


THE UNIFORM OF NURSING STUDENTS: A STRATEGY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY (1950-1960)

Pacita Geovana Gama de Sousa Aperibense¹ 

Camila Pureza Guimarães da Silva² 

Tania Cristina Franco Santos³ 

Antonio José de Almeida Filho³ 

Sioban Nelson⁴ 

Maria Angélica de Almeida Peres³ 

¹Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro – Prof. Aloisio Teixeira Campus. Macaé, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

²Hospital Federal de Bonsucesso. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

³Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

⁴University of Toronto, Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing. Ontario, Toronto, Canada.

ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the use of the student uniform as one of the determinants in the establishment of the professional identity of the nurse graduated from *Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery* in the 1950-1960.

Method: Socio-historical study, using documents of that time and interviews by means of the thematic oral history technique with seven former *Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery* students as sources, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Claude Dubar's concept of identity supported the discussion of the data.

Results: the uniform leveled the students, equaled them and set a standard of behavior to be followed. It also distinguished them hierarchically and served as an assessment item during the course.

Conclusion: the uniform was a determinant strategy of the professional identity during the daily course reality as, according to the former students, it was an element that distinguished this group's positions and behaviors, permitting the understanding of the graduated nurse's possible roles in the society of that time.

DESCRIPTORS: History of nursing. Nurses. Clothing. Culture. Socialization. Career choice.

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UNIFORME DE ALUNAS DE ENFERMAGEM: ESTRATÉGIA PARA CONSTRUÇÃO DA IDENTIDADE PROFISSIONAL (1950-1960)

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar o uso do uniforme de aluna como estratégia de formação da identidade profissional da enfermeira diplomada pela Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery, nas décadas de 1950-1960.

Método: estudo sócio-histórico, cujas fontes foram documentos da época e entrevistas realizadas pela técnica da história oral temática com sete ex-alunas da Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. O conceito de identidade de Claude Dubar subsidiou a discussão dos dados.

Resultados: o uniforme nivelava as estudantes, igualando-as e definindo um padrão de comportamento a ser seguido. Também as diferenciava hierarquicamente e era um objeto incluso na avaliação durante o curso.

Conclusão: o uniforme foi uma estratégia determinante da identidade profissional durante o cotidiano no curso, pois, na visão das ex-alunas, era um elemento que demarcava posições e comportamentos deste grupo, permitindo compreender os possíveis papéis da enfermeira diplomada na sociedade à época.

DESCRITORES: História da enfermagem. Enfermeiras e enfermeiros. Vestuário. Cultura. Socialização. Escolha da profissão.

UNIFORME DE ALUMNAS DE ENFERMERÍA: ESTRATEGIA PARA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE LA IDENTIDAD PROFESIONAL (1950-1960)

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar el uso del uniforme de alumna como uno de los determinantes de formación de la identidad profesional de la enfermera diplomada por la *Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery*, en las décadas de 1950-1960.

Método: Estudio socio-histórico, cuyas fuentes fueron documentos de la época y entrevistas llevadas a cabo por la técnica de la historia oral temática con siete antiguas alumnas de la *Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery*, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. El concepto de identidad de Claude Dubar apoyó la discusión de los datos.

Resultados: el uniforme nivelaba las estudiantes, igualándolas y definiendo un patrón de conducta a ser seguido. También las diferenciaba jerárquicamente y era un objeto incluso en la evaluación durante el curso.

Conclusion: El uniforme fue una estrategia determinante de la identidad profesional durante el cotidiano en el curso de la Escuela pues, según las antiguas alumnas, era un elemento que demarcaba posiciones y comportamientos de este grupo, permitiendo comprender los posibles papeles de la enfermera diplomada en la sociedad de aquel tiempo.

DESCRITORES: Historia de la enfermería. Enfermeros. Vestuario. Cultura. Socialización. Selección de profesión.

