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A Phenomenological Study on Persistence to Program Completion of Students of a Second Language in Associate's Degree in Nursing Programs in Central New York

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A Phenomenological Study on Persistence to Program Completion of Students of a Second Language in Associate's Degree in Nursing Programs in Central New York

Abstract

With an increasingly diverse U.S. general population and an increased need for nursing staff, the Institute of Medicine Future of Nursing (IOM, 2010) has called for a needed increase of racial/ethnic and gender diversity in the nursing workforce to reduce health disparities. The purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence academic success of nursing students who speak English as a second language (ESL) in Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN) Programs. This qualitative, phenomenological study used semi-structured, face-to-face, individual interviews with a convenience sample of eight nursing students. Essential themes included cultural and language differences limiting learning and communication; experiences of discrimination as a barrier to success; and financial and time related barriers in addition to revealing student motivations driven by (a) a passion for caring for people and nursing as a means of providing care; (b) a goal orientation, and (c) motivation driven by desire for better life, better future, and pride. Student strategies for dealing with challenges and the stress related to program completion included taking a break, talking to family, and crying to release tension and to relax. In addition, students recommended the formation of support groups or sharing groups to support ESL nursing students toward degree completion. These results of the qualitative, phenomenological analysis offer insight into the lived experience and struggles of these nursing students and can be used to inform and highlight needed support and direction for the development of programs to support ESL nursing student persistence and completion to graduation.

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A Phenomenological Study on Persistence to Program Completion of Students of a
Second Language in Associate's Degree in Nursing Programs in Central New York

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my dear friend, Carl, and to my sister Bessie. Carl, struggling with his own battle of cancer, insisted on taking my golden retriever, Dino, on weekends so I could devote hours on doctoral studies. His steadfast encouragement, support, and humor kept me on track. To my sister Bessie, who listened to my frustrations of juggling work and school to achieve my long-term goal of receiving a doctorate degree. To my immigrant parents, both deceased, who instilled the power of knowledge and education and inspired their children to pursue the highest educational degree possible.

I also express my gratitude to my dissertation chair, Dr. Kim VanDerLinden and committee member, Dr. Loretta Quigley for their guidance, expertise, patience, and encouragement through this dissertation journey. I could not have pursued the dissertation process without them. To my advisor, Dr. Linda Evans, with her unique wisdom and perception could whole-heartedly zero in on my inner feelings and provide me with tangible advice. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge all of my classmates, for opening my eyes and heart in order to explore, discover and learn.

Biographical Sketch

Christina Granato is currently Dean for Health and Community Services at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, New York. Ms. Granato attended Finger Lakes Community College from 1972 to 1974 and graduated with an Associate's degree in Applied Science in Nursing. She entered Syracuse University from 1974 to 1976 and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing, and in 1982 with a Master of Science degree in Nursing. In 1998, she earned a Family of Nurse Practitioner post-master degree and license, and in 2005, she earned a post-master-master degree as nurse educator from the State University of New York at Upstate College of Nursing. In 2006, she received the national certification as a Nurse Educator.

After several years of hospital based nursing, Ms. Granato left the hospital environment to continue her career as an academician at Onondaga Community College where she was faculty and Chair of Nursing until she assumed the current position of academic dean. As an academic dean, she became very interested in assisting students of a second language obtain their associate's degree in the health professions, particularly in Nursing.

In the summer of 2016, Ms. Granato enrolled in the Ed.D for Executive Leadership doctoral program at St. John Fisher College. Under the direction of Dr. Kim VanDerLinden and Dr. Loretta Quigley, Ms. Granato pursued her research to

explore barriers to success and characteristics to persist to completion for English as a second language (ESL) nursing students in associate's degree programs.

Abstract

With an increasingly diverse U.S. general population and an increased need for nursing staff, the Institute of Medicine Future of Nursing (IOM, 2010) has called for a needed increase of racial/ethnic and gender diversity in the nursing workforce to reduce health disparities. The purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence academic success of nursing students who speak English as a second language (ESL) in Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN) Programs. This qualitative, phenomenological study used semi-structured, face-to-face, individual interviews with a convenience sample of eight nursing students. Essential themes included cultural and language differences limiting learning and communication; experiences of discrimination as a barrier to success; and financial and time related barriers in addition to revealing student motivations driven by (a) a passion for caring for people and nursing as a means of providing care; (b) a goal orientation, and (c) motivation driven by desire for better life, better future, and pride. Student strategies for dealing with challenges and the stress related to program completion included taking a break, talking to family, and crying to release tension and to relax. In addition, students recommended the formation of support groups or sharing groups to support ESL nursing students toward degree completion. These results of the qualitative, phenomenological analysis offer insight into the lived experience and struggles of these nursing students and can be used to inform and

highlight needed support and direction for the development of programs to support ESL nursing student persistence and completion to graduation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The registered nurse (RN) shortage continues to be an issue in our health care system as there is a growth shortage of RNs in the United States, and this shortage is expected to worsen. Demographic trends predict a rapid growth in racial and ethnic minority groups, with the United States projected to become a majority-minority nation by 2043 (Phillips & Malone, 2014). This projected growth in minority populations, coupled with the growing disparities in health care and health outcomes, underscores the need to retain a diverse nursing workforce that will mirror the nation's culturally diverse population. Enrollment, retention, and persistence to successful completion of Associate's Degree in Nursing programs is a concern that is tied to the increasing shortage of nurses, including that of ethnically diverse nurses. The Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN, 2016) defined graduation rate, or completion rate, as the number of students who complete the nursing program within 150% of the stated program length. The national percentage of all Associate's Degree in Nursing students who drop out of a program is approximately 50% (Cameron, Roxburg, Taylor, & Launder, 2011; Harris, 2014; Shelton, 2012). Because of the concern for the nursing shortage in this country, several initiatives have been implemented to increase and retain student numbers in nursing, including diverse students. Past and current literature and reports have documented the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the registered nurse population, with a slow growth in the percentage of RNs from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds (Health Resource Services Administration

[HRSA], 2013; National League for Nursing [NLN], 2016). The number of ethnically diverse nursing students graduating does not meet the demand of a growing diverse population.

Since the mid-1970s, there has been a 40% decrease in freshman college students choosing to enroll in nursing programs and/or choosing nursing as a major (Shelton, 2003). Younger women graduating from high school with high grade point averages (GPA) choose professions, such as law or medicine, which have potential to yield higher financial rewards as well as autonomy (Shelton, 2003). Recent estimates suggest a 3% annual growth in demand for registered nurses over the next 10-15 years (HRSA, 2013), resulting in a significant deficit of about 20% fewer RNs by 2020 (Shelton, 2012). Approximately 65% of registered nurses are employed in hospital settings, an employment statistic that is expected to have a 15% growth from 2016-2026 (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2018). In addition, about one-third of the nursing workforce is older than age 50 (HRSA, 2013), reflective of the retiring baby boomer generation. The U.S. Department Labor Statistics estimated a 22% increase in job availability for registered nurses due to the retirement of the RN baby boomers (HRSA, 2013).

Ethnic minority nursing students have higher attrition rates, as minority status relates to several barriers such as difficulty balancing personal and academic stressors, and the lack of coping mechanisms and supportive resources to deal with the challenges of nursing education (Baker, 2010). Cultural and diverse differences make communication and the development of meaningful relationships with other students and

faculty difficult, which can possibly lead ethnic minority students to feeling disconnected, creating a barrier to success (Nguyen, 2016).

The widening gap of supply and demand for registered nurses in this country poses concerns. It is significant for administrators of educational institutions and nursing programs, leaders in community health-related facilities, and the public to be aware of the seriousness of the nursing shortage and the potential threat to the health care system, especially with regard to the health of the aging population. Academic institutions spend a considerable amount of time and money recruiting and admitting academically qualified applicants who then leave the program of study. Federal money is lost when providing financial assistance to nursing students who drop out. Health care facilities will be forced to reduce the number of qualified professional staff to care for patients, which could prolong hospital stay, and contribute to driving up the cost of health care. Less registered nursing will be available in the home care setting, which may result in increased hospital stay contributing to rising health care cost.

Despite the growing demand for nurses, the last four decades have experienced over 40% decrease in post-secondary interest and enrollment in the nursing profession (Shelton, 2012). The Health Resource and Service Administration (HRSA) in 2013 suggested a 3% annual growth in demand for registered nurses over the next 10-15 years, which will result in a significant nursing deficit of about 20% fewer registered nurses and unfilled positions by 2020 (Shelton, 2012). The United States Department of Labor Statistics (2013) estimated a 22% increase in job availability for registered nurses due to the retirement of the RN baby boomers.

Data from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN, 2013) showed a comparison of racial, ethnic, and gender nursing diversity to the general population. African Americans and Hispanics are two racial groups who are significantly underrepresented in nursing. The comparison shows 6% African American registered nurses compared to 13.2% African Americans in the general population, and 6% Hispanic registered nurses compared to 17.1% Hispanics in the general population. HRSA (2015) demographics showed that only 21.4% of RNs represent ethnic minorities. The Institute of Medicine Future of Nursing (IOM, 2010) urged for an increase of racial/ethnic and gender diversity in the nursing workforce to reduce health disparities.

Problem Statement

Of significant concern is the shortage of a diverse registered nurse workforce. The completion rates of English as a second language (ESL) nursing students in Associate's Degree in Nursing programs does not meet the workforce demand to care for a growing diverse population. The widening gap of supply and demand for registered nurses in this country poses concerns. Due to a shift in the nation's demographics, the United States is projected to become a majority-minority nation for the first time in 2043 (Phillips & Malone, 2014). In addition, it is estimated that by the end of 2016 the Asian population, Hispanic population, Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander population will more than double (Phillips & Malone, 2014). This projected growth of minority populations and the increasing disparities in health care and patient outcomes emphasizes the need to recruit and retain a culturally diverse nursing workforce.

For several decades, the United States has seen a growth in cultural linguistic diversity of its population. Ethnic and cultural minorities are expected to constitute

approximately 51% of the total United States population by 2050 (Choi, 2005).

Currently, 17% of registered nurses in the United States represent diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Harris, 2014; Veal, Bull, & Miller, 2012).

As the number and diversity of immigrants increase in the US, the demographics associated with the student body of higher education are changing, including that of nursing programs. Although the number of ESL students is increasing nationally, the extent of success of ESL students in higher education is unknown. Several factors impede student success in nursing education (Donnell, 2015).

As the United States grows as an ethnically diverse country, higher education institutions are charged with providing all opportunities for ESL students to successfully graduate. Nursing educators have a greater responsibility to successfully graduate ESL students to meet the demands for an increased and more diverse workforce. Not only do Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN) programs graduate the majority of new RNs, but they also graduate the largest number of minorities (HRSA, 2017), providing the nation with greater diversity in the nursing workforce. On average, attrition rates for students enrolled in both associate's degree and baccalaureate degree nursing programs was reported at 50% (Harris, 2014). Therefore, it is essential that programs of nursing look carefully at their attrition and retention rates and seek to understand the needs of at-risk students, including ESL students, to determine the best strategies to implement for student success. Ethnically diverse students are at increased risk for attrition due to additional barriers, including a lack of awareness within the program of their cultural needs, feelings of social isolation, academic disadvantages, and language barriers (Baker, 2010).

Theoretical Rationale

Since the early 1900s psychologists have made progress in studying intelligence and mental ability (Duckworth, Kelly, Mathews, & Peterson, 2007). Much is known about IQ, including how to measure it reliably and precisely, and what outcomes it predicts. In addition to studying cognitive ability, researchers have attempted to show why some individuals with equal intelligence accomplish more than others. Such noncognitive attributes of high achieving individuals that were considered included creativity, charisma, self-confidence, and other positive qualities. During the last 10 years, researchers have explored the personal quality called grit (Duckworth et al., 2007). This study seeks to find if grit is a characteristic that successful ESL nursing students possess.

Duckworth et al. (2007) defined the work of grit as a “noncognitive personality trait defined by perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (p. 166). Success, even in the face of barriers and obstacles, may be the result of passion and perseverance. Passion in this context is something that gives direction and purpose to much of what we do (Willingham, 2016). Purpose has been viewed as an indicator of positive adult development; the commitment to purpose emerges during young adult years (Hill, Burrow, & Bronk, 2014). This may suggest that grit is strongest with college-age students. Duckworth et al. (2007) found that grittier students completed more years of college education. Completing a college education can be challenging, as evidenced by community college dropout rates of greater than 50% (Duckworth et al., 2007). It was also found that grittier college students with lower SAT standardized exam scores achieved higher GPAs than their peers.

