

1963

# Attitudes of nursing students toward the aged

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ATTITUDES OF NURSING STUDENTS  
TOWARD THE AGED

BY

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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  
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Reader:

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Nursing education has long found it necessary to continually evaluate and improve its educational objectives, because many of these objectives are dependent upon the needs of society and social change. In her process of education, the nurse needs guidance in recognizing and developing the ability to meet these needs in the most effective and complete manner. Her motivation, relations with patients and attitudes toward patients are factors which influence the care that she renders to the patient. It has been noted that the attempts made at meeting the needs of the patient by the nurse "are primarily significant to the patient as reflections of her attitude toward him."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the attitudes expressed by the nurse and nursing student toward patients are indicative in studying and evaluating educational objectives in order to meet the changing needs of society.

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<sup>1</sup>M. Johnson and H. Martin, "A Sociological Analysis of the Nurse Role," American Journal of Nursing, Vol. LVII, (March 1958), p. 374.

Since the nursing student utilizes clinical resources to implement her classroom theory, it is evident that she encounters many and varied individuals, among these the aged. Although there has been a study done by Chetnik, "A Study of the Attitudes of Twenty-Four Senior Students in Nursing Toward Chronically Ill Aged Patients,"<sup>2</sup> in which she concluded the nursing students preferred not to work with the chronically ill aged patients. Little or no study has been done to compare the attitudes of three levels of nursing students to determine if the attitude of the nursing student is different when she is beginning her education than when she is near completion of her program.

During past experience as a clinical instructor in a three year diploma school of nursing, it became apparent to the investigator that the more advanced nursing student preferred to work with younger patients and seemed less tolerant with the aged patient than the beginning nursing student. The relationships formed by the beginning student with the aged patient seemed also more satisfying to the patient and the student than those formed by the senior student.

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<sup>2</sup>Teresa M. Chetnik, "A Study of the Attitudes of Twenty-Four Senior Students in Nursing Toward Chronically Ill Aged Patients," (Unpublished Master's dissertation, Boston University School of Nursing, Boston, 1961).

### Statement of the Problem

To determine if beginning students in nursing have more positive attitudes toward the aged than more advanced students in nursing.

### Justification of the Problem

With the increased emphasis on the health standard in the United States, people are living longer and the population of aged people is growing. As Mulholland writes:

"Aging brings in its wake the problems of long term illness in ever increasing numbers. Of this age group about two fifths have some form of disability, and not only are they more susceptible to disease states but also to accidents. Of these individuals 1.1 million are confined to hospitals, and another 4,000,000 are in their own homes."<sup>3</sup>

Since the nursing student receives a large portion of her educational experience in the hospital there is indication for investigation of her attitude toward the aged patient who makes up a large percentage of the hospital population with which she will be dealing.

This beginning study may help to indicate the need for further study of attitudes of nursing students toward other groups of people in a hospital environment. Since the

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<sup>3</sup>H.B. Mulholland, M.D., "Aging and Chronic Illness," Health Aspects of Aging, (Committee on Aging, American Medical Association, Chicago, Illinois, 1958), p. 5.

nurse assumes the role of a giver and the patient the role of consumer, the nurse has an obligation to offer a product of excellence and her attitude toward the patient may affect her excellence.

#### Scope

The students involved in this study were one hundred and thirty one nursing students enrolled in a three year diploma school of nursing here in New England. The clinical experience of the beginning student was less than that of the student nearing completion of the program.

#### Limitation

There is one important limitation to this study. Only one three year diploma school of nursing in New England was used, therefore the findings are limited to this group, and no generalizations can be made to other students.

#### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following term was defined for use:

Attitudes- "...enduring predispositions to perceive and to be affected by given objects, including people. Attitudes, as we have seen, are also components of love and hate. As with other types of attitudes emotional feelings toward other people are either positive or negative."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>David Krech and Richard S. Crutchfield, Elements of Psychology, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), p. 250.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

#### Review of the Literature

Several studies, in the form of unpublished theses, have been written about attitudes of nursing students toward specific experiences during their educational programs. Many have chosen areas unique to nursing experience to study, however, few have dealt with a social group or portion of the population. As a result, exploration of the literature involved sociological journals for the most part. The findings of the related material will be structured to indicate the process of investigation taken by the investigator.

