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**The perceived relationships of peers on the process of professional socialization of women thirty-nine years old or older and women twenty-five years old or younger in four graduate departments.**

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**FIVE COLLEGE  
DEPOSITORY**

THE PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIPS OF PEERS ON THE PROCESS OF  
PROFESSIONAL SOCIALIZATION OF WOMEN THIRTY-NINE YEARS  
OLD OR OLDER AND WOMEN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD OR YOUNGER  
IN FOUR GRADUATE DEPARTMENTS

A Dissertation Presented

By

Lois Gail Marmor

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University  
of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 1986

School of Education

Lois Gail Marmor

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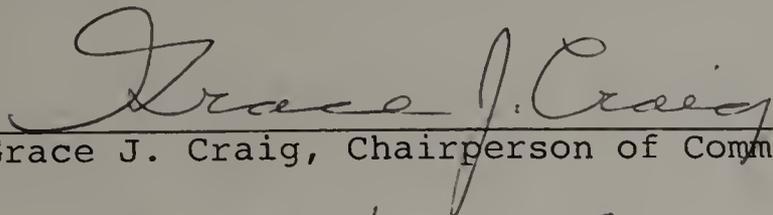
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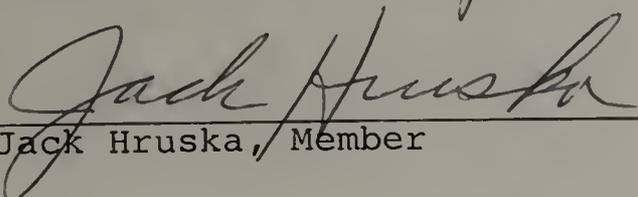
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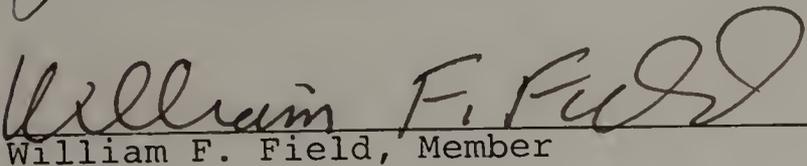
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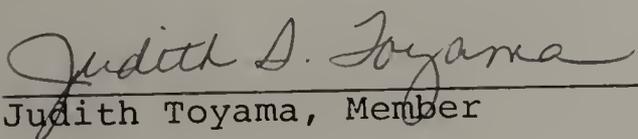
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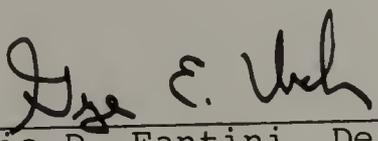
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In Memory of My Father

Melvin Marmor

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Finally, I am grateful to the twenty-four women in my study who took time from busy schedules to talk to a stranger about their graduate experiences.

## ABSTRACT

The Perceived Relationships of Peers on the Process of Professional Socialization of Women Thirty-nine Years Old or Older and Women Twenty-five Years Old or Younger in Four Graduate Departments

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This exploratory study compared the perceptions of two groups of women in four selected graduate departments concerning their experiences as graduate students. The review of the literature, designed to provide background information, covered three major areas: middle age, professional socialization and adult student (peer) relationships.

Half of the twenty-four women interviewed were twenty-five years old or younger and the other half were thirty-nine years old or older. Each woman participated in an open-ended interview concerning the process of professional socialization, their relationships with peers, and the perceived role of peers in the process of professional socialization. There was also a brief demographic questionnaire completed by the subjects prior to the interviews.

There were three major findings. First, there were no major differences found to exist between the two age cohorts. Women in both age cohorts stressed the importance of peers during the process of professional socialization, and shared many of the same values. Minor differences between the cohorts included their feelings towards competition and the importance of relationships outside of graduate school. Secondly, the concept of being off time does not seem to be applicable to the older women in this study. Older women did not feel any more limited or insecure, or out of place in graduate school, than did the younger women. Indeed this study indicated that perhaps younger women felt more off time than the older women did, in that they felt their lack of professional work experience was a handicap. Lastly, the departmental climate was of primary importance in the process of professional socialization. Such issues as clarity of degree requirements and support from the faculty were important to these twenty-four women.

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# C H A P T E R I

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

#### Increased number of women in graduate school

In the past twenty years there has been a significant increase in the number of middle-aged and older people, especially women, returning to higher education. This is due, in part, to the fact that as we become an older population, the character of society is changing.

