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DOES PURPOSE IN LIFE AFFECT THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING STUDENT'S ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science in Nursing

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Susan Beeler Walker

August, 1987

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the encouragement and consultation provided by my thesis committee members, Dr. Johnie Mozingo, Dr. Sandra Thomas, and Mrs. Patricia Smith. Without their assistance this project could not have been completed. Gratitude is due Mr. John Jozwiak for his helpful suggestions with the statistical analysis of the data.

I am grateful to the associate degree nursing programs at Dyersburg State Community College, The University of Tennessee, Martin, and Union University for allowing me to conduct this study. I am also appreciative of the students who participated in the study.

Finally, to Dr. Danny Walker, my husband, and my children, Matthew and Lee Taylor goes a special thanks for their continuous support, love, and encouragement during the past three years.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a relationship existed between freshman associate degree nursing students' purpose in life and their academic success. The study also sought to determine if a relationship existed between purpose in life and age or between purpose in life and previous work experience in a health care facility.

Ninety freshman associate degree nursing students who were enrolled in one of three ADN programs in Western Tennessee comprised the final sample. All subjects were taking their first nursing course.

The Purpose In Life Test (Part A) was used to measure the subjects' degree of purpose in life. A questionnaire developed by the researcher assessed sociodemographic characteristics.

Pearson product-moment correlation technique was applied to the data. No significant correlations were found between purpose in life and the variables--academic success, age, and previous work experience in a health care facility. A statistically significant correlation was found between age and previous work experience in a health care facility.

The non-random sample studied limits the generalizability of the findings, and the researcher identified other variables which should be investigated. Additional studies are needed to further evaluate the influence that purpose in life has on program completion

and job satisfaction. Through continued research, nursing educators may find additional factors predictive of academic success.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem and Background Information

During the decade 1975-1985, the nursing profession experienced rapid growth. Factors contributing to this growth were greater emphasis on preventative medicine and rehabilitation, expansion of health care services, and rapid advances in medicine and technology. Approximately 1.5 million persons are employed as registered nurses (RNs) in the United States (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 1986). Although this number represents a 36 percent increase for the years 1975-1985 (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1986), a nursing shortage continues. The need for registered nurses has been particularly acute in hospitals, where vacant positions for registered nurses have doubled since 1985 (Curran, Minnick, & Moss, 1987). Simultaneously, accredited educational institutions have been faced with high attrition rates in the nursing student enrollment (Bell, 1981).

Attrition rates for diploma (26%), baccalaureate (41%) and associate degree nursing programs (44%), indicate that at least one third of all students admitted to nursing programs fail to complete their programs successfully (Rowland, 1978). The largest amount of attrition (84%) occurs during the first year after admission (Hill, Taylor, & Stacy, 1963; Tate, 1961). This attrition is even more distressing when one considers the fact that nursing programs are finding it

difficult to fill their enrollments (Shelby, 1987). It is evident that attrition rates are costly to students, faculty, educational institutions, and to the nation's nursing force (Oliver, 1985). Therefore, schools of nursing are challenged to find effective means for selecting and retaining students in order to provide sufficient graduates to meet the present and future demands for nursing care.

Early identification of students likely to be successful is important for associate degree nursing (ADN) programs. These programs are now providing the bulk of hospital-based bedside nurses in the United States. ADN programs are vocational or technical in nature and are designed to prepare students in two years to take the examination for registered nursing licensure. The majority of these ADN programs are in community colleges, and the students enrolled in these programs differ from the typical professional nursing student in several ways. They are usually older than the typical 18 to 21 year old college student, have previous educational and work experience, and are usually highly motivated to achieve a vocational goal. Although these characteristics are associated with more mature individuals, these students still have problems in achieving academic success in ADN programs.

Numerous studies in nursing education have been directed toward finding a solution to unacceptable rates of attrition (Alichnie & Bellucci, 1981; Donsky & Judge, 1981; Oliver, 1985; Weinstein, Brown & Wahlstrom, 1980). Cognitive variables which have been found to be the most reliable predictors for academic success in nursing programs are: scores on academic tests, college entrance exams (Bell, 1981),

previously taken science courses (Weinstein, Brown & Wahlstrom, 1979; Montgomery & Palmer, 1976); and pre-nursing grade point average (GPA) (Alichnie & Bellucci, 1981; Clemence & Brink, 1978). Nevertheless, Schwirian (1977) found that academic failure or difficulty accounts for less than fifty percent of the attrition problems in nursing programs. Schwirian (1977) also discovered in a national survey of nursing programs that little attention had been given to the noncognitive attributes of personality.

According to Knoell (1960) personality characteristics have rarely been used in research to examine the attrition problems of undergraduate students, and most of the studies that have examined noncognitive variables are over twenty years old. In a study by Knopke (1979) the personality factors of achievement, order and dominance, as measured by the Edwards Personal Preference Scale (EPPS), were correlated with the academic success of nursing students. Other cognitive factors such as conformity (Alichnie & Bellucci, 1981), responsibility (Baker, 1975; Moses, 1977), and self concept (Roediger, 1983) were also found to be associated with academic success.

Of special significance is the lack of literature examining psychospiritual variables, and more specifically, the relationship of the personality variable, purpose in life, to academic success. This gap in nursing research seems to be an oversight because, according to Frankl (1963), this dimension is the core of man's personality and his reason for existence. The following quote exemplifies oversights

in research when the analysis of cause and effect relationships omits a significant variable: "We often think that when we have completed our study of one, we know all about two because two is one and one. We forget that we have still to make a study of 'and'" (Eddington, 1982, p. 27). It is therefore appropriate to examine the personality variable, purpose in life, as a possible predictor of academic success.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on Viktor Frankl's theory about the meaning of life. Frankl proposed that man possesses his own unique purpose or meaning in life which challenges him to carry out a concrete assignment towards its fulfillment (Frankl, 1962). For example, an individual seeking to serve mankind may enroll in a school of nursing to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill this purpose. However, before this purpose in life can be achieved, the individual must be able to acknowledge the fundamental differences between the reshaping of the outer life (nursing education) and the fulfilling of the inner life (meaning or purpose of life) (Frankl, 1972). Through this process of self actualization, the psychospiritual dimension of man's being is examined and the meaning of existence is answered.

The name of Frankl's theory is "logotherapy." This term was employed because the Greek word logos denotes meaning. Logotherapy "focuses on the meaning of human existence, as well as on man's search

for such a meaning" (Frankl, 1962, p. 99). This meaning is unique and specific for each man because it must be fulfilled by him alone. Only after fulfillment does meaning achieve a significance which will satisfy man's own "will to meaning." Frankl (1962) contends that man is able to live and even die for the sake of his meaning, ideals, and values.

Frankl (1962; 1969) names three specific values which either push man toward the fulfillment of a purpose in life or cause him to forfeit his purpose. They are: (1) creative values, (2) experiential values, and (3) attitudinal values. Creative values are those that the individual gives to the world in terms of creations such as work. Experiential values are those that the individual takes from the world in terms of experiences and encounters such as love. Attitudinal values are those which the individual develops in terms of the stand taken toward predicaments such as unalterable suffering (Frankl, 1962; 1969). By becoming aware of these values, individuals are able to transcend their present existence and go beyond themselves. Thus, they are able to think less of present rewards and pleasures and more about future goals and the fulfillment of the purpose of their existence (Frankl, 1969).

Existence, termed by Frankl (1962) as existential frustration, is the constant striving of the personality to fulfill itself at the highest level of development. From this perpetual state of motion, existence is a process of becoming (Grimsley, 1960). When the individual fails to strive for concrete meaning in personal existence, an existential vacuum exists.

The existential vacuum is a feeling that life is meaningless. Frankl (1969) hypothesized that this feeling of emptiness and aimlessness develops for two reasons. First, in contrast to animals, man has no natural instincts or drives that tell him what he must do. Second, in contrast to former times, the present age of vanishing traditions and waning universal values gives little direction to man in regard to his purpose. In addition to this etiology of existential vacuum, man often does not even know what he wants to do (Frankl, 1969). Individuals possessing a frustrated "will to meaning" often substitute the "will to pleasure" in sexual gratification or the "will to power" in materialistic striving to escape the existential vacuum in which they live (Frankl, 1969). However, man's freedom of will and his ability to utilize passing opportunities enable him to go beyond his basic biological and instinctual drives and creatively construct his own meaning for life (Frankl, 1969).

Frankl (1962) believed that in order for man to transcend to his self meaning or purpose in life he must exist in a state of striving and struggling. This state of inner tension is described as noödynamics, a "spiritual dynamics in a polar field of tension where one pole is represented by a meaning to be fulfilled and the other pole by a man who must fulfill it" (Frankl, 1962, p. 107). On the negative pole is the "freedom of will"; on the positive pole lies the "will to meaning." If this "freedom of will" is not properly utilized to guide the "will to meaning," an existential vacuum may be produced (Frankl, 1969).

When loss of interest and motivation to find a purpose in life occurs, a neurosis develops which Frankl called noögenic neurosis. This neurosis emerges from the conflicts man has between the creative, attitudinal, and experiential values of life. However, the man who accepts the responsibility of the "freedom of will" and integrates it into his "will to meaning" is able to transcend toward his purpose in life, avoiding an existential vacuum or noögenic neurosis (Frankl, 1962).