INTRODUCTION

In modern nursing, the professional identity of the nurse was built based on the professional attributes described by Florence Nightingale, considering the principles of care, administration, discipline and training of the Nurse.^{1,2} The socialization process that built this professional identity comprised the interaction among individuals from the same group, supported by theoretical and practical knowledge, which guaranteed the expertise of this group and, consequently, the group members' acknowledgement as professionals.^{3,4}

Results from a study produced in Iran in 2012 demonstrate that the concept of the nursing image is multidimensional, paradoxical, dynamic and complex. They imply, for their definition, elements such as invisibility, clothing style, nurses' behaviors, gender issues and professional organizations. Regarding clothing, the authors emphasize that, while the original reason for wearing the uniform was to reflect the image of cleanliness, hygiene and servitude, believing that a neat and clean appearance facilitates the professionalization of nursing and projects a corporate image, on the other hand, they consider that the appearance impresses significantly and that the uniforms express a sense of identity, although they are not able to guarantee the professionalism of the nurse.⁵

In recent years, studies on the use of uniforms and the construction of the Nurse's professional identity began to be produced in Brazil and some of them are carried out in the Anna Nery Nursing School (*Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery -EEAN*), an institute of historical value in the development of the profession in the country and who instituted the uniform as an element of multiple functions in the daily life of its social space. The uniform of nursing students, when observed as from the advent of Modern Nursing in the world, always consisted of clothing (dress, skirt, trousers, blouse, etc.) and accessories (apron, coat, brooch, cap, armband, suitcase, hat, etc.) and the insertion and withdrawal of some of these accessories have been recorded over the years, as well as the changing of the models and colors of the clothes, depending on the historical time and the institution.⁶⁻¹⁰

At EEAN, uniforms, whose models were imported from American schools, were part of the emblems used as a strategy to build their students' professional identity, for which they also had strict discipline, ritual ceremonies, oaths, commemorative and social events.^{8,11-12}

The EEAN's relations with the professional and social identity of the Brazilian nurse were noted in studies that discussed with its creation, implantation and development, processes that included the diffusion of nurses trained by the school to almost all Brazilian states, through the contracting of her former pupils by the Nursing Service of the National Department of Public Health in the 1920s and 1940s; of Decree n. 20.109/31, which turned it into the standard official school from 1931-1949; of the movement to create nursing schools in federal universities in the five regions of the country in the 1970s by a health sector group that included a former student and teacher, who represented EEAN in the former Department of University Affairs of the Ministry of Education and Culture.^{8,13-17}

The use of uniforms in Brazilian nursing schools was an important strategy to build the image of the nurse and her professional identity. At EEAN, several elements had symbolic meanings, such as a cap, apron, brooch and armband.^{8,10} Studies on uniforms at EEAN identify that, during the 1920s till 1950s, these were an essential part of the student's image and their use before the teachers was unquestionable.⁸ The changes in the uniforms pointed out in these studies reveal an influence of women's fashion in order to accompany the cultural evolution of society, without radically changing the image of the graduated nurse who reproduced the North American model on the basis of the Nightingalean School.^{8,10}

The objective of this study was to analyze the use of the student uniform as one of the determinants in the establishment of the professional identity of the nurse graduated from *Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery* in the 1950-1960.

The theoretical background consists of authors who focus on clothing and professional identity, especially Roland Barthes who studied clothing as a non-verbal language and Claude Dubar, who deals with the construction of identities. In order to better understand the role of uniforms at EEAN, Michel Foucault's concepts of disciplining the body are added. The integration of these authors allowed us to perceive how clothing interfered in the construction of the professional identity of the nurse.

The philosopher Michel Foucault wrote about different aspects related to the state's power in society. In his perspective, the concept of state, which he called a disciplinary state, aims to shape individuals in institutions such as school, work and family. Thus, they need to become useful to society.¹⁸ This notion of utility has to do with what have been called docile bodies. "A body is docile if it can be submitted, used, transformed and perfected ... in any society the body is trapped within very tight powers, imposing limitations, prohibitions or obligations".^{18:118} This relationship of docility-utility is determined by means of certain mechanisms, such as discipline (disciplinary processes), which manipulates, normalizes and regularizes in order to fulfill certain objectives.

