was much broader with regard to extrinsically focused anger.

The complexities of anger described by the co-participant researchers after the realization of academic wrongness revealed anger to be a central theme in RAW. Described using a spectrum of intensity, without clearly defined levels to constrict descriptions of emotional responses, the anger based emotions of the co-participant researchers were part of the process of RAW. In some cases, anger was described long after the academic wrongness incident had been replaced with successful completion of the academic component. Both intrinsic and extrinsic anger remained after the initial RAW and in some descriptions, anger and frustration were presented as an expected part of life, “this is the kind of shit that the universe always gives you in life” (Bridget, personal communication, June 30, 2015).

**Step 4: Validation.** Once I was satisfied that I had exhausted the reflective process of determining the invariant constituents and constructing the themes suggested by the clustering of the constituents, I validated the constituents and themes by comparing each co-participant researcher’s full record to the analyzed data. I used the three questions provided in Moustakas (1994) to ensure the compatibility of the constituents and the themes to the descriptions provided by the co-participant researcher. Again, this process of confirming consistency between the manuscript and the meaning units extracted from the analyzed data was completed for each individual transcript separately as to not have another’s perspective taint the experience described by each individual. In this instance, I bracketed each co-participant researcher’s stated perspective as well as continuing to bracket my own perspective

**Step 5: Individual textural description.** Statements from the individual

interviews were extricated, fully considered, and thematically categorized to construct an individual textural description of the lived experience of the individual. In this section, I will provide individual textual descriptions for each of the four co-participant researchers. Textual descriptions provide a clear representation of the noema, what the co-participant researcher experienced. The noema in this inquiry is the realization of academic wrongness described both in the specific context of a comprehensive senior level nursing course as well as in historic contexts of the co-participant researcher's choosing. These textual descriptions provide examples of each co-participant researcher's experiences and perceptions regarding RAW. Thematic connections are presented for each description.

In providing textural descriptions from each co-participant researcher, it is important to note the differences in the catalysts for the realizations of academic wrongness. First, all individuals experienced the same catalyst for the current realization of academic wrongness. Each co-participant researcher had unsuccessfully attempted the comprehensive exam three different times prior to the beginning of this inquiry. The timing of the exams was the same for each co-participant researcher. The commonality of the wrongness experienced and the timing of the wrongness realization helped to focus the co-participant researchers in the actual moments following the wrongness and the realization that followed the wrongness.

In contrast, the catalyst for the historic RAW described by each co-participant researcher was selected by each individual. Three of the four co-participant researchers described historic realizations of academic wrongness within the nursing program when asked about the first time they recalled being wrong in an academic environment. The

forth co-participant researcher was specifically redirected to describe her first memory of RAW in the nursing program as she chose to share a historic academic wrongness realization outside of the current educational context. The general context for the historic academic wrongness, the nursing program, was consistent; however the timing for each participant was different. The time frames from the moment of the realization of academic wrongness and discussion surrounding the experience depended on the timing of the self-selected wrongness example. The historic RAWs described by co-participant researchers were the result of several academic interactions. Two of the co-participant researchers elected to describe wrongness associated with high stakes exams, specifically a programmatic math exam linked to program progression and a final exam for a course. One co-participant researcher described a failure of an entire course. The final co-participant researcher described an academic wrongness realization in the clinical environment. Although the time frames and events differed for each co-participant researcher, the descriptions of the realizations of academic wrongness provided common experiences.

***Bridget.*** Bridget was a transfer student who had not failed any of her nursing courses while in the Baccalaureate nursing program. Bridget described an early RAW after taking the medication math exam within the nursing program, a high stakes exam directly connected to program progression. Bridget provided several rationalizations as to why she was not successful on this high stakes exam. Her description of the incident that follows encompasses all of the themes of RAW identified in this inquiry. Bridget described her story to tell, explaining away the RAW. Her experiences of powerlessness and being *lost* in this situation and her anger and frustration are clearly demonstrated in

the following passage as she describes what happened to her after she realized she was not meeting the academic standards of the program.

I remember it. What sticks out in my memory-- the first thing that came to mind is when we took our first med-surge, um, I mean I'm sorry, our first med-math test here at PPU, and I transferred in. So I didn't have the math that PPU provided. I came with an associate's in healthcare administration. So I had like calculus and trig. I hadn't seen algebra since seventh grade and I started college at 31. And I, I remember reading it. And the first one I remember Professor S. saying, "This won't count. We're just getting an idea of where" and I started to cry, literally like a lump in the throat, you know when the tears are like-- you can't blink because if you do, you'll start to cry, and long story short, I think it was like twenty questions and I think I got like sixty five and I was crushed, but I was also like I think I just read this exam in Korean, like I don't even know what this means—I didn't even know where to begin to tackle it like, and I'm a, I'm a, I'm a pretty good critical thinker and I can often figure things out especially mathematics because I'm logical, so I was crushed and I remember crying to Professor S. like I'm never going to be a nurse. This is the beginning, I'm failing. Like, am I in over my head? Did I make a huge mistake? How am I ever going to learn this? And all my peers were like, 'This was so easy.' And she was like 'First of all, they had high school yesterday. Second of all, they had this math class.' that because I didn't even know, what like, PO meant, or BID, or anything. Like, I didn't know what it meant and when I would ask the teachers I was like, What does that mean? They were like, 'We can't tell you that.' But-but I don't even

know what it stands for. Like, that's not fair. (personal communication, June 30, 2015)

When describing what she experienced during the current RAW, Bridget uses rich stories to explain away the current RAW. She provides a description of the progression of RAW, from her first experience of RAW with the comprehensive exam to the current exam attempt and her experiences ascribed to this unsuccessful attempt.

I was devastated. I was crushed. I did worse on the second one than the first one, and I didn't feel like I was doing worse, so I was shocked. After the first one, after the first one I was like, "What?" You know, but I was like, "Eff this," like, "Blah". I'd never taken a four-hour test before and—whatever it was comprehensive.

After the ATI I was-- the second attempt of the ATI I was really upset because I was also *so close* again. But I uh and then I started-- I was crying and I was like under the covers and like I didn't want to face the world, but I was like a mess.

I cried for like hours, but after the third one, after the third exit but, second HESI, but attempt three, and I did the worst yet, I was quiet. And I felt like each attempt is knocking my confidence more and I'm only going to do worse now.

She describes being *lost* and *broken* during the time frame between the latest unsuccessful attempt and the interview:

And then to have this program that we're in be completely useless and to have our, our, our rocks if you will. Like you and S, the people we've always counted on to be our answers and to be our strengths say 'Yeah we don't know either' is crushing and, and it very much feels like I was put on a raft made out of twigs held together by twine that like, you know, like on *Castaway*, and literally

pointing in this direction of the star, like ‘Go that way and good luck. Don't forget to write.’

In both instances, Bridget expressed that the realization of academic wrongness as inconsistent with her expectations, that she was misunderstood as the person she truly is. “This is not supposed to happen. This is not reflective of what I know.” She experienced others treating her differently after the academic wrongness “all they know is I’m not passing.” Bridget described the current situation by comparing her expectations versus the reality of the current situation and RAW. “I thought a month ago, I'd be sitting here talking to you about how I passed my boards already, not that I can't take them for however long yet still.” The themes of a story to tell, powerlessness, and anger were all experienced by Bridget throughout the realization of academic wrongness both at the moment of realization and after. Bridget continues to struggle with RAW:

The exit exam process I went through still haunts me. I have PTSD like symptoms when I think or talk about it. It has left me bitter toward my graduation. It's a pity. Up till the exit exam I was X's biggest fan. I wouldn't wish on an enemy what I went through. (personal communication, January 11, 2016)

***Fidelma.*** Fidelma was a college age student who described her historic realization of academic wrongness when she failed an entire course, Adult II, during her educational journey in the Baccalaureate nursing program. Fidelma focused on the theme of powerlessness, specifically *lost*, in the beginning of her description of what she experienced:

So failing at school is a little more difficult to deal with, I guess I should say. I think it's that I feel like I tried so hard in school. I didn't see the failing point and

it's like, I felt like *lost* cause, like what else can I possibly do to do better. Like I don't know which is best. Like should I study more, should I have done this.

(personal communication, July 2, 2015)

As Fidelma continued to describe her experience, however, she began to construct her story of what she had experienced during the realization of academic wrongness. In her attempt to *explain it away*, Fidelma described the external factors that wronged her during the summer term and her experience of being *so close* to passing.

But the real big disappointment was Adult II [the second medical surgical course]. Um, I didn't even think that it could happen. I think it-- it was the summertime-- it was the summer time, it was like the first summer rotation I think by that point, I was just drained and worn out I think it kind of got the best of me and I kind of got a little lazy. So I'm like-- I didn't stud...I failed by like two points. So it was like, right there. I know. So it's like a little bit more effort, I probably would've passed. But I think it had a lot to do with like, how the program was set up. And there was really honestly like no breaks and it kinda was just like bam, bam, bam, bam, and after a year of that, and like not being used to it, I think it took a little bit of a toll on me. And I was just like, Oh it's summertime. Like everyone's usually lazy during the summertime. (personal communication, July 2, 2015)

When describing her experience with RAW surrounding the most recent attempt at the comprehensive exam, Fidelma explains it away describing the computer issues she had during the attempt:



I think it was because I had my computer shut off five different times, like kicked me off the internet five different times. One of the like audio-video things wouldn't load, so I completely guessed because I didn't know what else to do, and those are the high point questions. Once they found out it wasn't working one time, so I had to switch my computer and then I had to call I think Kelly and tell her everything, the IP address and everything, and then that took like another like ten minutes. And then the next time I got the question it was 156. It was an audio, and then she had to kick me off again because she had to download like Adobe flash drive. (personal communication, July 2, 2015)

She also describes being *so close* “I got an 892 and I needed 900. So I was like, ‘Are you, excuse my language, (Mouths ‘f-ing’.) kidding me?’ I'm like, ‘Really?’ Like I was like right there” (personal communication, July 2, 2015). Fidelma also describes being *so close* during the exam review, when each question she got wrong was presented with the correct answer and rationale:

I'm always one of those people who I get down to two and I sometimes pick the wrong one. Like my gut will probably tell me to pick the other one but I go ‘oh no, just pick this one.’ So like when I got those questions I was like, Oh Christ, if you had just picked that answer like you would have got it right, or you would have passed. (personal communication, July 2, 2015)

As Fidelma read each incorrect response, she stated she was provided more information, “I like seeing what I got wrong, and why I got it wrong” (personal communication, July 2, 2015). She describes this as “a good experience” although she states RAW is “hard, and it's stressful.” Overall Fidelma is trying to “turn it into a positive” because “negative

is not a good place to be now” suggesting that Fidelma is transitioning as she moves through the realization of academic wrongness and toward the next phase in her processing of the wrongness.

**Bettina.** Bettina was a college age student who failed the Pharmacology II final exam during her educational journey in the Baccalaureate nursing program. The failure of this exam resulted in her failing the course; however she connects the realization of academic wrongness with the high stakes final exam rather than the course failure. She most strongly expressed experiencing powerlessness in her interview for both her historic and current experiences with RAW. When describing being wrong in general, Bettina stated:

Well, in school, it's like when you're wrong in school, you don't really have much of an opportunity to fix it, I guess. Like, in terms of a test, that's the grade you get. It is what it is. In life if you mess up, you have the opportunity to fix it or learn from it and get better. (personal communication, July 3, 2015)

When describing RAW with regard to failing the Pharmacology II final exam, Bettina shared the theme of powerlessness. What she experienced was the sense of *being wronged* and *lost* as a result of the realization of academic wrongness.

The first time... Um, I guess the first time I can think of that would be when I failed pharm because I had taken my final exam shortly after my mom had died. And like, I wasn't ready for it but I just wanted to be over with it and it was just a complete mess and I ended up failing the class. It was like, I understand that it was my choice to take it, but the alternative would've been, like, a fill in the blank test which would've been even worse. Which I just feel like there should be some

sense of leniency. I mean I just *lost* my mom. (personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Although not as clear as powerlessness, Bettina also described experiencing extrinsic anger. When she stated “some sense of leniency” above, she was discussing the faculty member’s response to her situation. She follows up this thought:

I mean, I just felt like it was very inconsiderate. I mean, the rest of my professors, you know, they let me, like, some of them let me opt out of the final, or others pushed it back, but didn't make me have to do an alternative format. There was just this one teacher and she was like, ‘No, like you have to take it’ and I'm like, ‘Okay, fine’, you know.

Bettina’s vocal tone changed significantly when relaying this information. She emphasized “Okay, fine” using an angry tone she had not expressed prior in this interview.

When describing RAW surrounding the most recent attempt at the comprehensive exam, Bettina explains it away. She stated she was surprised by the outcome as she thought she did worse than she actually did on the exam. She attributed her wrongness to a miscommunication of the time that led to “scrambling”. Although she stated she was resigned to her unsuccessful attempt, she described being angry at herself:

I actually was shocked that I had gotten as high as I had gotten, because I-- I was scrambling at the end. Like, I thought for certain I answered, like, the last 50 questions all wrong. I was certain that I did. So the fact that I didn't pass, it didn't really, I guess, bother me in terms of me not doing well. But more so angered me,

because I wasn't more like, more on top of the time. (personal communication, July 3, 2015)

As Bettina continues to explain this time disconnect, she provides more explanation as to what she was experiencing and why. She was late to the exam and had not brought her wrist watch to keep track of the time:

I showed up like five minutes late for the testing, so there was only like one spot that did that was open, until, like, that wasn't, like, directly next to someone, and that spot happened to be, like, in the back corner where, like, I don't even know how to, like, explain it, but, like, the clock was in front of me and, like, on the-- I was on the side wall and the clock was, like, on, like, the opposite wall where I couldn't see it unless I, like, got up and went around to go look at it, and it happened to be the one day that I didn't have my watch on and I was using the sticky note method, because we had-- I had talked with Sp. about my test-taking anxiety and we, like, were, like, that the time, like, looking at that clock counting down is what really makes me paranoid and makes me start to click away because I have a fear of not being able to finish. So we were trying the sticky note method, where I cover up the time and everything. (personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Bettina described *being wronged* by the faculty member who was proctoring the exam. “And the proctor said that she'd give time updates, but the first one she gave was when there was 30 minutes left” (personal communication, July 3, 2015). Bettina returned to the fact that she did not have her watch as a central concern “So, I mean, if I had my watch, I could have prevented this, but I didn't have my watch that day” (personal

communication, July 3, 2015) as part of the explanation for the unsuccessful attempt.

Bettina moves between experiencing intrinsic and extrinsic anger with respect to RAW.

*Mackenzie.* Mackenzie was a student who had been an accelerated degree entry student for the prior three terms in the accelerated nursing program. She had successfully earned a prior Baccalaureate degree from another institution in another field of study. Mackenzie was required to decelerate, slow down her progression, from the accelerated Baccalaureate nursing program after failing Gerontology. Although she remained in the nursing program, she was required to retake Gerontology with the traditional pre-licensure students.

Mackenzie was the only co-participant researcher who described a historic RAW that was not connected to the nursing program. The historic RAW she described occurred during her first Baccalaureate degree program. Mackenzie explained away RAW, minimizing the significance of the assignment and her actions at first:

There was this one time, um where I guess I wasn't reading the instructions very clearly, um for this little um-- it wasn't really a project, but it was something for school that we had to hand in. And um, I really wasn't paying attention to what I was doing. I was very-- doing things very quickly, so I just wanted to show the professor, just an example of what I wanted to outline my little project with.

(personal communication, July 4, 2015)

As Mackenzie continued to describe her experience, she began to explain how this RAW was significant both in the historic time-frame and how she sees herself currently:

So, I like copy pasted something, so just to show her. I didn't think it would be graded or anything like that But um, she approached me after class, and she told

me that I plagiarized. And um I-- she handed-- she explained why like, I didn't site where I got the information and stuff like that. Um, and I know like I-I I am very careful all the time not to do this type of thing. But um, I guess, maybe I wasn't thinking clearly, or like I didn't mean to plagiarize, and take credit for anything. Like, it wasn't even something that umm, like information wise, that I was taking information from. It was just like an outline of how I want to do things. And she didn't want me to-- She didn't wanna put it in her record, because she knew that I was very oblivious to what I have just done. (personal communication, July 4, 2015)

As a result of this academic wrongness, Mackenzie had to complete modules on plagiarism to educate her about this issue and to help prevent acts of plagiarism in future assignments. Due to having to complete the remediation and redirection activities surrounding plagiarism, Mackenzie experienced the faculty member treated her unfairly. Mackenzie believed she did not intentionally commit the act of plagiarism, therefore should not have had to remediate. In this case, Mackenzie describes *being wronged* by the faculty member. She experienced being powerless and having *no voice*:

I felt I should have umm defended myself a little bit more. But I really-- I guess, I don't know, I just felt like she, umm, just found me as guilty, and I didn't--I don't know, maybe if I'd just stood up for myself more, I just would've umm, wouldn't have to had signed that form. (personal communication, July 4, 2015)

When describing RAW that occurred within the nursing program, Mackenzie discussed RAW in the clinical environment. This clinical experience was not her first time in the clinical environment; however she reports not knowing what to do with her

patient who was asleep. She described *being wronged* by the clinical faculty member and *lost* stating “She didn't really give us a lot of instruction on what to do, like our first day on the floor. So, I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do, so-- and my patient was sleeping.” Makenzie shared that the faculty member chastised her, “She's like, ‘Well, wake them up. This isn't a hotel, this is a hospital, so they need wake up, they need to get dressed, they need to take a shower, eat something’” (personal communication, July 4, 2015). Makenzie went on to explain away RAW:

I guess like not only me, like I know a lot of people who are very timid to wake up their patients, especially if it's their first day, umm, so I don't know, I-- she kind of like reprimanded me for not doing what I was supposed to do, but at the same time, I wasn't sure what to do, because she didn't really tell us what to do.

(personal communication, July 4, 2015)

Makenzie generalized the behaviors of others as well as the behavior of the faculty member to explain her behavior and explain away her wrongness.

When describing RAW surrounding the most recent attempt at the comprehensive exam, Makenzie described her story to tell, powerlessness and anger. She experienced feeling *broken* and intrinsically angry and *so close* to being right.

