The image of the nurse.

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Boston University

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Boston University
THE IMAGE OF THE NURSE

BY

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(Bachelor of Science, Simmons College)
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Reader: Sara M. Berkley
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<td></td>
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

What does he do? This is one of the first questions we formulate, either mentally or verbally, upon being introduced to an individual. A person's occupation has, for centuries, determined to a greater or lesser degree, the individual's status in his particular society. Determination of status is important in that it categorizes the individual for us. We now know what we should say to him, what he will say to us, how he will behave toward us and how we should behave toward him. We know how to relate to the individual, we have a frame of reference.

How accurate this frame of reference may be is another matter entirely. For each occupation and profession there seems to exist a public image. This image may, or may not, coincide with the image the incumbents of the occupation or profession hold of themselves. Consequently, a conflict in ideas, opinions and attitudes may exist. Simmons¹ believed that knowledge of these

¹Leo W. Simmons, Past And Potential Images Of The Nurse, Papers Presented at the Sixteenth Biennial Convention of Sigma Theta Tau, Boston, October 20, 21, 1961, Boston University Alumni Publication Series, II, No. 1, p. 1.
various views was important to the particular profession or occupation. The views influence the degree to which the incumbents of a profession are accepted or rejected by the public and the degree to which the practitioners are able to function professionally. It is the opinion of the writer that these varying views can also influence, to a great extent, the quantity and quality of persons who are interested in, and will choose to enter, a particular profession.

Statement of the Problem

This study was developed to determine the image of the nurse held by mothers of adolescent girls enrolled in a selected independent private school.

Justification of the Problem

When we look directly at a group of 227 student nurses from Kansas City metropolitan region, the assumption that nurses originate in the middle ranges of American society is supported.... 26 per cent came from families in which the fathers followed occupations above the average in prestige; 26 percent were daughters of men whose occupations fall at the middle of the range; and 48 per cent had fathers whose occupations were below the middle rank in prestige and presumably in income.1

If we, as nurses, want to upgrade the profession of nursing, it is important for us to attract into the field of nursing girls who have had the cultural, educational and social advantages and comforts available to those individuals who are members of the upper third of the American socio-economic system. Brown\textsuperscript{1} pointed out this fact when she said that "the profession has demonstrated the same weakness as has teaching in its failure to stir the imagination of any large number of young women from homes of economic comfort and educational advantage".

The values of initiative and self direction have been more deeply instilled in girls from the upper middle and upper socio-economic groups than in girls from the lower socio-economic groups. This is due to the nature of the occupations in which the parents of these girls engage themselves. Upper and middle class occupations deal more with the manipulation of interpersonal relations, ideas and symbols. Advancement is dependent, to a great extent, upon one's own actions. On the other hand, lower class occupations deal more with the manipulation of things under direct supervision, and advancement

is dependent upon collective action.\textsuperscript{1} If nursing is to become a profession, young women of independence of thought and initiative must be sought.

The writer attended a private school for girls. The graduating class consisted of 110 students. Only three graduates chose to study nursing. The writer concurs with Brown when she states that "democratic freedom of opportunity to enter nursing needs to be extended 'to those at the top'.\textsuperscript{2} It is also important to remember that girls from the upper socio-economic group are those who will be most able to afford the cost of a basic collegiate program. In order to develop an effective recruiting program aimed at obtaining individuals from this source, we must know their image of the nurse.

Scope and Limitations

The sample consisted of seventy-five mothers of adolescent girls enrolled at one independent private boarding and day school located in a college community approximately twenty miles from Boston. There are three


\textsuperscript{2}Brown, 192.
hundred and seventy-five girls currently enrolled at the school. Total cost to the parents exceeds three thousand dollars for a boarding student and is approximately two thousand dollars for a day pupil per school year.

Because the sample was small and represented only randomly selected individuals from one independent private school in the United States, wide generalizations cannot be made.

Preview of Methodology

A questionnaire, consisting of three parts, was mailed to a randomly selected sample of mothers of girls at the independent private school. Of the sixteen questions of which the questionnaire was comprised, three were of the ranking variety, ten were concerned with personal data about the participant, and three were of the open end type.