METHOD

Socio-historical and qualitative study, whose oral sources were obtained through interviews conducted from January to August 2015, with an average duration of 75 minutes each. The inclusion criterion was defined as: having been a student and/or teacher at EEAN during the study period. The instrument that guided the interview followed a pre-established script, addressing questions about the characteristics of the uniforms used, changes and adaptations observed during the time they were students and/or teachers and perceptions about the use of the uniform, especially the meaning they attributed to it. The written documents were selected from the EEAN Documentation Center and from the personal collection of the former students of the School. These sources were analyzed through internal and external criticism of the documents, in order to guarantee their interpretation according to the reality they were produced in, seeking to eliminate or explain any contradictions.¹⁹ The secondary sources were obtained from the bibliographic collection produced on the subject.

The technique for obtaining oral documents was the Thematic Oral History which, when confronted with other sources, makes its potential as a source of research richer.²⁰ To select the collaborators, the logic of constituting a target community, colony and network was adopted. The target community was made up of nursing assistants and teachers who wore uniforms when they were EEAN students.²¹ For this article, we present an excerpt including seven former students as participants, currently retired EEAN teachers.

In the documentary analysis, which includes the transcribed material, questions were formulated in order to problematize and answer the research questions.²² For the documentary corpus, a set of systematic procedures and objectives was adopted, following the steps of pre-analysis; exploitation of the material or coding; treatment of the results, inference and interpretation.²³ The collaborators were identified using the letter S for student, followed by the ordinal number corresponding to the interview sequence (e.g.: A1 - Student - first interview).

RESULTS

Upon entering the school, students started to have their gestures and behavior shaped to build the identity expected for the future professional. The collaborator who took the test in 1957 described the moment when she was admonished by the school teacher at the time. Her emotional reaction when she found out she had passed was the reason she was reprimanded: *I passed. Mrs. O. [quotes a teacher] who showed the results and observed that I was very excited because I could not have much emotion! [...] But it was fine that she said so, it was good that she controlled me at the time, [...] and at the time her encouragement was good, to retract the manifestation a little, everything is learning. [...] I never got angry at school, I found everything so playful, so interesting, it seemed like I was living one time in another time (A1).*

It is important to point out that the temporal cut of this research is limited to a period when EEAN was still a school for women only. The collaborators frequently mention the school's facilities, especially the classroom pavilion and the boarding school, which marks the importance of these places as settings where the uniform prevailed as an object of personal, social and professional identity construction.

In the 1960s, one could not move around the school premises without the uniform, just like the military do not move around a military environment without wearing their uniform. The statements of the collaborators demonstrate this relationship of rigor and discipline in relation to wearing the uniform within EEAN. One of them highlights the use since the beginning, in which she states: *there was a uniform as soon as we entered the course. One could not stay without the uniform. The uniform made the group, and the group was a social representation and this was very clear to us (A1).* The other collaborator mentioned that the women could not wear pants within the classroom pavilion. *We rarely wore common clothes in some classes in the classroom pavilion... I could only go there in my skirt, I had to have a proper, composed outfit, but most of the time, when it was a fundamentals class, we were always in uniform, it could not be different (A2).*

In addition to receiving the full uniform, including shoes and socks, the students also received a living allowance to keep studying, according to the following statement: the school provided [the uniform]. *Some students even got a scholarship, I for example, I had a scholarship at school, but we received the uniform (A3).*

Providing allowances and scholarships was a strategy to keep students in the course, which was full-time. For this reason, the students had guaranteed food and housing. Thus, EEAN provided means to encourage the students to enter the course without dropping out. On the other hand, by sharing the same housing environment with the students, the school leaders were present in their daily lives, also influencing the social formation of these girls.

