

# Professional Identity in the Lived Experience of Hospital Nurses

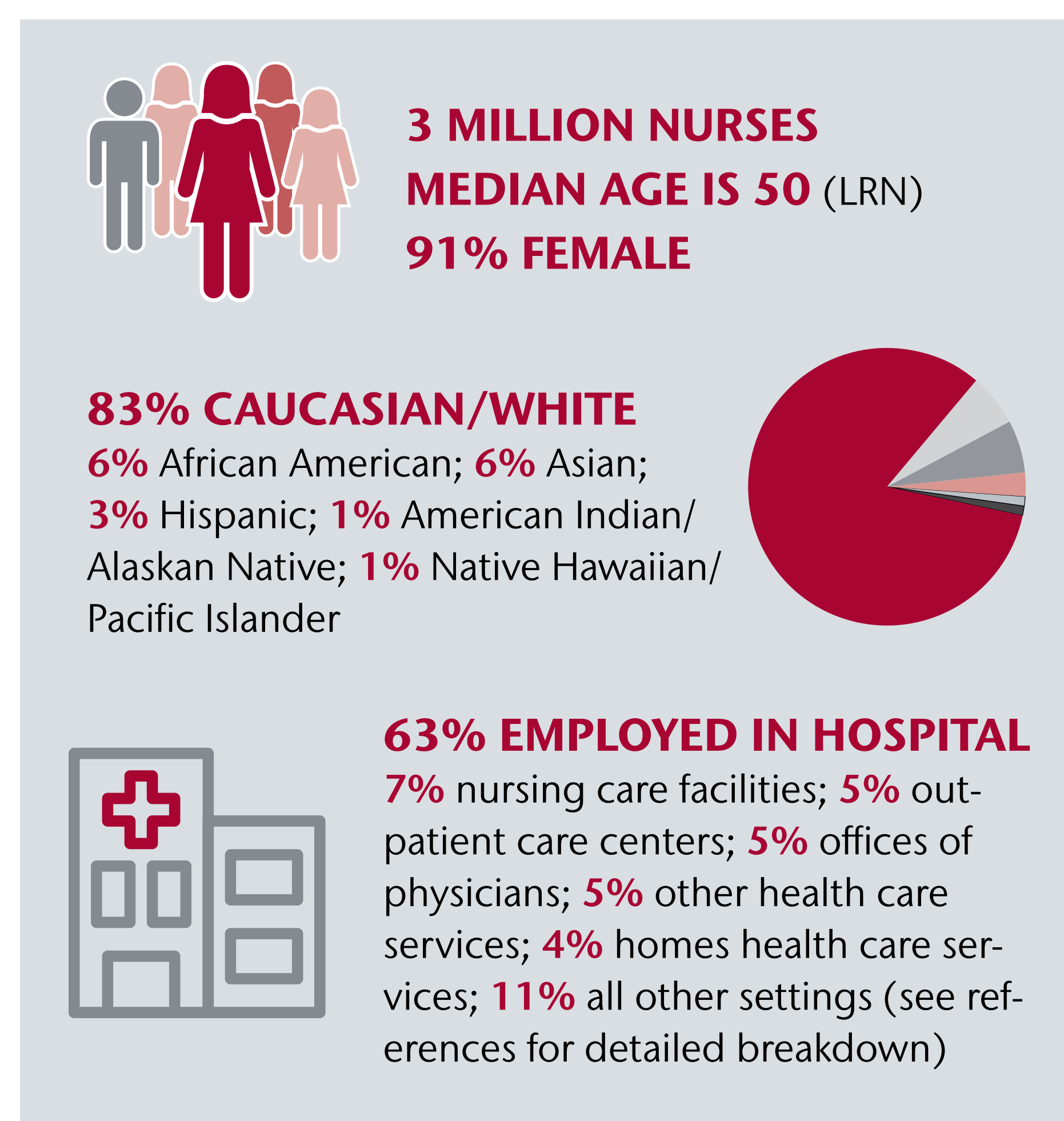


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## Introduction

- Nurses have commonly been viewed as a less important, less intelligent and submissive healthcare team member when compared to other members of the healthcare team<sup>5</sup>.
- Historical, political, and sociological factors contribute substantially to this view of nursing within the present health care culture<sup>11</sup>.
- Despite the public's perception that nurses are less competent than doctors, an annual Gallup poll<sup>5</sup> of honesty and trustworthiness among professional groups ranks nurses as having the highest position, above pharmacists, doctors, teachers, police officers, clergy and other professions.
- Can a professional person feel respected if they are deemed trustworthy but less competent than a member of another profession by the people that they both serve?

