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Nursing image among secondary students in California

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Cogswell, Elizabeth L. Current, M.S.

San Jose State University, 1993

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**NURSING IMAGE AMONG SECONDARY STUDENTS
IN CALIFORNIA**

A Thesis

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Department of Nursing
San Jose State University**

In Partial Fulfillment

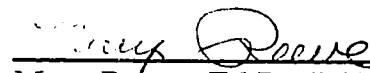
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by

Elizabeth L. Current Cogswell

August, 1993

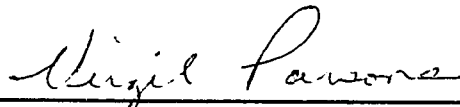
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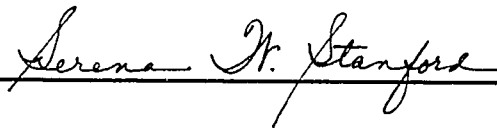


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ABSTRACT

NURSING IMAGE AMONG SECONDARY STUDENTS IN CALIFORNIA

by Elizabeth L. Current Cogswell

This study replicated one conducted by Sigma Theta Tau (STT) in Indiana and focused on secondary students in the 9th and 12th grades in northern California. Two hundred questionnaires were distributed, and 61 (30.5%) were returned. Questions were asked about attitude regarding nursing to ascertain image in the areas of activity, power, and value in society.

The conceptual framework was taken from research by Philip A. Kalisch and Beatrice J. Kalisch examining nurses' media image. Analysis of differences between gender, relationship with a nurse, and socioeconomic status were compared for relationships to student image of nursing. No significant differences were found between genders nor students of upper or lower socioeconomic status. No significant difference was found between students who did or did not know a nurse, which was surprising as all the literature supported a conclusion that there is a difference. Further research is necessary using a larger population sample, as obtaining a greater cross section of the population of students in both upper and lower socioeconomic levels.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my two aunts: Hazel Current Rogers, who died before she was able to finish her Masters degree; and to Margaret Current Johnason, R.N., who was my role model in nursing.

I would like to thank my husband, Denis, without whom I would not have been able to go back to school or write this thesis, and my children, Marie and Matthew, who were supportive and helped in those days when I had to do my own homework.

I also thank God who sustained my spirit and gave me the strength I needed throughout this time.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Nursing has entered a professional phase demanding practitioners of a very high caliber, with nurses working in settings requiring expanded decision-making capabilities. Due to the shorter duration of patient care, the population of hospitals has increased in acuity, and patients go home still in need of nursing care (Aiken, 1987; Daria & Moran, 1985). Because of this escalating population of critically ill patients, nurses must be able to make decisions they have never before been required to make. This necessitates a more enlightened student population.

In order to recruit more qualified people into nursing, the profession must alter some commonly held perceptions held by the secondary student population. Students consider professions on the basis of their own interests and social milieu (Hannah & Kahn, 1989; Henderson, Hesketh, & Tuffin, 1988). Counselors in secondary schools have a role in helping students focus on careers and prepare themselves for further education. Regrettably, very few counselors consider nursing to be more than a technical career, with a mere 6% of them directing students into nursing (Kersten, Bakewell, & Meyer, 1991). Counselors agree that students should be encouraged to enter nursing, but few advise the more qualified applicants to do so (King & Sherman, 1990). Further, students may consider nursing as being little more than a profession secondary to medicine. Those feeling the inclination to care for people often consider

as a career those professions which the media has depicted as being more compassionate and powerful than nursing, such as medicine. The unique contribution of nursing to the care of the elderly, ill, and helpless is not understood by this population of potential professionals.

Kersten et al. (1991) found that among cited reasons for students choosing a career in nursing, the notion of "caring" and "bringing relief" rated highest. Job security was also given as a reason for choosing nursing (Kersten et al., 1991; Marriner-Tomey, Schwier, Maricke, & Austin, 1990), as well as the opportunity to "work with people" and because it was an "exciting" occupation (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 1990). However, of all reasons given by students who chose nursing over other occupations, by far the most often stated was their personal access to a nursing role model at some time in their lives (Ellerby, 1988; Grossman, Arnold, Sullivan, Cameron, & Munro, 1989; Kersten et al., 1991; Kohler & Edwards, 1990; Rudov, Wilson, & Trocki, 1976). Bookchin, Anvaripour, Weissman, Probst, and Kemp (1989) studied role models by starting a mentoring program in New York City public schools and found that it increased enrollment of students in their nursing program at Mount Sinai Medical Center.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the new freedom of career choice among today's women, fewer are choosing nursing as a career, opting instead to enter professions that are perceived as having more prestige. This has contributed to a shortage of nurses at a time when nursing has become a highly

specialized, complicated profession (Grossman et al., 1989; Naylor & Sherman, 1987). According to testimony before the United States Congress, House Committee on Energy and Commerce (1988), the decline in the nursing student enrollment is attributed to inadequate wages, stressful working conditions, and a lack of professional prestige. These conditions minimize nursing as an occupation, diverting women to alternative career opportunities. Although men are increasingly entering nursing, it remains a predominantly female profession (Parker, 1991). In light of the rapidly expanding roles for women in our society, the nursing profession's reputation as being an almost exclusively female domain (currently about 97%) has had a direct and negative impact on our country's "pipeline" of prospective nurses (Green, 1987).

Nursing is not only perceived as a traditionally female role, but has an inferior image in the media (Porter, Porter, & Lower, 1989; Van Cleve, 1988). Low salary levels and the comparatively poor economic return on the baccalaureate degree are some of the cited reasons for women entering professions other than nursing (Porter et al., 1989). Economist Charles Link (1987) studied the wages of nurses and their return based on education and experience, factoring in personal characteristics, such as age and sex, and found that in 1984, a nurse's wage increased only \$.19 for every \$1.00 of the average manufacturing wage earner in Massachusetts. Brider (1990) confirmed that when salary increases are adjusted for inflation, nurses have made no economic gains since 1981. In fact, income in real dollars decreased by 3-5% in 1983 and 1987. According to

Naylor and Sherman (1987), a result of these factors may be a declining quality of students going into nursing programs, thus compounding the problem of increased patient acuity with yet another dilemma—the ebbing qualifications of nurses. The authors cite the American Association of College of Nursing report of 1983-1987 in their discussion of the decline of nursing as a choice among today's college-bound women. Green (1987) not only observed a decline in the number of nursing applicants to nursing schools, but a decline in academic qualifications as well.

