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# Problem Statement

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- Ledgister (2003) identified within the past 10 years the shortage of nurses in Canada has more than quadrupled, a trend occurring worldwide.
- Bowles and Candela (2005) acknowledged after 1 year in practice, 38% of novice nurses left the profession. More significant is after 2 years in practice, 57% abandoned nursing as a career.
- With experienced nurses retiring early or vacating nursing practice because of poor working conditions the nursing shortage to reach critical proportions (Begat, Ellefsen, & Severinsson, 2005).

# Why Nurses Leave

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Reasons cited by nurses for leaving the profession include issues with work cultures; particularly, with authoritative managers, restrictive work environments, experienced nurses rejecting novices, and a focus on nurses' clinical skills rather than attention on nurses' intellectual capacity (Tabari-Khomeiran, Kiger, Parsa-Yetka, & Ahmadi, 2007).

# Purpose Statement

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The aim of this qualitative study, from a phenomenological approach, was to explore the understanding of belongingness as expressed by nurses working in an urban hospital in Canada. Exploring nurses' experiences and understanding of this term could influence current and future nurse leaders' ability to foster a sense of belongingness in practice settings, possibly slowing current attrition rates of nurses from practice.

# Significance of Study/Leadership

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This study is important to nurse leaders and citizens worldwide as nurses might, if feeling a sense of belongingness, be able to provide increased quality in patient care (Kiekkas et al, 2008).

In addition, implementation of strategies related to this phenomenon might also prevent premature exodus from the profession and reduce the current statistics related to nurses leaving practice.

# Relevant/Important Research on Topic

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- The focus on belongingness in this study is reflective of prior work in education on the topic, and based on research previously conducted in nurses' work environments.
- Theoretical frameworks of social theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1970).
- Leadership theories (Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Wheatley, 2006).
- Theories of belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Dewey, 1938; Maslow, 1970; Somers, 1999).

# Research Questions

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1. What is a nurse's understanding of belongingness?
2. How could a nurse leader use the concept of belongingness in developing caring and supportive work environments?
3. How could belongingness influence job satisfaction and retention of nurses?

# Methodology

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- Qualitative method using a phenomenological study approach.
- Phenomenology, chosen as a means to describe the lived experience of nurses, followed van Manen's hermeneutic approach of exploring everyday occurrences (lived experience) to discover meaning (1990).



# Population Under Investigation

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- Any nurse with the protected title RN, as designated by the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), was invited to participate.
- Interviews with 15 nurses in a large urban hospital in, Canada occurred. The study was restricted to a single teaching hospital.
- A purposeful sample permitted the researcher to select individuals in an intentional manner (nurses were the experts in this study).

# Demographics

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Age Range	20-29 = 5	30-39 = 0	40-49 = 4	50-59 = 5	>60 = 1	
Educational Preparation	RN = 2	BScN = 11	Masters = 2			
Position	Staff nurse = 11	Formal Leader = 3	Other = 1			
Length of Time in Practice (years)	1-2 = 4	3-5 = 2	6-10 = 0	11-15 = 2	16-20 = 1	>20 = 6
N=15	F=14	M=1				

# Interviews

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- Ethics approval from the University of Phoenix (UoP), the researcher's place of employment (university), and the hospital was secured.
- Participants were notified through the hospital's email system about the study, and received a letter of introduction about the time commitment and aspects of the study.
- A consent form required and designed by the hospital was signed by each participant who took part in the study.

# Data Analysis

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- Using van Manen's approach to isolate themes included taking a holistic view, highlighting phrases, and reading line-by-line.
- Listening to the audiotape recordings and re-reading transcripts provided an opportunity to identify similarities in the participants' responses.
- Constant comparison of raw data from all sources to extract themes occurred. NVIVO 8 software was used to facilitate findings.

# Themes Related to Research Question One

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RQ1: What is a nurse's understanding of the term belongingness?

Theme 1: Belongingness relates to a sense of feeling happy and being part of a family in nursing practice.

Theme 2: A lack of belongingness causes stress and feelings associated with being alone and afraid.

Theme 3: There exists a sense of mourning about and yearning for the way nurses used to work.

# Themes Related to Research Question Two

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**RQ2: How could a nurse leader use the concept of belongingness in developing caring and supportive work environments?**

**Theme 1: The nurse leader/manager is primarily responsible for creating a culture of belongingness.**

**Theme 2: Recognition, being supported and consulted is important for a sense of belongingness.**

**Theme 3: Organizations have a responsibility to ensure belongingness exists.**

# Themes Related to Research Question Three

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RQ3: How could belongingness influence job satisfaction and retention of nurses?

Theme 1: Belongingness has an influence on intent to leave practice.

Theme 2: Novice and experienced nurses clearly identified why novices leave and or have intent to leave.

# Final Themes

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1. Belongingness relates to having a feeling of happiness and a sense of family.
2. Creating cultures of belongingness is primarily the responsibility of nurse leaders.
3. Organizations have a responsibility for ensuring a culture of belongingness exists.
4. For novice nurses to remain in practice having a sense of belongingness is essential.



# Assumptions and Limitations

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- As a first-time researcher accurate interpretation occurred.
- The ability to develop a relationship with the study participants was limited due to the short timeframe for completing the study.
- The study was restricted to nurses at one site and the sample size was small.
- As nurses volunteered and represented only a fraction of the larger population, voices may have gone unheard.

# Recommendations

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- The organization review current leadership practices at an individual and organization level.
- Initiate a leadership development program incorporating belongingness as a foundational philosophy for leadership development.
- To replicate the study in belongingness at other (multiple) sites and expand to rural as well as urban hospitals.
- Conduct a study with nurse leaders to gain a better understanding of belongingness from a leadership perspective.

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