The cost, to the parents, of sending a daughter to the school for a nine month period of instruction was determined in an interview at the agency. This figure, coupled with information as to the occupation of the fathers, was utilized to place the sample individuals in the upper third of the American socio-economic system.

Data were collected, compiled, analyzed, conclusions were drawn and recommendations made.
CHAPTER II
Theoretical Framework of Study

Review of the Literature

The literature on the public image of the nurse was found to be extremely limited. In fact, it was almost non-existent. Although some literature was available dealing with patients and their view of the nurse, this was not the type of information sought by the writer. Patients are people but, not all people are, or have been patients. The image of the nurse as seen by people was desired. Literature was also available dealing with the role of the nurse in hospitals and/or society today.

Flores\(^1\) found that the greatest difficulty in defining the role of the nurse occurred when the discussion centered around the staff nurse in a hospital setting. She believed that the role of the nurse who worked outside the hospital, such as a public health nurse, was much more clearly defined and recognized by the clientele whom that nurse served, than that of the hospital staff nurse.

Saunders\(^2\) discussed the present role of the nurse

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as an employer, relating this role to what it had been in the past and to what it will be in the future. The researcher then discussed six characteristics of the nursing profession which make it a unique profession.

In a study utilizing 118 subjects, seventy-five university students and forty-three elementary school pupils, Parker\(^1\) attempted to determine what the word nurse meant to various people. The participants were asked to write the first three words which they thought of upon being confronted with the word nurse. The researcher was interested in the value judgment words and idealistic symbols which might be used. The most frequent responses were hospital, white and patient. No major conclusions were drawn from the study.

Holliday conducted a study at Teachers College, Columbia University,\(^2\) in which graduate students were asked to identify the desired qualities thought to be of highest value in nursing care. From this information a composite ideal image of the professional nurse was formulated. In another study exploring the ideal image of a

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professional nurse\(^1\) it was found that patients at a particular hospital described the same traits as had the graduate students at Teachers College. Staff nurses at the same hospital realized the desirability of these traits but indicated that they did not have time to practice in the ideal manner.

A study designed to determine the correlation between the image of the graduate of a selected university program as seen by the dean of the school, its faculty, and graduating senior students was conducted at the School of Nursing, University of California, Los Angeles.\(^2\) Fifty-six descriptive adjectives and phrases were ranked according to the Q-sort technique. The correlation between the dean's description of the average graduate and the graduating seniors' average self description was found to be relatively high.

A study conducted in Seattle\(^3\) sought to reveal some of the factors which influenced the choice or rejection

\(^1\) Jane Holliday, "The Ideal Characteristics of a Professional Nurse," *Nursing Research*, X (Fall, 1961) p. 205.


of nursing as a career. Included in the study was a request to rank various occupations, common to women, in terms of prestige. The nurse was ranked highest in prestige above business woman, artist, teacher, telephone operator and beautician by high school senior girls.

Shuval\(^1\) sought to determine the image of the nurse in Israel as seen by first year nursing students. It was found that many girls from lower class families entered the field of nursing in an attempt to achieve a certain degree of status in Israel.

The most pertinent study found in the literature was that of Deutcher\(^2\). The study was designed to determine the image of the nurse as seen by friends of nurses, persons who had been cared for by a registered nurse, and persons who had had no direct contact with nurses. The images obtained in this study were correlated with the results of a study conducted earlier by Deutcher\(^3\), in an attempt to determine what factors are influential in an individual's formation of an image of a nurse. The


\(^2\)Irwin Deutscher, Public Images of the Nurse (Kansas City: Community Studies, Inc., 1955).

\(^3\)Irwin Deutscher, The Evaluation of Nurses by Male Physicians (Kansas City: Community Studies, Inc., 1955).
most significant data obtained by Deutscher for this writer's use were that respondents from the lower socio-economic groups hold a favorable image of the nurse whereas, persons from the higher socio-economic groups hold an unfavorable image of the nurse.