Examples of noncognitive attributes of high achieving individuals include creativity, vigor, resilience, emotional intelligence and stability, charisma, and self-confidence. Although some personality traits may be more significant with certain careers or vocations than others, the one trait seen in most leaders in every field is that of grit (Duckworth et al., 2007). Noncognitive traits that define grit, according to Duckworth, include perseverance, passion, resiliency, hardiness, conscientiousness, ambition, and need for achievement. Despite setbacks, failures, or other adversities, grit causes one to pursue short-term and long-term goals with deliberate passion. Those with grit show stamina, sustained commitment with interest, and persistent effort towards pursuing goals. Duckworth et al. (2007) found in her research that grit was not related to measures of talent, but to commitment over the long haul.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence academic success of students who speak English as a second language (ESL) in Associate's Degree in Nursing Programs (ADN). This research study explored factors that impact completion rates of ESL nursing students. Strategies to support the ESL nursing student may be more successful if focused on the specific needs of the learner. ESL students tend to have multiple barriers and stressors that may interfere with educational and professional goals. These factors likely contribute to the higher non-completion rates compared to the traditional student. Specific to ADN programs and given the importance of retaining ADN students to combat the increasing problems of nursing shortages (Shelton, 2012), it is essential to understand the factors that impede and promote completion rates among this population.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to answer the following questions:

- What barriers have the greatest impact on nursing students who speak English as a second language to persist in their program of study?
- How do nursing students who speak English as a second language overcome barriers to program completion?

Significance of the Study

The nursing profession faces the challenge of caring for an increased number of linguistically and culturally diverse patients who speak little or no English.

Approximately 20% of Americans speak a language other than English at home (Sullivan Commission, 2004). Currently, 37% of our population identify as racial and ethnic minorities (National League for Nursing, 2016). Nurses must be prepared to provide culturally competent care and understand how culture plays a role in patients' perceptions of health care needs and how they respond to the care received. Donnell (2015) reported that patients develop rapport more easily when their nurses share similar cultural backgrounds.

Rapid growth of diversification and the need for diversifying the nursing profession has received attention in nursing literature in recent years. The need to recruit, educate, and retain potential nurses from diverse cultural and ethnic groups is significant in today's changing social and cultural environment. Learning why diverse nursing students leave their program of study and factors that influence them to stay must be better understood. Faculty and administrators must support the development of more

successful strategies that will improve student retention and success to graduation. Given the challenges of cost effective health care and the need to meet the demands to care for an aging and diverse population, as well as the cost of recruiting, admitting and educating nursing students of a second language who do not complete their program of study, academic leaders must make necessary changes to ensure graduation of ESL nursing students.

Creating inclusive academic environments while fostering the recruitment, retention, and graduation of diverse students is the responsibility of institutional and nurse educator leadership (HRSA, 2006). Educational institutions must graduate registered nurses that reflect the population of the nation and have the capacity to meet the health care needs of individuals of various cultures, ethnicities, race, and religious beliefs. Leaders must be committed to sustaining a more diverse workforce that fosters inclusive environments through educational commitment to their success. Commitment can be demonstrated by developing and implementing strategies through aggressive academic advisement characterized by frequent face-to-face meetings, curricular retention programs with a focus on academic success, and supporting and developing the individual emotional, psychological, and spiritual self.

To further improvement to the health of a community, healthcare organizations need to be appropriately staffed with competent care givers. To ensure safe, proper care, it is necessary to properly educate people for a nursing career. As the community is diverse, so should be the future nurses, including those who use English as a second language, who will serve the community.

Health disparities are multidimensional and exist throughout the United States. The preventable differences unfavorably affect individuals who experience difficulties based on race, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status. The goal to attain health equity requires valuing every person equally with lasting efforts to address inequalities and injustices. Diversity in nursing is essential to develop a health care system that understands and addresses the needs of the changing population. Workforce diversity is required where factors such as societal biases and stereotyping, communication barriers, limited cultural sensitivity, and competence contribute to health care inequities.

ESL students face additional challenges such as communication and language barriers. As a result, they experience higher dropout rates. Healthcare organizations, for both the inpatient and outpatient settings, depend on institutions of higher learning to provide the pool of talent needed to staff their organizations. The completion rates of ESL nursing students in ADN nursing programs do not meet the nursing workforce demand to care for a diverse population. Therefore, this study was designed to explore critical factors to retain and graduate qualified ESL nursing students to ensure best care in communities served.

The IOM (2010) brought to light the differences in access and care outcomes for ethnic and racial minorities, and that ethnicity remains a significant predictor of the quality of care one receives. The IOM (2010) addressed the need for a health care workforce that is culturally competent and linguistically capable. The need for graduating ethnically diverse nursing students is imperative to meet the health care needs of the diverse population in the United States.

Within all health professions, concentrated efforts are needed to diversify the nation's health-care workforce. The nursing profession is particularly challenged to recruit and retain a culturally diverse workforce that reflects the nation's demographics. In addition, educational institutions face the same challenges of recruitment and retention of a diverse student population. Completion rate issues can be very misleading and complicated as every college institution is special with different emphasis on academics, institutional culture, and understanding their own student population and educational goals. Nursing education holds a unique responsibility to those the profession serves, and it is imperative to understand the issues that lie behind the problem of completion rates of ESL nursing students.

ESL students face additional challenges due to language barriers. As a result, they experience higher dropout rates (Jeffreys, 2014). The completion rates of ESL nursing students in Associate's Degree in Nursing programs fail to meet the nursing workforce demand to care for a diverse population. Healthcare organizations depend on institutions of higher learning to provide the pool of talent needed to staff their organizations. Therefore, this study was designed to explore the critical factors that lead to graduation of qualified ESL nursing students to ensure the best care in communities served.

Definition of Terms

The following are definition of terms addressed in the study:

Completion/Graduation – outcome of how many students within a cohort complete and/or graduate. This is typically measured in two or three years for associate's degree programs

ESL Student – English as a second-language-students are those who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and academic courses.

ELL – English-language learners used interchangeably with ESL

Nursing Shortage – a widespread and dangerous lack of skilled nurses who are needed to care for individual patients and the population.

Retention – outcome of how many students remained enrolled from fall to fall or persistence rates as well as graduation rates. This number is applied to any defined cohort.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the disparities in health care population that persist despite allocation of public and or private resources, and the need for graduating ethnically diverse nursing students to meet the health care needs of the diverse population in the United States. HRSA (2013) suggested that health disparities may be influenced by changing the ethnic/racial profile of the health care workforce. The remainder of the document is organized in four chapters.

Chapter 2 summarizes the relevant literature and current research pertaining to the barriers affecting successful completion of ESL nursing students, and strategies that lead to successful graduation. It will explore issues related to attrition and retention of ESL nursing students such as language proficiency and academic challenges, student perception of faculty support and societal support. Chapter 3 reviews the research design methodology, context, participants, data collection, and analysis processes used in this

study. Chapter 4 explains the findings and how the findings address the research question using the participant's own words as primary data source. Chapter 5 reviews, interprets, and summarizes results, providing a discussion of implications of the findings, limitations of the study and offers recommendations for future research. Chapter 5 concludes with a final summary.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

Increasing completion rates of ESL nursing students in Associate's Degree in Nursing programs will help to meet the workforce demand to care for a growing diverse population. The national completion rate of Associate's Degree in Nursing students is approximately 50% (Cameron et al., 2011; Harris, 2014; Shelton, 2012), leading to an overall concern for the nursing shortage. The National League for Nursing (NLN, 2016) and the Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA, 2013) have documented the lack of racial and ethnic diversity of registered nurses and the need to increase their representation and participation in the nursing profession. The number of ethnically diverse nursing students completing their degrees and graduating is not meeting the demand of a growing diverse population.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *the Future of Nursing: Leading Health, Advancing Change* (2011), emphasized increasing diversity of the workforce to ensure nurses provide culturally relevant care. For several decades, the United States has seen a growth in cultural and linguistic diversity of its population. Ethnic and cultural minorities will constitute approximately 51% of the total population by 2050 (Choi, 2005). Currently, 17% of registered nurses in the United States represent diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Veal et al., 2012). A more diverse workforce will be critical as the U.S. population becomes increasingly diverse. The IOM (2010) reported that the registered nurse workforce is comprised of 66% White, 6% Asian, 5% Black, 4% Latino,

and 0.3% American Indian or Alaska Natives. Asians are the only minority group that meets the U.S. population of Asian immigrants. Those who describe themselves as Asian, Native American, or Pacific Islander comprise 4.5% of the U.S. population.

The purpose of the study was to add to the literature by providing an increased understanding of why ESL students leave or stay in nursing as their program of study, and how nurse educators and administrators can contribute to increasing completion rates of ESL nursing students in associate's degree programs. As the diversity of immigrants increases in the United States, the demographics associated with the student body of higher education are changing, including that of nursing programs. Although the number of ESL students are increasing nationally, there is limited knowledge available about the success of ESL students in higher education. Currently, the literature reveals many reasons nursing students stay or leave their program of study. Several factors impede student access and success in nursing education. Students for whom English is a second language face additional challenges and barriers, not experienced by students with English as their native language.

Historically, the nursing profession has been a profession dominated by females. The Nurse Training Act of 1964 transformed the education of nursing from hospital-based programs to community colleges and universities. This increased the number of nurses in the workforce over a decade, and more women remained in the profession after marriage. However, the mid -1970s began to show a 40% decrease in freshman female college students choosing nursing as a profession as the proliferation of new career opportunities emerged, such as that of law and medicine (Shelton, 2003). Hence, the

nursing shortage became more pronounced. From the mid-1970s to early 1990s there was a surge of diverse nurses that immigrated from Asia and the Philippines.

However, regardless of the influx of nurses from other countries, the nursing profession was still not able to match proportionally the influx of immigrants from other countries who were now part of the patient population, leading to a greater shortage of a culturally diverse profession. Diverse nurses in the profession will continue to be in demand. The nursing profession must engage in strategies to address completion rates of the ESL students as a means of addressing the shortage of a diverse nursing workforce.

Review of the Literature

Factors influencing students to persist. There are several factors that lead students' to persistence to successful program completion despite hardships. The decision for nursing students to leave their program of study or to stay is difficult. Shelton (2003) explored the relationship between nursing students' perceived faculty support and student retention. Students' academic and social support seeking behaviors were shown to have an impact on progression and attrition. This study by Shelton demonstrated the significance of faculty support and student retention. A higher perception of faculty and psychological support were significant reasons for students staying in their program of study. Along these same lines, Wray, Aspland, and Barrett (2014) found predominant factors that influenced students to stay were the desire to become a nurse and the support received from colleagues, family, friends, and university staff. The authors found the reason students left their program was largely due to financial struggles. In addition, Cameron et al. (2011) interviewed 15 students with emergence of two themes: program and personal. At least 50% of those who completed their program of study had at one

time considered leaving (Cameron et al., 2011). In addition, characteristics influencing nursing students to stay (retention), as opposed to leave (attrition), were that of personal commitment (Cameron et al., 2011). Good support from family, friends, clergy, and faculty were also major factors influencing retention of students (Cameron et al., 2011).

Another way in which student college success was examined was to explore persistence to graduation. Williams (2010) conducted a qualitative, narrative research using semi-structured interviews. The study explored factors influencing student persistency and four major themes emerged: keeping up, not giving up, just doing it, and making connections. In addition, Bowden (2008) conducted semi-structured interviews to investigate attrition. The aim was to show that the experiences of nursing students who consider leaving, but who stay on course, can add to the understanding of attrition in nurse education. It was revealed that 48% never considered leaving, 30% thought about leaving but stayed, and 22% seriously considered leaving on more than one occasion (Bowden, 2008). It was also noted that academic issues were cited as the most frequent response to consider leaving (Bowden, 2008). Such issues included fear of failure and stress over writing assignments as the most common reasons; stress of undertaking clinical placement was the second most common reason; and financial issues came in third, although all were stated to be the top most stressful reasons to leave. Bowden (2008) also discovered that the most popular reasons students stayed were faculty and tutoring support, support from family and friends, and peer support despite the fear of academic failure.

An internal aspect of persistence is self-efficacy. Themes were noted by Nguyen (2016) on leadership self-efficacy of international students. Nguyen found that one's

ability to perform is connected to one's college involvement experiences. However, this study did not show that self-efficacy led to persistency in international students.

International students showed lower leadership self-efficacy (LSE) and small gains with college environmental influences.

Diefenbeck, Michalec, and Alexander (2016) explored the lived experiences of 12 racially/ethnically diverse nursing students to determine issues related to recruitment and retention. Open-ended questionnaires were emailed to the participants that revealed three themes representing consensus statements for retention: family-oriented, school-based (faculty, advisors, classmates), and sustaining or promoting factors. The greatest influence was from family support and the second was that of sustaining and promoting factors, or the internal drive to be a nurse.