I was a little disheartened. Umm, cause even though I did better at the second time around, you know, I was still not close to what I needed, and I thought I, you know, did a little better than what I got. And yeah, I just-- you know, I was just frustrated. (personal communication, July 4, 2015)

Immediately following this description, Makenzie began to cry, “And I'm just kind of burned out at this point. Sorry, it's getting emotional” (personal communication, July 4,

2015). The interview was halted for a few minutes to allow Mackenzie to compose herself. After Mackenzie composed herself and the interview continued, she expressed there was “no end in sight” for her in this realization. “To be honest like, I never feel completely prepared” (personal communication, July 4, 2015). Mackenzie continued to experience powerlessness as being *lost* up to the day before testing. She was unable to clearly decide whether or not to take the next exam attempt. Her email indicating her decision to take the exam, “Wanted to confirm with you that I will be taking the exam tomorrow morning” (personal communication, July 5, 2015), came after the date students were supposed to notify the university of their intentions for the exam attempt on July 6, 2015.

As each textual description developed, a clear individual representation of the noema emerged for each co-participant researcher. Connected to the invariant constituents and thematic units, the essence of the realization of academic wrongness in the context of high stakes testing begins to evolve. In step 6, I will further the explication of the essence of RAW extracted from the lived experiences of the co-participant researchers.

**Step 6: Individual structural description.** Individual structural descriptions provide graphic depictions making use of the subtleties found in the narratives provided by each co-participant researcher. Through the use of the lens of imaginative variation, textural descriptions, the “what” of the experience, transcend the limits of the textural descriptions to form an essence of how the experience came to be. Imaginative variation allows for the processing of textural descriptions to construct possible meanings from the textural descriptions shared by the co-participant researchers by considering the



descriptions from a variety of aspects, seeing the descriptions from alternative perceptions of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Different from textural descriptions, structural descriptions seek to explicate how the co-participant researchers experienced the realization of academic wrongness rather than simply what was experienced by the co-participant researcher during academic wrongness realization.

**Bridget.** Bridget described feelings of anger, powerlessness, and being *lost* as a result of the realization of academic wrongness.

Um, but, um, how did I feel? So, I felt-- I felt like—you know, your confidence is shattered. You feel like did I make a big mistake? And you feel really stupid, you know? You're like, Wow, I-- You know? Like, I don't know this at all. I can't even pretend to figure it out. Like there's-- you know? There's not even like I can fake it till you make it type of thing. (personal communication, June 30, 2015)

Bridget felt unprepared and insecure during RAW, questioning her decision to be in the program and her intentions of becoming a nurse.

**Fidelma.** Fidelma described feelings of being *lost*. She questioned her plan:

I didn't see the failing point and it's like, I felt like a *lost* cause. Like, what else can I possibly do to do better? Like I don't know which is best. Like should I study more, should I have done this? (personal communication, July 2, 2015)

Fidelma, like Bridget, felt less than able to navigate the educational challenge.

**Bettina.** Bettina described feelings of intrinsic anger and extrinsic anger and powerlessness.

I was just annoyed with myself, being annoyed at the whole process now. It's... it makes me angry because I think it's ridiculous that I'm being held back by a few percentage points. I mean, I made it through five years. I'm just like, over it.

I'm angry at myself because when I look back into the remediation, the review, and stuff, it's like, you knew this stuff. So it's not for lack of knowledge, I guess, it's for lack of test-taking skill or whatever, which it's like, that's not—then it just makes me angry because it's another skill you have to learn on top of the content, and it's just like that thing that makes me feel like I can't fit anything else in my brain, so how will I be able to get over this? It's... it makes me angry because I think it's ridiculous that I'm being held back by a few percentage points. I mean, I made it through five years. It's just a really annoying situation to be in. (personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Bettina describes feeling *lost*, not knowing exactly what she needs to do and how she will be able to “get over this”. Bettina feels like she is being used as a guinea pig. “So I just have to sit here and be the guinea pig that I've been this entire senior year. And unfortunately, after graduating, I'm still a guinea pig. In an attempt to clarify her thoughts, I stated “You don't feel like you have a voice.” to which Bettina responded “I don't” (personal communication, July 3, 2015). Her voice in the interview was monotone for the majority of the exchange, only increasing in intensity when she described having *no voice*. Bettina feeling like a guinea pig, without power or voice in this situation was also seen in her demeanor up to the time of the next exam attempt. During the

observation window just prior to the beginning of the exam attempt on July 6, 2015, she came into the exam room with her head down, and did not make eye contact with anyone.

*Mackenzie.* Mackenzie described feelings of being *lost* and finding it harder to forgive herself during RAW when compared to times she remembers being wrong in her daily life.

Umm, I guess thinking about it now, umm, like in my daily life - whenever I make mistakes and stuff like that - it's easier for me to forgive myself for things. And, a lot of the things that I do, I do for a reason. So, I don't really-- not that I'm not apologetic about the bad things that I do, but like, it's more accepting of me to just move on with things, if it's in my daily life. When it comes to school, it's a more structured thing, where I have no control of it. (personal communication, July 4, 2015)

The structure of the academic environment restricted Mackenzie's ability to make decisions as she would in her day to day life based on her reasons and not the reasons of others. The limitations of the academic environment were imposed on but not fully internalized by Mackenzie. The disconnect between her control and the control she perceived as imposed by the academic environment created feelings of frustration.

So, I guess it's just more frustrating like in that situation, when I have, you know, there's like rules and regulations then in that situation that I got myself into, it could have clearly been avoided. And, had it been on my permanent record, like that just would not have looked good at all. So, I guess it would be-- I would say it would be different. It's not at least now, you know, in my life right now, I think

that when I do wrong I don't elicit the same feelings that I have when I do something wrong with my schoolwork.

The structural descriptions of the realization of academic wrongness became amalgamated into clear depictions of how the each co-participant researcher perceived the realization of academic wrongness. In step 7, the textural and structural descriptions were merged to depictions including the thematic units and to form complex enlightened perceptions from each co-participant researcher individually.

**Step 7: Individual textural-structural descriptions.** The textual and structural descriptions of each co-participant researcher's lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness were incorporated along with the fourteen invariant constituents and three themes to create more holistic meanings and essences of the experience. The "what" and "how" of each co-participant researcher's experience combined with the invariant constituents and themes revealed during analysis provide the sources for powerful multilayered accounts of the realization of academic wrongness, full of the lived experience as well as the context and the importance of both in regard to one another for that individual. Although combined with the invariant constituents and themes developed from the analysis of all of the participants' contributions, each textural-structural description remained separate from the descriptions of the other participants in this step of the analysis.

***Bridget.*** Bridget's experience of the realization of academic wrongness included stories to tell, powerlessness, and anger. In many instances, the explanations of why she was not really wrong were infused with anger toward the program and the process. Bridget's frustration at her own limitations gave way to powerlessness in a few instances,

but ultimately Bridget continued to focus on *being wronged* rather than addressing the realization of academic wrongness and steps toward remediation.

And I felt like each attempt is knocking my confidence more and I'm only going to do worse now. This is not supposed to happen. This is not reflective of what I know. And it was also the day before pinning, and it made me feel like I don't deserve to be there. I didn't earn this. It stole every positive thing I had to say about myself or this program. (personal communication, June 30, 2015)

**Fidelma.** Fidelma's experience of the realization of academic wrongness included stories to tell, powerlessness, and anger. She had a difficult time communicating her anger at the program and process and tended to minimize her negative feelings at first. However once given permission to speak out, Fidelma clearly expressed "I hate them", them being the program administrators. She felt she was wronged, betrayed and lied to by the administrators in the program. Fidelma expressed her anger and frustration toward the program, the process, and herself however she was quick to reframe these negative feelings.

Then I, like, turn it into a positive. You know what, I'll just take this remediation, look at it as like I'm studying for NCLEX and that's just what it's gonna be. Yeah. Got to stay positive [laughter]. Can't go in the negative anymore. Negative is it's not, it's not a good place to be right now. (personal communication, July 2, 2015)

**Bettina.** Although Bettina's experience of the realization of academic wrongness included stories to tell, Bettina's descriptions were dominated by powerlessness and anger. Bettina expressed powerless and anger throughout her descriptions of RAW, having *no voice* and *being wronged* by the program and process. Her anger toward the

process and herself remained a focus of her descriptions of her experience. Although Bettina expressed she was not surprised by her unsuccessful attempts on the comprehensive exams, she did not connect the realization of academic wrongness to this understanding. She did not think she passed, however she explained away the wrongness due to the program and process, not her know actions and activities.

I'm angry at myself because when I look back into the remediation, the review, and stuff, it's like, you knew this stuff. So it's not for lack of knowledge, I guess, it's for lack of test-taking skill or whatever, which it's like, that's not—then it just makes me angry because it's another skill you have to learn on top of the content, and it's just like that thing that makes me feel like I can't fit anything else in my brain, so how will I be able to get over this? It's... it makes me angry because I think it's ridiculous that I'm being held back by a few percentage points. I mean, I made it through five years. I think I know the information and I think that if you let me take my NCLEX, it would guarantee and show that I know the information. Yet, I'm being held back by a few percentage points. (personal communication, July 3, 2015)

Even in her stories, Bettina described *being wronged* and having *no voice*, no choice and no power.

I mean, the rest of my professors, you know, they let me, like, some of them let me opt out of the final, or others pushed it back, but didn't make me have to do an alternative format. There was just this one teacher and she was like, “No, like you have to take it” and I'm like, “Okay, fine”, you know. (personal communication, July 3, 2015)

**Mackenzie.** Mackenzie's experience of the realization of academic wrongness included stories to tell, powerlessness, and anger. Her descriptions of anger were mostly self-directed. Mackenzie struggled with powerlessness, "When it comes to school, it's a more structured thing, where I have no control of it" (personal communication, July 4, 2015). She was "burned out". Although she continued to try, "Even after the first couple of attempts, it's just like, Okay I can get it the next time" with the next unsuccessful attempt, the realization of academic wrongness became clear again "But-- And then you don't. Sorry, it's getting emotional [crying]. (Me: You don't see an end point yet) Right." Mackenzie was *lost* in the realizations of academic wrongness, not seeing an end and not sure during her various RAWs "what I was supposed to do." During the review session, when the co-participant researchers first saw the questions and correct responses in class, Mackenzie shared these thoughts:

It was a little overwhelming. It's good to know, I guess, that people feel the same way that I do. But umm, I don't know, just kind of like mess with my head more, and I just became a little bit more angry. (personal communication, July 4, 2015)

For each co-participant researcher, the realizations of academic wrongness included stories to tell, anger, and powerlessness. Although each co-participant researcher experienced RAW in her own way, RAW presented challenges to ability to engage with content, others, and self. Much time was spent on telling the story of RAW, expressing anger, frustration, and powerlessness.

**Composite description.** The voices of all of the co-participant researchers can then be fused together into composite textural and structural descriptions of the shared experience that are exquisitely close to the essence of the lived experience of the

realization of academic wrongness. Moustakas (1994) does not list this stage as a separate step in the data analysis process, however composite description concludes the deconstruction and reconstruction of the descriptions of the co-participant researchers, the final step in the analysis. In an effort to stay true to the Moustakas analysis process, analysis and consideration of other data collected for this inquiry will follow the composite description.

When experiencing the essence of the realization of academic wrongness, first the individual must realize an academic wrongness has occurred; the individual's response to an academic challenge has not met with expectations of the individual and/or others in the academic context. Next, the individual begins to process the affective-cognitive disconnect between the response she believed to be acceptable and the one she gave. During this processing, she constructs a story which can engage memories of past interactions and/or current actions within and outside of the current context. Along with these memories, her current self-efficacy is considered. As well as the current state of her self-efficacy, her self-theories of intelligence provide an internalized belief concerning how this current disconnect between the affective and cognitive self can be reconciled. Although the outcome of this processing is individualized, each co-participant researcher processed through the realization of academic wrongness using these touch points. For example, Bettina presented a process wrought with powerlessness. Although angry at issues in the academic environment, her anger never fully materialized based on her tone and actions. She had difficulty embracing RAW, stating that she was surprised that she had done as well as she did on the unsuccessful attempt. Bettina minimized her RAW by saying she anticipated "doing worse" and "did better than I thought", thus decreasing



RAW. Her expectation was that she would have more incorrect responses, she was wrong about the outcome; however in this case being wrong had a positive slant.

**Analyzing other data sources.** Although Moustakas (1994) provides a clear process for the analysis of interviews in his phenomenologic method, he is silent on the exploration of other data sources. Semi-structured interviews provide a source for rich data; however interviews alone provide limited opportunity for triangulation of the data. Methods triangulation (Patton, 1999) allows for further development of the essence of the realization of academic wrongness. When added to the data from the semi-structured interviews, these data from alternative methods provided additional nuances. To achieve this, data were collected from a variety of sources including unsolicited email communications, a graphic elicitation activity using Post-It Notes, classroom observations, and course documents. These alternative data were explicated and included into the composite descriptions of the shared experience of the realization of academic wrongness.

**Unsolicited emails.** Unsolicited emails from the co-participant researchers provided a different source for data than that provided by the manuscripts from semi-structured interviews. Unsolicited emails provided text for analysis as did the semi-structured interview manuscripts, however the emails also provided behavioral information. These emails were not affected by the interview questions or driven by the inquiry. The emails were messages sent by the co-participant researchers as they thought about the current situation, the need for remediation, and the impending next exam attempt. The act of sending an email, regardless of the content of the email, was seen as an attempt at engagement and communication.

Not all unsolicited emails provided meaning units for analysis. A total of 44 separate emails were received between June 15, 2015 and July 6, 2015 of which 80% contained meaning units aligned with the inquiry. Although each co-participant researcher emailed me during this time period, Bridget and Fidelma emailed more often than Mackenzie and Bettina. As the table below indicates, the number of emails received from a co-participant researcher did not necessarily represent increased data for analysis from that individual. The number of emails received contrasted with the number of emails containing meaning units aligned with this inquiry are as follows:

Table 1

*Unsolicited Email Messages Received*

Co-Participant Researcher	Emails Sent	Contained Meaning Units
Bridget	17	16 (94%)
Fidelma	17	12 (71%)
Bettina	4	2(50%)
Mackenzie	6	5(83%)
Total	44	35(80%)

Both emails and manuscripts provided text for analysis, however simply analyzing the unsolicited emails using Moustakas' methodology would not completely address the potential of this data source. The unsolicited email communications were analyzed using a combination of a directed approach to content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and Moustakas' (1994) methodologic process. By considering both approaches to data analysis, the email messages received from the co-participant

researchers were vetted in light of the thematic units derived from Moustakas' phenomenologic method when applied to the semi-structured interview data.

Perceived anonymity in email communications can increase the participants' willingness to disclose sensitive information; however email has limitations including potential for miscommunication and misinterpretation of meaning (Meho, 2006). Considering this as well as the fact that the emails were unsolicited and therefore did not necessarily address the question of the realization of academic wrongness, I saw the unsolicited emails more as behaviors during the timeframe of the realization of academic wrongness, what the co-participant researchers were thinking and doing independent of the questions posed during the semi-structured interviews. These messages therefore were not necessarily affected by the artificial nature of interview questions (Silverman, 2011) posed by me but neither were these messages necessarily framed within the inquiry. Similar to the horizontalization employed during listing and preliminary grouping, I considered each email message as having potential meaning for the inquiry. Once individual meaning units were extracted, I considered each meaning unit using the questions from Moustakas' (1994) steps 2 and 4 to determine if the meaning unit was within the frame of inquiry.

Once I eliminated text units that were not necessary and fundamental to the understanding of the essence of the realization of academic wrongness, I placed the remaining text units into one of the fourteen predetermined invariant constituents extracted from the semi-structure interview analysis. This process is aligned with a directed approach to content analysis rather than Moustakas' process. Having identified the invariant constitutes directly from the descriptions provided by the co-participant

researchers, these invariants became the relevant research findings. These findings were used as guidance for codes and meaning units (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). At this step, I deviated from the traditional directed approach to content analysis as I did not create new codes for datum not meeting the definitions of the fourteen predetermined invariants.

***Story to tell.*** Following horizontalization, reduction, and elimination of the emails, meaning units were categorized into the invariant constituents of the theme of a story to tell. The invariant constituents of *explain it away* and *being wronged* were noted in a total of 15 meaning units. Co-participant researchers continued to explain away academic wrongness in unsolicited email communications. In an email contesting exam questions rationales, Bridget concluded “She may not need home health care. I didn’t, my aunt didn’t either, until she was very, very advanced and sick” (email communication, July 3, 2015), trying to explain away the rationale for the remediation question rather than trying to understand the construct of out of hospital patient needs.

Other emails shared descriptions of *being wronged*, feeling that the process of virtual remediation was “a big waste of time” and that “the mentor is not doing what we need.” These email comments were made by Bridget and Bettina in several emails from June 28 through June 30, 2015 during the timeframe when all co-participant researchers needed to engage with the virtual remediation course and the course appointed mentor. Co-participant researcher engagement within the virtual remediation course will be further described in the observation section.

***Powerlessness.*** A total of four meaning units were categorized under powerlessness. These were further categorized under three of the seven invariant constituents of powerlessness, *not really me*, *lost*, and *broken*. Bridget expressed she was

“feeling a little *lost* and abandoned” during the remediation process with the virtual mentor. Mackenzie exemplified both being *lost* and *broken*, “I’ve been having a rough time adjusting back home and have been a little depressed to be honest. I haven’t been on top of my studying as I should have been.” The aspect of anxiety was evident in the emails as well, particularly in response to a change in the exam schedule. Anxiety is part of the theme of powerlessness, but has connections across several of the invariant constituents. Co-participant researchers expressed they were more anxious due to the exam schedule change and had several questions concerning the meaning of the changes with regard to the remediation process should an individual be unsuccessful on the exam attempt. Anxiety as a trans-invariant constituent component is discussed in more detail within the Post-It Note activity described later in this chapter.

**Anger.** Anger was noted in several of the unsolicited emails. Interestingly, one of the emails contained an element of sarcasm with the use of a smiley face. The use of the smiley face in context did not denote happiness. It was clear from the text that the smiley face was signified frustration and was really a smirk rather than a smile, used in an annoying and self-satisfied manner. The co-participant researcher, in the context of the following email exchange:

I replied to the question while I was at work today while my client was getting shampooed. I wrote it quickly and meant remote, not rural. The original question didn’t appear when I wrote my reply to refer to. My rationale was essentially exactly what you stated though. I know why and from whom telecom systems are used for. :) Thanks for the feedback though. (email communication, June 17, 2015)

Several examples of anger and frustration were noted in the unsolicited emails. None of these were intrinsic in nature as the emails concerned anger at the process, the program, the administrators, and the virtual mentor and remediation system. The process of testing and the lack of advance notice of the changing process was a key element in the increasing frustration found in the email communications. Each co-participant researcher communicated anger and frustration surrounding the remediation process and the perceived limited information surrounding the exam process should a student not be successful on the next exam attempt.

