
Changes in the Characteristics of Physiotherapy Students in New South Wales over the Decade 1976-1986

Responses to a survey comparing the backgrounds and career attitudes of incoming physiotherapy students in 1976 and 1986 indicated that female students in 1986 were more ambitious, more committed to full time careers, attached greater importance to professional recognition, pay and promotion, had more egalitarian attitudes toward women's role, had fewer romantic attachments and wanted fewer children. Responses of male students in 1986 revealed that they were older than women students, were somewhat more ambitious and conservative and were more concerned with their surroundings and freedom at work.

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Social changes which have taken place in Australia in the last decade include increased participation of women in tertiary education and of married women in the work force (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1984) accompanied by more egalitarian attitudes toward men and women's roles in society (Westbrook and Nordholm 1987). The decade has also been a time of economic recession and unemployment, particularly among the young (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1984). It has become increasingly difficult for students to gain entry to tertiary courses. In the years 1982 to 1986 the H.S.C. aggregate mark needed to obtain entry into the physiotherapy degree in New South Wales rose from 353 to 372 marks. One of the arguments in support of the removal of fees for tertiary education was that it would encourage the enrolment of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It is to be expected that such social changes would result in different

attitudes being expressed by physiotherapy students in 1986 than were expressed in 1976.

During these years enormous changes have also occurred within the physiotherapy profession. The bachelor's degree was introduced in New South Wales in 1976 and since then a variety of post-graduate diplomas and a master's degree have been introduced. Other changes have included the establishment of physiotherapists as first contact practitioners, the founding of the Australian College of Physiotherapy and the growth of specialization (Cole 1983). Students commencing physiotherapy in 1986 entered a profession with a greater variety of, and more clearly defined career paths, than in the past. Physiotherapy graduates in contrast to many other graduates enjoy very high employment rates (Graduate Careers Council 1985) and there are numerous unfilled positions (Steeper 1986).

One of the most obvious changes in

the student population has been the increasing numbers of male students. Ten per cent of the undergraduates commencing physiotherapy at Cumberland College in 1976 were males. In 1986 males comprised 34 per cent of students commencing the degree. This change may reflect the increasing attractiveness of physiotherapy as a career and the greater community acceptance of males working in what were previously female dominated professions. In 1976 Westbrook, Nordholm and Walker (1979) carried out a survey comparing the backgrounds and ambitions of fifteen male students enrolled in health science courses at Cumberland College with female students. The male students, two thirds of whom were enrolled in physiotherapy, were significantly older than the female students. They came from larger families, their fathers were employed in positions of lower socio-economic status, and they were more likely to aspire to leadership positions in their profes-

sions. Thus the males tended to have deferred making a decision to enrol in a health profession. Considering their socio-economic backgrounds, the career choices of the male students were more upwardly mobile than those of the female students. Many researchers have reported significant differences in the importance attached to various aspects of work, by men and women (Siegfried, Macfarlane, Graham, Moore and Young 1981). While men tend to value advancement and security, women tend to prefer pleasant environments and co-workers. Do such factors influence the work preferences of physiotherapists? A comparison of the professional histories and work styles of male and female physiotherapists in private practice (McLoughlin and Westbrook 1984) found few differences. Both groups were as likely to have multiple practices, to have specialized practices, to have post graduate qualifications, to be using new treatment approaches, and to be members of the Private Practitioners Group. However, females were more likely to have spent time in part-time practice and were less likely to have established professional affiliations with community groups such as sporting teams. Thus sex differences in physiotherapists' career attitudes may exist primarily in prejudiced beliefs rather than in reality (Mathewson 1975). The fears expressed by the Department of Labor and Immigration (1975) regarding the likely high losses to the physiotherapy profession of future graduates have not been supported by the results of our longitudinal study of the 1978 graduates from Cumberland College (Westbrook and Nordholm 1982; Nordholm and Westbrook 1985).

