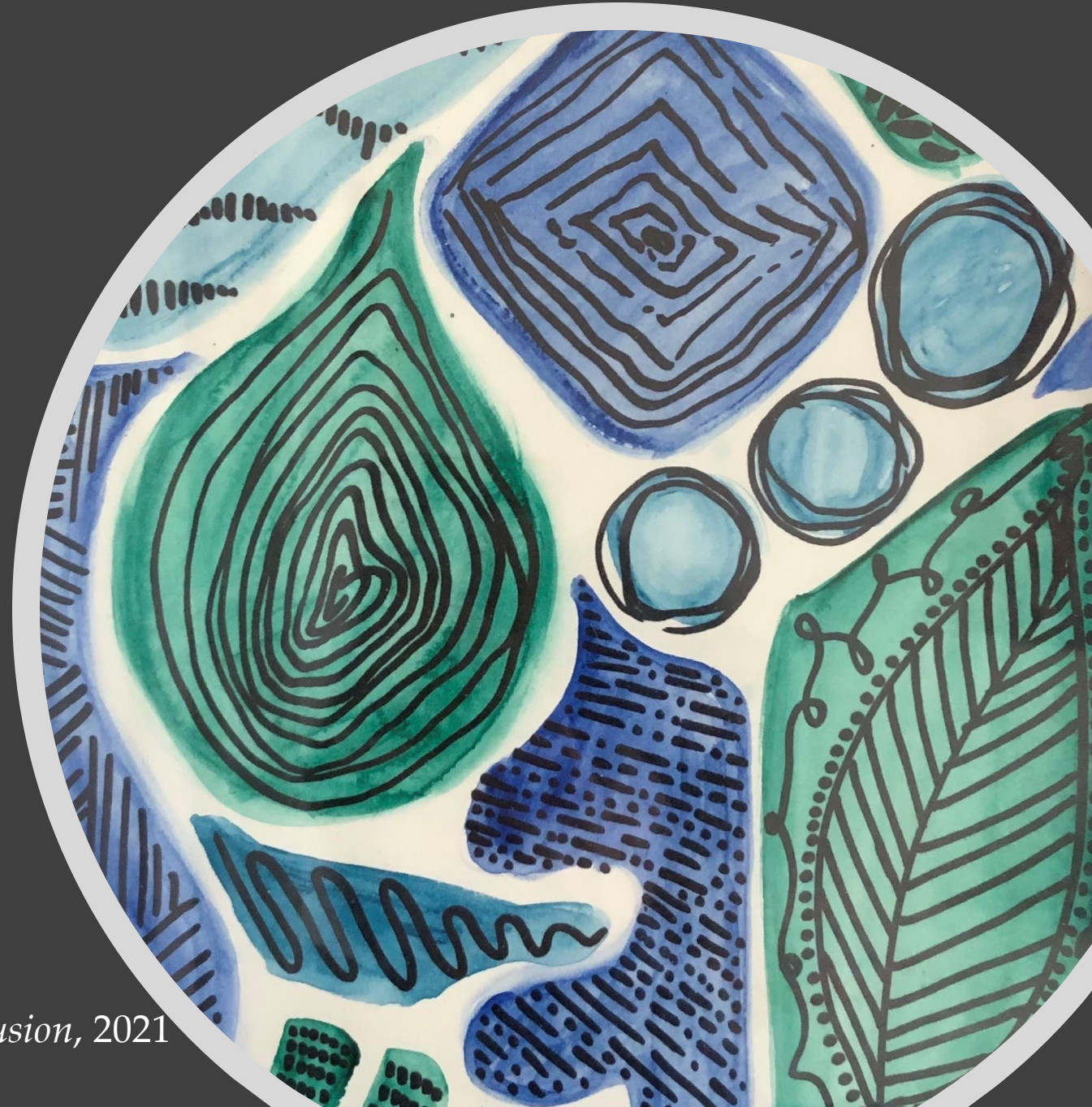# Insights to the COVID Response in Pediatrics

Presenters: Lindsey M. Tarasenko, Madelynn Neu, & Nadia Shive
43rd Annual L. Joseph Butterfield Perinatal Conference (hybrid)
Friday, September 9th, 2022 @ 4:15-5:15 PM

Clarity in the Confusion, 2021
Painting

Gratitude

- Study Participants

- Anonymous Funding Donor through Children's Hospital Colorado Foundation

- Kerkoff Photography & Design – photography rights obtained

- CU Nursing

- Children's Hospital Colorado

- All members of the research team:
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Affiliations

Children's Hospital Colorado

College of Nursing
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Watson Caring Science Institute

GANNON UNIVERSITY
Villa Maria School of Nursing

Disclaimer: Any social and/or political views expressed by any of its team members does not necessarily represent the viewpoints or opinions of the affiliated institutions.

Conflict of Interest

This study received funding from an anonymous donor through Children's Hospital Colorado Foundation

Invitation…

- **Professionally reflect** on the experiences of pediatric nurse participants and your own experiences; this is collective wisdom

- **Respectful** of the participants that shared their vulnerability and advocacy

- **Immerse** yourself into the findings and application to practice

Sometimes it is the Flower Wilted by Rain that Moves Our Hearts Most, 2021
Mixed media on canvas

Background

Presentation Objectives

Provide an in-depth meaning of pediatric nurses' experiences responding to the pandemic to inform future practice.