Co-participant researchers expressed anger and frustration during this timeframe when they received an email from an administrator which changed the expected plan for remediation and retesting. During this timeframe, co-participant researchers were informed of a change to the process described during the face to face class meeting.

**Post-It Note class activity.** The Post-It Note activity is used as part of the review and remediation session for unsuccessful students in the senior level course. The Post-It Note activity was initiated immediately following the exam review and reveal of the rationales for the incorrect responses on the comprehensive exam. Students were given Post-It Notes and asked to write one or two words on each Post-It Note to describe how they were feeling after the reveal of the incorrect questions and rationales. Post-It Notes were collected as the students wrote their responses and placed on the classroom white board. Students were encouraged to view the similarities and differences in responses. Figure 1 shows the Post-It Note activity after students began the process of viewing similarities and differences in the responses.



*Figure 1.* Post-It Note Activity

A discussion surrounding the responses continued until the end of the class meeting. Students were encouraged to add to the Post-It Notes on the board if any new thoughts emerged as a result of the discussion. It is important to note that these responses were immediate, directed only by encouraging the students to write anything you feel, in any way you want. After class, I gathered all of the Post-It Notes and placed each in categories based on the processing done as a group. Not all of the Post-It Notes had been assigned to a group by the students during class. The Post-It Notes were placed in a file

folder until after the semi-structured interviews were analyzed revealing the invariant constituents and themes for the lived experience of RAW.

Once the invariant constituents and themes were determined from the semi-structured interviews, the grouped and ungrouped Post-It Notes were aligned with the existing invariant constituents and themes. Appendix J provides each Post-It Note statement exactly as written, the invariant constituent aligned with the Post-It Note statement, and the thematic connection. Post-It Notes providing the exact same word or words were not reproduced as individual listings, but are numbered to designate the duplication of these words.

**A story to tell.** After horizontalization, reduction, and elimination of the Post-It Notes, three Post-It Notes were categorized under the theme of a story to tell. The notes were further analyzed and divided into two invariant constituents from the five invariant constituents comprising the story to tell theme. The invariant constituents of *deceived* and *being wronged* were noted during horizontalization, reduction, and elimination of the Post-It Notes. The invariant constituent of *deceived* was focused more on the feelings of the students at the realization of academic wrongness rather than the contextual elements. The invariant constituent of *deceived* is the response of the students after evaluating how the environment treated the students. The terms tricked and cheated were written on the Post-It Notes and have similar meanings to that of *deceived* and are part of the definition of the invariant constituent *deceived*. The invariant constituent of *being wronged* has environmental factors attached as this invariant constituent's definition includes the factor or factors students align with increasing the potential for academic wrongness. The Post-It Note attributed to this invariant constituent did not describe a feeling as such, the



statement “492 was a JOKE!” spoke to how this student felt wronged by the program as part of the realization of academic wrongness. *Being wronged* by definition included any environmental factors the students believed led to the wrongness or increased the potential for wrongness.

The remaining invariants for the theme of a story to tell, *so close*, *explain it away* and *merely a misunderstanding*, were not noted. The invariant constituents not noted on the Post-It Notes have a common element, the inclusion of the context into the invariant constituent. The *so close* invariant would not be an expected response when asked about the students’ feelings about themselves at the realization of academic wrongness. The *so close* invariant is more aligned with how the students felt about the exam and their performance rather than a focus on themselves and their feelings at the realization of academic wrongness. The invariant constituent of *explain it away* requires the students to consider not only their feelings, but contextual details. The invariant constituent of *merely a misunderstanding* also requires a connection to the contextual environment and the incorrect interpretation of the contextual element.

**Powerlessness.** A total of 20 Post-It Notes were categorized under the theme of powerlessness. The notes were further analyzed and divided into four invariant constituents from the seven invariant constituents comprising the powerlessness theme. The invariant constituents of *not really me*, *lost*, *targeted*, and *broken* were noted in the Post-It Note activity. The invariant constituent *not really me* was seen only once in the Post-It Note activity. This example did not follow the instructions for the activity, using one or two words, but was included due to the Post-It Note’s relevance to the phenomena of interest. The Post-It Note read: “Why am I good enough for everything else except

PPU? I'm above the national averages." This Post-It Note message questions the perception of the academic institution with regard to the student. The disconnect the student has with the perception of others and the student's perception of self is clear in the question posed on the Post-It Note. The invariant constituent, *not really me*, is defined as not being seen as the individual believes themselves to be. The invariant constituent of *lost* was seen in the Post-It Note activity, focused on feeling unable or incapable of navigating or functioning in the environment. The invariant constituent *targeted* focuses on the co-participant researchers feeling they are identified as lacking in educational preparation, making them targets for removal from the program and the process. The descriptions of lacking found in the Post-It Notes therefore align with the invariant constituent of *lost*. The invariant constituent *broken* is defined as not being able to function normally. The Post-It Notes provided a variety of responses that align with the invariant of *broken*. These responses include physical descriptions of illness such as "nausea" and "sick". A complete list of the responses aligned with the invariant constituent of *broken* can be found in Appendix J.

The remaining invariant constituents of *black and white*, *guinea pigs* and *pawns*, and *no voice* were not noted during the process of horizontalization, reduction, and elimination. The invariant constituents not noted in the Post-It Notes have a common element, control by the academic institution. The invariant constituent of *black and white* focuses on the contextual elements perceived as dichotomous and uncompromising. The invariant constituent *guinea pigs* and *pawns* focuses on the manipulation and subjection of the co-participant researchers by the academic program's faculty, policies, and processes. The invariant constituent *no voice* is defined as not being heard or denied the

right to be heard. Communication is denied by the institution either due to response or access.

**Anger.** There were a total of 17 Post-It Notes categorized as aligning with the theme of anger. For the theme of anger, I could not differentiate the direction of the anger, intrinsic or extrinsic, from the Post-It Note comments; however, the theme of anger was quite evident in the Post-It Note statements provided by the students. Only one Post-It comment was clearly extrinsic, “I HATE PPU!” The statements of anger written on the Post-It Notes did not differentiate whether the students were angry at themselves, the institution, or the situation. All of the Post-It Notes connected to the theme of anger are listed without the invariant constituents of intrinsic or extrinsic except for the single Post-It Note that clearly denotes anger at the university. This Post-It Note expressed anger at the institution as part of this student’s experience with the realization of academic wrongness.

**Overlap within powerlessness.** Due to the anonymous nature of the Post-It Note activity, it was not possible to member check the Post-It Note responses. Six Post-It Note responses did not align clearly with one specific invariant constituent under the theme of powerlessness. These Post-It Notes all describe anxiety, from mild to extreme. Feeling anxious at the realization of academic wrongness is expected, however anxiety was not an invariant constituent or separate theme described during the interviews. The emotion anxiety, which occurs as the result of threats perceived to be uncontrollable or unavoidable, would be part of the theme of powerlessness, but not necessarily under only one invariant constituent. Anxiety could be part of the *black and white* or guinea pig and pawn invariant constituents as a response to being controlled or part of *lost* or *broken*

invariant constituents as a response to feeling out of control. Following in the descriptive phenomenologic tradition, the Post-It Notes without attachment to one invariant constituent are found in Appendix J in a section labeled as powerlessness but without a corresponding invariant constituent as the co-participant researchers' meanings of these words were not clear. I could only describe what was shared, anxious, extremely anxious, stressed out, antsy, and concerned, all terms denoting levels of anxiety but without a connection as to what was associated with the feeling of anxiety.

Following the same analysis process used for the unsolicited email messages, the invariant constituents described by the co-participant researchers during the semi-structured interviews were used as the relevant research findings for the traditional directed approach of content analysis. The invariant constituents were used as guidance for the codes and meaning units (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Since anxiety was not one of the fourteen invariant constituents described during the semi-structured interviews, anxiety was not identified as an invariant constituent or theme during the analysis of the Post-It Notes. As in the analysis of the unsolicited emails, no new codes were created for data not meeting the definitions of the fourteen predetermined invariant constituents.

From this analysis at the moment of the realization of academic wrongness, co-participant researchers most often expressed *brokenness*. The term written most often was annoyed, categorized under the anger theme. Students wrote more Post-It Note comments describing feeling *broken*, anxious, and angry than other invariants and themes immediately following the exam review.

**Observations.** The observations for this inquiry were divided into two distinct environments, the face to face environment and the virtual environment of the remediation course. In both environments, behaviors could be noted and analyzed. In the face to face environment, the observation protocol was used to collect data for analysis. In the virtual environment, I reviewed records of engagement with the asynchronous remediation environment.

*Face to face observations.* Two face to face observations of the co-participant researchers as a group were completed during the in class review of the exam attempt and just prior to the next attempt. The observation protocol (Appendix E) was used for both observations. The in class observation lasted 216 minutes and the pre-exam attempt observation lasted 32 minutes. During the observations, a variety of behaviors and verbal responses were noted that directly aligned with the invariant constituents identified during the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. One of the observation tool wrongness experiences, late to class, was reconfigured into the behavior section. All of the wrongness experiences for these two observations used the single wrongness experience of computerized exam failure as the other wrongness experiences listed were not part of these observations.

The initial observation, the in class review session, provided a wide range of behaviors and verbal responses. In Appendix K, the behaviors noted during the observation are listed and aligned with the invariant constituents and themes. All three themes were represented, although not all of the invariant constituents. Powerlessness and anger were clearly represented by behaviors, whereas the story to tell theme was more difficult to see. The arguments in class, however, contained a variety of the

invariants from a story to tell. The discussions during class were not captured verbatim; therefore a full text analysis of all of the discussion in class cannot be completed.

In the observation prior to the next exam attempt, all co-participant researchers exhibited behaviors aligned under the *broken* invariant constituent just prior to the next exam attempt, expressing physical responses “I feel sick to my stomach” and avoiding eye contact. It is interesting to note the clothing worn during this exam attempt. All co-participant researchers wore T-shirts depicting or describing themselves as survivors. This was not a planned event according to the co-participant researchers.

***Virtual environment observations.*** Observations in the virtual environment consisted of reviewing the records from the asynchronous remediation course. The course content became available, June 17, 2015, and remained open and available until the next attempt at the comprehensive exam, July 6, 2015. In the 19 days the co-participant researchers had access to the remediation content, no co-participant researcher made full use of the remediation available. Table 2 shows each co-participant researcher’s activity within the asynchronous remediation environment.

Table 2

<i>Remediation Activity</i>			
Co-participant researcher	Days Active	Date	Activity Completed
Bridget	8	6/22	1
		6/23	2
		6/24	2
		6/26	3
		6/27	2
		6/28	1
		6/29	2
		6/30	2
Fidelma	4	6/17	1
		6/25	1
		6/30	2
		7/1	1
Bettina	4	6/18	1
		6/24	1
		6/27	2
		6/30	2
Mackenzie	1	7/1	4

*Bridget.* Bridget logged on a total of 8 days in the 19 day timeframe from the initiation of virtual remediation access to the next attempt on the comprehensive exam. She took a total of 15 different assessments available in the remediation modules. Her time on task varied considerably and her activity was concentrated within a 9 day timeframe from June 22, 2015 through June 30, 2015. Bridget’s activity within the asynchronous remediation environment did not constitute the completion of all available remediation activities. Bridget did not access the remediation content the first day the content became available waiting 5 days to begin remediation activities. She was not active for the last 5 days the content was available, although she was encouraged to access remediation content by the virtual remediation mentor.

*Fidelma.* Fidelma logged on a total of 4 days in the 19 day timeframe from the initiation of virtual remediation access to the next attempt on the comprehensive exam. She took a total of 5 different assessments available in the remediation modules. Her time on task varied considerably and her activity was not concentrated on a specific time period. Fidelma's activity within the asynchronous remediation environment did not constitute completion of all of the available remediation activities. Although Fidelma accessed the remediation content the first day the content became available, she did not consistently engage with the remediation content. There was an 8 day gap between her first engagement and the second and a 5 day gap between the second and the third engagement. Her final engagement was a full 5 days prior to the next exam attempt and Fidelma was not active for the last 5 days the content was available. She was encouraged to access remediation content by the virtual remediation mentor as she did not complete all of the available module content.

*Bettina.* Bettina logged on a total of 4 days in the 19 day timeframe from the initiation of virtual remediation access to the next attempt on the comprehensive exam. She took a total of 6 different assessments available in the remediation modules. Her time on task varied considerably and her activity was not focused on a specific timeframe. Bettina's activity within the asynchronous remediation environment did not constitute completion of all of the available remediation activities. Bettina did access the remediation one day after the content became available; however her activity within the asynchronous remediation environment was sporadic. There was a 5 day gap between her first engagement and the second. The timeframe between her second and third and third and fourth engagements was shorter, 2 days between each activity. She did not access the



remediation modules for the 5 days prior to the comprehensive exam although she was encouraged to do so by the virtual mentor. Bettina did not exhaust the content available to her in the virtual environment and did not respond to the emails sent by the virtual mentor.

*Mackenzie.* Mackenzie logged on a total of 1 day in the 19 day timeframe from the initiation of virtual remediation access to the next attempt on the comprehensive exam. She took a total of 4 different assessments available in the remediation modules all in one day, July 1, 2015. She did not communicate with the virtual mentor and did not access the modular content available for review after taking the assessments.

Each of the co-participant researchers had 19 days of access to the virtual remediation content. None of the co-participant researchers accessed the remediation content daily nor did they exhaust the remediation content prior to the next attempt at the comprehensive exam. The engagement with the remediation content was limited. Bridget accessed the content more frequently than the others, however she accessed the remediation content less than half of the time the content was available. The limited engagement with the virtual remediation system coincides with the descriptions of anger and frustration expressed in the unsolicited emails toward the remediation system and the virtual mentor.

**Brain Tool.** The Brain Tool (Appendix F) was used by all of the co-participant researchers during the in class review of the unsuccessful exam attempt. As part of the tool, a column is provided for thoughts of the student using the tool. Co-participant researchers wrote a variety of comments in this column. Each comment was analyzed using the process I used for the unsolicited emails, using a combination of a directed

approach to content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and Moustakas' (1994) methodologic process. Meaning units and corresponding invariant constituents and theme are addressed in Appendix L. The meaning units provided by the co-participant researchers at the moment of the realization of academic wrongness, when each saw the questions and responses from the unsuccessful exam attempt, aligned with four invariant constituents within the story to tell theme as described during the semi-structured interviews. The invariant constituents of *so close*, *explain it away*, *not really me*, and *being wronged* were all noted in the writings provided on the Brain Tool form. The most frequent invariant constituent, *so close*, is more aligned with how the students felt about the exam and their performance at the realization of academic wrongness. Since the Brain Tool has students focus on each exam question and their performance on that particular question, the responses mirroring the *so close* invariant constituent align with this thought process. Rather than a focus on themselves and their feelings at the realization of academic wrongness, as seen in the Post-It Note activity, the Brain Tool thought column responses focused more on the exam and the co-participant researchers' responses to their performance and how they felt about the test with regard to RAW.

The data collected using a variety of methods and analyzed using a descriptive lens provided an understanding of the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness in the context of high stakes testing. Co-participant researchers described feeling powerless, angry, and had stories to tell about the realization of academic wrongness immediately following and long after the academic wrongness experience. RAW impacted the behaviors of the co-participant researchers. As seen in the observations during virtual remediation activities, the behaviors of the co-participant

researchers did not align with actions consistent with reviewing and remediating content in preparation for the next exam attempt. Although unfettered access to both content and faculty support was available to these co-participant researchers, interactions with the content and faculty was haphazard and limited. Unsolicited communications with faculty did not focus on remedial activities, but focused instead on exam scheduling, program processes, and negative comments concerning the validity and value of the remediation process. The behaviors of the co-participant researchers spanned from no engagement to limited and sporadic engagement with the academic resources provided within the environment. Considering both virtual remediation and face to face faculty resources were not utilized in a consistent manner by any of the co-participant researchers during the remediation time frame between exam attempts, the disconnect between the actual behaviors verses expected behaviors suggests serious implications for current remedial practices after RAW. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings of this inquiry with regard to the framework proposed in chapter 3 to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this journey providing further connections of perceived cognition, self-beliefs, and social structure within the educational environment with respect to the realization of academic wrongness.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this inquiry was to better understand the lived experiences of students at and after the realization of academic wrongness while in an academic program. For this study, the realization of academic wrongness was defined as the moment when an individual becomes aware his or her response was not what was expected or accepted in the academic context. The population for this endeavor was nursing students in a baccalaureate nursing program. These students were selected due to their shared significant programmatic wrongness, several unsuccessful attempts at a comprehensive end of program exam. In addition, each student experienced the realization of academic wrongness in the context of the programmatic requirement for post wrongness content engagement prior to the next exam attempt.

Seeking to better understand the meaning, structure, and essence of the realization of academic wrongness called for a methodology that allowed the unique voices of the students to be articulated unfettered as much as possible by researcher bias. In this inquiry, I employed Moustakas' (1994) descriptive phenomenology to co-create and present the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW) for these students. By interrogating the realization of academic wrongness with the students acting as co-participant researchers, the essence of RAW was described as near to the actual experience as possible. As described by the co-participant researchers, RAW was a multilayered, emotional experience intricately connected to past experiences with RAW, the contextual environment, and the expectations of self and others both in and out of the academic context. The realization of academic wrongness was a phenomenon that had yet

to be interrogated let alone considered close to the precipitating wrongness event while students remained within a program of study. The five questions guiding this inquiry were as follows:

RQ1 : What are the lived experiences of nursing students at the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ2: What are the lived experiences of nursing students after the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ 3: What are the behaviors of nursing students at the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ4: What are the behaviors of nursing students after the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ 5: What are the meanings of the identified nursing student behaviors and lived experiences after times of realizations of academic wrongness (RAW) as described by the nursing students with respect to content engagement and remediation?

The five original questions guiding this inquiry are best discussed by grouping questions one with three and two with four rather than addressing these questions individually. By pairing the first four questions into two groups, I was able to address all five inquiry questions in a more meaningful way than if each question was addressed as a separate and distinct question. Separating the lived experiences at and after academic wrongness from the behaviors of the co-participant researchers during these time frames did not serve to present a cohesive description of the essence of RAW. The lived experiences and behaviors at RAW comprised the initial grouping and the lived

experiences and behaviors after RAW comprised the second grouping. Finally, the meanings of RAW with respect to content engagement and remediation are addressed as a separate question. Question five was originally constructed to encompass both the lived experiences and behaviors of the co-participant researchers during remediation, therefore this question already allows for a cohesive description of the co-participant researchers' experiences.