Figure 1 Nurse Statistics in USA<sup>10,15</sup>



## Background

- Registered nurses need to be highly skilled, intelligent, well-organized and effective workers<sup>7</sup>.
- Despite these strong work ethic-related characteristics, many competent nurses continue to report that they are overworked, overwhelmed, disrespected and feel powerless in their workplace<sup>1</sup>.
- An estimated 30% of nurses leave their jobs within the first year of employment & 27% of nurse's report being bullied in the last six months<sup>8</sup>.
- Nurses are moderately empowered in their workplace compared to other health care workers<sup>3</sup>.
- Nurses who report feeling empowered in their workplace function more effectively<sup>2</sup>.
- Recent studies have shown that nurses who work in hospitals with high nurse-to-patient ratios and peer-assessed national recognition programs such as Magnet status experience have better patient outcomes, including improvement in 30-day mortality rates<sup>13</sup>.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of the lived experience of nurses working with patients in hospitals and, with that information, to identify meaningful themes and patterns of how their workplace environment impacts their sense of professional identity.

**Professional Identity:** the perception of self in relationship to the work that one does<sup>1</sup>.

**Structural Empowerment:** formal and informal power structures of the workplace. The structure of opportunity, the structure of power, and the structure of proportions<sup>9</sup>.

## Standpoint Theory of Nursing

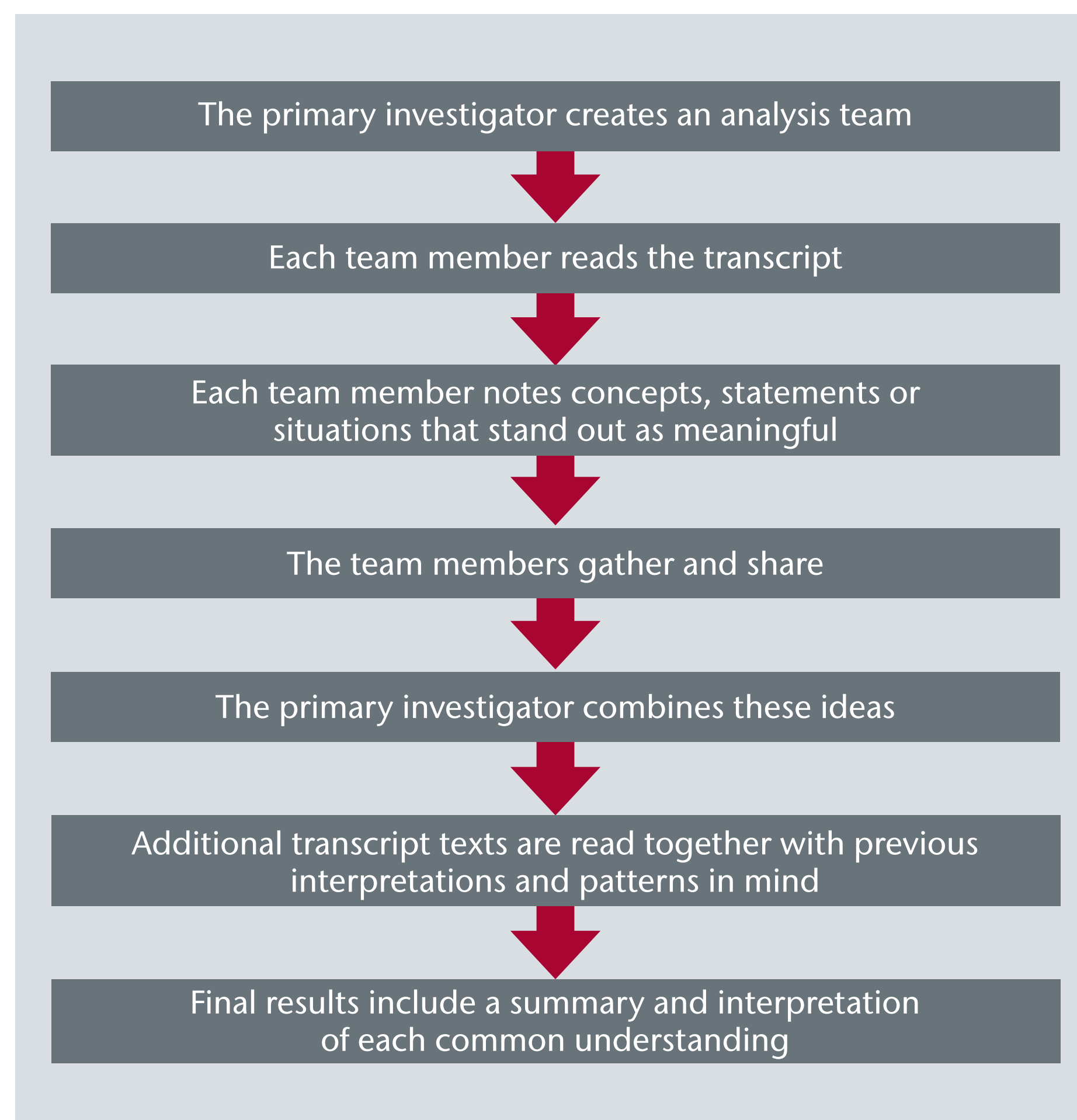
Those in an oppressed position are aware of their own worldview as well as the dominant or oppressor worldview<sup>12</sup>.

