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College Students' Attitudes Towards the Aged

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COLLEGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES

TOWARDS THE AGED

(TITLE)

BY

John Edward Duffy

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in Sociology

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1974

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The increased longevity of man's life has fostered many problems. In 1900, 4.1 percent of the population of the United States was over the age of 65 years. However, from that year until the present, the elderly have steadily increased in their percentage of the population. In 1968, 9.3 percent of the population was 65 years old, (more than a 100 percent increase).¹ By 1980 it is estimated by the U. S. Bureau of the Census that the number of aged people will exceed twenty-four and one-half million.² One of the major reasons for this increase is improved medical knowledge and preventive medicine. This new medical care has enabled elderly people to live longer, thus causing other types of problems. This new 20th Century phenomenon results in the increase of the number of young adults having to take care of their aging parents either economically, medically, or psychologically. Society and the family have not prepared themselves for this new phenomenon and no longer can many of the young adults cope with the problems of the elderly, as they did in the past. There are many reasons for the shortage of young adults being interested in the field of gerontology. The great amount of social and technological changes occurring so rapidly and the increasingly rapid way of life with high mobility rate makes

it difficult for the family to give adequate care to the elderly as was done in the agrarian culture. These changing family patterns influence the separation of the family physically and psychologically. This results in older persons being left to their own resources, unable to rely on their children for support.

As the process of aging progresses, the resulting crisis is inevitable, and is a serious problem for each family involved. The degree of the crisis may vary. The situation may be that of the sudden hospitalization of an aged parent, or the death of one of the grandparents. Finding new living accommodations for an aged adult or giving financial assistance for a medical bill, along with helping to set up nursing care, or a rehabilitation program often becomes the responsibility of the children of the old person. The family may now have to give new psychological help to prevent the feelings of loneliness, helplessness, insecurity, depression, and willingness to die.

This 20th Century phenomenon is a problem presented to young adults and their families. This new crisis becomes a burden to a young adult when he has to "care for his own children, himself and his aged parents at a time when he begins to experience the first evidence of his own aging as indicated by fatigue or decrease in stamina and change in appearance."³ The extended family patterns of society have changed today because of industrialization, urbanization and mobility. Even though the aging parents do not live within the same households most older people with children live close enough to at least one of them to visit weekly or more often.⁴

- Tibbitts states that frequently young adults make room in their home for an older parent, in a crisis situation or on a permanent basis. Today approximately one-fourth of the people over 65 share a household with an adult child. He also states:

"relatively few of the aged who have children are shunted into mental hospitals or nursing homes, in order to get rid of them. Instead, most children desperately seek other solutions and turn to institutionalization only as a last resort."⁵

Even though the burden exists, the young adults try to cope with the crisis in the best possible way. This relationship between young adults and their aging parents is one of the most confusing areas of study. Much of the information on the subject of intergenerational relations, between young adults and their aging parents, is based on myth rather than fact.⁶ Very few books have been written on this new phenomenon. The sociologists, doctors, and psychologists have neglected this field of study until recently. The family was usually studied from a nuclear family setting. Rarely were the grandparents brought into view. Individuals who studied the family life cycle and man's life cycle were concerned with courtship and marriage, biological changes and sexual activities, pregnancy, child growth and rearing, adolescence, and divorce.

Young adults are becoming increasingly forced to isolate themselves from older individuals because of the fast pace of life today. The opportunity for relationships between young adults and grandparents is being reduced continuously. Without an understanding of the aged, young people will have a difficult time helping the aged. Young adults are becoming more involved in politics and the power

they possess in changing major social problems. Because of this power, it is important that the young people understand the problems of the aged. If misconceptions about the aged continue, old programs dealing with the senior citizens will not be corrected by these young people. The initiation of new programs and correction of the old programs is essential for the welfare of the aged.

The reasoning behind researching this area is to help with the understanding of society's problems, and:

"the imaginative rebuilding of the family equipped for a changing society....If the short-run aim is to help families manage and reduce the tensions they carry, the long-run aim must be to prevent them from reaching an unmanageable level. To this end we must study the family in its total social context."⁷

Within this total social context are the aged. "The treatment of the elder and his ultimate place in the family bear significantly upon the welfare and social orientation of subsequent generations."⁸

The study of the aged is only part of the total life span of man and his family.⁹ It is the intent of this research to focus on the aged because of the "academic lag" in the field and the special needs of the aged today. It seems rather illogical to ignore the problems of the aged. It is a social problem. Therefore, the aged cannot be helped if the problem is not exposed and dealt with.

This exploratory research is an attempt to discover the intergenerational attitudes of college students towards the aged that can be utilized by others interested in gerontology. The findings will be relevant to individuals who will work with young people and the aging members of their families. This research would also aid professions that are involved in providing services for the aged and their families and also the educating of these groups.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the field of gerontology there has been a shortage of published research dealing with attitudes towards the aged. Not until recently have there been any investigations concerning the aged. The author will rely heavily on the literature review that Brockman has obtained, because he has access to many more sources than are available to the author. A combination of Brockman's study and the author's work will provide a literature review of the articles pertinent to the development of the hypotheses under investigation in this thesis.

Within the review of the literature the hypotheses will be presented which are a combination of those used by Dr. Brockman in his studies of the aged and those generated by this author. Not all of Dr. Robert Brockman's hypotheses will be tested; only those dealing with the attitudes toward the aged. Dr. Brockman also dealt with the student's attitudes towards self in relation to attitudes towards the aged.