Within EEAN, whether in the classroom pavilion or boarding school, the period the student was taking was critical to determining her daily life. Besides the distinction in social conditions in social spaces, there was also a hierarchical distinction, visible in the uniform, identifiable through an accessory - the armband.

The uniforms used in the 1950s and 1960s kept the same symbolism of the time EEAN was set up, as the school still maintained a prominent place in the field of nursing education. It was an important feature in the construction of the students' identity, who in the first decade of the second half of the twentieth century came with a different social and cultural mentality, but continued to understand the value of the uniform, transmitted through the years from one class to another and maintained by the leaders and teachers. It was a symbolic inheritance, part of the institutional memory, which led to acceptance and the desire to wear the uniform.

The EEAN maintained forms of vigilance and control of the clothing that took form by the inspection of the uniform. From the moment they received it, students should take responsibility for preserving it: *we were forwarded to the iron room and one of the eldest teachers, a nurse, instructed us how she did it and we started to iron. [...] Each one was concerned with its sharpness (A3).*

Sharpness was the name given to the item that assessed the students' uniform with regard to appearance, presentation, cleanliness, hygiene and conservation. An older teacher was responsible for instructing the students on how to maintain the cleanliness of their uniforms, especially with regard to the process of ironing the dress and the apron.

This was taught to prepare the students for an evaluation criterion that was the sharpness of their uniform, for which they received the grades: Bad, Low, Regular, Good, Superior and Excellent on the evaluation instrument of students in practice. As from 1963, this evaluation form was no longer available in the EEAN Student Dossiers.

In the 1950's and 1960's, buying uniforms in stores was not a custom. Instead, the students had to have them manufactured to facilitate the compliance with the School's model requirements. The Student Manual from 1963, in its description of classes and practicums, emphasizes the following on the uniform: "Students should attend the classes and practicums in full uniform. Full uniform is considered to be the model offered by the sewing room".^{23:3}

As it was a model with several details, to guarantee homogeneity and standardization, the School had its own sewing room: *all [the uniforms] were the same because the School had a seamstress, with a sewing room, so I could not be different (A2).* The seamstresses were in charge of taking the measures of the students and making the uniforms: the uniforms were created by the people of the group. *Our first models were still copied a bit from the American ones (A1).* They were delivered approximately one week after entering the course, including a nominal identification on the reverse side of each model for the sake of identification in case they got mixed with other students' uniform: *we were sent to the sewing room, they took our measures and the next week, after less than fifteen days, we already had the uniform (A3).*

The collaborators acknowledged that EEAN maintained a rigorous, disciplinary, rigid and authoritarian regime in the students' training: *so it was like this, a demanding regime, apparently similar to a military force [emphasis], but in fact it was not, there was a certain reason because anyone who learned reason would not discuss there and would not find that, and I found it very interesting and very beautiful (A1).* This recognition is always accompanied by a discourse that justifies such dynamics though, in the sense of recognizing that those actions were necessary to ensure the preparation of competent, responsible and disciplined professionals: *it was hard, to bear the Anna Nery School, it was not easy, we had to work hard because the discipline was very strict, it was a military regime, but it served us a lot to be excellent professionals afterwards (A4).*

In spite of the recognition of the discipline, the collaborators report the feeling of pride and honor to wear the uniform, according to the statement: *we found pleasure and even pride in wearing the uniform (A3); and the uniform is used with symbolic pride and honored by the actions of the professional who wears it, that is how we learned it (A1).*

The school worked very hard on the formation of the students' identity, imprinting in them the feeling of pride, honor, importance and imposition the use of the uniform represented, that they considered themselves part of the institution and incorporated all these qualities. They did not realize, however, that by being empowered with the institutional pattern, their individualities were annulled, making them members of a group and invisible as women and individualized beings; *I liked wearing my uniform [...] it had a standard model [...] when they were dressed nobody showed anything different, it was everyone standardized ... The trim of the dress was the same, and it was very good, very good, very good (A1).* In addition, the collaborator highlights the positive side of wearing the uniform: *I am*

proud to participate in our professional group, being in uniform was always an alert to me about the authority I felt that was vested in me when I wore my uniform (A1).