Related to self-efficacy is the concept of perceived locus of control (LOC). Wood, Saylor, and Cohen (2008) investigated the relationships among academic success, ethnicity, and perceived LOC. This mixed methods study showed a statistically significant negative relationship between external LOC and medical-surgical theory grades of nursing students. The higher the external LOC, the lower the course grade (Wood et al., 2008). ESL students had higher external LOC scores than native English speakers, indicating persistence (Wood et al., 2008). A statistically significant difference in course grades among ethnic groups was noted with ESL students showing lower grades than English speaking students (Wood et al., 2008). Students were more likely to attribute academic outcomes to persistency, good study habits, and supportive social and cultural connections (Wood et al., 2008).

Grit. The notion of grit is built from theories of positive psychology, specifically within the character classification of temperance. Positive psychology is a focus on positive experiences, optimism, positive personal traits such as love, courage, perseverance, or factors that allow individuals to flourish. The United States Department of Education (2013) defined grit as “perseverance to accomplish long-term or higher order goals in the face of challenges and setbacks, engaging the student’s psychological resources, such as their academic mindsets, effortful control, strategies and tactics “(p. 15).

Similar to grit is the noncognitive trait of mindset. Dweck (2006) identified two mindsets as fixed and growth mindsets. Fixed mindsets are traits such as intelligence and talent that are finite. Growth mindset refers to qualities that can be developed through dedication, effort, practice, education, and experience. It is a perspective or mindset within psychology. Linked to this is the passion and persistence for long-term goals, defined by Duckworth as grit (Duckworth et al., 2007). This concept is based on the ideas of self-control and conscientiousness.

Grit has been compared to the Big Five personality traits of consistency, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeable, and neuroticism (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Conscientiousness, one of the Big Five personality traits, is one’s aptitude for being organized, following through, and self-reflectiveness. Beyond self-control is persistence, or the ability to continually overcome obstacles. From this combination of persistence, self-control, and conscientious emerges grit (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009).

Angela Duckworth and her colleagues (2007) found that grit is the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals, and this contributes to successful outcomes. Significant relationship between grit and current student GPA has identified grit as a better predictor of high school graduation and GPA than IQ (Duckworth, 2013). Furthermore, high school grades are a better predictor of college success than standardized exams (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009). In other words, grittier students who stick to the everyday work in high school are more successful in college. An increased focus on improving student standardized test results for those close to passing were leaving the low-end and high-performing students behind, and, failing to accommodate ELL/ESL students (Valenzuela, 2005).

For years, the intelligence quotient (IQ) was used as the main predictor of success; however, the concept of grit, passion, and persistence for long-term goals has been identified as an important element of the successful attainment of long-term goals in academia. Within the educational context, grit is portrayed as an important influence on outcomes such as students' engagement, achievement level, retention, and probability of graduation (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Research examining grit indicates that it can be measured reliably and that it is distinct from other trait-like individual differences (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Duckworth and colleagues developed an initial measure of grit that provided evidence that grit was different than traditional personality traits, such as conscientiousness (Duckworth, et al., 2007). Duckworth and Quinn (2009) developed a Short Grit Scale that demonstrated a correlation of grit to conscientiousness. Another aspect of grit is perseverance of effort, which is the tendency to sustain time and energy

necessary for accomplishing long-term goals regardless of distractions. Duckworth and Quinn also replicated earlier studies including independence of grit from aspects of personality and its positive relation to academic success and retention. Grit also has shown to be predictive of different aspects for success as retention in the West Point cadet-training program, progress in the Scripps Spelling Bee, higher GPA amongst undergraduates, and higher education attainment among adults.

Wolters and Hussain (2015) investigated the relationship between grit and college students' self-regulation and academic achievement using a sample of 213 ethnically diverse college students. Results indicated that perseverance of effort was a consistent and adaptive predictor for indicators of self-regulated learning (SRL) and academic achievement. Student engagement in SRL may be a pathway of which perseverance is associated with improved academic outcome. Perseverance of effort was a positive individual predictor for cognitive, motivational, and management strategies.

Strayhorn (2013) found that an overall indicator of grit was a positive predictor of self-reported grades among African American college males in a predominantly white college. As such, grit was a stronger predictor of college grades than was high school GPA and other standardized college entrance exams. Maddi et al. (2012) found that a single indicator of grit was a strong predictor of retention and performance in military cadets, confirming the view of grit as an important influence on one's persistence and performance, including within academic contexts.

ESL students in higher education. In any educational scenario, teaching and learning effectiveness is filtered through students' learning motivation and success. Learning barriers and obstacles are common for students in general in higher education

(Litton, 2012). Such barriers may include personal, emotional, economic, attitudinal, institutional, financial, or complex instructional materials. Additional challenges exist for ESL students, such as sociocultural factors, language, and academic deficiencies (Litton, 2012).

Language background and proficiency affect academic performance. Linguistic barriers can be reflected at various levels and with different linguistic skills. Rajab (2013) demonstrated that approximately 50% of Arab students faced difficulty distinguishing the difference between the letters “p,” “b,” and “d” in writing the letters, transcribing, and phonetic pronunciation. Javid and Umer (2014) found that Saudi learners had problems in academic writing due to weaknesses in use of prepositions, spelling, prefixes, suffixes, and verbs. Speaking a non-English language in childhood predicts lower performance (Green, 2015). Students from different ethnic backgrounds are more likely to have immigrant parents, and parental language and culture use has been shown to have an intergenerational impact on their children’s language skills (Bleakley & Chino, 2008).

Ethnicity has been shown to be as strong of a predictor as English proficiency or acculturation, but English proficiency remains highly predictive in academic performance (Green, 2015). Problem-solving skills requiring the mix of meaning and understanding is also a challenge. ESL students are challenged to meet the demands of university textbooks. Roessingh and Douglas (2012) found the performance gap in English diploma examination for ESL students averaged 56%, while the native student averaged 71%. ESL students took longer to graduate than the native student and took more summer classes as repeats. Repeating courses also showed persistency to graduate.

Generally, ESL students can develop basic interpersonal communication skills within 2 years of participating in an English-speaking school, but developing cognitive, academic language proficiency is a gradual process (Roessignh & Douglas, 2012). Age on arrival to the United States and length of residence are variables in language proficiency and educational achievement in the second language (Lee & Shallet, 1997; Roberts, 1994). Students who arrive after the age of 14 have already developed study skills and learning strategies, and encoded curriculum content and concepts (Li, 2004). Mapping a new language into a preexisting framework is much easier for students who mainline into the school system before college.

Cultural influences. Cultural issues affect student learning as it governs the life style and psychological sensitivity of people (Linton, 2016). For example, Brisk (2010) pointed out that Sudanese Muslim girls are disengaged from interacting with boys in the classroom groups. Many international students are challenged with alienation, loneliness, homesickness, and social exclusion, as well as racial discrimination and vulnerability to exploitation (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009). English language proficiency challenges affect students' ability to socially engage with others, which affects their psychological state of mind (Yeh & Inose, 2003). ESL and international students feel the impact of spoken language barrier far greater than that of a written barrier, as spoken language formalizes the process of social interaction with American students (Sherry et al., 2010). However, focusing on just English language proficiency runs the risk of avoiding other environmental issues, such as racism (Yoon & Portman, 2004). The impact of discrimination affects the lives of international and ESL students (Sherry et al., 2010). In addition, Sanner and Wilson (2008) and Sealey, Burnett, and Johnson (2006) found a low

level of cultural competence among faculty; and, students felt there was a general lack of racial and ethnic diversity among faculty and peers.

Language proficiency and academic challenges. The gap between linguistic and professional criteria is acknowledged (Green, 2014), yet remains an unresolved issue in the professional workplace. Effective healthcare communication is intrinsic to high quality patient care. Common barriers noted to impede success in education of ESL students are in the areas of linguistic proficiency and communication. A meta-analysis of a critical review of literature by Olsen (2012) identified language barriers as the single most significant obstacle facing ESL nursing students.

Language background and proficiency have been shown to affect academic performance. Students whose native language is the same as the language of the educational program outperform their classmates (Green, 2014). Speaking a non-English language in childhood is a disadvantage, predicting lower academic performance (controlling for language proficiency), while lower English proficiency and being of non-local ethnicity has been shown to have independent and additive prediction of weaker performance in all years of a pharmacy program (Green, 2014). English proficiency and ethnicity had some prediction of weaker academic performance over the course of their program, but with a small size effect (Green, 2014).

Developmentally distinct ways in which ESL students describe and demonstrate academic language learning is consistent with their developmental stage. Ouellette-Schramm (2016) suggested diverse developmental perspectives can make a difference in academic language learning. The developmentally distinct ways in which ESL

participants described and demonstrated academic language learning are consistent with what might be predicted by their developmental stage.

Another aspect of ELL/ESL student learning included study skills and academic support. Tsai-Fu and Wu (2010) were interested in the effects of note-taking in their native language or in English, and whether instructions on how to take notes had an effect. The study showed a significant influence of note-taking instruction. The interaction of both note-taking in the native language and note-taking instruction was significant (Tsai-Fu & Wu, 2010). ESL students taking notes in English had a better opportunity to make connections, organize their thoughts, and develop ideas. Providing support with use of nursing tutorials specifically designed for ESL students and changing teaching practices has been shown to be effective in improving reading, writing, and vocabulary, as well as lessen the fear of failure (Miguel, Townsend, & Waters, 2013). Harris and Grace (2014) implemented a student success program to at-risk students, including ESL students, and found that although more than half the students were unsuccessful, the ESL students remained. It was also noted that students' grades on the anatomy and physiology courses were strong indicators to program success.

Language and communication skills of health care professional students has been a concern with the number of increasing diversity students in health care. Evidence has shown that academic performance among ESL nursing students is related to the level of English-language acculturation (Salamonson, Everette, Koch, Andrew, & Davidson, 2007). The English Language Acculturation Scale (ELAS) scores showed a significant relationship with students' grades. Green (2014) questioned if ESL students with strong ties to their own culture and low English proficiency and ethnicity had some prediction of

lower academic achievement. He found that English proficiency and ethnicity had some prediction of weaker academic performance among pharmacy students.

On the other hand, Torregosa, Ynalvez, Schiffman, and Morinet (2015) showed that interaction between English language proficiency and academic performance was insignificant. Rather, interaction with academic networks (faculty/advisors) was a significant predictor of academic grades. Donnell (2015) examined the associations between ESL, reading comprehension, and attrition rates. The results showed that ESL was not a significant predictor of attrition when controlling for age, ethnicity, race, sex, and first-generation college student status; however, reading comprehension was a significant predictor of ESL attrition. Contrary to this, Greenberg et al. (2012) demonstrated that age was significant to those who persisted with reading and vocabulary classes, and Mulholland, Anionwu, Atkins, Tappern, and Franks (2008) showed age was a significant predictor to successful completion. The older ESL student was more persistent to succeed.

In nursing education, effective communication is a core competency, fundamental to safe quality nursing care. ESL students may be at risk for clinical practice failure due to difficulties with communication in the English language, and nursing educators must enable ESL students to achieve this competency. Yoo and Park (2015) found that providing hands-on student participation in practical learning, or case-based learning on communication skills, ESL students increased their communication skills, problem-solving ability, and learning motivation. Assisting ESL students to improve on clinical communication skills, Rogan and Miguel (2012) evaluated the use of online resources, such as an online terminology tool, podcasts, and vodcasts, using qualitative analysis.

Over 70% of the ESL students in the study used the online resources and two major themes were evident through content analysis. The themes revealed that the resources were an effective learning tool and an effective learning medium. Vodcasts were easy to access and podcasts were effective for learning good clinical communication and how to perform a skill. Clinical educators from health professional programs find non-verbal communication, such as good eye contact, and the approach to patients as most important for student success during practicum (Elder et al., 2001).

Noncognitive influences on ESL student retention. Effective approaches to increase racial diversity must focus on student retention, understanding that one's socio-economic and ethnic background can have significant impact on noncognitive characteristics. Language and communication skills of health care professional students has been a concern with the increasing diversity of students in health care. Green (2014) questioned whether ESL students with strong ties to their own culture and low English proficiency led to poor academic performance. The results showed that lower English proficiency and ethnicity had some prediction of lower academic achievement.

Evans (2006) completed a qualitative study that determined the effects of social and educational backgrounds of Hispanic/Latino and American Indian students (ESL students) on success in a baccalaureate nursing program, compared with Anglo students. The diverse students demonstrated less parental educational background and lower social class than did the Anglo students. The majority of the ESL students were from parents of less adequate education and lower socio-economic status. These students required mentoring, counseling, tutoring, academic support, and financial support provided through grants for academic success. Those Anglo students who required financial aid

were more likely to have better educated parents with higher incomes who could provide them with the social, cultural, and financial means.