By utilizing Nazzaro's (1975) model of the paradigm of Frankl's theory, an understanding of the concepts of this theory can be attained (Appendix A). The model is divided into three triangles, labeled A, B and C. Triangle A represents the three cornerstones upon which Frankl's (1969) concept of man is based. These are (1) freedom of will located at the negative pole; (2) will to meaning, located at the positive pole; and (3) purpose in life, located at the peak of the triangle. The charges at the base of triangle A represent the inner tension necessary for meaning in life to be identified and fulfilled. The concepts of existential vacuum and noögenic neurosis lie outside this triangle. They represent states of being that exist when a purpose in life is not found. Triangle B is located within triangle A and surrounds triangle C. It depicts the creative, experiential, and attitudinal value concepts of man's psychospiritual dimension. This plane of values influences man's freedom of will, his will to meaning, and the emotional aspect of the spirit. Triangle C, existing within the other two triangles, represents the emotional

aspect of the psychospiritual dimension of man. The visual aspect of this theory clarifies its premise: that three distinct areas comprise man's third dimension.

If Frankl's theory were applied to factors which predict academic success, then successful students would be those who have a definite purpose in life, such as serving mankind through nursing. Unsuccessful students would be those who lack a purpose for their lives. By assessing this psychospiritual variable of applicants, nursing faculties would be able to identify potentially unsuccessful students and then assist them in setting goals and making career selections.

Purpose of the Study

For the past two years the freshman attrition rate in three associate degree nursing programs in Western Tennessee has been approximately 35-40 percent (M. Figgins, 1987; N. Hight, 1987; R. Privett, 1987, personal communications, June 1, 1987). Although attempts had been made to determine the basis for this problem, more research was needed to determine specific causative factors. This researcher wondered if the difficulty in predicting student success could be related to one's psychospiritual nature. It was found that prospective students had never been screened to determine this relationship. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of the psychospiritual variable, purpose in life, to the academic success of freshman ADN students. Because there is some basis for belief that age and previous work experience in a health care facility may also

influence an individual's purpose in life, this study included an examination of these factors and their relationship to purpose in life. Information obtained from this investigation may be helpful to instructors and counselors as they work with nursing students in making appropriate career decisions.

Nominal Definitions

1. Ontology--A branch of metaphysics concerning the nature of existence and essence, involving the categories of being (Daly, 1965).

2. Purpose in Life--"The ontological significance of life from the point of view of the experiencing individual" (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964, p. 201).

3. Associate Degree Nursing Programs--Two year nursing education programs generally located in a community college setting. The purposes of these programs are: (1) to prepare graduates for the registered nurse examination; (2) to prepare graduates to function as beginning practitioners and to become competent nurses; and (3) to prepare graduates to perform technical functions at the registered nurse level (Montag, 1951).

4. Academic Success--Completing a college or university program of study or individual course with a passing grade.

5. Predictive Criteria--Characteristics of an individual which may foretell the ability to achieve success in a specific goal or objective.

6. Existential Frustration--An emotional response experienced by an individual when he/she fails to find a meaning or purpose in life (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981).

7. Logotherapy--Viktor Frankl's theory which focuses on the meaning of human existence and on man's search for such a meaning (Frankl, 1962).

The Research Question

What is the relationship between freshman associate degree nursing students' purpose in life and their academic success in the first nursing course?

Subsidiary Questions

1. What is the relationship between freshman associate degree nursing students' age and their purpose in life?

2. What is the relationship between the freshman associate degree nursing students' previous work experience in a health care facility and their purpose in life?

Summary

Chapter I identified the problem of attrition that exists in most schools of nursing. The relationship of this problem to the size of the nation's nursing force for hospital care was addressed. A synopsis of the variables that have been examined in the past for their predictive criteria to the attrition problem was presented.

The psychospiritual dimension of man's personality, purpose in life, was identified as a dimension of man's being which had not been examined in relation to academic success. Because Frankl (1972) proposed that the framework of an individual's motivation dwells within his/her purpose in life, the researcher questioned its relationship to the academic success of freshman ADN students. Subsidiary questions concerning the relationship of age and previous work experience in a health care facility to purpose in life were also raised by the researcher. A review of relevant literature is included in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter II contains an examination of the literature in the following related areas: (1) cognitive factors and academic success, (2) personality factors and academic success, and (3) studies of the variable "purpose in life."

Cognitive Factors and Academic Success

Educators have long been seeking to find criteria predictive of academic success. One area in which reliable criteria have been found is the cognitive domain of the individual. Researchers have identified correlations between global cognitive predictors (Scholastic Aptitude Test) and academic success (Frick & Kenner, 1956; Sharp & Pickett, 1959), as well as multidimensional cognitive predictors (subscores of profile abilities test) and academic success (Anderson & Stegman, 1944; Chappell, 1954; Gretchen, Davis, & Garcia, 1958). These cognitive measures of ability testing have accounted for approximately 35-45 percent of the variation in academic performance of undergraduate students in various academic disciplines (Lavin, 1965). The research utilizing cognitive factors as predictors of academic success in nursing education has reinforced these findings.

Cognitive Factors and Academic Success in Nursing

Backman and Steindler (1971) investigated the cognitive differences between those students who withdrew voluntarily and those who were dropped from an associate degree nursing program at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey. Their sample included 155 students who were categorized into the following three groups: (1) Group G (N=112), those who had graduated; (2) Group D (N=26), those who were dropped for academic failure; and (3) Group W (N=17), those who withdrew voluntarily. The three measures of intelligence utilized in this study were the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), the verbal and mathematics sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and high school rank. Only the WAIS was administered as a part of the preadmission testing program. The scores from the SAT and high school rank were collected from the subjects' admission records. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Scheffé tests were conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences among the means of the three groups on the intelligence tests.

Findings revealed that Groups G and W had significantly higher ($p<.05$) mean scores than Group D on the WAIS full score, the SAT verbal test and high school rank. Group W performed significantly better than Group D on both the math and verbal sections of the SAT and on the WAIS. The average high school rank of Group W was also significantly higher than Group D. Differences between Group W and Group G were not significant. The researchers concluded that those subjects

who withdrew voluntarily tended to exhibit higher intellectual ability than those who were dismissed for academic failure. Thus, they suggested that withdrawals should not be grouped together under the general classification of dropout. It should be noted that the number of subjects in Group D (N=17) and Group W (N=26) was small, uneven, and sampled from only one region of the U.S. The sampling of this study limited its applicability to other nursing programs.

In a study conducted by Montgomery and Palmer (1976) the relationships between four cognitive factors and the academic success of 279 ADN students enrolled in a fundamentals of nursing course were examined. The four factors were: the American College Testing (ACT) composite and mathematics scores, the number of previously earned college credit hours, and whether the student had had high school chemistry and/or physics. Significant correlations were found between academic success in the fundamentals of nursing course and: (1) ACT mathematics and composite scores, and (2) having taken high school physics and/or chemistry. In comparing the mean nursing grades with the number of college credit hours, the researchers found that the highest mean nursing grades were made by those students who had from six to twenty-three hours of college credit.

Age did not seem to be significantly related to successful or unsuccessful completion of the fundamentals course. However, the age grouping was determined by the date the student had taken the ACT rather than chronological age. Therefore, it would appear that the relationship between age and academic success should be further investigated before it is discarded as a predictive factor of academic success.

Clemence and Brink's (1978) five year study was designed to determine the relationship between admissions criteria and the successful completion of one program of study leading to the Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. The terminal variables were completion of the program and passage of the state board examination. The three categories of data included as the admission variables were: (1) admission grade point average (G.P.A.), (2) course requirements, and (3) demographic data. The 247 subjects in the study were students graduating from one generic bachelor's program in nursing from 1971 through 1975. Seventy-six variables were collected manually from the students' folders and subjected to frequency tabulation, measures of central tendency, Chi-square, and correlation analysis. The level of significance chosen for accepting a relationship between the terminal variables and the admissions variables was $p<.05$.

Results of the data analysis revealed two things: (1) those students with high admission grade point averages (G.P.A.) were more successful in completing a program of studies leading to the Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing than those with low admission G.P.A.s; and (2) the only demographic variable that was significantly related to the terminal variable was ethnicity (minority students). The latter finding should be questioned, however, because the G.P.A. admission criteria for minority students participating in this study was lower than that required of the other subjects.

In regard to the relationships among prerequisite course work, success/nonsuccess on state board examination, and completion of the

nursing program, the following results were found: (1) psychology course grades were related to the success or nonsuccess of program completion and scores on the state board examination; (2) sociology course grades were related to scores on state boards, and to the amount of time needed to complete the program, but not to the passing score on the state board examination.

Recommendations made by the researchers were that G.P.A. still be utilized as a factor to predict academic success in a nursing program, but that prerequisite courses and demographic data be carefully examined before they are used as predictors of academic success. The researchers also recommended that correlation studies of this type be used for comparative studies and not for generalizations.

Yess (1980) conducted a study in a New England community college associate degree nursing program to help the admissions office identify predictors of academic success. The sample included 75 ADN graduates (25 each from the graduating classes of 1976, 1977, and 1978). For this descriptive research two variables were identified. The one dependent variable was cumulative quality point average of the student (Q.P.A.). The fourteen independent variables were: (1) gender, (2) age, (3) dropout rate, (4) college transcripts, (5) marital status, (6) number of dependents, (7) job experience related to the community college program of study, (8) relationship of course objectives to the community college program of study, (9) number of high school extracurricular activities, (10) source of support, (11) Scholastic Aptitude Verbal Test Score, (12) Scholastic Aptitude Mathematics Test

Score, (13) highest mathematics level achieved in high school, (14) number of high school English courses, (15) and average of grades earned in high school English courses. A multiple regression analysis was employed by Yess to evaluate the data.