According to Grossman et al. (1989), most of the high school students studied were aware of the caring aspects of nursing but seemed unaware of the expanded roles of nursing, such as the independent practice of nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and nurse midwives, as well as the increased responsibilities of nursing in the hospital areas, such as critical care, intensive care, and post anesthesia units. Very few of the students perceived nursing as being a career which involved leadership, independent judgement, or executive roles. Another study found that high school students felt nurses had to perform unpleasant tasks (Kohler & Edwards, 1990). Comments from a study in England found that nursing was a depressing job and had insufficient "perks" to balance the loneliness and drudgery (Ellerby, 1988). In all those studies (Ellerby, 1988; Grossman et al., 1989; Kersten et al., 1991; Kohler & Edwards, 1990), the strongest correlation between students and decisions to enter nursing appeared to be among the students who were exposed to nursing role models.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to generate further data on which to base counseling to increase recruitment of qualified students into the nursing profession. This study replicates a previous study of attitudes of high school students toward nursing. Most of the previous studies of students' attitudes toward nursing have sampled low to moderate socioeconomic populations or populations on the east coast and in the midwest. This study utilizes a west coast sample population and contrasts students from both high and low socioeconomic groups and should clarify the views of high school students toward the nursing professions, utilizing a wider geographic and socioeconomic population.

Research Questions

1. What is the difference in the median subscale scores for the image components (activity, evaluation, and power) of nursing as a function of socioeconomic status of the students studied?
2. What is the difference in the nursing image component scores between students who know another person who is a nurse and students who do not?
3. What is the difference in the nursing image component scores between males and females?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

1. Nursing refers to registered nurses.

2. Expanded role refers to all nurse functions that are beyond the expected role of the popular image of a nurse. This role includes, but is not limited to, all critical care monitoring (which includes the ability to read monitors and make changes to care parameters based on monitoring data) and nursing diagnosis and treatment of patients based on nursing diagnosis.

3. Image is: (a) "The concept of someone or something that is held by the public" (Miguel, 1990, p. 6); and (b) "The composite public impression of a person, organization . . ." (New Websters Dictionary of the English Language, 1981, p. 750).

4. Image of nursing is the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of nurses and nursing (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987).

5. Nursing role model is a positive, personal experience of a high school student with a nurse.

6. Socioeconomic status is a general designation of social standing, as measured by income, wealth, educational background etc. (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Sociology, 1986, p. 278). For the purposes of this study, lower socioeconomic status was calculated as income below \$50,000 and upper socioeconomic status as income above \$50,000.

7. Stereotype is a rigid or biased perception whereby individuals are ascribed certain traits (usually negative) based on their membership in a specific national or social group, regardless of whether they do or do not, in fact, possess those traits (Wolman, 1973, p. 357).

Summary

When nursing is perceived as having lesser status and power and is seen as requiring less knowledge and competence than other professions, then the qualifications of those entering nursing may not be suitable to the demands of the profession. By the same token, those qualified individuals who might have considered nursing may disregard it as a career option due to prevalent stereotypes and popular misconceptions. Reaching potential nursing students with the correct information and image could change their perspective.

Chapter 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is taken from the research by Philip A. Kalisch and Beatrice J. Kalisch about the media image of nursing (1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1983c, 1987; Kalisch, Kalisch, & Scoby, 1983). These researchers have studied the image of nursing as it was portrayed in novels, movies, and television since *Sairy Gamp* was introduced to the public by Charles Dickens in 1843 (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1982). Conclusions regarding nurses and the public's perception of them as derived through their media portrayal have evolved out of this study.

Images are a major part of American reality (Gray, 1982). We are surrounded by images, projected by all forms of media. The impressions conveyed by those images communicate strong portraits which stay in the mind long after the presentation is over. Image plays a fundamental role in reflecting our cultural attitudes (Gray, p. 12). So it is with nursing. Throughout the past 100 years, people have come to regard nursing strongly in parallel with those attitudes reflected in the media image of the day. The image of nursing has become increasingly distorted by television's overly "imaginative" screen writers who tend to place dramatic effect over accuracy. "Each day, scores of images of nurses and nursing speed past readers and viewers, leaving only a diffuse awareness of their

impact" (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987, p. ix). People create a reality for themselves about nursing which they "know," based upon these often-inaccurate and unfair media portrayals (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1983a). Until people are confronted with the reality of that construct, they continue in their stereotyped picture of that image, decreasing the effectiveness of nursing to the public (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1982; Kalisch & Kalisch, 1983b). It is important to convey to the public an accurate portrayal of nursing as an autonomous profession capable of providing leadership for solutions which face today's health care (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1983c).

Kalisch and Kalisch (1987) divide the media portrayal of nurses into four main categories: the nurse as the "Angel of Mercy," the nurse as the "Girl Friday," the nurse as "Heroine," and the nurse as a "Sex Object." The profession of nursing today owes a lot to Florence Nightingale's first Angel of Mercy image. This image caught the imagination of the public as an ideal which acquired support for the first training school in London and further allowed nursing to expand as an acceptable profession. After World War I, the new image of the independent career woman began to be reflected in the many books and movies of the 1920's. Here was a woman who was able to smoke, drink, bob her hair, and have a career until she married. This nurse was not as ethereal as the previous image, but she was now more subordinate to the physician. The nurse is depicted as either being romantic or just the opposite. If she is romantic, she may also, by implication, be sexually active; if she is not, she usually is portrayed as being asexual and "crusty" (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1983a, p. 10;

1983b; 1987, p. 62). These nurses are often shown performing menial tasks along with their nursing duties and are not depicted as being in any way independent.