Storlie, Mostade, and Duenyas (2015) explored values and life role salience associated with career development of Latino first-generation college students. Major themes that developed included fitting in at a predominately Anglo campus and redefining their career development pathways. All participants expressed feeling judgment about their cultural background and degree of fairness in skin color. In addition, they disclosed their struggles in leaving the traditional family life roles and having to redefine non-traditional career pathways. In a similar study, Marshall, Zhou, Gervan, and Wiebe (2012) found that ESL students revealed cultural and linguistic factors become negative factors in terms of the sense of belonging, as related to language and physical appearance.

Locus of control (LOC) is a learned perception of identified factors that leads one to a particular outcome and is influenced by environment, culture, and personal variables. Wood et al. (2012) found that although academic scores of ESL students proved to be lower than those of English speaking students, ESL students contributed their success to their own LOC personal attributes (persistency) and supportive social connections. Students reported they possessed good study skills, worked hard, were determined and ambitious (Wood et al., 2012). In addition, supportive connections through family, friends and peers in the form of positive attitudes, encouragement and love helped them persevere through their studies. Bowden (2008) found that students who were able to draw support from others, primarily pastoral support and practical support from tutors, were able to stay in their program of study. Diefenbeck et al. (2016) found family-

oriented factors to be the most important influence on providing the emotional support required for student retention.

Intelligence has been known to be one of the best documented predictors of achievement (Willingham, 2016). Reliable and valid measures of IQ have documented a range of achievement outcomes affected by IQ, including college grade point average (GPA). Predictive validities of intelligence have also correlated with the complexity of a desired occupation considered. However, Terman and Oden (1947) suggested that intelligence does not always translate into achievement, and emphasized that certain noncognitive qualities of perseverance, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and integration toward goals were more predictive than IQ. Howe (1999) disputed that high achievement is derived from perseverance, and is at least as crucial as intelligence. Howe also suggested that inherent ability is less important than factors predisposing an individual to engage in practices of perseverance and persistency.

Students may exhibit greater interest in their long-term goals if they build passion from positivity and optimism. One study demonstrated that grittier college students reported greater positive affect and commitment to a purpose (Hill et al., 2016). This study demonstrated that positive affect and purpose correlated positively with the Big Five personality profile including talkativeness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. It demonstrated that grit, purpose, and positive affect relate positively. As noted by Duckworth et al. (2007), levels of grit tend to correlate with a more positive personality profile.

Hough (1992) believed that the achievement-oriented person is one who works hard, tries to do a good job and completes the task at hand. The dependable person is

self-controlled and conventional. In a meta-analysis Hough (1992) found that achievement orientation predicted job proficiency and educational success better than dependability. Grit is distinct from one who is just dependable with consistency of goals and interest. A highly dependable person may still be one who switches job careers annually. Persons high with grit do not swerve from their pre-set long-term goals, even in the absence of positive feedback. Secondly, the need for achievement is an unconscious drive for implicitly. Grit can entail dedication to either implicitly or explicitly achieve goals.

Chapter Summary

The gap of the nursing workforce is widening as the diverse population of patients in health care increases, leading to the need to graduate more nurses of diverse backgrounds. It has been demonstrated that there are barriers to successful completion of ESL nursing students. The profession of nursing must articulate its values, maintain integrity of the profession, and integrate principles of social justice by supporting a culturally inclusive profession and engage in rectifying healthcare disparities. As the numbers of ESL nursing students coming into nursing programs continue to expand, meeting their unique needs and ultimately increasing their rate of success is crucial.

Review of literature has provided evidence of the barriers ESL nursing students face with successful completion of their educational program. English language deficiencies appear to be the most salient need identified in this literature review along with the specific aspects and characteristics of student academic success in higher education. Further research may be needed in exploring outcome evaluation such as comparing characteristics of programs, persistency of students and retention rates over

time, and perceptions of faculty of ESL students and cultural competence of faculty, particularly during clinical practicum. In addition, there is little written concerning the relationship of ESL nursing students in terms of attrition and cost, and the implications regarding social justice. Chapter 3 will discuss the research design methodology including research participants, instruments to be used in data collection, and procedures for data analysis. Chapter 4 will provide details of the analysis and results of the study and Chapter 5 will discuss the results as they relate to the research questions of the study and prior literature.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction and General Perspective

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence academic success of students who speak English as a second language (ESL) in Associate's Degree Nursing Programs (ADN). This study was designed to investigate the application of grit theory with diverse nursing students for whom English is their second language (ESL). Understanding characteristic traits that assist ESL nursing students to overcome challenges may offer thoughtful means of assisting students to graduation. Strategies used to overcome barriers to academic success and achieve program completion were explored. A qualitative, phenomenological research design was used to gather data regarding characteristic traits that lead one to persist to obtain the long term goal of ADN completion.

A significant concern is the shortage of a diverse registered nurse workforce. The completion rates of ESL nursing students in Associate's Degree in Nursing programs does not meet the workforce demand to care for a growing diverse population. The widening gap of supply and demand for registered nurses in this country poses concerns. Because there is an overall concern for the nursing shortage in the United States, several initiatives have been implemented to increase student numbers in enrollment (Shelton, 2012). In addition, there is major apprehension within the health care industry regarding the shortage of a diverse registered nurse workforce, including students with English as a second language (ESL). The completion rates of ESL nursing students do not meet the

workforce demand to care for a growing diverse population, and the gap of supply and demand for ethnically diverse, registered nurses continues to widen. For several decades, North America has seen a growth in the cultural linguistic diversity of its population. Ethnic and cultural minorities are expected to constitute approximately 51% of the total United States population by 2050 (Choi, 2005); yet, only approximately 17% of registered nurses in the United States represent diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Veal et al., 2012).

Olsen (2012) identified barriers unique to ESL students including English language deficiency, cultural conflicts, clinical and academic difficulties, and personal ethnicity barriers. Olsen found that ESL nursing students reported several factors that prevent program completion. The purpose of this qualitative, transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was to answer the following questions. First, what barriers have the greatest impact on nursing students who speak English as a second language to persist in their program of study? Second, how do nursing students who speak English as a second language overcome barriers to program completion?

Research Design

The research design selected for this study was qualitative, transcendental phenomenology. Qualitative phenomenology is used to examine perceptions and understandings of individuals regarding to their lived experiences related to a phenomenon. The design is used by the researcher who investigates, describes, and seeks to understand meaning and truth. Transcendental phenomenology is the scientific study of the appearance of elements of a phenomena as we see them or as they appear to us in consciousness (Giorgi, 2009). This design was used to study perspectives and provide a

deeper understanding of how one experiences the phenomenon, regardless of whether the phenomenon or its elements are indeed the way it is being experienced.

Qualitative, transcendental phenomenology describes the “what’ and “how” the participants experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994) and allows for further exploration arriving at the essence of the experience. According to Moustakas (1994), transcendental phenomenology considers perception as the primary source of knowledge. The application of transcendental phenomenology to the research study of ESL nursing students is to understand the meaning of participants’ experiences of overcoming their unique barriers and achieving successful program completion. Because little research has been conducted on the completion rates of ESL nursing students, further exploration of the meaning will help to better understand and gain new insights into the problem with varying levels of depth.

The framework of Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenology is comprised of four major processes including epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis or composite of texts and structural descriptions. During the epoche phase, the researcher engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments of the phenomenon being investigated. This phase is a suspension of judgment about the existence or non-existence of the phenomenon. Giorgi (2009) referred to this phase as bracketing, first introduced by Husserl in the early 1900s.

Bracketing is not allowing past knowledge to be engaged while determining the mode and content of new and present experience, and, the researcher does not influence the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon; it is their reality (Hamill, 2010). Bracketing is the process of setting aside one’s own bias and personal experience about

the topic. Taking notes or memos, and keeping journal entries of a dialogue are examples of how bracketing can set aside personal bias. In addition, bracketing allows the researcher to focus and separate parts in isolation from others.

The reduction phase seeks to produce clarification of the description of the phenomenon being investigated. This phase creates essence, the most essential meaning that is revealed (Lopez & Willis, 2004). One does not posit the existence of the object, but sees it simply as a presence to be further explored (Giorgi, 2009). The imaginative variation phase represents a new way to see things or interpret variations or dilemmas. Lastly, the synthesis or composite of texts and structural descriptions allows the researcher to synthesize meanings and essences of the phenomenon under study.

Research Context and Setting

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with ESL nursing students. The participants were from three associate's degree granting nursing programs located in Central New York State (CNY). The Associate's Degree in Nursing program level was chosen, as it is the program that graduates more than 60% of registered nurses in New York State. There are three basic programs of study for nursing. These include the 2-year associate's degree program, the 3-year diploma program, and the 4-year baccalaureate program. The specific nursing programs selected include hospital-based programs and State University of New York (SUNY) community colleges.

The Council of Associate's Degree in Nursing (CADN) in New York State (NYS), of which the identified programs are members, is a non-profit organization that supports research projects that address issues of students, faculty, and administrators. The program directors/deans were contacted by the researcher by email to ask for student

contact information, such as email address and phone numbers (Appendix A).

Deans/directors gave permission to the researcher to contact students.

The population of New York State consists of 19% non-English speaking residents, and 29.2% of New York State's population of age 5 or older speak a mother language other than English (Demographics of New York-census data, 2010). In central New York, approximately 8% are racially ethnically diverse, 7% African American, and 85% White. (Demographics of New York-census data, 2010).

Demographics of the associate's degree programs from which participants were chosen are similar, since all are from the same region in Central New York and included colleges under the State University New York system and hospital-based programs in urban and rural areas. The SUNY colleges offer career-oriented certificate and degree programs for students planning to become immediately employed upon graduation, or to transfer on to a 4-year institution. The colleges have regional accreditation by the Commission of Higher Education Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and ACEN accreditation. These colleges offer a blend of rural and urban cultures. Hospital-based Associate's Degree in Nursing programs have regional Middle States accreditation and ACEN.

Population, Sample, and Participant Recruitment

The colleges with nursing programs from which participants were chosen have a diverse student population. Demographics showing diversity of the colleges chosen appear to be similar with diversity scores. The average diversity score of New York State community colleges is 70% (Community College Review, 2018).

Research Participants

A population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristics (Creswell, 2012) of which the researcher wishes to study. In this study, the population consisted of currently enrolled ESL nursing students in at least the second semester of the associate's degree program. In addition, participants must have been over the age of 18 to be included in the study.

The researcher recruited participants by emailing a letter describing the study and criteria to participate in the study (Appendix B). Participant names were acquired through the researcher's professional network of chairs, deans, and directors in nursing education. All participants were recruited from Associate's Degree in Nursing programs in central New York and were chosen based on willingness, interest, availability, and accessibility, in addition to the listed characteristics. A convenience sample is a selection of participants who can best inform an understanding of the central phenomenon of the research (Flick, 2014).

A suggested sample size for a qualitative phenomenological study was four to six participants (Creswell, 2013). According to Mason (2010), a guiding principle to sample size in qualitative research is the concept of saturation. Sample size may be guided by saturation when no new data emerges. In studies for which there is a high level of homogeneity among a population, six participants may be sufficient to develop meaningful themes (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Sampling

The sampling plan included a convenience sample of students that met the criteria for inclusion in the study of being ESL students in at least their second semester.

Convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling method based on data collection from a participant population that is convenient to access by the researcher (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Convenience sampling was selected for this study because possible resources of people and time were limited. The participants must have been willing and available to be studied. Selection was the easiest to access with limitations (Flick, 2014). The disadvantage to convenience sampling is that the researcher cannot say with confidence that the individuals interviewed are representative of the population, and may likely be biased (Saunders et al., 2012), although, the sample can provide useful information for answering the interview questions. The sample was limited to ESL students to best enable the researcher to answer the research questions, providing meaningful data relevant to the question (Flick, 2014). This group was knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest, available and willing to participate, and able to communicate opinions and experiences.

Assurances of Confidentiality

The request to conduct this study was sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, NY. The researcher was required to obtain IRB approval for the study (Appendix C). Following IRB approval, an email from the researcher was sent to the ADN programs in CNY to introduce the researcher, to explain the intent of the study, and to emphasize confidentiality of the participant. Letters of support to conduct the study from each program's institution IRB were obtained, as well as permission from the appropriate program directors, deans, or chairs. Names and email addresses of ESL students were obtained from program directors. It was necessary to obtain informed consent of the participants before they engaged in the interview process.

Prior to the start of the interview, participants were informed that participation was completely voluntary, and the interview could be stopped or they could withdraw at any point during the study. To ensure confidentiality, participants were assigned a pseudonym known only by the researcher. The list of participants, any data collected, transcriptions, field notes, and recordings were securely locked in a container at the researcher's home and will be destroyed after 3 years. The researcher's computer is also password protected and any information stored on the computer will be deleted after 3 years.