Four significant findings were revealed by this study. First, the SAT mathematics scores were the most important predictors of academic success in the nursing education program in this community colledge. Second, those students who were married or had been married did better academically in their nursing courses than did their single counterparts. Third, nursing students who had stated that they intended to pursue a Bachelor's degree earned higher grades than those not in pursuit of such an academic goal. Fourth, previous job experience (such as that of a Licensed Practical Nurse) and graduating Q.P.A. had a negative correlation. It should be noted that the small sample selected from one community college was inadequate for the multiple regression analysis, because a subjects to variable ratio of 10 to 1 is generally recommended.

Oliver (1985) studied the relationship of fourteen selected admission criteria to the academic success of associate degree nursing students. This study had a two-fold purpose: (1) to determine which of the independent variables most accurately predicted academic success as measured by program completion and first quarter GPA, and (2) to determine if there were clusters of independent variables that better predicted program completion and first quarter G.P.A. than did single independent variables. The sample population was composed of

67 freshman students enrolled in an ADN program for the years 1977 to 1979. Pearson product-moment correlation was utilized to measure the relationship between each of the 14 variables and the students' first quarter G.P.A. A series of *t* tests were used to determine if the continuous variable means differed significantly between the nonsuccessful and the successful program completion groups. Differences in the frequencies of the categorical variables between the two groups were examined with Chi-square tests.

The findings revealed that independent variables were more accurate in predicting first quarter G.P.A. than cluster variables. Those variables found to be significant ($p < .05$) were: age, high school rank, biology grade, previous college attendance, faculty prediction of first quarter G.P.A., and faculty prediction of the student's potential to complete the program. Although these findings did not answer the researcher's questions, Oliver concluded that further research investigating the efficiency of cluster variables as predictors of academic success should be done with more control over the independent variables.

Personality Factors and Academic Success

Allport (1937) defined personality as "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment" (p. 48). The two general classifications of personality theory are: (a) theories which pertain to individual personality, such as those of Allport (1937), Sheldon

(1942), Cattell (1950), Rogers (1951), Freud (1960); and (b) theories which pertain to social personality, such as those of Lewin (1935), Skinner (1953), and Bandura (1971). Although each theorist has developed his own concepts and assumptions, the intent of most was to promote the study of the whole unsegmented person (Hall & Lindzey, 1957). The concepts of "self" (Rogers, 1951) and "traits" (Allport, 1937) influenced several researchers in a quest to identify criteria which affect the learning process.

According to Freud (1960) each system has its origin in inherited predispositions and each has its own course of independent development. Ego processes are operated by neutralized sexual and aggressive energy. Cattell (1950) pioneered the study of individual differences among people. Most of his work focused on the study of intellectual ability; although, more recently the application of his theory has been concerned with personality variables, i.e., the development of psychological tests by Spearman. The social personality theory of Lewin (1935) may be summarized as: (1) behavior is a function which exists at the time the behavior occurs; (2) analysis begins at the general and is deduced to the specific.

Personality Factors and Academic Success in Nursing

Failure to succeed academically in a program of nursing is not the consequence of intellectual inadequacy alone (Cohen, 1981; Levitt, Lubin & DeWitt, 1971). Some researchers have found that only 20 to 40 percent of the nursing student failures have been related to cognitive

factors (Berg, 1947; Heslin & Katzell, 1962). Therefore, the bulk of the attrition problem must be related to the noncognitive factors of the personality (Levitt, Lubin & DeWitt, 1971). Cohen (1981) and Hayes (1981) agree that noncognitive factors are frequently identified as the crucial variables which determine a student's academic performance.

Smith (1965) investigated the role personality plays in the success of a nursing student. As a part of a pre-entrance test battery, the Cattell 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire and the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule were administered to applicants to the Catherine Laboure School of Nursing in Boston; approximately 99 percent of the applicants took these tests during their senior year in high school. Two groups of students were examined over a three year period. Group one consisted of 219 nursing students who graduated from the three year program in 1960, 1961, and 1962. These were called the successful students. The second group consisted of 45 students who matriculated but failed academically between 1957 and 1960. These were called the unsuccessful students. Smith's study revealed that the successful students were better adjusted, less preoccupied with sex, and more interested in persevering than the unsuccessful students. Weaknesses noted in this study included the large discrepancy in the size of the groups and the application of the test batteries to students in only one diploma school of nursing.

Thurston and Brunclik (1965) utilized a unique approach to the problem of attrition in schools of nursing. The purpose of their

study was to determine whether the technique of incomplete sentences could be beneficial in predicting student success in schools of nursing. Their 90 item form, the Luther Hospital Sentence Completions (LHSC), was designed to evaluate the emotional reactions and attitudes believed by experienced nurses to be vital to good nursing practice. A Nursing Education Scale (NES) was designed as a scoring standard for LHSC responses. The sample consisted of 30 applicants to Luther Hospital School of Nursing and 20 applicants to Holy Family Hospital School of Nursing. Although most of the research focused on the construction and validation of the LHSC as scored by the NES, the relationship between nursing school achievement and performance on the NLN Pre-nursing and Guidance Test (PNG), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Test (MMPI), and the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank (ISB) were also studied.

The findings were as follows: (1) cross-validation of the LHSC as scored with the NES showed significant differences between failures and achievers; (2) few relationships were found between achievement and the MMPI scores; (3) there were no relationships between achievement and Rotter ISB performance; (4) a significant difference was found between the schools and scores on the Rotter ISB; (5) little difference on the MMPI and the Rotter ISB was observed between those students accepted and those students rejected from the two schools; and (6) a significant difference in achievement was found in Pre-nursing and Guidance Test scores and high school rank. On the PNG, the under-achievers scored higher than the failures or the achievers. Based on

the fact that no significant relationship was identified between the MMPI and the Rotter ISB scores and academic success in nursing, the researchers concluded that these tests should not be used for the purpose of predicting academic success.

Levitt, Lubin, and DeWitt (1971) employed the use of a test battery that could be used by nursing schools for the selection of students. The test instruments used were the Kuder Preference Record, Vocational Form CM, the Edwards Personality Preference Schedule (EPPS), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), the Kerr Empathy Test, Cattell 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (Cattell 16 PF), and the California Capacity Questionnaire. A total of 50 test units for each subject were furnished by these six instruments. Only four of the test units showed a differentiation between the 344 graduates and the 87 dropouts who attended Indiana University School of Nursing during the years of 1964 to 1967. These tests were the Kuder, the MMPI--faking scale (F), the MMPI--psychopathic deviate scale (Pd), and the Cattell 16 PF. The differentiation indicated that dropouts were somewhat more predisposed to psychopathological tendencies (MMPI, F), somewhat more likely to experience anxiety in manifest symptoms rather than in indirect ways (Cattell 16 PF), slightly more inclined to sociopathic behavior (MMPI, Pd), and noticeably less likely to be interested in outdoor activities than the graduates.

It was concluded that time, cost, and effort involved for administering the four test units was minimal, but that use of these tests

should be limited to applicants whose acceptability was questionable (Levitt, Lubin & DeWitt, 1971). The credibility of these findings is dubious because the MMPI was not designed to be utilized for the purpose of identifying potentially unsuccessful students, but instead was intended for analysis of hospitalized psychiatric patients (Lachar, 1974).

In 1975, Jones tested the hypothesis that there would be no significant difference between certain measured personality factors of persistent and non-persistent ADN students in the same program. Subjects included in this study were 47 freshmen and 54 sophomore persisters, and 18 freshmen dropouts and 1 sophomore dropout from the ADN program at Illinois Central College. Each subject was given the Edwards Personality Preference Schedule (EPPS) during the fall of 1972. After the researcher hand scored each of the EPPS tests the data were analyzed by a two-tailed t-test. The level of significance identified was $p < 0.10$.

Findings revealed that only four of the 15 personality variables were related to whether the student persisted or dropped out of the program. The students who persisted demonstrated the personality factors of achievement, deference, and heterosexuality; students who dropped out of the program demonstrated the personality factor of humility. The researcher concluded that the differences in the needs of the persisters and the dropouts may have been related to areas of emphases of this particular ADN program, i.e., problem-solving and team nursing. The small sample size affected the generalizability of the findings.

The credibility of the findings could also be questioned due to the level of significance ($p < .10$) accepted by the researcher.

Baker (1975) conducted a study which investigated the nonintellectual differences between 112 graduates and dropouts in five associate degree nursing programs. However, seven students who had not completed the program requirements but who remained enrolled were not included in the data analysis. Each student was given the following: a personal history questionnaire, five psychological tests (Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Scale of Values, Opinions Towards Mental Illness, Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation Inventory--Behavior, the California Personality Inventory, and the Dogmatism Scale), and two experimental instruments to assess reasoning ability (Necessary Arithmetic Operations Test) and verbal comprehension (Extended Range Vocabulary Test).

At the end of two years the data analysis revealed the 73 students who graduated were more likely to be older, married, achievement oriented, self controlled, and more responsible than the 32 dropouts. The graduates were also found to have a more tolerant and accepting attitude toward people who suffered with emotional problems. The criteria for the variable "maturity" included chronological age and marital status. It should be noted that these factors were not shown to be statistically associated with responsibility and self control but were assumed by the researcher to measure maturity.

