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THE MATURE WOMAN IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING, HER CAREER
ASPIRATIONS AND THE IMPACT OF COUNSELING

A Thesis

Presented to the
Department of Counseling and Guidance
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Betty G. Foster

July, 1976

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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Chairman

July 28, 1976
Date

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Introduction

Centuries of societal expectations, reflecting societal needs, have brought woman to this point in history. Her role has been determined by these expectations and needs in the context of a male dominated society (Trager, 1974). The roles have been ambiguous, causing guilt and bewilderment (Weitzman, 1975).

When more workers in society were needed, women were praised for childbearing; when wars were fought, women worked at factory jobs; when workers or fighters were no longer needed, women were expected to become glamorous sex partners "as well as super floor cleaners and cooks" (Trager, 1974 p.x).

Dr. Trager continues by saying, "It appears that women as a species are expected to adapt to changing societal needs with grace and docility, never progressing beyond the stage of being 'a good girl who does as she's told'" (p.x).

Women were expected to marry and bear children. Women's biology has been used as an explanation of how sex roles have developed similarly in many cultures (Wilson, Bolt & Larson, 1975). Those women who did not marry were considered deviant--they did not "make the grade" somehow. For the married woman, her commitment to marriage differs from her husband's. His commitment is to his career, and may also be to the community, the church, a business group. Her commitment is to her family. While he climbs the status ladder, often uprooting his family and neglecting them, the wife is expected to commit herself to his needs.

In times past, only a small percentage of women lived long after age 65. One major role was enough for her lifetime. However, with more women living longer, they are not only outliving their male counterparts, but their assigned roles and functions as well.

A woman not only loses her major role at middle age--that of motherhood--but her secondary and tertiary roles, those of homemaker and sexual partner, are impaired and/or lost at this time of life. In 1890, the average woman took care of children until her mid-fifties. Today when most women are in their forties, they see their last child leave home (Bell, 1975).

In our society, there are few assigned roles for older women other than wife or grandmother, and there are few norms governing the relationship between a woman and her adult children. When the children leave, the woman's situation is consequently normless. Durkheim focused on problems stemming from normlessness, or anomie, and this state can be likened to a woman's situation when her children leave where there are no folkways, no patterns, and no mores indicating what can be expected from children after they have grown (Bart, 1975).

"After age 45, women are no longer needed as breeders, factory workers, sex objects, or pampered housewives" (Trager, 1974 p.x). Older women are viewed as unattractive, unneeded and unable to compete in a male dominated society.

To those who may object to this stereotype, one only need look at the low pay/low status job opportunities, low retirement benefits, high incidence of poverty, personal feelings of rejection and the ambiguous situations in which a woman finds herself.

Human life is valued in many ways. One way places monetary value on a life, and women are worth less. The Social Security Administration values a baby boy at \$54,063; a baby girl at \$34,622; a college degree is worth \$118,000 for a male and \$65,000 for a female; a college-educated housewife is valued at \$5,034; a substitute mother at \$84 a week or \$4,368 a year (Hoffer, 1974).

The role of homemaker--woman's primary role--is held in lowest esteem. The Dictionary of Occupational Titles put out by the U.S. Labor Department lists 23,000 titles with that of homemaker described as domestic service and referred to Housekeeper, working. It is in the lowest classification of Service Occupations. It is described as "of no significant function except a serving function" (Heide, 1974 p. 71).

With this historical background and present day conditions and stereotypes, where does the middle-aged and older woman of today find herself? She may look to the future questioning who she is, what her role (or roles) will be, will anyone need her, how will she spend the remaining years of her life and with whom, what will she do to earn a living? If she goes for more education, who will hire her, what will she do in case of sickness and old age?

Most women today 40 years and older are or have been married, yet statistics show a rising divorce rate and an increase in the number of widows. Numbers of women living alone show a soaring 66 percent increase between 1964 and 1974 (For Singles, Life Isn't All 'Swinging,' 1975).

For the woman who is married, status is ascribed to her by her husband's position if she has no career or valued skills of her own. Many women are in a position where definition of self and the meaning of life and self esteem all depend on other people, and this places her in a vulnerable position (O'Brien, 1973).

Today women are entering the labor force in unprecedented numbers. The number of women in the ages 45 to 64 is predicted to increase 63 percent between 1960 and 1990 (Sheppard, 1974). This figure takes into account the fact that women can retire at age 62 under Social Security, yet if current practices are an indication, women do not take advantage of early retirement as much as people might think.

One possible explanation is the fact that women have a difficult time becoming and remaining economically independent. For the most part, older women workers are economically disadvantaged.

Janet Harris, in her book The Prime of Ms. America (1975, pp. 162-163), offers this profile of women workers 45 years and older:

Seven out of ten work full time in year-round jobs. Nearly two out of three are married. Most of us work because we need the money. More than half of us hold clerical or service jobs, a category that includes domestic work. About 13 percent are professionals or technicians. Less than seven percent hold management positions. Our average yearly salary--as year-round full-time workers--is less than \$6,000, about half as much as men our age...We are the last hired

and first fired. For women between the ages of forty-five and fifty-four the unemployment rates are twice those of men our age. As we grow older, both our salaries and work opportunities decrease. At forty-five to fifty-four, nearly 70 percent of the single women (widowed, divorced, separated, or never married) and nearly half the married women are working; during the next ten years the figures will drop to 60 percent and about 35 percent, respectively. At age sixty-five, only three out of ten of us will have incomes over \$2,000 per year, and only eight percent will receive over \$5,000 a year! In our society, age is a vocational handicap--only nine percent of all men and women hired in 1972 were over age forty-five--and being female is a vocational handicap. The differences between men's and women's salaries were greater in 1970 than they were in 1950.

The educational level of a woman worker makes considerable difference in her income, yet even then, there is still quite a discrepancy. "For fully employed women 45-54 years old in 1971, the range was from less than \$4,000 for those with less than eight years of elementary schooling to \$9,500 for those with four years or more of college" (Allan, 1974 p. 26).

Despite the fact there are advantages to employing mature women such as less absence for illnesses, better job stability, and strong attachment to the labor force there remain prejudices and stereotypes that are real barriers to the older woman today seeking further education and employment (Allan, 1974).

Over the last few years, laws have been passed with the purpose of eliminating discrimination in employment on the basis of age and sex. For the woman who has never worked outside the home or who is reentering the work force after a long absence, these laws are very complicated, and many employers are not as knowledgeable about them as they might be.

Another aspect of the problems of the middle years is the concept of "age appropriateness." Age is an important factor in role assignment and role behavior. Roles are usually assigned as a result of certain criteria being met. There are particular positions, rights, duties, privileges, and obligations assigned to each age group, and certain behavior is expected for roles within each age grouping. In our culture, the primary entry criteria are health, age, sex, color, experience, and educational achievement (Atchley, 1972),

Thus, as a person lives out her life, the positions or roles for which she is eligible keep changing with age. For young adults there are certain things that can be done that cannot be done as children. As people get older, they are assigned positions such as "retired," "grandmother," etc., but there are no clearly defined expectations for these roles as there are for younger people.

In addition to age making people eligible for positions, it is also important as a position in itself, and certain behaviors are expected (Sarbin & Allen, 1968). So a middle-aged woman who considers furthering her education and seeking full-time employment is not at an "appropriate" age to enter the world of higher education. She has not achieved the completion of her education when young so now is

considered "over age" or late in her educational development. She is not "acting her age."

In the employment arena, 45 or 50 years of age is considered "too late." Career development patterns assume uninterrupted, full-time involvement; therefore, the norms for timing come close to the realities of men's lives, but not of women's lives. Women are simply "off time" in their career development (Huyck, 1975).

If the employment picture looks bleak, the educational scene is equally formidable. Through socialization and education, today's middle-aged woman, with few exceptions, has been trained to view education as fitting her for marriage or for some service role which involves her in applying knowledge defined by male scholars (Conway, 1974). In past years, even when a woman graduated from college, she would be prepared only to provide the cultural supports for a male existence. It was believed that the intellectual powers of the female could be fulfilled only through applying knowledge in the service of others, and therefore, it was possible to educate women without ever considering their intellectual skills on the same level as those of males (Conway, 1974).