Within the profession there is a growing awareness both of the changing attitudes of graduates and of the need to expand the expectations of physiotherapists so that the profession can maintain 'the broadest possible horizons' in the face of social and medical change (Warmington 1986, p.ii.). Yeland (1986) considered that new gradu-

ates have 'up to date' ideas on physiotherapy which more experienced physiotherapists could learn from. Young physiotherapists are far less keen than in the past to work in acute general hospitals and it is feared that physiotherapy will lose its traditional base in the hospital and medical system (Steeper 1986). On the other hand Moore (1986) feared that physiotherapists risk losing status because so few physiotherapists have gained, or recognise the importance of gaining, administrative qualifications.

In the face of such changes both within society and the profession it was of interest to obtain empirical data regarding the changes, if any, which have occurred in students' career attitudes over the last decade. Such attitudes have important implications regarding the likely career patterns and job preferences of the future work force in physiotherapy. The first aim of the study was to compare the backgrounds, attitudes and ambitions of female students who enrolled in physiotherapy at Cumberland College of Health Sciences in 1976 with those who enrolled in 1986. The second aim was to compare the characteristics of male and female students who commenced physiotherapy in 1986. The small number of male physiotherapy students enrolled in 1976 made comparison with those enrolled in 1986 inappropriate. However it was of interest to discover whether the earlier differences found between male and female students in the health sciences (Westbrook *et al* 1979) were apparent a decade later among physiotherapy students.

Method

Questionnaire

The questionnaire administered to the incoming students in 1986 consisted of 15 items which had been administered to physiotherapy students who commenced their degrees a decade earlier (Nordholm *et al* 1978, Nordholm and Westbrook, 1979). Questions 1-6 explored the students' backgrounds by asking each respondent his or her sex,

age, father's occupation, number of siblings, mother's current employment status (employed or not employed), and the student's current social situation (not dating at all, casual dating, going steady, engaged, living with another, married, other). Father's occupation was used as an indicator of the socio-economic status of the student's family. Answers were coded from 1-4 in terms of Congalton's (1969) four point scale of the status and prestige attached to various occupations in Australia. An occupation rated 1 would be typically a higher managerial or professional one while unskilled occupations are rated 4.

Questions 7-9 explored the students' goals. They were asked to rank eight life goals in order of importance from 1 for the most important to 8 for the least. The goals were: find a spouse, achieve recognition and distinction in chosen profession, make good friends, raise a family, enjoy life, do a good job at level of basic training, do something good in society, and experience adventure such as travel. Students were asked, 'Assume that your chosen field has three levels of Occupational Status (1 executive leader position, 2 intermediate supervisory position, 3 basic training position)' and were asked to check 'the one you realistically aspire to achieve'. They were also asked to indicate, 'How many children would you like to have?'

Female students were requested to complete two additional questions concerned with their future plans. These were derived from an American study by Epstein and Bronzafit (1972). Item 10 asked students to 'Check the alternative which most accurately describes your career plans: (a) I intend to be a career women. I would not consider giving up a career for marriage; (b) I may get married eventually, especially if I don't have to give up my professional career; (c) I plan to have a career. But I also plan to marry and have children, while working in my chosen field; (d) I am completely undecided whether I want a career or marriage or

both; (e) I plan to prepare myself for a career and will probably work in my chosen field after I am married. However, I expect to interrupt my career when children arrive although I may return to my career after they are grown or at least in school; (f) I expect to get married and do not plan on working in a career at all, but I hope to be qualified, through my studies, for a job in case my marriage plans don't work out; (g) I definitely do not expect to work in any professional job after my college studies are completed.' Item 11 was as follows; 'Ten years from now, would you like to be: (a) a housewife with no children; (b) a housewife with one or two children; (c) a housewife with three or more children; (d) an unmarried career woman; (e) a married career woman without children; (f) a married career woman with children, working part-time; (g) a married career woman with children, working full-time; (h) have not thought about it.'

The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) (Spence and Helmreich 1972) was item 12 in the questionnaire. This scale consists of 55 items concerning the vocational, intellectual, sexual and marital roles of women in society. Subjects are asked to answer 'agree strongly, agree mildly, disagree mildly, or disagree strongly' to statements such as, 'Women with children should not work outside the home if they don't have to financially.' Items are scored from 0-3 and added to give a total score out of 165. A higher score reflects a more liberal, egalitarian attitude towards sex roles.

