1957

A study of the learning experiences in the eight week period of field instruction in public health nursing from the viewpoint of the student.

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Boston University

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/11305

Boston University
A STUDY OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN THE EIGHT WEEK PERIOD OF FIELD INSTRUCTION IN PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE STUDENT

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A field study submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in the School of Nursing Boston University August, 1957

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"This was supported (in part) by a training grant U.S.P.H.S. NT-53 from the Division of Nursing Resources, Bureau of Medical Services, U.S. Public Health Services."
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Boston University School of Nursing offers a basic collegiate nursing program which is fully accredited by the National League for Nursing including preparation for beginning positions in public health nursing. The four year program is carefully planned and the students receive a broad background of general knowledge along with theory and practice in the actual skills of nursing.

The School of Nursing Bulletin states:

"...the curriculum for the preparation of the professional nurse is developed around four major cores of educational experience; that related to the biological and physical sciences; that related to the humanities and social sciences; that related to health, science, and nursing; that related to the patient and his family."1/

One part of the total curriculum for the preparation of the professional nurse is the eight week period of field instruction in public health nursing which is given during the second semester of the senior year.

1/Boston University Bulletin, School of Nursing, Boston University Press, 1956-1957, p. 28.
It was the purpose of the investigation to study the learning experiences in the eight week period of field instruction in public health nursing from the viewpoint of the student. Specifically the answers to the following four questions were sought:

1. What learning experiences in the public health nursing field instruction duplicate previous learnings?
2. What learning experiences are unique to public health nursing?
3. What learning experiences are most valuable to the student in the eight week period of field instruction in public health nursing?
4. How much time does the basic professional nursing student require to adjust to the period of field instruction in public health nursing?

Justification

The writers in the professional literature discuss the content of the field instruction period and the need for the student to evaluate the learning experiences as a means to increase her awareness and understanding of her goals. There is also discussion in the literature as to whether there are unique learning experiences in public health nursing.

It has been the experience of the investigators that there are areas in the public health nursing field instruction period that repeat previous learnings. The writers
feel that, in order to utilize the eight week period of field instruction more effectively as a learning experience for students, the areas of duplication need to be identified and the areas of uniqueness need to be highlighted.

Since the writers believed that the student participating in the public health nursing field instruction period has a valuable contribution to make in the evaluation of the learning experiences, the study was designed to obtain the students' opinion about this experience.

Scope and Limitations

The study was concerned with the learning experiences of the twenty-three senior students in the basic professional nursing program at Boston University School of Nursing during the period of field instruction in public health nursing.

Since the study involved the students from only one class in one basic professional nursing program, the findings are significant only for this situation. The study was further limited by the fact that a majority of the students were assigned to non-official agencies in a large metropolitan area.
Definition of Terms

For the purpose of the study the following terms were used:

Planned Conference, any conference conducted by the supervisor or other personnel in the agency. It does not include conferences held by the field teacher.

Student, refers to the senior student member of the class of 1957, in the basic professional nursing program at Boston University School of Nursing.

Preview of Methodology

The four sources of data for the study were:

1. The experience records kept by 23 students
2. Two questionnaires to supplement the experience record
3. The open-end focused interview with 12 students
4. The written evaluation of the field instruction period

An analysis of the experience record kept by the student was carried out in the following two areas; the planned conferences conducted for the student and the community agencies that were contacted by the student. To supplement the data on the experience record, two questionnaires were developed and were given to the
student each week during the period of field instruction.

An open-end focused interview schedule was devised to secure the opinions of a sample of twelve students about the eight week period of field instruction. The interview schedule was administered toward the end of the eight week period of field instruction.

It is a requirement of the University that each student write a narrative evaluation of the eight week period of field instruction in public health nursing. Only pertinent data were taken from the reports and were analyzed as part of the study.

Sequence of Presentation

Chapter II presents the review of the related literature and the bases of the hypothesis of the present study. Chapter III describes the methods used in collecting the data. Chapter IV contains the analysis and discussion of the data. Chapter V includes a summary of the conclusions reached and recommendations derived from the findings, as well as recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Review of Related Literature

The literature relating to field instruction in public health nursing can be classified into two groups; that which is concerned with the content of the learning experiences, and that which is concerned with methods of evaluating the outcomes of the learning experience.