An interest in the attitudes of nursing students toward patients during clinical conferences, promoted the choice of topic and this brief survey of the literature on social attitudes. This review is necessarily limited because a complete account would entail a total separate study.

One of the current approaches to education of the nursing student is the patient-centered approach and through the research of Abdellah it was discovered that:

"Sometimes nurses lose sight of the fact that they create a climate in which patients may develop nursing problems. For example, a nurse may have just encountered a difficult interpersonal relationship problem with another nurse or a doctor. Her reaction to this problem may affect her attitude toward the patient for whom she is caring.

If her reaction has been hostile and negative, the atmosphere in the patient's room might also become hostile and negative. Thus, the patient's nursing problems might arise from the nurse's problems."<sup>1</sup>

With this example, the influence of nurses' attitudes on her nursing care and the expected reactions of patients is clearly illustrated. Relating the influence of attitudes to a social group, specifically the aged, the scope of influence is larger and more significant. As put by Newton:

"The aged are no different from any age group except that they have lived more years. Some attractive and responsive, whereas others are disagreeable and even repellent. Altogether they represent a large segment of society which the nurse should learn to know."<sup>2</sup>

However, Newton also stated that, "All around us in the social scheme we ourselves have built, we find that the aged are less wanted than the young."<sup>3</sup>

Although research of attitudes of nursing and nursing students toward the aged has been limited, several social and psychological studies have explored and exhibited results indicating a degree of negativism toward the aged. In a

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<sup>1</sup>Faye G. Abdellah, Patient Centered Approaches to Nursing, (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1961), p. 15

<sup>2</sup>Kathleen Newton, Geriatric Nursing (St. Louis: The C.V. Mosby Co., 1960), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

study by Tuckman and Lorge comparing the responses of three groups of older people to one hundred and thirty-seven statements about daily living, data supported the hypothesis that, "as individuals become less able to function independently in the community, they subscribe to a greater degree to the misconception and stereotypes about old age."<sup>4</sup>

Another study by Golde and Kogan supports the previous study in theory. An instrument was developed to test the hypothesis that, "beliefs and attitudes regarding old people are qualitatively different from those concerning the larger class of 'people in general' ".<sup>5</sup> The results confirmed the hypothesis of differences in beliefs and attitudes toward the two groups. The data indicated that the image of old people differs considerably from the image of people as a whole.

The most significant study indicating the attitudes of a younger age group toward the older age group was carried out by Kogan. In this study, a Likert-type scale was developed to assess the attitudes of two groups of college students toward old people. His conclusions were as follows:

1. There was no clear consistent relation obtained between authoritarianism as measured by

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<sup>4</sup>J. Tuckman and I. Lorge, "The Effect of Institutionalization on Attitudes Toward Older People," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 47, (1952), p. 344.

<sup>5</sup>P. Golde and N. Kogan, "A Sentence Completion Procedure For Assessing Attitudes Toward Old People," Journal of Gerontology, Vol. 14, No. 3, (July 1959), p. 360.

the scale.

2. Unfavorable attitudes toward old people were associated with negative dispositions toward minorities, feelings of anomie and a variety of physically disabled groups.

3. A nurturance factor was derived from a brief personality inventory given to the subjects.<sup>6</sup>

Direct study of the attitudes of nursing students toward the aged was carried out by Chetnik. A questionnaire and personal inventory sheet was distributed to twenty-four senior students in nursing. Her conclusion was that the students preferred not to work with chronically ill aged patients; and it was also noted that the students' personal experience with this same group of people might influence her attitude.<sup>7</sup>

#### Basis for Hypothesis

The literature has pointed out an increasing interest in the aging population and also the increasing numbers of this group found in hospitals. The literature has also indicated that there is a trend toward negativism of attitude toward the aged. Since the nursing student will be having increased contact with the aged, study of her attitude toward this group is important. Therefore, if there

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<sup>6</sup>N. Kogan, "Attitudes Toward Old People: The Development of a Scale and Examination of Correlates," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. LXII, (January 1961), p. 54.

