

Uniform as a sign of a new nursing identity in Brazil (1923-1931)

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Uniforme como signo de una nueva identidad de enfermería en Brasil (1923-1931)

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To analyze the meaning of the uniform in the implementation of the Anglo-American model of nursing and in the construction of a new identity of the nurse in Brazil. **Methods:** Socio-historical study. Primary sources: written and photographic documents were analyzed according to the concept of professional identity by Claude Dubar, and were integrated with the theory of Roland Barthes, who considers the clothing as an abstract language with symbolic representations. **Results:** The uniform was an element of social distinction and hierarchical differentiation, and it approached the Brazilian and American nursing students by the similarities in their clothing, that is, by the image constructed with the same elements of the uniform, among which the white dress of the nurses, white apron for students and white cap for both of them stood out. **Conclusion:** The uniform was a strategy for the implementation and recognition of the Anglo-American model of nursing and for the construction of a new identity for nurses in Brazil.

Keywords: History of Nursing; Clothing; Education Nursing.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar o significado do uniforme na implantação do modelo anglo-americano de enfermagem e na construção de uma nova identidade de enfermeira no Brasil. **Métodos:** Estudo sócio-histórico. Fontes primárias: documentos fotográficos e escritos, analisados segundo o conceito de identidade profissional de Claude Dubar, integrando a teoria de Roland Barthes, que considera o vestuário uma linguagem abstrata com aspectos práticos e simbólicos. **Resultados:** O uniforme era elemento de distinção social e hierárquica e aproximava estudantes e enfermeiras brasileiras e norte-americanas pela semelhança entre os vestuários, ou seja, pela imagem construída a partir dos mesmos elementos constituintes do uniforme, dentre os quais se destacaram a cor branca no vestido de enfermeiras, o avental branco para as estudantes e a touca branca para ambas. **Conclusão:** O uniforme serviu de estratégia para a implantação e reconhecimento do modelo anglo-americano de enfermagem e para a construção de uma nova identidade de enfermeira no Brasil.

Palavras-chave: História da Enfermagem; Vestuário; Educação em Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Analizar el significado del uniforme en la implantación del modelo anglo-americano de enfermería y en la construcción de una nueva identidad de la enfermera en Brasil. **Métodos:** Estudio socio-histórico. Documentos fotográficos y escritos fueron analizados según el concepto de identidad profesional de Dubar, integrado a la Teoría de Barthes, que considera el vestuario como un lenguaje abstracto. **Resultados:** El uniforme era un elemento de distinción social además de aproximar las estudiantes brasileñas y norteamericanas por la semejanza entre los vestuarios. Se construyó una imagen a partir de los mismos elementos constituyentes del uniforme, dentro de los cuales se destacó el color blanco en el vestido de enfermeras y el delantal blanco para las estudiantes y la cofia blanca para ambas. **Conclusión:** El uniforme sirvió de estrategia para la implantación y el reconocimiento del modelo anglo-americano de enfermería y para la construcción de una nueva identidad de la enfermera brasileña.

Palabras-clave: Historia de la Enfermería; Vestuario; Educación en Enfermería.

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INTRODUCTION

The image of the nurse is marked, besides other characteristics, by the clothing used in nursing practice, which has been eternalized in the global iconography, allowing us to identify the use of accessories like the apron, veil and cap. Studies about uniforms provide elements for the construction of professional identities, through approaches that range from references of belonging to a group or an institution to the work conditions and technical-scientific development of certain ages¹.

In Brazil, religious nursing was strengthened in the 19th century and the image of the nurse with clothing characteristic of these institutions was established in society, particularly the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. Although the creation of the first school of nursing in Brazil dates back to 1890, its nurses were unable to go beyond the recognition of the image of the religious women as nurses, due to the power they were attributed in hospitals, which was guaranteed by the organization and practice of nursing in different countries and by their activities on behalf of the institutions' political-financial interests².

The actual entry of a professional nursing model in the Brazilian society, competing with the religious model, started with the creation of *Escola Anna Nery*^a (EAN), in 1923, when the National Public Health Department (NPHD) invested in the implementation of the Anglo-American Nursing model to support the development of the newly implemented Health Reform².