The Public Health Nursing Curriculum Guide, provides the basic guide for the preparation of public health nurses. It defines the objectives of a public health program, to which public health nursing is related, and indicates the necessary areas in which public health nursing must function. Hill and MacOwen, Hubbard, Adams, and others have emphasized the need for careful planning and selection of the content of the field.

experience, in order to fulfill the educational purpose. McGavaran and his associates suggest that the field experience, for which university credit is given, must meet high educational standards and that each experience should be planned to complement every other experience. This implies a harmony between the activities in the field and the stated objectives of the University.

Glennon investigated the character and the content of the field experience of 24 university schools of nursing. The findings indicated that the majority of the field experiences were planned to coincide with those experiences suggested in the Public Health Nursing Curriculum Guide. A few schools stated that the experiences were planned on an individual basis to fit the specific needs of the students.


6/Catherine B. Glennon, Policies Relative To Student Field Practice In Educational Programs For The Preparation Of Public Health Staff Nurses, Nursing Education Monograph Number 6, Division of Nursing Education School of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1951.
The interests and efforts of the Collegiate Council on Public Health Nursing Education, at the 1951 Work Conference, were directed toward developing criteria that would define the scope of the preparation needed to produce the competencies expected of the beginning public health nurse. The supervised field instruction was declared not only a course of study, but a substantial part of the total educational program. It was recommended that continuing studies be made to analyze the field instruction in relation to the total curriculum.

The study of curriculum goals in public health nursing preparation, reported by Shetland, showed that the "situation in which public health nurses function is composed of different factors, more perhaps that are unknown, than that in which institutional nurses practice. This difference in the situation would seem to imply differences in the emphasis if not the kind of learning experiences provided." Shetland also emphasized the


importance of the setting of public health nursing in planning effective learning activities for the student.

Literature concerned with evaluating the field experience portrays different procedures that have been developed to analyze various aspects of the experience. An instrument to measure the effectiveness of the field instruction and to evaluate the expected levels of competency of the beginning public health nurse was developed by Martenson. She recommended that the validity of the instrument could be demonstrated by wider use with subsequent student groups, a wider range of agencies and with a refinement of the instrument.

Paynich secured data on the learnings in the field experience by means of the non-structured interview with forty-five students. Five areas of learning were developed by the author. The data were compared and analyzed in relation to the five areas. Paynich felt


that evaluation of the experience by the student was an important means of having the student, to some degree, direct her own learnings. She suggested that the agencies and the schools provide additional opportunity for student evaluation of field instruction. Paynich stressed the value of learner awareness, the judgement potential, and the shared activity of the student in the improvement of the learning situation.

Dick used the learnings recorded in diary entries by the students, to analyze the field experience.11/ These entries provided a partial indication of the students' achievement of their objectives. Dick suggested that a study of these findings could furnish leads for strengthening the classroom teaching-learning situation, and could indicate areas where emphasis seemed to be needed.

Other writers reported on the use of the evaluation of the field instruction period by the student. Murphy felt it to be of significance in determining repetitious teaching in the experience.12/


12/Marion Murphy, Workshop On Public Health In The Nursing Curriculum, School of Public Health, Center for Continuation Study, University of Minnesota, 1955, National League for Nursing, Division of Nursing Education, New York, 1955, Mimeographed, p. 37.
Shetland called it a process of growth directed activity, with the goals set by the student.\footnote{13/Margaret Shetland, "Evaluation: A Constructive Process," \textit{Public Health Nursing}, (February, 1949) 41:99-101.}

Bases and Statement of Hypothesis

The literature discusses the content and the methods of evaluating the field instruction in public health nursing but it does not discuss the areas of duplication of previous learning experiences or bring out the features that are unique to public health nursing. The writers believe that there are specific learnings provided solely within the field instruction period that cannot be met in any other clinical experience. This study was an attempt to show that many of the learning experiences students have in the eight week period of field instruction are unique to public health nursing.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Selection and Description of the Sample

The 23 members of the senior class in the basic professional nursing program at the Boston University School of Nursing participated in the study. The students had completed three and one-half years of the basic professional nursing program and had a broad background in general education as well as a sound foundation in nursing. At the time of the study, the students were assigned to an eight-week period of field instruction in public health nursing in three local public health agencies. An effort was made by the University to assign the student to the agency of her choice, taking into consideration the traveling distance and living arrangements of the student.