Themes emerged during data analysis that suggested interdependence of perceived cognition, self-beliefs, and social structure of the educational environment with respect to RAW. The following sections discuss in detail the findings of this descriptive phenomenologic inquiry focusing on the thematic constructs described by the students and how the themes relate to existing theories. First, I address the questions that guided this inquiry showing the connections to the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework was presented in chapter 3 and was created by connecting the theories of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), self-theories of intelligence (Dweck, 1999), and affective-cognitive consistency (Rosenberg, 1956, 1968). By considering these theories while describing the lived experiences of the co-participant researchers, connections between cognition, feeling, and social considerations can be made to describe the broader impact of the realization of academic wrongness (RAW). Next, I discuss the potential impact of the findings. Implications for policy and practice are suggested as well as recommendations for further inquiry into the realization of academic wrongness and the affects RAW has on engagement, remediation, retention, progression, and degree completion. Finally, the limitations inherent to capturing the phenomena of RAW are

discussed along with limitations of this current inquiry with regard to time and methodologic processes.

### **Lived Experiences and Behaviors at the Realization of Academic Wrongness**

The time frame considered to be at RAW was from the initial reveal of each exam question and corresponding rationale during the in class meeting on June 15, 2015 to the time of the individual interviews which spanned June 30, 2015 to July 4, 2015 inclusive. Nursing students provided descriptions and demonstrated behaviors at the moment of and shortly after the realization of academic wrongness which provided thematic units from which invariant constituents were constructed. From these invariant constituents, the themes of a story to tell, powerlessness, and anger evolved. The stories the students told, the actions they showed, and the words they provided in written form contributed to the rich descriptions of their experiences at RAW including justifications and rationalizations of various forms. The stories told by the co-participant researchers as well as the anger and powerlessness described and demonstrated aligned with the framework suggested in Chapter 3. The theories of self-efficacy, self-theories of intelligence and affective-cognitive consistency help to frame the lived experiences and behaviors of the co-participant researchers within academic constructs and provide a theoretical basis for the descriptions and behaviors of these students.

**A story to tell.** The theme of a story to tell was constructed from five invariant constituents. In each case, the invariant constituent provided an explanation or excuse as to why the wrongness occurred and why the student was not solely responsible for the wrongness that occurred. The co-participant researchers discussed the realization of academic wrongness and tried to make sense of the events leading to the academic

wrongness. The five invariant constituents of a story to tell presented the means for descriptions, justifications, and rationalizations of various forms. The descriptions, justifications, and rationalizations in a story to tell are associated with Schulz's (2010) discussion of rationalization as part of the process leading to the integration of the realization of wrongness. Individuals in an attempt to resist wrongness realization believe they need to fight or resist the wrongness even after being shown why they are wrong (Schulz, 2010). Students in this study described a similar type of processing after RAW providing examples of prior academic performance, contextual errors, and programmatic inconsistencies to support their arguments and rationalize, justify, or describe why and how the wrongness occurred. Whether these stories took on the auspices of personal myths (McAdams, 1993) or faking it (Miller, 2003), all seem to serve a similar purpose, the repair and or preservation of self-efficacy, the continued alignment with the individual's self-theory of intelligence, and the reduction of dissonance to allow a return to affective-cognitive consistency.

RAW challenges both the cognitive and the affective realms of the individual. RAW places the student in direct conflict with her self-efficacy, the belief in her ability to succeed, and at odds with an alignment toward an entity theory of intelligence. Students with an alignment toward an incremental theory of intelligence may question their ability to reconstruct and revise their understanding of content and context. Similarly, RAW increases the dissonance with regard to an individual's affective-cognitive consistency due to the incongruent and disruptive nature of RAW. Realizing we are wrong is inconsistent with our prior beliefs and knowledge and creates opportunities to evolve or devolve in light of this realization (Schulz, 2010). The stories the students told served to



minimize, distract, and deflect the reasons wrongness occurred and limit personal culpability. The purpose of the stories seemed to be self-efficacy preservation and the preservation of the co-participant researcher's self-theory of intelligence. This need for preservation of self-efficacy and self-theories occurred during a period of affective-cognitive dissonance, a time when the individual was questioning her knowledge regarding content (cognition) and her perceived position within the hierarchy of the academic environment (affect). The dissonance created by the deviation from the student's affective-cognitive consistency with regard to beliefs and knowledge surrounding programmatic content as well as beliefs in her own abilities needed to be resolved for a return to lower levels of inconsistency (Fletcher, 2010). Acting on their espoused beliefs, students continued to construct personal myths as to how the wrongness occurred with limited personal responsibility for the wrongness and with little regard for the social influences suggesting changes in study behaviors and content review. These students were stating their beliefs of not being really wrong. As these beliefs concerning limited personal responsibility for wrongness were strongly held by the students, these students were more inclined to describe their experiences in ways consistent with not being wrong and to act accordingly (Norman, 1975). The stories told allowed students to express the various ways the realization of academic wrongness was at odds with their understanding of content, context, and themselves. Most students expected to be successful on the exam and being unsuccessful was an unexpected outcome. Only one student expected to be unsuccessful on the exam, however her description of the event was similar to those of her peers having little to do with her being responsible for the wrongness. She placed the blame for this wrongness on not having her watch and the

proctor not announcing the time more often during the exam. Although her expectation was an unsuccessful attempt, she did not describe the unsuccessful attempt as being based in her misunderstanding of content or context. The realization of academic wrongness created a disruption although the unsuccessful attempt was in line with her espoused belief that she would be unsuccessful.

The dissonance created by RAW continued throughout the timeframe of the study with students describing disconnects between the content they believed they knew, the way they felt in the environment, and the way they perceived the environment responded to them during RAW. Although all co-participant researchers expressed the belief of “letting people down”, this belief proved insufficient to promote a more introspective and reflective view of RAW in the early stages. For example, input concerning the need for additional review of the content from family, peers, and faculty was met with resistance and perceived as not useful (accusatory) to the co-participant researchers. In addition, the stories constructed presented external causes for the wrongness rather than a focus on internal causes controllable by the individual. As a result, RAW was seen as an experience having little to do with the student’s own actions or at least that was compounded by external factors. By minimizing the student’s part in the wrongness and focusing on the negative implications of the educational context, programmatic policies and practices, and behaviors of others, the ultimate realization of academic wrongness could be explained in such a way as to partially divest the student from the realization. The stories limited the affective-cognitive inconsistencies created by the realization of academic wrongness but did not serve to remove the inconsistencies. This is consistent with Fletcher’s (2010) positing that limiting inconsistency seems to be preferable to

eliminating inconsistency when paradigms are challenged and with Chaiken and Yates' (1985) findings supporting preference for slight reconsiderations of knowledge and beliefs versus significant paradigm shifts. Significant paradigm shifts and or attempting to totally eliminate the inconsistencies would significantly destabilize the balance of feeling and knowledge (Rosenberg, 1968), lowering the consistency level, creating chaos, and initiating the need for behaviors to limit or eliminate the dissonance created. None of the stories or behaviors signified this type of radical shift in paradigms. Due to the disruptive nature of RAW and the continuing affective-cognitive dissonance, each co-participant researcher questioned her ability to be successful in the next academic challenge, a question of her self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy (Bandura (1997) includes an individual's subjective response to stimuli when accounting for a person's ability to conceptualize success or failure in a particular situation. Although the invariant constituents were focused on differing explanations and excuses, all served a specific purpose with regard to preservation of self-efficacy. The stories helped the student to preserve self-efficacy by allowing the student to retain some belief in her ability. Along with the subjective response to stimuli, an individual constructs self-efficacy beliefs based on the social constructs which either encourage or discourage certain actions and results. The student's position within the hierarchy of the academic context was protected by limiting personal culpability. The stories seemed to help the student process the realization of academic wrongness and to create enough doubt in the ownership of the wrongness to allow the student to at least partially retain her self-efficacy, the belief that she was indeed capable of successfully completing the academic challenge if faced with the challenge in this context in the

future. The student's perceived self-efficacy, not the "perceived skill acquisition" (Bandura, 1997, p. 216), was supported by not only the stories she told but also by the behaviors that supported the self-efficacy of the student.

The behaviors demonstrated by the students regarding virtual remediation engagement and unsolicited email communications support the preservation of self-efficacy rather than attempts at skill acquisition. Behaviors supporting the students' beliefs they could succeed and did not need to acquire skills included the lack of consistent activity in the virtual modules as well as the absence of email questions concerning content knowledge acquisition. Virtual remediation engagement was minimal at a time when increased engagement would seem necessary to prepare for the next exam attempt, suggesting the students did not perceive the need to remediate. Unsolicited email communication content was clearer with regard to the intent of the student than the behavior in the virtual remediation environment. Emails questioned the need for remediation and conveyed displeasure with the virtual content and practice modules. Questions concerning content understanding or requests for review of specific content areas were not received.

Students' behaviors supported at least partial preservation of self-efficacy created by these stories. Although all students questioned whether the next exam attempt would provide a positive result, all students elected to attempt the comprehensive exam on the next exam date. It is important to note that students were not required to test on this date. Any student could have elected to test at another time without any programmatic implications. The students' behaviors were consistent with a preserved self-efficacy as each arrived on time for the exam despite emails to the contrary the day prior. Without a

partial belief in an individual's ability to be successful, an individual often displays behaviors consistent with delaying the next interaction with situations where a similar wrongness could occur (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). The partial preservation of self-efficacy was important for students. Students need to believe in the possibility of success during an academic interaction for the students to meaningfully engage in the academic context. The students respond or resist not only due to their perceived self-efficacy in the context, but also based on the ways the students believe they know or learn, their cognitive processes (Bandura, 1993). These descriptions can be explained by considering the students' own self-theories of intelligence (Dweck, 1999).

The descriptions students shared provided insight into the beliefs each student held for her own cognitive processes and abilities. Interviews included statements such as "I'm a pretty good critical thinker"; "I'm logical"; and "I tried so hard in school". When considering Dweck's (1999) self-theories of intelligence, these statements speak to one of the two self-theories, either entity or incremental intelligence. Descriptions of working hard speak to incremental intelligence whereas descriptions of being logical or being a good thinker align with descriptions of entity intelligence. With regard to behaviors, limited engagement with virtual remediation modules suggests students did not attempt to obtain knowledge (incremental) but sought out activities to prove their knowledge (entity). The modules contained learning activities and the exams were used to prove content knowledge.

The five invariant constituents described by the co-participant researchers in presenting their stories were *so close*, *explain it away*, *deceived*, *being wronged*, and *merely a misunderstanding*. The invariant constituents that form a story to tell can be

described as having an I am (entity) rather than I can be (incremental) belief embedded within each invariant. Coming from the entity self-theory, students' stories explained how the co-participant researchers had been so close to being right, right except for this other thing, tricked, wronged, or misunderstood. Conversely, the focus of I can be, the basis of the incremental self-theory, is not described in these invariants.

In summation, the theme of a story to tell provides descriptions, justifications, and rationalizations as part of the processing at the realization of academic wrongness. Resisting the realization of academic wrongness is supported by Schulz's (2010) findings with regard to other types of wrongness realization. Through the process of creating these stories, repair and or preservation of self-efficacy, continued alignment with the student's self-theory of intelligence, and reduction of dissonance to allow a return to affective-cognitive consistency can be achieved.

**Powerlessness.** The theme of powerlessness was constructed from seven invariant constituents. Each invariant constituent provided a variation on the explanation for the co-participant researcher's perceived lack of ability to act within the context of the academic environment. Co-participant researchers expressed the perceived lack of ability to act within the context was due to an uncompromising programmatic structure that did not consider individual variation. The descriptions of not being considered as individuals and of the programmatic inflexibility provided insight into the students' perceptions of the unyielding process and structure of the academic environment. In this environment, the co-participant researchers perceived themselves as an outcome of the process instead of being central participants in the process, "cogs in a wheel". The students described feeling used and abandoned due to the focus on the perpetuation and promulgation of the

social structure within the educational environment that maintained programmatic standards at the risk of sacrificing students.

Powerlessness descriptions and behaviors provided yet another way for the students to minimize the effects of the realization of academic wrongness. At the moment of RAW, the students perceived the experience as incongruent with their prior relationships within the academic environment. These relationships with and within the environment were described by the co-participant researchers with regard to their roles as students. These descriptions included statements that suggested these students perceived themselves in the roles of capable student, equivalent peer, and peer mentor prior to RAW. These specific terms were not explicated by the co-participant researchers to describe their student roles; however the terms are the result of combining the descriptions of the co-participant researchers. Relationships within the academic environment changed as a result of the unsuccessful exam attempt. The perceptions of the students with regard to the responses of others within the academic environment supported the experience of powerlessness and reinforced the perception of an external catalyst that initiated the wrongness and thereby the experience of RAW. The invariant constituents of powerlessness included beliefs the students were targeted, manipulated, and silenced during RAW. These invariants signified a change in way the students interacted within the social structure of the academic environment and the ways these students perceived themselves in context.

RAW creates cognitive dissonance within the educational environment. The responses of others within the social structure during times of inconsistency needed to be balanced with the student's need for a return to consistency, limiting the resultant effects

on others and maintaining the balance within the social structure (Rosenberg, 1956, 1968). Powerlessness allowed for a disconnect with respect to social expectations. By definition, broken and lost students would not be expected to interact with others as they had prior to RAW as these students lacked direction (*lost*) and or were fragmented versions of their prior selves (*broken*). Chaiken and Baldwin (1981) and Chaiken (1982) described similar outcomes with respect to social influences and expectations on behavioral changes to manage dissonance. Unexpected behaviors, those inconsistent with espoused or held beliefs of being a capable student, are not surprising in response to RAW when considering the disruptions caused by RAW for the student and those within the educational environment.

Consider the responses of the students in the environment with respect to the cognitive dissonance. Students experiencing RAW did not perceive they were being seen as their true self, the invariant *not really me*. Not being seen as themselves created a disconnect between the students experiencing RAW and the students not experiencing RAW. Perceiving the academic wrongness as a deviation from their normal performance, students wanted others to acknowledge the experience as a deviation from their actual abilities and knowledge, to remove RAW, and to continue on with the normal progression of the program. This did not occur. Students described being *lost*, but did not explicitly connect this experience to losing known peers within the social structure. The students perceived their relationships within the academic environment had been significantly impaired, but did not provide descriptions of attempts at repairing these relationships or continuing to perceive the students who were not experiencing RAW as part of the peer group or as resources for successful completion of the next exam. The



successful students were not examples of what could be for the unsuccessful students, only reminders of what should have been. Descriptions of the successful students included comparisons or yard sticking against the prior self-beliefs of the unsuccessful student and how she perceived the successful students. Comparison to another's performance serves to minimize the impact of negative feedback on the individual (Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008). Most often, the successful students were described as lucky, not as better prepared, more intelligent, or more capable. Since being lucky is outside of the control of the individual, the descriptions of successful students as being lucky supported the feelings of powerlessness in the unsuccessful students. Prior to RAW, these students perceived themselves to be knowledgeable and capable members of the academic community. These feelings of being equivalent or superior to their peers were in direct conflict with the realization of academic wrongness. The realization of academic wrongness served to challenge this perception and caused the students to question their ability to act and be affective within the academic environment, challenging the students' beliefs they would be successful in the next academic challenge.

Uncertainty in important matters is an unsettling experience (Bandura, 1997). Powerlessness stemmed from ambiguity within the academic context as well as perceived depersonalization. Students felt like *pawns in a game* and *Guinea Pigs* without a voice or recourse. Depersonalized in this way, the perceived limitations in communication were expressed as part of the programmatic structure, where students felt they had little recourse throughout the program. When changes were made students reacted negatively. Even when those changes lowered the threshold for successful completion or afforded

additional opportunities for testing, students described these changes as distressing. Perhaps in this instance, the saying knowledge is power resonates best. For these students, changes to the process removed what they thought they knew and replaced this knowledge with something else. It did not seem to matter that these changes were for their benefit, that these changes reduced the passing score, afforded another testing opportunity, and removed the financial implications of being unsuccessful. Any changes in the programmatic process during the realization of academic wrongness seemed to distress the students and support their feelings of powerlessness. The students felt they should be asked before changes were made as these changes directly affected these students. The students also expressed only they knew their experiences during the time between exams and wanted to be part of the decision making process concerning what would be most beneficial during the time between the exam attempts.

Although not the focus of this inquiry, the descriptions of these students as being *Guinea Pigs* and *pawns in a game* is concerning on many levels. Students engaging with and within higher education environments are evolving as learners. Regardless of the focus of the education or the desires of the student, educational environments should provide arenas for discourse and discussion, not environments where lock step acceptance is the expectation. Process and policy may be necessary for structure, however not at the expense of open communication to better understand the needs of students.

Powerlessness is counter to the need to perceive the ability to construct additional knowledge, change, and adapt to the academic context. Descriptions and behaviors of powerlessness at RAW impugn each student's belief in her abilities to succeed. When

perceiving herself as powerless, the student had difficulty acting in ways which support reconstruction of knowledge, adaptability, and change when faced with wrongness realization. Specifically, powerlessness limited perceived abilities within the academic environment during the realization of academic wrongness when the students questioned if they were capable of being successful on the next exam attempt. Powerlessness therefore supported the belief that the student was not capable due to lack of ability to act within the context to exert change. The belief in one's ability to succeed or fail is the hallmark of self-efficacy. Internal, subjective stimuli need to be considered when accounting for a person's ability to conceptualize potential for success or failure. The ability to believe that one could succeed or would fail is built through interaction with the environment, external reinforcement, and internal responses and beliefs. The participant learner assimilates the social constructs which either encourage or discourage certain actions and results. Based on this theory when faced with an academic challenge, the participant learner's beliefs in his or her own abilities may have significant influence on the experiences the learner will perceive and the behaviors that the learner will exhibit (Bandura, 1977). Similarly, environments in which learners perceive limited or no control support beliefs of lack of ability, regardless of past successes or level of difficulty of the content (Bandura, 1993). The perception of lack of ability to change the educational environment and the ways the students were perceived was compounded by the ways these students perceived what they knew, the content the students felt they understood prior to RAW. Prior to RAW, these students believed they were "smart enough" for the task at hand. At the realization of academic wrongness, this belief was challenged. The students described being *lost* and *broken*. They felt they have no direction and did not

know what to do next. Lived experiences of powerlessness do preserve perceived self-efficacy, but toward the belief the student will fail due to the perception of lack of ability to change. The negative self-efficacy belief supported by feelings of powerlessness is counter to the beliefs students need within an educational environment, that the students are able to succeed.