There were a few special women who achieved recognition because they accepted the belief that education was an end in itself (rather than a preparation for marriage); however, it was a special calling which ruled out the possibilities of family responsibilities, and they escaped the role conflicts which were to paralyze later generations of graduates attempting to combine a marriage and a career. Their model

of the educational process was a single-sex one, and so the problem of whether or not women could share in the creation of knowledge on equal terms with men was not addressed. So the role of educated women continued to be the application of knowledge in service occupations and/or its simplification for transmission to the young.

Through the years, women have entered the educational process on supposedly equal terms with males, but their intellectual goals and career aspirations remained separate and unequal. Schools have been dominated by males where males have been expected to succeed in certain prescribed occupations while females' education has prescribed other, more limiting roles. There have been few models of women achieving academic authenticity because of the historical forces which have shaped the roles of educated women in our country (Conway, 1974).

The weight of lengthy cultural traditions which has denigrated female intellect has taken its toll, and the woman student is nervous and self-conscious about her own intellectual performance. In order to achieve equality in education, it will be necessary to make major cultural institutions of society responsive to women's experiences so perceptions can be transformed and we can break away from models of action which have been derived from stereotyped male roles (Conway, 1974).

Even more apparent to the woman returning after a long absence is the fact that the educational process is not prepared for a person her age. Most institutions deal with the "typical" college age student--one that is approximately twenty years younger than she. There

is a generation gap, with different needs, goals, orientations, and peer groups.

It is assumed by some that today's college students are more sophisticated than the older generation. They supposedly know how to take tests, use mechanical equipment in the classroom, do library research, etc. Whether or not this is true is open for speculation, but these things are part of the complicated milieu in which the older woman finds herself. Often there is inadequate counseling because counselors have had little experience with the student of this age (Clarke, 1975). A woman beginning seriously to prepare herself for a career at age 40 or 50 is not likely to be within the realm of their experience. So the mature woman finds herself "pioneering and setting the direction" (Harris, 1975 p. 216).

To add to these dilemmas, there are the feelings of low self esteem the middle-aged and older woman harbors as she enters a new environment (Huyck, 1975). Economic security and positive self esteem are often rewards for occupational success in our society, and when there is no occupational success, feelings of self esteem are likely to be lacking (Bell, 1975).

Women are also socialized to be passive, dependent and emotional (Weitzman, 1975), so there is likely to be a great deal of conflict in the woman this age. David C. McClelland, in his book Power, The Inner Experience (1975), states:

It is as if women have learned that if they stand out, or are assertive, they are very likely somehow to get hurt. Society

not only does not expect them to be assertive, it punishes them if they are: men avoid them; they are told they go crazy if they have no social life; ways are found to justify not promoting them or paying them the same as a man, etc. Small wonder that on the average they learn to avoid being assertive!" (p. 91).

To summarize, there is widespread belief by those who have studied the field that white, middle-class women in our society today who are 40 years of age and older have likely been socialized into ambiguous roles. The roles of mother, wife, homemaker are said to be of greatest value, that women find fulfillment in the context of the family.

On the other hand, these roles become empty for many women when children leave and other roles are diminished or gone. These women see that privilege, prestige and value are more closely aligned to the male career role. Women are not prepared through training or life experience to compete in the world of education and a career.

Employment opportunities and wage scales discriminate against women, especially those in the 40 year plus category. Her age limits her in the field of education as well as in the work force.

Lack of societally assigned roles creates a situation of normlessness. Uncertain about her place in society and its expectations and a feeling of low self esteem combine to create barriers for many women of this age as they enter educational institutions and/or a career.

Related literature

Many writers (Allan, 1974; Armstrong, 1973; Harris, 1975; Katz, 1975; Markus, 1973; O'Brien, 1973; Riley, 1968; Rossi, 1964) have researched and described the legal and economic status of older women, societal expectations and stereotypes of women, and sociological perspectives on women's roles.

Roby (1975) and Conway (1974) have studied the numbers of women in higher education and have noted the barriers confronting women today both within the institutions of higher learning and in utilizing the education the women have received. Organizational barriers for women have included admission practices, financial aid grants, rules governing campus life, the sexist character of much subject matter taught, and the composition of faculties and administrators.

Low self esteem appears to be a prevalent theme in writings about the middle aged and older woman (Baruch, 1973; Clements, 1973; Frankel, 1974; Kimmel, 1974; Rossi, 1964). Since she has likely been in a housewife/mother role for many of her adult years, she realizes she has little prestige or status in society. Her identity has come from her husband and children for the most part and she has few societal norms to guide her.

Clements (1973) compared older women with young women at a state university and found older women's attitudes less positive toward peers, parents and their own self attractiveness, but more positive toward work and education. The older subjects were less anxious, depressed and hostile than the younger women. There was a positive correlation

between attitude toward work and age with the older women more effective academically. They also had achieved more emotional equanimity and competency. Clements also states there is a dearth of information about emotional characteristics of mature women returning to college.

Goal oriented women have been found to be more positive in self concept and indicate stronger feelings of self worth than did non-goal oriented women (Frankel, 1974).

In a study by Markus (1973), factors influencing a return to school and the school experience showed the most significant life changes reported by the women included achieving stated goals, getting a degree, gaining a specific skill and achieving a sense of accomplishment.

Career development and work have been described as they currently exist (Bem, 1973; Frankel, 1974; Grimm, 1974; Harris, 1975; Hansot, 1973; Kuhlen, 1952; McClelland, 1973). Discrimination has existed and still does in spite of national legislation. If future job prospects and salary expectations remain unchanged from the present time, women, particularly those in their mid-forties and older, will not find the world of work as promising as many anticipated.

Few studies have been done on career development in women. Huyck (1975) described women's career development as being "off time" since careers are nearly always studied with the male as the model. Most women's careers have not had consistent, steady development; so middle years are reached and a woman may be beginning a career while a man has been in one or more careers most of his adult life,

Counseling practices have generally been regarded as sex biased (Roby, 1975; Clarke, 1975) and as not meeting the needs of women who seek more education and/or careers. Particularly the middle-aged and older student is treated as one who is incapable of understanding and functioning as adequately as the younger student (Campbell, Chilman, Henneghan, 1974; O'Brien, 1973). Clarke (1975) cites a model program in Canada which "grew out of the recognition that in many cases traditional individual counseling sessions...were not proving sufficiently comprehensive or effective" (p. 123).

McEwen (1975), after searching the literature concerning the nature of counseling services for women, states that;

The predominant theme throughout the literature concerns the discriminatory attitudes and practices which have historically existed toward women and the counselors' responsibilities for correcting these practices and for developing their own sensitivities to human feminine concerns (p. 382).

Most of the research published concerns itself with younger women rather than the woman 40 years and older. But the increased enrollment of women in higher education is gaining attention from those institutions and from society in general. In a May 1975 publication, "A Survey of Research Concerns on Women's Issues," Arlene Kaplan Daniels states that "we need information not only about the women currently enrolled in such programs--their backgrounds, goals, and progress--but also about the women who might be involved if they could be reached and if more programs were available to them" (p. 32).

The general state of the field of research on women's issues is one of interest but one in which there is little priority in funding (Daniels, 1975). Substantial allocation of research dollars is needed as well as a concerted and integrated approach to research. Daniels also states that while the interest in research is growing, there is a need for "an overall framework within which individual endeavors can be placed in perspective." (p. 32).

Statement of the problem

The rapidly increasing number of mature women seeking higher education is a relatively recent phenomenon in our society, and little is known about this group of women forty years of age and older who are in the institutions of higher education. Data is lacking about the kinds of things that need to be known in order for institutions to plan adequately, advise and provide support services for the older woman returning for more education.

Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study was to gather data that may be helpful to an educational institution, particularly the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in planning, advising and providing support services for mature women seeking higher education.

Data gathered included reasons mature women gave for enrolling at UNO and what contact and/or satisfaction they had with various counseling services at the time of enrollment. Perceived counseling needs were also identified and whether or not support groups of mature women at UNO would be helpful to women responding.

Career aspirations were identified along with demographic data and feelings about self, capabilities and goals for the future.

Methodology

Definition of terms

UNO: The University of Nebraska at Omaha

Career: the respondents applied their own definition to this term. If "housewife" was perceived as a career by a respondent, for example, she was considered as having a career for purposes of this study.

Counseling: the respondents assigned their own meaning to this term in the context of the questionnaire.

Population

The population of this study was all women enrolled the spring semester of 1976 at UNO who met the following criteria: 1) a birth-date in 1936 or before, making them 40 years of age or older in 1976; 2) cumulative credit hours of six or more prior to the spring semester; 3) all graduate college women meeting the age requirement. The total number of names that met the criteria was 333, but three names did not have addresses printed, so were not used.

Subjects

The subjects for this study were those women in the population who returned their questionnaires within a four week period from the time of mailing. A total of 205 questionnaires were returned within the time period. Two were not usable. Five returns had no age stated so these were not included in age averages or medians. Other data from these five returns were used, however.

Twelve questionnaires were returned after the cut-off date of four weeks. Responses on late returns were generally no different

than those received within the four week period. Data on these twelve were not used.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire constructed by the writer of this study was used to gather data. (See Appendix A). Using names and addresses from UNO's computer print-out of all women enrolled the spring semester of 1976 who were born in 1936 or before, selection was made of the population to be studied using criteria described under Population. The questionnaire was mailed to this group along with a cover letter of explanation and a postage paid return envelope. (See Appendix B). No coding of questionnaires was done, so respondents were assured anonymity. A total of 330 questionnaires were mailed to the selected population.

Limitations

Because of privacy legislation, grade point averages could not be used.

Data from the UNO Registrar's Office as delivered by the University computer was used. The print-out omitted women born in 1931 (having their 45th birthday in 1976) and a supplementary list was not immediately available. Three addresses were omitted, and accumulated hours did not appear to be consistent in all cases, especially for those who were graduate students.

If there were other apparent limitations or inaccuracies, the writer of this study determined whether or not a name was used.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed as follows: returned questionnaires were sorted into three groups. For purposes of this study these groups are referred to in the following pages as Group I, Group II, and Group III. Group I was comprised of those women who reported they have a career at the present time. Group II was made up of women reporting they did not presently have a career, but plan one. Group III were those women reporting they did not presently have a career and had none planned for the future.

Worksheets were used to record data with columns corresponding to coded statements and/or questions on the questionnaire. Each questionnaire was numbered to correspond with its numbered line on each worksheet. Information from the questionnaires was recorded in the appropriate column on the worksheet.

For each grouping, the following data were used to describe that group: 1) average age; 2) marital status; 3) number of children; 4) reasons for enrolling in order of preference by respondent; 5) counseling services used, if any; 6) response as to perceived helpfulness of services; 7) those services most helpful; 8) two needs of respondent not met by counseling services; 9) support of student's educational goals by family and/or friends; 10) desire to have support group at UNO; 11) if yes, suggestions for discussion topics; 12) feelings of respondent when first entering UNO; 13) career plans of respondent ten years ago; 14) future plans of respondent.

A number of questionnaires were returned with extra information and comments in addition to the specific questions. If the extra

comments were judged pertinent and applicable for purposes of the overall study, an asterisk was placed in the appropriate column of the worksheet. After the initial analyses of the specific questions, the asterisked topic on any line of the worksheet could be identified by the correspondent number on the questionnaire and this additional information was used in the discussion section.

Responses were tallied and along with the data from the computer sheets used to describe the women in each grouping showing average age, average number of children, etc.

Finally, differences between the three groups were described, and comparisons and contrasts were made using the above data.

Results

The population for this study (N=330) consisted of women enrolled at UNO the spring semester of 1976 who met the following criteria:

1) a birthday in 1936 or before, making them 40 years of age or older in 1976; 2) cumulative credit hours of six or more prior to the spring semester; 3) all graduate college women meeting the age requirement.

The total number of women meeting these criteria was 333. Three names on the computer print-out did not have addresses noted, so these names could not be used.

The average age of the population was 46.3 years and there were only thirty-six full time students, with the remainder of the students registered as part time. (Table 1).

Table 1
Composite Description of Population

Total Population	Mean Age	Median Age	Average Credit Hours Enrolled	Full time Students	Part time Students
330	46.3	44	5.7	36	294
				Average Credit Hours	Average Credit Hours
				13.4	4.7

Graduate students and women enrolled in Continuing Studies made up the largest categories by college with 224 enrollees or a little more than 67 percent of the total group. The remaining 106 women were enrolled in ten other colleges or special units. (Table 2).

Table 2

Distribution of Population by College

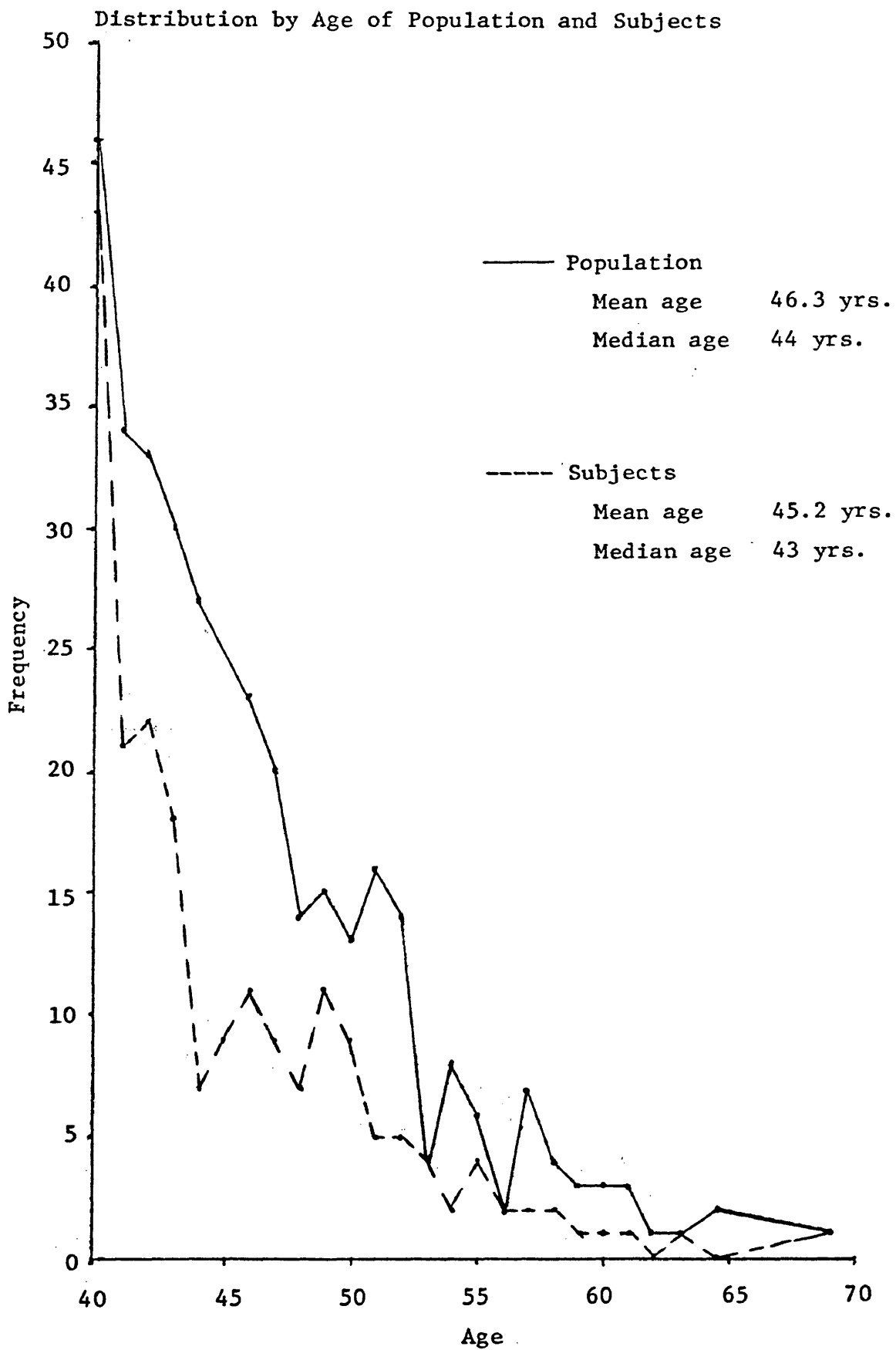
Total Population	Graduate	Continuing Studies	Education	Arts and Sciences	Number enrolled in 8 other Colleges & special units*
330	130	94	48	29	29
% of total	39.4	28.5	14.5	8.8	8.8