Item 13 was the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem 1974). This scale which is a measure of self concept consists of 60 personality characteristics. Subjects rate how typical these characteristics are of themselves. Twenty of the items are feminine items *eg* sympathetic, affectionate, which Bem found both sexes are more likely to attribute to women. There are 20 masculine items *eg* assertive, ambitious, which both sexes are more likely to attribute to males. Bem

found that some people are sex-typed, describing themselves mainly in terms of sex appropriate characteristics. Others are androgynous having self concepts that combine traits of both sexes. Bem and Lenney (1976) showed that androgynous people were less likely than sex typed people, to avoid opposite sex behaviour when it is appropriate to a situation *eg* androgynous males were more likely than masculine males to be caring and androgynous women were more likely than feminine women to be assertive. An androgyny score is derived by subtracting subjects' masculinity scores from their femininity scores. A score approaching zero indicates that a person combines masculine and feminine characteristics in his or her self concept. A negative score indicates a masculine self concept and a positive one, a feminine self concept.

Item 14 asked respondents, 'How did you decide on your occupation?' and required them to indicate which of seven factors had had the most influence on their decision. These were: 'One of my parents was in the same occupation; a close friend or relative was in the same occupation; a guidance counsellor or occupational counsellor suggested it; a teacher influenced me into entering it; I always wanted to enter it; it wasn't the occupation I originally wanted to enter, but I couldn't get into the occupation of my choice; and I happened into it without any deliberate thought'. Item 15 listed 12 aspects of work and asked students to rate 'How important to you is each of the following aspects of your career choice.' Ratings were made on 5 point scales from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). These aspects which were derived from the work of Renwick and Lawler (1978) are listed in Table 4.

The questionnaire administered to the 1976 sample contained identical items to the 1986 questionnaire as well as additional questions. The questionnaires given to the two groups had instructions printed on the front page. In 1976 these emphasised the interest

of the researchers in comparing Australian with overseas students. In 1986 students were informed of our interest in what changes, if any, has occurred in student attitudes over the previous decade. Students were reassured concerning confidentiality and told that reports would only include summary statistics. They were informed that they would receive feedback concerning the results of the surveys.

Subjects

The 1976 sample consisted of students who enrolled in the Bachelor of Applied Science degree at Cumberland College of Health Sciences in that year. In the first week of first semester questionnaires were administered to the students (64 females, 10 males) in approximately two thirds of the behavioural science seminar groups for physiotherapy students. For logistic reasons we were unable to test all classes. There is no reason to suspect that seminar groups selected for the survey did not comprise a representative sample of the groups in the year as students were assigned to these groups in a random fashion. The ten males included in the survey comprised 66.6 per cent of those enrolled in the year. The 1976 sample completed items 1-13 of the questionnaire used in the 1986 study. Almost three years later a follow up study was done of the 1976 students when they were completing their final semester (Nordholm and Westbrook 1979). Questionnaires were distributed to the 103 female final year students and 74 returned them. In this questionnaire we included items 14-15 concerning career choice. We have used the responses that the 1976 sample gave in their final year to compare with the responses made by the 1986 sample at the beginning of their course. Thus caution should be applied in interpreting these comparisons. By third year some of the original 1976 sample had left the course, students' perceptions of their career choice may have been influenced by their educational experiences and the 72 per cent of students

who took the trouble to return the questionnaire in third year may not have been representative of the year. However the question of changing reasons for career decisions was of such interest that it was deemed of value to make these comparisons.

The 1986 sample consisted of 115 female and 58 male students who enrolled in Physiotherapy 1 in that year. The students who completed the questionnaire during behavioural science classes in the first week of first semester made up 97 per cent of the first year enrolment in physiotherapy. It has been argued that a sample of students tested in class is unlikely to be a representative sample. However most students do attend class in the first week of their courses as witnessed by the 97 per cent response rate. Thus we are confident that the views expressed by our two samples are representative of students' attitudes. Some subjects in both samples failed to answer all items on the questionnaires. Thus the number of respondents varies for different items.

