

A T T I T U D E S O F H I G H S C H O O L
S T U D E N T S T O W A R D A G E D
P E R S O N S

A THESIS

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CHAPTER I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Aging, to a large extent, is a cultural as well as a biological process. Adaptation to it depends upon self-perception. Aging years are, in a sense, a second childhood.

The aged are designated as those who are known to have lived 65 or more years. In view of the American elaboration of the concept of time, such a definition is understandable. It is almost impossible in the United States to live one's life without having the exact date of one's birth made a matter of public record. The Federal Government, through its Social Security Act, proclaims 65 to be the age at which pension payments begin for men; for women at 62.

Life after 65 shares with adolescence an intensification of the intimate self-reflection. In both stages of life, the question, "Who am I?" assumes pungent relevance. Both are times of mental and physical metamorphosis, as each person becomes absorbed in the workings of his own body and mind, and watches these internal changes with a mingling of wonder and dismay. Both adolescent and aging individuals seem to experience a kind of loneliness or increasing sense of privacy with a more profound than usual sense of personal

distinctiveness, one's unique difference from others.

Efforts to understand high school student attitudes toward aging have involved few family life educators. Much of the literature that already exists is based on observation, personal interpretation, and opinion rather than on objective studies. It seems important to gather data about the attitudes of high school students toward aging, as the stages of development are alike in many respects. This information should be useful in understanding student attitudes toward aging individuals.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

This study was concerned with an investigation of the attitudes of 96 high school students toward elderly persons. The overall purpose of the study was to initiate and conduct a study in the southern part of the United States.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Aging is thought of as a process of deterioration of the body and mind. In reality, it is also a part of growth and development. Old Age (21), according to the Encyclopedia International, is the period during which the human life cycle is drawing toward a conclusion. In modern societies, the onset of old age tends to be very sudden and is usually marked by compulsory retirement at the age of 62 or 65.

Bortz (4) cited aging as the change which occurs in all forms of life with the passing of time which has both positive and negative aspects. The dynamic process of living processes involved in conception, growth, development, and maturation continues throughout life.

May (15) conceived that age is expressed in years, by the sum of birthdays, only because no other simple standard is available. To use this calculation to express the relative deterioration that accompanies aging is nonsense because the speed of such deterioration varies tremendously in different individuals.

Who are the elderly? In response to this question, Boyd and Oakes (5) emphasized that there is some wisdom in the observation that a person is as old or as young as he feels. Social Security legislation, retirement policies, and statistics on morbidity and mortality suggest another way of determining who is old. There is some merit in thinking of persons who are 60, 62, or 65 as older people. References to elderly correctly suggest that older people, as a result of aging, probably have many similar characteristics and experiences. However, significant differences are absent among the elderly. The behavior of elderly people is the inevitable expression of intrinsic processes within them; people of the same age simply are not all the same. Observed

differences among them reflect their biographies and the opportunities and limitations in the social environment in which they live.

Rosenmayr (24) noted that adolescents and social conditions of environment direct the process of aging, the result then being what one may term maturation. In a sophisticated environment, age may lead to more attention to certain symbolic values like music or literature. However, in a culturally impoverished environment, age may lead to a decline in the same area of activities.

Myers (17) warned that the increasing life span has multiplied the number of aged in our society. At the same time our economic and social lives may have changed in ways that make it difficult for retired people to find productive and satisfying roles. Problems of the aged often involve financial insecurity, and ways and means are needed to help them live more abundantly.

Stieglitz (26) described aging as the element of time in living. It is a part of living beginning with conception and terminating with death. The process cannot be arrested unless life is arrested. There is no elixir or eternal youth. Aging may be retarded or accelerated, but cannot be arrested while life goes on, because it is essentially an element of living. Living is a continuous process, variable

in its rates. Aging slows as one grows older. Aging involves two simultaneous processes which operate continuously in spite of the fact that they are contradictory to one another. On the one hand growth or evolution occurs, on the other atrophy or involution. These processes continue throughout life, though at varying rates.

Tibbitts and Donahue (28) defined aging as the survival of a growing number of people who have completed the traditional adult roles of making a living and child rearing. The years following the completion of these tasks are beginning to represent an extension of life marked by a shortening of hours of work, both on the job and in the home and, in the end, complete retirement from paid employment. The extension of life has brought into being a new turning point which needs sharper recognition by more and more people.

Activities and Interests.--- In many cases the physical and social changes accompanying old age have forced elderly people to slow their pace to the point where they can no longer take part in much of the productive activity of their societies. Clark and Anderson (7) suggested that personal qualities and attitudes usually cannot take the place of productive activity as a basis for self-esteem. If an elderly man still thinks and talks about himself with reference to his role as worker, provider, or head

of a family, it is apt to be in a negative manner, with emphasis on the things he no longer can be or do.

Hiatt (10) believed that, without benefit of either power or prestige, the aged in our society might experience a loss with regard to their ability to function socially. Elderly persons have taboos imposed on them by younger people. These include social bans against old people dancing, remarrying, wearing gay clothing, and even doing work not considered appropriate for them.

Lang (13) mentioned some don't's and do's by which older men and women are expected to abide. According to the author cited above, it is socially permissible for the 65 year old individual to sit in a rocking chair, baby sit, speak after spoken to, wash dishes, do light house work, wear dark conservative clothing and putter in the garden. Many elderly people have found new freedom in the social clubs for them that have mushroomed in recent years all over the country. But many other aged persons are hesitant to defy taboos erected by their juniors and have continued to chafe under restrictions, and live their lives the way society thinks they should live.