One agency, a metropolitan non-official agency, provides a family health service which includes bedside care to the sick in the home, as well as home visits for the purpose of health supervision and health guidance. Nineteen students were assigned to this agency.

The other non-official public health agency is in an urban area ten miles from the University and it, too,
provides family health services. In addition, the agency provides child health conferences and some nursing services to local industries. Two students were assigned to this agency.

The third agency, a metropolitan official agency, provides child health conferences and follow-up visits in the home, communicable disease programs, school health programs in the parochial school system, and follow-up care of premature babies. Two students were assigned to this agency.

There was a close working relationship with the agency personnel and the faculty members at the University. The agency personnel guided and directly supervised the students during the period of field instruction, and an effort was made by each agency to provide the student with a variety of learning experiences. The students returned to the University one afternoon a week for a class in public health nursing.

Methods Used to Procure Data

The experience record kept by the student during the period of field instruction contains information on the kinds of visits made by the student, the planned conferences held with the supervisor or other personnel, and the community agencies contacted by the student during the
period of field instruction. The writers felt that it was necessary to know whether the material presented in the planned conferences repeated earlier learnings, and how the student planned to use the material. In regard to the agency contacts, the writers were interested in knowing whether the student was making the first contact with the agency; by what means the student had made the contact with the agency; if the contact was made in relation to a family the student was following; and, how the student planned to use the contact.

Two questionnaires were developed to obtain the information needed to supplement the data reported by the student on the experience record. One was devised to obtain the data on the planned conferences. The questionnaire repeated two items that were included on the experience record, in order to identify the name of the conference and the person with whom the student had the conference. Two questions were included to elicit whether the material presented in the conference had been included in the student's previous experience and how the student planned to use the conference material. One of the questions required a "yes" and "no" answer. The other question was an "open-end" type of question to allow more freedom in student response. The second questionnaire was 1/See Appendix I.
developed to obtain the data on the agency contacts made by the students. Two questions were included in the questionnaire. The first question requested the name of the agency which the student had contacted. Two questions determined if this was the first contact the student had had with the agency and whether the contact had been made in connection with a family the student was following. Another item requested the student to indicate the manner in which the contact had been made. The last question asked how the student planned to use the contact. The students were asked to complete a questionnaire form for each planned conference attended and for each agency contact made.

Time was granted to the investigators for administering the questionnaires to the students during the weekly class sessions in the course in Introduction to Public Health Nursing, a course being conducted at the University concurrently with the period of field instruction. The questionnaire on the planned conference was submitted to the class in the first, third, fifth, and seventh weeks of the period of field instruction and the questionnaire on the agency contact was submitted to the students in the alternate weeks.

2/See Appendix II.
The questionnaires were administered in this manner because a time study was being conducted in one of the agencies, and keeping the records as part of the field instruction activities might have interfered with the ongoing time study.

The open-end focused interview was used to determine the opinions of twelve students about their public health nursing experiences. A total of ten questions was constructed. Seven questions allowed for free response; three questions were of the check answer type.

The interview schedule was tried out with a group of four public health nursing students at the University, to test its validity as an instrument to obtain opinions about the period of field instruction, and to secure an estimate of the amount of time necessary to complete the interview.

The selection of the twelve students for the interviews was made as follows: slips of paper with the names of the 23 students were placed in a container which was then agitated. Twelve names were drawn from the container by a group of disinterested students. The 12 students were contacted and a time for the interview was arranged.

3/See Appendix III.
The interviews were conducted during the sixth, seventh and eighth weeks of the period of field instruction; thus, the student had ample opportunity to form opinions in regard to the period of field experience. The usual length of time for the interview was fifteen minutes. Before reviewing the purpose of the study, each student was assured that all information given would be held in anonymity.

An analysis of the experience records kept by the students, was carried out in the following two areas: the community agencies that were contacted by the students, and the planned conferences that were conducted for the students.

The students were required by the University to write a narrative evaluation of the eight week period of field instruction.

Data, pertinent to the four questions of this study, were selected from these written reports and were analyzed.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

The data from this study are presented and discussed under four headings.