[Children's Hospital Colorado. (2021)]

[VPM NRP News. (2020)]

Study Rationale

- Prior to this pandemic, the comprehensive role of nurses during epidemic/pandemic responses, and the impact to nursing practice during these emergencies were absent from the literature

- Few studies have focused on pediatric nurse responses to this pandemic

- Opportunity as nurse scientists to respond to the pandemic by studying the impact to the work environment and nursing profession

Updated Literature Review

Twenty-four (24) relevant articles in 2022 on nurse experiences during COVID

- 14 Descriptive Quantitative
  - National or local surveys
    - Online or on-site

- 10 Qualitative
  - One pediatric study

- Scores compared to norms for the assessment instruments

Literature Review - Quantitative

- High levels of distress
  - (e.g., burnout, traumatic and moral distress, depression, anxiety, fear, PTSD)
- Compared to pre-pandemic – higher burnout, emotional exhaustion and shortened telomere length

- **Associations**:
  - Work-related environment and physical and emotional fatigue
  - Perceived poor organizational support and PTSD symptoms
  - Desire to leave nursing
    - High anxiety
    - Perceived poor work environment
    - Uncertainly about pandemic
    - Frequent policy changes
    - Safety concerns

(Ali et al., 2022; Fontenot et al., 2022; Guasetllo et al., 2022; Guttormson et al., 2022; Haidari et al., 2022; Howie-Esquivel et al., 2022; Ley et al., 2022; Lopez et al., 2022; Mensigner et al., 2022; Prasun et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2022; Zeiher et al., 2022)

Literature Review - Qualitative

- **Work related physical and emotional trauma →
Serious consideration to leave nursing**
  - **Organizational leadership**
    - Distant and unprepared
    - Feeling of abandonment by leaders understaffing
    - Chaotic work environment
  - **Professional Nursing**
    - Difficult working conditions (constrained space, inadequate PPE, changing care protocols)
    - Assault on identity
    - Self doubt and failure
    - Disputed nurse-patient connection,
    - Losing the art and failing the science of nursing
    - Role frustration
  - **Emotional responses**
    - Frustration
    - Feeling overwhelmed
    - Exhaustion
    - Heartbreak
    - Powerless
    - Concern for safety

- **Positive Aspects**
  - Learning new skills
  - Asking better questions
  - Developing resilience
  - Pride in work

(Blanchard et al., 2022; Chipps el at., 2022; Hanson & Tuttas, 2022; Howie et al., 2022; Kennedy et al., 2022; Lulguraj et al., 2022; Monroe et al., 2022; Robinson et al., 2022; Sahay & Dwayer, 2022; Simonovich et al., 2022; Squires et al., 2022; Stimpfel at el., 2022)

Study Aims

1. Explore the experiences of pediatric nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

2. Document an in-depth understanding and meaning of these experiences via a case description and themes, chronology of events, and daily rendering of activities.

3. Identify practice changes, unintended consequences and pressures within the context of a global pandemic.

4. Identify issues important to participants to inform future disaster planning, response and management tactics.

Theoretical Underpinnings
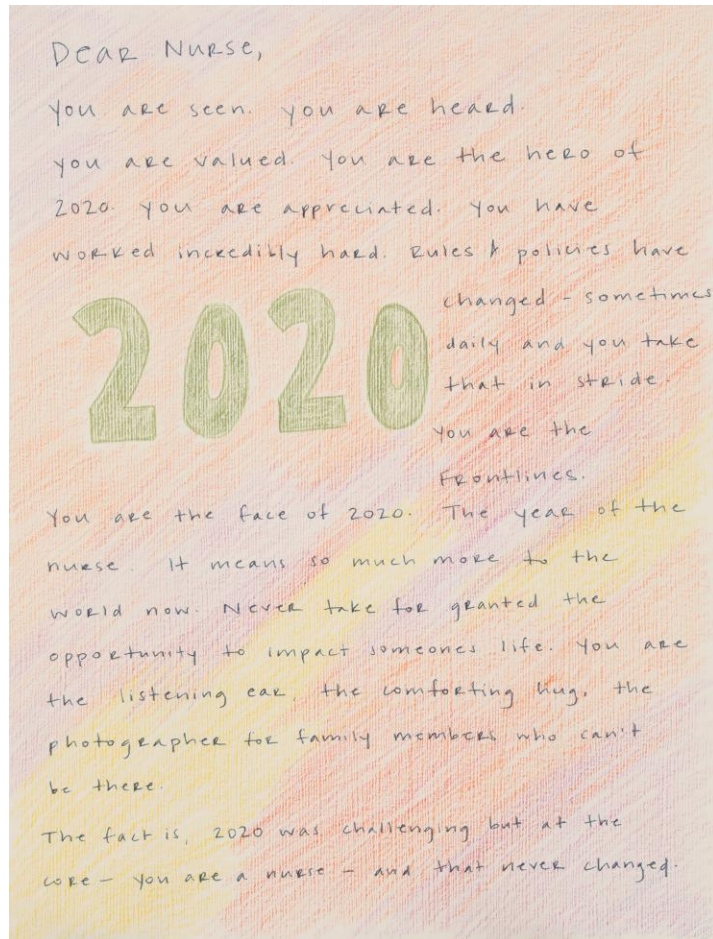
The Face of 2020
Letter

- **Jean Watson's Philosophy and Science of Caring**
  - Unitary Caring Science
  - Caritas Processes®

- **Chinn & Kramer**
  - Broader Conceptualization of Nursing
  - Emancipatory Knowing-Praxis