Procedure

After completion, the questionnaires were coded and statistical analyses were carried out using the SPSS statistical computer package. Only female students were used in making comparisons between student attitudes in 1976 and 1986 because the sample of males tested in 1976 was so small. Differences between the attitudes of male and female physiotherapy students were investigated by comparing the responses of the male and female students tested in 1986. Comparisons were made using *t* tests and chi square analyses. When performing the latter some response categories had to be combined because of small cell frequencies.

Results and Discussion

Comparison of Female Student Responses 1976-1986

Table 1 shows the results of *t* tests comparing three of the students' back-

ground characteristics in 1976 and 1978. These indicated that the age of students, their socio-economic backgrounds (as indicated by their fathers' occupations) and the size of their families had not changed significantly over the decade. However the chi square analysis (see Table 2) comparing mothers' employment on the two occasions indicated a significant increase in employment had occurred. This rise from 33.3% to 56.6% reflects a national trend (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1984). Significant changes had also occurred in students' dating behaviour (see Table 2). In 1976 12.7% of students said that they were not dating while in 1986 the number had increased to 32.1% of the sample. In 1976 52.4% of the students were involved in casual relationships but this had decreased to 29.5% by 1986. Similar proportions (31.7% in 1976 and 29.5% in 1986) were 'going steady'. However an increase of 5.7% had occurred by 1986, in those who were engaged, living with another or married. These three categories were combined because of the small frequencies. Examination of responses showed that the main increase in 1986 came from more students being married or living in relationships. The marked decrease in dating which had occurred may reflect the fact that a far higher H.S.C. aggregate was required to gain entry into Physiotherapy in 1986. The academic application students needed to achieve this mark may have precluded any great involvement in social activities.

Female students' occupational aspirations were significantly higher in 1986 than ten years earlier (see Table 1). In 1976 only 13.5% of students aspired to achieve executive leader positions while in 1986 43% did so. These ambitions were reflected in the relative importance respondents attached to the eight life goals. Achieving professional recognition was significantly more important to students in 1986 and experiencing adventure such as travelling, was much less important. Increased career ambitions were accompanied by a

decreased desire for children. The average number of children wanted dropped from 3.35 in 1976 to 2.86 in 1986.

Changed attitudes toward careers and marriage were again revealed in responses to items 10 and 11 (see Table 3). In answering the question concerning their career plans no student, on either testing occasion, chose options f, g or h which indicated lack of career commitment and approximately 2% indicated that they were undecided. Responses to options a, b and c, which indicated commitment to a full time career, were compared to responses indicating a preference for interrupting work while their children were young. The proportion of respondents with a firm career commitment rose from 25.4% in 1976 to 44.5% in 1986. When asked what they would like to be doing in ten years hence, students in 1986 were far more likely to see themselves as combining a family with full time employment, or being career women without families. They were significantly less likely than students were in 1976, to see themselves as housewives or working part time while they cared for children.

Career decisions in 1986 were more likely to be attributed to the influence of careers advisors than in 1976 and less likely to be due to the influence of a parent or friend who was a physiotherapist. Students in 1986 were less likely to say that they 'happened into' the course. The proportions who 'always wanted' to be physiotherapists remained at 49% and those who saw their choice as a 'second best' one had only risen by 3.2% in 1986 in spite of the increased difficulty that H.S.C. students experienced in being accepted in the courses of their first choice. The findings suggest an increased awareness among careers advisors that physiotherapy is a desirable profession. They also suggest that students were thinking more seriously about their future occupations than they did a decade earlier. As mentioned earlier, the 1976 responses to this item were collected when the students were in third year

Physiotherapy Students in New South Wales: 1976-1986

Table 1:
t tests comparing backgrounds, ambitions, AWS and Bem scores of female students 1976-1986, and male and female students 1986