Participants volunteered for the interviews, could opt not to answer any questions, and could end the interview at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by removing all identifiers such as names, student identification numbers, as well as the names and locations of nursing programs. Participants agreed to recording the date, time, and place of interview, and to being audio recorded. The setting for the participant was one that was convenient and comfortable for the participants. Ethical considerations to guide the research for protection of the participant included autonomy (respecting people), maleficence (do no harm), beneficence (doing good while maximizing benefits and minimizing risks), and justice (equitable treatment) (Creswell, 2012).

Instruments Used in Data Collection

The key instrument in phenomenological research is the researcher. During interviews, interview questions designed by the researcher were used to uncover factors that were felt by participants to influence ESL nursing students to complete the program of study. In this study, a semi-structured interview was conducted for no more than one hour with each participant. Semi-structured interviews have some degree of

predetermined order, but still allow for flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the researcher. Conversational and informal tone allows for open-ended responses from the participants, using their own words (Flick, 2014). Interview questions were using Duckworth's grit scale, capturing the essence of perseverance and passion for long-term goals.

Participants were asked no more than six open-ended, researcher-created questions that elicited data relevant responses. The questions were developed to reflect the unique barriers of ESL nursing students, as identified in literature research. The interview protocol was piloted with three ESL nursing students from two local nursing programs, and adjustments were made based on the pilot interviews. Questions are broad and open-ended to allow the participants to extensively express their points of view.

Sample interview questions are as follows:

1. Think back to the time you started the program of study and maybe thought about quitting, what helps you stay in nursing?
2. Describe your experience as an ESL nursing student.
3. Describe what you are passionate about.
4. What do you perceive as barriers to completing the program?
5. How do you manage your pursuit for long term and short-term goals?
6. How do you perceive yourself when you are overwhelmed?

Interviews

In-depth, open-ended, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with an audio recorder were used. Recordings allowed the researcher to focus fully on the conversation and interaction. Verbatim responses were captured by the audio recording and then

transcribed. The researcher served as the interviewer, observer, taking notes, and recording the interview. It is important for the interviewer and participants to establish trust and rapport with one another in this process.

A consideration in this study was cross-cultural interviewing. Interviewing a participant of a diverse background requires the interviewer to be aware of several cultural habits, practices, and positions, as these cultural factors may affect the relationship between the interviewer and the participant (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Many verbal and non-verbal factors could cause interviewers to make a mistake. Factors to consider in cross-cultural interviewing include making direct replies and looking at the participant's eyes when speaking. Linguistic and social issues are also important factors to consider. Difficulties in recognizing disparities in language use, gestures, and cultural norms may occur within interviewing process across gender, generation, social class or religion. Individual interviews were conducted at an off-site location that was easily accessible and of a neutral setting (Creswell, 2012; Giorgi, 2009).

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

The chosen methodology determines the data analysis. The phenomenological method is inductive in form as it goes from detailed data, such as notes from interviews, to general codes and themes. The first step in this qualitative, phenomenological analysis was to explore the data by reading transcripts over and over as well as writing memos or notes and short phrases for the transcripts, helping to explore the data. The next step was to code the data. Coding was used to make sense of the text data, divide it into segments, and label the segments. This process involved identifying text segments, placing a

bracket around them and assigning a code, word, or phrase describing the meaning of the text segment, and then labeling the text to form descriptions (Flick, 2014).

Codes were examined for overlap and redundancy, and then narrowed into broad themes or categories to form major ideas through an inductive process. Identifying a small number of themes and reducing codes to five to seven themes is best for writing qualitative reports that provide detailed information about a few themes, rather than general information on many themes (Creswell, 2013). Layering themes may be considered if multiple perspectives from different individuals are evident. Layering themes simply organizes the data from minor to major, or elementary to more sophisticated themes.

The transcendental phenomenological process begins with the *epoche*, for which the researcher sets aside his or her own ideas and perceptions related to the research (Moustakas, 1994). The analysis began with the process of *horizontalization*, in which specific statements from the participants were identified in transcripts that provide information about the participants' experiences relate to the topic (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Significant statements were outlined, and redundancy, overlapping and irrelevant statements were eliminated (*reduction*), producing themes, which were then detailed using structural description to reveal how the phenomenon was experienced or the context of the experience, ultimately enabling the researcher to develop a description of the essence of (meaning behind) the common experience (Moustakas, 1994). To capture the true meaning of the experience for the participants, Moustakas (1994) described the use of *intuitive integration*, or the development of textual and structured descriptions of the experiences that are synthesized into a composite description of the

phenomenon. This description captures the true meaning or essence of the experience. Interpretation of the study occurs when a larger meaning of the phenomenon is formed based on personal views, or comparisons with past studies (Creswell, 2012). For this study, the researcher followed Moustakas's rigorous and systematic procedure for phenomenological analysis, as described.

Trustworthiness and authenticity were supported through use of various data collection methods, which allows the researcher to critique and compare the data attained from different sources, and through detail and documentation of codes and themes in different sources of data, supporting triangulation of the data and trustworthiness to the findings. Trustworthiness can also be established by checking accuracy of the data with the participants by follow-up interviews. Peer review offers an external check to the research process as a means of providing reliability by asking questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations. Thus, trustworthiness also may be supported by careful documentation of procedures followed closely with each participant.

There are several computer programs available for analysis of qualitative data, such as NVivo, a popular program that will assist the researcher in the management, analysis of the qualitative data, and secure storage of the data (Creswell, 2013). The Nvivo qualitative analysis program allows the researcher to organize and manipulate the data and display codes and categories graphically. The NVivo program was used for this qualitative research study.

Summary of Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to add to the literature an understanding of ESL nursing students' perceptions of their unique barriers and

persistence to successful completion of the nursing education. Chapter 3 provides the overview of the methods and approach used to investigate ESL nursing students' persistence to program completion. Transcendental phenomenology was selected, as its systemic processes compliment the search for further exploring and understanding how ESL students overcome barriers to successful program completion. The phenomenology approach examines the perceptions and understandings of individuals' experiences in response to a phenomenon as it investigates, describes and explores the human consciousness and experience. Perspectives of individuals are important to gain a complete understanding. Giorgi (2009) suggested that the focus on the essence of the shared experience defines phenomenological methodology. The aim is to grasp the structural description of the essence of the experience. These perspectives allowed the researcher to explore how ESL nursing students described the true meaning of their experience in overcoming barriers to success. Findings from this research study will be described in Chapter 4, and conclusions will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence academic success of students who speak English as a second language (ESL) in Associate's Degree in Nursing Programs (ADN). A qualitative, phenomenological design was used to address the research questions: What barriers have the greatest impact on nursing students who speak English as a second language to persist in their program of study; and how do nursing students who speak English as a second language overcome barriers to program completion? The sample included eight diverse nursing students for whom English is their second language (ESL). These students were all in at least their second semester. Understanding characteristic traits that assist ESL nursing students to overcome challenges may offer thoughtful means of assisting students to graduation. The qualitative data analysis consisted of the coding and thematizing of data obtained during the eight interviews with ESL nursing students to reveal themes in the data.

A semi-structured interview protocol was the primary method of data collection. Open-ended questions and probing questions were used to gather information from each of the interview participants. At completion of each interview, the audio recording was downloaded from the conferencing platform or the primary digital recorder into the computer. The interview recording was transcribed into a typed format and uploaded for use in NVivo qualitative software, which was used to provide an organized workspace. None of the participants' personal information, such as names, appeared in the transcribed interview documents.

Data Analysis and Findings

This section provides the findings that emerged from the qualitative analysis of the interview data. In the following sections, each thematic category is discussed with themes that emerged from consideration of common response types found in the eight transcripts and related to the research questions:

- What barriers have the greatest impact on nursing students who speak English as a second language to persist in their program of study?
- How do nursing students who speak English as a second language overcome barriers to program completion?

Themes revealed in each category support the development of essential themes, which serve as the conclusions of the analysis. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the thematic categories, the related themes revealed within each category, and the essence of the themes (essential themes). Each thematic category and theme revealed is discussed individually, providing textual examples taken directly from the interview data.

Passions and motivations supporting success. The first thematic category included participant responses that expressed their personal passion or passions in life, motivations to persevere, and goals supporting perseverance. Common responses highlighted themes in the data of a passion for helping others through nursing, a passion for family and the desire and motivation for a better life, and pride and high self-expectations.

Table 4.1

Summary of Categories and Themes

Categories	Theme	Essence
Passions and Motivations supporting success	Helping others (through nursing)	Passion about caring for people (family and others) and nursing as a means of providing care
	Nursing	
	Passion for Family/ Motivated by wanting better life	Motivated by desire for better life, better future
	Goal oriented	Goal orientation and high self-expectations
	High expectations for oneself	
Experiences and Barriers as an ESL Nursing Student	Motivated by pride (self-pride and pride of others)	Motivated by pride (self-pride and pride of others)
	Cultural and Language Differences	Language differences affecting ability to learn and interpersonal communication
	Experiences of Discrimination	Negative experiences of discrimination in classroom and clinical setting
Hardiness: Managing Goals and Response to being Overwhelmed	Financial and Time Barriers	Financial burdens that affected time available
	Making and Sticking to plans	Sticking to plan
	Support of Family	When overwhelmed, taking a break, relaxing, talking to family, and crying to release tension
	Remaining positive	
	Taking a break	
Suggestions for Improvement	Crying	
	Trying to relax	
	Sharing group or Support group	Support groups for ESL nursing students

Passion for helping others through nursing. The responses given for a passion for helping others was often described in terms of nursing. Therefore, these responses

were further combined into a single theme of a passion for helping others through nursing. Three of the eight participants directly described a personal passion of helping others. For example, Participant 6 stated, “I love to help people.” Other participants offered more description when revealing their passion, such as Participant 5, who described the feeling of helping others as a nurse and how someone can feel better just through the personal, healing connection of touch.

My passion is to save lives, help people, do my best. Sometimes . . . you see the patient hasn't been washed for days, and when you do it, when [the] patient says thank you, it's what fills you, because they see that someone is helping them. Even if we are not giving treatment, just with the touch, you can feel better.

(Participant 5)

Similarly, Participant 1 described nursing as a means of fulfilling this personal passion for helping others.

Well, first of all, I'm very passionate about nursing. I absolutely love it. I could not see myself doing anything else. All I want to do is help people, make a difference in people's lives, so I'm very passionate about that. (Participant 1)

Lastly, Participant 3 described a passion for the job, also related to being helpful to patients, stating, “Second, passionate about the job that I do, you know. I try to do my job 100%, you know, and be as helpful to all the patients as I can be.”

Passion for family and to provide a better life. In addition to having a passion for helping others through nursing, the participants commonly noted a passion for family. For example, Participant 3 stated, “Well, the most passionate I think I am about my family, you know, about my wife, about my parents, about my sister.” For many, this

passion for their family served as a motivation to continue the goal of completing the nursing program (discussed in the section on factors supporting perseverance). For example, Participant 4 described this connection:

I think it's my family. It's because I start the program, it's because of my son.

You know, every....we as an immigrant, we come to the United States to improve our lives. So we have to do something. And I think the future, my son's future was, I can say, one of the biggest reasons that I start the program. (Participant 4)

Thus, the passion for family supported their goals of completion in the nursing program.

The participants also commonly noted the motivation to continue to provide a better life for themselves and for their families. The following examples provide insight into the desire to provide a better life to themselves and family.

I want a better life because that's why I'm doing all of this. ... That's why I'm doing all this is for goal, why I struggle with that nursing program. It's very difficult, very difficult. But I know why I'm doing this and I do it for me, my family, my future kids, so they can have everything they want, so we can travel. I love travel. So, it's difficult to travel with no money, so that's a long term goal. But one thing it's like keep me stay in the program is I think back like "oh, this is my goal, this is where I want to be, and I want....this is for my future." So I want to live a better, to have better future. So I have to try no matter what. (Participant 6)

But I, whenever I thought of quitting, I thought that wasn't the future that I wanted. For me, I started the program because I wanted a career in nursing. And I like that nursing has so many possibilities and I thought if I first get up the career,

that the future was pretty much endless and I really wanted that. And with that in mind, I just couldn't quit. (Participant 8)

Some participants described being motivated by their families. This was often linked to providing a better life for their families, but not always. One participant (Participant 7) described the role of her parents in supporting her educational persistence, providing support and comfort, "always standing by her, always try to calm me down," pointing out her goals.