Soon will be the time when the average member of society will spend more than half of his or her life outside of the labor force. In the face of these social changes, the goal of education should not be exclusively that of educating for productive skills, but also that of providing continuous opportunity for relearning or learning new skills (Birren & Woodruff, 1973: 311).

The mid to late 1960's saw large numbers of post World War II "Baby Boom" women obtaining a college education; from 1970 to 1980 there was a fifty per cent increase in the number of women in graduate school (Grant & Snyder, 1983). Partly because there have been basic changes in the character of middle age, a large number of middle-aged people have entered professional and graduate schools for full-time study (Hiestand, 1971). Since women are having fewer children, they have reduced the number of years of

child rearing. Women are realizing they have more years left to live without the responsibility of child rearing. Some "Baby Boom" women now are, or will soon find themselves, at a point in their lives when either the children are off on their own and they are free to pursue their own interests. Others are divorcing and must either support themselves for the first time, or increase their earning capacity by advancing their careers. Some of these women are faced with a need for identity apart from the family; some are angry at what they perceive as the reality of an unfulfilled life. Many women see an opportunity for either a new career or career advancement, and the independence either of these may bring. It seems more and more apparent today that middle-aged women are expressing the right to change their minds about what they want out of life. ". . . middle-aged persons find increasing support for their efforts to overstep former boundaries in the search for personal satisfaction." (Hiestand, 1971: 9). Many women are looking to higher education for solutions to these problems and issues.

There is a growing body of literature on older women in undergraduate school (Furness & Graham, 1974; Churgin, 1978; Fitzpatrick, 1976). This literature addresses a variety of issues confronting women returning to school, (e.g., admissions, financial aid, discrimination, adjustment to school, and family relationships). Middle-aged women in graduate school

have, in comparison to undergraduate women, been virtually ignored. A few exceptions include an article by Solmon (1973) on the history of women in doctoral programs at selected schools in the United States, and Feldman's classic, Escape From the Doll's House, written in 1974. Both of these sources deal with the same kinds of issues mentioned for undergraduates, namely, admissions, financial aid and discrimination. In short, in spite of the fact that from 1970 to 1980 there was a fifty per cent increase in the number of women in graduate school, there is still a dearth of information as to the nature of their experiences there.

While there is no single source of information about the number of women of different ages returning to higher education, we can, to a limited extent, begin to piece together the scant information that does exist. In 1970 there were 403,541 women of all ages in graduate school. The number of master's degrees given to women in 1970 was forty per cent of all master's degrees awarded that year. Of the doctoral degrees awarded in 1970, approximately fourteen per cent went to women (Gappa & Uehling, 1978). By 1970 the number of women of all ages in graduate school had increased to 669,220. The comparable figure for men in graduate school in 1970 was 635,291 and by 1980 that figure had increased to 674,853 -- a less than ten per cent increase (Grant & Snyder, 1983). By 1981 half the master's degrees and one-third of the doctorates awarded in this country went to women.

There are fewer women in doctoral programs than in master's degree programs partly because the fields women traditionally enter do not generally require the doctorate (e.g., education, library science, nursing). By 1979, women not only dominated in foreign languages, health, home economics and literature on the master's degree level, but also accounted for more than half the master's degree candidates in fine and applied arts as well as psychology. Men still predominated in business and management, engineering and public affairs (Brown, 1981).

It is of interest to note the age differences between men and women doctoral degree recipients. In the mid 1970's it was reported that:

. . .the percentage of men receiving the (doctorate) degree before the age of 35 is higher than that of women, the proportions for the two sexes are virtually identical for the years from 35 to 39, and the proportion of men who receive the Ph.D. at age 40 and later is lower than for women. (Gilford & Snyder, 1977: 35).

A basic premise in a democratic society is that there should be equality of educational opportunity. There is no reason there should not be a balance between the sexes, with both men and women having an opportunity to succeed in graduate school. This is basic to the liberal democratic tradition of our society.

We have seen that there is an increase in the number of women in higher education, especially graduate school, and there seems to be no reason why the number of such women in graduate school will not continue to increase. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts this will be the case well into the 1990's.

Throughout the 1980's the cost of higher education has continued to increase and there appears to be no likelihood of a reversal. Therefore, higher education, especially graduate school, should be as cost efficient as possible. If the initial investment is not to be considered somewhat wasteful, the majority of students who enter graduate school should be assisted to completion. We do know that women drop out of graduate school more often than men (Havighurst & Levine, 1979). Married women seem to have the highest drop-out rate (Cantor, 1974). Perhaps graduate school is not as cost efficient for women as for men.

