

# Student Attitudes toward Older Adults

Anna Feenstra

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# Background

- Aging of the American population
- By 2050, about one fifth of the population will be age 65 or older
- Illnesses increase with old age; almost half of all hospital visits are made by people 65 years or older.

# Background, cont.

- Not enough people trained in geriatrics in the U.S.
- Geriatric nursing lacks appeal to many nurses and students

# Background: Ageism

- Many people have negative attitudes toward aging and the aged.
- One theory is the terror management theory (TMT)
- Ageism is present at all levels of society, in the U.S. and other countries
- Older adults seen as physically or mentally deficient



# Associated Factors

- Younger age
- Male gender
- Lack of experience with older adults

# What has been done?

- Integration of gerontology material into curriculum
- Dedicated gerontology courses
- Instructors in both classroom and clinical setting
- Exposure to well elders



# Purpose of Study

- Determine the attitudes of nursing students toward older adults and if they change over the course of the nursing program.

# Methods

- HSIRB approval obtained
- Pre-test post-test single group design
  - Beginning of sophomore semester (T1)
  - End of sophomore semester (T2)
  - End of program (T3)
- Kogan's Old People scale (KOP)
- Demographic questionnaire

# Sample

- T1 and T2
  - n=40
  - 75% female (n=30)
  - 80% under 25 years of age
  - Most had had prior experience with older adults
  - 87.5% Caucasian
- T3
  - n=35
  - 80% female (n=28)
  - 86% under 25 years of age (n=30)
  - Most had prior experience with older adults
  - 94.3% Caucasian

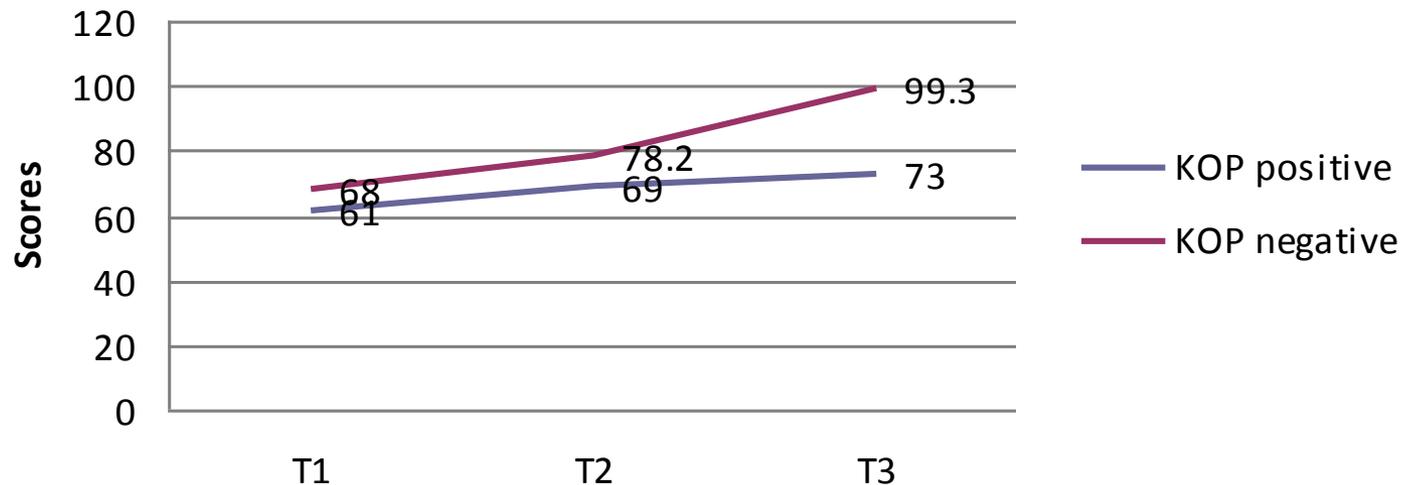
# Results

**KOP scores throughout study (whole cohort)**



# Results, cont.

**KOP scores throughout the study (10 students)**



# Discussion

- Results consistent with previous research
- Higher scores on negative items consistent with Kogan's original research

# Limitations

- Not all participants paired (only T1 and T2)
- Change in class composition
- Sampling issues
- The scale: old, may be outdated

# Implications/Recommendations

- More research needed on factors affecting attitudes toward older adults
- Increased emphasis on gerontology education
- Gerontology education should be integrated throughout curriculum
- Aging specialists as faculty



# Conclusion

- Increase in older adult population
- Negative attitudes toward older adults in society
- Great need for geriatric-educated health practitioners
- Increase in positive attitudes through education
- Necessity of gerontology-oriented, integrated nursing curricula.

# A final thought...

***“Who will care for  
a segment of  
society to which  
almost everyone  
will someday  
belong?”***

(Ryan & McCauley, 2005, p. 6)



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