"Identikit: make me a nurse" The use of imagery to inform construction of the professional self

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Background: Stereotypical images of adult nursing abound in popular culture for consumption and commodification by the public, including those who aspire to join the profession. Potentially, professional misrepresentation may cause confusion in roles and responsibilities (Ten Hoeve, *et al* 2013; Weaver, *et al* 2013) Literature confirms this misappropriation of identity through imager yet it remains constant, perpetuating stereotypes.

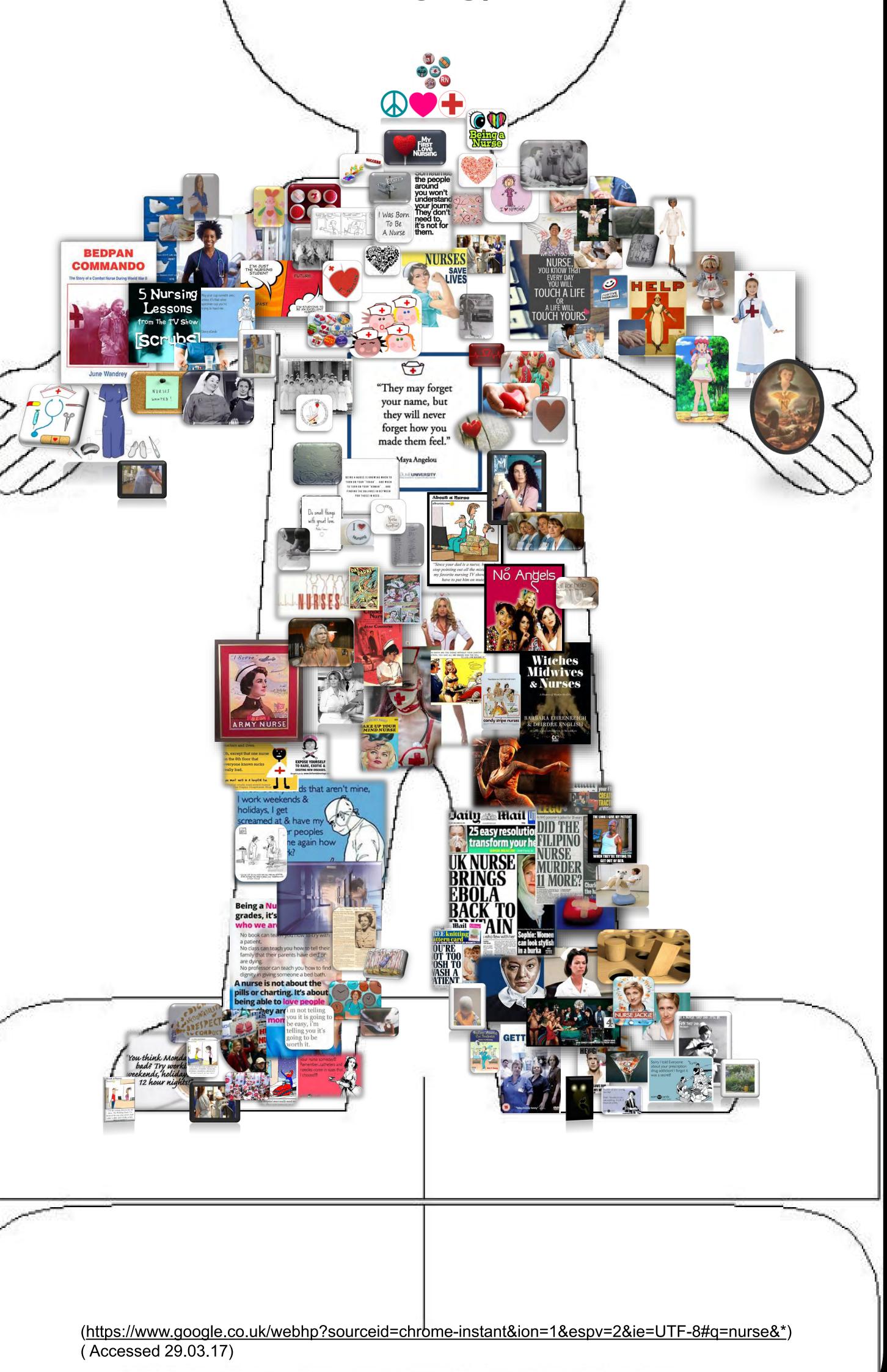
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Findings: Participants explored wide-ranging stereotypes of nursing which they considered simultaneously useful and problematic, such as power dynamics and hierarchy. This use of imagery enabled the discussion of an eclectic mixture of societal representations of nursing. Such constructs lie within the profession itself, offering an opportunity to consider how these stereotypes serve to re-affirm or negate professional identity.

Aim: To explore the perceptions of nursing stereotypes and the value they may bring to construction and sustainability of professional identity.



Discussion: It appears that construction of self is multifaceted, comprised of numerous identities, representations and misrepresentations. The presence of which appears to inform how participants interact within a wide range of environments. This study aims to interrogate these issues, drawing out the nuances associated with participants' contributions and adding to existing literature by signalling the range of impacts arising from stereotypical representations of nursing.

Methods: Drawing on cocollaboration with ten female preregistration undergraduate adult nursing students (recruited through a UK higher education institution), this study applied a constructivist grounded theory research approach. Participant selected imagery informed a series of three photo-elicitation interviews per participants from May 2012 to December 2013. Analysis of visual and transcribed data was applied using a constant comparison approach with concurrent memo writing, thematic sensitivity and research reflexivity (Charmaz, 2014).

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Conclusions: Existing literature focusses on challenging stereotypes of nursing. This study illustrates how they also re-affirm or deny professional identity. Extending understanding of perceptions of nursing stereotypes enables reidentification with our professional selves which in turn informs recruitment, education and practice.

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