The Planned Conference

The experience records showed that the students attended conferences dealing with sixteen subjects. The total number of hours spent in conferences, by the individual student, ranged from eight hours, to twenty-two hours and thirty minutes. The average number of hours the student spent in conferences was thirteen hours and six minutes.

In the 136 questionnaires, the students reported only twelve conference topics. The responses to the two questions, "Has this material been covered before?" and "How do you plan to use this material?" are presented under each of the conference topics mentioned by the students in the questionnaires.

General orientation to the visiting nurse service (18)*

-- Eight students stated that this conference did not

*Total number of questionnaires completed by the students on this conference.

-18-
repeat earlier learnings; seven students felt that the information duplicated previous learnings; three students commented that the material had been partially covered previously. The students' comments indicated that most of the material had been covered in class at the university. In 15 instances the students planned to use this information to become acquainted with the visiting nurse service. Six students mentioned patient teaching as a way to use the material.

**Time study (18)** -- The material in this conference was new to the 18 students in this agency. Two students remarked that they planned to use this information in order to participate in the time study.

**Orientation to the district office (16)** -- Sixteen students said that the material in this conference was new to them and added that the conference would help them become familiar with the district to which they were assigned.

**Orientation to specific nursing techniques (15)** -- Eleven students felt that the material presented in this conference did not repeat earlier learning experiences. Three students specifically mentioned that the material had been covered in their surgical nursing experience. One

*Total number of questionnaires completed by the students on this conference.*
student stated that "this material had been covered in class." Fourteen of the students felt that they needed to know this material in order to give nursing care to patients in their homes.

Maternity cycle (14)* -- Ten students checked "yes" that the material had been covered before and four students checked "no" that the material had not been covered before. Four students stated that the material had been covered during their obstetric experience and one student said that the conference repeated material in the public health nursing course first semester. Thirteen students were going to use the conference material to instruct patients or to give patient care. One student was going to use the information in "future years."

Records (4)* -- Four students stated that this conference contained new learnings for them and that they planned to use the material to make out patients' records.

Fees (14)* -- Thirteen students felt that they received new information in this conference. However, one student felt that it was repetitious learning. Fourteen students were planning to use the material to instruct patients about fees.

*Total number of questionnaires completed by the students on this conference.
Community resources (19)* -- Fourteen students felt that most of the material in this conference had been covered in the courses in public health nursing and community resources. They planned to use the material from the conference to refer patients to other community agencies. Five students did not feel that this conference repeated previous learning experiences but added no further comments.

Nutrition (5)* -- Five students did not think that the material in this conference duplicated previous experiences and they planned to use this information with patients and families.

Supervision (6)* -- One student said that the material in this conference had been discussed in "class". Five students commented that the material had been partially covered before but did not designate where. Four students planned to use this material when supervised and for their own growth and development.

Legal aspects of nursing (3)* -- Three students stated that this was new information and they planned to use it in their public health nursing duties and for general background information.

*Total number of questionnaires completed by the students of this conference.
Student evaluation (4)* -- Two students felt the material in the conference repeated earlier learning and two students felt that this was new learning. Two students stated that this conference would help them in their evaluation conferences and in their own growth and development.

The findings indicate, in the students' opinion, that there were six planned conferences, namely, the conferences on the time study, orientation in the district office, records, nutrition, fees, and legal aspects of nursing that did not repeat previous learning experiences.

However the students had various opinions about the other six conferences. With the exception of general orientation to the visiting nurse service, the planned conferences were conducted by individual district supervisors. Because of the individual approach to the several topics different content may have been included by each supervisor.

The data on the experience record show that the main topics of the conferences were covered in each district but neither the experience record nor the questionnaire revealed the actual content of the conferences.

*Total number of questionnaires completed by the students on this conference.
The findings suggest that the use of this questionnaire was not the best way to obtain the desired information. One wonders if there was not confusion on the students' part about the question, "Has this material been covered before?" as thirteen students wrote in "partially covered". This might indicate that a "yes" or "no" question should not have been used. The findings imply that there are areas of duplication of previous learning experiences but the data are not sufficient to pinpoint which areas.