It has been established that it is essential to the field of sociology, as it is to many scientific studies, that replication of research findings be undertaken. "Replication, properly conducted, may serve at least two functions. It may provide a more valid 'test of significance' where the usual test cannot be legitimately applied, and it may lesson the seriousness of the

'ecological fallacy', in which relationships between characteristics of individuals are wrongly inferred from data about groups."¹⁰

Replication can serve as a very important tool of the scientists of all fields. Katz states that "only when we attain the level of standardizing our specifications for data can we see the extent to which reported findings are true generalizations."¹¹

This exploratory study will demonstrate that there are some socio-economic reasons for an individual's attitudes towards an aged person.

Tom Hickey of U.C.L.A. has found that many of the attitudes formed by a person about the aged are determined by stereotypes picked up by that person. Hickey speculates that the person's attitudes are related to early experiences. In Hickey's study, he found that children as young as eight years old had already established concepts of the aged. It was also noted that socio-economic positions determine the differences in attitudes.¹²

In 1961, Nathan Kogan found that there may be individual characteristics that determine a person's attitudes and behavior. Brockman's interpretation of Kogan's scale was that there was a correlation between college students' scores on the authoritarian scale, and Srole's scale of anomie and personality attributes and attitudes towards old people. There was evidence that students with unfavorable attitudes towards old people show higher levels of anomie. Also there was no clear relationship between authoritarianism and attitudes toward old people.¹³

Variables related to socio-economic status and attitudes about old people were included by many researchers. In Kutner's study of 500 older people there was a relationship between social class and morale. The hypothesis confirmed that the higher the social-economic status the higher the morale for the respondents.¹⁴ Hollingshead and Redlich revealed the relationship between mental health and social class and found that socio-economic status was clearly related to differences in the definitions of mental illness, and the attitudes and treatments of the mentally ill.¹⁵

These five authors all had similar findings; that is, socio-economic position does affect one's attitudes toward individuals. The author of this thesis has concluded, through the review of the literature and a theoretical hunch, that if a person is financially and emotionally stable, he can afford to be more concerned about the aged. The person within the Upper Class Position can be more concerned about the aged, because he does not have to concern himself with his own problems as much. Also, he does not have the financial problems that the lower class person has. This reasoning led to the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis Number One

The respondents in a higher category of Index of Class Position will achieve a higher positive attitude towards the aged than the respondents in the lower categories of Index of Social Position.

There are many studies that have been reviewed to determine whether or not there is any relationship between attitudes towards

old age and the sex of the individual. Tuckman and Lorge did research in determining students' responses to a questionnaire of misconceptions and stereotypes about old people. They found in their study that there were thirteen significant differences between men and women's attitudes.¹⁶ Also in the area of sex differentiated attitudes towards older persons it was found that men's attitudes toward outgroups¹⁷ increased favorably as they grew older. However, Kogan and Wallach found that older male subjects still had a more negative concept towards old people than did older females.¹⁸ Ethel Shanas states that her research found that a "daughter" is more apt to give help to an older parent than a son.¹⁹ In addition to the Tuckman and Lorge study, they found that individuals who had more direct contact with a variety of old people were less negative in their attitudes towards the aging than those respondents who had limited association with the aged.²⁰ Kogan teamed with another researcher, Golde and devised a sentence completion questionnaire to determine attitudes towards old people. They found that the attitudes of young adults towards old people were qualitatively different from attitudes towards the broad class of people in general.²¹ According to Kogan, this was interpreted to mean if the older people were considered to be a minority group, the young adults were more sympathetic, to the ethnic, racial and religious minorities.²² In addition, Kogan and Shelton concluded that the beliefs about old people were similar to the ethnic and racial prejudices held by most minority groups.²³

Utilizing the Tuckman and Lorge study, the author suggests that women will have a more positive attitude towards the aged because women have more direct contact with a variety of old people. Women within our

society are reared to have more of a nurturant role. That is, daughters are required to take care of younger brothers and sisters more often than a son is. The game "playing house" is thought of as a girls game with her dolls serving as a child which she must care for.

A review of the literature combined with thoughts and conceptions about the procedure of rearing children has led the author to develop the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis Number Two

The female respondents will exhibit a higher positive attitude towards the aged than the male respondents.

Another variable that influences the young adults attitude toward the aged is the field they choose to study. Two authors, Anne Roe and John L. Holland, have dealt with this variable. In Roe's book, she states a student's occupational selection offers useful insight into their individual characteristics and differences. Her findings showed that a person interested in a service type occupation had a personal interest in other human beings. Persons within this category were interested in personal interaction and were also listed under the succorant and nurturant listing. These group members ranked high in social and religious values. The second category devised by Roe was the technology type of person. These individuals had high interest in material factors and did not have interest in personal interaction as did the service type. The business category had interest in personal relations as the service group did, however they were different in that it was exploitative rather than nurturant.²⁴

- Holland developed his study 10 years later and his views were similar to those of Roe on occupational choice. He believed that a person's occupation was an expression of his personality. His theory states "(1) people were characterized by their resemblance to one or more personality types, and (2) their interaction with the opportunities available in their environment led to outcomes that could be predicted." These outcomes are vocational choice, vocational stability and achievement, personal stability, creative performance, and susceptibility to influence.²⁵

Based on the findings of these two authors, students in the field of education and sociology should have a more positive attitude towards the aged than those in business or physical science. The education majors will rank highest on the attitude scale because they, like sociology majors, are interested in obtaining a service type occupation. Education majors will rank highest because they deal more directly with individuals. Sociology majors will rank second because they deal with large groups of society. Business majors will rank third because they are more interested in personal relations but are more removed from personal services. Physical science majors will rank fourth because they are more technologically oriented and are not concerned about human behavior in the same way that education, sociology and business majors are. Based on this logic, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis Number Three

Respondents in the Department of Education will achieve a higher positive attitude towards the aged than the respondents from the Departments of Sociology, Business Administration or Physical Science respectively.

Data collected concerning religious significance was shown to be conflicting in regard to attitudes towards the aged.

