

Reviewer Comments # NRES-D—07-00159:

**Reviewer #1** ( Patricia Dantonio, PhD, RN, FAAN):

I am delighted that scholars are increasingly considering the impact of 20th century nursing leaders, and Harriet Werley is one such leader whose contributions deserve more attention. I like the author's approach of focusing on Werley's role in planning for potential nuclear disasters in the 1950s: I think it provides a way of framing one leader's impact in a way that will appeal to readers of Nursing Research.

The author asserts that Werley "influenced the nursing profession to accept its professional responsibility as a key provider in disaster management and partner in interdisciplinary research." (abstract) and later (page 18) that "the entire nursing profession became involved in mass disaster preparation."

I'd like the author to re-consider whether she actually has the data to support such a sweeping statement. I do not see that in this manuscript. Rather, I read her data as telling a much more complicated - and much more interesting - story. Werley may have wanted the profession (through its organizations and its educational systems) to assume such a role (her "vision" page 18), but there was considerable resistance. The NLN entertains the idea for a few years, but then drops it. Disaster management ends up the responsibility of the American Red Cross. What does this mean - for nursing, for the role of the professions, for the role of the military? Where were the points of resistance to Werley's agenda? Were they reasonable (what was / is the fundamental purpose of nursing education)? Was it the inertia that accompanies the receding of an imminent threat? How might these tensions be replaying themselves today?

Much of Werley's story is told through her own works and words. This is not necessarily a problem, but the author needs to take this into account when constructing her analysis. For example, the author accepts without question (quoting from Werley's 1988 memoirs) that she was torn between accepting the position and asking that it be filled with a doctorally prepared nurse (page 5). Should this be accepted at face value? Werley had to be a confident and ambitious nurse to succeed as she did, and the issue of finding a doctorally prepared nurse in 1955 is very, very slim. Did she later receive criticism for not having a doctoral degree?

I'd also like to know more about Werley. How did she get into the positions she did (not just that she did)? What was she like? Who were her friends and colleagues (and she's obviously one of a small group of powerful women - see her appointment to one of the first NIH nursing research review panel)? How does she get from a position as an "ANC career guidance counselor" to represent nursing on the DACS?

I'd also like to see this work more solidly grounded in the secondary literature - beyond that of just the Army Nurse Corps. John Gaddis' studies of Cold War America, for example, can help a reader get a real feel for the terror many American felt and the responsibility of the military to prepare for possibly imminent nuclear war.

There are some other technical details that the author may want to consider:

1. There is a heavy dependence of passive voice which leaves the reader without a sense of who is doing what. See, for example: page 4 lines 9-10: who is initiating the courses?
2. The author argues that Werley was a pioneer in military interdisciplinary research; but also (page 4) mentions 2 nurses working on research teams. Also how does Werley (and the author) conceptualize interdisciplinary research: being part of another's research project? And what happens to Werley's proposal for research on nursing functions (page 17)?
3. There needs to be better documentation of materials. For example, where is the data on page 7 coming from?
4. Joseph Goldstein keeps appearing with Werley in published articles and presentations? Who is he? What is his importance to Werley's work?
5. Page 9 -14: the author moves back and forth between historical data and connections to present issues. This is methodologically problematic.
6. What exactly did Werley think of nurses' role in Operation Plumbob (page 16)?

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. I believe it has the potential to be a significant piece of nursing historical research.

**Reviewer #2** (Barbara Brodie, RN, PhD):

This is an interesting and timely historical examination of the activities of Major Harriet Werley of the Army Nurse Corps during the 1950s after the Second World War.

In the study the author presents two points: Major Werley was an important leader in the U.S. Army's drive to plan and develop the resources necessary to deal with the nuclear fallout that would follow a potential nuclear war should the U.S. and Russia go to war. For the second point of the study, the author attempts to demonstrate that Harriet Werley was a significant leader in developing the field of nursing research.