Another instrument used by EEAN to construct and maintain the identity of the student group was the Student Manual. The revised manual, dated 1963, explained its function so that it was not seen as an instrument that imposed behaviors, but as a contribution to the students' personal/moral/social development: "The Commission in charge of the revision of this manual wishes to make the pupils feel the effort spent so that it [the manual] is not a coercive means of their student life, but a true aid factor so that the years spent in Anna School Nery will become fertile in enjoyment and healthy joy".^{24:4}

The same manual also highlights the issue of living in a group: "About the characteristics and a democratic activity emphasizes the ability of each to accept the responsibility of self-discipline, respect for the rights of others, intelligent respect for authority, cooperation or joint efforts for the common good. These being the basic principles followed at the Anna Nery School, each of its members respects the System of Honor - proof of trust - resulting in a great amount of personal responsibility".^{24:4}

The highlighted section shows important aspects in the formation of identities, such as the "System of Honor", which shaped more than the student's behavior, as it went beyond this, for requiring ethical and moral attitudes such as respect and trust, among others. A social environment of formation was then created in the daily life, which the uniform was part of, constructing individual and group identities as a symbolic space of teaching and learning: *we learned the meaning of the uniforms through the symbolic environment (A1).*

The uniform model promoted the concealment and standardization of bodies, making recognition difficult, imposing anonymity on students, denying the individual. Its use, associated with the prohibition of any adornment or makeup, made all the same, visually indistinct in the school space.

Another characteristic of the daily life wearing the uniform was the presentation to the head of discipline to evaluate how they looked: *we had to present ourselves to the instructors daily, parading and being evaluated according to the qualification criteria of the order and appearance of our wearing the complete uniform. We were in orderly groups and we had a hierarchy to watch over with the students who were already advanced, who, according to time, wore an armband with the division, cap, apron and white shoes (A1).*

As the students began to be considered pre-professionals, the discourse of surveillance, order and control of the institution intensified. Wearing the uniform meant being alert to the responsibilities concerning EEAN rules and commitments. The following statement of the collaborator expresses this question well: *until today I have learned this, that work clothes are discrete clothes, do not turn work clothes into a reason to show your body to other people, there is no reason, you can show it like, insinuate, but do not show it, and I think that is discretion and I learned it there, our teachers all, each with her rigor (A1).*

Likewise, the youngest teacher in the institution was charged with supervising the uniforms, among other non-verbal aspects of student behavior: *V. [quotes a teacher] was different, she kept looking at us because she was the youngest [teacher] of the School when we started [...] V. stayed on the stairs and watched us go down, because she really had to look [emphasis], would you want a group to go in there with stockings with a hole, not cleaned, dirty shoes? She returned! [Emphasis] If I did that, I had to go back! Because everyone was over 18 years old. That is to say, it was a lack of self-respect and, even more, respect for the group, an even worse group, which was being established at that time, even though it was the fifties [1950] already. But from 20 [from 1920] to 50 [1950], that is nothing in history (A1).*

DISCUSSION

Professional identity does not develop only at certain times, but it runs through a whole life trajectory, always in a process of construction / deconstruction and reconstruction, so that “identity is never given, it is always constructed and must be (re)constructed in a greater or more or less lasting uncertainty”.^{3:135}

The identity of any profession is built by different factors that include clothing, posture, theoretical and practical training, among others. Professional identity is collective and it is not only the choice of a trade or the acquisition of a diploma, because it is articulated with the individual identity, in a transaction that is both “internal” and “external”, established between the individual and the institutions she or he interacts with.^{3,25}

In view of the daily reality the students were subject to in their education, we observe that this daily life gave them the elements that formed their professional character, of their identity as a nurse. The EEAN authorities allowed students to experience identity types in an environment in which symbolic and material relationships were concretely carried out, such as how to iron and maintain the uniform’s uniformity; the obligation to use it within the school premises; discipline and care for clothing; responsibility in maintaining the individuality of the uniforms.