Family Life.--- May (15) insisted that when traditions are overthrown, families and ethnic bonds are disrupted, the generations lose touch with one another. The merry-go-

round of an industrialized society is one of the factors that isolates the aged. In former societies the respected wisdom of older people was able to exert a sobering influence on impetuous youths, whereas the aged nowadays are pushed to the edges of society. May further expressed the opinion that much of the lowered status and prestige of the elderly is attributed to the effects of technology. Society places the highest value on youth and accomplishment.

Moore (16) asserted that the three generation family under one roof, though no longer usual, does offer an opportunity for valuable exchange of thoughts between grandparents and grandchildren. A substitute involvement by the elderly, without emphasis on authority and without condescension, has evolved and promises great rewards. Grandparent programs, where older people devote themselves to young children in day-care centers, was designed to meet the interactional requirements. Teen-agers, on their part, adopt lonely old people for friendly conversation, birthday and holiday celebrations.

Bultena and Marshall (6) compared situations of 284 older males who retired in their home communities with those of 349 males who moved to Florida or Arizona upon retirement. Findings revealed that migration to a retirement state leads to greater isolation of the aged from their children than

when they retire in their home communities. Personal interaction with children appeared increasingly to be tied to holiday and vacation periods as compared to the earlier day to day social exchange that was made possible by the physical proximity of family members. Data indicated that older persons who retire to Florida and Arizona typically find this as convenient a locale for receiving or initiating family visits as was their previous residence in the Midwest. Persons who moved tended to be those who were least likely to realize a disruption in family ties by their action.

Why has research of the older family been ignored? Stieglitz (26) responded that the study of old age is not as popular and interesting as predictions of technological advances. The older family is characterized by decline, deceleration, death, and thus tends to be avoided and ignored. In our youth-oriented culture, old age is not considered a fascinating topic. Family life is of utmost importance to an elderly person's well-being. The community at large also must be his concern and commitment. Withdrawal and loneliness await those who turn their backs on society.

Adolescent Attitudes

Nature.--- Crow and Crow (8) regarded attitudes as referring to a person's feelings toward other people, conditions or situations that are specific of experience and

reflect themselves in the individual's relations with his fellows. Often as attitudes are developing, attitudes can exert a potent influence upon an adolescent. Attitudes are dynamic forces in high school student behavior. Adolescents are great imitators of attitudes as many are learned from their parents, their teachers, and their associates. Teenagers often develop similar attitudes to those of their associates without always being aware of it.

Newcomb (19) theorized that attitudes most important in daily life are social attitudes; attitudes formed in relation to other individuals, groups, institutions, tools and technology, standardized values, or norms. These are attitudes that really determine an individual's reaction to other people, other groups, and that map out for the individual the main boundaries of experience and taste. Most of their social attitudes are transmitted by short-cut verbal value judgments. Words are the most common medium for both the formation and the expression of attitudes. Although it is known that attitudes of others are learned largely from the words used, most individuals do have many quite personal attitudes, which are seldom if ever expressed. If the individual is approached concerning likes or dislikes, attitudes will be expressed.

Boyd and Oakes (5) declared that every human experience

is accompanied by feeling tones and effective responses. Sensations possess feeling aspects of pleasantness or unpleasantness, satisfactoriness or annoyance. The summation of these experiences constitutes a feeling tone or affective experience. These human qualities or attitudes influence an individual's thoughts, interests, and behavior. Boyd and Oakes insisted that attitudes constitute values that relate to self and are quite subjective. An individual is concerned about the things that are of special interest to him or that affect him directly. One person will experience concern about a different set of problems, a different possession, a different situation, a different person, or a different condition than will another. Each individual evaluates and appraises situations or issues in terms of his degree of interest in, and attitude toward, them.

Influence.-- Blos (2) reiterated that an individual is known by his expressed attitudes. These are individual and personal, and relate to the way a person thinks or behaves in situations. The feeling tones that accompany each experience constitute the quality components out of which attitudes are constructed. As an individual is stimulated by an idea, an activity, an object, or another person, certain responses in the form of approval or disapproval are made.

Crow and Crow (8) argued that adolescents do many things

without an awareness of the forces that prompt their behavior. Much of their inner conflict is attributable to these unconscious attitudes. The force of these attitudes is not fully appreciated by adolescents because they are not aware of the effect of their behavior upon others; adolescents do not recognize the fact intended. Attitudes of selfishness, insincerity, domination, or self-interest exhibited by an adolescent may not be known to him, but only to others.

Austin (1) conducted a study during the 1969-70 school year in Gainesville, Texas. A two part questionnaire was used to investigate teenagers' attitudes toward selected current social issues. The sample included 162 senior students, 81 boys and 81 girls, and 190 sophomore students, 111 boys and 79 girls. Findings emphasized that teenagers are independent of their parents, brothers and sisters in forming attitudes. The peer group was found to influence high school student attitudes.

Characteristics.--Stinnett and Montgomery (27) secured data by means of a self-administered questionnaire with subjects in the older adolescent stage and found that a munition personality factor was positively related to favorable attitudes toward the aged. Those respondents who reported having a considerable amount of contact with aged persons indicated a more favorable attitude toward older

people.. More frequent contacts appear to lead to a breakdown of unfavorable attitudes in group relations.

Porter (22) contended that today's younger generation had grown up in the midst of the greatest scientific breakthrough in history. The American teenager is brought up in a world of baffling conflicts and contradictions. The author indicated that teenagers are responsible individuals who are proud to offer devotion when given the opportunity.