*Includes seven students in Home Economics (UNL), six in College of Public Affairs and Community Service, nine in College of Business Administration, three in School of Fine Arts, one inter-campus student, one in College of Engineering and Technology, one non-degree student, one in University Division.

The questionnaires and cover letters were sent to the selected population and a period of four weeks allowed for returns, with no returns used after that period. Responses on the twelve late returns were generally no different than on earlier returns. During the four weeks, 205 questionnaires were returned, with two not usable. One woman felt the questionnaire was an invasion of her privacy and refused to answer the questions. The other woman felt she did not meet the age requirement because she had not reached her 40th birthday, so returned the questionnaire with a note to that effect. Five returns had no age written on them but other responses on those five were used. Total subjects for this study numbered 203. The distribution by age of the population and the subjects is shown in Table 3.

The average age of the subjects was 45.2 years and nearly three-fourths were married and 94 percent had children with many mothers indicating they still had children at home. The average number of children for respondents was 3.4

Table 3



The questionnaires were not coded and did not ask for information about credit hours, part time or full time status and college enrolled in; therefore, there are no comparisons between population and subjects on those topics. Comparable data would have been desirable, but the desire to preserve anonymity prevented coding the questionnaires; therefore, age is the only comparable data.

The responses on the questionnaires concerning careers fell into three categories: 1) those women who reported they have a career at the present time (N=133); 2) those women who reported they did not have a career at the present time but planned one in the future (N=27); 3) women who reported they did not have a career at the present time and did not plan one (N=43). Throughout this study these three groups are referred to as Group I, Group II, and Group III, respectively. (Table 4).

As might be expected, the women who have a career were more likely to be single than those in the other two groups. The average age and the average number of children for all the women was very similar, however.

The primary reason that most women gave for enrollment at UNO was self-fulfillment/self-satisfaction. Second choices of the largest number of women were the anticipation of economic advantage and the desire for a satisfying career. The need for something meaningful to do with their time was given only as fourth choice by the largest number of women. (Table 5).

One hundred thirty-eight women reported they used one of the counseling services as indicated on the questionnaire. Only fourteen

Table 4
Demographic Data for Groups I, II, III, and Total Subjects

	Total Number	Mean Age	Median Age	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Never Married	Average No. Children
<u>Group I</u> Women Reporting They Have Career	133	45.4	43	89 67%*	20 15%	14 10.5%	10 7.5%	3.2
<u>Group II</u> Women Reporting No Career But Planning Career	27	44.2	42	20 74%	4 15%	2 7%	1 4%	3.5
<u>Group III</u> Women Reporting No Career, None Planned	43	45	43	37 86%	3 7%	2 5%	1 2%	3.5
Total All Subjects	203	45.2	43	146 72%	27 13%	18 9%	12 6%	3.4

*Indicates percentage of each respective group.

Table 5
Primary Reasons Given for Enrollment

	Anticipate Economic Advantage			Self-fulfillment/ Self-satisfaction			Desire Satisfying Career			Need Something Meaningful				
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	Total	
1st Choice Number	40	5	5	73	19	25	9	2	4	15	1	1	3	5
%*	30	19	12	55	70	58	7	8	9	8	1	4	7	3
2nd Choice Number	35	7	9	26	4	6	36	9	6	51	22	7	11	40
%	26	26	21	20	15	14	27	33	14	29	17	26	26	22
3rd Choice Number	28	6	4	15	4	3	24	10	10	44	20	2	6	28
%	21	22	9	11	15	7	18	37	23	33	15	7	14	21
4th Choice Number	12	4	7	2	0	2	11	3	3	17	43	11	6	60
%	9	15	16	1	0	5	8	11	7	16	32	41	14	58

*Indicates percentage of each group
 **Group I - Women reporting they have a career (N=133)
 Group II - Women reporting no career, but planning career (N=27)
 Group III - Women reporting no career, none planned (N=43)

used the UNO Counseling Center, with the remaining number using the academic advisor, department advisor or some other person they named as one who had advised them. Nearly one-third of the women did not respond to this question. (Table 6).

Table 6

Counseling Services Used By Women At Time of Enrollment

Service Used	Group I		Group II		Group III		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	(N=203)	%
UNO Counseling Center	6	4	3	11	5	12	14	7
Academic Advisor	47	35	9	33	9	21	65	32
Department Advisor	38	29	8	30	13	30	59	29
No Response	42	32	7	26	16	37	65	32

Group I - Women reporting they have a career (N=133)

Group II - Women reporting no career, but planning one (N=27)

Group III - Women reporting no career, none planned (N=43)

The counseling services were generally regarded as helpful by those women who responded to this question. Nearly two-thirds of Group I felt the services were definitely helpful and more than one-third more women felt they were somewhat helpful. In all three groups, the majority of women felt the services were definitely helpful. (Table 7).

Table 7
Reported Helpfulness of Counseling Services
Used at Time of Enrollment

Response	Group I Number	%*	Group II Number	%*	Group III Number	%*	Total N=203	%*
Yes	48	61	10	59	12	57	70	60
Somewhat	29	37	6	35	9	43	44	38
No	2	2	1	6	0	0	3	2
No Response	54	41**	10	37**	22	51**	86	42**

*Indicates percentage of those women responding.

**Indicates percentage of total of each group.

Group I - Women reporting they have a career (N=133)

Group II - Women reporting no career, but planning one (N=27)

Group III - Women reporting no career, none planned (N=43)

A large number of respondents indicated they had family and/or friends outside the university who were supportive of their educational and personal goals. More than three-fourths of the women in Groups I and II indicated such support and nearly all the women in Group III responded they had such support. (Table 8).

Table 8
Respondents Indicating Supportive Family and/or Friends

	Group I	Group II	Group III	Total
<u>Yes</u>				
Number	112	23	40	175
%*	84	85	93	86
<u>No</u>				
Number	17	2	1	20
%	13	7	2	10
<u>No Answer</u>				
Number	4	2	2	8
%	3	7	5	4

*Indicates percentage of each group.

Group I - Women reporting they have a career (N=133)

Group II - Women reporting no career, but planning career (N=27)

Group III - Women reporting no career, none planned (N=43)

Less than half of the women felt that a support group of women in similar situations at UNO would be helpful. However, women in the three groups differed in their responses. For example, in the group who had careers, 41 percent (N=133) indicated a support group would be helpful, while 72 percent (N=27) of the women who had no career but were planning one indicated such a support group would be helpful. In Group III, those women who had no career and were not planning one, there were 51 percent (N=43) who felt a support group at UNO would be helpful. For the total subjects, 47 percent of those responding indicated they were in favor of a support group at UNO.

There was a wide diversity in the feelings the women had when they entered the university. More than half of the respondents indicated they felt confident about their academic abilities, and three-fourths felt eager about this experience. About half of the women indicated some doubt about competing with younger students and slightly more than half indicated they were sure about their future goals. (Table 9).