Solomon, Havighurst, Albrecht, and Barron in their studies of religion as a factor in attitudes toward aging concluded that religion is not a significant factor. Barron sampled 496 New York City residents and concluded that there were no differences in his sample between those who had strong religious beliefs and those who did not. Solomon found no significant relationships between life satisfaction and religious orientation.²⁶

However, Swenson found that individuals who had fundamental religious convictions and habits were less apprehensive towards death than individuals with little or no religious activity.²⁷

In spite of the conflicting data the author is concluding that the significance of religion will make a difference in a young adults attitude toward the aged. The young adults who find religion significant, will have a more positive attitude toward the aged because religion emphasizes more than any other institution the philosophy of loving one another. Predicated on this assumption, the following hypothesis was developed.

Hypothesis Number Four

The respondents who designate that religion is a significant factor in their life will achieve a higher positive attitude toward the aged than those respondents who do not find religion significant.

Based on Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Society²⁸ and his definition of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft a hypothesis will be developed. The term Gemeinschaft means "community" in German. This society is characterized by the predominance of intimate primary relationships which emphasize tradition and kinship. This type of society is closely related to the rural-agricultural societies.²⁹ Ideally Gesellschaft is most typically approximated in modern urban society. It's emphasis is on utilitarian goals, and the impersonal and competitive nature of its social relationships.³⁰

Based on the Tönnies ideal type society the following hypothesis was developed.

Hypothesis Number Five

Respondents who reside in rural areas or small towns will achieve a higher positive attitude toward the aged than those respondents who reside in larger cities.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Adeline M. Hoffman, The Daily Needs and Interests of Older People (Springfield, 1970), p. 449.

² Ibid., p. 300.

³ Alvin A. Goldfarb, Social Structure and the Family (New Jersey, 1965), p. 35.

⁴ Clark Tibbitts, Middle-Aged and Old People in American Society (Cleveland, 1965), p. 34.

⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

⁷ Louis A. Ferman and others, Poverty in America (Ann Arbor, 1965), p. 12.

⁸ Maurice E. Linden, "The Older Person in the Family", Social Casework, (XXXVII, February, 1956), p. 486.

⁹ Ibid., p. 487.

¹⁰ William F. Kenkel, The Family in Perspective (New York, 1966), p. 274.

¹¹ Daniel Katz, Research Methods in Behavioral Science (New York, 1953), p. 64.

¹² Robert Brockman, College Students' Attitudes Toward the Aged and Their Own Aging (Ann Arbor, 1969), p. 13.

¹³ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁵ August Hollingshead and Frederick Redlich, Social Class and Mental Illness (New York, 1958), p. 401.

¹⁶Jacob Tuckman and Irving Lorge, "Attitudes Towards Old People", Journal of Social Psychology (XXXVII, February 1953), p. 246.

¹⁷George A. Theodorson and Achilles G. Theodorson, Modern Dictionary of Sociology (New York, 1970), p. 289. Outgroup according to Theodorson for our purpose is a group whose members are considered to be in opposition or to be in some way alien, to an in-group.

¹⁸Nathan Kogan, "Attitudes Toward Old People: The Development of a Scale and an Examination of Correlates", Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology (LXII, January, 1961), p. 53.

¹⁹Ethel Shanas, The Health of Older People (Cambridge, 1962), p. 111.

²⁰Tuckman and Lorge, "Attitudes Toward Old People", p. 247.

²¹Peggy Golde and Nathan Kogan, "A Sentence Completion Procedure for Assessing Attitudes Toward Old People", Journal of Gerontology (XIV, July, 1959), p. 360.

²²Ibid., p. 51.

²³Robert Brockman, College Students' Attitudes Toward the Aged and Their Own Aging, p. 17.

²⁴Ibid., p. 24.

²⁵Ibid., p. 25.

²⁶Ibid., p. 21.

²⁷Ibid., p. 23.

²⁸Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Society (Lansing, Michigan: 1957), p. 42-43.

²⁹Theodorson and Theodorson, Modern Dictionary of Sociology, p. 170.

³⁰Ibid., p. 173.

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The following chapter will illustrate the manner in which the investigation was conducted and also the instrument that was used to measure the attitudes of the students. The following chapter will contain (1) sampling procedures, (2) the data collection procedure, (3) the research instrument used, and (4) an analysis of the data and the statistical measures that were used.

THE SAMPLE

The purpose of this study is to determine the attitudes of college students toward the aged. The author chose college students at Eastern Illinois University from four major fields to achieve this aim. They were chosen because of their accessibility and their particular majors. The students and their field of interest were chosen along a certain line of reasoning. These majors were thought to have different attitudes towards the aged. As stated in previous chapters, students in education and sociology, being service-type majors, should have a more positive attitude toward the aged than those in the more technological fields; business administration and physical science. A purposive sample was taken from approximately 12 percent of the Eastern Illinois University summer population. The purposive sample was chosen because this type of sampling best

satisfied the needs of this thesis. This sampling of students was not on a probability basis. The four different majors were thought to have the different characteristics the author was looking for. In addition to testing students in upper-level courses this would insure the typical population the author was looking for, assuming that errors of judgment in the selection will tend to counter balance each other.¹

The author recognizes that the students who are tested may not be representative of the total college student population. However, economy, time and the problem of a probability sample during the summer session of four major departments made it unfeasible to use a different sampling technique.

Four different college majors were chosen, based on the assumptions that these students would provide a range of individual and group characteristics that would be related to different attitudes toward the aged. The Departments of Education, Sociology, Business Administration, and Physical Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Math) were selected. All were upper-level courses, selected for majors in the particular field.²

The problem as to why these individuals decided to study these particular fields is not a concern of this thesis. The question is, does the course content that these individuals are exposed to, indicate a difference in their attitude toward the aged. Those students in service type majors (education and sociology) would score a higher percentage, exhibiting a positive attitude towards the aged than those majors in technological fields (business and physical science). These four particular majors were predicted to

exhibit a "linear" relationship with attitudes toward the aged. This "linear" relationship is predicted on the assumption that the major course content would emphasize a different level of interest in human behavior.