Variable		Groups			t tests	
		Females 1976	Females 1986	Males 1986	Females ^a 1976-86	Females ^b males 1986
Background						
Age	M	18.13	18.73	21.28	-1.63	4.82***
	S	1.94	2.56	4.38		
Father's occupation ^c	M	2.22	2.16	2.19	0.41	0.21
	S	.91	.82	.82		
Number siblings	M	2.81	2.35	2.70	1.97	1.41
	S	1.50	1.47	1.67		
Ambitions						
Occupational aspirations ^d	M	1.92	1.62	1.44	4.07***	1.99*
	S	.44	.59	.54		
Children wanted	M	3.35	2.86	3.12	2.40*	1.14
	S	1.32	1.25	1.49		
Goals ^e						
Find a spouse	M	4.90	4.79	4.04	0.37	2.38*
	S	1.92	1.86	2.01		
Professional recognition	M	5.27	4.42	4.61	2.26*	0.51
	S	2.38	2.37	2.14		
Make good friends	M	2.87	3.12	3.67	-1.03	2.02*
	S	1.51	1.52	1.78		
Raise a family	M	5.63	5.86	5.31	-0.81	-1.76
	S	1.59	1.76	2.08		
Enjoy life	M	2.19	1.89	1.74	1.20	-0.58
	S	1.67	1.49	1.51		
Good job at basic training	M	5.65	5.68	6.17	-0.09	1.51
	S	2.26	1.99	1.81		
Do good in society	M	5.10	4.92	4.87	0.49	-0.14
	S	2.05	2.22	2.32		
Experience adventure	M	4.40	5.24	5.26	-2.65**	0.07
	S	2.07	1.93	1.95		
AWS ^f	M	106.17	120.10	110.83	-4.76***	-2.82**
	S	15.72	18.32	22.10		
Androgyny ^g	M	.65	.51	-.46	1.19	-7.53***
	S	.76	.75	.90		

a df = 177 - 164

b df = 171-156

c Scored 1 (high status) to 4

d Rated from 1 (high aspirations) to 3

e Ranked from 1 (most important) to 8

f Higher scores = more liberal attitudes

g Scores closer to 0 are more androgynous

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Physiotherapy Students in New South Wales: 1976-1986

Table 2
Percentage frequencies and chi square tests comparing female students responses in 1976 and 1986 and male and female responses in 1986

Response	Females 1976 ^a	Females 1986 ^b	Males 1986 ^c
5. Is your mother employed in a salaried position at present?			
Yes	33.3%	56.5%	46.6%
No	66.7%	43.5%	53.4%
χ^2 (females 1976-86) = 7.86 (df = 1) p < .01			
χ^2 (females-males 1986) = 1.16 (df = 1) p > .05			
6. What is your current social situation?			
Not dating	12.7%	32.1%	24.6%
Casual dating	52.4%	29.5%	33.3%
Going steady	31.7%	29.5%	26.3%
Engaged, living with another, married	3.2%	8.9%	15.8%
χ^2 (females 1976-86) = 13.69 (df = 3) p < .01			
χ^2 (females-males 1986) = 2.63 (df = 3) p > .05			
14. How did you decide on your occupation?			
Parents, friend in Physiotherapy	19.4%	12.5%	21.4%
Guidance counsellor/teacher	4.5%	17.9%	14.3%
Always wanted to	49.2%	49.1%	39.3%
Second best choice	7.5%	10.7%	16.1%
Happened into it	19.4%	9.8%	8.9%
χ^2 (females 1976-86) = 10.50 (df = 4) p < .05			
χ^2 (females-males 1986) = 3.88 (df = 4) p > .05			
a N (items 5,6) = 63, N (item 14) = 67			
b N (item 5) = 115, N (items 6,14) = 112			
c N (item 5) = 58, N (item 6) = 57, N (item 14) = 56			

and need to be interpreted with caution. By that stage one might have expected students who 'happened into' the course to be those more likely to have left; on the other hand memories of why one selected a career may have become vague resulting in a higher frequency of this response.