Contacts with Community Agencies

A total of 322 contacts with community agencies were reported by the students on the experience record. Individual contacts ranged from one to 39 with an average of 14 contacts for each student. The majority of the contacts were made in behalf of the patient or his family. The information from the experience record was arbitrarily grouped under five headings and arranged to show the agency contacts directly concerned with service to the family, in contrast to agency contacts not used immediately in the solution of a specific family health problem.
Table 1. Types of Agency Contacts Reported by 23 Students during the Eight Week Period of Field Instruction in Public Health Nursing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Agencies</th>
<th>Number of Contacts made in Behalf of Families</th>
<th>Number of Contacts not made in Behalf of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>124&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>21&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Physicians</td>
<td>102&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Service</td>
<td>39&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>19&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>/Health agency contacts includes the hospitals and the outpatient departments connected with them, the several Home Care services, the tuberculosis sanitorium, and the Well Baby and Child Health Conferences.

<sup>b</sup>/The Social Service departments of the hospitals were included in with the social services facilities contacted in the community.

Fifteen students completed 35 questionnaires relating to contacts made with community agencies. In 25 instances it was the first contact made by the student with the agency and in 10 instances the agency had been previously contacted by the student. The request was then made that the student indicate where and when previous contacts had been made with the agency. This question was answered by only three students. They stated:
Another item on the questionnaire asked how the student planned to use the contact with the agency. In 24 instances the contact was made to clarify the diagnosis and the medical orders so that adequate care could be given to the patient. Nine contacts were made to assist patients or families with plans for medical care or plans for financial assistance. Three students planned to use the contact information in teaching patients.

Interviews with Twelve Students

In the interviews, eleven students, or 92 per cent, stated that they enjoyed the period of field instruction. The comments varied from "enjoyed it," "liked it" to "loved it". Eight of the students specifically mentioned that they "liked going into the homes". This might indicate that home visiting is an unique feature of public health nursing. The twelfth student stated that she was disappointed in the period of field instruction because "I did not visit alone soon enough and I do not like bedside nursing care".

Two questions were asked about the type of visit the students most enjoyed and least enjoyed. The responses are shown in Table 2.
Table 2. Types of Visits Most Enjoyed and Least Enjoyed by 12 Students during the Public Health Nursing Field Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Visit</th>
<th>Visits Most Enjoyed</th>
<th>Visits Least Enjoyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morbidity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colostomy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students who liked morbidity visits commented, "I felt I could do more for them" or "I like children"; the students who least enjoyed morbidity visits commented "I like visits where I can do teaching". The students who preferred health teaching visits stated "I like teaching," while those students who found health teaching visits least enjoyable mentioned "I do not like teaching".
The comments made by the students seem to illustrate individual likes and dislikes in relation to the care of patients. The setting of public health nursing does not appear to have made an appreciable difference in the type of visit the students most enjoyed, or least enjoyed. It seems that the differences in the comments are in the areas of liking or disliking teaching, and, liking or disliking bedside nursing care of patients. These feelings are not unique to public health nursing, they could apply to any nursing situation.

In an effort to determine the students' opinion of the eight week period of field instruction as a learning experience, the following two questions were asked: "What learning experience did you find most valuable to you?" and, "What learning experience did you find least valuable to you?" See Table 3.

Some of the reasons given by the student for considering the experience valuable were, "I have a better understanding of community resources now," "I will find going into the homes helpful when I return to the hospital," and "Observing influence of the family group on the patient." Six students stated that there were no least valuable experiences, for to them all the experiences seemed important. Other comments made about the least valuable experiences were, "The material presented
Table 3. Most Valuable and Least Valuable Learning Experiences in the Public Health Nursing Field Experience from the Viewpoint of 12 Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions of Learning Experiences</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most Valuable Learning Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing influence of family group on patient</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using community resources</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going into homes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvising equipment in the homes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching a diabetic patient</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All seemed important</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Least Valuable Learning Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All seemed important</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition in conferences</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition in giving general nursing care</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating unnecessary visits</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition in reading in the office</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the conferences was repetitious," "General care was repetitious and not learning," "I repeated unnecessary visits," and "Reading in the office was repetitious."

One wonders why the student, who stated that reading in the office was repetitious, kept reading repetitious material instead of looking for newer readings. Also one wonders why the student felt that general care was repetitious and "bedside care of patients is not learning." Three students stated that the conferences were repetitious. This corroborates the findings from the questionnaires.