The Education Department was selected because students within this field are interested in training individuals for future professional activities that are related primarily to individuals and their behavior. The field deals with theories and learning focusing on individuals in terms of their growth and development and their group behavior. In addition, Brockman noted the continuing interest of education students to be involved with individuals at different points in their life cycle.³ Education majors are also more concerned about service for individuals than for a group, or a large society. Indirectly, the education major performs services which affect the whole society; however, initially the education major deals directly with individuals.

The Sociology Department was chosen because the courses deal with theories of individuals, groups, and large groups of society. Members within the sociology field focus mainly on broad societal problems and the consequences of group memberships for the individual in society.⁴ Sociology was considered to have less influence on the individual than education. The interests of sociology students were considered to be slightly different than those of education students because sociology courses deal with different groups problems, and society as a whole, rather than individuals directly.

The Department of Business was recognized as dealing with some aspects of individual and group behavior in theory and structure of organizations. It is less related to the individual than education and sociology.⁵ As stated in Chapter I, business majors have an interest in human behavior as do the service majors. However, business majors would be less concerned about human behavior and more concerned about commercial interests.

The Physical Science Department was selected because they are not concerned about human behavior in the same way as the other three fields. The physical sciences by virtue of the type of data that they analyze have a lower interest in personal behavior and a high interest in material factors.⁶ The physical scientist is concerned indirectly with society and the individual. The exposure he receives in this area is through educational requirements of the University and his primary concern within his own field is not dealing directly with social needs of society or the individual.⁷

DATA COLLECTION

The questionnaire used for this study was two pages in length, self-administered and required an average time of 10 minutes to complete. Part of the questions submitted to the respondents were taken from Dr. Robert Brockman's instrument.⁸ The questions were grouped into two sections, general information, and those from Dr. Brockman's instrument dealing with attitudes toward the aged. The central theme of the questionnaire was related directly to the hypotheses of this study.

Three hundred and twenty questionnaires were given to students enrolled in upper-level classes required for graduation by their particular department. Of the 230 questionnaires distributed, 225 were returned. Only 221 were used for analysis because of mistakes made in filling out the questionnaire and incompleteness.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The instrument used by the author is similar to the one used by Dr. Brockman. The scaling of the instrument was predicated on the Guttman rationale. The Guttman scaling technique is based on the premise that attitudes are unidimensional and questions used to measure the attitudes represent varying degrees of "intensity" or possession of the attitude. Thus, agreement with a questionnaire statement which represents a high degree of the attitude allows us to predict that the respondent will agree with statements representing lower or less intense degrees of the attitude. The scaling technique is used to test these assumptions. It results in a coefficient of reproducibility which measures the accuracy with which we can reproduce a person's pattern of responses from knowledge of his total score.⁹ This coefficient of reproducibility "...must be a 90 percent probability of accurately reproducing from the individual score values the response patterns which they represent."¹⁰

The instrument used met all the minimum standards of a Guttman scale. The coefficient of reproducibility of the instrument used by this thesis achieved a 94 percent probability of accuracy in the pre-test stage.¹¹

It is suggested by other authors, that the tests for a Guttman scale are suggestive of the validity of the scale.¹² In addition, consensual validity was used by asking professionals¹³ within the field of sociology to utilize their professional expertise in methodology to determine the validity of the instrument. Another attempt to obtain accurate answers to the questionnaire was to ask respondents to answer the questionnaire if they so desired, if not, they did not have to answer.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

There are two important independent variables that had to be operationalized for each of the respondents: the respondents' Class Position and the determination of the respondents' residency. The measure utilized for this study, to determine the respondents Class Position, was a two-factor index of Class Position developed by Ellis.¹⁴ This index grew out of the need to measure the social class of college students. The respondents were asked to choose from an occupation list their fathers' occupation. This was considered to be an objective assessment. Also, the respondents were asked to estimate the social class their family belonged to, which was a subjective judgment. The occupation is scored from a one-to-seven classification based on the Hollingshead and Redlich scale. The class identification question is based on the Kahl and Davis scale, scored from one to five. In computing the total score, the occupational score is added to the class identification scale. Ellis divides their scores into

six groups with the lowest scores representing the highest class position and the highest scores representing the lowest class position. The boundary scores are as follows: Group I (Upper), 2; Group II (Upper-Middle), 3-4; Group III (Middle), 5-7; Group IV (Lower-Middle), 8-9; Group V (Upper-Lower), 10; Group VI (Lower-Lower), 11-12.

The second variable that had to be determined was the rural-urban residence of the students. The students were asked to name their hometown in addition to the population size of their hometown. This was to be a checking device on the accuracy of the students' estimation of population size. William H. Sewell's theory was utilized to determine the difference between rural and urban. According to Sewell, the cutoff point between rural and urban was a population size of under 2,500 for rural dwelling and above 2,500 for an urban community.¹⁵

The third independent variable dealt with the effect of religion on an individual's attitude towards the aged. The effect of religion on an individual was measured in two ways. First the effect of church attendance on the students attitude towards the aged was measured. Since attendance to a church function does not necessarily mean that an attitude is affected, a second question was designed. The second question was designed to determine the religiosity of the respondent.