Goal orientation. The most common response to the question about how the student perseveres and, therefore, essential theme to this thematic category of factors supporting perseverance is participants' self-identification as being goal-oriented. Participant 1 described, "I am very...I don't know if I would say stubborn, but when I have a goal, I have to reach it." Similarly, Participant 5 stated, "I am very persistent. I am the person that says I am not going to give up; they are going to have to kick me out." Participant 2 further expanded on the notion of an internal benefit of being goal oriented in a thick and rich description.

If I have the goal, if I know, and maybe there's going to be another question about it, but if I have a goal, if I have something to go to, especially with all my support, I'll do everything possible to get to the goal and not give up even I know how hard it is. And I know a lot of people who dropped the program after failing one test. And even like American people, and I told them, you got power, you have language, that's your power, but still, I don't know why they still quit, they not in the program anymore and I was like, ok, I'm not gonna do that, I'm gonna keep trying and keep getting up, and keep going. So probably me inside, helped me to,

that's what helped me to be still in the program, and just keep telling to myself, that you can do it, there is nobody who has never made any mistakes, we all make mistakes, even machine make mistakes. So it's ok, if you do not know something. It's ok to fail something, but that's why the program gives you four tries to pass the test. Honestly, I failed just one test so far, and I that was probably the biggest point where I was like, ok, I probably should stop and just do something else much easier. My husband told me, you can just stay home and raise kids. When he told me that, I was like, NO, Never! That's never gonna happen. So, yeah, those things like that, I just have a goal and I want to get that goal and to be proud of myself. (Participant 2)

Lastly, Participant 8 described not giving up on the future he/she saw for him/herself.

Whenever I thought of quitting, I thought that wasn't the future that I wanted. For me, I started the program because I wanted a career in nursing. And I like that nursing has so many possibilities and I thought if I first get up the career, that the future was pretty much endless and I really wanted that. And with that in mind, I just couldn't quit.

Pride. The concept of pride was used to describe participants' personal motivation to remain in the nursing program. Some participants described how significant others in their life motivated them by being proud of them. For example, Participant 4 and said, "My passion is my family and my son and I want to...I want my son proud of me."

He [grandfather] was very proud of me for going to nursing school, and that's been one of my biggest motivations to continue. And I had to take a semester off

a couple months ago, for personal reasons, and I didn't let it discourage me. I was sad about it because I wanted to keep going, but I knew I wasn't going to give up.... Like I mentioned earlier, making my grandpa proud, my grandma, my mom....and I think about when my mom went through nursing school. She was working two or three jobs, barely spoke English, had to take care of me and my grandparents....and I think if she can do that, I should be able to do that. So I want to make her proud too. (Participant 1)

In contrast, Participant 2 discussed self-pride as a motivating factor. This participant noted, "I feel like if you're proud of yourself, everyone's going to feel the same way. I am a very self-critical person, so if I'm proud of myself, that tells something."

Experiences and barriers as an ESL nursing student. The second thematic category that was developed from the data included responses that were related to the experiences of being an ESL student in nursing and, more specifically, the associated barriers experienced by the participants. The variety of responses highlighted several themes from the experiences of participants, with the majority of participants speaking to cultural and language barriers. These cultural and language barriers, which made participants lack understanding (in both written and verbal communication), feel socially left out or awkward, and experience the need to learn to approach and interact with people within a cultural context. The next theme within this thematic category of experiences and barriers as an ESL nursing student was one of discrimination, both in the classroom and in the clinical setting.

Cultural and language differences. The most common experiences reported by the participants were related to cultural and language differences that limited their ability for effective communication. These limitations were perceived in different ways; some of the language and cultural barriers created a lack of understanding for participants, both when reading and trying to communicate with others. Some participants noted only language issues contributing to communication and learning difficulties. For example, Participants 2 and 4 described her own learning difficulties due to the language:

Sometimes I had situations when I read the book, and I'm creating some sentence and there is like a word there I don't know. I was like, ok, is this some medical terminology word I don't know, or maybe that's an English word that I don't know. And those situations like that also like made me, they still make me, upset and that was one more reason probably to give up, or not to give up, but maybe, yes, like that put me down, probably. (Participant 2)

The language is the biggest difficulty that I had. And culture as well. ... Language was a big one. ... Because, you know, you talk with different people in different level, different accents, and it's hard. ... Sometimes I get scared, honestly. ... I think, how can I do that? Can I be a good nurse if I can't communicate with patients? Sometimes I see other nurses; they, how they talk to the patients and change the atmosphere. When the patients are in stress and nurse help them to relax. Sometimes I don't know if I can do this. And it makes me scared. ... It's the biggest one (language barrier). ... The other student, they already know it. They went to the hospital and the doctor's office from the beginning, from they were baby. And they the system, they know the words, they know some

medicines. And for me I have to start everything from the beginning; I have to memorize everything. There are a lot of medicines that the names are different. We use...I know the medicine, I know what it's there for. But the name are different, and I have to ... So I have to work harder (Participant 4)

Others reported both cultural and language aspects hindering communication with others staff as well as patients.

In nursing program you have to communicate with people. It's not just science and like you study yourself, you do everything by yourself. You have to communicate with people. And language is important, culture is important. You have to know their culture. (Participant 4)

Thus, language difficulties affected both their ability to study and learn effectively and cultural aspects in addition to language issues produced difficulties with peer relations and clinical experiences. The following examples from the interviews provide further insight into how language and cultural barriers affected these students.

It's definitely my language. As I told, like reading the book, you don't know if it's an English word or like medical terminology that you need to look up. And language is the biggest one because I even have words that I don't use, I don't say them because I can't pronounce them. I have that, so and sometimes, you have to think before you say something. It's not like in my language, you can just talk nonstop, of course you have to think, but it doesn't take that much time as if you speak in English, because in English you have to think what are you say and how you say because the sentence structure is completely different. So the language would be the biggest one. (Participant 2)

And language is important, culture is important. You have to know their culture. Sometimes you think....sometimes I had a problem. Sometimes, like, I wasn't sure if this question is right to ask. For example, patient, we have to communicate with patients. And I want to....mmm...make joke with them, talk about different thing, not just disease or care, health issue. And I wasn't sure: is this right? Can I ask this question? How can I respond to their jokes? ... I mean...the language is the same, you know? It's always a problem for me. The culture is a little different. You know your friends, they know you. It's easier to talk to, communicate. And it's college. It's a different level. ... It's easier to talk to people that still are in the same level. And they have the same....I mean, they have the same background.

(Participant 4)

Participants also reported feeling socially left out or awkward, and feeling the need to learn to approach and interact with people within a cultural context. Participant 8 described feeling shy and awkward, not knowing how to approach anyone in the clinical environment.

How to even begin to understand what that means and to know you know how to help the patient, not just the contact with the patients, but you know, how to approach anybody in that environment, doctors and other nurses and everything. So, it was definitely um, something that made me feel very, how do I put this, very shy, more than I...because I had come to be very shy at the beginning, especially. It was especially hard in a clinical setting where you have 8 weeks. So I had a couple of weeks to warm up, then I felt good. Then it was over. And then

it was, again and again, always a cycle of awkward, a little bit awkward moment, you know, because also the language is a barrier, even though you know, that you have certain, or it is expected to have a certain English proficiency, you still not like a native speaker, so that maybe at least for me, I guess created a barrier to not be so shy and to speak up. (Participant 8)

Whereas, Participant 6 described feeling socially left out:

In the clinical, like, I still feel like sometimes I feel left out. ... You know like, if you speak the language well and you communicate with your other nurses during your clinical orientation then sometimes, you know....I don't know. Like for myself, I feel left out when I first started the class. Like maybe I don't know how to like socialize with them. ... Seeing myself with others. Like they talk to each other, you know? Even the students, like, they talk to the nurses like oh, they're friendly, they talk and they're like, you know, nice to each other. And with me, I feel like...I don't know, I feel like a little difference from others. That's how I feel. (Participant 6)

However, the experiences of being an ESL revealed a few noted benefits also.

One participant described that he/she was able to better relate to and understand their patients.

I've never gotten treated differently, by faculty, by peers, by patients....if anything, patients like to know if I'm foreign, because they find it interesting. Or if they're foreign, even from a different country, they relate. And that also helps me relate to patients. Because I know some people, they get a little bit annoyed with patients that can't speak English or families that can't speak English. And I

understand, you know? I understand how difficult it was for my grandparents who barely speak English. (Participant 1)

Another participant suggested that being an ESL nursing student supported being more open minded. Participant 1 stated, “I try to consider everything. It makes me more open-minded.”

Experiences of discrimination. There were several reports of experienced discrimination in both the educational (academic) setting and the clinical setting.

Participant 6 described discrimination from the patient side:

Experience as an ESL nursing student, during my clinical, I felt like, you know, I was discriminated by the patients. Because I had this experience like the patient even like refused me to take care of him. ... Because my face look different. ... I had experience like the patient even say “yeah, because she looks Asian, so I don’t want her,” like that. So, yeah, that hurts. (Participant 6)

In contrast, Participant 2 described discrimination from the clinical staff:

But my clinical is another story because we are all working with people and it’s always difficult to work with people. Always. And sometimes people, I can give you a couple examples. I was told that America is just for Americans. And I was also told, stop talking to me with your fake accent. Yes, I have some examples like that and various situations that I didn’t know what to answer as. So, yeah, um my clinical experience is good, but working with people is not easy, but I still love it, I still know that there are, I still me very good and nice people. ... Honestly, I did not even reply I think back to the person because I did not expect that at all. Even I was talking to her and it was one of the nurses on the floor, even

when I was talking with her, she made that face, like she's looking at somebody, I don't know, something nasty or something, and not (inaudible) that she said that. I felt very shocked. I didn't reply anything. I just left. I just was ok. There is nothing I can do with my accent. If there was a way to fix it, I would definitely do it. But if the person decided to tell me that, ok, that's her problem. That's her problem I think. That's not my problem. I know I have it; I know I will always have it and I cannot get rid of that. ... I would say I felt very upset. ... So yeah, it took me maybe a couple days just to let it go. My strategy is to let go.

(Participant 2)

Time and financial barriers. Time and financial barriers were included together because often participants were reporting financial burdens that also were affecting time, such that the need for a job for financial reasons ended up limiting their time available to put into the program. As an example of financial burden and responsibilities, Participant 3 described:

I guess the main barrier is the financial barrier. Because I do have to work full time and because I have a house and I have, you know, other responsibilities. I have to take care of some of my family in Ukraine kind of thing. So it's kind of...it's a lot of funds that...a lot of roles that I have. So that's the main, I guess, the main barrier. ... yes the financial responsibilities is the one. (Participant 3)

Similarly, Participant 5 expressed financial barriers and associated time limitations due to working:

[I] didn't get approved for anything [financial assistance] because I have a degree from my country. ... No [financial aid]. They approved this year a loan. But I

don't get anything. I have been paying cash all the time. ... I have been pay about \$13,000 already ... and I keep doing it. ... What I do is, for example, summer, that we stop for 3 months, thank you God that I have a good job and am a good worker. My boss like me, my title now is like, part time flexible, so I can go any time I want, I just have to communicate with my boss. So during the summer, I work 40 hours, took my summer classes and I save money to pay for the next semester. (Participant 5)

From these barriers, participants also discussed factors that support their perseverance in the nursing program, despite the difficulties reported.

Hardiness: Managing goals and responses to being overwhelmed. The third thematic category was defined by participant responses that described experiences of being overwhelmed and how they continued to manage their goals through feelings of being overwhelmed, as well as the many barriers experienced and described in the previous sections. Key themes in managing goals were (a) making and sticking to a plan, (b) support of family, and (c) remaining positive. Key themes in terms of strategies when overwhelmed included (a) taking a break or stepping away, (b) talking to family for support, (c) crying to release the tension, and (d) trying to relax.