To determine how much time a student feels she needs to adjust to a new situation, the students were asked the question, "When do you feel that you began to contribute to the agency and families?" See Table 4.

In the students' opinion, it required an average of 2.5 weeks for them to feel that they were contributing to the agency; and it required an average of 2.9 weeks for them to feel they were contributing to the families. To the writers this appears to be rather a short period of time for a student in a new situation to feel that she is contributing to the agency or to the families. One might wonder how the student feels she contributes to the agency and to the families.

A second question, "When do you feel that you began to feel comfortable in the agency and with the families?"
Table 4. Amount of Time Required by 12 Students to Contribute to the Families and to the Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time in Weeks</th>
<th>Number (1)</th>
<th>Time in Weeks</th>
<th>Number (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From beginning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>2.9 weeks</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>2.5 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
was asked to further establish, in the students' opinion, the length of time needed to adjust to a new situation. See table 5.

Eight students stated that they felt comfortable in the agency within a week; ten students stated that they felt comfortable with the families within a week. One student felt that, due to her own insecurity, she was not comfortable with the agency personnel until her seventh or eighth week. Two students, who were assigned to the same agency, stated that they never felt comfortable with the agency personnel because of "interpersonal problems in the agency."

In order to determine how many students were interested in public health nursing as a possible area of employment after graduation, the 12 students were asked: "Are you planning to go into public health nursing when you graduate?" Five students stated that they were planning to do public health nursing upon graduation; two students stated that they may do public health nursing upon graduation; and, five students stated that they were not planning to do public health nursing upon graduation.

The 12 students agreed that every student in the basic professional nursing program should have the eight week period of field instruction in public health nursing.
Table 5. Amount of Time Required by 12 Students to Feel Comfortable in the Agencies and with the Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comfortable in the Agency</th>
<th>Comfortable with the Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time in Weeks</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From beginning</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8 weeks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reasons given for considering this experience important for all students were, "To apply all previous learning experiences," "To know patients in their own homes," "To take better care of the patients in the hospital now that I know something about home environments," and, "To learn to adapt nursing care and procedures in the home situation."

In order to find out if there were any experiences in the eight week period of field instruction that duplicated previous clinical experiences, the question was asked, "Did this experience repeat your experiences in the hospital?"

The students commented that although the basic nursing procedures were repeated, "You need to adapt them to the home situation," "You were more conscious of living conditions," "You were able to apply your previous learnings," and, "You were able to see a later stage of illness, or recovery from an illness, than one usually sees in the hospital." These comments seem to indicate that the students considered the eight week period of field instruction to be a valuable learning experience.

The Written Evaluation Report

Duplication of previous learning experiences -- The evaluation reports did not reveal any learning experiences in the field instruction that the students considered
to be a duplication of previous learning experiences.

**Learning experiences unique to public health nursing**

Nineteen students recognized that giving nursing care in the home was a different learning experience. Some of the comments were:

"home care presented more variations than could be found when giving care in the hospital!"

"the hospital was a controlled environment for the patient, but in the home situation the family was in control and the nurse was a guest in the home"

"the patient described on the chart is very different from the patient seen in the home."

Three students saw the family as a unit of service identified with public health nursing and commented:

"saw public health nursing as family nursing in contrast to the concern with care of the individual in the hospital"

"cared for all members of the family of all ages"

"cared for family members, sick and well."

Two students felt that they had participated in the team approach in the solution of family problems for the first time in their experience and added, "saw teamwork in action" and "saw teamwork really practiced." The opportunities found in the home situations for teaching were pointed out by 13 students with such statements as,

"realize that every nurse is a teacher, but more so in public health nursing"

"schedule less routinized than with the hospital program, and the opportunities to teach seemed greater"
"better able to practice and use knowledge from all clinical experiences in teaching in the home"

"teaching in the home seemed useful for family situation could be seen."

These students also "developed skill" in teaching, "saw effectiveness of teaching," and made use of resource materials in teaching. Establishing relationships and working with community agencies on behalf of the patient or the families were characterized by ten students as being different from other clinical experiences. Some of the comments were:

"became aware of the community resources needed for use with the families"

"became aware of inter-agency relationships"

"gained an understanding of community resources and the obligation to work with them"

"interested in how community resources can be utilized in family health service."