Moses' (1977) study attempted to determine variables which might be used as predictive criteria in the identification of successful

students in an associate degree nursing program. The subjects were 119 students enrolled in the Grayson County Junior College Associate Degree Nursing Program during the 1973-74 academic year. The subjects were divided into two groups: Group I, those who successfully completed one year at Grayson County Junior College; and Group II, those who dropped out of the program within the first year. Indicators from seven sources were identified by the investigators: (1) scores on the eighteen scales of personality as measured by the California Psychological Inventory, (2) scores on the occupational and the basic interest scales as measured by the Strong Vocational Interest Bank; (3) scores of the twenty-nine variables of self concept and self criticism as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS), (4) age, (5) gender, (6) college grade point average, and (7) American College Test composite score.

Findings revealed that the two groups of ADN students did not differ significantly in regard to personality variables; however, significant differences were found on the variables of intellectual efficiency, responsibility and achievement via independence. There was no significant difference in the self concept variable between the dropouts and those who persisted, but a significant difference was evident in the variable of self criticism and on the TSCS Defensive Positive Group Scale. Significant differences between the two groups were also found on ACT Composite Scores and G.P.A.

The three best predictors of success in this associate degree nursing program were G.P.A., ACT composite score, and the scores on

the Self Criticism and Defensive Positive scales of the TSCS. Although the methodology was well conceived, the convenience sample of 127 ADN students limited the generalizability of the findings. Also, because a discrepancy exists between other research (Cohen, 1981; Roy, 1976) and Moses' finding on the affect of self concept on academic success, it is suggested that this variable be further investigated before a definite decision is made concerning the relationship of self concept to academic success in nursing students.

Zagar, Abbit, and Wengel (1982) investigated the predictive validity of the MMPI, the EPPS, and the American College Test (ACT) composite score in forecasting academic success as measured by grade point average in a three year, diploma nursing program. Subjects were 570 female nursing students enrolled in the Wesley-Passavent School of Nursing in Chicago. The MMPI and the EPPS personality tests were administered prior to admission to the school of nursing, and the ACT composite score was obtained from admission records. Grade Point Average (G.P.A.), the criterion measure, was computed on a 4-point scale through graduation or withdrawal. With G.P.A. as the criterion of success, the scores from the MMPI scales, the EPPS scales, and the ACT Assessment Composite measure were subjected to multiple regression analysis. The results indicated that the ACT composite score was the most valid predictor of G.P.A. The investigators recommended eliminating the usage of the EPPS or the MMPI as a screening device for predicting success in students applying to a school of nursing (Zagar, Abbit & Wengel, 1982). Again, the methodology of utilizing the MMPI

on "normal" student populations to assist in the identification of personality factors predictive of academic success may have been inappropriate.

Roediger (1983) studied the relationship between self concept, life change, stress and student attrition. The subjects were 235 nursing students enrolled in practical or associate degree nursing programs in 10 community colleges in the state of Washington. The first finding was that a weak correlation existed between self concept as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) and cumulative grade point average for the first year in a community college nursing program ($r=0.15$). The second finding was that life change and stress were found to be related to attrition. The results, however, accounted for only 11 percent of the attrition, and the researcher recommended further research to: (1) investigate other noncognitive variables that may account for attrition, and (2) conduct research on students before they are admitted to a nursing program to determine baseline data on noncognitive variables.

Theoretical Framework for Purpose in Life

The implicit theme underlying most human endeavors, according to Frankl (1963), is "meaning." Frankl (1958) postulated that man has an inborn drive called the "will to meaning" which causes him to strive to find a purpose in his own existence. This purpose or mission which is unique for each individual, provides direction to life and makes life understandable (Frankl, 1958). In the will to meaning "the

individual looks beyond the self and strives to see a purpose in existence and a meaningful way in which he fits into the scheme" (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1963, p. 43). By utilizing the Purpose In Life (PIL) Test developed by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964) this concept of meaning can be evaluated.

Studies Related to Purpose In Life

A review of studies involving the purpose in life variable, revealed four areas relevant to the present investigation. These areas were the relationship of purpose in life to other life values, to age and gender, to motivation, and to grade point average.

Relationship to Other Life Values

Crandall and Rasmussen (1975) conducted two studies which investigated the relationships of other life values to purpose in life. The first study examined the relationship of purpose in life as measured by the Purpose In Life (PIL) Test and the endorsement of specific values from Rokeach's Value Survey. Subjects were female and male volunteers from a university introductory psychology class. The values of excitement, pleasure and comfort were found to be associated with low scores on the PIL. The researchers concluded that these results supported Frankl's contention that a life focused on pleasure and happiness was self defeating and contributed to an existential vacuum.

The second study by Crandall and Rasmussen (1975) was designed to explore further the relationship between the PIL and religious values. Subjects for this study included thirty-seven female and thirty-four male students from an adolescent psychology class. They were given the PIL Test and the Intrinsic-Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scale. On this scale intrinsic orientation is defined as a personal commitment to religious values, and extrinsic orientation is defined as the instrumental value of religion such as social acceptance and personal reassurance. A significant correlation between the PIL and the intrinsic religious orientation was found ($p<.01$), but no significant correlation existed between the PIL and extrinsic orientation. The researchers suggested that these results were consistent with Frankl's belief that "intrinsic religious orientation may help to foster greater perceived meaning and purpose in life" (Crandall & Rasmussen, 1975, p. 483).

Jacobsen, Mueller, and Ritter (1977) studied purpose in life and personal values among fifty-seven adult patients hospitalized with alcohol abuse. Their investigation revealed that adults hospitalized for treatment of alcoholism do not express a clear "will to meaning," nor do they express a clearly measurable manifestation of the "existential frustration." Each was administered the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Scale of Values (Allport, Vernon & Lindzey, 1970) and the Purpose In Life Test after admission and prior to discharge. Results of the tests revealed that the means on the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Scale of Values fell within the range reported for college and high school student norms. This finding suggests that adult female and male alcoholics

do not differ from normal populations on the life values measured. Results did suggest that an increased sense of purpose in life may develop during comprehensive rehabilitation. However, this inference must be regarded as tentative until comparable untreated control and outpatient groups can be tested in a similar fashion (Jacobsen, Mueller & Ritter, 1977).

Simmons (1980) explored the relationship of the Purpose In Life (PIL) Test score to three aspects of valuing: valuing competence, fulfillment in valuing, and value system content. Subjects were forty-eight male and fifty-one female general psychology students. Each was administered the following instruments: (a) a 10 item version of the PIL; (b) the past, present, and future Self-Anchoring Striving Scales; (c) the Heinz, Webster, Doctor's Dilemma, and Escaped Prisoner items of the Defining Issues Test; (d) the Hartman Value Profile; and (e) the Instrumental and Terminal subtests of the Value Survey, Form E. The author's findings indicated that a sense of purpose in life was associated with ability to make value judgments about the self but not about the external world, with present and anticipated future satisfaction but not with past life, and with an emphasis on responsibility and self control and a deemphasis on cheerfulness and momentary pleasure. The associations between purpose in life and these variables suggests that an individual's ability to succeed academically may be related to his purpose in life.

Relationship to Age and Gender

Studies by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964), Crumbaugh (1968), and Yarnel (1971) revealed that age differences were not related to PIL scores. However, Murphy's (1967) study suggested that age might be a significant factor related to mean PIL scores. The discrepancies between these studies may be related to the grouping of the subjects. Subjects for the 1964, 1968, and 1971 studies were not divided by age, but by graduate, undergraduate, seminarian, professional, and trainee categories. Therefore, associations between age and PIL score may not have been accurate. Murphy's study calculated the subjects' chronological age, and thus appeared to be more reliable.

A study by Meier and Edwards (1974) examined age and gender differences, and the interaction of age and gender with respect to purpose in life. The sample of 200 subjects, heterogeneous in terms of age and gender, were randomly selected and placed into five age groups. These five age groups were: 13-15, 17-19, 25-35, 45-55, and 65+ years. Each age group represented contained an equal number of males and females. The Purpose In Life Test and the Frankl Questionnaire were administered to each of the subjects.

Findings revealed that the various age groups differed in their PIL scores. The two youngest age groups scored significantly lower on the PIL Test than the three older age groups. The 13-15 age group's scores did not differ from the 25-35 age group. No significant differences were noted among the mean scores of the three older age

groups. The findings indicated that age was not related to the individual's Purpose In Life Test score (Meier & Edwards, 1974). However, because major gaps were noted in the sample population, one should be cautious about drawing conclusions from this study.

Other research on the relationship of gender and PIL scores has also produced conflicting findings (Meier & Edwards, 1974). Crumbaugh's (1968) study noted gender differences but suggested that these may be a function of the uneven distribution of female and male subjects used in the groups. This author indicated that the higher mean scores for men may have been due to the fact that Group N, successful persons, consisted mostly of men (214 of 230).

In a study conducted by Doerries (1970), the relationship between an individual's purpose in life and his or her participation in campus and community organizations was examined. Subjects included 122 college undergraduates in an introductory psychology course. One finding of the study indicated that significantly more women than men scored above the median PIL score ($p<.01$). However, the small sample size limited the extent to which this finding can be generalized.