Such a consecration of the school clothes did occur, as it was a time when one wished to wear the uniform, in which feeling that you belonged to the School meant wearing the clothes of the nursing student, which included, in the hospital model, the white apron and cap. Thus, the reference frames of life in practice, the symbolic and material relations were established affirmatively, giving the students unique characteristics and impressions of themselves as human beings and members of a social group, which reinforced the collective identity, related to the appearance an EEAN student was supposed to have.

A collaborator also highlights the rules defined for the intimate pieces the students should use. In addition to the protection the covered buttons provided, they were required to use a combination. It is a single piece made up of bra with thin straps attached to a petticoat below the bust. It became popular in the 1960s when fashion changes created the need for more functional and comfortable lingerie.²⁶

Although discipline is a system that imposes an institutional standard on people, students do not see it as harmful, which demonstrates the strength of identity formation within the school. They accepted it, even without criticism of this disciplinary rigor, always expressing the pride and honor they felt for wearing their uniforms, that is, being part of the group of women who distinguished themselves in society for being students of EEAN.

If, on the one hand, the use of uniform was enhance, strengthening the authority it granted to the school’s students, on the other hand, the idea of homogeneity of the person in relation to the whole was strengthened, that is, the uniform made the student invisible in her individuality, merely reinforcing their equality towards the group.

The collaborators underlined the function of neutralizing the bodies of women by using a uniform model that hid the female body, denying sexuality, only accepting as possible the commitment as a duty, to the task, but also the creation of alibis, which enabled the nurses to survive the challenge of making nursing survive as a profession.²⁷

The uniform, in all times and places, does not exist without serving purposes and ideologies. If, on the one hand, it leveled the students, matching them and setting a standard to be followed, on the other hand, it also distinguished them hierarchically, still as an academic group. Any irregularity was detected in the rigorous control process of the uniforms. This represented, in addition to the

pride to wear it, the evaluation of errors or misconceptions of the student, which caused fears of incompleteness and desire for perfectionism in wearing it.

It was in the discourse of the school authorities and society that equality, exaltation and honor for belonging to this group were justified. The goal was to preserve the public image of the nurse: “a person of soft appearance, immaculately clean and well-dressed”, of elegance in speech and clothing.^{28:528}

Also worthy of note is the strategy used by the American teachers, and perpetuated by the pioneers of EEAN, to empower students who could become future teachers to continue the legacy of the school, recognized for its discipline, rigor and quality of professionals formed in that period. This strategy reinforced in the teacher the professional identity of the new position she held, namely that of nurse, EEAN teacher, who should develop the ability to impose herself in a new perspective, not only of complying with the rules determined by EEAN, regarding its operation and the use of the uniform but, above all, of being an example.

The construction of group identity takes place through rules that need to be followed.³ In this sense, the uniform became consciously and deliberately symbolic, by identifying the woman that wore it as a member of a distinguished group in Brazilian nursing.

In this context, the uniforms, considered as standardized elements here, represented a strategic resource in the formation of the nurse’s professional image and identity. And this clothing is analyzed based on the relations between its particular signifier (uniform) and its general meaning, which is external to it (time, country, social class). This relation, however, is neither simple nor linear. It needs to be seen in the temporal context of the signifier or the meaning’s history.²⁹

Among the multiple dimensions of individuals’ identity, the professional dimension gained particular importance for three main reasons: one, the professional activity chosen conditions the construction of the social identities. Two, in the development of their work, individuals undergo subtle identity changes; three, education intervenes in the identity dynamics far beyond the school period, closely following all changes in the profession.³

Thus, the construction of identity is both symbolic and social, both processes are necessary for the construction and maintenance of identities. By the symbolic we give meaning to social relations, through the social we can experience differentiation, the classification of these relations.³⁰