With the onset of World War II, nurses' images once again improved in the direction of the "heroic." The nurse served both as a role model and as a propaganda messenger, serving as a morale booster in many war novels and movies. In them, nurses were shown attaining high levels of bravery and competence. The book, They Were Expendable, was based on a real story about nurses at Corregidor and became a popular movie depicting nurses at their most heroic (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987, p. 111). However, by the 1960's, nurses' images had plummeted in tandem with the rising hemline. Nurses were not only depicted as doing menial, subservient chores, but they were also portrayed as sex objects. They were regularly portrayed as technical workers, invariably seen as helpers, and viewed primarily as a physician's plaything (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1982).

The current popular media tend to stereotype nurses as being primarily doctors' assistants who perform technical and mundane tasks (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987). The old humanitarian idea that nurses are "nice" people who help doctors is still held by 90% of the public (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1983c). According to Kalisch and Kalisch (1982; 1983c), the cliché distorts the true picture of nursing and undermines the public's confidence in nurses. This, in turn, affects the number and quality of nursing school applicants at a time when women are enjoying more varied career options (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1983b; Porter et al., 1989). This poor

image also influences policy decisions in government and management where non-nurses determine the resources and directions of nursing (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1983b).

Review of the Literature

Nursing Image

Nursing image and the public is an area which has been much discussed in nursing literature. The poor image that nurses must battle in the modern popular media (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987) is suggested as one of the reasons why many people do not wish to enter the nursing profession. Much of the literature discussing the nursing shortage of the 1980's considers nursing image as central to the shortage problem (Daria & Moran, 1985; Gaberson, 1989; Kohler & Edwards, 1990; Marriner-Tomey et al., 1990; Naylor & Sherman, 1987; Porter et al., 1989; Riechelt, 1988; Stanick, 1989).

Occupational stereotypes appear in student textbooks as well. In studying textbook portrayals of nurses, Smith and Smith (1989) found that two frequent assertions about nurses are that they are assistants to doctors and that the complexity of their job is seen as average to menial. Even so, some of the texts would then state that nurses must come equipped with a strong science background. Also, many levels of nurses, such as licensed vocational nurses (LVN's) and registered nurses (RN's) of various educational backgrounds, are all treated as "nurses," creating further confusion. Kohler and Edwards (1990) found that the prestige of nursing was equated with that of day care, and that if someone wanted to work in

a hospital, it would have been better to have become a physician. The implication of Kohler and Edward's study was that a doctor's work is more prestigious and important than a nurse's.

In their study, Rudov et al. (1976) also discuss stereotyping of nurses by students. They measured student attitudes toward the tasks that nurses performed and found that differences in perception of the pleasantness of a task fell strongly along gender lines. Kalisch and Kalisch (1987) discussed stereotyping by children as young as 6, where nursing is viewed primarily as a female role and medicine as a male role. The children begin to assume sex-role categorizing because of cultural conditioning. According to Baer (1991), stereotyping of nurses is also encountered among adults who denigrate nurses and do not recognize nursing's unique contribution to health care.

Although Kalisch and Kalisch (1987) separate the nurse image into four divisions (each with a title implying a feminine role), men are also becoming nurses in increasing numbers and currently comprise about 3% of the nursing population (Parker, 1991). Unfortunately, with 97% of nurses still being women, the feminine stereotype remains firmly fixed in the public psyche (Shinar, 1975), and men still have a less positive attitude toward nursing as a potential career (May, Champion, & Austin, 1991). Because the media has fostered the notion that a man is "abnormal" if he pursues a nursing career, the progression of men into this profession has been thwarted (Miller, 1989).

Since the 1960's, the most pervasive negative image with which nurses have had to struggle has been "sex object." Television portrays nurses as promiscuous (Kalisch, Kalisch, & Scoby, 1983). Nurses were not even seen as romantic types but, rather, were characterized as only good for sexual diversion, compromising their professional image. Not only are nurses portrayed as sex objects, but they are also consistently portrayed as incompetent in their job performance (Curtin, 1990; Kalisch et al., 1983). Another stereotype this researcher found interesting was from a psychological study of Florence Nightingale wherein the author consistently considered Florence's wish to go into nursing as being self-deprecatory, implying that nurses are in some way "masochists" (Allen, 1975).

Socioeconomic Status

In the studies about career choices among young people, it has been theorized that children make career choices which mature in reality as the children mature (Henderson et al., 1988). Gottfredson (1981) theorized that occupations are chosen on the basis of self-image and willingness to expend effort. When children reach the age of 9 years, they tend to view their own social background and the prestige of careers when contemplating their own career choices (Henderson et al., 1988). According to both Gottfredson and Henderson et al., by the age of 14, adolescents incorporate more abstract concepts into their choice of careers, such as values, personality traits, and interests. Henderson et al. also demonstrated that personal ability entered strongly into the social

background/prestige choice matrix. Hannah and Kahn (1989) found that socioeconomic background tends to influence career choice among young women towards the conventional, and that higher socioeconomic females exhibit a tendency to choose cross-gender careers more often than do those of lower socioeconomic status. Their research tended to support other research on the influence of socioeconomic status on career choice (Burlin, 1976; Greenfield, Griener, & Wood, 1980; Kenkel & Gage, 1983; MacKay & Miller, 1982). Since the decade of the seventies, research has been conducted on how socioeconomic status has affected career aspirations (Block, Denker, & Tittle, 1981; D'Amico, 1985; Ethington & Wolfle, 1988; George, 1981; Nelms, Pentecost, & Lowe, 1982; Smick & Camp, 1988).