In the organization of the EAN, North American nurses adopted the use of uniforms as one of the strategies to maintain the institutional discipline, which permitted the identification of the students in the different course phases, as well as that of the nurses/teachers, according to their activity area, distinguishing them from other nursing professionals and characterizing the woman-nurse with high intellectual and moral standards, who also stood out through her specific clothing³.

In the 1920's and 1930's, six types of uniforms existed at EAN, three of which were used by the nursing students: Preliminary uniform, for students in the first course part; Hospital uniform and Public Health uniform, both for students taking these respective phases in the second part of the course. The teachers and nurses used a degree uniform according to their specialty (Hospital or Public Health). In addition, there was the uniform of the Public Health Visitatrices, used by these professionals who had taken an emergency course, which was extinguished in 1924³.

In this study, we will exclusively discuss the Hospital uniform of the students and teachers/nurses, considering that the image of the hospital nurse was perpetuated as representative of the profession, mainly because of its main accessory, the cap. Although its use has been abolished, the cap remains an identification symbol of the Nurse, present in current illustrations (posters, editorial cartoons, etc.) and

fiction (soap operas, movies, etc.), only surpassed by the oil lamp, used as the global symbol of Modern Nursing, inaugurated by Florence Nightingale, who was also known as the "Lady with the Lamp"².

In the first half of the 20th century, the uniform determined by EAN became characteristic of the nursing model established along Anglo-American lines, which became known as the Anna Nery standard². This standard was based on the Nightingale System, which professionalized nursing in the 19th century, first in England, and then disseminated around the world to lever the professional organization and scientific development of a nursing practice exclusively performed by women, educated in nursing schools that worked with a boarding school regimen, including theoretical-practical training in hospitals⁴.

Various studies indicate EAN as a benchmark of Modern Nursing in Brazil, despite an earlier attempt that did not achieve the same acknowledgement, whose model was not disseminated across the country in the same way as the school created in Rio de Janeiro. That school truly inaugurated "Modern Nursing" in Brazil, considering the essence of this universal expression as opposed to traditional or pre-professional nursing, practiced by people without formal training, coherent with the pedagogical rules and ethical premises of the Nightingale System⁵.

In its first curriculum, influenced by the "Standard Curriculum for Nursing Schools", elaborated by North Americans in 1917 and reviewed by the Goldmark Report in 1927, EAN prepared Public Health Nurses and Hospital Nurses. Its Instruction Program served as "the educational model that consolidated the implementation of the nursing career in the Brazilian society"^{5:30}. In addition, this School supported and promoted the creation of the first organizational entity of nursing and the first nursing journal, laying the foundations of the profession in Brazil⁵.

When considering images of nurses and students of nursing schools that originated in the Nightingale System, the similarity among the uniforms used stands out. Keeping in mind that, in the individual or group image of people, one of the noteworthy characteristics is the clothing, the use of the uniform by the students and nurses/teachers at schools that follow the same educational system is an important symbol of professional identity.

Thus, this study is focused on the uniform adopted at EAN as a strategy for the creation of a new nursing identity in the Brazilian society, between 1923 and 1931. The start date (1923) is the creation of EAN and the end date (1931) the enactment of Decree 20.109 in 1931, which sets rules for teaching at Brazilian nursing schools through equalization to the EAN model. The objective is to analyze the meaning of the uniform in the implementation of the Anglo-American nursing model and in the construction of a new nursing identity in Brazil.

The study is justified by the need to broaden research about the clothing used by nursing, with a view to a further understanding about its relation with the history of the profession in Brazil. The transformations in nursing clothing since its origins until today happened in parallel with its development in society, which evidences the relevance of this research to permit discussions about the image and the professional identity, which are fundamental themes to understand the development of nursing in the country.

METHOD

This socio-historical study used photographs and written documents as primary sources. Among the unconventional historical research sources, photographs have stood out because they show "a selected fragment of the appearance of things, people, facts, in the form in which they were esthetically frozen at a given moment in their existence/occurrence"^{6,2}. Studies that depart from photographic images need to contextualize the facts they register so as not to turn into "disconnected memory fragments"^{6,2}. In this study, we use photography as a record of nursing students and nurses' uniforms, in view of the clothing present in the image that was pictured. Knowing that photography is but the starting point in this study, a clue to unveil the past, we also use written documents from the Documentation Center at EEAN (CDOC/EEAN), as well as articles and books.