Statement of Hypothesis

Mothers from the upper third of the American socio-economic system do not hold a favorable image of the nurse.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Selection and Description of Sample

The agency in which the study was conducted is an independent private secondary boarding and day school for girls located in a college community approximately twenty miles from Boston. This particular independent private school was selected for study as a result of its convenience to Boston and because it is the Alma Mater of the writer. Students at the school represent nearly every state in the Union and several foreign countries. Enrollment totals about three hundred seventy-five students, of which eighty to eighty-five are day pupils. Students are generally of above average intelligence, their admission to the school being determined by scores on standardized and school administered tests. The tuition fee for the year 1962-63 amounts to two thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars for boarding students and is one thousand two hundred dollars for day students. Uniforms, books and fees require an additional five hundred dollars. These figures do not take into consideration travel expense entailed by students coming from any distance.
Seventy-five mothers of students currently enrolled at the school were asked to participate in the study. Forty-two mothers from the randomly selected sample responded.

**Procurement of Data**

At the beginning of March, a brief letter of introduction and explanation of the proposed study\(^1\) was mailed to the acting principal of the selected agency. The writer requested an interview to clarify the purpose of the study and to enlist the administration’s cooperation in releasing the names and addresses of parents of currently enrolled students at the independent private school. A letter from the assistant principal was received granting an interview at the end of March. Permission to conduct the study was granted at the time of the interview and the writer was given a list, in alphabetical order, of the names and addresses of parents and guardians of girls enrolled at the school. The names and addresses of the parents of foreign students were deleted from the list by the writer as the image of the nurse as seen only by mothers in our American society was desired. Mothers were chosen to participate in the

\(^1\)Appendix A.
study as it was thought that they would be more responsive to the questionnaire than their husbands.

Tool Used to Collect Data

Questionnaires, accompanied by a letter of introduction and explanation of the purpose of the study\(^1\) were mailed to seventy-five mothers randomly selected from the list of parents obtained at the independent private school. In addition, a self-addressed envelope for the return of the completed questionnaire, was included. No mention was made of the fact that the writer was a nurse. The questionnaire, consisting of three parts, was based to some extent on a questionnaire utilized by Berenson et al.\(^2\).

Part I contained six questions dealing with the occupation and education of the participant and her husband. Knowledge of the occupations of fathers was desired in order that the occupations could be rated according to Edwards' Occupation Index. This index was comprised of six groups of similar occupations, each of which was said to designate a particular social economic

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\(^1\)Appendix B and C.

class grouping. Occupation of the father and the tuition cost of the school were used to demonstrate that the parents of girls at the selected independent private school were in the upper third of the American socioeconomic system.

Part II of the questionnaire consisted of three ranking questions. Ten occupations, open to women in our society today, were listed. The participant was asked to rank the various occupations in terms of prestige, suitability for women, and desirability for her own daughter.

Part III consisted of seven questions, three of which were open end, relative to sources of information about nurses and nursing; feelings about her own daughter studying nursing; personality traits of a nurse; and a job description of nursing.

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CHAPTER IV

Findings

Presentation and Discussion of Data

Of the seventy-five questionnaires distributed, forty-two were fully or partly completed and returned to the writer. Table 1 indicated the states from which the responses came and the number of responses received from each state.

TABLE 1

13 STATES FROM WHICH RESPONSES WERE RECEIVED AND NUMBER OF RESPONSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The large number of responses from Massachusetts might be explained by the fact that there are approximately eighty-five day students at the selected independent private school. Thus the enrollment of Massachusetts residents is proportionately greater than that of other
states.

Thirty-six of the participants listed "housewife" or "homemaker" as their present major occupation. The six other mothers listed "innkeeper", "merchandising", "teacher", "back to college", "architect", and "landscape designer" as their present major occupations.

Mulligan\(^1\) determined that the chances of individuals of superior intelligence attending college increased as the father's occupational status increased.

Table 2 indicated the major occupations of the husbands of the participants.

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\(^1\)Raymond Mulligan, "Socio-Economic Background and College Enrollment," *American Sociological Review*, XVI (April, 1951), p. 188
### Table 2

**MAJOR OCCUPATION OF 42 HUSBANDS AS STATED BY PARTICIPANTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President or Vice President</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business executive</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandising</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner of a company</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrialist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport operator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing agent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign service officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innkeeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In view of the status of the occupations listed in Table 2, the writer felt justified in stating that the husbands, and consequently their families, were members of the upper third of the American socio-economic system according to Edwards' Occupational Index. Knowledge that the tuition cost at the independent private school totals $1,200 for day students and $2,750 for boarders was another factor in placing the participants...
in the upper third of the American socio-economic system. "Private schools must depend upon persons with money for their support, and they must charge tuition, thereby eliminating all but the brightest low-income youngsters from attending." Private schools, have been for many years, an upper class socialization agency.