Feelings of powerlessness while students were interrogating their knowledge and understanding of the content presented another layer to the realization of academic wrongness. At the realization of academic wrongness, these students were shown the rationales for the questions on the exam. During this processing, areas where students misunderstood key concepts and constructs with respect to programmatic and exam objectives were noted. Although the reveal of the rationales seems logical after unsuccessful exam attempts, this exercise was emotionally charged for all of the students. Each question was a new realization of academic wrongness, a new instance for the student to experience the disconnect from her espoused beliefs in her abilities and knowledge. Armed with the review and rationale information provided during the in class reveal, students were asked to proceed with content review and remediation within the virtual environment. The students had little time to repair or reconstruct their self-efficacy toward a positive direction, the belief in their abilities to produce a successful next exam attempt. Students described being *lost*, having “no idea what to do next” or “how to fix this” even though the students were given step by step instruction within the virtual environment. Consider still the implications of limited student control within the virtual environment. This factor was not interrogated in this study, however when using the lens provided by Bandura (1993), the virtual environment for remediation would

support beliefs in lack of ability due to limited student control. The invariant constituents of *no voice* and *black and white* would align with the ridged structure of the virtual environment. Modules progressed in a predetermined fashion and evaluations were opened by the virtual mentor. The student could not progress until the mentor allowed the student access to the next selection of content. The sole control the students maintained was when and if they logged into the system.

Nussbaum and Dweck (2008) suggest the connection between belief in ability and content remediation is critical. The belief in ability and remediation may seem congruent, but in some students these two elements are in direct opposition. Unless students believe they can affect their ability by learning content, being placed into a remediation environment can have an opposite effect than anticipated. Students who believed they were “smart enough” to successfully pass the exam attempt aligned with Dweck’s (1999) entity self-theory of intelligence. Students’ descriptions and behaviors aligned with this self-theory of intelligence perceive intelligence to be static and unchangeable, something they “are”. During the realization of academic wrongness, these students maintained the perspective that the remediation activities would not change their level of understanding of the content. These students expressed the virtual remediation activities focused on content review were “worthless” and would not help them to pass the next exam. Believing they are “smart enough” for the task at hand and remediation was futile, their feelings of powerlessness were supported. The academic programs response to their unsuccessful attempt was to provide these students with “worthless” remediation when these students believed they were not being seen as they “are”, capable and intelligent, in

a dichotomous and uncompromising academic context. Being *targeted* and *broken*, these students with *no voice* were resigned to being *pawns in the game*.

Describing intelligence as something that needs to be constructed, “I will just work hard” and not as an inborn characteristic is a key difference in the ways the students responded during RAW. The students who expressed beliefs that they could “practice, study, and work harder to pass” aligned with Dweck’s (1999) incremental self-theory of intelligence. Students’ descriptions aligned with this self-theory of intelligence perceive intelligence to be malleable, something they “could become” through work. Although an incremental alignment would seem to limit the feelings of powerlessness, descriptions from these students included all of the invariant constituents under the powerlessness theme. Additionally, the behaviors exhibited by individuals who described the need to “work harder” or “study more” were not consistent with their espoused beliefs. These students accessed the virtual remediation modules infrequently and did not seek additional assistance from the faculty. Although these students described the need to “work hard” and “study more”, this was not observed. The students’ inactions support the descriptions of feeling *broken* and *lost* with *no voice* in a dichotomous and uncompromising academic context. Resigned to being *pawns in a game*, these students knowing they need to review content instead chose to disengage, leaving us to wonder why they behaved in this way. The current inquiry did not address this specific question; however, a better understanding of the lived experience of powerlessness at the realization of academic wrongness is the beginning of the journey to that understanding.

Fighting back against depersonalization and perceived lack of programmatic support, the students expressed feelings of anger, both at themselves and toward various

contextual elements within the educational environment. Although the descriptions of powerlessness were robust, students still wanted to change or challenge the academic environment even when describing being *broken* and having *no voice*. Perceiving changing and or challenging the environment as being futile (“So, like, it is what it is”) but something they desired, students expressed feelings of frustration and anger as they conceptualized the options available (“So, like, it is what it is, but”). In describing the “but” students shared both internally and externally focused expressions of anger and frustration that were not part of powerlessness, but seemed to grow from the descriptions of powerlessness.

**Anger.** The theme of anger was constructed from two invariant constituents, *intrinsic anger* and *extrinsic anger*. Descriptions of anger contained distinct directional components, either toward the student herself or outside of the student toward something or someone else. *Intrinsic anger*, I did this to me, was more often voiced as frustration whereas *extrinsic anger*, you did this to me, included more variation along the spectrum of anger from mild annoyance to rage. The narrow spectrum of *intrinsic anger* aligns with limiting inconsistency rather than eliminating inconsistency during times of affective-cognitive dissonance when paradigms are challenged (Fletcher, 2010). Frustration served to describe feelings stemming from a slight challenge to the student’s paradigm, whereas descriptions using the terms anger or rage would signify a more intense response to a perceived inconsistency (Chaiken & Yates, 1985) challenging external processes and beliefs. Significantly destabilizing the balance between knowledge and feeling (Rosenberg, 1968), higher intensity anger at oneself would be destabilizing toward the held beliefs of the student. These intense feelings would signify the need for

the student to change requiring an elimination of the inconsistency perceived as intrinsically part of the student, counter to Fletcher's (2010) assertions. Higher intensity anger toward an external catalyst for anger however would not create the need to destabilize the balance between the feelings and knowledge the student held about herself. When describing *extrinsic anger*, the inconsistencies leading to wrongness realization are perceived as caused by something or someone outside of the student. In this way, *extrinsic anger* held a protective aspect for the student. Simply put, it is easier to be angry at something else rather than at yourself.

This is similar to the explanations found in Schulz (2010) for the First Person Constraint on Doxastic Explanation theory, or as she so aptly calls it, the 'Cuz It's True Constraint. People make assumptions about the facts of any situation. Individuals respond to the inconsistencies in the facts they hold versus those of others in three ways. The individuals assume others simply lack information (Ignorance Assumption), are unintelligent and cannot comprehend the information (Idiocy Assumption), or are malicious (Evil Assumption) (Schulz, 2010, pp. 104-109). The students felt others were either too ignorant, stupid, or evil to really comprehend that the wrongness was not caused or created by the students themselves. *Intrinsic anger*, the term used to express the descriptions of anger at the student's self-perceived limitations, demonstrates a continuation of minimal responsibility for the wrongness whereas *extrinsic anger*, being described using more intense terms, seems to align with the increased responsibility placed on external forces within the educational environment. Simply put, students described being angrier at things they perceived were done to them. Those things they did to themselves were not described with the same intensity.



*Intrinsic anger* was an emotional response to the unexpected and uncontrollable experience of RAW perceived as coming from the student's own actions or inactions. The actions or inactions were perceived as coupled to the academic wrongness that led to the realization of academic wrongness. When describing *intrinsic anger*, the student expressed negative emotions toward herself. The *intrinsic anger*, most often described as frustration, was due to factors the student believed she had control over but had failed to control. *Intrinsic anger* at wrongness realization was further described as frustration stemming from the student's lack of successful completion of the exam, belief that she should have performed better, self-described lack of preparation, disconnect with her beliefs in her abilities, and comparison of herself with successful peers. RAW was inconsistent with the student's prior beliefs concerning her ability to be successful on the exam and her position within the academic environment. Students not meeting their own academic expectations were frustrated with themselves, wondering what they had or had not done.

It is important to note these students experienced other significant academic challenges within the current program and had moved past these prior unsuccessful academic attempts to reach this point. When describing the current experience of RAW, the students all discussed instances where they were wrong in the past and had later been successful. Prior realization of academic wrongness and eventual success however was identified as a component of the students' current frustration. Rather than perceiving their ability to succeed based on prior experiences with RAW, students described being frustrated by the current RAW. As the descriptions continued, the current situation was described in terms suggesting the unexpected, unfair, or unjust nature of the

circumstances. Moving the descriptions from an internal focus, I have been successful before, to an external cause of the wrongness provided a new understanding of the consideration of the realization of academic wrongness. Perhaps suggesting prior successes serves only to increase the anger in students experiencing RAW.

Describing frustration as being perceived as being and acting differently from what the student believed to be correct about herself, a disconnect existed in the ways the student considered herself in the academic context and in her daily life. Thinking she is a competent student, the realization of academic wrongness challenged this belief and the way the student felt about herself. The inconsistent nature of RAW with regard to the way the student perceived herself and her abilities created a vacuum that at first seemed to be filled by descriptions of powerlessness that over a short time changed to frustration. The powerlessness and frustration existed simultaneously and were often described together by the students, feeling frustrated and perceiving a lack in ability to change the situation. This lack of ability to challenge or change the situation increased the student's feelings of frustration and brought the focus of the frustration toward external components of the academic environment.

Students when describing frustration questioned their ability to succeed, unsure what to do to be successful. The inability to "figure it out" increased the students' levels of frustration with themselves. Students wanted to feel sure that what they were planning to do was "right" for the next exam attempt. Without a guarantee the students would be successful, students continued to describe being frustrated. The descriptions again shifted to an external focus of anger. Students described the program as "worthless" and "not useful". They also "couldn't trust our rocks", individuals within the program who

students perceived as the people who knew how to help prior to this experience with RAW.

Students when describing frustration discussed their thoughts about their intelligence. The students described feeling frustrated that they were “smart enough” yet had not been successful on the exam. Three students did not feel that review would help them become ready for the next exam attempt and were frustrated that they could not simply retest without review and remediation. Perceiving the remediation as “useless and unnecessary”, descriptions began to shift from an internal focus to an external focus of frustration and anger toward the components within and outside of the academic content perceived as preventing the students from progressing. Again, as the intensity of the emotion of anger increased within the descriptions, the focus shifted toward the academic environment and its components rather than staying focused on the intrinsically mediated aspects of the student.

As discussed in many of the descriptions of *intrinsic anger*, the description turned toward an external focus of the anger. This seemed to be a common progression, where students would describe being frustrated with themselves and quickly shift the direction of the anger toward something external. Descriptions of *extrinsic anger* contained expressions of negative emotions toward the program, individuals within the academic environment, and individuals outside of the educational context. Anger was described as derived from ambiguity within the context as well as a result of the distress each student experienced as a result of the realization of academic wrongness. Changes and challenges within the academic environment along with changes to the way the students felt they were perceived also resulted in descriptions of anger. Students described anger and

frustration directed toward policy, process, faculty, administration, and others outside of the educational environment. The students described being perceived and treated differently during RAW, that individuals within and outside of the educational environment did not perceive them as they really are. Being depersonalized by the system, used as *Guinea Pigs* and *pawns*, students were frustrated by the lack of understanding by others both in and out of the academic environment.

In both intrinsic and extrinsic expressions of anger, the feelings of anger described by the students ranged from mild annoyance to severe anger; however the levels of anger were not explicitly measured or interrogated. Since phenomenologic inquiry seeks to provide a robust, detailed description of the lived experience of a phenomenon rather than a rich description of a singular component of the experience, the levels of anger, although intriguing, are not quantified in this study.

One of the most significant descriptions of anger was demonstrated by the number of Post-It Notes containing words expressing anger. These expressions of anger, however, could not be categorized by direction, either extrinsic or intrinsic. During the Post-It Note activity, anonymity was provided to the writer of the text placed on each Post-It Note to encourage open description from each student. The students were asked to write a word on each Post-It Note describing how they felt after the reveal of the correct responses on the comprehensive exam. Words describing anger were the most frequently seen expression (Appendix J), however without being able to identify which student wrote each comment, it was not possible to member check the Post-It note responses for further clarification of meaning. In observing these students during the classroom activity, most frowned and raised their voices when spontaneously discussing

their experiences. Other behaviors consistent with a strong negative response were observed such as hitting the desk with a fist and leaving the classroom abruptly. Although directionality could not be established, it is quite clear anger is a significant component of the realization of academic wrongness. Whether anger is directed toward the student or externally, descriptions of anger at the realization of academic wrongness are consistent with challenges to perceived cognition, self-beliefs, and social structure within the educational context.

As discussed, the stories the students told and the powerlessness and the anger described by the students all converged to provide accounts of the lived experience at the realization of academic wrongness. Although this time frame was important, the lived experience at RAW does not incorporate the entire experience of wrongness realization. To get a better understanding of the lived experience of these students, it was imperative to investigate what happens next, what the lived experience of RAW means to students following the immediate acknowledgment of wrongness.

### **Lived Experiences and Behaviors After the Realization of Academic Wrongness**

The second and forth research questions for this inquiry provided an opportunity to have the students describe academic wrongness they had previously experienced. Nursing students after the realization of academic wrongness continued to provide descriptions and exhibit behaviors of powerlessness and anger. The stories each student told continued to contain the invariant constituents previously noted under the story to tell theme. Although this realization of academic wrongness was not still a new experience in this academic context, students did not describe changing perspectives of the realization or the original wrongness. Students still continued to attempt to limit

personal capability, to create rationales as to why the students were not solely responsible for the wrongness, to question the necessity of another exam, and to communicate anger focused toward the situation and the program in its entirety.

The passing of time, however, affected the individuals in another way. All of the interviews were held in a six day timeframe before the next comprehensive attempt. The impending next exam attempt increased individuals level of anxiety. The emotion anxiety, which occurs as the result of threats perceived to be uncontrollable or unavoidable, is part of the theme of powerlessness for this inquiry but spans several invariant constituents of the theme. Anxiety as a trans-invariant constituent component of the theme of powerlessness increased as several of the invariants of powerlessness increased. As the time of next exam attempt loomed ever nearer, students became more anxious about the next attempt, having no control over the timing of the next attempt. The process of exam scheduling changed from the previously communicated process and plan due to programmatic changes. The change to the scheduling was not communicated to the students prior to the previous exam attempt. The next comprehensive exam date was announced via email communication after the reveal of the rationales and in contradiction to the information previously provided before the original comprehensive exam and during the reveal and review in class meeting. In this situation, students' descriptions suggested feelings of being manipulated and used in a dichotomous context, unable to change, challenge, or influence the environment.

The anxiety produced by the pending next exam attempt impacted the feelings of the individuals not only toward the next attempt, but also toward the past unsuccessful attempt as the two experiences influenced one another. This anxiety was seen in the email

communications received during the six day timeframe prior to the next exam attempt. The emails received focused on process related questions surrounding the next attempt and the prior exam process verses requests for content or question remediation. Although anxiety was described and demonstrated by the co-participant researchers in email communications, none of the co-participant researchers discussed being anxious when interviewed about thoughts and feelings surrounding RAW in either historic or current situations. Behaviors suggesting anxiety were also noted the morning of the next comprehensive exam attempt. The comprehensive exam attempt was held on July 6, 2015 and marked the end of data collection for this inquiry. Several distinct behaviors were noted including wringing of hands (2), noticeable shaking (3), general distraction (4), and heavy signing (2). These behaviors were clarified by asking the students exhibiting the behaviors how they felt with the prompt, “I noticed you are \_\_\_\_\_. How do you feel?” These observations were not formalized and therefore not caught on an observation tool, however are part of the field notes from the morning of the comprehensive exam.

Other than increasing anxiety as described above, the lived experience after the realization of academic wrongness for these students included the same themes as the lived experience at the realization of academic wrongness. Students still had stories to tell about the wrongness to minimize and limit personal culpability of the event. Students still expressed powerlessness at not being able to have had influence over the wrongness event that led to RAW. Students still described *extrinsic anger* toward the component of the educational environment perceived to have ownership over the inconsistencies which led to the wrongness. *Intrinsic anger* was still described as being frustrated over the events the student felt she had control over. Since this inquiry was to begin to describe

the lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness as a whole, I did not seek to quantify the levels of anger and powerlessness nor did I seek to give scale to the stories. For this study, it was not important to know how these levels existed one versus the other, but if and when they existed at all.

The lived experiences of the realization of academic wrongness at and after RAW cannot be removed in this context from the students' concurrent need to review and remediate content and concepts in preparation for the next exam attempt. Although the timing and process in this particular academic environment are unique, similar interactions with wrongness realization and concurrent review and remediation exist in most educational endeavors. Students are wrong in explicit and implicit ways and in response educators continue to question and evaluate throughout the educational context. That being said, the intersection of RAW and the process of review and remediation is the final component of the inquiry into the lived experience of these students with RAW.

### **Content Engagement and Remediation After RAW**

After the reveal of the exam attempt and review of the rationales on June 15, 2015 in a classroom setting, students were enrolled into an asynchronous remediation program. The students had unfettered access to content within the system, email access to the virtual mentor, practice exams supplied at the discretion of the virtual mentor, and email access to me for questions about testing, content, or nursing process while engaging with remediation content. The students were aware the next attempt at the comprehensive exam would be held July 6, 2015, giving the students a 19 day time frame to work with the remediation content available in the asynchronous program. As shown in Table 2, no student accessed the content daily, no student began remediation on the first day the



system became available, and there was only one day, June 30, 2015, that three students accessed the system. Most activity occurred the week prior to the next attempt.

During the time the students had access to the asynchronous remediation system, I received unsolicited email communications from each student. The emails did not necessarily address the question of the realization of academic wrongness and I saw these unsolicited emails more as behaviors during the timeframe of the realization of academic wrongness, what the co-participant researchers were thinking and doing independent of the questions posed during the semi-structured interviews. These messages therefore were not necessarily affected by the artificial nature of interview questions (Silverman, 2011) posed by me but neither were these messages necessarily framed within the inquiry. Perceived anonymity in email communications can increase the participants' willingness to disclose sensitive information; however email has limitations including potential for miscommunication and misinterpretation of meaning (Meho, 2006). Understanding the potential for miscommunication and misinterpretation, I attempted to closely align the email messages with the 14 predetermined invariant constituents of the three themes described in the semi-structured interviews.