Relationship to Motivation

Crumbaugh, Raphael and Shrader (1970) utilized the Purpose In Life Test in a study of motivation. Subjects for this study were a congregation of 56 Dominican Sisters. A battery of psychological tests was administered to each subject. Results indicated that there were no significant relationships between the Purpose In Life Test scores

and either the Washington Social Intelligence Scale, the Buhler Life Goals Inventory, the Keer and Sperhoff Empathy Test or the Cattell Motivational Analysis. The mean score on the PIL Test was 119.27. This score compared favorably to the mean score (118.90) of the highly motivated professional and business group studied earlier by Crumbaugh (1968). Moderately strong correlation coefficients were found between the PIL scores and the proficiency ratings of the subjects ($r = .48$), as well as the anxiety scale of the Cattell 16 Personality Factor Test ($r = .44$).

The researchers concluded that high scores on the PIL test correlated substantially with the rating of success in the religious training of the subjects. Those subjects who remained in training had higher mean PIL scores than those who dropped out of training. However, the authors suggested that before an association between dropping out of training and the score on the PIL Test can be made, a more thorough evaluation of other variables which might have influenced the subject's decision to withdraw from the religious training should be assessed.

Relationship to Grade Point Average

Martin and Martin (1977) conducted a study to determine the degree of correlation between the Purpose In Life Test and (1) the Time Competency (TC) scale of the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI), (b) the Inner-directed (I) scale of the POI, (c) IQ scores of high school students who took the Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test, form

L-M, and (d) grade point average (G.P.A.). Twenty-four randomly selected high school juniors and seniors (12 males and 12 females) comprised the subject population. Results of the comparisons between the scores on the PIL and the POI-TC, POI-I, and the Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test were significant at the $p<.01$ level. The comparison of PIL to grade point average was also significant at the $p<.05$ level.

The researchers concluded that these findings suggest that there is a positive relationship between certain attributes of a self actualizing individual and the life style of one who scores 113 or above on the PIL Test. On the basis of Martin and Martin's study, self actualization and strong purpose in life are related secondarily through separate relationships with other variables, but the small sample population prohibits generalization of these findings as well.

Summary

The literature review focused on three areas relevant to the investigation of the relationship between purpose in life and academic success in freshman ADN students. Cognitive factors associated with academic success in programs of nursing were identified. The factors most frequently cited as predictive of academic success were: previous college attendance, high school rank, mathematic and verbal subtest scores of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and previously taken science courses.

Studies of personality factors and academic success revealed that measures of personality varied in their ability to predict academic

success. These studies indicated that most academically successful nursing students possessed the following personality characteristics: a positive self perception of ability, a sense of responsibility and achievement, emotional stability, and decreased expression of anxiety.

Investigations of the relationship of purpose in life to other variables such as age and gender, motivation and grade point average were reviewed. General findings from these studies included the following:

(a) The values of excitement, pleasure and comfort are associated with low Purpose In Life Test scores.

(b) The value of a personal commitment to religion is associated with a high Purpose In Life Test score.

(c) The ability to make value judgments about the self, but not about the external world, is associated with a high PIL test score.

(d) A disparity of findings about the relationship of the PIL test to age and gender exists (young females may score higher than young males), while older subjects appear to score higher on the PIL test.

(e) Motivational factors are significantly related to PIL test scores.

(f) A positive association is found between the self actualizing individual and the life style of one who scores high on the PIL Test.

No investigations have been reported concerning the effect that purpose in life has on the academic success of freshman ADN students. The discrepancies associated with relating purpose in life to the

chronological age of an individual remain to be clarified. Correlations between previous work experience and purpose in life have not been examined in the 1980's.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research questions, information about the sample, procedure, operational definitions, and methods for the analysis of the data are discussed in Chapter III.

Design

This was a nonexperimental study. The PIL Test scores were obtained from a convenience sample of freshman ADN students in three West Tennessee colleges during the fall of 1986. The scores were correlated with the variables academic success, age, and previous work experience in a health care facility.

The Research Question

What is the relationship between freshmen associate degree nursing students' purpose in life and their academic success in the first nursing course?

Subsidiary Questions

1. What is the relationship between freshman associate degree nursing students' age and their purpose in life?

2. What is the relationship between freshman associate degree nursing students' previous work experience in a health care facility and their purpose in life?

Subjects

Initially, the nonprobability sample included 95 freshmen students in three NLN accredited associate degree nursing programs in West Tennessee. However, 5 subjects withdrew from their respective programs before completing the first nursing course, reducing the sample population to ninety. Each subject was enrolled in his/her first nursing course. Students who had previously failed and were repeating the course were excluded from the study. The programs were homogeneous in regard to general objectives for the first nursing course, student-teacher ratio, and evaluation methods.

Discrepancies in the homogeneity of the samples were identified in two areas, the stated corequisites and the number of credit hours earned for the first course. The corequisites for the three programs in this study were as follows: school A--human anatomy and physiology; school B--microbiology, human anatomy and physiology, and English composition; and school C--human anatomy and physiology, general chemistry, and introductory psychology. The number of credit hours earned were as follows: school A--4 quarter hours; school B--5 quarter hours; and school C--4 semester hours (6 quarter hours). No attempt was made to identify the course load or type of courses taken by the subjects concurrent with the first nursing course.

Characteristics of the Sample

Sociodemographic characteristics of the subjects are presented in Table 1. There were 7 males and 83 females. The mean age

Table 1. Number and Percentage Distribution of Socio-demographic Variables of Subjects.

Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	7	7.7
Female	83	92.3
Age		
19-23 years	45	50.0
24-28 years	28	31.1
29-33 years	7	7.8
34-38 years	9	10.0
39-43 years	1	1.1
Educational Level		
High School	17	19.0
1-2 years College	68	75.5
BS/BA Degree	4	4.4
MS/MA Degree	1	1.1
Employment Experience		
Previous Work in Health Care Facility	47	52.2
No Previous Work in Health Care Facility	43	47.8
Income		
$0-5,000	32	35.6
$6,000-10,000	9	10.0
$11,000-20,000	25	27.8
$21,000-31,000	9	10.0
More than $31,000	15	16.6
Marital Status		
Married Without Children	20	21.3
Married With Children	23	26.2
Single Without Children	37	42.2
Single With Children	10	10.3

was 25 years; the majority of the students (81.1%) were between the ages of 19 and 28.

The subjects' previous education varied in the following manner: (1) 19 percent were high school graduates; (2) 75.5 percent had 1 or 2 years of prior college education; (3) 4.4 percent had a bachelor's degree; and (4) 1.1 percent had a masters degree. Fifty-two percent of the subjects had previous work experience in a health care facility. Approximately forty-eight percent had no work experience in a health care facility.

The financial status of the subjects varied. Thirty-five percent of the subjects had incomes in the $0-5,000 range; 10 percent were in the $6,000-10,000 range, while 27.8 percent were in the $11,000-20,000 range. Those in the $21,000-30,000 range totaled 10 percent. Incomes greater than $31,000 were reported by 16.6 percent.

Marital status of 42.2 percent of the subjects was single without children. Those subjects who were married without children totaled 21.3 percent. Those married with children equaled 26.2 percent, and 10.3 percent were single with children.

Instruments

Purpose In Life Test

The Purpose In Life (PIL) Test, (Appendix B), developed by James C. Crumbaugh, Ph.D., and Leonard T. Maholick, M.D., is an attitude scale intended to measure Viktor Frankl's basic concept, "existential

vacuum." An existential vacuum or a state of emptiness may exist in an individual who has failed to find meaning or purpose in life.

Usefulness of the Purpose In Life Test has been demonstrated in the following situations: (1) in the counseling of students, (2) in vocational guidance, (3) in rehabilitation work, (4) in the treatment of both inpatient and outpatient neurotics, and (5) in the treatment of alcoholics, retired individuals, and people with handicaps (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981).

The norms of the raw scores for Part A (Appendix C) are based upon 1,151 cases reported by Crumbaugh (1968). In this study the mean for the normal population (N=805) was 112.42 and the mean for the neurotic patient population (N=345) was 92.60. From these means Crumbaugh estimated that the best "cutting score" between the two populations was 102, with an estimated standard deviation of 19. The relevancy of the score on the Purpose In Life Test is determined by the following definitions established by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1981): (1) definite purpose in life is indicated by a score of 113 or greater on the Purpose In Life Test; (2) an uncertain purpose in life is indicated by a score between 92 and 112 on the Purpose In Life Test, and (3) the lack of a clear purpose in life is indicated by a score of 91 or below on the Purpose In Life Test.

Reliability. The split-half (odd-even) reliability of the Purpose In Life Test was estimated as r=.81 (N=225, 105 nonpatients and 120 patients). The Spearman-Brown formula corrected this to r=.90.

This relationship was later estimated as r=.85 (N=120, Protestant Parishioners nonpatients) with Spearman-Brown correction to r=.92 (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981).

Validity. Construct validity was assessed from the mean order of four "normal" populations: N1--successful professional and business personnel (M=118.90, N=230, S.D.=11.31); N2--leading and active Protestant parishioners (M=114.27, N=142, S.D.=13.98); N3--college undergraduates (M=108.45, N=417, S.D.=13.98); and N4--indigent nonpsychiatric hospital patients (M=106.40, N=16, S.D.=14.49). Prediction of the mean order for psychiatric subjects was less accurate, but it did show the expected drop from neurotics to alcoholics to nonschizophrenic psychotics (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981).