To facilitate completion of graduate school, institutions of higher education should know what encourages women to complete their graduate education. Since that information does not really exist in the literature on either higher education or sociology, there is much data that is needed. There are many subjects concerning reentry women in graduate school that would contribute to our scant knowledge about these women in graduate school, including such subjects as motivation for returning, financial aid, family support,

peer relationships, and faculty role models. All of these areas need exploration.

This research focuses on peer relationships during the process of professional socialization. The importance of peers in the process of life-long socialization is a premise in sociology. It is reasonable to assume that peers play a role in the process of professional socialization. This study will look at the subject of peer affiliation because there is reason to believe that peer relationships during the process of professional socialization are related to success in graduate school. But we do not know if women of different ages perceive peers differently. Perhaps women of different ages have differing affiliation needs in graduate school.

#### Professional socialization

Socialization is the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society. As Hurley (1978) indicated, knowledge and skills are learned through interaction.

Professional socialization involves not only the mastery of skills and a body of theory, but also the adoption of values, norms, traditions, and a professional image that is part of that discipline. Skills and learning can be considered primary learning and the values (including the norms, attitudes, and code of ethics) are the attendant learning that one undergoes during the process of professional socialization

(Hamilton, 1954). The process of professional socialization occurs not only on the formal level of classrooms and laboratories, but on an informal one as well. Professional socialization involves interaction not just with the faculty but with other graduate students, especially those in one's own department.

Professional socialization research was more common in the late 1950's and early 1960's (e.g., Gottlieb, 1961; Becker, et al, 1961; Merton, 1957) when fewer women were in graduate school than today. Even today there is not much information in the literature pertaining to women in graduate school.

The process of professional socialization may be different in some aspects for men than for women, for younger students than for middle-aged students. We really do not know that much about the process of professional socialization or the role of peers in this process for women. We do know that one's self-perception as a professional is based, in part, on what one thinks others think of him/her. Thus, the development of a professional identity comes, in part, from what the graduate student perceives relationships to peers in his/her department to be.

There are some leads from developmental or life span literature that suggest the intersection of student status and young adulthood is different from the intersection of student status and middle age. There are concepts from life

span development literature that are important to an understanding of older reentry women in graduate school.

### Middle age

There is reason to believe that the experiences of older women are different from those of younger women. It is even possible that the differences may work to the disadvantage of older women, since older women students are not conforming to the age norms of society while younger women students are. Middle-aged women who are returning to higher education are considered by Neugarten as being off time. These older women are not conforming to what Neugarten refers to as the social clock of society (Neugarten, 1979). It is important to understand the social expectations for middle-aged women, and to do that one must look to developmental or life-span theory.

Developmental or life-span theory can be viewed from at least two basic perspectives: periods of life (stages) and processes (tasks) which may or may not occur at more than one developmental period (Baltes, et al, 1977). There are certain tasks associated with each period. For example, adulthood generally starts about the time one establishes a career. By middle age most married Americans are expected to be ready to launch their own children and be making civic contributions.

Because the developmental tasks of formal education (including graduate school) are traditionally accomplished in early adulthood, an examination of the period and associated tasks of middle age is important to the understanding of the situation of middle-aged reentry women in graduate school.

For women who have followed the typical route from school or college through marriage and child rearing, the questions are . . .: Now what shall I do? Shall I go back to school or to work? How capable am I anyway? . . . What kinds of knowledge and competence have I achieved through the past twenty years of homemaking, child rearing and community activities? Am I still a quick study -- the sharp, perceptive person I was back in college and graduate school days? Or has all that atrophied and gone to pot along with some of my other parts? (Chickering & Havighurst, 1981: 39).

The literature seems to indicate that the story of female development is the story of deviation from the male pattern (Bernhard, 1975).

### Peers

Neither Fisher-Thompson, Bernard and Baruch or other experts on the subject of women have explored the role of peers in the process of professional socialization. This is a focal point of this dissertation. If it is true that women find relationships to be critically important, and if it is true that the more women in a discipline, the more women will enter that discipline, then it becomes important to see what the relationships are between peers during the process of

professional socialization. The relationships between women and other graduate students may be based on a number of possible interactions. There may, for example, be cooperation, competition or exploitation; these are not mutually exclusive categories.

Doctoral students play a strong and often supportive role. . . for one another. . . . They find evaluation by their peers a more helpful gauge of their progress than evaluation by the faculty (Heiss, 1970: 124).