High School Students' Nursing Perceptions

In 1976, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare conducted one of the earliest studies on the perceptions of nursing among high school students (Rudov et al., 1976). The study was performed to increase recruitment of minority students into nursing. The sampling was conducted among high school students in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Tallahassee, Florida; and Phoenix, Arizona. The study attempted to sample a number of minorities in proportion to the population of the cities where they resided. Each city was sampled to give a cross section of categories of students: urban, rural-poor, and the Mexican-American and American Indian populations. It was concluded that many of the high school students were academically unprepared for nursing school. Only

half stated that they had taken any algebra, chemistry, or biology in high school. One other conclusion was that exposure to RN role models increased the probability that a student would choose a career in nursing. Included were images and stereotypes held by students about nursing which were seen as generally lower than the professional level of responsibilities that nurses actually held. Investigators strongly recommended recruitment intervention prior to the junior year of high school.

In a more recent study, Grossman et al. (1989) examined a sample population of high school juniors from one southeastern and five mid-Atlantic high schools to determine their perceptions about nursing as a career choice. It was discovered that the male students viewed nursing in a more negative light than did the females. It was further concluded that few students were considering nursing as a career option, while over half of those students questioned who *were* considering nursing as a career option had a personal relationship with someone who was actually a nurse (a role model). Another study (Kohler & Edwards, 1990) sampled a total of 309 students in grades 9 through 12 from three high schools in the southeastern United States. Here they examined opinions of students regarding nurses' working conditions. Student opinion was varied. The occupation which was viewed as most prestigious was law; 30% of the students saw nursing as equal in status to that of physicians, and 30% viewed nursing as a low status occupation. Nursing was viewed as a "profession" by the majority (91%) of the students; 70% of those surveyed

perceived nursing in a technical sense, and 61% believed nursing to be "both professional and technical in nature" (Kohler & Edwards). Kohler and Edwards suggested offering students some personal experience with nurses to increase the visibility of nursing in career education. Both Grossman et al. (1989) and Kohler and Edwards (1990) confirmed the Rudov et al. (1976) study, which concluded that students with nursing role models had a higher probability of choosing a career in nursing.

The National Council on Nursing Implementation (NCNIP) retained the services of a research firm to examine the perceptions of the public prior and subsequent to a media campaign about nursing. The study found that while the image of nursing improved after the Advertising Council's campaign, the perception of nursing still ranked below teaching and police work as a profession and stood way behind computer programming as a career. Nursing ranked seventh as a career choice prior to the campaign and fourth among the choices after the campaign (NCNIP, 1991). The understanding of nursing functions did increase after the media campaign, but the perceptions of functions and duties still remained primarily in the support/technical areas. The students did, however, begin to see some increased responsibility in such specialty areas as midwifery (NCNIP). Female and minority teens still held the most favorable views of nursing even after the advertising series (NCNIP).

Sigma Theta Tau (STT), the International Honor Society for Nursing, studied the perceptions of nursing as a career among adults and students in Indiana in 1988. The students' perceptions of nursing included

the idea that nurses "cared for people" and worked very hard. The students still viewed nursing as being primarily non-technical (involved work with the hands), although they did believe that nurses needed an education and used their intelligence in their jobs (STT, 1988). Students still regarded decision-making opportunities as being limited for nurses, and they felt that in an ideal career, the decision-making task itself was more important than the number of occasions presented to nurses for decision making (STT, 1988).

The STT (1988) study found that more females than males had positive attitudes towards nursing, and that the lower socioeconomic strata of respondents also had a more positive attitude toward nursing as a career than those respondents whose families earned over \$70,000. Students in grades 7 through 11 valued nursing as a career more than the college students studied. Nursing was also seen by these students as a manual skills job, viewed as "hard work" and involving a heavy workload. Further, nursing was perceived as offering fewer opportunities than other careers.

Summary

The overall image of nursing is that it is hard work, is primarily "women's" work, and carries little status as a career. Nursing has the reputation for being an occupation requiring minimal skills and utilizing very little intelligence. The belief among many is that if someone wants to work in a hospital caring for people, that person would get more autonomy and power if he or she became a doctor. Nursing is still seen

as a technical career and, in most cases, as secondary to medicine (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1981). The popular conception is still that nurses are "nice people" who work too hard and whose main function is to assist doctors (May et al., 1991). Also, nursing is not seen as a profession using much intellectual proficiency. Although one study did indicate an assumption that nursing required a good education (Smith & Smith, 1989), most studies did not identify education or intellectual prowess with nursing (Rudov et al., 1976; STT, 1988, p. 31). Many students also based their impressions of nursing on what they had seen on television (Kohler & Edwards, 1990), confirming Kalisch and Kalisch's premise that the popular media is responsible for most of the nursing stereotypes.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This study explores the attitudes toward nursing and nursing image among secondary students in northern California. It is a replication of an Indiana study carried out by Sigma Theta Tau (1988) which examined the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the public toward nursing as a career.

Design

A questionnaire survey of high school students was taken to ascertain their perceptions on nursing image. The questions being explored were:

1. What is the difference in the median subscale scores for the image components (activity, evaluation, power) of nursing as a function of socioeconomic status of the students studied?
2. What is the difference in the nursing image component scores between students who know another person who is a nurse and students who do not?
3. What is the difference in the nursing image component scores between males and females?

Subjects and Setting

The subjects were high school seniors and freshmen in northern California. Two schools agreed to participate in the survey. The schools were chosen to obtain a balance of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. A questionnaire was distributed to students during one class period in

school and returned to the teachers the following day. The subjects surveyed were the students of teachers who volunteered to use a class period to distribute the survey. Written consent was obtained from parents using a return mail response letter. The students were also informed at the time of the survey that they could refuse to answer any of the questions without penalty.

The variables were socioeconomic status (as reported by the student's family income), gender, and relationship with a nurse. Other variables which were considered were grade in school and career choice. These variables were later rejected because of the poor response to these items.

Socioeconomic status was controlled by using schools with a homogeneous population which was as constant in regard to income and cultural variation as possible. With the large immigration population in the state of California, it was postulated that immigrants may hold a more favorable view of traditional careers than persons born in the United States (S. Aquino, personal communication, October 15, 1991). The socioeconomic level of the students was based upon the individual student's estimation of family income.