The Purdue Opinion Poll For Young People, constructed by Remmers (23) was administered by correspondence to 195 adolescents, 88 boys and 107 girls, and to their fathers, mothers, and teachers. The young people represented a sampling of high school students who lived in rural areas or small towns of Indiana and Illinois. The purpose of the study was to discover in what ways certain specific attitudes of these high school students were related to the attitudes of their parents and their teachers. Conclusions were that, in general, greater similarity of attitudes were evidenced between parents and children than between teachers and children or teachers and parents; the degree of likeness of attitudes between youth and adults varies somewhat with the specific nature of the attitude.

Hurlock (11) described the adolescent years as those extending from the time the child becomes sexually mature -

about age 13 for girls and 14 for boys - to legal maturity, at 21 years of age. It is customary to divide adolescence into two periods, early and late adolescence, with the dividing line coming around the seventeenth year. The author conceived of social attitudes and behavior as having been influenced by the individual's self-concept. The child with a favorable self-concept will accept himself and more likely have favorable attitudes toward others. This will lead to better socialization; the person who accepts himself usually accepts others. Poor self-concepts, by contrast, lead to self-rejection, and this, in turn, leads to unfavorable social attitudes and rejection of others.

Shaw and Wright (25) attested that attitudes are the end products of the socialization process and significantly influence man's responses to cultural products, to other persons and to groups of persons. If the attitude of a person toward a given object, or class of objects, is known it can be used in conjunction with situational and other dispositional variables to predict and explain reactions of the person to that class of objects. To the extent that principles governing the change of attitudes are known, may be used to manipulate the individual's reactions to relevant objects - as is exemplified in psychotherapy, education, and propaganda. In addition to being predispositioned to respond to social objects, attitudes have the following general

characteristics that were stated by the above-mentioned authors:

- 1) Attitudes are based upon evaluative concepts regarding characteristics of the referent object and give rise to motivated behavior.
- 2) Attitudes are construed as varying in quality and intensity on a continuum from positive through neutral to negative.
- 3) Attitudes are learned, rather than being innate or a result of constitutional development and maturation.
- 4) Attitudes have specific social referents, or specific classes thereof.
- 5) Attitudes possess varying degrees of inter-relatedness to one another.
- 6) Attitudes are relatively stable and enduring.

Comparision of Needs.--- Whyte (29) asserted that more people are living longer, but at no time in an individual's life does he lose his basic needs. Regardless of age, if an individual is to maintain good mental health he needs love and affection; social recognition and a place of usefulness; spiritual, economic and emotional security; status. However, it is seldom possible to fulfill these needs in the same manner as when the individual was younger. The body processes slow down, friends and loved ones are lost through death and the mobility of families, the period of greatest productivity has passed and income has decreased. Thus status and the normal place of prestige are lost. Many older persons today have been able to overcome handicaps

and have adjusted their lives to take advantage of the opportunities which can also prevail in the latter years. However, many others have not found replacement in their lives for work, friends, and families. These older persons failed to develop new interests or to make new friends. Bogdonoff (3) pointed out that at all stages of development and growth the individual must feel he is somebody in order to successfully deal with the challenges of daily life.

Moore (16) argued that dissonance and harmony, conflict and cooperation, rejection and learning, conserving and discarding have always been a part of interaction among generations. Only as the old is modified or displaced and room made for the new can there be the development of creative processes which carry society and culture from the past into the present and toward a future. Disruption which accompanies change, displacement, and disorganization bring the cry of the decadence of the younger generation and the mess made by the elders. Older people are angered, youth rebel in dress or behavior or both. Generations have become both more numerous and distinctive in recent decades. Easy interchange of the young with the old is rare. Clark and Anderson (7) affirmed that both growing and aging individuals seem to experience a more profound than usual sense of personal distinctiveness, and trends of increasing self-absorption and sharper self-articulation.

Kogan and Shelton (12) regarded old people as cognitively differentiated from the general population. The older individual emphasizes certain characteristics and values and suppresses others in order to achieve acceptance and ward off rejection by the dominant majority of younger persons. The belief on the part of adolescents that elderly people resent them seems to be of particular importance. Such a belief, whether or not in correspondence with actuality, implies that younger individuals are likely to respond to aged persons in a defensive manner. Such attitudes might well serve to make more bitter an already delicate interpersonal situation, bringing about the very feelings of resentment in older persons that were attributed to them in the first place. Kogan and Shelton maintained that the age differences observed in images and beliefs regarding aged persons are often suggestive of ambivalence, conflict, and inaccurate perception between generations. Younger individuals, perceiving that older persons resent them, attempt to avoid interpersonal contact and partially justify such avoidance by suggesting that older individuals are really more interested in their families and are preoccupied with death.

Communication.---Moore (16) stated that communication between the older and the younger generations may have broken down in some small segments of society. When there is a discussion there is also listening. Understanding of the

point of view of each is at least possible. When there is mutual respect, the capacity to hear and to sense what is being said is also present. It is only when elders shout their fears and youth shout their defiance that interaction halts. The interchange of ideas between aged persons and adolescents is a catalyst which stimulates and expands expression that opens up limitless vistas of penetration and preception. How well the communication can be will be dependent upon receptivity and how both are able to employ their mental faculties. It is by means of communication that both will be able to realize the potential development.

Loeffler, Berdie, and Roth (14) found in an inter-generation communication study that a major behavioral change, leading to a more satisfactory communication system, would be the avoidance of interrogative and implicative statements, and the increased use of declarative statements. This, together with an increase in time spent listening, could change both the nature and content of communication interchange. Add to this ingredient of honesty, of saying "I have difficulty understanding that from your point of view" and a refreshing new kind of communication, real communication, a getting to know a real person, becomes the communication pattern.