Written documents were selected corresponding to the time of the Parsons Mission (time excerpt of this study), which discussed the uniforms used at EEAN and their symbolism. The following inclusion criteria were adopted for the selection of images: refer to the time excerpt of the study and picture nursing students and/or nurses in uniform. The sources were selected between June and November 2011, in the collection of CEDOC/EEAN and on the websites of North American nursing schools, particularly the School of Nursing at the Philadelphia General Hospital, which inaugurated the Nightingale Model in the USA (1873) and the School of Nursing at Vanderbilt University, located in Nashville/Tennessee, created in 1909, which received funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to implement the Goldmark Report in 1925. In total, eight photographs were chosen to illustrate the data analysis in this study, six of which came from EEAN and two from North American schools.

In view of the chronology of the primary sources and the socio-historical context of the selected schools, the uniforms were described and the following criteria were established for the analysis: type (hospital), model, accessories and color. The photographs were processed as records of images that present data about the contemporary clothing and the documents provided additional information, such as colors and other details that were not perceived on the image.

Data analysis was based on the professional identity concept by Claude Dubar⁷, integrated into Roland Barthes⁸ theory of clothing as an abstract language, whose practical and symbolic aspects are inseparable and lead back to the individual and the society that produced it⁸. The construction of an identity is widely discussed in sciences, and many authors agree that the acquisition of an identity is a continuous process that undergoes changes over time^{7,2}. The professional identity is collective and constructed not only through the choice of a profession or the acquisition of a degree, as it is articulated with the individual identity, in a transaction that is at the same time "internal" and "external", established between the individuals and the institutions they interact with⁷. The nurse's identity is constructed in the relation between the being and him/herself and with the other, in which the other says and reaffirms who the nursing being is and mirrors it, in a two-way process⁹.

Concerning the ethical aspects, the copyright of the images used is guaranteed in its references, respecting the orientations of its holders, after e-mail contact with the collections the images are filed in. As the study does not involve human beings, the project does not fit into the guidelines of Resolution 196/96 and therefore does not require ethical clearance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Anglo-American Nursing model, its attires and the arrival of a new nursing identity in Brazil

The Anglo American nursing model originates in the Nightingale System², which reached the USA in 1873 through the creation of the Training School of Nurses at Bellevue Hospital, today called the Philadelphia General Hospital. Alice Fisher, a nurse graduated from Saint Thomas School of Nurses in London, was one of the professionals responsible for the adaptation of the Nightingale System at this school, in 1885¹⁰. At first the Bellevue School had no uniform but, in the 1880's, the use of a brooch was implemented for degree nurses and blue and white stripes for the student uniform tissue, while the model was left to their own judgment. At that school, a model uniform and the compulsory use of the cap were defined in the early 20th century¹⁰.

Considering that the clothing is always implicitly conceived as the particular significant of a general meaning, as an external element, similar to the time, country or social class⁸, the standardization of the uniform at the Bellevue School shows the concern with defining the image of the nursing students and degree nurses in the USA through the clothing, so as to permit the identification of the group with the technical competency and moral values that guided the nursing practice through the symbols, badges, uniforms and oaths incorporated from the Nightingale tradition at North American schools.

Also in the 19th century:

English and North American nurses decided to firmly establish the Nightingale System as their vocational branch, acknowledged and incorporated the associated branch, while assuming the feminist philosophy as the third branch. In the United States and Canada, besides the divisions among hospital, home-care and district nursing, the Nightingale Systems gains meaning through these three branches^{5:27-28}.

The Bachelor degree in nursing was inaugurated at the University of Minnesota, USA, in 1909, whose program was part of the School of Medicine, took three years and started the movement for nursing education to reach the higher education system¹⁰. In 1910, approximately one thousand nursing schools were functioning in the USA, whose goal was to deliver care, through the students' work, and to prepare nurses for the community. The prioritization of in-service training, to the detriment of the students' intellectual capacity, entailed the need to transform the teaching model¹⁰.

A landmark in the standardization of nursing education in the United States and Canada is the elaboration of the Standard Curriculum for Nursing Schools by the National Nursing Education League, which resulted in the publication of the Goldmark Report in 1923. The recommendations of this report included the need for a secondary education degree to be admitted to the nursing schools and the affiliation of nursing schools with universities⁴.