To ascertain how many students did indeed have a relationship with someone who was a nurse, students were asked if they were acquainted with one. Definitive data on that relationship and clinical experience were not ascertained. Both relationship with a nurse and gender were self-reported.

To decrease the career choice factor, seniors and freshmen students were chosen since, according to Gottfredson (1981), career decision-making ability tends to reach a plateau by age 14 (Gottfredson, 1981; Henderson et al., 1988). Freshmen were chosen because their decision-making ability regarding career choice was in the very formative stages, and seniors were chosen because they had almost reached concrete decisions in regard to higher education and career choice. It was felt this population would produce a cross-sectional view of nursing image which would be relatively unbiased regarding career choice.

The selection of the population to be studied was determined by the willingness to participate of those schools meeting the socioeconomic criteria. Further, the study was conducted among those students whose teachers were themselves willing to distribute and collect the questionnaires. In order to obtain a large enough sample, two freshmen and senior classes at each school (four classes) participated, comprising approximately 240 students (120 from each school).

Data Collection

Data were collected by means of the Sigma Theta Tau (STT) Attitudes, Values and Beliefs Towards Nursing as a Career. Written permission was obtained from Sigma Theta Tau to use their survey tool (see Appendix A). Approval was also obtained from the San Jose State University Institutional Review Board - Human Subjects (see Appendix B). After written permission was obtained from parents, the questionnaire

was distributed to students at the two different high schools in California during one class period.

Instruments

The tool used was the Sigma Theta Tau (STT) Attitudes, Values and Beliefs Towards Nursing as a Career (see Appendix C). The tool has been submitted to factor analysis via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, before use by STT, for validity (STT, 1988). The questionnaire was subjected to an alpha coefficient reliability analysis on each of the dimensions of the questionnaire and was found to have an alpha = .81 for the total nursing Likert scale. The Activity section alpha was .80, Evaluation alpha was .71, and the Power alpha was .69. Also, the survey was submitted to a panel of experts on nursing, measurement, and attitude for internal validity (F. May, personal communication, February 27, 1992). The semantic differential section of the questionnaire was not considered reliable as a test by STT (see Appendix C). For this reason, that portion of the study was omitted from the discussion (F. May, personal communication, February 27, 1992).

The questionnaire was designed to evaluate the dimensions of Activity, Evaluation, and Power in nursing, as seen by the students. The Activity dimension corresponds to the physical activities of a nurse. The Evaluation dimension corresponds to respect and appreciation of the nurse's abilities. The Power dimension corresponds to a nurse's authority within society. The Activity statements were: nurses will always have jobs (1), nurses use their brains a lot (2), nurses are caring people (3),

nurses know a lot (5), nurses work very hard (6), nurses work with their hands (9), and nurses are very busy (13). The Evaluation statements were that nurses are appreciated (4), nurses make a lot of money (7), nurses have a college degree (8), nurses work in safe places (10), nurses need good grades (15), nurses are respected by others (16), and nurses work with high technology a lot (17). The Power statements were that nurses are leaders (11), nurses make decisions for themselves (12), and that nurses are very powerful (14).

The dimensions were identified in the concept of nursing as a career by STT and correspond to the psychological work of Osgood and Tannenbaum as cited by STT (1988). The questionnaire contained 19 statements about nurses corresponding to each dimension. The questionnaire used the Likert format, with 5 responses, from strongly agree (scored 5) to strongly disagree (scored 1). The second part of the survey was a semantic differential of 14 paired adjectives to solicit students opinions of nurses. This scale is designed to measure connotative attitude toward nursing (Burns & Grove, 1987). These were also scored as 1 to 5, with 5 being the most positive adjective, and 1 the most negative adjective.

Analysis Procedures

Analysis of data was performed using the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Each response to the questionnaire was coded, and numeric values were assigned to each variable. Frequencies were used to describe the numbers of responses to each variable. The Kruskal-

Wallis test was used to determine the significance of the group differences to answer the research questions. The Kruskal-Wallis test was chosen because the assumptions for normality and equal variances were not met by the samples. Medians were used as a measure of central tendency since the analysis conducted (Kruskal-Wallis) tests for a significant difference in the medians. The Kruskal-Wallis test is more efficient as it utilizes more of the information in the observations and does not need to make the restrictive assumptions about the sampled populations (Siegel, 1956; Sincich, 1993). The alpha level was set at .05 divided by the number of tests, which makes the p level .006. Gender, relationship with a nurse, and socioeconomic status were examined for comparison of answers of contrasting categories within each dimension.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Demographic Characteristics

Of the 200 surveys distributed to two schools, only 61 (or 32%) were returned, with 32 (52%) from school A and 29 (47%) from school B. Because consent forms were returned separately, it was possible to maintain complete anonymity. The returns were evenly divided between gender, with 31 males (50.8%) and 30 females (49.2%). The racial mix was as follows: Asian, 11.5%; Blacks, 8.2%; Hispanics, 11.5%; Caucasians, 67.2%; and "other," 1.6%. There were 51 returns (84%) from freshmen, and only 10 returns (16%) from seniors. The students who stated whether or not they knew another person who was a nurse was exactly reversed by school, with 16 stating "yes," and 10 stating, "no," from school A; and 10 stating "yes," and 16 stating, "no," from school B. Of the returns ($N = 61$), 38 students (61%) reported their family incomes, and 6 (16.2%) were in the lower socioeconomic status. Due to the low returns of the family incomes by students, inferences relating socioeconomic level to opinions of nursing image cannot be made in this study.