The students' emails contained stories that questioned the validity of the remediation process, the practice question rationales, the virtual mentor, and the next exam. Students described being "smart enough" and the students expressed they did not need remediation. These descriptions that suggest an entity self-theory of intelligence (Dweck, 1999), where an individual believes her intelligence is inherent. These students did not access the modular content, where concepts were reviewed; however the student whose stories were most closely aligned with an entity theory of self-intelligence

demanded more practice exams and was the most active in the practice exam area. Her demands for more practice exams also align with the entity self-theory of intelligence. Through testing and retesting within the asynchronous system, she attempted to prove her intelligence was something “she was” versus something she “could become”. Accessing the modular content more than the practice exams could have potentially destabilized the student’s balance of feelings and knowledge, inconsistent with an individual’s tendency to minimize significant assaults to held beliefs (Fletcher, 2010; Rosenberg, 1968). In these cases, the disruptive nature of RAW created a disconnect between the student and the remediation process causing the student to conceptualize the process as flawed and unnecessary.

The behaviors of the students whose descriptions were more aligned with the incremental self-theory intelligence (Dweck, 1999) were inconsistent with seeking content or information from the virtual remediation course, the virtual mentor, or me. Behaviors that would seem to be consistent with attempts to understand content during remediation would include accessing the virtual remediation content, attempting practice exams, and communicating with the virtual mentor or me. Individuals whose stories were more aligned with incremental intelligence did not communicate more often with the virtual mentor or me. They did not access the virtual remediation more often than those who provided more entity aligned descriptions of intelligence and they did not attempt practice exams more often than those students with an entity alignment. Simply put, those who were more incrementally inclined did not behave in ways that supported their descriptions of incremental intelligence, their understanding that intelligence is gained by work not by birth. Those students describing stronger entity intelligence interacted more

with the virtual mentor and me and accessed virtual remediation exams more often; however their interactions were primarily to question the validity of rationales, complain about the virtual remediation system, or demand more practice exams within the virtual system. These students took more practice exams, but did not access the modular content provided for content review. These behaviors seem more aligned with an entity theory of self-intelligence as studying would be unnecessary to an individual who believes she already has the knowledge required to be successful. By practicing the exam, an individual would work on the process of testing not the work of processing content.

Attempts at redirection into the learning modules in the virtual system were unsuccessful and the responses from the students became angrier. For example, Bridget went from describing her experience with the virtual remediation as being “frustrated” to “This is a total waste of time and BS” over the 19 day timeframe from the in class review of the exam and the next attempt at the comprehensive exam on July 5, 2015.

What did these lived experiences of RAW mean during content engagement and remediation for these students? According to the students’ descriptions and behaviors, the realization of academic wrongness prohibited meaningful content review and remediation. In place of a focus on content review and remediation and engagement, students chose different ways to disengage from the processes meant to aide them in their next exam attempt. Students either described the virtual remediation process as useless, refusing to engage in content review or students stated they would engage, but did not do so. The focus in virtual remediation became practice exams which did not provide reviews and rationales for misunderstood content, allowing the students to test their knowledge without adding to their understanding of what they got wrong and more

importantly why. Virtual remediation became the target for the students' *extrinsic anger*. Review and remediation activities were perceived as something keeping these students from the next successful attempt and not as a tool to assist the students in preparing for the next exam attempt. Virtual remediation meant the students were still powerless and needed something they did not have to be successful, even after "I made it through everything." RAW "stole every positive thing I had to say about myself or this program". RAW "took away everything I believed to know" and "I feel like I don't learn anything" in virtual remediation.

As part of this inquiry, I did not inquire specific reasons why the students did not access the asynchronous remediation as the focus of this inquiry was the lived experience of the students. From the descriptions provided, the lived experience of content review and remediation after RAW was a disconnected process for the students. They did not behave in ways consistent with perceived value of the content review and exam practice, choosing to avoid the asynchronous modules and exams overall. From the descriptions provided, we cannot determine whether this disconnect stems solely from the student's belief she does not need content review or from a perceived lack of ability and therefore avoidance of another experience with RAW. There are many questions yet to be posed and interrogated with regard to the realization of academic wrongness and the impact this phenomenon has on students, educators, and educational environments.

### **Implications**

These findings have implications across disciplines and programs as RAW is not limited to high stakes testing, nursing education, or higher education. An example of the breadth and depth of RAW in academia can be found in Bridget's initial response to the

question of her first memory of being wrong in an academic environment. She jokingly shared “First grade” before launching into her self-selected memory of RAW. Although her initial response was not provided in an attempt to answer the question, her statement taking us back to her early childhood experience with RAW has meaning. In any environment where learning takes place, the realization of academic wrongness is a possibility. As we learn, we are inevitably wrong.

Denying emotions during analysis is counterproductive and can negatively affect the results of the inquiry (Gilbert, 2001). Since the self is a primary instrument for qualitative data analysis, emotions felt during inquiry development, data collection, and data analysis need to be explicated so that readers can understand the perspective of the researcher at the time of construction of the results and meaning of the findings. Objective reporting of observations and cataloging of terms does not fully describe the essence of the phenomena of the realization of academic wrongness. Both the thoughts and feelings of all involved with the inquiry call out for a voice, as will your own thoughts and feelings as you read this offering. By adding all voices that are touched by the process, the phenomena of the realization of academic wrongness can be exposed and elaborated on to the point at which the clandestine nature of the phenomena can be relegated to the past where the stigma can no longer hinder the faculty or students in the quest for understanding and knowledge, where academic wrongness can be seen as part of the process of knowledge acquisition not a roadblock to progression.

The call for nurse educators to interrogate teaching and evaluation practices and processes is warranted (Benner et al., 2010; Pennington & Spurlock, 2010). A singular focus on remediation concentrated on students at the end of program has not provided

positive outcomes, limiting the numbers of nursing students who successfully complete nursing programs. In the current healthcare environment, the need for nurses has increased exponentially. The implications for the nursing profession with regard to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) (2010) are clearly highlighted in the Institute of Medicine (IOM) report (2011). In response to factors including the ACA, the IOM report calls for significant increases in the number of nursing professionals and broadening the scope of nursing practice to meet the healthcare needs of the increasing numbers of patients entering the ever changing and challenging healthcare system. These are just two of the catalysts for the increased need for students to successfully complete nursing programs. The aging population, the aging of current nurses, and the increase in patient acuity all converge to increase the need for new nurses to enter the profession.

Without a better understanding of the experiences of students during times of the realization of academic wrongness, practices and processes will be singularly informed and continue to be delivered at and not with students using their unique experiences to assist in their educational trajectory. To truly and fully serve our students, we must be open to understanding their perspective. Reconceptualizing academic environments to embrace being wrong as an opportunity for knowledge development is not sufficient. Harnessing the power of RAW within education will require more than a focus on conceptual knowledge development, review and remediation of concepts and constructs. The essence of RAW is wrought with changes and challenges to the way an individual thinks and feels about their current state of being, what an individual knew to be true is no more. To fill that temporary void, the individual searches out an alternative meaning. It is in that moment educators can harness the power of RAW, placing in the void

hopefulness and anticipation for the learning that needs to come. As shared by the students in this inquiry, remediation and review during RAW was inconsistent with their current state. These students knew they “should be studying” but did not exhibit behaviors consistent with reviewing and remediating content. Students instead attempted to test their knowledge again and again without significant content review. The deficit these students seemed to be addressing was not that of knowledge and content, it was that of inconsistencies of their self-beliefs. As Nussbaum and Dweck (2008) posit these students attempted to “repair deficiencies”, but those deficiencies were not perceived as content related but as related to their self-beliefs of intelligence. These students felt too smart to not know and needed to prove they did know.

Educators at all levels need to be mindful of the meanings RAW holds for our students and the implications RAW, both current and historic, has on students and ourselves. Our responses with regard to academic wrongness have as much to do with our experiences with RAW as with our student’s current academic issues.

### **Study Limitations**

Students experience various emotional and developmental events while in a program of study which constitute their realities. As part of this inquiry, I did not seek to identify all the varied lived experiences of nursing students within a nursing program. Students’ feelings and thoughts surrounding educational experiences such as high stakes tests, failure, and faculty relationships are separate and distinct constructs from the phenomenon of interest, the realization of academic wrongness (RAW). Although occurring in consort with RAW, the various experiences of students within an academic environment can be vetted as separate and distinct phenomena. As RAW can be separated

from other constructs found in an educational environment, the inquiry focused on this singular phenomenon. Limiting the focus of inquiry to one specific experience within a context is an epistemologic component of phenomenology, ensuring validity and limits within a study. Intentionality, an intrinsic component of the phenomenologic process, requires directedness toward an object or a non-object (Moustakas, 1994). As held by Husserl (1931) both objects and non-objects, as is the case with the realization of academic wrongness, can be interrogated using the descriptive phenomenologic method, however, the inquiry must be limited to the consciousness of the specific, not generalized, experience to clearly describe the lived experience of the phenomenon of interest. Although comprehensive student described experiences of a variety educational constructs are needed to challenge current educational theory and practice, attempting to collect and analyze descriptions of multiple phenomena within a single study is contrary to phenomenologic method which bases its core in intentionality constructed of noema and noesis, perception and meaning (Husserl, 1931). Without a focus, a phenomenologic study would suffer from lack of direction and intent diluting the power of the lived experience to superficial and disconnected explanations of contextual and textural elements by the participants.

Within this inquiry, time was a significant factor. The fleeting nature of the essence of RAW had specific limitations. In addition, a variety of limitations in this study were the result of the methodologic process including the passing of time and aspects of the data collection and analysis methods. Each of these limitations will be described in detail with suggestions for future inquiry considerations and adjustments.



**The essence of RAW.** The fleeting nature of the phenomenon of the realization of academic wrongness must be addressed. As a construct the realization of academic wrongness, the moment an individual becomes aware his or her response was not what was expected, is a time of fluctuation. The individual moves from thinking the response was correct, or at least the best attempt to be correct was made, to having the wrongness revealed. At this revelation, the individual begins to process RAW. The exact moment of the shift from being right to being wrong progresses quickly as the individual starts the process of attempting to understand RAW. What the individual thinks, feels, and perceives at and after RAW become part of the understanding of the individual. Each RAW affects and is affected by previous experiences with RAW. Since the timeframe at RAW is fleeting, interrogating RAW immediately following the reveal of academic wrongness was difficult. Using the Brain Tool allowed for data collection of thoughts at RAW as each question was revealed, however thoughts were not provided for each question or by each individual. The expectation for the thoughts column on the Brain Tool was an area for self-expression and was not required to be completed unless the individual wanted to do so. Interviews could not realistically be held within the classroom environment or immediately following the reveal and review classroom session as I was the sole researcher in this inquiry. Removing the reveal and review from the classroom environment into individual reveal and review sessions followed by an interview may have been an option, however this change in the current course process would not allow for the group Post It Note activity. Students have found this activity helpful to the processing of RAW according to antidotal reports from prior students. When considering the implications for the students, separating the students for the benefit of the inquiry was

not appropriate. The separation would have impacted the students' perceptions of RAW in context. RAW often occurs during class sessions or in the presence of peers. In future inquiry, the organic nature of context needs to continue to hold precedent over the researcher's desire to extract information.

**Time.** One limitation of the study was the passing of time. This limitation was seen in a variety of aspects of the study. First, the timeframe from RAW to the time of the actual interviews was much longer than I anticipated. The extended time frame from the moment of RAW influenced the thoughts, feelings, and descriptions provided by the co-participant researchers. As time passed, the thoughts and feelings associated with the moment of RAW changed as individuals processed the event by themselves and with others. The external influences and internal processing of RAW changed co-participant researchers' perceptions of RAW. The exact moment of the realization of academic wrongness is in itself a fleeting feeling. This was most seen with the descriptions of anxiety when using the Brain Tool and during the Post It Note Activity at RAW. Co-participant researchers did not describe feelings of anxiety during the interviews. As the next comprehensive attempt approached however, unsolicited email communications demonstrated anxious feelings and behaviors. The reports of anxiety at RAW evidenced in the Post It Note Activity as well as increasing reports of anxiety in emails indicate anxiety is closely aligned with the moment of RAW as well as the anticipation of a subsequent experience with RAW. Further inquiry into the experience of anxiety at and after RAW is required to begin to understand not only how anxiety and RAW are connected, but to determine increases and decreases in anxious responses during times bracketed by actual RAW and anticipated RAW.

A second time related limitation was the timing of the request of feedback for the manuscripts. Initially, the audio tapes of the interviews were sent to one transcriber. This individual did not return the manuscripts in a timely manner causing me to engage a second transcription service to complete the transcription work. This delayed the receipt of the initial manuscripts for an average of 6.5 weeks. The total time from interview to return of a manuscript to the co-participant researchers for feedback through member checking exceeded the anticipated timeframe of 30 days from interview to preliminary member checking cycle. Table 3 shows the timeframe from interview to manuscript distribution for each co-participant researcher.

Table 3

*Time from interview to manuscript delivery to co-participant researchers*

Co-participant researcher	Interview Date	Manuscript Delivered	Timeframe (days)
Bridget	6/30/15	8/29/15	60
Fidelma	7/2/15	8/30/15	59
Bettina	7/3/15	8/29/15	57
Mackenzie	7/4/15	9/3/15	61

As described previously, the essence of RAW is fleeting and changes over time as an individual processes RAW both internally and influenced by others. The prolonged time from interview to manuscript delivery may have been a factor in several areas. The co-participant researchers' memories of their thoughts and feelings during the interview were affected by the time from the interview to the reading of the manuscripts, changing the meaning of RAW over time. For example, Bettina expressed confusion concerning a

statement she made during the interview, “this doesn't make sense to me. I'm not sure where I was going with that” (personal communication, October 11, 2015). In future inquiry, vetting the capabilities of any outside vendor prior to utilization within a study is paramount.

As a result of the delay in delivery of the manuscripts and the request for member checking, the anticipated response time for member checking was longer than anticipated. To add to the delay caused by the longer than expected return of the manuscripts, co-participant researchers did not check their program emails as often as they had previously. The inattention to program emails contributed to the time limitation of prolonged response to member checking requests. Although program email inattention was not the sole factor in the time frame increase, a second email was sent to each co-participant researcher after no one responded to the initial email. None of the co-participant researchers responded to the member checking email until a second email was sent to each co-participant researcher asking them to respond to the questions asked and to review the manuscript for errors (Appendix I). Three of the four co-participant researchers responded to the second member checking email within a reasonable timeframe. Bridget had a prolonged response time to the request as she responded to the initial email after 131 days. Table 4 shows the timeframe from the second email and the response from the co-participant researcher.

Table 4

*Time from second email to member checking response*

Co-participant researcher	1 <sup>st</sup> email	2 <sup>nd</sup> email	Change (days)	Response	Total time (days)
Bridget	8/29/15	9/28/15	30	1/7/16	131
Fidelma	8/30/15	9/28/15	29	9/29/15	30
Bettina	8/29/15	9/28/15	30	10/8/15	38
Mackenzie	9/3/15	9/28/15	25	9/28/15	25

Again, the passage of time created opportunities for descriptions of RAW to change and shift from the lived experiences at the moment of RAW toward the processing of RAW providing more of a historic description of the lived experience. The timeframes from the moment of RAW to interview through to the member checking response was longer than originally expected and impacted the clear descriptions of the actual feelings and thoughts at RAW for the interview data. Other data collected during the in class review of the exam, the Brain Tool, observations, and Post It Note Activity, preserved some thoughts, feelings, and behaviors at RAW unadulterated by time and influences outside of the current realization of academic wrongness. Table 5 shows the progression of the timeframe between the interview and the response to member checking.

Table 5

<i>Total Response Times</i>	
Co-participant Researcher	Time From interview to Response
Bridget	181 days
Fidelma	74 days
Bettina	89 days
Mackenzie	71 days

The prolonged time frame affected the memory of not only RAW, but of the statements made during the interviews and the thoughts and feelings attached to the interview process. In future inquiry, attempts should be made to limit the time frame between delivery of the manuscripts and member checking responses.

**Data collection.** As a data collection technique, the interviews themselves are limiting to this study. Although the semi-structured interview is at the core of Moustakas' methodologic process (1994), interviews pose limits on and potential bias toward data. The interview process lends an artificial note to the data, where questions, probes and prompts are used to encourage discussion about the phenomenon of interest. The very guidance given by Moustakas (1994) to create questions, probes and prompts "aimed at evoking a comprehensive account of the person's experience of the phenomenon" (p. 114) places limits on a co-participant researchers descriptions based on the understandings of the researcher. These questions, probes, and prompts are created by the researcher prior to interactions with the co-participant researchers in anticipation of the semi-structured interview to guide the researcher and to narrow the focus of the interview to the phenomenon of interest. Moustakas (1994) also suggests questions, probes, and prompts could be set aside if the co-participant researcher begins to share his or her

experience with the phenomenon fully and as a natural course of mentioning the experience (p. 114); however when the phenomenon of interest is not one necessarily discussed or considered, questions, probes, and prompts become necessary.

The conversations about RAW may not naturally occur as some co-participant researchers stated they had never really thought about how they feel in the moment they are told or they realize they were wrong. Considering the experience of wrongness realization is not a common experience (Schulz, 2010) and therefore required questions, probes, and prompts to encourage co-participant researcher descriptions. In Makenzie's and Bettina's interviews, there were several hesitations in answering questions about RAW. The need for probes and prompts during the interviews suggests that co-participant researchers had not considered their experience of RAW and did not independently process the thoughts surrounding RAW or the lived experience of RAW. Additionally, deviation from the descriptions of RAW during the interview process may not have been due to lack of understanding with regard to focus but due to the unwillingness of the student to go deeper into the descriptions of wrongness realization. In future inquiry, using only predetermined probes and prompts to provide structure may be unwise. Some flexibility in probes and prompts may provide entry into descriptions not freely offered by participants; however care should be taken to encourage descriptions of the phenomenon of interest not interesting phenomena. As individualized probes and prompts evolve during the interview process, these prompts could be recorded. Categorizing these probes and prompts during analysis could lead to a deeper understanding of how students conceptualize wrongness realization in the academic context by identifying when students required more direction or focus to remain within

the descriptions of the experience of wrongness realization or when students' comfort levels were breached.

**Member checking.** Member checking (Creswell, 2014; Harper & Cole, 2012) was required for all of the interviews due to the need to clarify the connections and meanings expressed by the co-participant researchers with regard to relationships and how these specific relationships either supported or dissuaded the co-participant researchers during and immediately following RAW. Although all co-participant researchers agreed at the beginning of the inquiry that they would be available for clarification of meaning, not all of the co-participant researchers responded to questions asked concerning unclear meaning. Suspected meanings were reported for two of the co-participant researchers as these individuals did not respond to email requests for member checking information over several weeks. In future inquiry, member checking should be attempted closer to the completion of the interview perhaps in a virtual or live meeting forum.