The importance ratings made of the twelve aspects of work as a physiotherapist are listed in Table 4. Female students in 1986 attached much greater importance to the respect they would receive, the chances they would have to take part in decisions, the amount of job security they would have, and their opportunities for gaining promotion. They were less interested than

students a decade earlier had been, in having the opportunities to develop their skills and abilities and in the feedback they would receive about how well they were doing their job. Thus there was more emphasis placed upon the extrinsic rewards of work such as promotion and job security in 1986 than previously. This may be a response to current economic problems and unemployment. It probably also reflects the higher career aspirations of the group of students in 1986. On the other hand the lesser emphasis on extrinsic aspects of work by the 1976 sample may be partly due to their responses being given in the third year of their course, when they may have

been more aware through their clinical experiences of the satisfaction of developing skills and receiving feedback.

Scores on the A.W.S. (see Table 1) revealed that a highly significant shift had occurred in female students' attitudes toward women's roles over the decade. In 1986 students had far more egalitarian and liberal views. This is consistent with their increased ambitions and changed life goals. However while attitudes had changed, no significant change in self concepts was found as measured by scores on the Bem inventory. Women described themselves in a slightly more androgynous manner in 1986, but the difference did not reach significance.

Comparison of Male and Female Students, 1986

Comparison of male and female health science students in 1976 (Westbrook *et al* 1979) revealed that the males were older by an average of 2.3 years. In 1986 a significant difference still existed with male physiotherapy students being 2.5 years older than female students (see Table 1). However the other background differences observed in 1976 had disappeared ten years later. The socio-economic backgrounds of male students, the size of their families, and their mothers' employment status did not differ significantly from those of the female students. The dating patterns of the sexes did not differ significantly, although there was a trend, which was not surprising in view of the older age of the male sample, for males to be more likely to be involved in casual dating or more stable relationships (see Table 2).

Although there had been a highly significant increase in female students' career aspirations since 1976, the male students still expressed higher aspirations than the women students. This sex difference had been found in the comparison of male and female health science students in 1976 (Westbrook *et al* 1979). Fifty-eight per cent of the

Table 3:
Percentage frequencies and chi square analyses comparing career plans of females in 1976 and 1986

Response	Females 1976 ^a	Females 1986 ^b
10. Career plans		
Firm career commitment (options abc)	25.4%	44.5%
Interrupted career (e)	74.6%	55.5%
$\chi^2 = 5.47$ (df = 1) $p < .05$		
11. Preference for ten years from now		
Housewife (option abc)	14.3%	3.7%
Career, no children (de)	4.8%	14.0%
Children, part time work (f)	61.9%	55.1%
Children, full time work (g)	6.3%	17.8%
Have not thought about (h)	12.7%	9.3%
$\chi^2 = 13.53$ (df = 4) $p < .01$		

a N (items 10,11) = 63

b N (item 10) = 110, N (item 11) = 107

male respondents in 1986 aspired to executive leader positions compared to 43% of the females. Possibly the males' greater age resulted in them attaching more importance to the goal of finding a spouse than did the female students. However female students attached more importance to making good friends as a life goal. No significant sex differences occurred in the importance placed on the other six life goals or in the number of children desired.

Career decisions were reached in a similar manner by the male and female groups (see Table 2) but three significant differences occurred in the importance attached to the twelve aspects of work as a physiotherapist (see Table 4). Male students attached far greater importance to the physical surroundings of their work and the amount of freedom they will have, while they attached less importance to the respect they will receive. The first result is surprising as female workers have been found in a number of studies (Siegfried *et al* 1981) to place greater emphasis on a comfortable working environment. The lack of sex differences in

ratings of job aspects such as pay, promotion opportunities, job security opportunities, to develop skills, to which men typically attach greater importance than women, is of interest. Similarly no significant sex differences were found in ratings of the importance of friendly co-workers, and accomplishing something worthwhile which women workers have been found to rate as more important than males did. Male and female physiotherapy students in 1986 revealed relatively similar work preferences.