Survey Analysis

This study was a replication of the study conducted by Sigma Theta Tau (STT) in Indiana. When comparing the mean scores of the individual questions with the STT study, the questions which had the highest mean

scores in the STT were: "nurses care for people," "nurses work very hard," "nurses make good grades," "nurses work with their hands a lot," and "nurses are very busy" (STT, 1988). Those questions having the lowest mean scores were: "nurses make a lot of money," "nurses are very powerful," "nurses work in a safe place," "nurses make decisions for themselves," and "nurses are leaders" (STT, 1988). Those questions which related to power ("nurses are leaders," "nurses make decisions," and "nurses are powerful") scored low for both the STT survey and for the survey conducted for this research on California students. (For a comparison of the mean scores of the two surveys, see Table 1.) The mean scores for the California survey are listed in descending order and are compared to the mean scores from the STT. The scores presented in Table 1 concur with the findings of Kalisch and Kalisch (1982; 1987), who stated that nurses are seen as being less powerful, more technical, and as working with their hands.

Question 1

What is the difference in the median subscale scores for the image components (activity, evaluation, power) of nursing as a function of socioeconomic status of the students studied?

The image component of activity included the questions that "nurses always have jobs," "nurses use their brains," "nurses are caring," "nurses know a lot," "nurses work very hard," "nurses work with their hands," and "nurses are very busy." When analyzed, using the Kruskal-Wallis test, there were no differences of opinion among students of different

socioeconomic groups ($p = .43$). Regarding the evaluation component, the Kruskal-Wallis showed the least difference due to socioeconomic status ($p = .98$).

Table 1

Comparison of Mean Scores Between California Student Survey and STT
Survey N = 61

Question and Number	California	STT
9 Work with their hands	4.16	4.33*
6 Work very hard	4.07	4.38*
3 Are very caring	4.03	4.47*
13 Are very busy	4.02	4.32*
2 Use their brains	3.90	4.29
5 Know a lot	3.79	4.30
17 Work with high technology	3.70	3.94
18 Have a college degree	3.58	4.30
15 Need good grades	3.54	4.38*
4 Are appreciated	3.48	4.07
1 Will always have jobs	3.42	3.90
16 Are respected	3.30	4.07
10 Work in safe places	3.29	3.71
12 Make decisions for themselves	2.97	3.44
11 Are leaders	2.89	3.44
14 Are powerful	2.70	3.18
7 Make a lot of money	2.18	3.32

*Five highest scoring questions on STT.

In examining their understanding of society's appreciation for nurses, both high and low socioeconomic students were nearly unified in their opinions. The questions relating to evaluation were that "nurses are appreciated," "nurses make a lot of money," "nurses have college degrees," "nurses work in safe places," "nurses need good grades," "nurses are respected by others," and "nurses work with high technology." There was little difference in the median scores for either group (see Table 2).

Table 2

Comparisons of Medians and Significance Levels for Each Dimension

Significance = $p < .006$ (N = 61).

	Activity (N = 61)		Evaluation (N = 61)		Power (N = 61)	
	Median	P Value	Median	P Value	Median	P Value
Hi SES*	4.00	.43	3.29	.98	2.83	.31
Low SES*	3.86		3.14		2.67	
Know	3.93	.83	3.57	.26	3.00	.81
Don't Know	3.86		3.29		2.67	
Male	3.86	.21	3.29	.06	3.00	.73
Female	4.00		3.57		2.67	

*Disproportional group sizes, $n = 32$ for high, and $n = 6$ for low SES

The questions relating to power were that "nurses are leaders," "nurses make decisions for themselves," and "nurses are powerful." There was a slight difference in opinion, though not significant ($p = .31$), between students of lower socioeconomic status and those of higher socioeconomic status regarding their perceptions of the power of nurses, with those students of higher socioeconomic status having a slightly more elevated view of nursing power than those of lower socioeconomic status.

Question 2

What is the difference in the nursing image component scores between students who know another person who is a nurse and students who do not?

When tested using the Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA, no significant difference in any of the components was noted between the students who knew a nurse and those students who did not (see Table 2). The component of evaluation did reveal a slight difference of opinion between those students who did know a nurse and those who did not, in that those who did know a nurse had a higher overall estimation of nurses than those who did not. Likewise, the median scores for both evaluation and power components were different between those students who did know a nurse and for those who did not know a nurse; again, those who did know a nurse had a slightly higher overall opinion of nurses, but no statistically significant differences were observed.

Question 3

What is the difference in the nursing image component scores between males and females?

When tested, using Kruskal-Wallis, the scores for males and females were not significantly different in any of the image components of activity, evaluation, or power. In the median scores for activity and power, there was some slight difference. The female students rated the activity component higher than did the male students, but males rated the component for nursing power slightly higher than did their female counterparts.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Summary of Study

This replication study focused upon the attitudes of secondary students in California toward the nursing profession. The analysis examined attitudes across three dimensions of nursing: activities of nurses, appreciation of nurses, and power of nurses.

Question 1

What is the difference in the median subscale scores for the image components (activity, evaluation, power) of nursing as a function of socioeconomic status of the students studied?

The students with the higher socioeconomic status seemed to have a better opinion of nurses' power, which was not in agreement with the STT (1988) study. In that study, the lower socioeconomic students had a more favorable opinion of nursing power than did the higher socioeconomic students. However, this inference cannot be considered a strong conclusion, as there was too great a difference in the number of students who reported their family income from those who did not, and there were too few lower socioeconomic students.

Question 2

What is the difference in the nursing image component scores between students who know another person who is a nurse and students who do not?

The median scores for students who knew a nurse were slightly higher than for those who did not know a nurse in all the areas. In the power component they were still in the "uncertain" category, indicating that students have an uncertain to poor opinion of nursing power. There was close agreement about nursing activities between students who did know a nurse and students who did not know a nurse, and that agreement was only slightly above uncertain. The fact that there is no significant difference between the opinions of students who know a nurse and students who do not know a nurse is surprising, as most of the literature reveals that knowing a nurse does make a difference in a student's opinion of nurses (Rudov et al., 1976; Ellerby, 1988; Grossman et al., 1989; Kersten et al., 1991; Kohler & Edwards, 1990). However, those who knew a nurse seemed to have a slightly better appreciation for nursing, which agreed with the literature, indicating that knowing a nurse seemed to increase the student's appreciation of nursing.

Question 3

What is the difference in the nursing image component scores between males and females?