Neugarten (18) contended that relations between age

groups have been given little consideration as an area of inquiry. Only recently has attention been focused upon the so-called "generation gap" or the "revolt of youth," now a highly publicized phenomenon in countries all over the world. Wide age differences between persons are obviously the major consequences in interpersonal relations. Whatever the differences and similarities, however, a first step toward improved human relations in this area should be based upon altering the gross discrepancies between older and younger persons respecting their cognitions of "old people". Moore (16) acknowledged that association among generations demands flexibility, adjustability, and continued learning. Association with other age groups is not enough. Necessary also are the knowledge and the feeling that life does have meaning, that each person, regardless of age, does have a place of his own in the hierarchy of human needs and a contribution to make to those among whom will be found his own replacement.

Tibbitts and Donahue (28) regarded the adolescent level as the stage of -isms -- romanticism, idealism, or cynicism. The sense of social responsibility has become more generalized in the form of loyalty to a cause, as well as to a person or group. The tendency to excess is present in adolescence, but it is doctrinaire excess rather than physically strenuous excess. The pseudosophisticated line of talk, the

wisecrack, and the sophomoric savant are easily recognizable manifestations. Three emotional needs were cited by the just mentioned writers as needs of the high school student as well as needs of the elderly person age group: the need for affection, for personal security, and for personal significance. Persons in both age groups must have some satisfaction in these needs in order to develop and maintain the social assurance required for effective participation with others. The three form a series having relatively different degrees of importance at different stages. In a way, the motivational patterns pertinent to these needs can be used to evaluate communication of members of the adolescent and elderly age groups.

Bogdonoff (3) proposed that there is an inherent characteristic process in man in which the integrity of the individual is dependent, in part, upon a mutually potent interaction with the persons around him and upon the demands for engagement with various stimuli in the environment. Change is underway between youth and their elders; the young are now better informed than the older persons who have served as their informers.

Moore (16) stated that communication between generations is still open. It can be opened wider and made clearer by each generation involved. Responsibility is mutual.

Riots and anarchy belong only to a frantic few misled by models who call for destructive rebellion. To meet the inevitability of change, generations will always create new ways of interacting among themselves. The imperative is to keep the channels of communication clear. Each needs the other. No society can survive on any one generation alone. Adaptation to change, willingness to understand each other - these are integral parts of survival of generations and a way of life. Clark and Anderson (7) contended that an ever-widening gulf separating the elderly from the adolescents generation seems a natural consequence. Distance contributes to the widening gulf; often the very old and the very young do not make good company. Adolescents have an intense interest in peer-group relationships which isolated them from other groups.

A conclusion was brought out in a study by Boyd and Oakes (5) which throws light on the emerging problems of generational differences in the United States. Boyd and Oakes noted that each generation holds a somewhat different outlook on life, which adds to the many generational conflicts in society. The rapid technological changes occurring in the United States tend to produce a widening gap between generations. Many young people assert that no one over 30 can understand them. Educational practices have failed to keep pace with the changes. Most school cur-

ricula are geared to preparing the boy or girl only for the completion of early maturity and not for the longevity of old age. The perspective of a life course approach to human aging provides a meaningful opportunity for society to cope with the many stresses and strains existing between generations.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

This study was concerned with an investigation of the attitudes of 96 high school students toward elderly people. Specifically, the purposes include the following;

- 1) Determine student attitudes concerning personality traits, activities, interests, and family life of the aging.
- 2) Compare responses of males and females as to likenesses and differences in attitudes toward the elderly.
- 3) Examine attitudes of students with elderly people living in their homes and attitudes of students without elderly people living in their homes.

CHAPTER II

P R O C E D U R E

The major concern of the study was to investigate the current attitudes of high school students toward aged persons. The study included a total of 96 students enrolled in the Strong High School located in Strong, Arkansas, during the 1970 - 71 school year. The sample was composed of students enrolled in grades nine and 12, including 30 ninth grade boys, 31 ninth grade girls, 25 twelfth grade boys, and 10 twelfth grade girls.

Each participant was a regular student enrolled in the normal number of courses for his educational classification, and all were residents of the town or surrounding area. Strong High School accommodated grades seven through 12 and had an enrollment of 251 students at the time of the survey. There were 53 students enrolled in grade 12 and 53 enrolled in grade nine.

Data for the study were obtained through the use of a Student Survey Form, consisting of two parts. Part one, "Personal Data Information," developed by the author, supplied background information on personal and family life of the study participants. Part two, entitled "Attitudes Toward

Elderly People," was adapted from an instrument devised in 1953 by Shaw and Wright (25). This instrument was designed to collect opinions about current attitudes of students toward aged persons. The scale was developed to obtain information about current attitudes of students in the following areas:

- 1) Personality traits
- 2) Activities and interests
- 3) Family life

Respondents were requested to indicate, by circling either "yes" or "no" their personal opinion concerning whether or not each statement applied to aged persons. The attitude score is the total number of "yes" responses. A high score indicates an unfavorable attitude toward elderly people.

Data for the study were facilitated through the Home Economics Department at the Strong High School, Strong, Arkansas. The investigator contacted the principal and teachers of these students and was granted permission to administer the survey to interested persons. After completing the survey form, each participant returned the completed form to the author. A copy of the instrument follows:

STUDENT SURVEY FORM

Nowadays, the spotlight is on the younger generation. People are talking about how they look, what they are doing, what they are saying. This survey is an attempt to find out, among other things, what their attitudes are toward aged persons.