**Trust.** Trust in the researcher is also a limitation in this study. The relationship between each individual participant and the researcher presented unique issues. Programmatic shifts and changes increased the participants' level of mistrust with all individuals involved in the program, including me. Although I attempted to be transparent in all of my interactions with the students, the lack of a clear process during the study time frame made this extremely difficult. Students were seeking a "rock" someone to be able to guide them through the process that knew all of the pitfalls and could help them navigate the system. Trust between the participants and me was negatively impacted several times during this study as notices were sent by various administrators that were contrary to the original and that was articulated by me during the



initial meeting with the students. Although the participants said they understood and trusted me, my perception was that the participants were hesitant to believe anything anyone from the program said. I believe that this lack of trust significantly impacted two of the four interviews as these participants seemed cautious when answering questions concerning their thoughts and feelings during the RAW and after. Two of the participants seemed more open and willing to discuss their feelings and thoughts. This difference was described in detail in chapter 4. Even though these two participants seemed to provide their experiences more openly, I am still concerned the completeness of their experiences was impacted by the general lack of trust expressed by each participant. As noted in chapter 4, nonresponse bias was impacted by a lack of trust in the system by the two members of the population who declined to participate in the inquiry.

The inability for the students to become familiar with me prior to the exam process impacted the co-participant researchers' level of trust in me during this inquiry. Relationship building is a key component of the interview process, as participants need to have a level of comfort with the researcher to assist presenting their thoughts and feelings (Seidman, 2006). Only one of the participants had prior engagement with me while in the program. Although the students were provided with a letter introducing the study (Appendix A), due to programmatic changes I was not able to meet with the entire senior class as planned. I felt this created a relationship void between the co-participant researchers and me that we had to work through during data collection activities that may have prevented co-participant researchers to be as open as possible. Although each shared emotional and painful descriptions of RAW, I am concerned some things went unaddressed such as anxiety. As noted in chapter 4, anxiety was described on the Post It

Note Activity, the Brain Tool, and in unsolicited email communications. Anxiety was not described during the interview process, a time where clearly our relationships were part of the collection process. I continue to wonder if there were other descriptions co-participants researchers chose not to share. Bridget was the only co-participant researcher I had prior contact with in the program and her descriptions were robust with little need for probes and prompts.

**Communication.** During the member checking process, I miscommunicated with Mackenzie. The probe I used suggested that she did not discuss relationships at all when in fact she had clearly discussed relationships in the academic environment with both faculty and peers. It is difficult to ascertain how this misstep changed her explanation of her experiences with relationships. Perhaps she would have elected to share more about relationships in the educational environment if I had worded my probe more clearly. Also, limiting the entirety of the communications after the interviews to email was difficult. I gave the co-participant researchers the option to choose the mode of communication for member checking. I believe this limited my ability to have organic conversations with each co-participant researcher. In the future, I will attempt to have telephone conversations with participants rather than communicate solely via email.

**Data analysis.** Data analysis also limited the findings of this study. The inconsistent examples of prior academic wrongness events provided by the participants limited the alignment during analysis. Each participant was asked to provide an example of academic wrongness realization of their own choosing. This was done to extract historic descriptions of RAW. Although three participants provided in program examples, two examples were not based in high stakes testing scenarios. These two exemplars were

from course failure. One example was from a testing experience; however this experience was not a summative evaluation or high stakes exam. The testing experience was formative to determine the level of medication math ability of the students in an attempt to identify areas where individual students would need assistance. The only participant who initially provided an out of program example was redirected back to the nursing program as planned, however the nursing program example she provided was not a high stakes testing example. She provided a clinically based example for the context of the individualized historic realization of academic wrongness. Although all of the examples provided by the co-participant researchers were based in what they defined as their first recollection of RAW in academia, the examples provided presented different contexts and therefore different meanings. The unifying factor, the first recollection in the nursing program, did not direct co-participant researchers toward simply high-stakes testing experiences providing the opportunity for educators to begin to understand the depth and breadth of RAW within educational environments. RAW is not simply experienced as a result of tests. RAW is our constant companion in academic environments, ready to be leveraged or to consume.

***Post-It Note data.*** The Post-It Note activity created an opportunity for the co-participant researchers to express their immediate reaction to the realization of academic wrongness. The responses were anonymous as the students did not put their names on the Post-It Notes and students were not given specific colors to denote identity. The anonymous nature of the Post-It Note activity allowed students to share their thoughts and feelings freely, however anonymity did not allow for member checking and follow up. Although there was some discussion during the activity concerning the meaning of

the words written on the Post-It Notes, I could not be certain the writer of the word or words was the person commenting on the meaning of the Post-It Note content. It may seem logical to attempt the Post It Note Activity removing the anonymity provided by the current activity. This could be achieved by simply providing different colors of notes or using notes with different symbols, however participants may not share as openly if their anonymity is in question. Also, member checking with individuals after an activity couched as anonymous breaches trust with the co-participant researchers. In future inquiry, discussions during and immediately following the Post It Note Activity should be framed. Using probes and prompts similar to those used during the semi-structured interviews, group definitions and descriptions of the words shared on each note could be better identified.

## **Conclusion**

Once better understood, the realization of academic wrongness can be the beginning of positive interactions with students rather than a time of negative, accusatory stories which limit further understanding and seem to prevent meaningful integration of content in context for student progression and success. The stories told by the students along with their feelings of powerlessness and anger suggest interdependence of perceived cognition, self-beliefs, and social structure of the educational environment with respect to the realization of academic wrongness. Simply stated, when our students realize they were wrong, they are in a state of flux, changing and being challenged in ways they had not anticipated. Realizing the essence of RAW is constructed in these ways, we as educators have multiple opportunities to harness the power of RAW, to take in and take hold of the void created by RAW and guide our students toward positive

changes that support learning. In this inquiry, the interdependence of cognition, self-beliefs, and social structure in the context of the nursing program did not align to create an environment conducive to learning via content review and remediation. These students continued to focus on limiting the feelings associated with RAW rather than actively attempting to engage with the content and remediate. Although content engagement and remediation after wrongness would seem logical to faculty, this was not the logical progression for these students. Educators who understand the student perspective can proactively address the perceived cognition, self-beliefs, and social structure of the educational environment before the first RAW occurs in context. How educators can proactively address RAW before it occurs and how educators respond to RAW in context are areas we need to interrogate. The student's lived experience of the realization of academic wrongness is simply the initial foray into this phenomenon. Faculty and others within educational environments also have experiences with wrongness realization which will need to be better understood to truly achieve understanding of the impact and potential power of RAW.

Bridget's description of what RAW feels like serves to focus faculty and administrators alike:

It very much feels like I was put on a raft made out of twigs held together by twine that like, you know, like on *Castaway*, and literally pointing in this direction of the star, like "Go that way and good luck. Don't forget to write." Picture your students, cold and alone, adrift on the ocean with no idea how to get back home. Knowing this is what RAW feels like for your students, I challenge you to co-

create an understanding of RAW with your students. Help them traverse the oceans and reach the shores so in the future, they can navigate the uncharted territories they will face.

## References

- Adamson, C. & Britt, R. (2009). Repeat testing with the HESI exit exam-sixth validity study. *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing* 27(6), 393-397.
- Applebaum, M. (2013). Moustakas' Phenomenology: Husserlian? *PhenomenologyBlog*. <http://phenomenologyblog.com/?p=896>
- Argyris, C. (1990). *Overcoming organizational defenses: Facilitating organizational learning*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Argyris, C. & Schon, D.A. (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ashworth, P. (1999). Bracketing in phenomenology: Renouncing assumptions in hearing about student cheating. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 12(6), 707-721.
- Baker, S.E. and Edwards, R. (2012). *How many qualitative interviews is enough? Expert voices and early career reflections on sampling and cases in qualitative research*. (Report No. 019) Retrieved from National Centre for Research Methods, Economic and Social Research Council <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-576-47-5001-01/outputs/Read/6c79e36f-13cb-47e9-a6c2-450dbb9060a9>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Towards a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. New York, NY: General Learning Press.
- Bandura, A. (1984). Recycling misconceptions of perceived self-efficacy. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 8(3), 231-255.
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(2), 117-148.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. USA: W.H. Freeman and Company.
- Bednall, J. (2006). Epoche and bracketing within the phenomenological paradigm. *Issues in Educational Research*, 16(2), 123-138.
- Benight, C.C. & Bandura, A. (2004). Social cognitive theory of posttraumatic recovery: The role of perceived self-efficacy. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 42(10), 1129-1148.
- Benner, P., Sutphen, M., Leonard, V., & Day, L. (2010). *Educating nurses: A call for radical transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Brentano, F. (1902). *The origin of the knowledge of right and wrong*. (C. Hague, Trans.) London: Archibald, Constable & Company. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/stream/theoriginofthekn00brenuoft#page/n0/mode/2up>
- Billings, D.M. & Halstead, J.A. (2005). *Teaching in nursing: A guide to faculty* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). St. Louis, MO: Elsevier-Saunders.
- Cantrell, M. A. (2008). The importance of debriefing in clinical simulation. *Clinical Simulations in Nursing*, (4), 19-23.
- Chaiken, S. (1982). *Affective-cognitive consistency, counterarguing, and persuasion*. Unpublished manuscript, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. Retrieved from <http://chaiken.socialpsychology.org/publications>
- Chaiken, S., & Baldwin, M. W. (1981). Affective-cognitive consistency and the effect of salient behavioral information on the self-perception of attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41, 1-12.
- Chan, Z. C. Y., Fung, Y.L., & Chien, W.T. (2013). Bracketing in phenomenology: Only undertaken in the data collection and analysis process? *The Qualitative Report*, 18(59), 1-9. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR18/chan59.pdf>
- Colaizzi, P.F. (1973). *Reflection and research in psychology: A phenomenological study of learning*. Dubuque, IA: Kendell Hunt.
- Collins, J.L. (1985). *Self-efficacy and ability in achievement behavior* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (UMI No. 8506172).
- Copeland, A.J. & Agosto, D.E. (2012). Diagrams and relational maps: The use of graphic elicitation techniques with interviewing for data collection, analysis, and display. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 11(5), 513-533.
- Crabtree, B.F. & Miller, W.L. (Eds.). (1992). *Doing qualitative research: Methods for primary care, Volume 3*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- de Witt, L. & Ploeg, J. (2006). Critical appraisal of rigor in interpretive phenomenological nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 55(2), 215-229.



- Diekelmann, N. L. (1992). Learning-as-testing: A Heideggerian hermeneutical analysis of the lived experiences of students and teachers in nursing. *Advances in Nursing Science* 14(3), 72-83.
- Dreifurst, K. (2009). The essentials of debriefing in simulation learning: A concept analysis. *Nursing Education Perspectives*,2(30), 109-114.
- Drexel University, College of Nursing and Health Sciences. (2013). [List of 492B ACE and CoOp students 201015-201315]. Unpublished raw data.
- Dweck, C.S. (1999). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Eastman, C. & Marzillier, J.S. (1984). Theoretical and methodological difficulties in Bandura's self-efficacy theory. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 8(3), 213-229.
- English, J.B. & Gordon, D.K. (2008). Successful student remediation following repeated failures on the HESI exam. *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing* 26(5), 75S-77S.
- Fink, A. (2012). *How to conduct surveys: A step by step guide*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.
- Fletcher, J. (2010). *A revised theory of cognitive consistency* (Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Riverside). Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/655716/A\\_revised\\_theory\\_of\\_cognitive\\_consistency](http://www.academia.edu/655716/A_revised_theory_of_cognitive_consistency)
- Flick, U. (2007). *Designing Qualitative Research* Thousand Oakes, CA:Sage doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849208826>
- Gearing, R.E. (2004). Bracketing in research: A typology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(10), 1429-1452. DOI: 10.1177/1049732304270394
- Gilbert, K.R. (ed.). (2001). *The Emotional Nature of Qualitative Research*. New York, NY:CRC Press
- Giorgi, A. and Giorgi, B. (2008). Phenomenology. In J.A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 26-52). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Given, L.M. (2008). Qualitative research methods. In N. J. Salkind (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Educational Psychology* (pp.827-831). Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.
- Green, G., Campbell, R., & Grimshaw, M. (2011). In citing advanced levels of practitioner reflection through progressive graphic elicitation. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods* 9(2), 172-184.

- Griffiths, M.J., Papastrat, K., Czekanski, K., & Hagan, K. (2004). The lived experience of NCLEX failure. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 43(7), 322-325.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597-607.
- Hamill, C. and Sinclair, H. (2010). Bracketing-practical considerations in Husserlian phenomenological research. *Nurse Researcher* 17(2), 16.
- Harper, M. and Cole, P. (2012). Member checking: Can benefits be gained similar to group therapy? *The Qualitative Report* 17(2), 510-517.
- Hayman, B., Wilkes, L., and Jackson, D. (2012). Journaling: Identification of challenges and reflection on strategies. *Nurse Researcher* 19(3), 27-31.
- Hsieh, H.F. and Shannon, S.E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research* 15(9), 1277-1288.
- Hopkins, P.E. (2006). Youth transitions and going to university: The perceptions of students attending a geography summer school access programme. *Area* 38(3), 240-247.
- Hughes, R. G. (Ed.). (2008). *Patient safety and quality: An evidence-based handbook for nurses*. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK2651/>
- Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (W.R. Boyce Gibson). New York: MacMillan
- Husserl, E. (1964). *Cartesian meditations: An introduction to phenomenology*. (D. Cairns, Trans.). The Hague. (Original work published 1929).
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology: An introduction to phenomenological philosophy*. (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1954).
- Husserl, E. (2008). *Introduction to logic and theory of knowledge* [electronic resource]: lectures 1906/1907 (C. Ortiz-Hill, Trans.). Dordrecht: Springer. Drexel eBook
- Institute of Medicine, The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2011). *The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.
- Kenny, G. (2012). An introduction to Moustakas' heuristic method. *Nurse Researcher* 19(3), 6-11.

- Koloroutis, M. (Ed.). (2004). *Relationship-based care: A model for transforming practice*. Minneapolis, MN: Creative Healthcare Management.
- Krumer-Nevo, M. & Sidi, M. (2012). Writing against Othering. *Qualitative Inquiry* 18(4), 299-309.
- Kuzel, A. (1999). Sampling in qualitative inquiry. In B. Crabtree & W. Miller (Eds.). *Doing qualitative research* (pp. 33-45). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Lancia, L., Petrucci, C., Giorgi, F., Dante, A. & Cifone, M. G. (2013). Academic success or failure in nursing students: Results of a retrospective observational study. *Nurse Education Today* 33(12), 1501-1505. DOI: 10.1016/j.nedt.2013.05.001 <http://www.nurseeducationtoday.com/article/S0260-6917%2813%2900164-0/abstract>
- Lasater, K. (2007). High-fidelity simulation and the development of clinical judgment: Students' experiences. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 46(6), 269-276.
- Lester, S. (1999). *An introduction to phenomenological research*. Tauton, UK: Stan Lester Developments.
- McNamara, M.S. (2005). Knowing and doing phenomenology: The implications of the critique of 'nursing phenomenology' for a phenomenological inquiry: A discussion paper. *The International Journal of Nursing Studies* 42, 695-704.
- McPike, G. (2002). Phenomenological reflections on the failing grade. Retrieved from <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/sources/textorium/mcpike-grace-phenomenological-reflections-on-the-failing-grade/>
- Mariani, B., Cantrell, M.A., Meakim, C., Prieto, P., & Dreifuerst, K.T. (2013). Structured debriefing and students' clinical judgment abilities in simulation. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, 9(5), 147-155.
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. (2011). *Designing Qualitative Research* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.
- Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(3), Art 8. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs100387>.
- McAdams, D.P. (1993). *The stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of self*. New York, NY: Gilford Press.
- Meho, L.I. (2006). E-mail interviewing in qualitative research: A methodological discussion. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 57(10), 1284-1295.

- Melle, U. (Ed.). (2008). Introduction to logic and theory of knowledge: Lectures 1906/07 Vol. XIII In *Edmund Husserl: Collected works* (C. Otriz-Hill, Trans). Dordrecht, NLD: Springer. (Original work published 1984)
- Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Miller, W.I. (2003). *Faking It*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Moustakas, C. (2001). Heuristic research: Design and methodology. In K.J. Schneider, J.F.T. Bugental, & J.F. Pierson (Eds.), *The handbook of humanistic psychology: Leading edges in theory, research, and practice* (pp. 263-274). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Morrow, S.L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 250-260.  
[http://www.safranlab.net/uploads/7/6/4/6/7646935/quality\\_\\_trustworthiness\\_2005.pdf](http://www.safranlab.net/uploads/7/6/4/6/7646935/quality__trustworthiness_2005.pdf)
- National League for Nursing. (2012). The fair testing imperative in nursing education: A living document from the National League for Nursing. Retrieved from [http://www.nln.org/aboutnln/livingdocuments/pdf/nlvision\\_4.pdf](http://www.nln.org/aboutnln/livingdocuments/pdf/nlvision_4.pdf)
- Nibert, A.T., Adamson, C., Young, A., Lauchner, K.A., Britt, R.B., & Newman-Hinds, M. (2006). Choosing a theoretical framework to guide HESI exit examination research. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 45(8), 303-307.
- Nicole, L.H. (Ed.). (1997). *Perspectives on nursing theories* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott-Raven.
- Norman, R. (1975). Affective-cognitive consistency, attitudes, conformity, and behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 32, 83-91.
- Nussbaum, A.D. & Dweck, C.S. (2008). Defensiveness versus remediation: Self-theories and modes of self-esteem maintenance. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34, 599-612.

- Opdenakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(4), Art. 11. Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/175/391#gcit>
- Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 42 U.S.C. § 18031 (2010).
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *HSR: Health Sciences Research* 34(5) Part II, 1189-1208.  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1089059/pdf/hsresearch00022-0112.pdf>
- Pennington, T.D. & Spurlock, D. (2010). A systematic review of the effectiveness of remediation interventions to improve NCLEX-RN pass rates. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 49(9), 485-492.
- Pereira, H.R. (2012). Rigor in phenomenological research: Reflections of a novice nurse researcher. *Nurse Researcher*, 19(3), 16-19.
- Poorman, S., & Webb, C. (2000). Preparing to retake the NCLEX-RN: The experience of graduates who fail. *Nurse Educator*, 25(4), 175-180.
- Porter, S. (2008). Nursing research and the cults of phenomenology. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 13 (4), 267-268.
- Roller. M. (2013, May 12). Importance of nonresponse in qualitative research. Research design review: A discussion of Qualitative & Quantitative research design issues [Web log]. Retrieved from <http://researchdesignreview.com/2013/05/31/importance-of-nonresponse-in-qualitative-research/#more-743>
- Rosenberg, M.J. (1956). Cognitive structure and attitudinal affect. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 53, 367-372.
- Rosenberg, M.J. (1968). Hedonism, inauthenticity, and other goals toward expansion of a consistency theory. In R.P. Abelson et al. (Eds.), *Theories of cognitive consistency: A source book* (pp. 73-111). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.
- Saumure, K. & Given, L.M. (2008). Rigor in qualitative research. In L.M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. (pp. 796-797). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.