We do not yet know if this applies to older women as well as traditionally-aged graduate students; we do not know what kinds of support, if any, they need; where they get the support, and whether they give similar support to others. An understanding of these issues is germane to understanding the larger issue of the success of women in graduate school. This study is designed to compare the graduate school professional socialization process of younger women to older women, with a particular focus on the role of peers.

#### Purpose of the Study

Among the most pressing items on the agenda for research in adult development is the need to delineate in women's own terms the experience of their adult life (Gilligan, 1982: 173).

Over a decade ago, Kreps summarized the gaps in our knowledge: we need to know the experiences of women in graduate school; we need to know what incentives are needed for women to get doctorates in more disciplines; and we

need to know what the constraints are that prevent this from happening. Once we know the constraints we should be able to alleviate them (Kreps, 1974). More than a decade later we do not have the basic knowledge Kreps said was essential. Further, we lack the most basic information on the graduate school experience for women. This knowledge is essential before issues such as success, retention and attrition can even be addressed.

The purpose of this exploratory dissertation is to define, describe and compare the experiences of middle-aged women graduate students with those of younger women graduate students with reference to the perceived relationship between peers during the process of professional socialization. According to Gurin (1984), there are two kinds of comparisons when looking at the issue of being off time. One can compare subjects with others who are younger or older but for whom the event is more common, or one can compare subjects with agetates who are experiencing the event. Using the cross-sectional method, this study compared women twenty-five years old and younger to women thirty-nine years old and older in terms of how women in these two different age cohorts perceived the role of peers during the process of professional socialization in graduate school. To do so, twelve women in each age cohort were interviewed regarding their perceptions of their own professional socialization, their peers, and the role of these peers during the process of professional socialization.

There is considerable evidence that the relative strength of affiliative needs is linked to sex and to age. Women, especially younger women, are, on the average, more compelled by their needs to form, maintain and protect intimate relationships than are men (Field, et al, 1982: 484).

If differences between women of different ages exist, then the issue becomes whether these differences are of direction or intensity -- the implications are different.

We do not know what role peers play in the process of professional socialization in any detail.

. . .the accumulated evidence on social interaction in adulthood suggests that peers are important agents. . .acting as social models and providing emotional support (Norris, et al, 1984: 359).

If that support is not there, what impact will it have on the process of professional socialization? Does age play a role in how peers are perceived during the process of professional socialization? We have some ideas about the process of becoming a professional in graduate school, but not much is known about the role of others in that process. These are some of the questions this dissertation will address.

### Significance

Given the fifty per cent increase of women in graduate school during the decade from 1970 to 1980 there is every reason to believe that the enrollment of women in graduate school will continue to increase in the future. Despite the

increase in the number of women who are somewhat older than the typical student in graduate school, these women are rarely treated as a distinct group as older reentry women in undergraduate school are. We do not know if these older women in graduate school share the same experiences with younger women in graduate school. We do not know if older undergraduate women share the same experiences as older graduate school women. We do, however, know that the number of older women in graduate school is increasing and that educating them is costly. It seems useful to know more about these women and their experiences not only to fill the gap in the literature in sociology and higher education, but to make graduate school more cost efficient.

(some) returning women students at the graduate level experience more conflict with their husbands, parents, and friends than returning undergraduates (Fisher-Thompson, 1980: 6).

We do not know if this is true of all graduate women, nor do we know why it may be true.

The woman's perspective of graduate school is rarely found in the literature. The following, although old, may not be obsolete at all:

Graduate school has been described as a test of endurance rather than intellect; and it is certainly true that any candidate needs large reserves of self-confidence and determination simply to endure. . . . A chorus of parents, educators, and psychologists have all her life repeated the same tedious litany of inevitable defeat; you can't make it, won't make it, are abnormal

if you want to make it. If she drops out of school no one will condemn her; if she perseveres she will only win the right to begin another battle -- this time a lifelong one -- against academic discrimination (Packer & Waggoner, 1970: 30).

This research will make a contribution to the literature in both sociology and higher education. The data from this study can be used in conjunction with the scant literature on the subject of the perceived role of peers in the process of professional socialization to either create new theories or verify existing theories of human development and/or professional socialization. If, for example, there are no differences between the two age cohorts in this study, perhaps a rethinking of the concept of being off time is in order.

The data developed from this research should begin to provide an understanding of what helps women to succeed in graduate school. For instance, if peer relationships are perceived to be necessary to reentry women, departments may better facilitate the success of graduate women by providing -- formally or informally -- for this type of interaction.