Table 3 indicated the amount of education received by the participants and their husbands.

**TABLE 3**

**EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF 42 PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR HUSBANDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Number of Husbands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed high school</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not attend college</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended college but did not graduate</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended graduate school for one year or more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It was significant to note in Table 3 that thirty-seven of the participants attended and/or graduated from college and that forty of their husbands attended and/or graduated from college. Moser found that vocations with college preparation requirements were most often chosen by students whose parents attended college.

Ten different occupations open to women in our society today were presented in the questionnaire. The participants were asked to rank them in terms of their prestige for women in our society today, their suitability for women, and the occupation in which the participant would most like to see her daughter. The occupations listed were dietitian, physician, secretary, nurse, lawyer, occupational therapist, psychologist, librarian, social worker and public school teacher.

Twenty-eight participants completed the three ranking questions. Eight mothers left the questions completely blank while six wrote comments pointing out the fallacies inherent in ranking questions. The following participant's comment illustrated this point.

I view all of these occupations as equally worthy and prestigious. More important ... one's native abilities and interests should carry far more weight in choosing a profession than any social consideration. I


2Appendix C.
wish that you had included 'wife and mother' since I firmly believe that a truly satisfying career is only a compliment to a woman's greatest opportunity.

Three other mothers also questioned the absence of wife and mother or housewife from the list of occupation. The omission was deliberate; however, as it was felt that this item might influence the ranking.

Table 4 illustrated the ranking of the ten occupations in terms of prestige for women in our society today.

**TABLE 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Public School Teacher</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>6.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>7.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Dietitian</td>
<td>7.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
<td>7.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from looking at Table 4 that two occupations, physician and lawyer, thought of primarily as occupations for men, are felt to hold far more prestige for women in our society today than the other eight occupations presented. The ranking of nurse and social worker is quite close.
The ranking, in terms of their suitability for women in our society today, of the same ten occupations as listed in Table 4 are shown in Table 5.

**TABLE 5**

**RANKINGS FROM 1 TO 10 OF 10 OCCUPATIONS IN TERMS OF SUITABILITY BY 26 PARTICIPANTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Public School Teacher</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>5.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dietitian</td>
<td>5.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
<td>6.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>7.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>8.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, in Table 5, it was interesting to note that the two occupations, physician and lawyer, which ranked first and second in prestige for women, ranked ninth and tenth in terms of suitability for a woman in our society today. The Table also illustrated that the occupations of a public school teacher and a nurse were felt to be the most suitable of the ten occupations by a considerable margin.

Table 6, utilizing the same ten occupations, illustrated the ranking of these in terms of the occupation in
which the participant would most like to see her daughter.

**TABLE 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Public School Teacher</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>5.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>5.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dietitian</td>
<td>6.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>7.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, as in Table 5, it was noted that the occupations of physician and lawyer ranked ninth and tenth. However, the occupation of the nurse had fallen to fourth place in contrast to its rank of second place in Table 5. The nurse was ranked fifth in terms of prestige as shown in Table 4.

Means, other than by personal contact, by which the randomly selected sample of mothers of girls at the independent private school learned about nurses were stated by twenty participants. Seven stated that they had learned indirectly of nurses in no way other than by personal contact. Fifteen participants did not reply to the question.
TABLE 7

INDIRECT CONTACT WITH NURSES WHICH MAY HAVE
BEEN INFLUENTIAL IN 20 PARTICIPANTS' FORMATION
OF AN IMAGE OF A NURSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Frequenty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer work</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband or father a physician</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and/or television</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the board of trustees of a hospital and/or</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school of nursing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Nurse Association board work</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked in a hospital during World War II</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing school bulletin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with future nurse group</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence of direct contact with nurses was determined by two questions. One asked whether or not the participant or any member of her immediate family had been hospitalized for a period of a week or more within the past five years. The other question sought to determine whether or not the participant had any close relatives or personal friends who were nurses. Twenty-five mothers replied in the affirmative to each question. Seventeen participants answered negatively to the two questions.