More than half (59 percent) of the respondents indicated that ten years ago they had plans for their future which included education and/or a career. With the exception of three who did not respond, the others (39 percent) indicated they did not have such plans. As for plans ten years into the future, three-fourths of the women indicated they had definite future plans.

In addition to the foregoing data, the questionnaire was constructed to elicit respondents' reactions and comments. Nearly half of the respondents wrote such comments and feelings about their

Table 9
Feelings of Women When Entering UNO

	Uneure			Confident			Eager			Doubtful			Good			Not sure of Goals								
	Group*			Group			Group			Group			Group			Group								
	I	II	III Total**	I	II	III Total	I	II	III Total	I	II	III Total	I	II	III Total	I	II	III Total						
<u>Yes</u>																								
No.	35	12	60	81	12	20	113	92	23	32	147	28	11	13	52	114	25	36	175	21	8	13	42	
%**	26	46	30	61	46	47	57	69	88	74	75	21	42	30	26	86	96	84	88	16	31	30	22	
<u>Somewhat</u>																								
No.	54	9	20	83	40	9	13	62	32	3	8	43	35	7	9	51	14	1	4	19	32	7	9	48
%	41	35	47	42	30	35	30	31	24	12	19	22	26	27	21	25	11	4	9	10	24	27	21	25
<u>No</u>																								
No.	44	5	8	57	12	5	8	25	7	0	0	7	70	8	19	97	4	0	0	4	74	11	17	102
%	33	19	19	28	9	19	19	12	5	0	0	3	53	31	44	49	3	0	0	2	56	42	40	53

*Group I - Women reporting they have a career (N=133)

Group II - Women reporting no career, but planning career (N=27)

Group III - Women reporting no career, none planned (N=43)

**Percentage columns show percentage of each group. Group columns totaling less than 100% due to no response. Percentages in total columns computed on responses only.

situations, personal and/or educational, that were helpful in making a more complete evaluation of responses. Such responses have been categorized and evaluated and are reported in the following paragraphs to supplement other data.

The responses from Group I, those women who had careers (N=133), indicated that approximately 62 percent were in either the teaching or educational supervisory profession or were in health related fields such as nursing. They indicated further education was necessary for certification or in some way a requirement for their career.

Even though this was the case, those women still held to the fact that self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction was their primary reason for enrollment. One woman in this group who had ten children commented that furthering her education "gives life purpose."

Others indicated they did not feel satisfied being a housewife and mother and wanted competencies in other areas. The personal goal of a college education was important for a number of the women in this group. Some did not have a high school diploma when they married and wanted to prove they were capable of achieving something in their own right.

Some others felt the usual feminine role was very lonely, and that the "world was passing them by" when they were not furthering their education.

In this group of 133 women who reported they had careers, 123 had children and eighty-nine were married. Only six reported

that being a housewife was a career.

Many in this group made additional comments as to how important self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction were to them. One woman with seven children at home (and a career), wrote that self-fulfillment was her primary reason for furthering her education. She already had more education than her husband and the fact that she wanted to continue her education had put a strain on the marriage. Her friends also thought further education was a waste of her time. Others felt that their own self-fulfillment, self-satisfaction and personal growth not only was of help to themselves but that it helped in their relationship with their husband and children.

Responses from women who did not have a career but planned one (Group II, N=27) indicated that many wanted to be independent and to accomplish something worthwhile in their own right. Even though a number of these women had a job, they did not call it a career. They appeared to be furthering their education to go into careers they felt were more meaningful, fulfilling and creative. Less than 20 percent gave economic reasons as their primary reason for furthering their educations.

A number of women in this group wrote of wanting to be involved in something worthwhile and meaningful in their lives and felt education fulfilled this need.

The women in Group III (N=43) who had no career and none planned, indicated that self-fulfillment came with furthering their

education. They felt that education helped them become the person they wanted to be, and that they could make a more meaningful contribution to society with more education. Some felt education helped them become more fully-rounded persons and that they needed time and opportunity to develop their own personal growth. Others responded about the importance of developing their potential to the greatest degree possible and not to do so would be to live a frustrated existence.

A number of women in Groups II and III indicated they were planning ahead in the event they would have to support themselves and/or their family. Further education would prepare them better, they felt, to do this. Others indicated they had planned to complete their education at some future date, but because of death or disablement of their husband, they had to complete their education much sooner than they had originally anticipated. Some mentioned a degree as "insurance for the future" in case they would need to work.

Among the divorced women, primarily in Groups I and II, some answers on the questionnaires reflected hostility and anger. One woman who had a career indicated she was furthering her education because without it she could hardly make enough money to eat. Another commented that her primary reason for enrollment was "survival." Others less angry-sounding, indicated they were the sole support of their family and they needed a better job which they felt would be possible with further education.

The counseling services at UNO used by the subjects are shown in Table 6 and the reported helpfulness of these services in Table 7. (Throughout this study, counseling services refers to the general grouping together of the Counseling Center, academic and/or department advisor or other specific person the women reported they used.) In addition, there were many responses on the questionnaires about the helpfulness of the services and what needs of the respondents were not met, or could have been better met.

One major theme among comments from those who did not use the counseling services was the fact that the women did not know there was such a thing as the Counseling Center, or that "I needed counseling, but didn't know such services existed."

In analyzing the question concerning which of the counseling services was most helpful, there was confusion among respondents because they did not know whether the person they talked with was an academic advisor or a department advisor. A number responded that a particular person had helped them work out their scheduling or had answered some questions for them, but they did not know what position this person held, so the helpfulness was determined by the interaction with one particular person. A few others indicated they had been told the name of their advisor, but had not tried to contact that person or had tried a number of times and had been unsuccessful in making contact.

Thirty-five questionnaires were returned with comments extensive enough to be classified as to the helpfulness of the counseling or advisement services. Nineteen women indicated they were given specific help by one of the UNO counseling services. This included such things as working out specific courses, determining whether or not CLEP examinations would be helpful, and answering specific questions the women had about the registration process. These women included three who had used the Counseling Center and sixteen who used an academic or department advisor or who named a specific person.

Sixteen women expressed the helpfulness in more general terms by indicating the services were "supportive," the person they talked with was "understanding of my needs," "my goals were unclear and I was helped in clarifying them (or in setting goals)," and the counselor was "encouraging and patient." Two of these women used the Counseling Center and the others used other persons.

Fifty-two women expressed one or more needs that were not met by the counseling services. Comments from these fifty-two women were placed into four general categories:

- 1) the need to have the counselor (or advisor) more aware and understanding of their personal situations and needs. Eleven women expressed this need. Some of these women felt there was a lack of counseling for women in their middle years and that counselors were not generally helpful in understanding the unique problems of women with families, homes, careers, and educational goals. One woman indicated her academic advisor felt she should be satisfied with her

home and children, and others indicated the person they talked to did not take into consideration the fact that a woman can handle only so many things at one time and that classes at UNO were only one of the many responsibilities she had. None of the women in this category used the Counseling Center.

2) the need for the counselor to be more thorough, take a more personal interest, to be more supportive and not so hurried. Twenty-seven women expressed this need. Some commented they could not make an appointment with their advisor (or counselor) at a convenient time, or that the person had not been there for an appointment. Others reported the counselor appeared too busy to take any personal interest in them, that the counselor had been discouraging, not supportive, and acted unconcerned. (The "counselors" these women refer to were not a counselor in the UNO Counseling Center.)

3) the need for more specific information regarding course and degree requirements, the registration and administrative process, general orientation procedures, and career counseling. Thirty-three women gave comments expressing this need. Some commented that the counselor did not have a clear enough idea of what was needed for their degree requirements and some courses had been taken which weren't necessary. The registration procedure was complex some women felt, and it was especially frustrating to get a schedule of classes worked out only to find most classes they wanted closed at registration time. The need for the counselor to help the women relate their academic pursuits to opportunities in the "real world" was also expressed. Some women felt

they needed career counseling--what opportunities are available to women, the job possibilities for women this age, and how best to achieve a particular career. One woman indicated she was not encouraged to go into a field that was not "typically feminine," and felt that a counselor with "broader vision" could have been more helpful. Others in this particular group indicated they felt the counselor did not have an understanding of the complexities that a professional woman faced and more help would have been given if there had been a broader understanding of the professional woman in the business world. (Again, the reference to the "counselors" actually indicated an academic or department advisor or a specific person).