Managing goals. When managing goals, participants commonly described making a plan and sticking to goals, staying positive, and relying on the support of family. For example, Participant 2 described making a plan and how he/she stuck to that plan and why:

I'm the person who loves planning... I would have a couple different ways, like not exact plan, like this is how it must be. No, we have some different ways, but we always follow the plan. And, that helps us. (Participant 2)

In terms of sticking to a plan (or goal), Participant 6 also described how the goal stays on the mind:

I want to be a nurse. So that's the goal that I always have in my mind. So when I get here I have a chance, you know, to go to school and to, you know, if I want to be a nurse I can be. So I have to try to be a nurse. That's what I always put in my mind. (Participant 6)

Staying positive was another management strategy for achieving goals. This was noted by Participant 3, who said:

I try to stay positive all the time. If I cannot accomplish something I still stay positive, and if I fail a task then it's not the end of the world. I always think....I have a thought process of "somebody in the world has much worse than we do." You know? So I mean that's kind of, that's how I think. That's my outlook on the world I guess. (Participant 3)

As a final example of statements related to managing goals, participants also cited the help of family when feeling overwhelmed. For example:

And one other thing is I think also I have like a very supportive husband. Even though a lot of times I feel overwhelmed, I feel like- I don't know how to say that- like I feel down? Like I thought "I'm not going to make it, I'm not going to become a nurse." But then he say to me "just try your best." You know? "Just try your best first, and then we'll see. If you can't really make it then we'll think of,

you know, the other plan, but right now this is what you want to be. So just try your best.” He’s always encouraging. (Participant 6)

The need to take a break and try to relax. Participants described moments when they feel overwhelmed in the program. They also described what they do when this happens. Five participants commonly described taking a break and doing something else unrelated in an attempt to relax. The following examples show this need to take a break and the different way the student participants decided to do it:

When I get very stressed, I need to take a break. Sometimes if I get too anxious I try to make myself take a nap or something. ... I just need to get my mind off of it. ... Literally it could be anything. I could go for a walk; I could take a nap; I could watch some TV (Participant 1)

I don’t really get overwhelmed too often. I try to think positively all the time. Even if there’s like something that’s overwhelming me. But I guess like to relax if I get stressed out I listen to the music. I like the stars, I like looking at the stars and stuff and the universe and stuff (Participant 3)

Sometimes I exercise, I go for a walk. It helps me to calm down. And then I think I put too much pressure on myself. I want to finish it, finish the program as soon as possible. Because I’m not 20 years old; I don’t have that much time. So I put too much pressure on myself when I’m overwhelmed, when everything is not working right. I start to think “it’s ok” and “it doesn’t matter.” I talk to myself and I say “it doesn’t matter to finish it this semester or next semester.” One extra semester doesn't make a big difference. So I try to make myself relax. (Participant 4)

So I sometimes just have to take a break, a break from everything and put everything into perspective, to prioritize if I need to. I can study today or I need to do my household first because I can't think in this chaos because that's what happens with the children and all this paperwork. ... So when everything was so much, I just took a day off to just do one thing and not try to do it all at the same time. (Participant 8)

Support of family. Four participants also described relying on the support of family at these times. Participant 7 explained how she complained to her parents.

Participant 6 explained in more detail the support of her husband:

I have like a very supportive husband. Even though a lot of times I feel overwhelmed, I feel like- I don't know how to say that- like I feel down? Like I thought "I'm not going to make it, I'm not going to become a nurse." But then he say to me "just try your best." You know? "Just try your best first, and then we'll see. If you can't really make it then we'll think of, you know, the other plan, but right now this is what you want to be. So just try your best." He's always encouraging. (Participant 6)

Crying. Lastly, three participants noted the need to cry and release the tension. Participant 5 simply stated, "When I think I cannot do it. Sometimes I cry." Participant 7 said, "A lot of time, I cry." As another example, crying to let out the negative emotion, Participant 2 described

When I am overwhelmed, I just need to cry and express all of that, not just to, just to cry because something hurt and heavy inside and that's what helps me to get rid of it. 2

I usually watch a very sad movie. I know it doesn't matter which one, like a drama or something and that helps me to relieve all of that, all of that sadness, and it helps me. And also, that's the only way to get rid of that overwhelming, that's what helps me very much. That's the only way. (Participant 2)

Recommendations for improvement. In addition to the thematic categories, the participants in this study provided information on their recommendations for future improvements. Some of the participants offered some suggestions or recommendations to better support ESL nursing students in the program. Two participants suggested developing a sharing or support group or club that would be for ESL students (nursing or others) to share their experiences and provide discussion and support. Participant 2 provided the following description of this recommendation:

Before we started this, you were talking about the program, what maybe would be better to do to help people like me. Honestly, I like to learn from somebody's experience, so I wish there was some kind of meeting, not a class, but like a meeting with people from different countries who, not even nursing program, other programs, so we can share our faults and how we, how we struggle, so we can share stories. ... Because if somebody, for example, if somebody told me the story like I told you, like the person said to me stop talking to me with that fake accent, if I'd heard that from somebody else, I would already know how to react to that, or if people laugh at accent, they tell me they don't like my accent and

those are the stories that I would like to share with some people and hear their opinion. What they think about that situation. They would help me to cope with all this and do not take it very close to my heart, probably. You know what I mean? ... I always think about what I did and what have done, I always like compare what I did and what I would do and that helps to get ready for another situation like that. (Participant 2)

Similarly, Participant 8 described the importance of having some type of support.

If everything takes you by surprise, because you don't have a support group that tells you like where is this going and we're here to help you, that definitely I think was a very different experience for me than for my brother who didn't have a family to go to and who did not have a support group to explain him anything or was there for him. ... The recommendations maybe thinking about other ESL students maybe that are coming, that are fresh off the boat would you say and they maybe have no support. I think that is definitely a must. I would say that was, that was like night and day I think. If I had not had that one year experience as an exchange student and I didn't know what that meant, now years later, how incredibly helpful that was, even though I didn't have it during college. Just remembering that I had it and how it worked. That helped. (Participant 8)

The second recommendation was offered by a single participant, who suggested that the teachers collaborate to support the use of similar teaching techniques to limit confusion and difficulties, particularly related to language and cultural difficulties for the ESL students.

I guess related to the program, what could be done better is to have each teacher have the same kind of teaching technique, to be more on the same page with the classes. Because each teacher does have their own teaching technique, which is good, but I guess so it does not differentiate that much. Because one teacher teaches one way, another teacher teaches a different way. And maybe too have more information on PowerPoints. Because the PowerPoints are really helpful for a lot of students. Not only me, but I know a lot of students that I talk to and stuff.

(Participant 3)

Summary of Results

From the themes revealed in each thematic category, several overarching themes were identified and forwarded as the essential themes of the analysis. These themes included the following from the four thematic categories: Passionate about caring for people and nursing as a means of providing care (Thematic Category 1); goal orientation, sticking to goals, motivated by desire for better life, better future, and pride (Thematic Category 1); cultural and language differences limiting learning and communication (Thematic Category 2); experiences of discrimination as a barrier to success (Thematic Category 2); financial and time related barriers (Thematic Category 2); and taking a break, talking to family, and crying to release tension were ways participants tried to relax (Thematic Category 3). In addition to the themes related specifically to the experiences offered, the participants offered recommendations for improvement that included the formation of a support group or sharing group (noted within Thematic Category 4). These essential themes serve as the conclusions of the analysis. Chapter 5

details the findings as they relate to the research questions of the study specifically and to the prior research in the field.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The worsening shortage of RNs, the projected growth in minority populations, and the growing disparities in health care and health outcomes in the United States underscore the need for a diverse nursing workforce reflective of a culturally diverse population. Critical to meeting this need is increasing enrollment, retention, and persistence among minority nursing student populations toward successful completion of nursing programs. Understanding characteristic traits that overcome challenges faced by nursing students who speak English as a second language (ESL) may offer thoughtful means of assisting these students to graduation.

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence academic success of ESL students in Associate's Degree in Nursing Programs (ADN). Interviews were conducted with a sample of eight diverse nursing students for whom English is their second language. The qualitative, phenomenological data analysis process revealed essential themes in the data, which served as the conclusions of the study and were used to address the research questions. The study research questions included the following:

- What barriers have the greatest impact on nursing students who speak English as a second language to persist in their program of study?
- How do nursing students who speak English as a second language overcome barriers to program completion?

Stemming from several thematic categories developed during the data analysis, essential themes were revealed about the participants and their experiences as ESL nursing students.

Essential themes were related to the research questions of the study. Essential themes related to the first research question included cultural and language differences limiting learning and communication, experiences of discrimination as a barrier to success, and financial and time related barriers. Related to the second and third research questions, essential themes revealed from the analysis included student motivations driven by (a) a passion for caring for people and nursing as a means of providing care and (b) a goal orientation (sticking to goals), as well as motivation driven by desire for better life, better future, and pride. Student strategies for dealing with challenges and the stress related to program completion included taking a break, talking to family, and crying to release tension and to relax. Lastly, student recommendations included the need for a support group or sharing group to support ESL nursing students toward degree completion.

Implications of Findings

As the United States grows as an ethnically diverse country, and higher education institutions are charged with providing all opportunities for ESL students to successfully graduate, nursing educators have a greater responsibility to successfully graduate ESL students. However, attrition rates for students enrolled in both associate's degree and baccalaureate degree nursing programs are reported at approximately 50% (Harris, 2014). Therefore, it is essential that programs of nursing look carefully at their attrition and retention rates and seek to understand the needs of at-risk students, including ESL

students, to determine the best strategies to implement for student success. Ethnically diverse students are at increased risk for attrition due to additional barriers, which can include programs developed and conducted with a lack of awareness of diverse cultural needs, feelings of social isolation, academic disadvantages, and language barriers (Baker, 2010).

The results of this study contribute to the understanding of barriers to successful program completion among ESL nursing students. Supporting previous literature related to the barriers among ethnically diverse students, the results of this study highlighted challenges associated with cultural and language differences that served to limit the students' abilities to learn and communicate effectively, both in the classroom and in practical applications. Indeed, Olsen (2012) identified language barriers as the most significant obstacle among ESL nursing students, supporting difficulties due to poor linguistic proficiency and affecting communication. In particular, effective communication in a healthcare setting is critical to achieving high quality patient care.

Given the importance of effective communication as a core competency in nursing education and fundamental to safe quality nursing care, ESL students may be at risk for clinical practice failure due to difficulties with communication (Rogan & Miguel, 2012; Yoo & Park, 2015); such difficulties with communication in clinical practice were described by participants in this study as well. Yoo and Park (2015) found that providing hands-on student participation in practical learning, or case-based learning on communication skills, ESL students increased their communication skills, problem-solving ability, and learning motivation. In an attempt to assist ESL students and improve clinical communication skills, Rogan and Miguel (2012) showed effectiveness

of online resources, such as an online terminology tool, podcasts, and vodcasts, as learning tools to support clinical skills. Clinical educators from health professional programs also find non-verbal communication, such as good eye contact, and the approach to patients as most important for student success during practicum (Elder et al., 2001).

The results of this study supporting language and cultural differences as barriers also align with research by Green (2014), who found lower level of English proficiency and non-local ethnicity were independently predictors of poorer academic performance among students in a pharmacy program. Academic performance among ESL nursing students also was found to be related to the level of English-language acculturation (Salamonson et al., 2007). However, Torregosa et al. (2015) reported that the interaction between English language proficiency and academic performance was insignificant, but rather, it was the interaction with academic networks (faculty/advisors) that was a significant predictor of academic performance.

Research has documented the experiences of international students in general and the challenges associated with feelings of alienation, loneliness, homesickness, and social exclusion (Sherry et al., 2009). Indeed difficulties associated with language differences affect the ability of students to socially engage with others (Yeh & Inose, 2003), which was supported in this present phenomenological research study.

Additional barriers to success were evident in the participants' descriptions of experiences of discrimination. Research also has documented the experiences of international students in general and the challenges associated with racial discrimination and vulnerability (Sherry et al., 2009). The impact of discrimination affects the lives of

international and ESL students (Sherry et al., 2010). Indeed, the nursing students in this study reported experiences of lack of cultural understanding from faculty, peers, and patients in the clinical setting. This aligns with the findings of Sanner and Wilson (2008) and Sealey et al. (2006) who found a low level of cultural competence among faculty, with students reporting a general lack of racial and ethnic diversity amongst faculty and peers. The sense of support a student feels from faculty may be a critical factor to retention, where research has found higher perception of faculty and psychological support to be significant reasons for students staying in their program of study (Shelton, 2003). The perceived support goes beyond just faculty and staff, extending to colleagues, family, and friends (Wray et al., 2014), but the institution can foster supportive relationships between students and faculty and make efforts to eliminate discrimination.

Finally, as was reported by the participants in this study and prior research, financial and time related barriers were a significant barrier. Among ESL students, Wray et al. (2014) found students left their program largely due to financial struggles. Similarly Bowden (2008) reported financial issues to be a significant factor in students' consideration to leave the program, behind only fear of failure and stress related to clinical placement.

Despite these barriers to success, the participants in this study expressed and demonstrated drive and persistence toward completion of their academic and career goals, allowing for an in-depth look into their experiences of success and the factors that supported continued success. One essential theme in this study was having a passion for caring for people and using nursing as a means of providing care within this passion. Indeed, prior research suggests that students may exhibit greater interest in their long-

term goals if they build passion from positivity and optimism (Hill et al., 2016). A strong desire to become a nurse and a focus on that goal has been shown to be a predominant factor influencing students to persevere in nursing programs (Wray et al., 2014). Hill et al. (2016) demonstrated that grittier college students reported greater positive affect and commitment to a purpose. Among a sample of racially and ethnically diverse nursing students, Diefenbeck et al. (2016) found the greatest influence was from family support and second was the internal drive to be a nurse. Thus, from the results of this study as well as prior research, it seems the passion for caring for others and for being a nurse seems to feed the individual's goal orientation.