<sup>7</sup>Chetnik, op. cit.

is a degree of negativism present in her attitude, it would have significant implication for further study.

Statement of Hypothesis

The beginning student in nursing has a more positive attitude toward the aged than the more advanced nursing student.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Selection and Description of the Sample

One hundred and thirty-one students in a three year diploma school of nursing in New England participated in this study. The school offers a full accredited basic program in nursing. According to the curriculum pattern the clinical experience of the nursing student increases gradually over the three year period. The first year is most limited in number of hours spent in patient contact.

This program in nursing offers courses in the biological, physical and social sciences and is divided into ten week terms. Each nursing course within the term has concurrent clinical practice. Biological sciences are offered at a university and are taught as combined science courses. The largest number of theoretical hours are offered in the first year, however, the percentage ratio is only approximately a fifteen percent difference for theoretical courses offered during the second and third years. The program was planned to progress from the simple to complex throughout the three years. The approximate number of hours spent in the clinical area during a year for the first year

students is four hundred and sixty-six, for the second year students, eight hundred and eighty-four, and for the third year student, forty hours a week with the exception of a ten week class block with no clinical practice.

The students are not offered a separate course in gerontology or the care of the aged. However, there is a small unit of geriatric nursing included in a Nursing I course offered during the latter part of the first year.

#### Methods Used to Collect Data

The method used to collect data for this study was a social attitude inventory. The decision to use an inventory or questionnaire type of instrument was determined by the fact that the investigator wished to have the significant personal opinion of the subjects tested. The subjects were not identified in the inventory and thus had greater freedom in answering the questions that they would have had if their names had appeared on the booklet. Degree of objectivity was strengthened by the fact that the test booklet was constructed to include many questions or items not related to the investigator's subject of interest.

In reviewing the literature, the investigator decided to use a number of the items included in an article by Kogan.<sup>1</sup> After communicating with Dr. Kogan, it was

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<sup>1</sup>Kogan, op. cit., p. 46.

mutually decided to combine a current study of his and the study of the investigator to achieve greater anonymity of purpose for the investigator.

The social attitude inventory used in the study was developed by Kogan to include items developed previously by him which were of interest to the investigator, and additional items of interest to him for a current study. In order to achieve Dr. Kogan's purpose, the sample was increased from eighty students, the first and third year students, to one hundred and thirty-one students, the total school population available.

The social attitude inventory<sup>2</sup> consisted of three sections. The first section contained sixteen old people items, eight positively-worded and eight negatively-worded, and attitude scales intended to measure tendencies toward alienation, authoritarianism, and machiavellianism (a manipulative orientation toward people). These items were interspersed. The second section of the booklet contained personality items comprising scales of self-sufficiency, anxiety, social desirability, and defensiveness. The third section of the booklet was a biographical information blank that was adjusted to elicit significant information from nursing students.

The sixteen old people items were selected for the

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<sup>2</sup>Appendix.

significant feelings they would elicit from the students and to some extent in order to have a truly balanced scale. The scale was composed of seventeen paired positively-worded and negatively-worded old people items, including the sixteen used by Kogan in a previous study.<sup>3</sup> Reliability of items was significant. The total reliability for the old people scale used in this study was .62, which is significant.

#### Procurement of Data

The institution selected was a large, adult medical-surgical hospital in the Boston area. The students enrolled in the nursing school cared for adult patients only and received their related clinical experiences of obstetrical, pediatric, and psychiatric nursing in affiliated institutions.

Upon completion of the design of the study, a meeting was arranged with the director of nursing of the hospital selected for the study. During this meeting, the subject and purpose of the study as well as the method of collection of data were discussed, and permission to conduct the study was obtained. Further arrangements for time of and place for testing of subjects were made through the supervisor of clinical instruction. Because of the affiliation program described previously and class schedule

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<sup>3</sup>Kogan, op. cit.

conflicts, it was necessary to test the subjects in five separate groups.