Part of the following Student Survey Form is about personal matters, and part about your basic feelings toward older people. It is not a test, so please be frank in filling it out. You should find it fun.

Part I PERSONAL DATA INFORMATION

Instructions: Please answer all questions.

1. Name _____
2. Sex _____
3. Date of birth _____
4. Grade in school _____
5. With whom do you live? _____
6. Do you live with people over 65 years old? _____

Part II ATTITUDES TOWARD ELDERLY PEOPLE

Instructions: Below are statements about elderly people.

If you agree with these statements, put a circle around the "yes". If you do not agree with the statement, put a circle

around the "no". Answer all questions. If you are not sure, check the answer you feel most nearly describes your opinion.

Personality Traits

1. Yes No Old people are absent-minded.
2. Yes No They are unkind.
3. Yes No They are grouchy.
4. Yes No They worry about unimportant things.
5. Yes No They feel sorry for themselves.
6. Yes No They are hard to get along with.
7. Yes No They are very talkative.
8. Yes No They are hard of hearing.
9. Yes No They are stubborn.
10. Yes No They do make friends easily.
11. Yes No They are suspicious of others.
12. Yes No They are selfish.
13. Yes No They cannot remember names.
14. Yes No Their voices break.
15. Yes No They are untidy and careless about their appearance.
16. Yes No They are cranky.
17. Yes No They meddle in other people's affairs.
18. Yes No They are bossy.
19. Yes No They like to gossip.
20. Yes No They are insecure.

Activities and Interests

- | | | | |
|-----|-----|----|--|
| 21. | Yes | No | They repeat themselves in conversation. |
| 22. | Yes | No | They are set in their ways. |
| 23. | Yes | No | They are forgetful. |
| 24. | Yes | No | They are old fashioned. |
| 25. | Yes | No | They like just to sit and dream. |
| 26. | Yes | No | They are out of step with the times. |
| 27. | Yes | No | They would like to be young again. |
| 28. | Yes | No | They never had it better. |
| 29. | Yes | No | They are lonely. |
| 30. | Yes | No | They like to doze in a rocking chair. |
| 31. | Yes | No | They like to think about the good old days. |
| 32. | Yes | No | They feel tired most of the time. |
| 33. | Yes | No | They spend most of their time reading or listening to the radio. |
| 34. | Yes | No | They would like to live their lives over again. |
| 35. | Yes | No | They dislike any changes of established ways of doing things. |
| 36. | Yes | No | They have no interest in the opposite sex. |
| 37. | Yes | No | They frequently talk to themselves. |
| 38. | Yes | No | They do not take part in sports. |

Family Life

- | | | | |
|-----|-----|----|---------------------------------------|
| 39. | Yes | No | They spoil their grandchildren. |
| 40. | Yes | No | They prefer to live alone. |
| 41. | Yes | No | They are not proud of their children. |

- | | | | |
|-----|-----|----|---|
| 42. | Yes | No | They are not important in the family affairs. |
| 43. | Yes | No | They are better off in old age homes. |
| 44. | Yes | No | They are a burden to their children. |
| 45. | Yes | No | They usually live with their children. |
| 46. | Yes | No | They are not good to children. |
| 47. | Yes | No | They should not become parents. |
| 48. | Yes | No | They are critical of the younger generation. |
| 49. | Yes | No | They marry persons much younger than themselves. |
| 50. | Yes | No | They feel that young parents do not know how to bring up children properly. |

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Ninth and twelfth grade students enrolled in Strong High School, Strong, Arkansas, for the academic year of 1970 - 1971 were selected to participate in the study. Responses from the two educational classified groups were combined in analyzing the data. Sixty-one ninth grade students and 35 twelfth grade students were included in the study. The samples were taken as follows: 30 ninth grade males, 31 ninth grade females, 25 twelfth grade males and 10 twelfth grade females. A total of 96 students participated in the study. Each participant was a regular student enrolled in the normal number of courses for his educational classification, and all were residents of the town or surrounding area.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

In analyzing the responses on the Student Survey Form, data from Part I indicated that a majority of the respondents did not live with people over 65 years of age. The number

of students living with people over 65 is indicated below. Fewer participants lived with elderly people as can be noted.

<u>Students Who Lived With People Over Age 65</u>	<u>Grade Level</u>	
	<u>9th. (N=61)</u>	<u>12th. (N=35)</u>
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>
Male	2	2
Female	1	2

ATTITUDES TOWARD ELDERLY PEOPLE

To achieve the first purpose of the study, that of determining student attitudes concerning personality traits, activities, interests and family life of the aged, data were secured through Part II of the Student Survey Form, "Attitudes Toward Elderly People." For purposes of data analysis the attitudes were grouped into the following three areas: 1) personality traits, 2) activities and interests, and 3) family life. Respondents were requested to indicate, by circling either "yes" or "no" whether or not each statement applied to aged persons. The Attitude score was the number of "yes" responses, and high scores indicated an unfavorable attitude toward elderly people.

Of the 20 attitudes relating to personality traits, there were 13 attitudes for which 50.0 per cent or more of the ninth grade respondents indicated "yes", and 14 attitudes for which 50.0 per cent or more of the twelfth grade respon-

dents indicated "yes" concerning personality traits (Table I). In this area, "they worry about unimportant things" ranked highest for the ninth grade in the percentage of "yes" responses (80.2 per cent), and "they like to gossip" ranked highest in the percentage of "yes" responses, 87.0, per cent, for the twelfth grade. "They are unkind" was the attitude that ranked lowest in both groups, as indicated by 23.1 per cent of the ninth grade and 26.0 per cent of the twelfth grade.