Two questions were asked to obtain the participant's reaction to the idea of her daughter becoming a nurse and the type of education the mother expected her
daughter to receive.

Figure 1 illustrated the reactions of participants which could be expected if their daughters expressed a desire to study nursing.

FIGURE 1

REACTION OF 42 MOTHERS TO DAUGHTERS' DESIRE TO STUDY NURSING

Openly encouraging

Openly discouraging

Positive but say nothing

Negative but say nothing

Unaffected

A preference for a collegiate school of nursing rather than a three year hospital school of nursing for their daughter's nursing education was demonstrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

REACTION OF 42 MOTHERS TO DAUGHTERS' DESIRE TO ATTEND A COLLEGIATE SCHOOL OF NURSING RATHER THAN A THREE YEAR HOSPITAL SCHOOL OF NURSING

Yes

No

Would make no difference

33

3

6
"By far", "strongly" and "for her own enlightenments sake" were the comments inserted adjacent to the affirmative response by three participants. No other comments pertinent to this question were made.

It was interesting to note that of the five participants who indicated that they would be openly discouraging if their daughters expressed a desire to study nursing, all five implied that they would be more at ease if their daughters expressed a desire to attend a collegiate school of nursing.

In three of the five instances in which a mother indicated that she would have negative feelings about her daughter's desire to study nursing, the mother implied that she would be more at ease if the daughter wished to attend a collegiate school of nursing. Two of the five mothers who expressed negative feelings indicated that it would make no difference to them whether or not the daughter wished to attend a collegiate school of nursing.

Six mothers indicated that they would be unaffected by their daughters' desire to study nursing. Two of these mothers implied that study at a collegiate school of nursing by their daughters would make them feel more at ease. In contrast, two participants indicated that the study of nursing at the collegiate level by their
daughters would not make them feel more at ease. Two other mothers indicated that the study of nursing at this level by their daughters would make no difference to them.

Participants were asked to describe the personality traits of a nurse, telling what kind of person they thought a nurse was. Replies were categorized as favorable or unfavorable. Table 8 indicated those traits which were mentioned most frequently by the thirty participants answering the question and could be viewed as favorable to the nurse.

**TABLE 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAVORABLE WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF A NURSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRAIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unselfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although it was generally indicated by the participants that the nurse was dedicated to nursing, two
participants demonstrated unfavorable feelings in this respect. One stated that "a great many are out to marry a good-looking doctor". The second mother said that "some accept nursing as just another job."

One participant stated what three other mothers implied, that the nurse "steels her emotions quite often in order that she be able to do her job well".

Two individuals referred to the possession of initiative by the nurse. One said that nurses "do not have a lot of initiative, are willing to be complacent and take orders", and the other mother stated that nurses are "submissive to orders and requests but are able to take initiative action serenely in emergency".

The feeling that nurses did not have an easy job was demonstrated by these phases - "willing to work", "must be strong", "quick moving", "no clockwatcher" and "ready to do hard work without complaining". Furthermore, the nurse must be "a woman with a strong stomach and steady nerves".

Shuval¹ found that mothers objected most strongly to nursing as an occupation for their daughters because

¹Shuval, American Sociological Review, XXVIII, No. 5, 39.
it was thought of as physically difficult. Flowers discovered that the hard work associated with nursing was the leading reason why parents influenced their high school daughters against nursing as a career.

It was also felt that the nurse was one who is "able to be impersonal about other's troubles" or "is not able to give fully of herself because of lack of time". The nurse must have "the same qualifications as a good mother".

Of the twenty-seven participants who wrote a job description of nursing, nine described only the "routine nursing duties". For example - "bedmaking, bathing of patients, dispensing of medications, taking temperatures and blood pressures, helping in the operating room and writing on charts". Three other mothers mentioned "routine nursing duties" but included also such phases as "soothing worried relatives", "easing worries and tensions as well as tending to the medical needs of their patients", and "treat patients as individuals".

Following are some excerpts from the job descriptions which were received by the writer from twenty-seven mothers of girls currently enrolled at the independent private school.