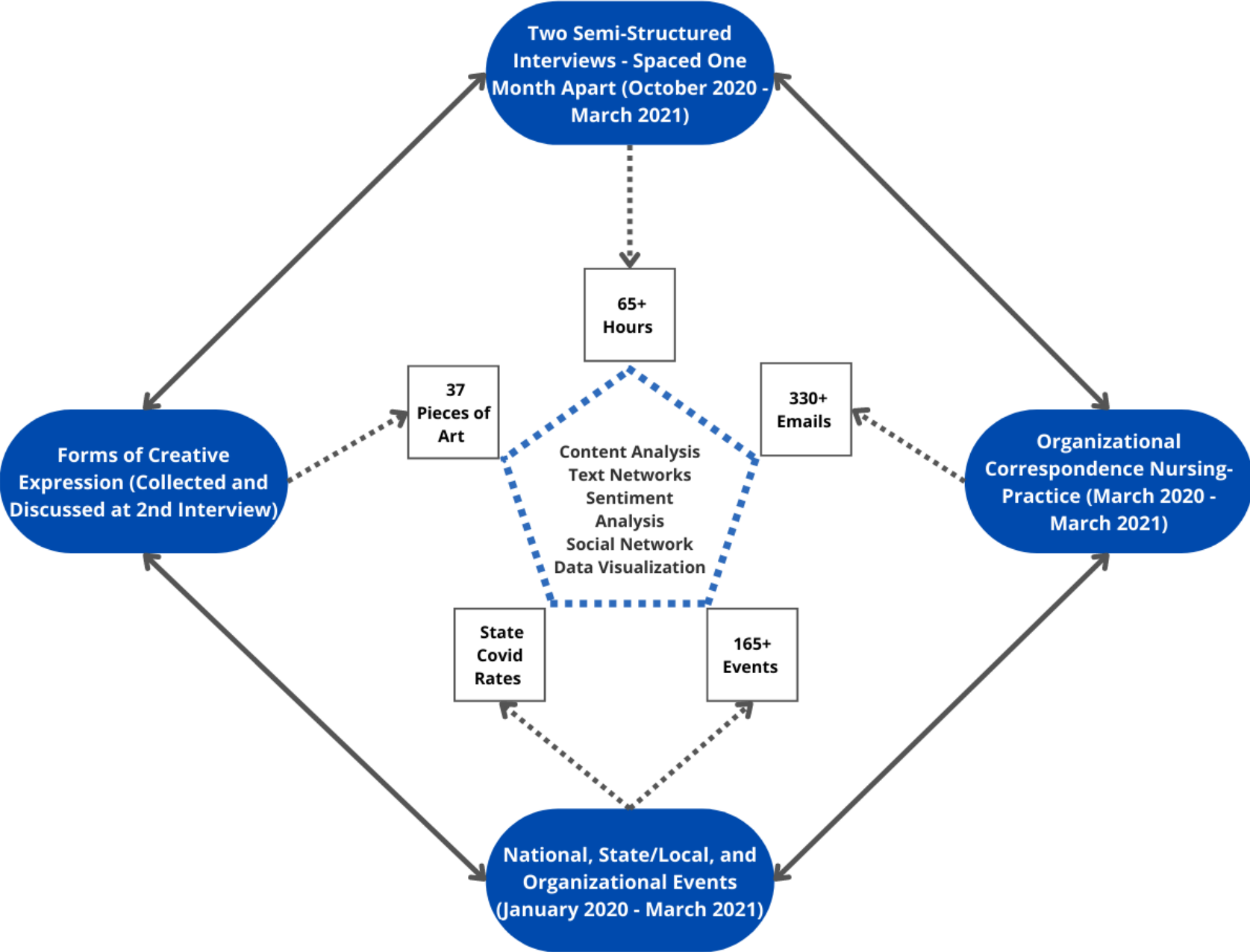- **Lenses**
  - Social Constructivism
  - Systems-Thinking

(Bender & Elias, 2017; Bruce et al., 2013; Cara et el. 2017; Chinn & Kramer, 2011; Sitzman & Watson, 2017; Watson, 2008; 2017; 2018)

Methods

Analyses

- **Content Analysis** (qual)
  - Categorical aggregation to establish patterns and themes – saturation achieved (Creswell, 2013; Saldana, 2016)
    - Interview data
    - Forms of creative expression (artwork)

- **Text Networks** (qual + quant) (Ranjan & Dey, 2014; Tang et al., 2014)
  - Topic generation based on email content

- **Sentiment Analysis** (qual + quant) (Rule et al., 2015; Ryker, 2019)
  - Algorithmic process of assigning whether text has positive, neutral or negative polarity

- **Social Network Analysis** (qual + quant) (Bail, 2016; Rule et al., 2015)
  - Assess the shared experiences of nurses from a quantitative and network perspective

Findings

Job Titles	Clinical Nurses: 19 (63.3%) Nurse Leaders: 7 (23.3%) Non-Direct Patient Care Nurses: 4 (13.3%)
Gender Identity	Female: 29 (96.7%) Male: 1 (3.3%)
Age (yrs)	Min: 22, Max: 60 M = 38.47, SD = 12.38
Nursing Experience (yrs)	Min: 1, Max: 35 M = 14.18, SD = 11.65
Highest Nursing Degree	BSN: 22 (73.3%) MSN: 8 (26.7%)

Participant Demographics

30 pediatric nurse participants

Systems

Individual

Profession

Nursing Practice Environment Operations as a Response to the Pandemic

- Organizational Communication and Support in a Complex Work Environment
- Future Disaster Management Recommendations
- Nursing Roles in the Pandemic