Concurrent validity was assessed in two ways: (a) correlation between the Purpose In Life Test scores and therapists' ratings of the degree of purpose and meaning in life as demonstrated by the patients (the therapist completed the PIL as he/she thought the patient would have completed it), and (b) correlation between PIL scores and ratings by ministers of the degree of purpose and meaning exhibited by their parishioners. The relationship between the therapists' ratings and the scale was r=.38 (N=50). The relationship between the ministers' ratings and the scale was r=.47 (N=120) (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981).

In terms of the relationship between the PIL and other variables, the following correlations were reported: (1) Minnesota Multiphasic

Personality Inventory D (Depression) scale of r=-.30 (N=45, outpatient neurotics), (2) the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire: emotional stability, r=.41; expedient vs conscientious, r=.37; confident vs insecure, r=-.44; group dependent vs self sufficient, r=-.34; tranquil vs tense, r=-.38; shy vs venturesome, r=.34; trusting vs suspicious, r=-.35; (3) Srole Anomie Scale: r=-.48, males; r=-.20, females (249 college undergraduates); and (4) Gordon Personal Profile: responsibility, r=.39; emotional stability, r=.43 (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981).

Crumbaugh and Maholick (1981) noted that the relationship to the PIL scores reported involved a personality trait rather than a psychiatric syndrome. In addition to this fact, the researchers concluded that the PIL's high separation between "normal" and patient populations indicated that the Purpose In Life Test accurately measured Frankl's concept of existential vacuum.

Practicality. Administration of the Purpose In Life Test is done in either a group or an individual setting. The twenty scaled items of Part A can be understood without comment by almost all subjects above the fourth grade level. The test has no time limit. Most subjects finish the test within 10 to 15 minutes. Scoring involves totaling the numerical values circled for the twenty test items. Parts B and C are designed for use by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and clinically trained counselors (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981)

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire utilized in the study was developed by the researcher and reviewed by her thesis committee members. Items on the questionnaire include age, sex, marital status, previous work experience and socioeconomic status (Appendix D). These noncognitive variables have been investigated by other researchers for their effects on academic success. However, only the variables of age and the previous work experience in a health care facility were evaluated for their relationship to PIL in this investigation. The remaining data were collected for the purpose of describing the sample.

Procedure

Form A (Certification of Exemption from Review for Research Involving Human Subjects) was filed and approved by the Office of Research Compliance at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in August, 1986. Two weeks prior to the beginning of the academic school year 1986-1987, the deans/directors of the ADN programs at The University of Tennessee at Martin, Dyersburg State Community College, and Union University were contacted for their permission to allow their incoming freshmen students to participate in the study. An appointment was made with the coordinators of the first nursing course to explain the project procedure and to elicit their cooperation for the data collection. In the meetings with the coordinators, the researcher presented the objectives of the study, explained the PIL test, the demographic questionnaire, and the student consent form (Appendix E).

The date for the administration of the instruments was then set. Course coordinators were asked to distribute letters describing the project to their faculty members (Appendix F).

Announcements about student participation in this project were made by course coordinators during the first week of classes. Students in school C were tested on the same date as the announcement, following their regularly scheduled class. Students in school B were tested before their regularly scheduled class on the day following the announcement. Students in school A were tested after their regularly scheduled class on the day following the announcement.

On the prearranged date and time, the researcher distributed the data packets to the subjects at the selected schools. Materials in the packets included: (1) an informed consent, (2) the Purpose In Life (PIL) Test, Part A, and (3) the demographic questionnaire. Approximately 45 minutes were allotted for the distribution, completion, and collection of the data packets. Each questionnaire was identified by the student's name. The researcher informed the students that the data collected from them would be treated with the utmost confidentiality by the researcher.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Fifty-one percent of the students enrolled at Union University participated in the study. Dyersbyrg State Community College had 70 percent participation, and The University of Tennessee at Martin had 60 percent. All subjects completed a consent form (Appendix E). The subjects were informed during the testing period that they were permitted to withdraw from participation at any time without incurring any penalty.

The names of the participants were sent to the course coordinators at each of the participating programs during the week following data collection. Four weeks before the fall term ended, a letter was sent to the course coordinators containing grade reporting procedures to be used (Appendix G). The subjects' numerical averages were mailed to the researcher by the course coordinators the last week of the fall term.

Operational Definitions

Academic Success--The achievement of a passing grade equal to or greater than 75 percent for the first associate degree nursing course.

Unsuccessful Student--Achievement of a numerical average below 75 percent in the first associate degree nursing course.

First Nursing Course--The associate degree nursing course presented in the first session of the academic program which focuses on introductory theoretical and clinical nursing content. All courses are within curricula which have been accredited by the National League for Nursing (NLN).

Definite Purpose in Life--A numerical score of 113 or above on the Purpose In Life Test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981).

Uncertain Purpose in Life--A numerical score of 92-112 on the Purpose In Life Test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981).

Lack of a clear Purpose in Life--A numerical score of 91 or below on the Purpose In Life Test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981).

The grading systems utilized by the ADN programs involved in this investigation varied; however, each school used a criterion of 75 percent for successful completion of the first nursing course. Averages utilized by each of the programs were as follows:

Grading Systems

School A	School B	School C
A 95-100	A 95-100	A 93-100
B 85-94	B 88-94	B 85-92
C 75-84	C 80-87	C 75-84
D 65-74	D 75-79	D 65-74
F 64 or below	F 74 or below	F 64 or below

Because cutoffs for grades were not uniform between schools and cutoffs for "A"s were so high that few "A"s are earned by students, the researcher set other criteria for high, average, and low academic success.

High Academic Success (HAS)--a numerical average between 92-100 in the first nursing course.

Average Academic Success (AAS)--a numerical average between 83-91 in the first nursing course.

Low Academic Success (LAS)--a numerical average between 75-82 in the first nursing course.

Data Analysis

The degree of the subject's purpose in life was measured by summing the numerical values circled on the 20 scaled items of the Purpose In Life Test (Part A). The PIL Tests were hand scored by the researcher. Pearson product-moment correlations were computed to examine the relationship between students' Purpose In Life Test scores and the level of their academic success in the first nursing course. Pearson product-moment correlation was also utilized to examine: (1) the relationship between previous work experience in a health care facility and PIL Test score, and (2) the relationship between age and PIL Test score. A significance level of 0.05 was chosen.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Study findings are presented in two sections. The first section contains general information about the subjects' PIL scores, academic averages, age, and previous work experience in a health care facility. The second section answers the research question and the two subsidiary questions from an examination of the correlation analyses. The chapter also contains a summary of additional findings.

General Information

PIL Test Scores

The ranges of the 90 PIL scores tabulated was from 84-133 with a mean of 113.56, S.D. 10.31. A majority of the subjects (57.8%) possessed a definite purpose in life (PIL score 113). Thirty-six (40%) scored between 92-112 on the PIL Test, indicating an uncertain purpose in life. Only two (2.2%) were identified as lacking a purpose in life (PIL score 91 and below). These findings are presented in Table 2.

Academic Average

The ranges of the 90 academic averages was 70-94, with a mean of 84.71, S.D. 5.35. The distribution of subjects in the three levels of academic success (HAS, AAS, LAS) represented 95.5 percent of the sample. Twenty-eight (31/1%) achieved high academic success. Average academic success was attained by thirty-one (34.4%) of the

Table 2. Number and Percentage Distribution of Subjects According to Purpose In Life.

Purpose In Life (PIL)	Number	Percentage
Definite PIL (score 113 or greater)	52	57.8
Uncertain PIL (score 92-112)	36	40.0
Lack of PIL (score 92 and below)	2	2.2

subjects and low academic success was attained by 27 (30%). Only four (4.5%) were categorized as unsuccessful. Table 3 presents these findings.

There was little difference in mean PIL scores of successful subjects; all (95.5%) were greater than the criterion of the 113 which was established by developers of the instrument as indicative of definite purpose in life. The mean PIL score for the four unsuccessful subjects (4.5%) was 108. This score indicates an unclear purpose in life. These findings also appear in Table 3.

Age of Subjects

The age range of the 90 subjects was 19-42 years. The mean age was 25 years, S.D. 5.23. A majority (81.1%) were 19-28 years with forty-five (50%) being between the ages of 19-23. Twenty-eight (31%)

Table 3. Number and Percentage Distribution of Subjects According to Academic Success and Mean PIL Scores.

Variable (Academic Success)	Number	Percentage	Mean PIL Score
High Academic Success (Ave. 88-100)	28	31.1	115.93
Average Academic Success (Ave. 84-87)	31	34.4	113.56
Low Academic Success (Ave. 75-83)	27	30.0	113.85
Unsuccessful (Ave. ≤ 75)	4	4.5	108.00

were 24-28 years. Sixteen (18%) were 29-38 years old. Only one (1%) was in the 39-43 category.

Work Experience in a Health Care Facility

The number of years worked in a health care facility ranged from 0 to 12 years. The mean was 2.2 years, S.D. 2.9. A positive skew of 1.547 resulted from the forty-three (47.8%) who had no previous work experience in a health care facility. Thirty-three (36.7%) had from 1-5 years work experience; thirteen (14.4%) had worked from 6-10 years. Work experience in the 11-15 year category was reported by one (1.1%). Table 4 reveals these findings.