We all think of nurses at the bedside only. However, there is more to it than that.
There is nursing education, public health nursing, preventive medicine, home care and out-patient care.

In some hospitals nurses are greatly over-worked. They are loaded with menial jobs such as routine bed-making, carrying trays, etc. which an undergraduate or practical nurse could handle thus saving the skill of a graduate for the really ill.

A good nurse keeps the patient comfortable.

I believe that nurses care for patients by carrying out doctors' orders.

A nurse listens attentively, follows orders promptly and in detail, must be observant, realize she is nurse not doctor.

Nurses care and administer to the sick carrying out the doctor's orders.

Nurses today are more apt to do the chart work and let the aides do the actual bedside care, unless of course, one is desperately ill.

I think of nursing as a profession divided into three levels, bedside care, administrative work, and assisting doctors in the operating room.

Assist with anything a doctor will do.

Nurses are now being swamped with paper work so have lost a great deal of the personal relationship with patients.

I feel that the trend away from good bedside nursing and pride in a good job well done is regrettable.

Technical duties which, of course, vary as the situation does - plus being at times a bit of wife, mother, daughter, etc.
The job of the nurse is to tend the sick.

..... make a person feel comfortable and
at ease.

The routine duties of a nurse are almost always the same - but it's the little dif-
ferences and methods of procedure that
makes a good nurse.

I feel that nursing is a very demanding job.
It must be, on many occasions, very tedious
and at times very monotonous but the rewards
are many.

Good heavens - there are all kinds of nurses
from public health nurse to private duty
nurse. You know what nurses do and I believe
I have a fairly good idea but I could be for-
ever trying to write a job description.

That the job of the nurse is to care for the pa-
tient was stated and/or inferred by the majority of the
participants. A knowledge and an understanding of how
the nurse accomplishes this task was seen to be the ob-
ject of various opinions. The majority of the mothers
did not recognize the supportive role of the nurse;
neither did they view the nurse as a health educator.
Several mothers noted that the nurse was becoming more
involved with administration than they felt to be de-
sirable. Basic nursing care, previously given by the
nurse, was seen to be given by auxiliary help.

On the basis of the data presented and discussed,
it appeared that the hypothesis that mothers from the
upper third of the American socio-economic system do not hold a favorable image of the nurse was neither proved nor disproved.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was developed to determine the image of the nurse held by mothers of adolescent girls enrolled in a selected independent private school.

Data for the study, were obtained from the responses to a questionnaire mailed to seventy-five mothers randomly selected from a list of parents of girls currently enrolled at the school. Forty-two mothers responded to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was composed of three parts. The first part sought information relative to the occupation and education of the participant and her husband. Part II contained three questions which asked the mother to rank ten given occupations in terms of prestige for women, suitability for women in our society today, and desirability for her own daughter. The third part of the questionnaire sought to determine the participant's sources of information about her own daughter studying nursing, personality traits of a nurse, and a job description of nursing.

It was hypothesized that mothers from the upper third of the American socio-economic system do not hold
a favorable image of the nurse.

Conclusions

1. The nurse ranked fifth, in a list of ten occupations, in terms of prestige for women. Physician and lawyer ranked one and two respectively as the occupations which hold the greatest amount of prestige for women in our society today.

2. Public school teacher and nurse ranked one and two respectively as the occupations which were thought to be the most suitable for women in our society today.

3. The nurse was ranked fourth in terms of the occupation in which mothers would most like to see their daughters.

4. Seventeen participants had had no personal contact with a nurse within five years.

5. Twenty-five of the forty-two participants would be openly encouraging if their daughters expressed a desire to study nursing.

6. Thirty-three of the forty-two mothers indicated a preference for a collegiate school of nursing if their daughters should choose to study nursing.