4) Thirteen women were placed in a fourth category. These women indicated they did not know any counseling services existed. They expressed a real need for counseling help and indicated they still would like to know more about the services.

The women who made comments about the helpfulness of the counseling services used words such as "supportive," "positive attitude," "encouraging," "understanding," and "patient" in describing the help they received. A number of women commented that when they enrolled, they didn't even know what their needs were and that they needed total guidance and help in choosing the field that would be best for them. Two others commented that they felt the counselor assumed the women knew much more about the entire educational and career field than they actually did.

The eighty-nine respondents who indicated they would like to have a support group of women like themselves at UNO to discuss special

problems and concerns gave specific suggestions as to topics to discuss. A large number of these responses covered some of the same topics expressed as counseling needs. The women who had no career now but planned one were the most articulate group with the largest percentage of responses.

Nearly all of the suggested topics can be included in two categories: personal and academic/career. However, the large majority of responses included a combination of both categories. Comments included the desire to discuss with other women the conflicts arising between personal goals and those responsibilities of family and how these could be integrated into the desire for further education. Feelings of insecurity, doubt, lack of self-confidence and self-worth, and inadequacy were mentioned as possible topics for discussion. There was a feeling by a number of women of "aloneness" in their educational experiences, and that support and help from other women would be helpful.

One woman mentioned the fact that younger students are on the campus more of the time and able to get acquainted with other students and exchange ideas and information about teachers, courses, etc., but there was not much opportunity for women like herself to do this since time was limited and she only came to the campus for class and left. Others mentioned the feeling of anonymity because they did not know others on the campus.

Other comments relating to academic/career needs had to do with the desire for more information on careers available to women, how to overcome the problem of discrimination against an older woman, how knowledge and past experience could be applied to credits at the

university, how study habits could be improved, where tutoring help could be secured, how minority women could find a meaningful place in the professional world, financial aid possibilities for older women, and the adjustment to the academic world and the world of work after having been away from it for so long.

Thirty-seven women commented that the idea of a women's discussion group at UNO sounded like a good thing, but they were so busy they wouldn't have time to participate. A few women responded that it would have helped them when they first started back to school, but wouldn't be helpful now.

In analyzing responses to the question concerning plans the respondents had ten years ago, those responses indicating plans were put into two categories depending on how specific the response was.

Of 133 women in Group I who reported careers, ninety-one indicated they had plans ten years ago. However, their comments as to specificity varied. Fifty-seven gave specific goals such as "I planned to get my Master's degree," or "I planned to finish my education and teach after my children got older." Thirty-six of the fifty-seven were prepared for a career and planned to continue that career, taking courses to upgrade it.

Thirty-four of the ninety-one indicated they had plans ten years ago which included further education and/or a career, but were not as specific as the others in that group. Some indicated they had hoped some day to finish their education but family responsibilities had prevented it. Others indicated they had to wait for their children to get older. Some indicated their future plans included "furthering my education,"

The forty-two who answered "No" in Group I made no other comments or

their comments had no relationship to education or career goals.

Twelve women who had no career but planned one (Group II, N=27) indicated they had plans ten years ago. Of the twelve, three were specific and nine less specific. The fourteen who responded "No" made no comments relative to education and/or career goals.

Those who gave specific responses had planned on a career at some future time and were still working to achieve that goal. The less specific comments were similar to those in Group I. For example, four women indicated they had always planned to finish their education someday. Others indicated they had started and stopped their education a number of times depending on the family and/or financial situation.

Seventeen women who had no career and none planned (Group III, N=43) responded they had plans ten years ago. Five of the seventeen gave specific comments and twelve gave less specific comments. The comments that were more specific included getting a particular degree. A few mentioned a career as a goal. Less specific comments were similar to those in the other two groups. For example, some women indicated they planned to get more education after they had helped children get theirs. Others responded they wanted more education but had no particular degree or goal in mind. Those who responded "No" made no other comments.

The final question, "What do you see yourself doing ten years from now?" was analyzed according to specificity of responses. In Group I (N=133), 105 women responded that they had definite plans. Seventy-two of the 105 comments were judged more specific and thirty-three less specific.

Fifty-five of the seventy-two indicated they planned to continue in the career they were in at the present time, or an upgrading of that career with more responsibilities. Nine hoped to be able to go into a new career or at least new positions related to their present career, such as educational administrative work if they were now a classroom teacher. Others gave a combination of responses. For example, "I want to continue in my career, take more college classes, and enjoy life." Others responded that their future involved working toward an advanced degree. Three hoped to get a Ph.D.

The less specific comments included such things as "writing," "being creative," "retiring," "involved in some new, interesting activity," "possibly working part time," "enjoying grandchildren some day," "more time for my own interests," "I have things I'd like to do, but that will depend on my family's (or husband's) income and situation."

The nine who indicated they did not have plans for the future made comments such as, "Too many things have happened in the last ten years to upset my life that I can't possibly make plans ahead," or "I have no idea what I'll be doing."

The women of Group II who were planning a career (N=27), gave twelve specific responses about their future plans. Comments included such things as "teaching elementary school," "working as a counselor with women alcoholics," and "working for an architect."

The remaining five who gave less specific responses indicated such things as "active in community services," "writing or something else creative," "putting my education to practical use even if on a volunteer basis."

Three indicated they "have no idea what I will be doing," or "I can't possibly plan for the future" because of the uncertainty of life.

In Group III, the women who had no career and none planned (N=43), the responses of nine were judged to be more specific than twenty-one other less specific responses. The more specific responses involved plans for a possible career in the future such as teaching, library work, or social work. The women making less specific comments indicated they planned to "be retired," to "read", to "take care of children," to "perhaps use my education for volunteer work," and to "do something useful and self-fulfilling."

The eight who had no definite plans responded with a question mark as their answer or said "Unknown," or "I don't have any idea."

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to gather data that may be helpful to an educational institution, particularly the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in planning, advising and providing support services for mature women seeking higher education. Literature on women forty years of age and older entering educational institutions is sparse with most studies being done on women younger than forty years. Institutions of higher education report growing numbers of older women enrolling, yet there is little information on the women who are enrolling. It would seem that the more an institution knew about its students, the better it could adapt its services and programs to fit needs. This exploratory, descriptive study has attempted to find out and describe some previously unknown facts about this particular group of women at UNO.

Literature about middle aged and older women says that most are or have been married and have children. The women in this study appear to be representative of women this age in general in that nearly three-fourths are married and 94 percent have children. Current writers also state that by the age of forty-five one woman in three can expect to be alone. The women at UNO, with an average age of 45.2 years reported that 28 percent were alone. So, even though they were a select segment of the adult female population as far as educational level is concerned, they were not atypical to a great degree as far as marriage and motherhood is concerned.

The middle aged woman has also been described in the literature as feeling she has little status or prestige or not much sense of identity. Her self-esteem and self-worth have been described as low and it is said she is unsure of herself and self-conscious when she enters an educational institution. Voelz (1974), in studying developmental tasks of women in their middle years, interviewed fifty-one women between the ages of 40 to 55 years who were employed, housewives or housewife-students and resided in a middle-class suburban area of a large mid-western city. She found that the principal concern of mature women seemed to be in finding meaning and self-fulfillment in a period of diminishing family responsibilities and increasing freedom and leisure.