Even before the standardization of nursing education, we observe the use of uniforms at North American nursing schools and, although each institution was free to choose its components, standards clearly exist in the configuration of the students and degree nurses' attires. The clothing structure includes the clothes and attires, the former corresponding to an individual structure, in which each person determines what the wear, and the second to an institutional, social structure, independent from the individual. The meaning of the clothing increases from the clothes to the attires, so that "the clothes are hardly significant and express more than they inform; the attires, on the other hand, are strongly significant and constitute an intellectual, informative relation between the users and their group"^{8:273}.

At the start of the 20th century, the Anglo-American model represented the adaptive transformation of the Nightingale System, in accordance with the evolution that had influenced issues like women's social role, teaching policies, health practices and fashion around the world and particularly in the USA, keeping in mind its social role. Hence, this model already transmitted the North American nursing ideal, also present in the uniforms determined at the schools.

The importation of the Anglo American nursing model in Brazil was made feasible by the NPHD, which promoted a Health Reform between 1920 and 1924. At that time, the health area was an arena of interests that involved investments in the professions focused on the public health area. Therefore, a Technical Cooperation Mission for the Development of Nursing in Brazil⁶ was arranged for, including North American nurses, in order to set up a Public Health Nursing Service and a School of Nurses^{2,11}. In this historical context, the identity construction theme was also present in the context of the health professions, to the extent that the Rockefeller Foundation funded the travel of public health physicians and nurses for specialization programs in the USA¹¹.

The start of the NPHS Nursing Service, even before the graduation of the first class at EAN, can be considered as the first movement in the construction of the nursing identity to be inserted in society, agreeing that work lies at the heart of the construction and reconstruction processes of identity forms, because it is in work that individuals gain the financial and symbolic acknowledgement of their activity in salaried societies, and through work that they achieve autonomy and citizenship⁷. In addition, the presence of these nurses, performing a professional practice that differs from existing practices in terms of posture, knowledge and conduct, highlighted a new nursing image, with the uniform servicing as the first signal of identification.

Hence, the model implemented by the North American nurses, by determining the need for an educational background for nurses, in accordance with technical criteria, influenced the transformation in human resource training at the time, when women gain a broader role in the Brazilian society¹¹, and also created another social identity for nurses, to the extent that "in a given social system, the social position, the wealth, the status and/or prestige depend on the educational level, the employment situation and the positions in the job world"^{7:1}.

Hospital uniform of nursing students and nurses as a sign of the Anglo American nursing model

The professional training of nurses in Brazil existed since 1890, through the Professional School of Nurses, and since 1916 through the Brazilian Red Cross Practical School of Nurses². At the start of the 20th century, the media showed the public image of the nurse as a woman dressed in white, establishing her professional characteristics based on clothing elements, related to the institution she belonged to, like the presence of a veil with a cross in the front region of the head and arms, as a part of the uniform of the Red Cross Practical School of Nurses¹². The replacement of the pre-professional religious nursing by secular professional nursing in Brazil was a process that extended through the first and second

half of the 20th century and used the dissemination of the image of the secular degree nurse, properly uniformed, as the main strategy^{2,12}.

The configuration of a new professional nursing identity in Brazil involved the valuation of the discipline, the traditions, emblems, rituals and uniforms in its constituent process^{3,13}. The official use of the uniform at EAN was an important part of the strategy to implement a new professional identity, being used as a symbol, as the language of the clothes, although non-verbal, has the same functions as the verbal language, transmitting information⁸. In the case of EAN, during the study period, the main information was that the students and degree nurses were capable of reproducing the model of their precursors, which was also transmitted through the uniform, a strong instrument to proclaim an identity¹⁴, as witnessed in the images of uniformed students in Brazil and the USA in the 1920's.

The images evidence the following similarities between the students' uniforms: plain white cap, white apron over short-sleeved dress, with white wristbands and collars, white stockings and closed white shoes. At EAN, the dress had blue and white thin stripes³, but the fact that the pictures were taken in black and white does not allow us to confirm the color of the dresses.

In this research, we identified that, at many North American schools, the colors of the uniform were blue and white, including the Bellevue School, the first created based on the Nightingale System. In the description of the uniforms at the School of Nursing of the North Carolina Baptist Hospital, between 1923 and 1943, these are romantically represented as a white and blue shadow, sewn with true dignity; between 1944 and 1968, the dress was navy blue with white wristbands and collar and the most recent model, between 1969 and 1974, had thin white and blue stripes¹⁵. Therefore, it can be affirmed that, traditionally, the blue and white colors were also a symbolic characteristics of the nursing students' uniform in the USA.