One of the distinctive strengths of this study is the wealth of primary data that was used by the author. Using the Harriet H. Werley Archival Collection, located in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Golda Meir Library Special Collections, the author was able to document Werley's career in the Army Nurse Corps, especially on her role in helping to create a new army special service to deal with mass casualties that would follow a

nuclear war. The manuscript is rich in evidence of Harriet's involvement in the activities of the U.S. Army Medical Department as it planned and prepared for a potential nuclear confrontation. As the medical department assembled the manpower and expertise needed to deal with mass casualties from a nuclear war, Major Werley, representing the Army Nurse Corps, fully participated in their decisions to develop educational and research programs, and plan for mock disasters training for the troops and medical staff.

Her involvement with the Army Medical Department led the Surgeon General to appoint her to serve as a Consultant and Administrative Officer in the Department of Atomic Casualties Studies. This experience allowed her a voice, as a nurse, in planning and implementing interdisciplinary research studies and projects. It also gave her access into the civilian's side of the nation's plan to devise an emergency care plan in the event of a possible nuclear war.

Because she believed that the civilian nurses also needed access to information on the new methods available to handle disasters such as burn management, radiation injury and decontamination, and the management of trauma and psychiatric injuries, she invited nursing faculty and staff to some of the army training sites. She also published a number of educational articles in leading professional journals and presented papers on the subject at national conferences across the country. After she left the Army, she continued her leadership role in the new field of disaster nursing through her work at the National League for Nursing.

I would suggest that the author think about adding some secondary historical studies that cover the history of the cold war years and the nation's response to the fear and trepidation gripping the country at the possibility of a nuclear attack. This information would not only strength the manuscript's scholarship but it would convince today's readers of the similarities in both times; when, we as a people, feared possible war and destruction.

I am, however, not convinced of the author's claim that Harriet Werley was a significant leader in the field of nursing research. The author's evidence is not as solid as her claim that Harriet was a leader in the development of disaster nursing. I personally believe that Harriet was a member of the small group of effective nurse researchers who, in the 1960s, conducted basic clinical and educational research studies, and helped create many of the nursing graduate programs that opened in this decade.

Before the manuscript can be considered for publication the author should do several things to strength its historical scholarship. First, the author must address the lack of names of the key people referred to in the narrative. For example on page 4 and 5 the Commandant of WRAIR is mentioned but no name is given. This lack of providing the reader with the names of key people who were instrumental in helping to develop the field of disaster nursing is frustrating. (For many pages of the narrative, the only one identified in the text is Harriet Werley, thereby giving the false impression that she is the only leader worth noting.) On page 5, in the last paragraph, neither the head of the Army graduate school nor the Surgeon General are identified by name. The author also needs

to do a better job in footnoting information. For example, on page 7, a 1956 Department of Atomic Casualties Studies history is cited but there is no footnote listed. The manuscript would also benefit from adding some historical explanatory footnotes.

Historians often offer readers background information on some of the events or people that are spoken of in the narrative. For example on page 17 the author refers to the Army School of Nursing but does not provide any background information as to why it was opened and closed.

I fear the author might see my comments as merely being picky but good historical scholarship has a rigor and discipline that demonstrates the validity and reliability of its content. Also, on page 14, I believe the author has confused some information. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare was part of the Public Health Service, not the other way around.

I suggest the author carefully re-reads their manuscript taking into account my comments.

I salute the author for developing the manuscript because it addresses an important step in nursing's development into an independent intellectual science. It offers readers lessons from the past that may provide them some insight into today's challenges. Finally, I believe the manuscript would benefit from editing before it is re-submitted.

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## **CHECKLIST FOR STYLE**

Title Page

? Supply complete address for corresponding author.

Abstract

? Provide a structured abstract, if possible.

References:

Check publication date for Flanagan ref/cit.

Check publication date for Piemonte (1987 or 1988).

The following references are not cited in the text. Remove from reference list or add to text: Walter Reed Med. Ctr (1955); Bryant 1955.

Other:

Is Project Proposal... included in text?

Include author for Nat. League article in Nursing Outlook.

Include author for Service Stripe article (1955) in text & ref. list.