#### Limitations

The study is limited to four selected graduate departments in one public institution of higher education in New England. The conclusions drawn from the data obtained at this University need not be valid for other populations.

The study is limited to white women as it is felt that minority women, with their special characteristics and problems, merit their own study. Thus, the subjects chosen are not representative of all women.

This study will include women who have either interrupted their graduate school education and have returned, or have come into graduate school for the first time. All subjects had completed at least one academic year (two semesters) of graduate study before being interviewed. This study is limited to graduate women in two age cohorts: thirty-nine years old and older and twenty-five years old and younger.

This author served as interviewer for all informants. Every attempt was made to establish rapport, to follow a "script" that structured the interviews, and yet provided flexibility to allow subjects a chance to clarify questions and express issues fully in an open and free manner. Even so, the author's bias was always a concern, and perhaps a limitation of this study.

An open-ended interview often provides an abundance of rich material in the informants own terms, thus justifying its use, but the nature of the interview may not result in perfectly comparable data. The content and scope of the interviews varied somewhat from subject to subject depending on their interests, concerns, and individual insights. Therefore, exploratory descriptive conclusions, rather than statistical inferences, are reported.

## C H A P T E R   I I

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Given the nature of the subject matter of this exploratory study -- the perceived relationships between peers during the process of professional socialization in graduate school -- there are several areas to be reviewed. There will be a discussion of middle age, including a brief review of some contributions of Bernice Neugarten; a discussion of the phase known as middle age, of middle-aged women, and of middle-aged women in higher education will also be included. There will be a review of the literature on the process of professional socialization, particularly in graduate school. Finally, there will be a review of the scant literature dealing with the role of peers in graduate school, including some aspects of student culture.

#### Middle Age

The course of adult development has often been marked by culturally prescribed age-related norms, roles, tasks and expectations -- both implicit and explicit. Contemporary American culture provides some flexibility and/or ambiguity with respect to age related prescriptions. ". . .it would appear that using chronological age as a basis for developmental stages does not adequately account for individual differences." (Notman, 1980: 86). As Sarason and Sarason (1983) pointed out,

there are events which may happen at different ages, but have higher probability of occurring at certain ages. Other events may be only somewhat related to age. Higher education seems to be an event that is generally associated with young adulthood, but can occur in middle age as well.

An understanding of some of the dominant sex and age related themes, conflicts and expectations potentially informs this study of the nature of the experiences of professional training in graduate school for women of different ages.

### Bernice Neugarten

For over thirty years Neugarten has been interested in issues and questions pertaining to the latter half of the life cycle for both sexes. Much of what she had to say about middle age was based on the Kansas City study of adult life. This pioneer study spanned the years from 1956 to 1962.

In the Kansas City study Neugarten has shown that over three-fourths of adults of all ages agree on the general appropriateness of age limits for the performance of a variety of tasks.

Individuals develop a mental map of the life cycle; they anticipate that certain events will occur at certain times; and they internalize a social clock that tells them whether they are on or off time. They also internalize other cultural norms that tell them if their behavior in various areas of life is age-appropriate (Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976: 35).

Her emphasis is less on biological time and more on social and historical time. She maintained that age is not always the

key to understanding what happens to people, it is their situations that are more relevant. For example, it is not being forty years old that leads to psychological change, but it is the fact that one begins to reevaluate the situations because one has been married for so many years, or because the children have left. Neugarten and Datan (1973) provide an understanding of the fact that there is some flexibility in performing the tasks associated with different age grades. They also indicate that we are socialized at different ages to manifest behavior society deems appropriate to each specific age grade. This functional approach to data and theory is appealing because of its utility in understanding the life cycle of women.

She (Neugarten), more than any other theorist, has elaborated the role of functional events and timing in adult development. Her studies place a special emphasis on function events happening 'on time', such as reaching a peak of occupational achievement... retiring from one's principal occupation, losing a spouse. . . . These events are not experienced as crises if they are 'on time'. Loss of loved ones causes grief. . . but when these events occur at times and in ways consistent with the normal expected life course, most persons manage without major upset (Chickering & Havighurst, 1981: 19).

The catch is that, given the fact that many women decide to postpone school or a career while raising children, the timing for many changes discussed in her theory is determined by male career patterns -- putting women at a disadvantage.