In the opinion of the students there were new and different learning experiences in five areas of the field instruction in public health nursing. These areas can be classified as:

1. Giving nursing care in the home
2. The opportunity to do family health teaching
3. Finding the home situation conducive to effective teaching
4. Participating in the team approach in family health service
5. Understanding the use of community agencies in total family health service.
Value of learning experience -- All of the students described the experience as valuable. Some students commented specifically about the value of the experience as follows:

"an opportunity to practice total nursing care"
"utilized all previous learnings"
"gained insight into my own limitations"
"valuable for application to future experiences"
"valuable for me in providing recognition, study and analysis of family problems"

Time needed to adjust to agency and families -- Two students reported that they felt that they adjusted and began to make a contribution to the agency in the last three weeks of the field period. The evaluation reports did not indicate the adjustment time needed in relation to the families.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigation was undertaken to study the learning experiences in the eight week period of field instruction in public health nursing from the viewpoint of the student. An attempt was made to answer four specific questions:

1. What experiences do students have in the field instruction period that duplicate previous learnings?
2. What learning experiences are unique to public health nursing?
3. What learning experiences are most valuable to the student in the eight week period of field instruction in public health nursing?
4. How much time does the basic professional nursing student require to adjust to the period of field instruction in public health nursing?

The four sources of data for the study were:

1. The experience records kept by 23 students
2. Two questionnaires to supplement the experience record
3. The open-end focused interview with 12 students
4. The written evaluation of the field instruction period.

The findings of this study are as follows:

1. (a) The students reported 16 different conference topics on the experience record. Twelve of
these conferences were mentioned by the students on the questionnaires. In the opinion of the students the following six conferences duplicated previous learning experiences:

1. The conference on the orientation to the visiting nurse service
2. The conference on the maternity cycle
3. The conference on the orientation to specific nursing techniques
4. The conference on community resources
5. The conference on supervision
6. The conference on student evaluation.

(b) The students indicated that the following six conferences did not duplicate previous learning experiences:

1. The conference on orientation to the district office
2. The conference on records
3. The conference on fees
4. The conference on nutrition
5. The conference on legal aspects of nursing
6. The conference on the time study

The students planned to use the information discussed in the conferences with patients,
with families, and in future professional activities.

(c) The majority (75 per cent) of the contacts with community agencies were first contacts for the students. The students planned to use these contacts in behalf of patients and families.

(d) The students felt that the following activities also repeated earlier learning experiences:
   1. Reading in the office
   2. Giving general nursing care
   3. Repeating unnecessary visits
   4. Applying basic nursing procedures

2. The students described the following learning experiences as being unmatched in other clinical areas:
   (a) Giving nursing service to the family as a unit
   (b) Giving nursing service to all ages and to the sick and the well
   (c) Giving nursing service in the home
   (d) Participating in the team approach to family health
   (e) Recognizing the public health nurse as a teacher
(f) Teaching health to all members of the family
(g) Establishing different kinds of relationships with patients, families, and allied professional workers.

3. All the students described the experience as being valuable. Specifically pointed out as the most valuable learning experiences were:
   (a) Observing the influence of the family group on the patient
   (b) Using community resources
   (c) Going into the homes
   (d) Improvising equipment
   (e) Adapting nursing care to the home situation
   (f) Applying all previous learnings to this experience.

Several students mentioned that they would be able to give better nursing care to the hospitalized patient now that they had completed the field instruction period in public health nursing.

4. Most of the students felt comfortable in the agency and in the families within a week. The majority of the students felt that they began to contribute to the agency within 2.5 weeks and to the families within 2.9 weeks.
Conclusions

1. From the data, duplication of previous learning experiences occurred:

   (a) In six planned conferences
   
   1. The conference on the orientation to the visiting nurse service
   2. The conference on the maternity cycle
   3. The conference on the orientation to specific nursing techniques
   4. The conference on community resources
   5. The conference on supervision
   6. The conference on student evaluation

   (b) In miscellaneous areas
   
   1. Reading in the office
   2. Giving general nursing care
   3. Repeating unnecessary visits
   4. Applying all basic nursing procedures