Although the model of the cap seems similar on the pictures, there is a difference between the uniforms of the North American and Brazilian students: the cap used at EAN was beak shaped, while that at Vanderbilt University was rounded. The rounded cap started to be used at EAN in 1932, during Rachel Haddock Lobo's deanship, returning to the beak shaped model in 1940³.

To complement the uniform, the EAN required the use of a hair net, short and clean nails and the use of a watch with a seconds hand, while the use of makeup and nail polish was prohibited³. On the picture of the North American students, no hair nets were observed, but short hair, in a cut used in the 1920's, related to women's liberation after the second world war, when a transformation of their social role started, manifested in changes like the use of short hair, shorter skirts and long trousers¹⁴.

In addition, modern women attempted to adapt to the opportunities that emerged, also by occupying spaces that used to be exclusive to men, working as store clerks, secretaries and telephone operators, functions that granted them economic independence and the opportunity to behave outside the standards set for life as housewives¹⁴. In that sense, modern nursing appeared as yet another opportunity for female professionalization, welcomed by the North Americans, who raised the nursing status through professional organizations and the creation of graduate nursing programs in the first decades of the 20th century.

Illustration 1 shows that the use of the uniform was not restricted to clothing requirements, but also involved the posture of the uniformed groups, as observed in the students' compliance with the same rule of female etiquette for sitting: legs or feet crossed. Hence, the uniform serves as a strong ally in the molding of behaviors. By wearing the uniform, the workers incorporate a persona that moves them to act in accordance with social expectations, with actions based on corporative commitment, which also functions as an ideological instrument to shape (physical and mental) actions and introduce new habits and postures¹⁶.

Illustration 1. EAN, class of 1925, Album of Clara Kieninger; Students of Escola de Enfermagem at Vanderbilt University



In the next illustration, we can identify the teachers and their specialty based on the uniform, disclosing a clear hierarchical distinction, keeping in mind that we are not considering the photographic arrangement, as this type of analysis goes beyond the scope of this study.

The images show a group of students wearing the same uniform, while the teachers wear the degree uniform. The similarities between the degree uniforms relate to the white dress with a v-shaped collar, buttons on the front and a white cap. Again, the cap model used differs between the Brazilian and North American uniforms and, in both cases, the cap is the element that distinguishes between nurses and students: at EAN, the nurses' cap has a dark frieze, while the student cap is completely white; at the North American school, the nurses' cap is rounded and the students' cap beak shaped.

The images of nursing students and nurses registered at different times and around the world show great variations in the cap model used with the uniform of students and nurses. In the USA, the cap was used to distinguish among nursing schools, through its shape and width, number and color of stripes¹⁵. No variation in the color of the cap was found, neither at EAN nor at North American schools, in the 1920's and 1930's: all of them were white. If a frieze was present, this was dark and, in Brazil, it was certainly navy blue³.

In Illustration 3, it is observed that the nurses' uniform does not include an apron, with the white color and the cap as the main symbolic elements. The main function of the apron is protection and, in the history of clothing, it symbolically characterized housework, like domestic services and gardening¹. The removal of the apron from the uniform when graduating aimed to demonstrate the figure of a professional who is prepared for her functions, that is, the apron was part of the uniform of the apprentices, whose function was to help the nurses during their hospital practicums.

The white color of the hospital nurses' clothing is related to hygiene issues and the discoveries that led to antiseptics and permitted the replacement of dark tissues, used in the religious nurses' habits, by light-colored tissue. Thus, together with hygienic conducts, the notion of cleaning was introduced in the hospital sphere through light-colored clothing, whose cleanliness could be identified faster. This passage from dark to light-colored tissues in the nursing uniform also marks its secularization process^{1:81}. On the other hand, new hygienic conceptions gave rise to the use of the uniform for work purposes only, to the extent that a dressing room was available at EAN to store the apron when the student were not in their practicum³.

The apron used at EAN was white, with the same length as the dress, a marked waistline, v-shaped neckline and straps crossed on the back. Besides the hygienic protection, the apron protected the form of the woman who wore it, as it was wide from the waist down, also gaining a morality function.