The testing was carried out at the approximate midpoint of the academic year for the three levels of students. At the beginning of the class period, the investigator was introduced as a candidate for a degree of Master of Science in the Boston University School of Nursing, who was collecting data as a part of degree requirements. The investigator then explained that the test was a social attitude inventory and that there were no right and wrong answers. Anonymity was stressed and the students were encouraged to answer every item included in the test because each incomplete test booklet would have to be discarded. The investigator then read the instructions included in the test booklet and told the students to begin. There was no limitation of time and completion varied between thirty and forty-five minutes. No information was given until all tests were filled out and returned. Then, at the request of a few students, the investigator revealed the subject and purpose of the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Presentation and Discussion of Data

This investigation was initiated as a result of the investigator's feeling that the attitudes of nursing students toward the aged become increasingly negative as the students progress in their educational experience. The social attitude scale used was developed by Kogan<sup>1</sup> and the items were designed to elicit a positive or negative response to statements about old people. The information was obtained from one hundred and thirty-one nursing students. Of this total number of students, forty-two were first year students, forty-one were second year students, and forty-eight were third year students. The mean age of the group was 19.4 years, with a standard deviation of 1.0 year.

The data were analyzed by (1) tabling positive and negative responses, (2) giving a summation of general trends in attitude for the three levels of nursing students, and (3) using the qualitative coefficients of correlation to show positive and negative trends in relation to year in the school of nursing.

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix.

In scoring of raw data, the six response categories were grouped.<sup>2</sup> The responses of strongly disagree, disagree, and slightly disagree were grouped and a response in any of these categories was considered disagree. The responses of slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree were grouped and response in any of these categories was considered agree. In scoring a negative item, a disagree response received a score of one and an agree response received a score of zero. Correspondingly, in scoring a positive item, an agree response received a score of one and a disagree response received a score of zero. Therefore, the higher the score, the more positive the attitude of the students toward the aged.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

TABLE I  
 STATISTICAL EVIDENCE OF STUDENT RESPONSES TO  
 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE OLD PEOPLE ITEMS  
 FOR EACH YEAR IN NURSING SCHOOL

Year in Nursing School	Item Responses	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient
First Year N = 42	Positive	5.0	1.7	.11
	Negative	4.9	1.6	
Second Year N = 41	Positive	5.1	1.4	.38
	Negative	5.2	1.6	
Third Year N = 48	Positive	5.4	1.8	.37
	Negative	5.0	1.7	

**Note:**

The magnitude of the coefficient of correlation for statistical significance is as follows: for the first year, N=42, .30 at the .05 level and .39 at the .01 level; for the second year, N=41, .31 at the .05 level and .40 at the .01 level; for the third year, N=48, .29 at the .05 level and .37 at the .01 level.

Table I considers each level of nursing students separately, and their responses to positive and negative old people items. It is evident that the correlation coefficient for first year students did not reach a level of statistical significance. This would indicate that the nursing students at this level did not favor a positive or negative attitude toward the aged. The second year nursing students' correlation was significant and indicated a more positive attitude toward the aged. The correlation for third year students was significant and also indicated a more positive attitude

toward the aged.

TABLE 2

INTERCORRELATIONS OF OLD PEOPLE ITEMS  
WITH YEARS IN NURSING SCHOOL

Old People Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Correlation for Years in Nursing School
Positive	5.2	1.7	.09
Negative	5.0	1.6	.004
Total	10.1	2.7	.06

Note:

The magnitude of the correlation coefficient for statistical significance is as follows: for the total group, N=131, .17 at the .05 level and .23 at the .01 level.

Individually, the differences in attitudes of the three groups of students were evident. However, Table 2 illustrates that there was no statistically significant relationship between the attitudes of the nursing students as a group and levels in the school of nursing, although there was a trend for a more positive attitude toward the aged.

As a result of the preceding data, it was decided to analyze each item to determine any significant attitudes expressed toward individual items. Table 3 through 18 illustrate positive and negative responses to the individual items by the three groups of nursing students. It is important to note, in reading the following tables, that scoring

was as follows: for each positive item, an agree response received a score of one and a disagree response received a score of zero, and for each negative item, a disagree response received a score of one and an agree response received a score of zero.