2. From the data, the learning experiences that were not repetitious of previous learnings were:

   (a) In six planned conferences
   
   1. The conference on orientation to the district office
   2. The conference on records
   3. The conference on fees
   4. The conference on nutrition
   5. The conference on legal aspects of nursing
6. The conference on the time study

(b) In 75 per cent of the contacts with community agencies

(c) In giving nursing service to the family as a unit

(d) In giving and adapting nursing care in the home

(e) In giving nursing service to all ages and to the sick and the well

(f) In participating in the team approach to family health

(g) In recognizing the public health nurse as a teacher

(h) In teaching health to all members of the family

(i) In establishing different kinds of relationships with patients, families, and allied professional workers

(j) In working with other community agencies for total family health

(k) In observing the influence of the family group on the patient

The data shows that the hypothesis was justified and that many of the learning experiences students have in the
eight week period of field instruction are unique to public health nursing.

The writers have further concluded that the questionnaire was not the best method of obtaining the information needed for this study.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. A similar study should be made of the eight week period of field instruction in public health nursing from the point of view of the university and the agency providing the experience.

2. Further study should be done in the content of the planned conferences to determine where there is duplication.

3. Further study should be done to determine whether the eight week field instruction period is the block of time needed by the student to acquire beginning skills and knowledge in public health nursing.

4. Further study should be done in other clinical experiences, particularly the out-patient department, to determine what learning experiences could be developed that, at present, are only available to the student in the period of field instruction in public health nursing.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX I
INFORMATION ON PLANNED CONFERENCES

Name: 
Date of Conference: 

Please check
Boston Visiting Nurse Service
Boston Health Department
Waltham Visiting Nurse Association

Please check the following in regard to the Planned Conferences you have had in the past two weeks.
(Note: The Planned Conferences: include all conferences except those with the Field Teacher.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject of Conference</th>
<th>With Whom (Check)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental Hygiene</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physiotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maternal and Child Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other (give title)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Has this material been covered before? Yes _ No _.
(If answer is "Yes" state where and when.)

How do you plan to use this material?

Remarks:
APPENDIX II

INFORMATION ON AGENCY CONTACT

Name: 

Date of contact: 

Please check
( ) Boston Visiting Nurse Service
( ) Boston Health Department
( ) Waltham Visiting Nurse Association

Many times in order to fulfill our aim of "better nursing care" for our patients, we find that it is necessary to contact another agency besides the one in which we are currently working. Please check the following in regard to any agency with which you have had contact within the last two weeks.

Name of Agency contacted:

Was this the first contact you have had with this agency? Yes__ No__ . (If answer for the previous question was "No," please state where and when you have had contact with them before.)

By what means did you contact this agency (Please check)
Telephone ( ) Written referral ( )
Observation visit ( ) Other (be specific) 

Was this contact in relation to a family you are following? Yes__ No__ .

How do you plan to use this contact?

Remarks:
APPENDIX III
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. STUDENTS HAVE VARIOUS OPINIONS ABOUT THEIR PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING EXPERIENCES. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOURS? (WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY?)

2. WHAT KIND OF VISIT DID YOU ENJOY MAKING THE MOST? (WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY?)

3. WHAT KIND OF VISIT DID YOU LEAST ENJOY MAKING? (WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY?)

4. WHAT LEARNING EXPERIENCE DID YOU FIND MOST VALUABLE TO YOU? (WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY?)

5. WHAT LEARNING EXPERIENCE DID YOU FIND LEAST VALUABLE TO YOU? (WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY?)

6. WHEN DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU BEGAN TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE AGENCY TO THE FAMILIES
   2 weeks 2 weeks
   4 weeks 4 weeks
   6 weeks 6 weeks
   8 weeks 8 weeks
   other other
   never never

7. WHEN DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU BEGAN TO FEEL COMFORTABLE IN THE AGENCY WITH THE FAMILIES
   2 weeks 2 weeks
   4 weeks 4 weeks
   6 weeks 6 weeks
   8 weeks 8 weeks
   other other
   never never

8. ARE YOU PLANNING TO GO INTO PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING WHEN YOU GRADUATE? YES NO

9. DO YOU THINK THAT ALL BASIC STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING EXPERIENCE? YES NO
   WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY?

10. DID THIS EXPERIENCE REPEAT ANY OF YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE HOSPITAL? YES NO
    IN WHAT WAY?