The fourth and fifth independent variables, academic major and sex, were measured by simple questions on the questionnaire.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The analysis of the data was aided by the use of the computer data processing. The following steps were taken:

1. There were no individual questions on the questionnaire that completely differentiated a respondent's attitude toward the aged, therefore, the respondents attitude toward the aged was determined by their total score. A coding procedure was developed, the lower the total score the more positive was the attitude of the respondent toward the aged. The higher the total score the less positive was the attitude. Answers receiving scores of one and two were strongly agree and agree, and scores of three and four, were disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Some coding had to be determined due to the fact that not all of the answers had identical responses. That is, the answers to the questionnaire were not all in the same order. This was done to hopefully insure honest responses.
2. The data were scored, keypunched and the Nucros Contingency Table program was utilized to produce bivariate relationships between the independent and dependent variables.
3. Controlling variables such as sex and socio-economic status were also done as they were hypothesized to affect various relationships being investigated in this thesis.
4. The data was collapsed at pragmatic cutting points, which divided the sample equally for three variables so that analysis of the data would be easily interpreted. The first set of data that has been collapsed was socio-economic status. Originally Ellis divided class position into six groupings, two upper-class positions, two middle-class positions, and two lower-class positions. Pragmatically the best way to reorganize the data was to group these six categories into three groupings; upper, middle and lower.

The Religion variable and the Total Attitudinal Score also were collapsed into their respective scores based on pragmatic cutting points, which divided the sample equally.

5. The total scores of the respondents were taken and pragmatically divided into two groups, positive attitudes toward the aged and negative attitudes toward the aged.

Because the middle range scores of the total scores are sometimes looked upon as nebulous, the extreme scores; the upper and lower quartiles, were obtained so as to compare to the original findings.

FOOTNOTES

¹Claire Selltiz, Marie Jakoda, Morton Deutsch, and Stuart Cook; Research Methods in Social Relations (New York, 1960), p. 521.

²Robert Brockman, College Students' Attitudes Towards the Aged and Their Own Aging (Ann Arbor, 1969), p. 34.

³Ibid., p. 34.

⁴Ibid., p. 35.

⁵Ibid., p. 35.

⁶Ibid., p. 24.

⁷Ibid., p. 36.

⁸Ibid., p. 212.

⁹Edward L. Allen, Techniques of Attitude Scale Construction (New York, 1957), p. 183.

¹⁰Bernard Kutner and others, Five Hundred Over Sixty (New York, 1956), p. 48.

¹¹Question 19 in the questionnaire could not be used because it was impossible to scale the items. The entire questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

¹²Ronald T. Wohlstein, Premarital Sexual Permissiveness (Edmonton, Alberta, 1970), p. 33.

¹³The professionals within the field in which consensual validity had been determined were Assistant Professor, Richard Hummel and Assistant Professor, Ronald Wohlstein.

¹⁴John P. Robinson and others, Measures of Occupational Attitudes and Occupational Characteristics (Ann Arbor, 1963), p. 369.

¹⁵William H. Sewell, "Community of Residence and College Plans," American Sociological Review (1964), p. 25.

CHAPTER III

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The general purpose of this study, as stated in the first chapter, was to assess the attitudes of a select college sample towards the aged. A detailed review of the literature suggested a number of socio-cultural factors which help to explain the existence of different attitudes towards the aged.¹ Five hypotheses were advanced pertaining to the relationship between these various socio-cultural factors and attitudes towards the aged. In this chapter, each hypothesis will be restated and a brief summary of the theoretical justification for the hypothesis will be presented which should facilitate a clearer presentation of the findings.

Hypothesis Number One

The respondents in a higher category of Index of Class Position will achieve a higher positive attitude towards the aged than the respondents in the lower categories of Index of Social Position.

This hypothesis was based on the review of the literature and the theoretical logic stated in Chapter I. Taking into consideration the literature findings and a theoretical hunch; if a person is financially and emotionally stable he can afford to be more positive towards the aged. Table 3.1 suggests supportive evidence for this hypothesis.

TABLE 3.1

INDEX OF CLASS POSITION AND THE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE AGED

Class Position	Percent Having Positive Attitude Toward the Aged
Upper Class	73.8% (42) ²
Middle Class	64.1% (131)
Lower Class	52.2% (46)

Gamma = .265

From this table it appears that the lower class does not have as positive an attitude toward the aged as does the upper class. Only 52.2% of the lower class had favorable attitudes towards the aged as compared with 73% of the upper class and 64.1% of the middle class. Table 3.1 does suggest support for the hypothesis. However, by controlling for sex, Table 3.1 was elaborated. By controlling for sex the author was able to see how his original relationship holds for males but disappears for females. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 will show this elaboration.

TABLE 3.2

INDEX OF CLASS POSITION AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGED (MALE)

Class Position	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged
Upper Class	70.0% (20)
Lower Class	54.5% (77)
Middle Class	45.5% (33)

Gamma = .267

TABLE 3.3

INDEX OF CLASS POSITION AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGED (FEMALE)

Class Position	Percent Having Positive Attitude Toward the Aged
Upper Class	77.3% (17)
Lower Class	77.4% (41)
Middle Class	69.2% (9)

Gamma = .098

Table 3.2 shows very little difference in the gamma or in the class responses. However, in Table 3.3 the females show a big change in the gamma and class responses clustering around the 70 percentile. With the scores of the women clustering around the 70 percentile and the low gamma of .098, it can be said that there is no significant difference between class position for females and their attitudes towards the aged. This also shows that women are more favorable towards the aged than males, regardless of their class position. The reasoning that class makes very little difference for women is predicated on the same assumption as hypothesis number two. Women within our society are reared to have more nurturant roles regardless of their social class. It seems possible that women can afford the luxury of a positive attitude toward the aged, while men might look at the financial burden. Their exposure to the aged is also greater than the exposure of males. This tends to make women more attuned to the problems of the aged.

Hypothesis Number Two

The female respondents will display a higher positive attitude towards the aged than the male respondents.

As stated in Chapter I, in the review of the literature, females will be more favorable towards the aged than males. Table 3.4 clearly illustrates that 22.2 percent more women were favorable towards the aged than men.