Responses concerning the activities and interests are shown in Table II. Of the 18 attitudes listed, there were 14 for which 50.0 per cent or more of the ninth grade respondents indicated "yes", and 13 for which 50.0 per cent or more of the twelfth grade respondents indicated "yes". "They like to think about the good old days" and "they feel tired most of the time" ranked highest in the percentage of "yes" responses, 90.1 per cent, for the ninth grade participants. "They like to think about the good old days" ranked highest in the percentage of "yes" responses, 96.0 per cent, for the twelfth grade participants. "They like just to sit and dream" ranked lowest in the percentage of "yes" responses, 34.0 per cent, of the ninth grade, and "they never had it better" ranked lowest in the percentage of "yes" responses, 35.0 per cent, of the twelfth grade responses.

Attitudes concerning family life are shown in Table III. The highest ranking attitude in this category was "they are critical of the younger generation" for the ninth grade participants with 68.7 per cent indicating "yes" responses. "They feel that young parents do not know how to bring up children properly" ranked highest with the twelfth grade participants with 87.0 per cent indicating "yes" responses. "They are not proud of their children" was ranked lowest in both groups when 6.5 per cent of the ninth grade, and 8.0 per cent of the twelfth grade indicated "yes" responses.

Percentage computations concerning personality traits revealed that the highest ranking attitude was "they are very talkative" as indicated by 81.8 per cent of the male respondents. The female respondents ranked "they worry about unimportant things" the highest with 87.8 per cent conferred "yes" responses. "They do not make friends easily" was ranked lowest in the percentage of "yes" responses, 21.8 per cent, for the male participants. "They are unkind", 17.1 per cent, was the lowest ranked attitude for the female respondents. Male and female responses concerning personality traits are shown in Table IV.

Responses concerning activities and interests are shown in Table V. Of the 18 attitudes which related to activities and interests, there were 13 attitudes for which 50.0 per cent or more of the male participants indicated "yes" re-

sponses, and 13 attitudes for which 50.0 per cent or more of the female participants indicated "yes" responses. "They are suspicious of others" was ranked highest, 89.1 per cent, by the male respondents. The highest ranked attitude among the female respondents, 97.6 per cent, was "they are suspicious of others." The two traits, they spend most of their time reading or listening to the radio, and they have no interest in the opposite sex" was ranked lowest, 47.3 per cent, among the male respondents. The female participants, 34.1 per cent, ranked "they like just to sit and dream and they do not take part in sports" the least often.

Of the 18 attitudes listed there were six concerning family life for which 50.0 per cent or more of the male respondents indicated "yes" responses, and five for which 50.0 per cent or more of the female respondents, 81.8 per cent, ranked "they feel that young parents do not know how to bring up children properly" highest.

"They spoil their grandchildren" was ranked highest, 85.4 per cent, among the female respondents. "They are not proud of their children" was ranked lowest by both the male and female respondents, 3.7 per cent, by the male respondents, and 4.9 per cent of the female respondents.

"Family living was shown to be the lowest ranked category by all the participants with a mean score of 5.4

(Table VII). The mean score of attitudes concerning personality traits was 10.0, and 12.1 was the mean score for attitudes concerning activities and interests. Female participants were shown to have a lower mean score, 10.9, than the male participants, 12.1, concerning personality traits. Of the other categories, the females also had the lower mean scores. The ninth grade respondents were shown to have a lower mean score than did the twelfth grade respondents in all three categories investigated.

TABLE I

PERSONALITY TRAITS OF THE ELDERLY AS EVALUATED BY

NINTH AND TWELFTH GRADE STUDENTS

<u>ATTITUDES</u>	GRADE LEVEL											
	9th.						12th.					
	Male N=30		Female N=31		All N=61		Male N=25		Female N=10		All N=35	
	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent
Absent Minded	13	43.3	9	29.0	22	36.2	16	64.0	6	60.0	22	62.0
Unkind	9	30.0	5	16.1	14	23.1	8	32.0	2	20.0	10	26.0
Grouchy	21	70.0	13	41.9	34	56.0	20	80.0	7	70.0	27	75.0
Worry	21	70.0	28	90.3	49	80.2	20	80.0	8	80.0	28	80.0
Feel sorry for themselves	18	60.0	10	32.3	28	46.2	15	60.0	5	50.0	20	55.0
Hard to get along with	14	46.7	10	32.3	24	39.5	11	44.0	5	50.0	16	47.0
Very talkative	24	80.0	23	74.0	47	77.1	21	84.0	9	90.0	30	87.0
Hard of hearing	22	73.3	20	64.5	42	68.9	20	80.0	8	80.0	28	80.0

TABLE I CONTINUED

ATTITUDES	9th. Grade						12th. Grade					
	Male N=30		Female N=31		All N=61		Male N=25		Female N=10		All N=35	
	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent
Stubborn	16	53.3	11	35.5	27	44.4	16	60.0	6	60.0	22	62.0
Don't make friends easily	8	26.7	8	25.8	16	26.3	4	16.0	2	20.0	6	18.0
Suspicious	19	63.3	14	45.7	33	54.5	18	72.0	7	70.0	25	71.0
Selfish	13	43.3	13	41.9	26	42.6	13	52.0	4	40.0	17	46.0
Cannot remember	17	63.3	23	45.7	40	54.5	20	80.0	7	70.0	27	75.0
Voices break	17	56.7	22	71.0	39	63.9	21	84.0	7	70.0	28	77.0
Untidy and careless	14	46.7	13	41.9	27	44.3	16	64.0	4	40.0	20	52.0
Cranky	20	66.7	15	48.4	35	57.6	12	48.0	4	40.0	16	44.0
Meddlesome	17	54.8	18	58.1	35	56.5	18	72.0	8	80.0	26	76.2
Bossy	23	76.7	27	87.1	50	81.9	18	72.0	8	80.0	26	76.2
Gossipy	23	76.7	25	80.6	48	78.7	21	84.0	9	90.0	30	87.0
Insecure	10	33.3	23	74.2	33	53.8	12	48.0	2	20.0	14	34.0