Scores on the AWS (see Table 1) indicated that female students had significantly more egalitarian attitudes regarding women's social roles than did male students. Numerous American studies have found that both men and women have become more liberal in their sex roles attitudes over the last half century but by the middle seventies a convergence of sex role attitudes had occurred (Helmreich, Spence and Gibson 1982). There was no evidence of this convergence among the physiotherapy students. The significant difference in the androgyny scores of male

and female students reflects the fact that male students had more masculine self concepts and females more feminine self concepts. This is hardly surprising.

Conclusions

The results of the survey revealed that highly significant changes in the attitudes and ambitions of female students occurred over the last decade. Although female students in 1986 came from similar backgrounds as those in 1976, they were much more likely to be committed to a full time career. Recognition, job security, promotion and being part of the decision-making process were more important to them than to past students. They held much more egalitarian attitudes toward women's role, and planned to have fewer children and remain in the workforce. Their career decisions appear to have been made more thoughtfully, and their romantic involvements were fewer. These responses suggest that the wastage from this cohort of students after graduation will be very slight indeed. While this will be of comfort to those concerned about unfilled jobs, the attitudes of these graduates seem likely to attract them to private practice rather than to acute hospital positions. The financial rewards of working in such situations may need to be considerably increased to attract them. On the other hand, their interest in decision making and their long term career goals may make them far more interested in administrative qualifications than current graduates. They are also likely to be attracted by positions that provide ready access to child care facilities.

The differences found between male and female students' attitudes proved to be fewer than those found between female students in 1976 and 1986. Furthermore, many of the differences observed between male and female health science students in 1976 were not apparent in the physiotherapy students tested in 1986. In the intervening dec-

Physiotherapy Students in New South Wales: 1976-1986

Table 4:
t tests comparing importance of career aspects for female students 1976-1978, and male and female students 1986

Aspect ^a		Groups			t tests	
		Females 1976 (N = 74)	Females 1986 (N = 108)	Males 1986 (N = 56)	Females ^b 1976-86	Females ^c - males 1986
The respect you receive	M	3.64	4.09	3.77	-3.58***	-2.16*
	S	.79	.89	.95		
The friendliness of the people you work with	M	4.58	4.57	4.41	0.10	-1.39
	S	.64	.67	.78		
The opportunities to develop your skills and abilities	M	4.89	4.68	4.66	2.20*	-0.15
	S	.69	.59	.61		
The chances you have to accomplish something worthwhile	M	4.61	4.79	4.71	-1.97	-0.59
	S	.60	.49	.68		
The amount of information you get about how well you are doing your job	M	3.97	3.59	3.52	2.66**	-0.43
	S	.84	1.01	1.13		
The amount of pay you will get	M	3.32	3.45	3.63	-0.90	1.03
	S	.81	1.04	.96		
The amount of job security you will have	M	3.65	4.01	3.80	-2.47*	-1.32
	S	1.03	.92	1.00		
The physical surroundings of your job	M	3.50	3.25	3.82	1.68	3.38***
	S	.88	1.05	.97		
Your chances for getting a promotion	M	3.04	3.35	3.45	-1.99*	0.51
	S	.91	1.11	1.16		
The chances you have to take part in decisions	M	3.62	4.04	4.18	-3.21**	0.94
	S	.75	.94	.88		
The amount of freedom you will have on your job	M	3.96	3.98	4.32	-0.15	2.46*
	S	.85	.86	.79		
The resources you will have to do your job	M	3.88	3.81	4.04	0.50	1.51
	S	.84	.97	.71		

a Rated from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important)

b Degrees of freedom = 180

c Degrees of freedom = 162

* <.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

ade physiotherapy appears to have become a much more attractive career option for males from relatively high

socio-economic backgrounds. There is no evidence that physiotherapy has begun to attract more entrants from lower

socio-economic groups. However male entrants continued to be significantly older than female entrants. Males con-

tinued to have higher career aspirations than females but they were no more interested in professional recognition, pay, promotion or job security than women. Males held somewhat more conservative attitudes regarding sex roles. Overall their responses suggested that their career behaviour is likely to be similar to that of their female colleagues.

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