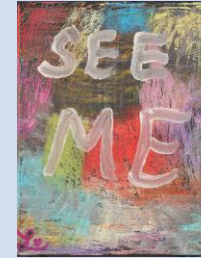**COVID Response Created Barriers to Nursing Practice**

- PPE Created Physical and Emotional Barriers
- Changed Work Functions that Unintentionally Assaulted Nursing Core Values
- The Weight of the Politicization of the Virus and Division Within the Sociopolitical Environment

See My Humanity

- Unintended Consequences of Long-Term Emergency Responses
- The Pandemic as a Catalyst to Professional Reflection
- Nurses Beyond Their Workplace – The Individual Experience
- Narrative and Art as a Modality for Reflection and Healing

The Pandemic Solidified the Ontology of Nursing

- Creative Use of Self to Provide High-Quality Care is Part of the Nursing Role
- Nurses as Advocates for Patients and Profession
- Nursing's Professional Obligation and Compassion

Contrasting Experiences

"Biogenic" Environment

- Life giving, life receiving, and healthy (Watson, 2008)
  - Voice in practice
  - Practice aligns with core values
  - Reflected security, safety, support, spirituality, and optimism (hope)

Building Hope & Resiliency, 2020-21
Home projects

Being Present, 2020
Colored pencil

"Biocitic" Environment

- Harmful/unpleasant (Watson, 2008)
  - No voice in practice
  - Lost sense of purpose
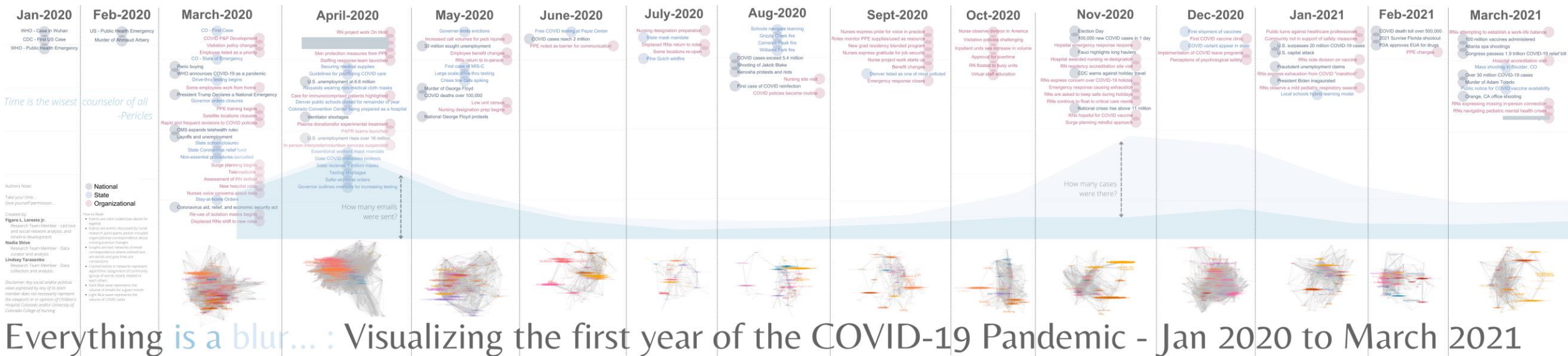 - Unintended consequence of navigating complex emergency responses and unstable environments

The Damage, 2020
Mixed media

Untitled, 2020
Watercolor

The Turbulent Environment

Everything is a blur... : Visualizing the first year of the COVID-19 Pandemic - Jan 2020 to March 2021

Nursing Practice Environment Operations as a Response to the Pandemic

COVID Trophy, 2020

Colored pencil drawing on paper bag

Organizational Correspondence – Text Network Word Flow Across Email Topics:

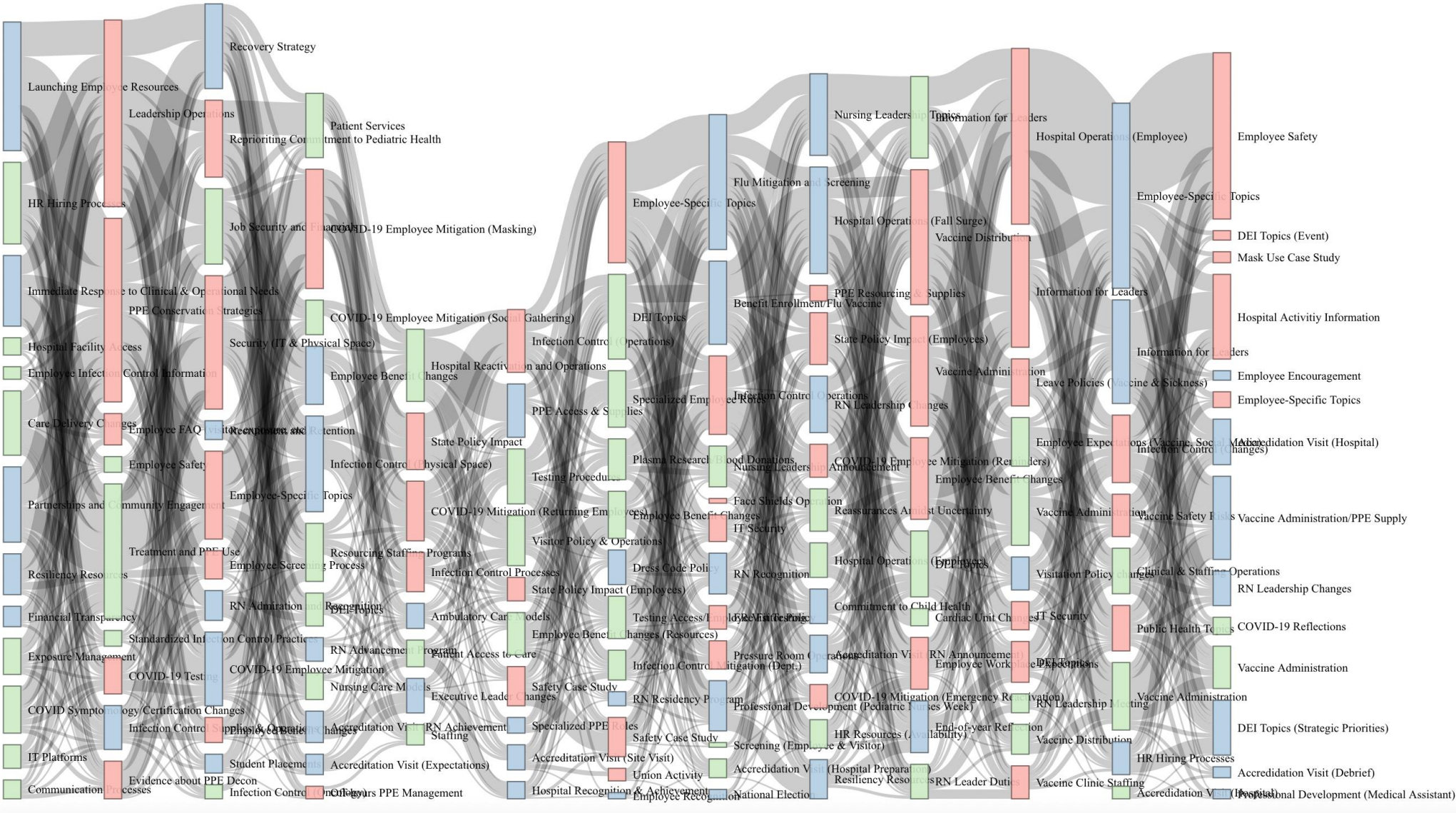## Priorities Evolved Over Time & Mirrored Environmental Changes/Needs

Figure 2: River plot of word flow across communities over time (March 2020 – March 2021) - Number and Content of Topics Evolved as the Pandemic and Organizational Priorities Evolved

Implications

- **Solely relying on emails as a form of communication for RNs during a crises is not recommended**

  - Email topics change at a rapid pace – not conducive for off-shift RNs

  - Emails contain so much information (efficient) that may lead to information overload or be difficult to interpret

  - Consider a multimodal communication strategy

  - Emergent changes often occurred on Friday afternoons when leadership and resources unavailable, consider practice changes at beginning or mid-week

  - Consider targeted, intentional, and dept-specific communication to stakeholders

Network Analyses Provide Demographic Insights

- **Pediatric nurses' experiences:**

  - Unique professional experience – mostly low network connectivity

  - Nursing teams were separated – changes in roles

- **Clinical nurses:**

  - Voiced distressing emotions in response to frontline changes and operations

  - Expressed work restrictions and nurses expected to model public health behaviors

  - Nurses with less experience desired change (activism)

- **Leaders:**

  - Voiced structural and operational priorities

  - Additional roles taken on during pandemic

  - Voiced the desire to support their clinical team through cohesion and connectivity

Network Analysis Implications

- Supporting nurses requires incorporating the nurses' variety of experiences
  - Hypothesize that one-size-fits-all support interventions and chaotic environments may have led to "Great Resignation" of nurses
    - US turnover rate 20-30%
  - Support feels tone-deaf if does not account for nurse's humanity and professional values