TABLE II

ACTIVITIES AND INTEREST OF THE ELDERLY AS EVALUATED BY
NINTH AND TWELFTH GRADE STUDENTS

<u>ATTITUDES</u>	GRADE LEVEL											
	9th.						12th.					
	Male N=30		Female N=31		All N=61		Male N=25		Female N=10		All N=35	
	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent
Repeat themselves	18	60.0	28	90.3	46	75.2	22	88.0	8	80.0	30	84.0
Set in their ways	22	73.3	24	77.4	46	75.4	19	76.0	10	100.0	29	88.0
Forgetful	21	70.0	22	71.0	43	70.5	19	76.0	9	90.0	28	83.0
Old fashioned	21	70.0	23	74.2	44	72.1	21	84.0	9	90.0	30	87.0
Like-to-sit-and-dream	9	30.0	12	38.7	21	34.4	18	72.0	2	20.0	20	46.0
Out of step	23	76.7	21	67.7	44	72.2	18	72.0	7	70.0	25	71.0
Would like to be young	24	80.0	19	61.3	43	70.7	23	92.0	7	70.0	30	81.0
Never had it better	15	50.0	13	41.9	28	46.0	13	52.0	2	20.0	15	36.0

TABLE II CONTINUED

<u>ATTITUDES</u>	9th. Grade						12th Grade					
	Male N=30		Female N=31		All N=61		Male N=25		Female N=10		All N=35	
	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent
Lonely	18	60.0	16	51.6	34	55.8	12	48.0	3	30.0	15	39.0
Like to doze	22	73.3	23	74.2	45	73.8	21	84.0	8	80.0	29	82.0
Like to think about good old days	26	86.7	29	93.5	55	90.1	23	92.0	10	100.0	33	96.0
Feel tired	26	86.7	29	93.5	55	90.1	22	88.0	9	90.0	31	89.0
Spend-most-time- reading-listening	14	46.7	10	32.3	24	39.5	12	48.0	5	50.0	17	49.0
Like to-live lives over	21	70.0	29	93.5	50	81.8	20	80.0	6	60.0	26	70.0
Dislike changes	16	53.3	21	67.7	37	60.5	19	76.0	7	70.0	26	73.0
No interest in oppo- site sex	16	53.3	18	58.1	34	55.7	10	40.0	6	60.0	16	50.0
Talk to themselves	16	53.3	16	51.6	32	52.4	21	84.0	9	90.0	30	87.0
Do not take part in sports	17	56.7	11	35.5	28	46.1	15	60.0	3	30.0	18	45.0

TABLE III

FAMILY LIFE OF THE ELDERLY AS EVALUATED BYNINTH AND TWELFTH GRADE STUDENTS

<u>ATTITUDES</u>	GRADE LEVEL											
	9th.						12th.					
	Male N=30		Female N=31		All N=61		Male N=25		Female N=10		All N=35	
	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent
Spoil Grandchildren	20	66.7	27	87.1	47	76.9	21	84.0	8	80.0	29	82.0
Prefer to live alone	8	26.7	5	16.1	13	21.4	7	28.0	3	30.0	10	29.0
Not proud of children	0	0.0	2	6.5	2	6.5	2	8.0	0	0.0	2	8.0
Not important in family affairs	14	46.7	21	67.7	35	57.2	11	44.0	6	60.0	17	52.0
Better off in old age homes	6	20.0	2	6.5	8	13.3	7	28.0	1	10.0	8	19.0
Burden to children	9	30.0	5	16.1	14	23.1	7	28.0	1	10.0	8	19.0
Live with children	21	70.0	10	32.3	31	51.7	16	64.0	4	40.0	20	52.0
Not good to children	8	26.7	2	6.5	10	16.6	1	4.0	3	3.0	4	3.5

TABLE III CONTINUED

ATTITUDES	9th Grade						12th Grade					
	Male N=30		Female N=31		All N=61		Male N=25		Female N=10		All N=35	
	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent
Should not become parents	21	70.0	18	58.1	39	64.1	17	68.0	6	60.0	23	64.0
Critical of younger generation	17	56.7	25	8.6	42	68.7	19	63.3	8	80.0	27	71.7
Marry much younger persons	17	56.7	10	32.3	27	44.5	18	72.0	5	50.0	23	61.0
Feel young parents don't know how to bring up children	24	80.0	23	74.2	47	77.1	21	84.0	9	90.0	30	87.0

TABLE IV

PERSONALITY TRAITS OF THE ELDERLY AS APPRAISED BY

MALE AND FEMALE PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

Attitudes	Male N=55		Female N=41	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Absent. Minded	29	54.5	15	36.6
Unkind	17	30.9	7	17.1
Grouchy	41	74.5	20	48.8
Worry	41	74.5	36	87.8
Feel sorry for them- selves	33	60.0	15	36.6
Hard to get along with	25	45.5	15	36.6
Very talkative	45	81.8	32	78.0
Hard of hearing	42	76.4	28	68.3
Stubborn	32	58.2	17	41.5
Don't make friends easily	12	21.8	10	24.4
Suspicious	37	67.3	21	51.2