The median scores between males and females indicate a higher estimation of nursing activity on the part of females than males. Surprisingly, the only difference between the scores is in the area of power, with males giving a slightly higher appraisal of nursing power than did females. However, gender differences seem to have very little bearing on the three components of nursing image.

Conclusions

Kalisch and Kalisch (1982, 1983b, 1987) and the Kohler and Edwards (1990) study state that students see nursing as dependent, as powerless, and as technical. The National Council on Nursing Implementation (NCNIP) (1991) study also found that students, even though they had a better understanding of nursing activities after seeing the public service advertisements on nursing, still viewed nursing as dependent. This study neither seemed to agree nor disagree with those studies. The conclusions seemed to indicate some agreement with the STT study, but not with other studies. Strangely enough, the opinion of nursing power seemed to be higher among high socioeconomic students and males. The results of this study concur with the study conducted by Sigma Theta Tau (STT) in that four of the five highest scoring questions for the STT are the highest four for this study.

Kalisch and Kalisch (1987) have stated that nursing activities are stereotyped by all segments of society, and the technical aspect of nursing stereotypes (Table 1) parallel the questions which are first in ranking: working with their hands (technical), working hard, and being very busy. All of the top six questions in the survey are Activity dimension questions. The questions which are technical (numbers 6, 9, and 13) indicate that students have an attitude about nurses' activities which considers nurses as technical workers. Kalisch and Kalisch (1987, 1983a) state that the media create stereotypes of nurses that become self-perpetuating, and it would seem that despite the fact a student may or may

not know a nurse, the stereotypes that nurses are powerless, and do technical, dependent labor still persist.

Scope and Limitations

The primary limitation of this study lay in the small number of overall returns. The population was so small, in fact, that little more than speculation could be accomplished regarding attitudes in any one area. For instance, so few of the seniors returned questionnaires that a great deal of the data regarding that segment of the population still need to be replicated for validity. Likewise, the number of students of lower socioeconomic status reporting was so small that no conclusions could be drawn based on socioeconomic levels (only 61% of the subjects in this study reported family income). Any solid inferences made regarding socioeconomic status at this point would be somewhat suspect. A further study is recommended using a larger sample of students to more nearly approximate the attitudes of the secondary student population, with particular emphasis on the senior population and students of lower socioeconomic status.

Another limitation was the questionnaire itself. Further reliability and validity tests need to be conducted on the instrument to strengthen the weakest questions in the "Aspects of Evaluation" section. Some of the same types of questions were considered as weak by STT (F. May, personal communication, February 17, 1992). Also, since the Semantic Differential section of the questionnaire was considered by STT to be less reliable and weaker than other portions, no conclusions were drawn from

it (F. May, personal communication, May 15, 1992). In an effort to arrive at better adjectives, the researcher developing the Semantic Differential Scale needs to explain each pair of words in theoretical terms, stating why each item is important and clustered together. In so doing, the Scale could then be used to build theory (Burns & Grove, 1987). This researcher did not calculate comparison testing on "power," because that aspect of the Semantic Differential Scale was considered the least valid by STT (F. May, personal communication, February 27, 1992). Because "power" words are so subjective, further research is needed in this area, especially since this area is considered weakest for nurses. There was no information for comparison on any part of the Semantic Differential Scale.

In the final analysis, the study's scope proved to be too large. The number of variables that were addressed required a larger sample population to reach statistically significant conclusions. A larger sample of both northern and southern California student populations is needed to determine if there are, in fact, valid differences among California students when compared to their counterparts in the rest of the United States.

Recommendations

The main recommendation would be replication of the study with a broader student population to determine if those conclusions which are not in agreement with other studies are valid. The populations of students in both southern California and northern California need to be reexamined.

Another recommendation would be to retest the reliability and validity of the Semantic Differential Scale to obtain a more reliable series

of adjectives for ascertaining student attitudes toward nurses. Also, one question needs to be added to the questionnaire--"Are you contemplating a career in nursing?"

A final, yet very important, recommendation is to encourage the dissemination of nursing information to secondary school vocational counselors since they constitute one of the primary pipelines to our young people and to the pool of potential career nurses. Students need to be informed about nursing activities, options, and the many newly expanded opportunities for both genders and students from all socioeconomic circumstances. Once they become aware of the unique challenge a career in nursing can provide and of the genuine need that exists for academically qualified and dedicated candidates, perhaps more of these students will choose this highly rewarding profession for themselves.

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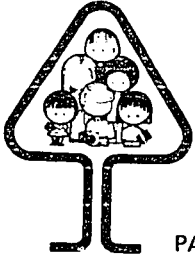
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APPENDIX A
Consent Letters



PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT · 25 CHURCHILL AVENUE · PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA 94306

November 25, 1991

Ms. Elizabeth Cogswell
2501 Cowper Street
Palo Alto, CA. 94301

Dear Ms. Cogswell:

I have read your request to do research on student attitudes towards nursing as a career. It sounds like an interesting project. You indicate that you have already made tentative contact at Palo Alto High School. Either of the two high schools will be suitable from the district's standpoint. Please contact the Principal at whichever school you select in order to proceed.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara A. Liddell".

Barbara A. Liddell
Associate Superintendent

cc: Sandra Pearson, Kevin O'Reilly

Carlmont High School

ALAMEDA DE LAS PULGAS
AND SAN CARLOS AVENUE
BELMONT, CALIFORNIA 94002-3535

Peter H. Newton, Principal

(415) 595-0210

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MERLE D. FRUEHLING
Superintendent

December 17, 1991

Ms. Elizabeth L. Cogswell
2501 Cowper
Palo Alto, CA 94301

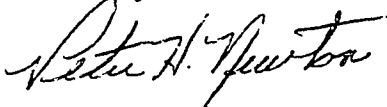
Dear Ms. Cogswell:

I have received your letter of December 12 regarding your request to use four class of students to respond to a questionnaire. I would like to review the questionnaire prior to its use.

The date of this activity is an important matter. January 13-23 is a very poor time; other than those dates, I see no problems.