In a record of the visit by students from the first class at EAN to the Philadelphia General Hospital in 1925, besides the Brazilians, one nurse and students from different phases of the Training School for Nurses of Philadelphia General Hospital (PGH) are shown, all wearing uniforms. It is interesting to highlight the students wearing the hospital uniform, among which five EAN students can be identified, sitting on the frontline. The distinction is found in the model of the students' cap: rounded for PGH and beak shaped for EAN; the color of the stockings and shoes: black for PGH and white for EAN; the sleeve length of the dress: long for PGH and short for EAN. In addition, the Brazilians wear a brooch.

The distinctive elements observed in the EAN and PGH students' uniforms also existed among the North American schools of nursing, each of which had its model of cap and brooch, containing the corresponding institutional emblem,

Illustration 2. EAN, Class of 1925; Image 5: Nurse School graduates, Eastern Maine General Hospital, 1922 (Eastern Maine Medical Center-Item 16251)



Illustration 3. EAN, classof 1925, Albumof Clara Kieninger



Illustration 4. Visit of Pioneers to Philadelphia General Hospital



among other differences, such as color variations in the constituent elements. The symbolic image of students and nurses is recognized by the common characteristics of the uniforms though, like the white apron and cap. The similarity between the Brazilian and North American students' images evidences the role of the uniform in the construction of the student and

nurse's image, implemented by the Parsons Mission at EAN, in accordance with the model of the North American schools.

Therefore, as elements standardized by external authorities, the uniforms can constitute a strategic resource in the establishment of the individual professional image and identity¹⁶. During the Mission in Brazil, the North American nurses struggled to construct the image of a nurse who granted visibility to the profession through her preparation and conduct¹³.

In addition, the education process at EAN added uppractical, professional, organizational and theoretical knowledge that, in combination, constitute professional and social identities, constructed through increasingly diversified socialization processes⁷. Hence, the uniform and its standardized and compulsory characteristics can be considered as an element of the professional identity construction, considering that the clothing is fundamental in the construction of individuals' image⁸.

The cap as a symbol of modern nursing

The reception ceremony of the caps, which was also held at the North American schools, was established at EAN since the first class. It represented a rite of passage from the

Illustration 5. Reception of Caps - Class of 1929; Image 10: Reception of Caps, Class of 1931



preliminary course phase to the professionalization phase and the actual integration into the student group. Its goal was to strengthen the professional identity, associated with the model that was implemented through the exaltation of the elements of the uniform, corresponding to the professionalization phase the student was about to take. During the ceremony, the students who were moving on to the hospital phase appeared for the first time, wearing the white apron over the dress of their uniform in order to receive the cap and thus complete the hospital uniform. On the other hand, the students who were taking the public health phase appeared with the respective uniform to receive their cuffs^c.

This rite aimed to instill the professional identity that was to be designed during the students' education, associating it with the uniform they were wearing for the first time, as illustrated by the words of the EAN dean, Clara Louise Kieninger, in her speech during the reception ceremony of the caps for the first class, in which she highlighted the symbolic value of the uniform: "your uniform shows to the world that you belong to the restricted group of individuals who welcome their brothers whose life is at risk"^{17:1}. When referring to the cap, the dean associated its use with commitment to the ideals of the profession: "And now that each of you is wearing the cap, you should never forget that you have been designated to work with the life and death of creatures of God and that you should always be ready for any call within your vocation"^{17:1}.

When highlighting the nobleness of the nurse's work, due to its nature of caring for human beings who suffer, emphasizing that the work they will be designated to belongs to a restricted group, the words of the dean reveal a projection of the nursing work the students are expected to perform in the future. The construction modalities of a professional identity constitute not only an identity at work, but also and mainly a self-projection in the future, the anticipation of an employment trajectory and the anticipation of a learning or, better, an educational logic⁷.

During the reception ceremony of the caps, important elements for the construction of a professional identity are combined, such as the use of the uniform and the exaltation of its elements, particularly the cap, which was placed on the students' head through a ritual prepared using different symbolic elements, such as the taking of an oath and the lit nursing lamp, where the students lit their individual candles, in the presence of the student and teaching staff of EAN, as well as external authorities and guests^{3,14}.

The clothing is not restricted to an artistic or ornamental manifestation, but its use demonstrated the need to manifest a meaning, and thus goes beyond the esthetic and functional aspects, with a double origin that is at the same time symbolic and instrumental.