Healthcare System Opportunities

- **Professional Nursing – Control Over Practice**
  - Practicing to top of scope
  - Ability to influence application of policies and care delivery in specific area and/or population
  - Voice in staffing models/assignments
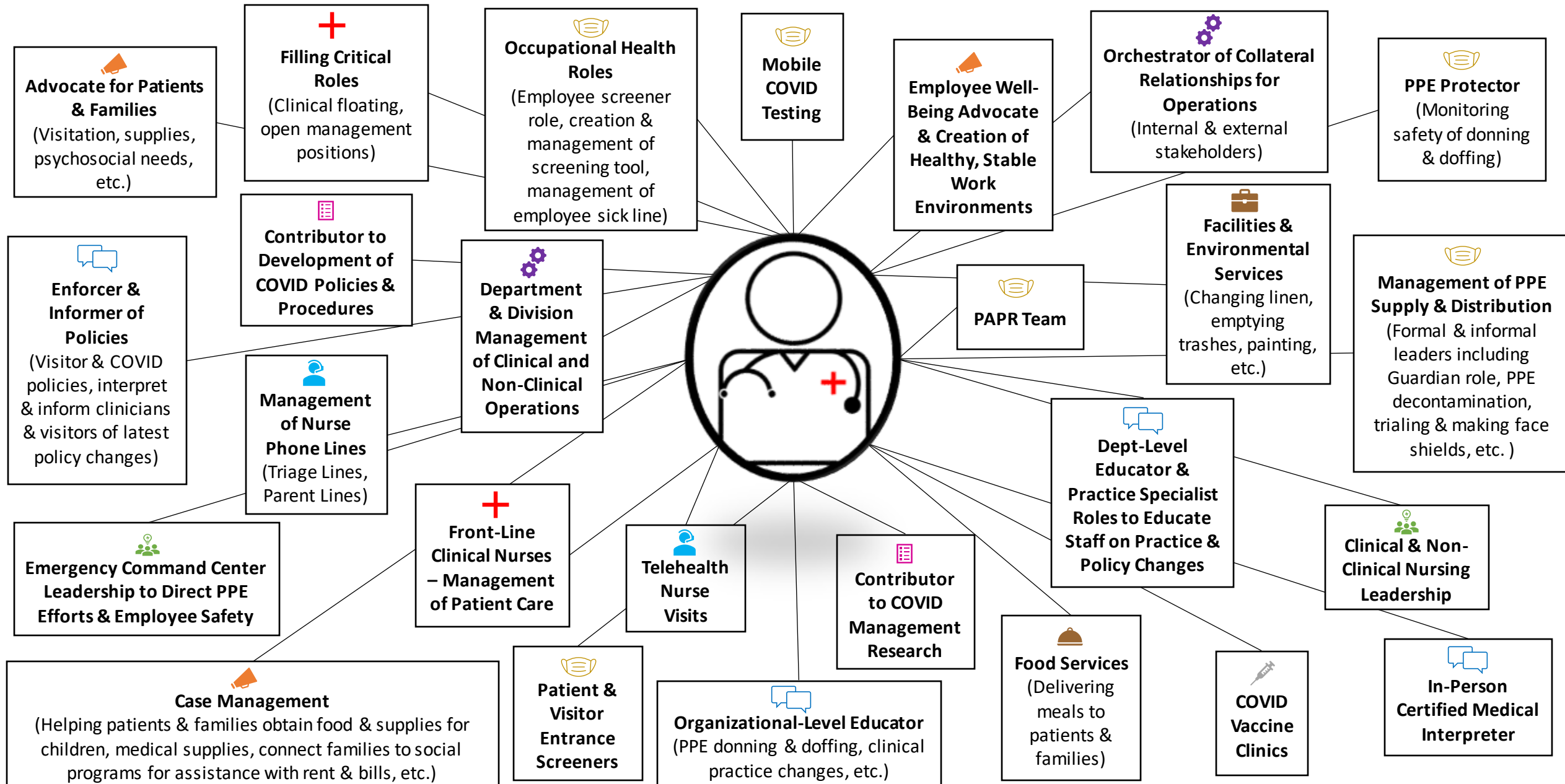 - Compensation for additional roles/coverage

- **Leadership Support**
  - Authentic leadership presence

- **Work Environment Stability**
  - Work-life balance and staffing accommodations
  - Self-care during workflow
  - Training for response roles
  - Safety as a priority

The Roles Pediatric Nurses Held to Support COVID Response Efforts

COVID Response Created Barriers to Nursing Practice

Dolor De Madre, 2020

Pencil and colored pencil

Changed Work Functions that Unintentionally Assaulted Nursing Core Values

- **Suspension of quality and project work created dissonance**

  - Ties to identity and role of the professional nurse

  - Quality work is a job satisfier

  - Recovery from clinical work

- **Displaced nurses**

  - Prior role - "lost something that really built me up"

  - Nursing as a unit of labor

  - Some nurses did enjoy learning new skillset and meeting other employees

Changed Work Functions that Unintentionally Assaulted Nursing Core Values

Healthcare Hero, 2020
Fine art print, and original mural located on Colfax
Created and signed by Artist Austin Zucchini- Fowler

- **COVID Policies**
  - Clinical nurses are patient- and multidisciplinary-facing and felt they were expected to articulate policy/practice changes

- **Visitor policies did not allow for flexibility and complex family/visitor dynamics**
  - Nurses experienced cognitive dissonance between policies and moral obligations

PPE Created Barriers to Patient Care

Physical

- Application of PPE increased workload and affected quality of assessments

Emotional

- **Perceptions of policing PPE**
  - "everything is under lock and key"
  - Expectation on being experts in PPE policy
  - Compromise peer physical and psychological safety
  - Role could be isolating, distressing due to stretching moral boundaries and experiences of incivility

- **Decreased time in room and full PPE garb hard to make patient/family connection**
  - Understand had to operationalize the pandemic, but the human component was taken away to providing nursing care – "it felt like betrayal"
  - Unable to reassure patient/family with body language and physical touch
  - PPE – impact to pediatric patients due to developmental level

The Weight of the Politicization of the Virus and Division Within the Sociopolitical Environment

- **Hero mentality/model citizens**
  - Expectation to model responsible behaviors publicly

  -> pressure to always convey positivity and gratitude
  - Nationally, nurses' sacrifices were glorified that compromised their safety