TABLE 3.4
SEX AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGED

Sex	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged	
Male	54.2%	(131)
Female	76.4%	(89)

Gamma = -.465

Table 3.4 supports the hypothesis and the theoretical reasoning that women will have a more positive attitude towards the aged because women have more direct contact with a variety of old people. Also, women within our society are reared to have more of a nurturant role.

Investigating the extremes and controlling for different variables revealed no significant differences in either case.

Hypothesis Number Three

Respondents in the Department of Education will achieve a higher positive attitude toward the aged than the respondents from the Department of Sociology, Business Administration or Physical Science.

More specifically, education majors would have the highest percentage of respondents exhibiting favorable attitudes towards the aged, with decreasing percentages for sociology, business and physical science majors respectively. The reasoning behind predicting these results as stated in Chapter I and Chapter II is based on the review of the literature. Education and Sociology majors will be more favorable towards the aged because they are interested in obtaining a service type occupation. Business and Physical Science majors are more technologically oriented.

TABLE 3.5
ACADEMIC MAJOR AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGED

Major	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged	
Education	74.6%	(60)
Sociology	76.7%	(59)
Business	55.8%	(52)
Physical Science	42.0%	(50)

Gamma = .418

Table 3.5 presents the data concerned with the relationship between academic major and attitude towards the aged. As the data indicate, sociology majors had a slightly higher percentage of respondents holding positive attitudes toward the aged than education majors, 76.7% and 74.6% respectively.

Sociology majors and education majors exhibit almost identical scores. In order to find out why these scores appeared this way, further investigation between academic majors and attitudes towards the aged should be done. In dichotomizing the dependent variable into positive and negative scores it is obvious that many of the respondents were neither positive nor negative but somewhat indifferent toward the aged. A different method of dichotomizing the sample with respect to the dependent variable was therefore employed. Whenever developing a scaling device as discussed in Chapter II, it becomes problematic as to how to take such a scale and divide the sample into various categories typifying a particular level of attitude. By dichotomizing the scale, systematic bias may be introduced. As stated in Chapter II extreme scores were obtained. Upper and lower quartiles were needed to see if respondents with more opinionated attitudes towards the aged would show a difference in the academic majors scores. Table 3.6 shows a reversal of the sociology majors and the education majors.

TABLE 3.6

ACADEMIC MAJOR AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGED (EXTREME)

Major	Percent In the Upper Quartile (Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged)	
Education	96.3%	(27) *
Sociology	79.4%	(34)
Business	50.0%	(24)
Physical	13.6%	(22)

Gamma = .698

* The raw scores indicate the total number of each major in both the upper and lower quartiles combined. The percent reflects the number in the upper quartile (having extremely positive attitudes towards the aged).

Looking only at the extreme scores, in Table 3.6, the reversal of the two majors, sociology and education suggests support for the hypothesis. The respondents who are represented in Table 3.6 have a more definite attitude toward the aged than those respondents in Table 3.5. By investigating the extreme score, the scores of the individual majors differs greatly. The respondents favorability towards the aged when using only upper and lower quartiles increased as predicted.

Controlling for other variables produced no significant change in the gamma or the individual major scores.

Hypothesis Number Four

The respondents who designate that religion is a significant factor in their life will achieve a higher positive attitude towards the aged than those respondents who do not find religion significant.

Although conflicting literature was found, the author believed that religiosity would make a difference in the respondents attitude toward the aged. The first way in which the author tried to test religion as a significant factor was through church attendance.

The Table 3.7 reveals support for the hypothesis.

TABLE 3.7

CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGED

Attendance	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged
1 or 2 times a year	58.0% (100)
1, 2, 3 times a month	63.8% (69)
4-12 times a month	73.1% (52)

Gamma = -.208

Table 3.7 shows that the respondents who found church attendance important in their life also scored more positively in their attitude toward the aged compared to the other respondents. Table 3.7 also shows that the respondents who attended church only once or twice a year had a lower percentage of favorability toward the aged (58%), as compared to the respondents who attended church four to twelve times a month (73%). This table also suggests supportive evidence for the hypothesis. However, by controlling for sex, there are some significant differences.

TABLE 3.8

CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGED (MALE)

Attendance	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged	
1 or 2 times a year	48.6%	(70)
1, 2, 3 times a month	58.3%	(36)
4-12 times a month	64.0%	(16)

Gamma = -.220

TABLE 3.9

CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGED (FEMALE)

Attendance	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged	
1 or 2 times a year	80.0%	(30)
1, 2, 3 times a month	68.8%	(22)
4-12 times a month	81.5%	(22)

Gamma = -.015

For females, church attendance does not seem to affect their attitude toward the aged significantly. However, for men in Table 3.8, church attendance is in some way related to their attitude toward the aged. Once again, the traditional role women play in our society, possibly could be the reason women scored so positively toward the aged regardless of church attendance. The men having not been reared to perform the nurturant roles in society appear to be influenced by church attendance.

Whether one could attribute causal significance to church attendance when exploring attitudes towards the aged is a difficult question. Attendance to a church function does not necessarily mean an attitude is affected. Therefore, to double check the religiosity of the respondent and his attitude toward the aged, a second question was asked. The second question was designed to determine the religiosity of the respondent not his church attendance. Table 3.9 suggests support of the hypothesis as Table 3.8 did earlier.

TABLE 3.10
RELIGIOSITY AND THE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE AGED

Significance of Religion	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged	
Central or Moderately Significant	76.0%	(104)
Minor or no factor at all	52.1%	(61)

Gamma = .487

Comparing Tables 3.7 and Table 3.10 there does seem to be some correlation of the respondents church attendance and his religiosity and his attitude towards the aged. In Table 3.10 those respondents who found religion a central or moderately significant factor in their life showed a more positive attitude towards the aged than those who found religion minor or not a factor at all. Despite the conflicting literature the author predicted that religion would make a difference in a respondents attitude toward the aged. This was based on the assumption that religion emphasizes more than any other institution the philosophy to love one another. In this case, the respondents who found religion significant did score higher than the other category.