TABLE 3

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 6,  
A POSITIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
It would probably be better if most old people lived in residential units that also housed younger people.	0	24	18	15
	1	18	23	33

In response to item 6, a positive item, the first year students indicated a negative attitude, and the second and third year students indicated a positive attitude. Therefore, the first year students favored separate housing for the aged, while the second and third year students felt that the aged should be absorbed in the community.

TABLE 4

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 12,  
 A NEGATIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people get set in their ways and are unable to change.	0	5	3	7
	1	37	38	41

The response to item 12, a negative item, indicates that a majority of the students in each of the three groups disagreed with this item. Therefore, most of the students felt that old people are flexible and able to make a change.

TABLE 5

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 16,  
 A POSITIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people are really no different from anybody else; they're as easy to understand as younger people	0	21	27	13
	1	21	14	35

In response to item 16, the first year students were evenly divided in their attitude, the second year students tended to be negative and the third year students tended to be positive. This would indicate a great deal of individual

opinion possibly related to the exposure of the students to aged people.

TABLE 6

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 23,  
A NEGATIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Old people have too much power in business and politics	0	2	2	5
	1	40	39	43

In response to item 23, a negative item, a majority of the students felt that old people did not have too much power in business and politics.

TABLE 7

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 30,  
A POSITIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people would prefer to continue working as long as they can rather than be dependent on anybody.	0	2	2	0
	1	42	39	48

In response to item 30, a positive item, a majority of the students felt that old people preferred to continue working and remain independent.

TABLE 8

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 35,  
 A NEGATIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people bore others by their insistence on talking about "the good old days."	0	27	26	30
	1	15	15	18

In response to item 35, a negative item, there was a trend toward agreement by many of the students. This indicated some individual opinion possibly related to the exposure of the students to the aged.

TABLE 9

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 41,  
 A POSITIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people can generally be counted on to maintain a clean, attractive home.	0	14	11	25
	1	28	30	23

Response to item 41, a positive item, indicated that the first and second year students agreed that old people were able to maintain a clean attractive home, however, the third year students tended to disagree with this item.

TABLE 10

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 45,  
 A NEGATIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people spend too much time prying into the affairs of others and giving unsought advice.	0	28	35	39
	1	14	6	9

Response to item 45, a negative item, indicated a tendency to agree with the item and this trend increased from the first to the third year student. This indicated that the students felt that old people were prying and gave unsought advice, and that they felt more strongly about it during the third year.

TABLE 11

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 52,  
 A POSITIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people are very relaxing to be with.	0	16	20	22
	1	26	21	26

In response to item 52, a positive item, the students tended to agree that old people were relaxing to be

with, however, this agreement decreased from the first year to the third year group.

TABLE 12

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 59,  
A NEGATIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
If old people expect to be liked, their first step is to try to get rid of their irritating faults.	0	28	30	35
	1	14	11	13

In response to item 59, a negative item, the students tended to agree. Therefore, they felt that most old people have irritating faults which influence the attitudes of others toward them.

TABLE 13

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 63,  
A POSITIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
It is evident that most old people are very different from one another.	0	17	13	13
	1	25	28	35

In response to item 63, a positive item, there was general agreement that old people were individuals. This trend increased in the three groups with the third year students agreeing most strongly.

TABLE 14

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 68,  
 A NEGATIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Number of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
In order to maintain a nice residential neighborhood, it would be best if too many old people did not live in it.	0	0	0	4
	1	42	41	44

In response to item 68, a negative item, there was general disagreement. Therefore, the students felt that old people should be accepted in a residential neighborhood.

TABLE 15

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 71,  
 A POSITIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Number of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people seem to be quite clean and neat in their personal appearance.	0	13	13	16
	1	29	28	32

In response to item 71, a positive item, there was general agreement. Therefore, the students felt that most old people seemed to be quite clean and neat in their personal appearance.