The mean PIL scores categorized according to number of years previously worked in a health care facility appear in Table 4. A majority

Table 4. Number and Percentage Distribution of Subjects According to Work Experience and Mean PIL Scores.

Variable (Work Experience)	Number	Percentage	Mean PIL Score
0 years	43	47.8	109.40
1-5 years	33	36.7	117.58
6-10 years	13	14.4	116.85
11-15 years	1	1.1	122.00

(52.2%) possessed mean PIL scores ≥ 113, which indicate a definite purpose in life. Those subjects with no previous work experience (47.8%) had a mean PIL score of 109.4. This score indicates an uncertain purpose in life.

Correlation Analysis and Research Questions

The Pearson product-moment correlation technique was utilized to examine relationships between the variables academic success, age, and previous work experience in a health care facility and PIL Test scores. No significant correlations ($p < .05$) were found between PIL scores and academic success ($r=.14$), between PIL scores and age ($r=.13$), or between PIL scores and work experience in a health care facility ($r=.19$).

The three additional relationships examined from the correlation matrix were: (1) previous work experience in a health care facility and academic success, (2) previous work experience in a health care facility and age, and (3) age and academic average. The only significant correlation found was between age and previous work experience in a health care facility ($r = .62$, $p < .0001$). Table 5 presents these correlations.

Table 5. Correlation and Probability for PIL Scores (PIL), Academic Success (AS), Age, and Work Experience (WORK EX).

Variables	PIL	AS	AGE	WORK EX
PIL	1.00 .0000	.14 .2039	.13 .2098	.19 .0680
AS	.14 .2039	1.00 .0000	-.01 .8933	-.05 .6234
AGE	.13 .2098	-.01 .8933	1.00 .0000	.62 .0001
WORK EX	.19 .0680	-.05 .6234	.62 .0001	1.00 .0000

Note: The first number in each entry is the correlation coefficient (r). The second number in each entry is the probability level (p)/

Summary

The PIL Test scores for the 90 freshman ADN students were correlated with the subjects' academic average received for the first nursing course, the subjects' age, and the subjects' previous work experience in a health care facility. No significant relationships were found between PIL Test scores and these variables. The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation between age and previous work experience in a health care facility.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter V presents a discussion of the findings and compares them to previous similar studies. Limitations of the study are presented, and recommendations for additional research are offered.

The Research Question

What is the relationship between freshman associate degree nursing students' purpose in life and their academic success in the first nursing course?

The relationship calculated between the ADN student's purpose in life (PIL Test score) and his/her academic success in his/her first nursing course was not significant ($r=.14$, $p=.2039$). While the mean PIL scores for the three categories of successful students were all equal to or greater than 113 and would, thereby, seem to indicate that these students had a definite purpose in life, examination of the range of scores for the group (84-133) clearly indicates that several students with an unclear purpose in life were also academically successful.

The study conducted by Martin and Martin (1977) found evidence of a relationship between the grade point average of high school students and their purpose in life. The present study does not seem to confirm those findings for ADN nursing students.

No significant correlation was found between previous work experience in a health care facility and academic success. This finding did not support the research of Yess (1980), who found that previous job experience in a health-related field, such as that of a licensed practical nurse, was negatively correlated with academic success (as measured by quality point average) of associate degree nursing students.

There was no correlation between age and academic success. This finding was consistent with that found by Montgomery and Palmer (1976). Oliver's (1985) study also reinforced this finding because age could not be isolated as a variable predictive of academic success.

Limitations of the Study

The convenience sample was composed of 90 subjects from three associate degree nursing programs in Western Tennessee. Further, the sample was younger than the usual ADN student group, and therefore may not be representative of the population. Utilizing a randomly selected, more geographically diverse sample would have increased the generalizability of the findings.

Administering the test to the subjects preceding or following their regularly scheduled class period prevented 100 percent participation at the schools. Utilization of class time for the testing might have increased participation.

Extraneous sociodemographic variables such as present employment status and family responsibilities were not reviewed. Including an

assessment of these variables could have provided a basis for examining their influence on academic success.

Another limitation was the lack of assessment of the total college course load carried by the subjects during the term in which they were studied. Inclusion of this date would have permitted a more comprehensive analysis of the effect additional course work has on the academic success of the ADN students enrolled in their first nursing course.

A final limitation is the lack of prior utilization of the PIL instrument with nursing students. It is not known if this instrument is valid for this population.

Implications for Future Research

Because the sample size was small (N=90) and the age distribution was unequal, a replication of this study utilizing a larger sample population with more evenly distributed age groups is recommended. Furthermore, this study examined only one area, the relationship between freshmen ADN students' purpose in life and their academic success in their first nursing course. In order to present a more accurate picture of academic success versus failure, the researcher suggests a study including all subjects lost by attrition during an entire ADN program sequence. The data from this time frame would be more conclusive in regard to the relationship between the psychospiritual variable, purpose in life, and academic success in an ADN program.

The effect that previous work experience in a health care facility has on the ADN student's purpose in life should be studied in the

future because the correlation between these two variables approached the level of significance with $r=.19$, $p<.07$. It is suggested that interviews be conducted with those students who have work experience in a health care facility in order to identify the amount of perceived influence this variable has had on their ability to find a purpose in life.

Oliver (1985) investigated independent variables versus cluster variables. She found independent variables more predictive of academic success than cluster variables, but suggested further research with cluster variables. Further study should address other factors which may be associated with one's purpose in life, i.e., locus of control, self concept, and gender differences. Crumbaugh (1968) studied the relationship between gender and purpose in life, but his uneven distribution of male and female subjects limited his findings.

A final implication for research is a longitudinal study to assess the purpose in life of beginning ADN students, graduating ADN students, and ADN graduates with one year's work experience. Comparing the variation in the individual's PIL Test scores over three time periods would provide data that could be more accurately related to academic success and even job satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

Summary

This study did not find a significant correlation between the psychospiritual variable, purpose in life, and the academic success of freshman associate degree nursing students. Therefore, this

variable should not be identified as a factor predictive of academic success until further research is conducted. Since researchers have found that cognitive factors account for less than 50 percent of the nursing student attrition rate (Schwirian, 1977), continued efforts should be made to examine the personality factors of applicants. Only through research will criteria predictive of academic success be identified and a solution to the problem of attrition be found.

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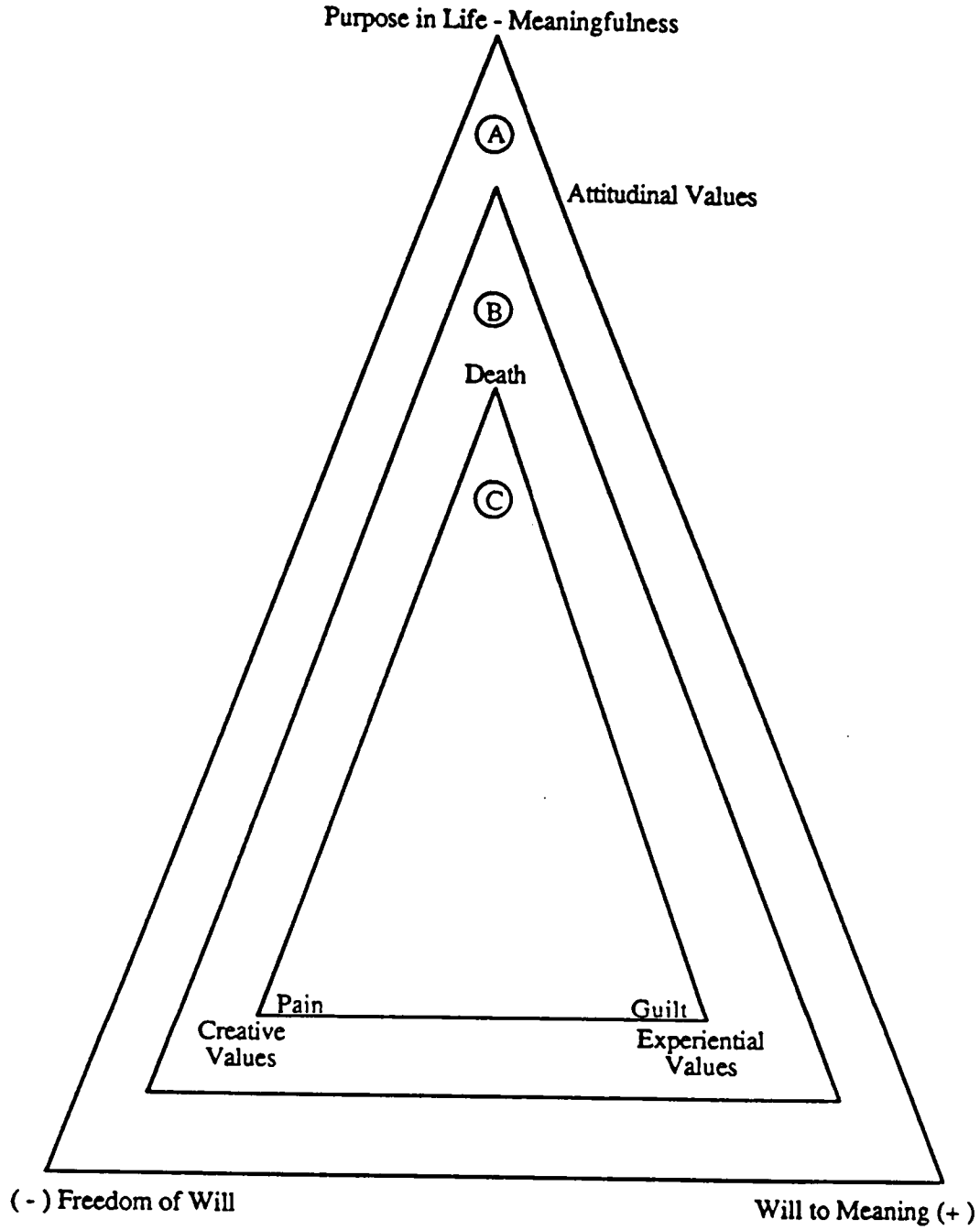
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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

MODEL OF FRANKL'S THEORY

Model of Frankl's Theory



Note: From Psychospiritual attitudes and values of undergraduate students by A. Nazzaro, 1975, unpublished Master's Thesis. University of New York at Buffalo.