The construction of identity involves essentialist claims about a particular identity group, and these claims are based on some version of history and the past, in which history is constructed or represented as an unchanging truth.³⁰

The history of EEAN students as an identity group is determined by the established fame of its expertise and teaching excellence, brought by the US nurses and reaffirmed after Decree 20.109/1931, which determined the conditions for equating the country’s nursing schools and defined EEAN as the official standard school.³¹ This trajectory of significance of EEAN has been remembered, recalling the due proportions of the profession’s development over the years, which reinforces the idea of unchanging truth.³²

The scale, object and mode of control exercised by EEAN were analyzed here based on the uniform and discipline for its maintenance. In analyzing these issues in the light of the disciplinarization of the body, one needs to consider Foucault’s conception of power, in which discipline (or disciplinary power) is a specific type of power. “It is false to define power as something that says no, imposes limits, punishes. Power has a productive efficiency, a strategic wealth, a positivity”.^{18:118}

The “mechanics of power” defines how one can master the body of others not simply to do what one wants, but to operate as one wants. Thus, discipline manufactures submissive and exercised, “docile” bodies; a body characterized by “enhanced aptitude” to the detriment of “marked domination.”^{18:118}

In a discrete but permanent way, the forms of spatial organization and disciplinary regimes of EEAN combine the control of movements, schedules, rituals, regularization of the daily life through the control of bodies, assuming the task of training, correcting and qualifying the student, turning them into entities capable of producing.

This concept of Foucault was used to analyze how the uniform and the circumstances surrounding its use were important objects of disciplining the body of EEAN students, in order to shape a stereotype for the students and to determine a professional identity for the category.

The construction of the nurse's professional identity is a dynamic movement that integrates a socio-cultural, historical and economic context, and involves structural changes, as central processes in the way of acting and thinking of a society. The social tendencies lead to the reorganization of their meaning.³³

CONCLUSION

The uniforms used at EEAN in the period studied constituted a structure whose elements were significant because they were interconnected by a set of collective standard, expressed mainly in the rituals that consecrated its use, which regulated the arrangement of the pieces in a user, granting it value as clothing.

Thus, this research has a dimension in other areas of study, including, for example, historiography, sociology, anthropology, social sciences and fashion, as this theme discusses, beyond the meaning of clothing, the relationship with the identity formation of a professional group and, more specifically, the case of the identity of the nurse trained by EEAN through the use of uniforms during graduation.

The uniform was discussed here, considering the set of elements that indicate the historical problem, the social and cultural life of a group and society at the time, permitting the understanding of the social relations, life and the daily reality established through its use.

Even though the method chosen for research has a determined place, time and group, these nurses' representation about identity should trigger reflections about professional and academic practice. These reflections turn the theme into a current issue, in view of the ongoing identity crisis in the nursing category and in the health area as a whole.

The study concludes that the uniform was a determinant strategy of the professional identity in the daily course reality at EEAN as, according to the former students, it was an element that marked the positions and behaviors of this group, permitting the understanding of the graduated nurse's possible roles in the society at that time.

Studying nurses' uniforms remains an ongoing task for various nursing researchers. Identity construction is a widely discussed theme in science. Many authors agree that the acquisition of identity is an ongoing process that undergoes changes over time.

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NOTES

ORIGIN OF THE ARTICLE

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CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORITY

Study design: Aperibense PGGs, Peres MAA.

Data collect: Aperibense PGGs, Silva CPG.

Data analysis and interpretation: Aperibense PGGs, Peres MAA.

Discussion of the results: Santos TCF, Almeida Filho AJ, Peres MAA.

Writing and / or critical review of content: Nelson S, Peres MAA.

Review and final approval of the final version: Nelson S, Peres MAA.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No any conflict of interest.

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CORRESPONDENCE AUTHOR

Pacita Geovana Gama de Sousa Aperibense.
pacitageovana@yahoo.com.br