- **"Incredibly divided America" affected professional and personal relationships**
  - Varying views disrupted trusting relationships with families
  - Some lacked support in personal relationships due to varying beliefs/values
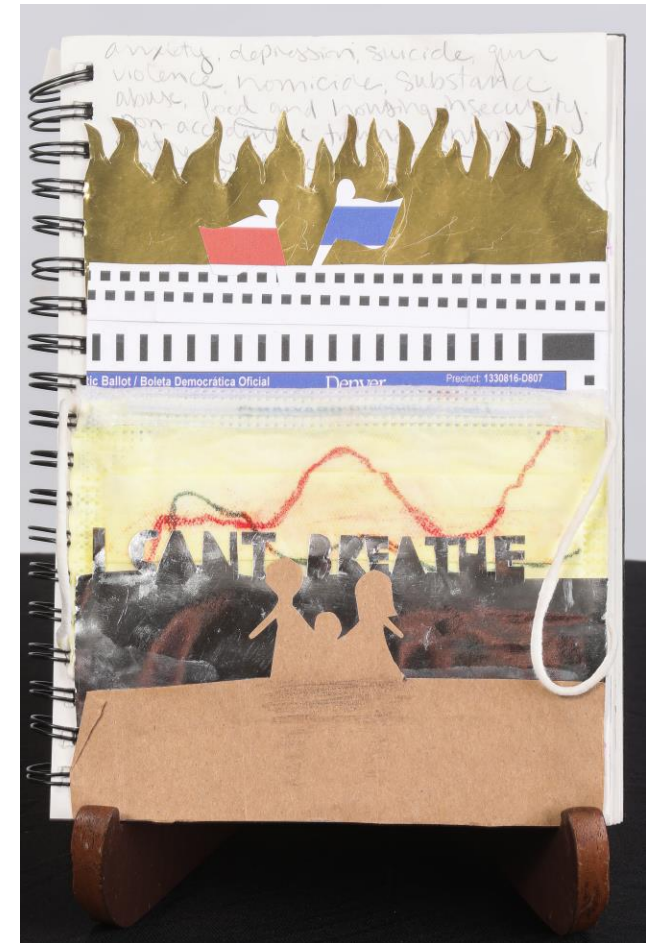
Landscape of 2020
Mixed Media Collage

See My Humanity

What…

Happened…

Masks…wear one

I remember…

You can't see your mother. It's too risky. Facetime or Zoom.

You were already fading away.

Where is the light?

What happened? I remember…
Poem excerpt

Unintended Consequences of Long-Term Emergency Responses:
"*My heart is not working today* "

Psychological Safety

- Fear/stress of virus exposure and exposure to family
- Long-term chemical exposures
- Hope that vaccines would stop the pandemic and provide safety

Mental Health Aspects

- Isolation
- Exhaustion from unstable environments
- Inability to give therapeutic self

Professional

- Reflection, problem solving, and human-to-human connection hindered due to social distancing constraints and emergency response efforts

"I was being held together by adrenaline and then once things slowed down and that adrenaline decreased it was like the big fall-apart and trying to go to work and be present, not feel burned out was almost impossible and it took a lot of work on my end personally to be able to start build that backup again."

Nurses Beyond The Workplace: The Individual Experience – Home and Work are Intertwined

Impact to Professional Well-Being

- Work-life imbalance

- Professional pride and purpose for those leading efforts

- Moral Injury – dissonance between value system and work tasks

Impact to Personal Health and Family Dynamics

- Nurses being patients with life-altering DX or caregivers in personal life

- Navigating schooling and childcare

- Unable to celebrate life events (graduations, births, weddings, etc.)

- Strength and connection or loss and grief of family/friend connections

Narrative and Art as a Modality for Reflection and Healing

Yeah, it is better not to think about it, just dig in and work
Keep your head down, keep busy, be there for the kids
Parent's fears are high, and we run into the fire to be there for them
It's what were taught, it's what we know, it's instinct now
In a crisis, we don't question, it's our thing

How's it fair I got a vaccine before so many in need?
More kids, parents and staff sick every week
It can be hard to feel ok 'bout it anyway
It's a privilege and somehow a grand experiment

Behind my mask I cough, the chemicals it hides starting to take a toll on me
Too much time in a mask. Will I pay a price? Will I be ok? Is it worth it?
I don't know, but it ain't the first sacrifice I made since I've been a nurse
It's what we do

Excerpt from Solace in the Cemetery, 2020
Song lyrics

The Pandemic Solidified the Ontology of Nursing

Grateful, 2021
Painting

Nurses are Advocates for Patients and Profession

Arriving
to join the fight,
we hold the line
and raise the light,
for our patients
in their untimely plight,
facing illness and trauma:
vignettes within
the pandemic drama.

Kneeled
humbly beside them,
face shields down,
and hearts aflame,
we pin heroes' capes
to their hospital gowns,
and wrap compassion
around their fear and pain

Striving
to nourish their hope
as we run feeds,
offer glimmers of normalcy
while attending their needs,
we'll add humor to their meds
and throw cheer at the gloom
encircling their beds.

Luminaries, 2021
Poem

- **Patients**
  - Workarounds/loops holes to navigate complex family dynamics
    - Visitor policies
    - Supply shortages
  - Emphasizing the importance of joy and play in pediatric patient care
  - Protection of vulnerable pediatric population

- **Profession – Nurses more than a unit of labor**

Nursing's Professional Obligation and Compassion

- **Moral Obligation & Commitment**
  - Help where needed (positive response to helping in a crisis)
  - Sense of pride and professional community
  - Provide ethical and high-quality care to those in need (accountability to practice standards)

I Had A Long Day Yesterday and Another Quick Reminder That We Are Still Here, 2020
Photograph

Conclusions & Implications

Systems Conclusions: These are SYSTEM issues

Systems

Profession

- **Emergency responses constrained nursing workflow**, furthering the operational demands on nurses and hindering the ability to provide high standards of care.

- Nurses are committed to their patients and profession, but because of their oath and value system to respond, **some nurses were underutilized and put into roles that did not allow them to practice to top of scope and have agency over practice**.