- Schulz, K. (2010). *Being wrong: Adventures in the margin of error*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Searle, J.R. (1983). *Intentionality: An essay in the philosophy of the mind*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=nAYGcftgT20C&pg=PA37&source=gbs\\_toc\\_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=nAYGcftgT20C&pg=PA37&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Silvestri, L.A. (2000). *Self-efficacy and the predictors for NCLEX-RN success for baccalaureate nursing students* (Doctoral dissertation)
- Silverman, D. (2011). *A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about qualitative research (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.
- Shultz, C.M. (2010). High-stakes testing!?! Help is on the way. *Nursing Education Perspectives* 31(4), 205. <http://nljournals.org/doi/full/10.1043/1536-5026-31.4.205>
- Sprunk, E.A., LaSala, K.B., and Wilson, V. L. (2014). Student incivility: Nursing faculty lived experience. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 4(9), 1-12.
- Spurlock, D. (2006). Do no harm: Progression policies and high-stakes testing in nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education* 45(8), 297-302.
- Spurlock, D. (2013). The Promise and peril of high-stakes tests in nursing education. *The Journal of Nursing Regulation* 4(1), 4-8.  
<http://jnr.metapress.com/content/u3uk17m21h014161/?p=7884f61451da46cbb1345961612ef00b&pi=1>
- Swanson, K.M. (1991). Empirical development of a midrange theory of caring. *Nursing Research*, 40(3), 161-166.
- Swanson, K.M. (1999). What is known about caring in nursing science: A literary meta-analysis. In A.S. Hindshaw, S.L. Freetham, & J.L.F. Shaver (Eds.). *Handbook of clinical nursing research* (31-60). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tanner, C. A. (2006). Thinking like a nurse: A research-based model of clinical judgment in nursing. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 45(6), 204-211.
- Thiel-Barrett, A.V. & Kemery, D.C. (2013). [Dr. Barrett's Handy Dandy How Does My Brain Work Sheet]. Unpublished raw data tool.

- Thiel-Barrett, A.V. & Kemery, D.C. (2013). [Directions for Dr. Barrett's Handy Dandy How Does My Brain Work Sheet]. Unpublished raw data tool directions.
- Tobin, G.A. & Begley, C.M. (2004). Methodological rigor within a qualitative framework. *The Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 48(4), 388-396.
- Tonges, M. & Ray, J. (2011). Translating caring theory into practice: The Carolina care model. *The Journal of Nursing Administration*, 21(9), 374-381.
- Tufford, L. & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 11(1), 80-96.
- Tye, M. (2015). Qualia. In E.N. Zalta (Ed.). *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/qualia/>.
- Umoquit, M., Tso, P., Burchett, H., & Dobrow, M.J. (2011). A multidisciplinary systemic review of the use of diagrams as a means of collecting data from subjects: Application, benefits, and recommendations. *BioMed Central, Medical Research Methodology* 11(11). Retrieved from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2288/11/11>
- Umoquit, M., Tso, P., Varga-Atkins, T., O'Brien, M., & Wheeldon, J. (2013). Diagrammatic elicitation: Defining the use of diagrams in data collection. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(60), 1-12.
- Urwin, S., Stanley, R., Jones, M., Gallagher, A., Wainwright, P., & Perkins, A. (2010). Understanding student nurse attrition: Learning from the literature. *Nurse Education Today*, 30(2), 202-207. DOI: 10.1016/j.nedt.2009.07.014 <http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy2.library.drexel.edu/science/article/pii/S0260691709001476>
- van Kaam, A. (1966). *Existential foundations of psychology*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching the lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York, NY: SUNY.
- van Manen, M. (2010). Phenomenologyonline: A resource for Phenomenological inquiry. Retrieved from <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/>
- Vance, A, & Davidhizar, R. (1997). Strategies to assist students to be successful the next time around on the NCLEX-RN. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 36, 190-192.
- Watson, J. (2005). Caring theory as an ethical guide to administrative and clinical practices. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*, 30(1), 48-55.
- Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

- Winch, G. (2013). *Emotional first aid: Practical strategies for treating failure, rejection, guilt, and other everyday psychological injuries*. New York, NY: Hudson Street.  
[http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=OtrwoZpH\\_uQC&oi=fnd&pg=PT5&ots=Rii9Pg8P\\_-&sig=9HoSba84N-ynG6oq1FkvXdfYUbY#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=OtrwoZpH_uQC&oi=fnd&pg=PT5&ots=Rii9Pg8P_-&sig=9HoSba84N-ynG6oq1FkvXdfYUbY#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- Wojnar, D.M. & Swanson, K.M. (2007). Phenomenology: An exploration. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 25(3), 172-180.
- Wolff, K. A. (2011). The lived experience of remorse among male, adolescent offenders: A phenomenological inquiry Dissertation UMI number 3475757  
<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy2.library.drexel.edu/pqdtft/docview/891797762/fulltextPDF/69EDEE8725D14C66PQ/35?accountid=10559>



## **Appendix A**

### **Engagement Letter**

Dear Senior Nursing Student,

My name is Professor Kemery. I am a doctoral student at Rowan University. I am seeking student co-researchers to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of senior level nursing students with regard to reviewing rationales after HESI exam attempts. The information shared by the student co-researchers will be used to complete a phenomenological dissertation study. I would like to ask you to consider participating in the research endeavor. This letter is purely informational and you are not being asked to sign an informed consent form at this time.

Should you meet the criteria for the study, your participation will be voluntary. Your time commitment will include an interview lasting approximately 60 minutes during which you will share your experiences. In addition, I will be asking for your permission to include information from your last HESI review experience. The study time frame will begin after the HESI attempt scheduled (INSERT DATE). If you meet the study criteria and are selected for inclusion in this endeavor, you will be provided more information about the study and a consent form.

Though anticipated risks of participation are minimal, you may experience distress or emotional discomfort when reflecting on your experiences. Benefits include the possibility that you may gain clarity or new insight into your current or past interactions with exams as well as participating in the development of knowledge that might be helpful to student nurses, faculty, and administrators in the future.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Please email me with any questions or concerns

[dck28@drexel.edu](mailto:dck28@drexel.edu)

Sincerely,

Professor Kemery

**Appendix B**  
**Participant Consent**

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Research: Students' Lived Experiences of the Realization of Academic Wrongness

Investigator's Name: Dana C. Kemery

Rowan University, Doctoral Dissertation, Educational Leadership

This is a long and important document. If you sign it, you will be authorizing the investigator to perform research studies with you. You should take your time and carefully read it. You can take a copy of this consent form to discuss it with your family member, physician, attorney, or anyone else you would like before you sign it. Do not sign it unless you are comfortable in participating in this study.

You are being asked to participate in a research project. The purpose of this project is to find out how being wrong makes you feel, think, and act. You have been asked to take part in this study because you have had a significant experience with wrongness while in a nursing program. There will be at least four other individuals who will be included in this study. Participants will be observed for approximately three (3) hours during regular course meetings. The observations will be recorded using an observation protocol for use in the study. Your identity will be kept confidential and no one will be told that you agreed to participate in this study.

The risks of this study include emotional discomfort knowing you are being observed. If at any time you feel that you do not want to continue to participate, you may choose to withdraw your consent. There may be no direct benefits to you from participating in this study.

## Appendix C

### Participant Interview Consent

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Research: Students' Lived Experiences of the Realization of Academic Wrongness

Investigator's Name: Dana C. Kemery

Rowan University, Doctoral Dissertation, Educational Leadership

This is a long and important document. If you sign it, you will be authorizing the investigator to perform research studies with you. You should take your time and carefully read it. You can take a copy of this consent form to discuss it with your family member, physician, attorney, or anyone else you would like before you sign it. Do not sign it unless you are comfortable in participating in this study.

You are being asked to participate in a research project. The purpose of this project is to find out how being wrong makes you feel, think, and act. You have been asked to take part in this study because you have had a significant experience with wrongness in a nursing program. There will be at least four other individuals who will be interviewed for this study. Each participant will be interviewed for approximately one (1) hour. The interview will be audio recorded for use in the study. The recording(s) will be used for data analysis and will be transcribed. The audio recordings will be secured in a locked file cabinet and destroyed upon publication of the study results. Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

You may be asked to clarify your responses after the initial interview. Your identity will be kept confidential and no one will be told that you agreed to participate in this study. The risks of this study include emotional discomfort in answering questions. If at any time you feel that you do not want to answer a question, you may choose to not answer the question. This will not necessarily preclude you from continuing with the interview if you so desire. You may discontinue the interview at any time. There may be no direct benefits to you from participating in this study.

## Appendix D

### Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Interview Code \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interview Protocol

**General:** Describe the first time you were wrong in school. How are your experiences with being wrong different in an educational setting versus your daily life?

**Prompts:** Any time in any school is fine.

**Probes:** Describe wrongness using the concept of rightness. How do these two things differ? Can these things be the same? What did you feel? What did you think? What physical reactions do you notice when you realize you are wrong? What did you do?

**Nursing:** Tell me about the first time you remember being wrong in the nursing program.

**Prompt:** Any course, Clinical or classroom, exam or quiz

**Probes:** How do you remember feeling? What do you remember thinking? What did you do? What does being wrong mean to you as a nursing student?

**HESI Grade:** Describe your experience when you saw your HESI grade on the second attempt.

**Prompt:** How does being unsuccessful feel to you?

**Probe:** What do you notice yourself thinking about with regard to your HESI experience? How are you handling the experience? What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I say HESI?

**HESI Review:** Describe your experience when you saw your HESI exam during the review.

**Prompt:** When you were reviewing the exam, how did you feel?

**Probe:** Tell me about your ability to concentrate during the review.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

If I have any more questions, can I follow up with you?

## Appendix E

### Observation Protocol

**Research Questions:** RQ 3: What are the behaviors of nursing students at the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

RQ4: What are the behaviors of nursing students after the realization of academic wrongness (RAW)?

Observation Number \_\_\_\_\_ Number of students \_\_\_\_\_

Total Observation Time \_\_\_\_\_

Wrongness Experience	ID/Student Behavior	Environmental Response	Student Response

To Be Used With Observation Protocol Key

**Observation Protocol Key**

Wrongness Experiences

1	Answer Verbal Question Wrong
2	Answer Written Question Wrong
3	Late to Class
4	Sitting in wrong seat
5	Math error
6	Computerized exam failure
7	Other (specify)

Student Behavior / Student Response

1	Verbal Response (clarify)
2	No Response
3	Arguing
4	Blushing
5	Eye rolling
6	Laughter
7	Apology
8	Head shaking

9	Closing Eyes
10	Hand up (location)
11	Smile
12	Head down
13	Tears
14	Sigh
15	No eye contact
16	Shrugging shoulders
17	Other (specify)

Environmental Response

1	Verbal Instructor Response (clarify)
2	No Response
3	Redirection
4	Nonverbal cue (clarify)

## Appendix F

### The Handy Dandy How Does My Brain Work Sheet

<b>Number of Question</b>	<b>No Clue</b>	<b>Down to 2</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Brain Freeze</b>	<b>Thoughts?</b>



## Appendix G

### Directions for The Handy Dandy How Does My Brain Work Tool

This tool will help you to keep track of the difficulties you had on each question as you review the rationales from the exam. Each column has a purpose. Refer to the explanations below to decide where to record each question issue. Please ask your faculty member any questions as you process your exam.

**Number of the Question:** Put the number of the question as it appears on the exam in this box. Used for sequencing and pacing. Strategy: Test taking skills. Were you getting tired? Distracted by a question that you did not know the answer to? Anxious? Hungry? Did you take a break? Once you become aware of your needs during testing, you can anticipate your needs before they become an issue. You have a plan of action. For example, you make the decision that after 40 questions, you will take a 5 minute break. Early items wrong-anxiety decreased focus at beginning of exam. You need to increase your focus and train your brain to engage early on. Memory exercises to increase focus

**No Clue:** Did not know the content well enough to select an answer. Example: You do not know what isolation is or when to use it. You cannot remember what disease processes need isolation. Strategy: Go back and review and remediate concepts and content based on your needs.

**Down to 2:** Not sure how to prioritize the answers to select the best answer. Strategy: practice testing taking skills such as answering questions using a hierarchy system (ABCs, Maslow)

**Not sure:** (Butterfly Effect) Do not remember why you picked the answer or what you were thinking when you picked the answer. Strategy: Test taking. Focus on the question and think clearly. Do you need content review and remediation? Did you read the question correctly? Do you understand what the question is asking?

**Brain Freeze:** Silly mistakes. Example: you meant to and thought you clicked on (or circled) A but you really selected B. Strategy: Test taking. Focus on one question at a time. Read the question and the selected answer once you click (or circle) the answer. Be very sure that it the answer you really meant to select. Read the question and the answer together to be sure you selected the answer you wanted.

## **Appendix H**

### **Member Checking Email**

Good Evening (Co-participant Researcher Name Here)!

I hope this email finds you well. It took a significant amount of time to get all the transcriptions completed and vetted. Thank you again for sharing your experiences with me.

I have attached the transcript of our interview for your review. If you have anything to add, please feel free to add to this document. You can also call me at 856-625-0100 if you would like to discuss the transcript.

I do have (number) question(s) for you. You discussed the affects this experience has had (Specific probe questions were placed here, based on the manuscript content)

Please email me with any questions.

Have a wonderful night.

Professor Kemery



		really allowed to do anything about it” and second “and didn’t really care.” How do these things relate to that feeling of disappointment? These things may not have anything to do with your disappointment, so please feel free to express your thoughts.	
Fidelma		At time stamp S2 06:44, you said this “So I mean, it was kind of a big kick in the butt like, or not a kick in the butt, like a slap in the face.” Can you tell me more about what these two things mean to you?	9/29/15
Bridget	8/29/15 (Initial) 9/28/15 (Second) 1/7/15 (Acknowledged initial Email)  1/8/16 Revised email questions sent  1/12/16 (clarify)	You discussed the affects this experience has had on your relationships. Could you briefly categorize these groups for me? For example, you mentioned your relationship with your boss and your father. How would you describe these people in your life?  You discussed the affects the experience had on your relationships. Could you elaborate on this? During the time frame before you passed the comprehensive exam, how were these relationships for you? Anything you would like to share would be wonderful.  At time stamp S2 18:11 you said “and then you're telling us to wear red”. Can you tell me what that means?	No response  1/11/16
Mackenzie	9/3/15 (Initial) 9/28/15 (Second) 9/28/15 (acknowledged	You discussed the affects this experience has had on your life, but did not mention relationships. Could you briefly categorize these groups for me? How would you describe these	9/28/15

	email)	people in your life and how this experience has affected your relationships with these people?	
--	--------	--	--

## Appendix J

### Post-It Note Alignment

Post-It Note	Invariant Constituent	Theme
Cheated	<i>Deceived</i>	Story to Tell
Tricked	<i>Deceived</i>	
492 was a Joke!	<i>Being Wronged</i>	
Why am I good enough for everything else except PPU? I'm above the national averages.	<i>No really me</i>	Powerlessness
Over my head	<i>Lost</i>	
Behind	<i>Lost</i>	
Incapable	<i>Lost</i>	
Stupid	<i>Targeted</i>	
Dumb	<i>Targeted</i>	
Inadequate	<i>Targeted</i>	
Ridiculous	<i>Targeted</i>	
Failure	<i>Broken</i>	
Hot mess	<i>Broken</i>	
Depressed	<i>Broken</i>	
Death	<i>Broken</i>	
Tired	<i>Broken</i>	
Disheartened	<i>Broken</i>	

Defeated	<i>Broken</i>	
Nausea	<i>Broken</i>	
Queasy	<i>Broken</i>	
Sick	<i>Broken</i>	
Shitty	<i>Broken</i>	
Spiritually Weak	<i>Broken</i>	
Annoyed (4)		Anger
Agitated		
Frustrated (3)		
Pissed		
Angry (3)		
Over this.		
Want to scream		
Over it!		
Flustered		
I HATE PPU!	<i>Extrinsic Anger</i>	
Anxious (2)		Powerlessness
extremely Anxious		
stressed		
concerned		
antsy		

## Appendix K

### Observation Tool Alignment

<b>Behavior/ Verbal Response</b>	<b>Invariant Constituent</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Arguing	<i>Anger, extrinsic</i>	Anger
Eye Rolling	<i>Anger, extrinsic</i>	Anger
Laughter	<i>Anger, extrinsic</i>	Anger
Apology	<i>Not really me</i>	Story to Tell
Head shaking (side to side)	<i>Lost</i>	Powerlessness
Head down	<i>Lost</i>	Powerlessness
Tears	<i>Broken</i>	Powerlessness
Sigh	<i>Broken</i>	Powerlessness
No eye contact	<i>Broken</i>	Powerlessness
Shrugging shoulders	<i>Lost</i>	Powerlessness
Late to class	<i>Anger, extrinsic</i>	Anger
Hand up (mouth)	<i>No voice</i>	Powerlessness
Hand up (forehead)	<i>Not really me</i>	Story to Tell
Hand up (covers eyes)	<i>Broken</i>	Powerlessness



## Appendix L

### Brain Tool Alignment

Brain Tool Comment	Invariant Constituent	Theme
Missed one answer (4)	So close	Story to Tell
Stupid Question (3)	<i>Explain it away</i>	
Mixed up answer (5)	So close	
I knew this...	<i>Not really me</i>	
Didn't interpret correctly (8)	So close	
Didn't know the med (2)	CONTENT	
Not sure what it meant (3)	CONTENT	
Maternity is my weakness	<i>Explain it away</i>	
Misread answers(2)	<i>Explain it away</i>	
Changed answer (3)	So close	
Taught wrong (6)	<i>Being wronged</i>	
Misread question (2)	So close	
Didn't know what it meant (3)	CONTENT	
forgot	<i>Not really me</i>	
Couldn't hear	<i>Explain it away</i>	
Didn't mean to pick that one (3)	<i>Not really me</i>	
Overthinking (2)	<i>Not really me</i>	
Content issue (7)	CONTENT	