Once again, by controlling for sex, we find females have a more positive attitude toward the aged than males. Tables 3.11 and 3.12 will show this point.

TABLE 3.11

RELIGIOSITY AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGED (MALE)

Significance of Religion	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged	
Central or Moderately Significant	71.4%	(56)
Minor or no factor at all	41.3%	(75)

Gamma = .560

However, for both sexes the importance of religion to one's life, appears to influence attitudes toward the aged. In both control tables the direction of the relationship duplicates the original table.

TABLE 3.12

RELIGIOSITY AND THE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AGED (FEMALE)

Significance of Religion	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged	
Central or Moderately Significant	81.3%	(48)
Minor or no factor at all	70.7%	(41)

Gamma = .284

As stated earlier, men are not as favorable towards the aged as women.

Hypothesis Number Five

Respondents who reside in rural areas or small towns will achieve a higher positive attitude toward the aged than those respondents who reside in large cities.

Based on Tönnies' ideal type society the hypothesis was developed. Table 3.13 suggests support for the hypothesis.

TABLE 3.13

RURAL, URBAN AND THE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AGED

Residence	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged	
Rural	73.5%	(49)
Urban	60.5%	(172)

Gamma = .288

Thirteen percent more rural respondents than urban respondents scored positively towards the aged. Based on Tönnies' ideal society, the rural respondents emphasize primary relationships which stress traditions and kinship. Primary relationship and kinship are the reasons why the rural respondents scored more positively than the urban respondents.

The control tables for sex illustrate how the original relationship had been distorted somewhat. The female scores were much more favorable towards the aged than the male.

TABLE 3.14

RURAL, URBAN AND THE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AGED (MALE)

Residence	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged	
Rural	60.0%	(30)
Urban	52.5%	(101)

Gamma = .152

TABLE 3.15

RURAL, URBAN AND THE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AGED (FEMALE)

Residence	Percent Having Positive Attitudes Toward the Aged	
Rural	94.7%	(19)
Urban	71.4%	(70)

Gamma = .756

Nevertheless, controlling for sex does not explain away the original relationship.

Once again the females show a more positive attitude toward the aged, as they have throughout all of the other cases, class position, church attendance and religion significance. It is very apparent that Tönnie's description of the Gemeinschaft society is very true in the case of women. However, women generally scored more positively toward the aged than men. The rearing that women go through as children and their exposure to older persons definitely is a factor in their attitudes toward the aged as it is in all other cases.

FOOTNOTES

¹The questionnaire which was chosen to research the attitudes of college students toward the aged can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

²In this and all following tables the number in parenthesis is the base for the percentage.

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to ascertain from college students, their attitude toward the aged. The sample was chosen from college students at Eastern Illinois University. The purposive sample represented approximately 12 percent of the Eastern Illinois University summer population. Upper-division courses in the field of education, sociology, business and physical science were chosen, based on the assumption that these students would best provide a range of individual and group characteristics that would be related to different attitudes towards the aged.

The data for this study was obtained from a self-administered questionnaire. A purposive sample was chosen because this type of sampling best satisfied the needs of this thesis. The students who were tested may not be representative of the total college student population. However, economy, time and the problem of a probability sample during the summer session of four major departments made it unfeasible to use a different sampling technique.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

The sample was divided almost equally between males and females. The males represented 59.5 percent and females 40.5

percent of the total population. The students in the different major fields also were distributed somewhat equally being skewed only slightly toward the service type fields. Education and Sociology represented 26.7 percent and 27.1 percent respectively of the total population, while the fields of business administration and physical science were 23.5 and 22.6 percent respectively. The majority of the respondents within the sample were of the middle class, 59.8 percent, while the rest of the 40.2 percent of the population was equally divided between the upper and lower class. The only variable that was not as equally divided was the home residence of the student population. Urbanites represented 77.8 percent of the total population.

GENERAL FINDINGS

The students in this sample showed varying degrees of favorability towards the aged. They expressed through their responses to the questionnaire continuously their positive opinion toward the aged. Only in one isolated case, did a group not indicate a positive attitude toward the aged. The physical science group was the only group which indicated a less favorable attitude toward the aged. However, as a total population, 64 percent of the students had a positive attitude toward the aged.

On the basis of the findings, in Chapter III, it appears that the following conclusions can be deduced. As a whole, the summer population of Eastern Illinois University students has a

positive attitude towards the aged. The respondents who are in service type occupations are more positive towards the aged, than those in technological fields. Rural respondents and those who found religion a significant factor in their life were more positive towards the aged than either urban respondents or those who were not concerned about religion. Also, students whose families were in the upper class were more favorable toward the aged than students whose families were in the middle or lower class. It is interesting to note that not only in the isolated investigation of male and female attitudes toward the aged did the females have a 76.4 percent positive attitude toward the aged, compared to 54.2 percent for males. Also, in all of the control tables for sex, the female exhibits a higher percentage of favorability towards the aged than males. Regardless of the women's social class, residence or religious significance, she ranked much higher than the males as far as attitude towards the aged is concerned. The females within our society experience definite rearing patterns which have an effect upon their overt opinions towards the aged. Women have clearly indicated that they have empathy for the aged. Men on the other hand, have positive attitudes toward the aged but do not exhibit them as overtly as do women. The rearing patterns for males are not the same as for females. Males must learn to play a more domineering role and give financial support to the family. The reason that males may not have as positive an attitude towards the aged as do females is due to their rearing patterns and the fact that they are not as exposed to the problems

of the aged as women are. Another reason why males are less favorable towards the aged compared to females, is that they feel the financial burden incurred as a result of the elderly rather than their social problems. Based on the existing data, many conclusions can be drawn.