7. Nurses were thought of most often as dedicated and kind individuals.

8. Job descriptions of nursing were varied and limited in scope.

Recommendations

1. Another study, utilizing a larger sample and a different methodology, should be undertaken to determine the image of the nurse as seen by members of the upper brackets of the American socio-economic system.
2. The education of the public as to the role of the nurse may be accomplished through a more concentrated use of the mass communications media, such as periodicals, newspapers, television, radio and lectures.
APPENDIX A
Appendix A

38 Summit Avenue
Brookline, Mass.
March 7, 1963

Dear Miss Farmer:

I am a candidate for a Master of Science Degree at Boston University. To fulfill the requirements of the program, it is necessary for me to submit a field study. The statement of my problem is:

To determine the image of the nurse held by mothers of adolescent girls enrolled in a selected independent private school.

On the assumption that independent schools for girls draw students from the upper third of the American socio-economic system, I feel that by sending a questionnaire to a few mothers of these girls, I would get an image of the nurse as it is seen by this group of people.

I am particularly interested in the girls at _____ as I was graduated from _____ in 1956. I would like very much to discuss this with you in more detail. Although my class schedule limits my available time, I am free Thursdays and Saturdays if an appointment could be arranged on either of these days.

I eagerly await your reply.

Sincerely,

Donna G. Vincent
Appendix B

Dear Participant,

I graduated from Simmons College in 1956 and have since been graduated from Simmons College. I am now a graduate student at Boston University and am required to submit a field study. I am studying the attitudes of people toward various occupations. Your name was randomly selected from a list of the parents of girls at which I obtained during a recent interview at the school.

I realize that answering the enclosed questionnaire will take up some of your valuable time; however, I will be grateful if you consent to participate in my study.

Some of the questions on the questionnaire may be difficult to answer but, it is important to my study that all questions be answered as fully as possible. There are no correct answers and the questionnaire will remain anonymous.

If you have any comments or questions please feel free to enclose them with the completed questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. I would appreciate it greatly if the questionnaire were returned by April.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Donna G. Vincent
APPENDIX C
Appendix C.

Questionnaire

Part I

1. Have you completed high school? _____yes _____no
2. If you have completed high school, please encircle the figure which represents the highest level of education which you received.
   College
   Graduate School
   1, 2, 3, 4.
   1, 2, 3, 4
3. Present major occupation:__________________

4. Did your husband complete high school? _____yes _____no
5. If your husband did complete high school, please encircle the figure which represents the highest level of education received by your husband.
   College
   Graduate School
   1, 2, 3, 4
   1, 2, 3, 4
6. Major occupation of husband:__________________

Part II

1. Please rank the following occupations in the order of prestige which you feel that they hold for women in our society today. The occupation which you feel holds the greatest amount of prestige for a woman today would be labeled one (1); number ten (10) would be the occupation in which you feel a woman would hold the least amount of prestige.
   public school teacher
   lawyer
   social worker
   nurse
   psychologist
   secretary
   physician
   librarian
   occupational therapist
   dietitian
2. Please rank the following occupations in terms of their suitability for women in our society today. The occupation which you feel is the most suitable for a woman today would be labeled number one (1); number ten (10) would indicate the occupation which you feel is the least suitable for a woman in our society today.

- lawyer
- social worker
- psychologist
- secretary
- librarian
- nurse
- physician
- public school teacher
- dietician
- occupational therapist

3. Please rank the following occupations in terms of the occupation in which you would most like to see your daughter. The occupation in which you would most like to see your daughter would be labeled number one (1); number ten (10) would be the occupation in which you would least like to see her.

- dietician
- nurse
- secretary
- physician
- occupational therapist
- lawyer
- librarian
- social worker
- psychologist
- public school teacher

Part III

1. Have you, or any member of your immediate family, been hospitalized within the past five years for a period of a week or more? _____yes _____no

2. Do you have any personal friends or close relatives who are nurses? _____yes _____no

3. Other than personal contact, how else have you learned about nurses?
4. If your daughter stated that she would like to study nursing would your reaction be:
   - openly encouraging
   - openly discouraging
   - positive but say nothing
   - negative but say nothing
   - unaffected

5. Would you be more at ease if she implied that she wished to attend a collegiate school of nursing rather than a three year hospital school of nursing?
   - yes
   - no
   - would make no difference

6. People in different occupations can sometimes be described as possessing particular personality traits. In a phrase or two, what kind of a person is a nurse?

7. People have various ideas about what nurses do. Using as much space as you need, please write a job description of nursing below.

Thank you.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Articles and Periodicals


Unpublished Material

