Public Abstract
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The purpose of this dissertation was to gain an understanding of moral distress by exploring the current theoretical foundation, key constructs, and identify personal and professional values present during moral distress experiences. This work will help inform future studies to target specific interventions that can move the science closer to establishing effective interventions aimed at lessening the impact of moral distress on critical care nurses. First, an exploratory, descriptive study was completed that examined moral distress in critical care and transitional care nurses and identified situations in which these nurses experienced the highest levels of moral distress. Furthermore, these nurses explored their coping strategies and interventions for moral distress through an open-ended qualitative questionnaire which revealed gaps in nurses' responses and the quantitative measured levels of moral distress. Next, an exhaustive analysis and evaluation of the Moral Distress Theory was completed and identified limitations in the theoretical model based on the current state of the science. Finally, a study was completed to identify barriers and values during moral distress experiences that will be used to target specific interventions aimed at lessening the impact of moral distress in future studies.