1. The students under investigation generally held positive attitudes toward the aged.
2. Sex is the overwhelming influence in students attitudes toward the aged. Females regardless of their life style or socio-economic status were more favorable towards the aged than males. Male opinions do vary with their socio-economic status.
3. In the case of church attendance, as in the case of class position, the original relationship disappears for females but remains essentially unchanged for males, when sex is controlled.
4. However, in the case of the subjective significance of religion to students, the direction of the original relationship is retained in control tables for sex, even though the strength of the relationship increased slightly for males and decreased somewhat for females.
5. A unique pattern is revealed in the case of rural-urban residency. The direction of the original relationship is retained in the control tables for sex. That is, even though the male relationship declines in strength while increasing for females, both sexes have favorable attitudes toward the aged.

LIMITATION AND IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the major drawbacks to this study was the purposive sampling procedure during the summer session. Random sampling during the regular school session might have been more advantageous in that, it might have given more accurate respondents of the total college student population. Another methodological research technique that

should be implicated, is to derive a longitudinal pattern of study if at all possible. It would also be valuable for future research in this field of gerontology to select a more heterogeneous population. The heterogeneous population could be taken from the college population or preferably from different geographical segments of society. Sampling a heterogeneous population would enhance the empirical generalizations that could be made. If the sampling population increases, a more sophisticated computer program should be utilized in order to enhance a more precise account of the data.

In addition, research in this area would suggest the testing of middle-aged adults, 40-55 years, and their attitudes towards the aged, in order to ascertain whether or not the opinions of middle-aged adults differ from those of college students. Middle-aged adults face different problems than do college students. The middle-aged adult experiences the burden of caring for his own family, of being exposed to the first evidence of old age himself and possibly of taking care of his parents. This would suggest future research in the area of institutionalization of aged parents. There is a great need for research in this area of gerontology.

It was the intent of this research and perhaps the responsibility of this author to investigate the problems of the aged. The aged have been ignored for too long. Hopefully this research will provide some basis for beginning to deal with the social problems of older persons.

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

We would like to know something about your attitudes at present toward old people.

1. Sex: _____ 2. Age: _____ 3. Hometown: _____
4. Size of Hometown: _____ 5. Academic Major: _____
6. Year in School: _____ 7. Grade Point Average: _____
8. Religion Preference: _____ 9. Ethnic Status: _____
10. Which of the following categories does your father's occupation fit into best? Choose a category even though your father's job is not listed.
- _____ 1. Manager or owner of a LARGE company; major professional: doctor, lawyer, CPA, college professor; Elected official of large city; Military officer above rank of major, etc.
- _____ 2. Manager or owner of MEDIUM sized company; Minor professional: public school teacher, clergyman; Elected official of small city, accountant (not CPA); Military officer up to major; District sales manager, personnel manager, operates farm over 200 acres, etc.
- _____ 3. Owner of SMALL company, Administrative position in large company, semi-professional, credit manager, insurance agent, mortician, salesman, operates farm of 100-200 acres, etc.
- _____ 4. Owner of VERY SMALL business, clerical or sales worker, technician, operates farm of 50-100 acres, etc.
- _____ 5. Skilled worker or foreman: carpenter, baker, barber, tool and die maker, policeman, plumber, welder, heavy equipment operator, owns and operates farm of less than 50 acres, etc.
- _____ 6. Semi-skilled worker and machine operator: truck driver, meat cutter, Sharecropper or tenant farmer with little stock or equipment (farms for someone else), etc.
- _____ 7. Unskilled worker: trash remover, assembly lineman, janitor, waiter, farm hand, freight handler, unskilled factory worker.
11. Briefly, what does your father do in his job? _____
-
12. In your own estimation, in which of these social classes would you say your family belongs?
- _____ Lower _____ Working _____ Upper _____ Middle
- (If you checked Middle, would you say your family belonged in the _____ upper-middle, _____ middle-middle, or _____ lower-middle social class?)

13. Circle the number of years of schooling your father has completed.
 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 16+
14. Circle the number of years of schooling your mother has completed.
 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 16+
15. How significant a factor is religion in your life?
 _____ A central factor
 _____ A moderately significant factor
 _____ A minor factor
 _____ Not a factor at all
16. How significant a factor is religion in your family's life?
 _____ A central factor
 _____ A moderately significant factor
 _____ A minor factor
 _____ Not a factor at all
17. How often do you attend church?
 _____ Never
 _____ Once a year
 _____ Two times a year
 _____ Once a month
 _____ Two times a month
 _____ Three times a month
 _____ Four times a month
 _____ 5-7 times a month
 _____ 8-12 times a month
 _____ More than 12 times a month
18. How do you feel, in general, when you're with old people?
 _____ Very uncomfortable
 _____ Somewhat uncomfortable
 _____ Somewhat comfortable
 _____ Very comfortable
19. What are you bothered by most in old people? (Please put number--1, 2, 3, etc.--in front of the following, in terms of what makes you feel most uncomfortable, second, etc.)
 _____ Their appearance: wrinkled and decrepit
 _____ Their complaints about health and disability
 _____ Their childishness
 _____ Stubbornness
 _____ Old-fashioned values and standards
 _____ The fact that they've got one foot in the grave

20. "Young people have a great deal to learn from people who have lived a long time". Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree |
21. How often do you yourself think of what it will be like to grow old?
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quite often | <input type="checkbox"/> Very seldom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> Never |
22. "In order to have a happy old age one must keep active; isolated old people are the ones who suffer most." Do you agree or disagree?
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree |
23. Do you like being around old people?
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Like very much | <input type="checkbox"/> Dislike somewhat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Like somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> Dislike very much |

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