- One role, such as the nursing role, must be oppressed by a more dominant role.
- The role that is oppressed must be largely controlled by the needs and interest of the dominant role.
- The oppressed role facilitates making these needs and interests possible.
- The oppressed role understands the perspective of the dominant role as well as their own perspective.

## Methods

- Philosophical hermeneutics will be used as the methodology to study this phenomenon.
- Researchers from this philosophical perspective seek to gain knowledge by interpreting the everyday experience of those being studied in an effort to better understand their world and to identify what shows itself as meaningful<sup>14</sup>.
- This methodology seeks to reveal a deeper understanding of how nurses create a professional identity for themselves in the work that they do with their patients through the narratives or voices of interviewing the nurses themselves.

Figure 2 Methodology



## Eligible Participants

- ✓ Registered nurses in Washington State
- ✓ Provide care to patients in the hospital setting
- ✓ Speak fluent English
- ✓ Willing to be digitally voice-recorded.

- Participants are always aware of the topic of the interview before they have consented to participate.
- The primary investigator is the sole interviewer; interviews and only interviewed once.
- To maintain confidentiality and protect their identity, participants are asked to assign themselves pseudonyms<sup>14</sup>.

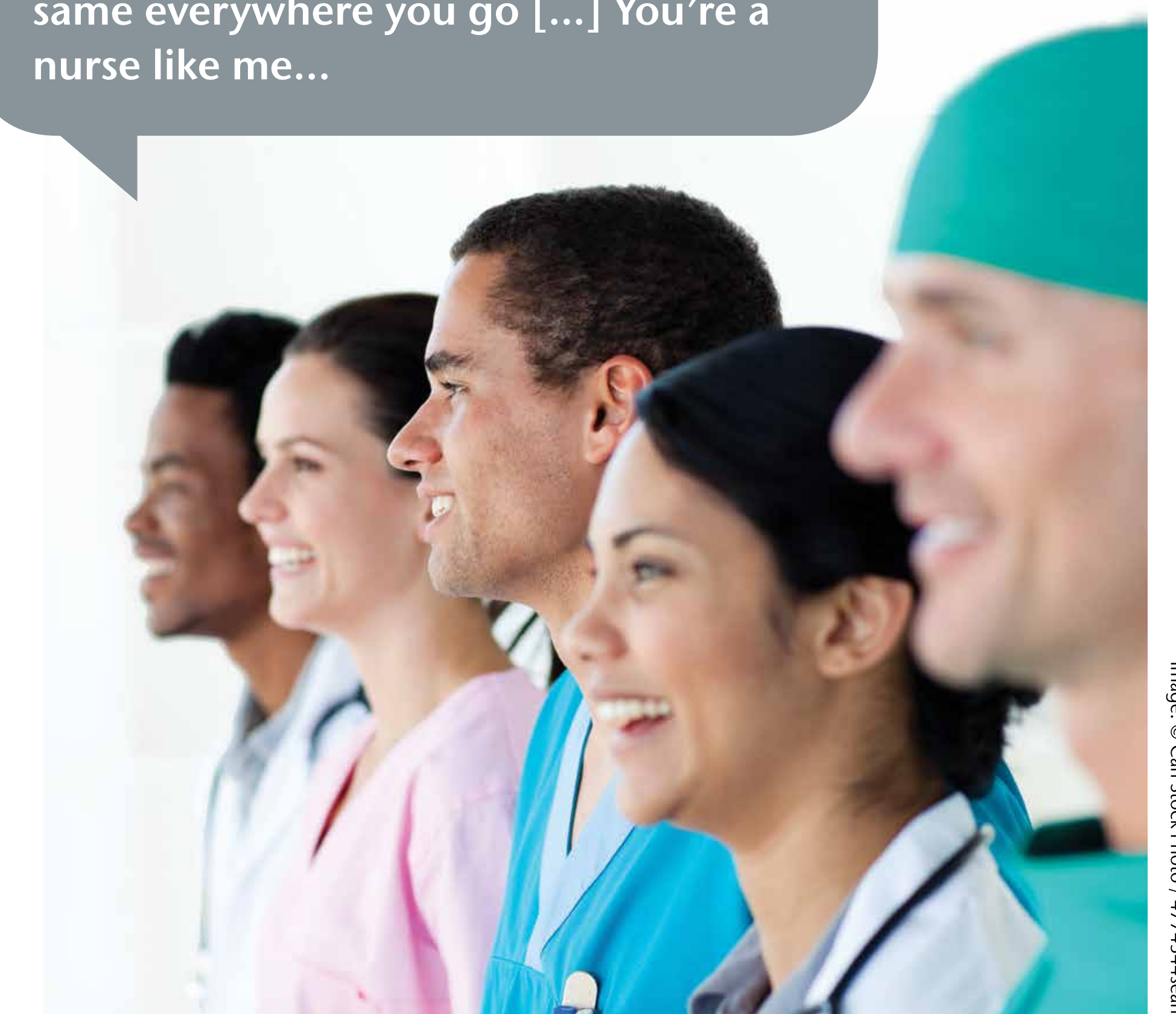
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“I feel like sometimes I’m kinda like a detective and digging through the chart and finding that one little piece about the puzzle that makes sense about why the patient is there or some key part to kind of explain what’s going on.”

## QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS

“I have learned, though, that nursing – I mean the actual task of nursing - is the same everywhere you go [...] You’re a nurse like me...”



## Pilot Study

- The purpose of this pilot study was to determine if the research question and methodology were accurately capturing the experience of the phenomenon being studied.
- Participants were recruited, consented, interviewed, recorded and transcribed in the same way as the full study with WSU IRB approval.
- A total of 2 interviews were conducted using the same open ended question and in the same style as the larger study.
- “Is there a particular experience that stands out in your mind as nurse working with patients that made you feel like a professional?”

## Next Steps

- New possibilities about what professional nursing in a hospital situation may emerge as the result of thinking deeply about this phenomenon.
- The results of this study will help nurses to better understand the experience of professional nursing as practiced by nurses with patients in the hospital setting.
- By sharing this experience with nurses, it is the hope that this research will encourage nurses toward more professional nursing practice and in some way aid to liberate nurses from their historical structural oppression in hospital settings.

This dissertation study is currently collecting data. Final results will be presented and published at their conclusion.

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