Goal orientation (sticking to goals) was a theme in this study, revealing that the goals were driven by a motivation or desire for a better life, better future, and individual pride. These particular findings of passion and goal orientation strongly align with grit theory. Duckworth et al. (2007) defined the work of grit as a “noncognitive personality trait defined by perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (p. 166), wherein success, even in the face of barriers and obstacles, may be the result of passion and perseverance. According to grit theory, passion drives direction and purpose (Willingham, 2016). Noncognitive traits that define grit, according to Duckworth, include perseverance, passion, resiliency, hardiness, conscientiousness, ambition, and need for achievement. Similar to the expressed experiences and perceptions of the participants in this study among ESL nursing students, despite setbacks, failures, or other adversities, it is grit that supports the continued pursuit of short-term and long-term goals with deliberate passion, which requires characteristics of stamina, sustained commitment with interest, and persistent effort towards pursuing goals, with grit being related to long term commitment

rather than talent (Duckworth et al., 2007). The sustained interest in and effort toward a long term goal with persistence, self-control, and conscientiousness, defines grit and contributes to successful outcomes (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). In this study, as well as prior research (Wood et al., 2012), ESL students contributed their success to their own locus of control personal attributes (such as persistence due to goal orientation, as described by this study's participants) and supportive social connections.

In addition to understanding the challenges experienced by participants and the motivations supporting their perseverance, participants discussed their personal strategies used to release tension and avoid setbacks related to the challenges and experiences of discrimination. The essential theme revealed strategies of taking a break, talking to family, and crying to release tension and to relax. As with other research noted, support of family, friends, and faculty is critical to providing a means of coping with the challenges experienced (Bowden, 2008; Cameron et al., 2011; Wood et al., 2012). The results of this study support prior research in this area and highlight the important role of family, friends, peer support, and faculty support to the retention of ESL nursing students. This finding in conjunction with previously discussed findings on perceived discrimination, particularly within the clinical setting, represents an avenue of change from which the program administration can utilize to support greater retention and successful completion among ESL nursing students. Along these lines, the participants in this study offered a recommendation to better meet the needs of other ESL students in nursing programs such as the one used in this study, which was to develop and offer a support group or sharing group to support ESL nursing students toward degree completion. Such a group would provide social support to students who may be lacking

family or peer support due to circumstances, or add another dimension of support to those who have some family/peer support. A support group would enable access to needed emotional support (Diefenbeck et al., 2016) for these students to support retention.

Limitations

This study was limited to a sample of eight diverse nursing students for whom English is their second language. Although taken from a single geographic area, the colleges with nursing programs from which participants were chosen represented a diverse student population, which consisted of American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, Black, and others (unknown). Another limitation of the study was due to cross-cultural interviewing. Conducting interviews with participants of diverse backgrounds requires the interviewer to be aware of cultural habits, practices, positions, language nuances, and other cultural and language differences that may affect the interviewer-interviewee relationship as well as the understanding and context of what is being said (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Many verbal and non-verbal culturally affected cues could be mistaken or erroneously interpreted. The study may therefore have been limited by difficulties in recognizing disparities in language use, gestures, and cultural norms may occur within interviewing process across race/ethnicity, gender, generation, social class or religion. Lastly, this study was not designed to reveal any distinctions in responses between age groups of the participants.

Recommendations

Given the growth in ethnically diverse populations in the United States, and the need to provide opportunities for ESL students in post-secondary nursing schools to meet the demand, particularly among diverse nursing professionals, nursing educators have a

responsibility to successfully graduate ESL students. However, roughly half the students enrolled in both associate's degree and baccalaureate degree nursing programs fail to graduate (Harris, 2014). It remains important, therefore, for nursing programs to examine attrition rates among ESL nursing students, to understand the factors that may be affecting high attrition among the population, and to develop strategies to assist the students toward successful completion, such as awareness of diverse cultural needs, feelings of social isolation, academic disadvantages, and language barriers (Baker, 2010).

This section on recommendations proposes recommendations for practice as well as for further studies stemming from the results reported in this study. The results of this study contribute to the understanding of barriers to successful program completion among ESL nursing students. Supporting previous literature related to the barriers among ethnically diverse students, the results of this study highlighted challenges associated with cultural and language differences that served to limit the students' abilities to learn and communicate effectively, both in the classroom and in practical applications. This finding supports several recommendations for practice, both in terms of educational administration and clinical practice.

From the findings of this study and prior literature, several recommendations can be offered to support enhanced retention of ESL nursing students in similar programs. Development of a support or "sharing" group, as noted by participants, would provide needed emotional and problem solving support to the students. Participants noted that such a group could be for all ESL students and not only for nursing students. Participants discussed the need for family or friends to support student success and in the absence of such a support network, a support or "sharing" group would serve this purpose.

Additional research has supported the notion of the importance of family/peer interactions and support for students, especially ESL type students. This type of support may be critical to future success among ESL nursing students. The impact of such a support group on student outcomes could be the topic of additional research, either qualitative (focused on the students perspective and experiences), or quantitative in terms of measuring the impact on success rates.

Another practical recommendation to educational administration is the potential need for additional English language skills in medical terminology, which, according to the results, may be necessary, as participants reported struggling with language understanding related specifically to medical terminology. Again, this result can be used to highlight the need for additional research to support data-driven responses to changes in educational programs.

Lastly, programs and professional development for faculty and clinical staff on discrimination and cultural competence can be added to eliminate the harmful effects of discrimination would be powerful in supporting the eradication of such occurrences. Professional development should include cultural competence, but for nursing students, this means more than the faculty, but also the staff working with students during the clinical portion of their study. Proper training for all involved is essential for limiting or eliminating discrimination and creating a more welcoming and culturally sensitive and appropriate work and educational space. Continued research on the impact of cultural sensitivity and cultural competence training would also be helpful in terms of supporting data-driven decision making in the education of future nursing staff.

From the findings of this study and prior literature as well as the limitations of this study, several additional recommendations for future research can be made. Given the importance of the concept of grit, inclusive of the individual's passion and persistence for long-term goals, a study measuring grit, a different concept to individual trait-like differences and a concept that has been shown to be measurable (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) using a similar population, may shed light on differences in grit among ESL nursing students. Grit has been shown to be independent of personality traits and has a positive relationship to academic success and retention (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Understanding the influence of individual grit and how grit can be cultivated within this population of ESL nursing students may be critical to continued success among the students.

As noted previously, findings of this study showed participants who reported having difficulty with reading and understanding medical terminology. In addition, prior research has shown reading comprehension to be a significant predictor of ESL attrition (Donnell, 2015). A study looking specifically at the role of reading comprehension as it relates to medical terminology may support the need to include medical terminology coursework for ESL students. Thus, future research could be used to better understand the impact of reading comprehension skills and perhaps programs designed to support improved reading comprehension skills among the students on nursing student success.

Lastly, although this study did not address age as a factor, prior research remains contradictory regarding the impact of age on the concept of persistence among this population. Donnell (2015) found results related to persistence to hold regardless of age, ethnicity/race, sex, and first generation status; however, other research has shown age to

be a significant predictor of successful completion among ESL students, with older students being more persistent. Given the potential link between age and persistence, a study specifically examining the relevant factors described in this study within the context of age would be interesting. Results could support strategies designed to specifically address the needs of the students at various ages and stages in life.

Conclusion

There is a critical need to support retention of a diverse nursing population. This study was designed to seek to understand the challenges and the characteristic traits that overcome these challenges faced by nursing students who speak English as a second language (ESL). Through individual interviews with a sample of eight diverse nursing students for whom English is their second language, a qualitative, phenomenological data analysis revealed essential themes, which served to understand the experiences and perceptions of this group of students.

Essential themes highlighted cultural and language differences limiting learning and communication; experiences of discrimination as a barrier to success; financial and time related barriers; student motivations driven by a passion for caring for people and nursing as a means of providing care; and a goal orientation (sticking to goals), and motivation driven by desire for better life, better future, and pride. Lastly, student strategies for dealing with challenges and the stress related to program completion included taking a break, talking to family, and crying to release tension and to relax; and student recommendations for support group or sharing group to support ESL nursing students toward degree completion. Implications for practice and continued research were offered to support greater retention among ESL nursing students.

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Appendix A

Letter to the Program Chairs, Directors and Deans

Dear Chair, Director or Dean,

I am a doctoral student in the Ed.D. program in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, N.Y. As part of my research, I am conducting a study exploring factors that affect the persistence of ESL students in Associate's Degree in Nursing programs. As part of this study, I would like to interview ESL nursing students in their last semester during this Spring of 2018. Upon approval of the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB), I would plan to conduct the interviews at a convenient place for the students and offer them a \$10 Barnes and Nobles gift card as a token of appreciation for taking their time to assist me with this research. I will explain the purpose of my research, inform them of their rights as a study participant, explain that participation is completely voluntary, and they have the right to withdraw at any time. Participants will be advised of the minor risk that might be associated with the interview process and be given my name and phone number in case they experience any discomfort at the time of or any time after the interview. I would keep their names, any identifying information and their interview notes completely confidential. Thank you so much for your cooperation and assisting me to recruit students for this research upon IRB approval. I hope this research study will be beneficial in helping to learn more about the

experiences of ESL students in nursing programs. Please respond to this email if you are willing to assist and would support my study.

Appendix B

Letter to the Participant

I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Doctorate in Executive Leadership program in the School of Education at St. John Fisher College (SJFC) in Rochester, N.Y. As part of conducting research for my doctoral dissertation, I am very interested in exploring the completion rates of Students with a Second Language (ESL) in Associate's Degree in Nursing programs. The purpose of this letter is to ask for your assistance as an ESL student at the level of second semester or beyond of the nursing program in which you are matriculated by agreeing to be a participant in this study.

For this study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face audio recorded interview with this researcher. The interview will last no more than 30 minutes and will be held in a public place (college or library), and upon completion, you will receive a \$10.00 gift card from Barnes and Nobles to thank you for taking the time to participate in this important research. There are no risks to you. There will be no identifying information collected and no contact with your program director.

Your information will be kept strictly confidential under lock and key by the researcher and will never be linked to the results of the study. Your participation is only voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Your rights are as follows:

1. To have the purpose of the study explained along with any risks and benefits.

2. To understand that participation in this study will not impact your progression in the program or any service.
3. Withdraw from research as a participant at any time without penalty.
4. Refuse to answer any question without penalty.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read and understood the above and have received a copy of this form. I am under the age of 18 and am free to participate in this study.

Print name (Participant)	Signature	Date
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Print name (Researcher)	Signature	Date
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Please contact me, researcher Chris Granato, at 315-263-9171 if questions or would like to participate. If at any time you feel emotional or physical discomfort and wish to be removed from the study, please contact the researcher. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed and approved this research proposal. For any concerns about confidentiality, you may contact_____. This individual will direct your call to a member of the IRB at SJFC.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research. Your perceptions and experiences in your nursing program are very valuable and could help retain more men in nursing school and eventually, the nursing profession.

Chris Granato, RN, MS, FNP, CNE

Doctoral student, St. John Fisher College

Supervising Faculty: Dr. K. VanDerLinden

Appendix C

Letter to the Institutional Review Board

Dear Institutional Review Board,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Doctorate in Executive Leadership program at St. John Fisher College (SJFC) located in Rochester, New York. I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral dissertation. I am interested in exploring the completion rates of students with a second language (ESL) in Associate's Degree in Nursing programs. The purpose of this letter is to request permission to conduct interviews with the ESL nursing students at your institution.

The title of this study is *A Phenomenological Study on Persistence to Program Completion of Students of a Second Language in Associate's Degree in Nursing Programs in Central New York State*. The purpose of this study is to identify those factors that contribute to persistence to completion of educational goals for ESL students in central New York State community college Associate's Degree in Nursing programs. This research study will explore factors that impact completion rates of ESL nursing students. Students will be interviewed for 30 minutes at a public facility (the college or library), and all interviews are voluntary. There are no risks to the students to be interviewed and all participants will be at least 18 years of age. There will be no identifying information collected and all information will be kept under lock and key by the researcher.

A letter will be written to the Chair/Dean of the Nursing Department asking for the release of contact information on ESL students following approval of this students. Students will then be contacted by email or phone call asking for their voluntary consent, followed by a letter of consent.

Thank you for your support,

Christina Granato, RN, MS, CNE, FNP, EdD. candidate at St. John fisher College

cmg05423@sjfc.edu

315-263-9171

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Kim VanDerLinden