APPENDIX B

PURPOSE IN LIFE TEST

Name _____ Date _____

Age _____ Sex _____ Classification _____

P I L

James C. Crumbaugh, Ph.D.
Veterans Administration Hospital
Gulfport, Mississippi

Leonard T. Maholick, M.D.
Atlanta Psychiatric Clinic
Atlanta, Georgia

PART A

For each of the following statements, circle the number that would be most nearly true for you. Note that the numbers always extend from one extreme feeling to its opposite kind of feeling. "Neutral" implies no judgment either way; try to use this rating as little as possible.

1. I am usually:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
completely bored			(neutral)			exuberant, enthusiastic

2. Life to me seems:

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
always exciting			(neutral)			completely routine

3. In life I have:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
no goals or aims at all			(neutral)			Very clear goals and aims

4. My personal existence is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Utterly meaningless without purpose			(neutral)			very purposeful and meaningful

5. Every day is:

7	6	5		3	2	1
constantly new			(neutral)			exactly the same

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PSYCHOMETRIC AFFILIATES

1620 East Main Street
Murfreesboro, TN. 37130

Test #168
FORM A

6. If I could choose, I would:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
prefer never to have been born			(neutral)			Like nine more lives just like this one

7. After retiring, I would:

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
do some of the exciting things I have always wanted to			(neutral)			loaf completely the rest of my life

8. In achieving life goals I have:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
made no progress whatever			(neutral)			progressed to complete fulfillment

9. My life is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
empty, filled only with despair			(neutral)			running over with exciting good things

10. If I should die today, I would feel that my life has been:

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
very worthwhile			(neutral)			completely worthless

11. In thinking of my life, I:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
often wonder why I exist			(neutral)			always see a reason for my being here

12. As I view the world in relation to my life, the world:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
completely confuses me			(neutral)			fits meaningfully with my life

13. I am a:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very irresponsible person			(neutral)			very responsible person

14. Concerning man's freedom to make his own choices, I believe man is:

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
absolutely free to make all life choices			(neutral)			completely bound by limitations of heredity and environment

15. With regard to death, I am:

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
prepared and unafraid			(neutral)			unprepared and frightened

16. With regard to suicide, I have:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
thought of it seriously as a way out			(neutral)			never given it a second thought

17. I regard my ability to find a meaning, purpose, or mission in life as:

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
very great			(neutral)			practically none

18. My life is:

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
in my hands and I am in control of it			(neutral)			out of my hands and controlled by external factors

19. Facing my daily tasks is:

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
a source of pleasure and satisfaction			(neutral)			a painful and boring experience

20. I have discovered:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
no mission or purpose in life			(neutral)			clear-cut goals and a satisfying life purpose

APPENDIX C

NORMS AND PERCENTILE EQUIVALENTS

FOR THE PURPOSE IN LIFE TEST

Table of Norms and Percentile Equivalents for Part A, Purpose in Life Test
(Based on 1,151 cases reported by Crumbaugh, 1968)

PIL Raw Score	Percentile	PIL Raw Score	Percentile	PIL Raw Score	Percentile	PIL Raw Score	Percentile
140	-	120	83-84	100	45-46	80	12
139	98	119	82	99	43-44	79	11
138	-	118	80-81	98	41-42	78	10
137	-	117	79	97	39-40	77	9
136	97	116	77-78	96	37-38	76	8
135	-	115	75-76	95	35-36	75	7
134	96	114	74	94	33-34	74	-
133		113	72-73	93	31-32	73	6
132	95	112	70-71	92	29-30	72	5
131	94	111	68-69	91	27-28	71	-
130	-	110	66-67	90	26	70	4
129	93	109	64-65	89	24-25	69	-
128	92	108	62-63	88	22-23	68	3
127	91	107	60-61	87	21	67	-
126	90	106	58-59	86	19-20	66	-
125	89	105	56-57	85	18	65	2
124	88	104	54-55	84	16-17	64	-
123	87	103	52-53	83	15	63	-
122	86	102 MEAN	49-51	82	14	62	-
121	85	101	47-48	81	13	61	1

Note: PIL raw scores from 92 through 112 are in the indecisive range; scores 113 or above indicate the presence of definite purpose and meaning in life; scores below 92 indicate the lack of clear meaning and purpose.

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

Demographic Data Questionnaire

Directions: Please circle the answer which most adequately describes your background in the questions below.

1. Gender:

   A. Male B. Female

2. Marital Status:

   A. Married with Children C. Single with Children

   B. Married without Children D. Single without Children

3. Ethnic Group:

   A. Caucasian B. Black C. Oriental D. Other

4. Previous Education:

   A. High School or equivalent C. College 1-2 years

   B. Bachelors Degree D. Masters Degree

5. Annual Income:

   A. 0-$5,000 C. $11-20,000 E. $31,000 or more

   B. $6-10,000 D. $21-30,000

Directions: Complete the questions below by filling in the blank with the correct numbers.

6. Years worked in a health care facility: _____

7. Years worked in a non-related health care facility: _____

8. Age: _____

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM

Dear Student:

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to develop predictive criteria for successful completion of the first course in associate degree in nursing programs. Your participation will involve the completion of two questionnaires that will require approximately 45 minutes. Your final grade for your first nursing course will need to be acquired at the end of the semester to complete the data collection procedure.

No negative effects are expected to result from your participation in the project. Your participation may provide information that would be of benefit to nurse educators, vocational counselors and future student nurses.

All data will be kept confidential and stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. Each questionnaire will be coded with an identification number. Only the researcher will be able to identify individual respondents. All data will be summarized for any presentations or publications that arise from the research.

Participation in this project is voluntary and your consent for participation may be withdrawn at any time prior to completion of the data analysis by giving written notice to the researcher listed below. If you do withdraw or choose not to participate, you will not incur any penalty.

If you have questions about your participation in the study, please feel free to contact the researcher listed below.

I have read and understand the above statements. I freely consent to participate in this project under the above conditions.

Name _____

Susan B. Walker, RN
209 Russell Rd.
Jackson, Tennessee 38301
(901) 424-7972

APPENDIX F

LETTER TO FACULTY MEMBERS

Dear _____:

On _____ and _____ during the orientation phase of the first week of classes a data packet will be administered to your students. This procedure will be done following your presentations for the day. It will take approximately 45 minutes to distribute, administer, and collect this information from your students.

_____ will serve as the collaborator for this project at your school. If you have any questions concerning this study, please contact _____ or the researcher (see name and address below).

Your cooperation with this project is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Susan B. Walker, RN
Union University
School of Nursing
Jackson, Tennessee 38305
(901) 668-1818, Ext.306

APPENDIX G

LETTER TO COURSE COORDINATOR

Dear _____,

I am writing to you to request the numerical averages of the students who participated in the research study titled, "Does Purpose in Life Affect the ADN Freshman Student's Academic Success?" Attached to this letter are the names of your students who participated in the study. Enclosed also is a self-addressed stamped envelope in which you may mail these grades to me. If there are any problems in attaining these grades for this purpose, please let me know.

Thank you so much for your cooperation with this project.

Sincerely,

Susan B. Walker, RN
Union University
School of Nursing
Jackson, Tennessee 38305

VITA

Susan Beeler Walker was born in Spartenburg, South Carolina on February 4, 1952. She graduated from The University of Tennessee at Martin in 1974 with an Associate Degree in Nursing. In August, 1975 she graduated from The University of Tennessee at Martin with a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education.

While her husband Danny Walker attended Auburn University School of Veterinary Medicine, Susan taught natural science courses in one of the high schools in the Lee County School System. She retained this teaching position for two years. During the summer months Susan worked on the post-partum and medical-surgical units of what was then the Lee County Hospital (currently the East Alabama Medical Center). The last two years in Auburn (1977-1979), Susan worked as an inservice education instructor for the Regional Education Department of Lee County Hospital.

Following her husband's graduation (June, 1979), Susan and Danny moved to Jackson, Tennessee. For the next year Susan worked for a private physician. At the end of the year Susan accepted a position in a local high school teaching a Health Occupations course. At the end of two years Susan left this position to return to Union University to complete the requirements for the Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. She graduated from this program in June, 1984. Upon graduation Susan was offered the position of instructor in the Associate Degree Nursing program at Union University. In the spring of

1985 Susan enrolled in Graduate School at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She received the Master of Science in Nursing degree in August, 1987.

Susan is a member of the American Nurses' Association and the Tennessee Nurses' Association. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau, the national honor society of nursing.

The Walkers have 2 sons--Matthew, 10 years old and Lee Taylor, 5 years old.