TABLE IV CONTINUED

Attitudes	Male N=55		Female N=41	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Selfish	26	47.3	17	41.5
Cannot remember	37	67.3	30	73.2
Voices break	38	69.1	29	70.7
Untidy and careless	30	54.5	17	41.5
Cranky	32	58.2	19	46.3
Meddlesome	35	63.6	26	63.4
Bossy	41	74.5	35	85.4
Gossipy	44	80.0	34	82.9
Insecure	22	40.0	25	61.0

TABLE V

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS OF THE ELDERLY AS APPRAISED BY
MALE AND FEMALE PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

Attitudes toward Elderly	Male N=55		Female N=41	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Repeat themselves	40	72.7	36	87.8
Set in their ways	41	74.5	34	82.9
Forgetful	40	72.7	31	75.9
Old fashioned	42	76.4	32	78.0
Like-to-sit and dream	27	49.1	14	34.1
Out-of-step-with-time	41	74.5	28	68.3
Would-like-to-be-young	47	85.5	26	63.4
Never had it better	28	50.9	15	36.6
Lonely	30	54.5	19	46.3
Like to doze	43	78.2	31	75.9

TABLE V CONTINUED

Attitudes toward Elderly	Male N=55		Female N=41	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Like to think about good old days	49	89.1	39	97.6
Feel tired	48	87.3	38	92.7
Spend-most-time reading and listening	26	47.3	15	36.6
Like-to-live lives over	41	74.5	35	85.4
Dislike changes	35	63.6	28	68.3
No interest in oppo- site sex	26	47.3	24	58.3
Talk to themselves	37	67.3	25	61.0
Do not take part in sports	32	58.2	14	34.1

TABLE VI

FAMILY LIFE OF THE ELDERLY AS APPRAISED BY
MALE AND FEMALE PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

Attitudes	Male N=55		Female N=41	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Spoil grandchildren	41	74.5	35	85.4
Prefer to live alone	15	27.3	8	19.5
Not proud of children	2	3.7	2	4.9
Not important in family affairs	25	45.5	27	65.9
Better off in old age homes	13	23.6	3	7.3
Burden to children	16	29.1	6	14.6
Live with children	37	67.3	14	34.1
Not good to children	9	16.4	5	12.2
Should not become parents	38	69.1	24	58.3

TABLE VI CONTINUED

Attitudes toward Elderly	Male N=55		Female N=41	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Critical of younger generation	36	65.5	33	80.5
Marry much younger persons	35	63.6	15	36.6
Feel young parents do not know how to bring up children	45	81.8	32	78.0

TABLE VII

MEAN SCORES OF TEENAGERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD

ELDERLY PEOPLE

Group	Personality Traits	Activities and Interests	Family Life
	Mean Scores	Mean Scores	Mean Scores
Females N= 41	10.9	11.8	5.0
Males N= 55	12.1	12.2	5.7
9th Grade N= 61	6.0	11.6	5.2
12th Grade N= 35	12.5	12.8	5.7
All	10.4	12.1	5.4

CHAPTER IV

S U M M A R Y, C O N C L U S I O N S A N D R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

The purpose of the study was to initiate and conduct a study of attitudes of students on a selected high school campus in the southern part of the United States. This study was concerned with an investigation of the attitudes of high school students toward elderly people. Data were obtained from responses of 96 high school students enrolled in Strong High School during the 1970 - 1971 school year. Of the 96 participants, 55 were male and 41 were female. Sixty-one ninth grade students and 35 twelfth grade students were included in the study. A sample was taken from the following high school students: 30 ninth grade males, 31 ninth grade females, 25 twelfth grade males and 10 twelfth grade females. Each participant was a regular student enrolled in the normal number of courses for his educational classification, and all were residents of the town or surrounding area.

The instrument used to obtain the necessary information for the study was in two parts and was entitled "Student Survey Form". Data from the instrument were analyzed to

determine student attitudes toward elderly people. Responses to items on Part II of the "Student Survey Form" were arranged and analyzed according to the following areas: 1) personality traits, 2) activities and interests, and 3) family life.

Data indicated that a majority of the respondents lived with people under 65 years of age. Of the 96 participants, only seven indicated living with persons over 65 years of age.

Students expressed more favorable attitudes toward the family living area. "They are not proud of their children" was the lowest ranked attitude on the survey. None of the ninth grade males and none of the twelfth grade females responded "yes" to this item. Of the 96 participants, only four thought that item applied to elderly persons.

Ninth grade students indicated a more favorable attitude toward elderly people than did the twelfth grade participants. The ninth grade participants had a much lower percentage score in the area of personality traits than did the twelfth grade participants.

The female participants had slightly more favorable attitudes than did the males in the sample. Of the three categories investigated, the females in the sample were

shown to have a mean score of 30. This implies that the attitudes of both groups were nearly parallel.

The difference in attitudes, especially those concerned with personality traits, lends support to the idea that at each stage, life requires human beings to be consciously aware of continuing change physically and mentally, the acceptance of passing years and the ultimate knowledge of death. Massive resources are directed to preparing young persons for adult roles, but relatively little attention has been given to preparing persons for older-age roles.

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered.

- 1) Extensive research studies should be conducted to determine the experiences that actually contribute to an adolescent's development of attitudes toward elderly people.
- 2) Further investigation should include more attitude categories with a larger sample.
- 3) A comparative study should be made of attitudes as expressed by elderly people with those of high school students.

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