The women in this study generally indicated a sense of self identity or an emerging sense of self and of self-worth. Some women indicated their feelings of self-esteem and self-concept were low, but they were in the minority. The findings of Voelz were partially confirmed in that the largest number of women felt that self-fulfillment/self-satisfaction was their primary reason for going to school. However, in responding to the open-ended questions, none of the women mentioned role loss or filling leisure time as the reason for enrolling in college. Their problem (if it was a problem) appeared to be too many responsibilities and conflicts between home, career and education rather than freedom and leisure time.

The literature refers to college counseling as generally being sex biased and not meeting the needs of women who are seeking more education and/or careers. This study did not confirm those observations in that 60 percent of these women reported they used some

type of counseling service at the university and 98 percent of those found the services definitely or somewhat helpful. Only a few volunteered the comment that they felt the counseling received was sex-biased. The number of women not responding to the question pertaining to counseling may be partially attributable to the fact that some women did not know there were any counseling services available. Another possible reason was the fact that a number of women were unsure about whether they had used an academic advisor or department advisor. Some reported talking to a specific person, but did not know his/her position.

Even though a high percentage found counseling services helpful, there were also fifty-two women who responded with specific needs that were not met or could have been better met.

While the women in this study partially confirmed statements in the literature about lack of self-confidence, there was considerable difference among the three groups as to whether they felt self-confident at the time of enrollment. The group who were career women tended to show stronger feelings of self-confidence and good feelings about themselves than did the women in the other two groups. The career women also had more definite goals ten years ago and into the future than the other two groups. This partially confirms a study by Frankel (1974) where it was found that goal-oriented women were more positive in self-concept than non-goal oriented women. Although Frankel's study used two groups of women younger than the UNO women, she found no difference between the 20 to 22 year olds and the 30 to

40 year olds in respect to self-confidence and self-esteem. In fact, she found as age increased, so did positive self-concept and self-esteem. These findings may partially explain the fact that the group of UNO women who have careers appeared to be more sure of themselves and of their academic abilities. This also may have implications for this group primarily needing career guidance rather than the more "total guidance" and support that many of the other women felt would be helpful.

In confirming a study by Markus (1973), the UNO women tended to state such things as achieving stated goals, getting a degree, gaining a specific skill, and achieving a sense of accomplishment as factors influencing a return to school. A large number of these women who said they always wanted to continue their education indicated they were willing to work this in with family and/or career responsibilities and that "getting more education" was a goal in itself. The motivation to achieve this goal must be quite strong in these women.

Some writers have made references to the fact that women tend not to plan their future, assuming they will be dependent on their husband and not taking into account the fact he may die or they may be divorced. This group of women partially confirm those observations with 39 percent reporting they had no definite plans ten years ago for their future. Looking ahead ten years, however, more of the women said they had definite plans (75 percent). This could perhaps be partially attributed to the fact that in the last few years more has been written and women have been made more aware of the need

to plan in case of death or divorce. Some of these women commented on the need to be able to take care of themselves and their family and felt further education would better help them prepare for this possibility.

Another possible reason for more of these women planning ten years into the future is the fact they are older and more mature than ten years ago. Their family is older, perhaps financial resources are better and they are better able to plan. Also part of the maturing process may include the ability and/or desire to plan ahead. It may be changes in the individual rather than changes in the social system that motivates future planning. This is an area where more research needs to be done.

To summarize, this group of women at UNO conformed in some ways to the general female population, especially the middle class, white segment of society. However, as adults they obviously have a wide variety of past experiences, complex interrelationships, family situations, career aspirations and personal needs, and they expressed a diversity of feelings about themselves and their needs as far as their personal and educational experiences at UNO were concerned. Sixty-five percent of the women had a career and most were married with families, so their lives were very busy. They weren't enrolled in college because they had spare time on their hands. Many were goal oriented and their education was a means to attain both personal and professional goals, yet the majority reported that self-fulfillment was their primary reason for returning to college. Some expressed a lack of self-confidence, but they also expressed a strong desire to achieve their goals with a need to be recognized as individuals,

not part of a stereotyped group. They appeared to be interested in a quality education and felt the institution was not always sensitive to their needs or lacked the ability to meet their educational needs.

Recommendations

Recommendations for improvement of services for mature women entering college will be directed specifically at UNO, although other urban universities with a wide diversity in population may be able to implement some of these recommendations. It is possible that women enrolling in small colleges in non-urban settings may have quite different careers and/or career plans; therefore, some of their personal and educational goals might be different than this group at UNO. This is an area where more research needs to be done. Also, many of these recommendations can be equally applicable for any student entering the university, but to remain within the present context, recommendations will be directed toward the mature woman.

1. It is recommended the university establish a central intake system where all students would be directed to one center when they were seeking information about enrollment or beginning the actual enrollment process. Trained persons who were well informed about the total university and its multiple services would then be the first contacts students would have with the university. It would be essential to have a large enough staff to interact with persons on a highly personal level. Also, the staff of the center should be specially trained in counseling skills, aware of their own values and/or biases and particularly sensitive to both spoken and unspoken

needs. The ability to provide understanding, empathy and genuine interest in the person when she first came in would be essential.

2. During the initial contact session with the individual, needs could be determined and referrals made where needs could best be met. Since the majority of women in this study had careers and had been enrolled for some time and were upgrading their career or meeting career requirements, their needs would generally be different than the needs, for example, of those women who indicated they needed "total guidance."

The two groups of women who had no careers and particularly the women who were planning a career felt they needed career guidance and/or exploration of new careers, therefore, they should be referred to a person or persons specializing in this area. This counselor should have special skills and training in working with older women, being open to new career possibilities and the area of employment opportunities, which implies a close working relationship with the business community. This is one area where sex biased counseling has been known to exist and it would be very important for the counselors to be able to give non-sex biased help.

A number of the women in the above two groups expressed the need for "total guidance" and, as some indicated, "they knew they wanted to enroll in college but didn't have any idea what they wanted to do." This type of help would require a different kind of counseling where the woman's total situation and needs could be assessed and she could be helped in clarifying her goals, both personal and/or career.

The women in the career group indicated a need for accurate academic information--what classes to enroll in to fulfill requirements, for example. Again, trained counselors with knowledge about such requirements could be used to help the women seeking this type of information.

For women enrolling in off-campus courses, this central intake system would give her a central place to identify with and a place she could go to later if she needed additional help. Her relationship to the university would be thus strengthened.

3. With this system, it is recommended that multiple groups, organizations, departments and colleges within the university be utilized as support groups, all coordinated with and under the direction of the intake center. This would not only make for better coordination, but would allow the central intake center to utilize talents and specially trained people in a wide segment of the university.

For example, the Women's Resource Center could be designated as a group to refer the women who have need of "total guidance," such as the women in Group II who have no career but are planning one. This probably means she has come to the university with unclear goals or no goals. She may have conflicts with her family, and feelings of low self-esteem and self-confidence. Group sessions using specially trained facilitators might be one of the best ways for this type of woman to interact with other women in clarifying goals, resolving personal conflicts, overcoming feelings of inadequacies and self-doubt, and becoming self-directed and enabled to go on from this point being

more sure of herself and able to make better decisions for herself. Group leaders and resource persons should be chosen for their expertise, their skills in counseling, and their abilities to effectively model new roles available to women.

For career women seeking guidance on careers or academic information, she could best be referred to designated and trained persons within her major department where she could get the kind of information she wanted. She should be aware of what position that person held in the department, also.

4. Since one of the greatest complaints expressed was the "administrative hassle" women encountered, counselors in the intake center should be able to help women through the "hassle" and direct them to units or departments in the university where they could get the kind of help and information they needed. A particular complaint was that of classes being closed before the women could get to the university for registration. Another woman noted she had not been informed about her acceptance into a certain department and had unnecessarily been delayed one semester. If needs were not met, the woman could go back to her original intake counselor and together they could work out a way to proceed.

5. Time appeared to be precious to most of these women and with a career, family and educational requirements, there was often frustration expressed about the unavailability of advisors and/or counselors, so consequently such persons within the university who should have been able to help were not used.