TABLE 16

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 75,  
 A NEGATIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people are constantly complaining about the behavior of the younger generation.	0	11	18	14
	1	31	23	34

In response to item 75, a negative item, the students tended to disagree, generally. Therefore, they felt that old people were not constantly complaining about the behavior of the younger generation.

TABLE 17

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 81,  
 A POSITIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people are cheerful, agreeable and good-humored.	0	19	15	23
	1	23	26	25

In response to item 81, a positive item, the students tended to agree, although not strongly, that most old people were cheerful, agreeable, and good-humored.

TABLE 18

RESPONSES OF NURSING STUDENTS TO  
 OLD PEOPLE ITEM NUMBER 86,  
 A NEGATIVE ITEM

Item	Score	Numbers of Responses		
		1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Most old people make excessive demands for love and reassurance	0	19	15	23
	1	23	26	25

In response to item 86, a negative item, the students tended to disagree, however, not strongly, that old people make excessive demands for love and reassurance.

In reviewing the preceding data, the responses to individual items may be summarized to show the reason for the low significance of statistical evidence. Items 12, 23, 30, 63, 68, 71 and 75 elicited expected positive and negative responses. Items 41, 52, 81 and 86 elicited expected responses, however, distribution of responses was divided between positive and negative scores, thereby decreasing the significance of the items. Responses to items 6 and 16 were fairly evenly divided positively and negatively again decreasing their significance. Finally, items 35, 45, and 59 elicited responses opposite to the expected responses.

Discussion of Additional Findings

In addition to the findings concerning attitudes

toward the aged, information obtained from other items was reported by Kogan.<sup>3</sup> The results of an alienation scale included in the test booklet indicated that the nursing students had feelings of alienation toward people in general which increased with each group. This evidence was least significant in the first year group, but increased in significance in the second and third year groups of students.

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<sup>3</sup>Nathan Kogan, (Unpublished study, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey).

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to study the attitudes of nursing students toward the aged. The investigator's hypothesis was that the beginning student in nursing has a more positive attitude toward the aged than the more advanced nursing student.

The nursing students included in the sample were one hundred and thirty-one students in a three year diploma school of nursing in New England. The students were tested in three groups, representing the first, second and third years in the school of nursing. The investigator believed the groups would exhibit a trend of negativism toward the aged, as indicated in the literature, which would increase from the first to the third year.

A social attitude inventory developed by Kogan was used to determine the attitudes of the nursing students toward old people.<sup>1</sup> Correlation between the three groups and the total group picture was then shown in table form. An analysis of responses to individual items was also

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix.

illustrated in table form. In presentation and analysis of the data, there were trends of positive attitudes in all groups toward the aged. Since the hypothesis of the investigator stated an opposite opinion, the hypothesis was regarded as disproven.

As a result of the findings of the study, the investigator feels that the following conclusions and recommendations can be stated.

#### Conclusions

1. The first year students had not formed an attitude toward the aged that was clearly positive or negative, although there was a trend toward a positive attitude.
2. The second year students had a statistically significant and positive attitude trend toward the aged.
3. The third year students had a statistically significant and positive attitude trend toward the aged.
4. The total group of one hundred and thirty-one students did not display a statistically significant trend, however, the trend shown was in the direction of a positive attitude toward the aged.

#### Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions of this study, the investigator feels that the following recommendations can be made.

1. That similar studies be done in other schools of nursing.
2. That comparative studies be done of three year schools of nursing and collegiate schools to determine if there is:
  - A. a difference between attitudes of students from various nursing programs.
  - B. a relationship between these attitudes and various factors that could possibly influence the attitudes, such as: educational preparation; contact with increased numbers of aged people.
3. That similar studies be done with graduate nurses to determine attitudes after graduation.
4. That studies be done to determine in more detail the effect of nurse's attitudes in her patient interactions.
5. That studies of alienation attitude trends be done in schools of nursing.

APPENDIX

## SOCIAL ATTITUDE INVENTORY

Directions

On the following pages, you will find a number of statements expressing opinions with which you may or may not agree. Following each statement are six boxes labeled as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

You are to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement by checking the appropriate box.