I may be contacted by phoning 595-0210, extension 227.

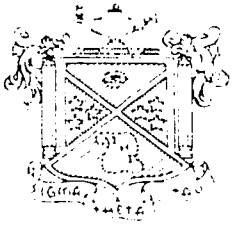
Sincerely,



Peter H. Newton
Principal

PHN/wp

cc: G. Zellner, file



Sigma Theta Tau International, Inc.

HONOR SOCIETY OF NURSING

International Headquarters
550 West North Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-2157
(317) 634-8171

Fax (317) 634-8188

May 17, 1991

Elizabeth Cogswell
2501 Cowper
Palo Alto, CA 94301

Dear Ms. Cogswell:

Thank you for your letter requesting permission to use the questionnaires developed for Sigma Theta Tau International's study of *Attitudes, Values and Beliefs of the Public in Indiana Toward Nursing as a Career: A Study to Enhance Recruitment into Nursing*, published in December, 1988.

Permission is granted to use the questionnaires, and copies of the adult and student questionnaires are enclosed.

Best wishes in your research effort. We look forward to receiving a report of your completed study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carole Hudgings".

Carole Hudgings, RN, PhD
Director
International Nursing Library

cc: Fred May

APPENDIX B
Human Subjects Approval

Office of the Academic Vice President • Associate Academic Vice President • Graduate Studies and Research
One Washington Square • San José, California 95192-0025 • 408/924-2480

To: Elizabeth L. Current Cogswell, Nursing
2501 Cowper
Palo Alto, CA 94301

From: Serena W. Stanford *Serena W. Stanford*
AAVP, Graduate Studies and Research

Date: February 17, 1992

The Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board has approved your request to use human subjects in the study entitled:

"Image of Nursing Among Secondary Students"

This approval is contingent upon the subjects participating in your research project being appropriately protected from risk. This includes the protection of the anonymity of the subjects' identity when they participate in your research project, and with regard to any and all data that may be collected from the subjects. The Board's approval includes continued monitoring of your research by the Board to assure that the subjects are being adequately and properly protected from such risks. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Dr. Serena Stanford immediately. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma and release of potentially damaging personal information.

Please also be advised that each subject needs to be fully informed and aware that their participation in your research project is voluntary, and that he or she may withdraw from the project at any time. Further, a subject's participation, refusal to participate or withdrawal will not affect any services the subject is receiving or will receive at the institution in which the research is being conducted.

If you have questions, please contact me at 408-924-2480.

CC: Mary Reeve, Nursing

APPENDIX C
Parental Information Letter
Survey Tool

College of Applied Sciences and Arts • Department of Nursing
One Washington Square • San José, California 95192-0057 • 408/924-3130 • FAX 408/924-3135

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Responsible Investigator - Elizabeth. L. Current Cogswell RN, BSN

Title of protocol - Perceptions of High School Students towards
Nursing as a career.

Dear Parent:

Your student has been selected to participate in a research study investigating the perceptions of high school students towards nursing as a career, and perceptions of nursing's image. Your student will be asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding nurses and nursing. This will be done some time in the next month at Palo Alto High School in your student's class. If your child is uncomfortable with any part of the questionnaire, or with the questionnaire itself, the student is not required to answer the question/s. By refusing to answer any, or all, of the questions, the student will not be penalized in any way by either the school or San Jose State University. The questionnaire is completely anonymous and voluntary. There will be no recompense nor coercion for answering any of the questions. There are no anticipated risks to your student if he or she participates. There are also no anticipated immediate benefits to the participation of your student.

The resulting study will be used for a Masters Thesis studying nursing image. The Thesis may be published, but complete anonymity is guaranteed, and at no time will names be used.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Elizabeth Cogswell, at 328-8296, or:

Mary Reeve, Ed.D, RN
Department of Nursing
San Jose State University
One Washington Square
San Jose CA
1 408/924-3165

If there are any complaints related to the research process, contact:

Serena Stanford, Ph.D.
AAUP
Graduate Studies Office
San Jose State University
One Washington Square
San Jose CA
1 408/924-2480

If you will allow your student to participate in this study please sign the consent form and send this form back to me in the accompanying self addressed stamped envelope by March 9, 1992.

My son/daughter _____ has my
(student's name)

permission to participate in the Nursing Image survey which is being done in my child's classroom.

Signed: _____
Parent/Guardian's signature

Sincerely,

Elizabeth L. Current Cogswell, RN, BSN

Elizabeth L. Current Cogswell
Masters Student
San Jose University School of Nursing
2501 Cowper
Palo Alto CA 94301

Dear Parent:

I am doing a study of the Image of Nurses among the high school students in the state of California. Your student's classroom has agreed to assist me by distributing the questionnaire to their students. Your student's opinion of nursing will increase our knowledge of the image of nurses among the general population. This will enable us to further educate the public on nurses and nursing. I would appreciate it if you would consent to allowing your teenager to participate in the study.

It is important to have the questionnaire done as soon as possible. In order to be able to do so, I must have your consent to be able to give the questionnaire to your child. Please sign the consent form with the accompanying letter, and return it to me in the accompanying self addressed stamped envelope.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Cogswell, RN, BSN

NURSING IMAGE SURVEY**General Information:**

Grade: 9 () 12 ()
Sex: M () F ()
Race: Asian () Black () Hispanic ()
 White () Other ()

Approximate Annual Total Household Income:

_____ Less than \$5,000
_____ \$5,000 - \$19,000
_____ \$10,000 - \$ 19,999
_____ \$20,000 - \$ 29,999
_____ \$30,000 - \$ 39,999
_____ \$40,000 - \$ 49,999
_____ \$50,000 - \$ 59,999
_____ \$60,000 - \$ 69,999
_____ \$70,000 - or more

Highest Educational Level Obtained by Parent/Guardian in Household:

_____ Less than High School graduate
_____ High school graduate
_____ Some college work
_____ Bachelors Degree
_____ Some graduate work
_____ Graduate degree

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