The central intake center and those groups and/or individuals to whom women would be referred, should have flexible hours including some

evenings and Saturdays and a convenient location. For example, a working woman probably doesn't have time to leave for her lunch hour and go to the university (where she probably couldn't find a place to park) and get to see her advisor. It would be preferable to have the intake center, or at least a branch of it, in a location that was easily accessible and with hours of operation that might be flexible to allow any person time to come there. Conventional university hours might be maintained some days, but other days there should be flexibility so a working mother could go in the evening or on Saturday when she would have more time and perhaps someone to look after children. The same flexibility of hours should apply to other units, groups or departments so referrals from the intake center could be made, knowing the persons would be available.

6. Some women would have multiple needs, such as those for "total guidance" and at the same time the more immediate needs of registration. Hopefully, publicity about the intake center and its services would be such that women like this would take advantage of it far enough in advance that some of her goals would be clarified before actual registration. Or, more importantly, she might delay her decision to enroll until after her goals had been clarified. For this reason, it would seem necessary for the university to operate the intake center for anyone in the community who had an interest in the university but needed personal counseling prior to entering. Perhaps after the personal counseling, the woman might decide not to enroll. This would need to be an accepted, viable decision for her, and the university counseling would not preclude her entrance into

the university. Because of a good experience at the university, however, she would speak well of it and may enter at a later date.

7. This writer feels that the urban university has a special obligation to the community and interactions between the university and a diverse segment of the population can only enrich and strengthen both the university and the community. The mature student makes up a significant segment of the potential students for a university such as UNO. Admissions counselors should expand their recruitment to include adult organizations such as the American Association of Retired Persons. For financially deprived persons or those with meager educational backgrounds the central intake center should be publicized as a place where all persons interested in their jobs, their personal problems, and their educations could go for accurate information and an understanding staff to help them explore possibilities. If the person was a member of a minority group, resource persons within that group could be used to provide further information and support. Services provided by the university would not be contingent upon that person enrolling, but regarded as a service to members of the community. Indirectly, an adequate, well-functioning service should ultimately benefit the university.

8. Of particular importance is the need for evaluation of the central intake system and those other units, departments, etc. that would be providing the actual services and program. Efficiency and effectiveness should be evaluated to see that the programs are doing what they are designed to do and are doing it effectively. Where

there has been confusion over who has been doing the advising and/or counseling, this should be clarified so both the women and the university knows who the person or persons are who are acting in this capacity and are responsible for this function. Only with clear-cut goals in the beginning and ways of evaluating these services can they be made more effective. The services should be flexible, so that after evaluation adjustments can be made efficiently and quickly. An effective program needs to be responsive to people and their needs and should be flexible enough to meet a majority of those needs.

9. A final recommendation for providing more effective counseling services for women returning to UNO is an evaluation of present units and/or departments and the people in them to see how effective they are. On the basis of the data from the women in this study, there are some persons within the university who are providing sex-biased counseling, inaccurate academic information, and who are not trained in using effective counseling skills. The university should take immediate steps to raise the awareness of those in counseling and/or advising positions at the present time so they not only can give accurate information, but so they can listen effectively, give full attention to the student, exhibit genuiness, warmth, and understanding. Knowledge of occupations and a willingness to explore career possibilities with mature women without stereotyping should be important requirements for counselors.

Some areas for further research have already been mentioned. Other topics for research might include further studies on motivating factors that have an impact on the mature woman returning to college. Are there similarities in personality or the socialization process that

cause some women to seek further education even though it may be difficult for her to do so? Why do some women choose further education for self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction?

Research needs to be done on careers and women's life roles. Can models be designed for women who have a multiplicity of roles including a career? How about the woman who starts her career later in life? What can she expect as far as training, education and employment possibilities? What kinds of models do we have for this woman? For the woman who has a career, more study needs to be done on multiple careers for women.

The needs of middle-aged men need to be studied further, also. Do they have some of the same needs for self-fulfillment that women appear to have? When men enroll in higher education, how do they perceive themselves and how do they feel about this experience? Further research needs to be done on careers, including changing careers at middle age.

Research needs to be done, also, on the differences between the women at small, private colleges and community colleges and those women in large, metropolitan urban universities. A similar study such as this one could be done to determine similarities and differences, if any, between the women.

A follow-up study of the women in the UNO group is suggested to determine how they fared as far as continuing their education, and for those who planned to pursue a career, how they succeeded in finding a job and their satisfaction with their education and how it related to the type of job and/or career they found.

When more of these questions are answered, hopefully the urban university will be able to look at the population around it and be able to plan and implement courses and educational experiences to meet the needs of a very diverse population. All aspects of its interaction with persons has an effect on that person, and it would appear to be in the best interests of the university if it would effectively work with that person from his/her first contact with the university in order to help the person develop in the very best way possible.

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Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Age _____

Are you presently married; never married; divorced/separated;
 widowed?Do you have children? Yes; No. If so, how many? ____.
Ages? _____Do you consider yourself as having a career at the present time?
 Yes; No.

If so, what is the career? _____

Are you enrolled at UNO to further your career? Yes; No.Are you working toward a degree? Yes; No. If so, what degree?
_____Are you planning a career for the first time? Yes; No.Did you have a career years ago and are you planning to return to that
same career after your education is completed? Yes; No.If not, do you plan a different career? Yes; No.If you have a career, or plan one, why is a career important to you?

_____Which of the following would you say are your primary reasons for en-
rollment at UNO: (Put a #1 after your most important reason, a
#2 after the second most important reason, etc.)

Anticipate economic advantages as a result of education ____

Seek self-fulfillment/self satisfaction ____

Desire a satisfying career ____

Need something meaningful to do with time ____

Other reasons(s) _____

Did you use the UNO Counseling Center in Room 213, Administration Building prior to or at the time of enrollment? ___ Yes; ___ No.

Were counseling services provided by your ___ Academic advisor; ___ Department advisor; ___ neither?

Were these counseling services helpful? ___ Yes; ___ Somewhat; ___ No.

If so, which one(s) were most helpful? _____

If not, what were two needs you had that were not met by any of the counseling services? _____

Do you have family and/or friends outside the university that are supportive of your educational and personal goals? _____

Would it be helpful to you to have a support group of women like yourself at UNO to discuss special problems and concerns? _____

If so, what are some things you would like to do or discuss? _____

How did you feel when you first entered the university:

Unsure of yourself ___ Yes; ___ Somewhat; ___ No.

Fairly confident about your academic abilities ___ Yes; ___ Somewhat; ___ No.

Eager for this new experience ___ Yes; ___ Somewhat; ___ No.

Doubtful about competing with the younger students ___ Yes; ___ Somewhat; ___ No.

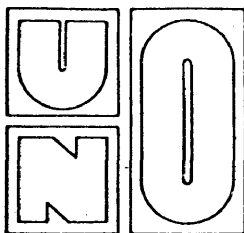
Good about the fact you enrolled ___ Yes; ___ Somewhat; ___ No.

Not sure of what your goals were ___ Yes; ___ Somewhat; ___ no.

Ten years ago did you have plans for your future which included further education and/or a career? ___ Yes; ___ No. If so, how specific were your plans? _____

What do you see yourself doing ten years from now? _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.



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College of Public Affairs and Community Service
Gerontology Program

Appendix B

April 5, 1976

Dear UNO Student:

As a graduate student, I am conducting a research project on women 40 years and older enrolled at UNO.

I plan to write a description of this particular group (of which I am a member) showing reasons for enrolling, career goals, if any, and use of university counseling services.

Your help is needed. Completion and return of the enclosed questionnaire will greatly assist me in gathering data that will be used in a master's thesis.

Please complete both sides of the questionnaire and return as soon as possible. This will only take a few minutes of your time. These questionnaires are unidentifiable to protect your privacy.

This material will be incorporated in a thesis entitled, "The Mature Woman in a University Setting, Her Career Aspirations, and the Impact of Counseling," and will be available at UNO's library by the end of this coming summer.

Thank you for your help. It is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betty Foster".

Betty Foster