Please consider each statement carefully, but do not spend too much time on any one statement. Do not skip any items.

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers--the only correct responses are those that are true for you. THIS INVENTORY IS BEING USED FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY AND IS COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS.

TURN THE PAGE AND BEGIN

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<sup>1</sup>On the inventory the labels are abbreviated as follows: Str Dis, Dis, Sl Dis, Sl Agr, Agr, Str Agr.



















	Str Dis	Dis	Sl Dis	Sl Agr	Agr	Str Agr
80. People's ideas change so much that I wonder if we'll ever have anything to depend on.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
81. Most old people are cheerful, agreeable, and good humored.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
82. We're so regimented today that there's not much room for choice even in personal matters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
83. Most men are brave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
84. Everything is relative, and there just aren't any definite rules to live by.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
85. It is safer to trust nobody.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
86. Most old people make excessive demands for love and reassurance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## DIRECTIONS

This section consists of a number of statements about feelings, tendencies, and preferences that may or may not be characteristic of you. Following each statement are six boxes labeled as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Defi- nitely	Moder- ately	Some- what	Some- what	Moder- ately	Defi- nitely
UNCHARACTERISTIC			CHARACTERISTIC		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notice that there are three boxes on the left labeled Uncharacteristic with three gradations of difference ranging from Somewhat through Moderately to Definitely Uncharacteristic. Likewise there are three boxes on the right labeled Characteristic with three gradations of difference ranging from Somewhat through Moderately to Definitely Characteristic. You are to indicate the degree to which each statement is characteristic of you by checking the appropriate box.

You may notice an occasional statement which is neither particularly characteristic nor particularly uncharacteristic of you. If so, do the best you can be checking the box that seem most appropriate.

Please consider each statement carefully, but do not spend too much time on any one item. Do not skip any items.

You may go right ahead.

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<sup>2</sup>On the inventory the labels are abbreviated as follows:  
Def, Mod, Som, Som, Mod, Def.















	Def	Mod	Som	Som	Mod	Def
	UNCHARAC			CHARAC		
75. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
76. Sometimes I have the feeling that other people are using me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
77. I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrongdoings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
78. At times I have enjoyed being hurt by someone I loved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
79. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
80. I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
81. When I don't know something I don't at all mind admitting it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION BLANK

1. Age at last birthday \_\_\_\_\_
2. Sex M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_
3. Year of nursing training 1st \_\_\_ 2nd \_\_\_ 3rd \_\_\_
4. School of nursing in which you are enrolled.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your father's occupation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Father's education \_\_\_\_\_ Mother's education \_\_\_\_\_  
(Check highest level completed)
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| _____ Elementary school                   | _____ |
| _____ Some high school but did not finish | _____ |
| _____ High school graduate                | _____ |
| _____ Some college but did not graduate   | _____ |
| _____ College graduate                    | _____ |
| _____ More than college                   | _____ |
7. Approximate annual income of family:  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Were you born in the United States?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
9. If not, in what country were you born?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Are you a citizen of the United States?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

11. Father's country of birth. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Mother's country of birth. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Are your parents now or have they ever been legally separated or divorced.
- Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
14. If yes, what was your age when this event occurred? \_\_\_
15. Did you spend any part of your life living on a farm?
- Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
16. If yes, how long and how old were you at the time?
- \_\_\_\_\_
17. How many different cities or towns did you live in before the age of 17?
- \_\_\_\_\_
18. Father's religious preference. \_\_\_\_\_
19. Mother's religious preference. \_\_\_\_\_
20. Your religious preference. \_\_\_\_\_
21. How frequently do you attend religious services?  
(Check one)
- \_\_\_ Every week
- \_\_\_ At least once a month
- \_\_\_ Major religious holidays
- \_\_\_ Never
22. Father's political preference. \_\_\_\_\_
23. Mother's political preference. \_\_\_\_\_
24. Your political preference. \_\_\_\_\_
25. List any student organizations of which you are a member. If you hold office in any of these organizations, specify the offices held.

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