For the students, the meaning of the cap used in the nursing uniform was the commitment and responsibility assumed by the persons who wore it, in this case, to rise up to the standard proposed by the North American nurses, as observed in the words of Ethel Parsons during the first reception ceremony of the caps, held at EAN:

We, the nurses from North America, who were invited by your government to bring the benefit of the experience and education we received from our predecessor nurses, will only spend some time with you [...] Preserve yourselves at the height of the supreme ideals of the noble and sublime qualities of the woman and the nursing profession and, in two years, after you have completed your course, we, the nurses from other nations, will welcome you in our ranks, and will thus be united by the same bond [...] ^{18:60}.

The analysis of this speech reveals the reception ceremony of the caps as a strategy to construct a professional and, therefore, a social identity, when the individuals are expected to assume work relations, to somehow participate in collective organizational activities and intervene in the game of actors⁸.

To establish a new professional model, the valuation of the cap, an accessory present in the students and the nurses' uniform, played a decisive role, as the uniform of the nurses was meant to highlight their qualities, thus constructing a social image, which was officially acknowledged as the image of the standard nurse in Brazil, through the Decree issued in 1931.

The cap was a sign of distinction in the image of the Anna Nery nurse, a sign of professional acknowledgement of a group that was properly prepared and graduated to practice nursing, whether in teaching, care delivery or supervision. As the image registers what we see or believe to see, its meaning is related to the interpretation each individual can reach in accordance with his/her imaginary schemes. As a representation of the real, the image reaches the category of sign which, when it turns into a convention, becomes a symbol¹⁷.

CONCLUSION

Some limitations permeated the development of the study, such as the lack of full access to all documents from the North American schools of interest, as this research had no funding, so that documents with access free of charge were prioritized. On the other hand, the wealth of documents at CEDOC/EEAN and of publications about the uniforms at the North American schools permitted the accomplishment of the study.

In this research, we exclusively focused on the hospital uniform of Brazilian and North American students and nurses, which allowed us to observe that elements like the white color, the apron and the cap turned into signs of the profession during the first decades of the 20th century, replacing the image of the nurse who used a religious habit.

The implementation of the Anglo-American nursing model by North American nurses aimed to elevate the status of the profession in the Brazilian society and, among the strategies for the construction of a new professional nursing identity, the use of the uniform stood out. The importance of the uniform in this construction was evidenced in this study, reaffirming its role as described by sociologists, who consider it as an element that permits knowledge about the rules and values associated with clothing and accessories, as well as with the occasions and usage forms, keeping in mind that the uniforms are characterized by the official regulation of a group, which is the case not only in professional, but also in school, religious, hospital and other groups.

The similarity between the Brazilian and North American uniforms reinforced the idea of the intent to transfer the nursing model from the USA to Brazil, preserving due proportions. The images of uniformed students and nurses, as disseminated by the NPHD, a Brazilian official entity, and by EAN, which maintained rituals for the valuation of the uniform,

like the Reception Ceremony of the CAPS, gave rise to and acknowledged a new nursing teaching and care model in the Brazilian society.

The Reception Ceremony of the CAPS can be understood as a rite of passage and institutionalization, with the status of pre-graduation, where the professional identity would be completed through the use of the uniform. The exaltation of the cap, attributing vocational and identity meanings to its use, reproduced a mechanism used since ancient times, through which the cultural categories and principles are coded and manifested, serving as a demonstration of a change, as an instrument of mastery and institutional and/or social commitment.

The study demonstrated that the uniforms implemented at EAN by the Parsons Mission positively influenced the implementation of a new nursing model and the formation of a professional nursing identity in Brazil, serving as an element of social and hierarchical distinction, and also because it approximated the Brazilian and North American students and nurses through the similarity of their uniforms, that is, through the image constructed based on the same symbolic elements of their clothing.

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^a Created as *Escola de Enfermeiras do DNSP*, the institution was called *Escola Anna Nery* in 1926 and is currently called *Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery*, affiliated with *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro* (EEAN/UFRJ)

^b Led by Nurse Ethel Parsons, this Mission was referred to as the Parsons Mission.

^c About the Public Health Uniform implemented at EAN, consult: Peres MMA, BARREIRA IA. *Significado dos uniformes de enfermeira nos primórdios da Enfermagem Moderna*. *Esc. Anna Nery Rev. Enf.* 2003 abr; 7(1):25-38.