- **Long-term emergency response created a new work environment norm of instability**

Systems Implications

Systems

Profession
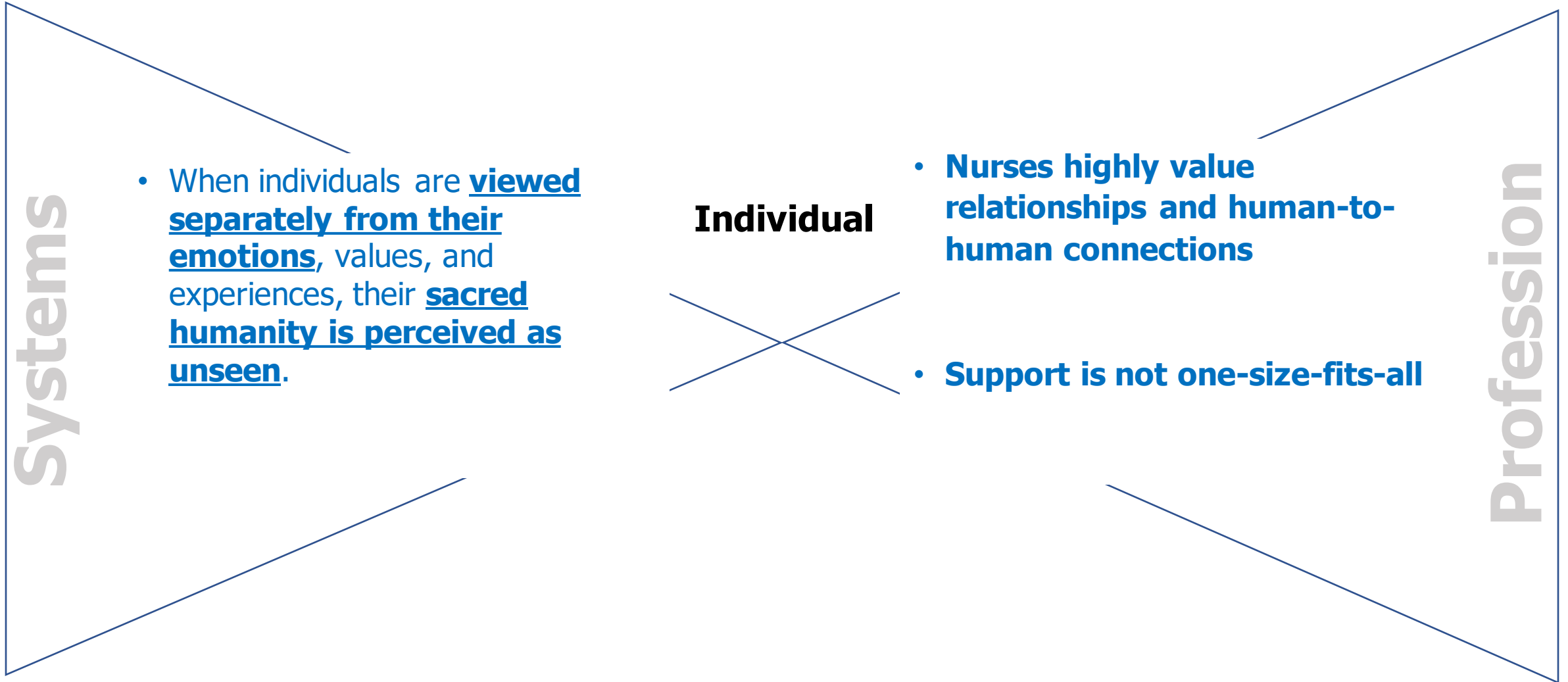
- Nursing is a profession and identity. When **work aligns with nursing core values these nurses positively perceive their value and satisfaction within their role and organization**.

- **Nurses must have a diverse and collective voice in disaster training, management and application to specific patient populations and care areas**.

- **Create work environment stability**

Conclusions: See My Humanity   Implications

Systems

- When individuals are **viewed separately from their emotions**, values, and experiences, their **sacred humanity is perceived as unseen**.

Individual

- **Nurses highly value relationships and human-to-human connections**

- **Support is not one-size-fits-all**

Profession

Professional Nursing Conclusions

- **<u>Cathartic and empowering experience in professional reflection</u>** through narrative and art.

- **The pandemic impacted the individual nurse and nursing work environment and has change the professional climate.**

- **More than a unit of labor**

Systems

Profession

Professional Nursing Implications: The Value of Professional Reflection and Agency Over Practice

Systems

Consistent and Recurrent Debriefing & Reflection

- Connect to one's purpose and value system

- Creates a professional community

- Healing through acknowledgment to experiences and associated emotions

- Creates a platform for activism (voice in practice)

- Recognize and celebrate creative use of self to provide high-quality care
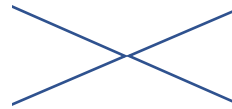
Governance structures may offer a means for nurses to:

- Professionally reflect, use of evidence

- Agency over practice decisions/implementation

- Ensure nurses are working to top of scope through professional governance behaviors

- Involvement in practices changes at the organizational and community level

- Make direct impact on patient care population

More Than a Room Charge

- Opportunity to measure nursing's direct impact on patient physiological and psychosocial outcomes to demonstrate nursing value

Profession

Disseminating Research through Art

Immerse yourself…

- Placards
  - Code name
  - Title and year piece was created
  - Medium
  - Description of piece from the voice of the participant

Share your Story

Please step up to the microphone or raise your hand in Zoom to share or ask questions

(Microsoft stock image, 2022)

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