Neugarten talked about an age-role identity in addition to the sex-role identity. For instance, there is a time to finish school, to marry, to start a career. If one deviates or is off time there is often the feeling of shame and/or guilt. Indeed, there are even age-sex roles. For example, women are expected by both men and women to marry at an earlier age than men, and they generally do (Troll, 1975). The older one is the more one believes in age appropriate behavior and the more one expects problems with being off time (Neugarten, et al, 1965). Neugarten reminded her readers that being off time is not necessarily bad. She maintained that the timing of life events is becoming less regular in contemporary American culture. Indeed, she believes that we are putting less emphasis on age now than ever before. She believes our society is becoming age irrelevant.

. . .we seem to be moving in the direction of what might be called an age irrelevant society; it can be argued that age, like race or sex, is diminishing in importance as a regulator of behavior (Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976: 52).

It remains to be seen if this applies to the older women in this study.

Based on her studies, she described adulthood as having four different phases, each with its own pattern of personal and social behavior to which people are expected to conform. These periods are: young adulthood, maturity, middle age and old age. She saw progress from period to period along five

dimensions: job related events, events in the family life cycle, changes in health, alterations in psychological attributes and changes in social responsibilities (Neugarten, 1972). She claimed these dimensions are more important than chronological age in the understanding of developmental periods and tasks.

Recently Ellicott (1985) reported on the psychological changes due to the phase of the family life cycle of one hundred twenty-four women ranging in age from thirty to sixty. They were grouped into six categories: those with no children (10%); those with children in elementary school or younger (7%); those with school-aged children with the oldest being no more than thirteen years old (13%); those with the youngest at home being at least thirteen years old and one child gone from home (12%); the launching phase where the children leave the parental home (28%); and the post-parental phase when the last child has left home (30%). The times when women experienced the greatest number of transitions included: when children were pre-school age or in elementary school, the launching phase, and the post-parental phase. In support of Neugarten, Ellicott indicated that change is associated with the phases of the family life cycle not the chronological ages of these women.

From Neugarten we have two interrelated concepts that pertain to middle-aged reentry women in graduate school -- the social clock and being off time. Being off time is

becoming more common and acceptable. Many women are simply not conforming to what has been traditionally expected of them. It is clear that these expectations are in a state of flux.

The age grading of social role allocation is breaking down in our society; we have adults enrolled in school throughout their adult and older years; middle-aged adults may divorce, remarry, and begin a new family; and women are starting career development during middle age. It is unclear just how the age stratification system will evolve in the future (Huyck & Hoyer, 1982: 67).

While it may be too soon to predict exactly what will happen, the trend seems clear -- more flexibility will be the key to each phase of adult life.

### Middle age

Since young adults in graduate school are conforming to society's expectations for them, the focus here will be on middle-aged women in graduate school. Some of these women have gone from college to marriage and motherhood and have postponed professional education and/or a career for five to fifteen years or more. Before discussing reentry women in graduate school, it is first necessary to look at the subject of middle age in general, and then briefly discuss middle-aged women.

Middle age seems fixed more by social than biological characteristics (Brown, 1982). It is really a time when, for most, child rearing is no longer a major responsibility, but retirement is still far away. Traditionally middle age is a

time when employed people reach their peak of productivity. It is a time of increased civic and social responsibility; a time to teach teen-aged children to be responsible and independent. It is a time when some undergo role reversals and become the 'parents' to their own parents -- sometimes one's own parents need care, financial help, or aid making major decisions. In addition to these social traits, there are psychological changes as well such as the acknowledgement that death is inevitable, and increased introspection (Lidz, 1980).

For some, middle age is a continuation of the previous life style with few changes, but for others there may be shifts in careers, social groups, roles and marital status. For a few, middle age will involve a total reorganization of commitments (Schuster & Ashburn, 1980). Perhaps Brandt (1984) put it best when he summed up middle age as being the time for readjusting expectations if one wants to make a smooth transition to old age.

#### Middle-aged women

Giele (1982) maintained that women at mid-life are more concerned with relationships and agreed with Gould (1978) that a central issue for women is to give themselves permission to try new roles. A study by Lowenthal et al (1975) of males and females at four transition points of life, indicated that middle-aged women had more problems (e.g., family, career) than women at other periods of life, or men at any period of

life. If this is true, then being middle-aged is a difficult time for women. It may be true, however, that many of the problems linked with middle-aged women are no longer regarded by these women as problems. For example, the "empty nest syndrome" where women are supposed to feel a great loss when children leave the "nest" may, for many women, be a relief; it presents an opportunity for them to do new things. As Notman (1980) indicated, further research about women's adult development in a variety of life circumstances is needed for there is so much we do not know.

Women in middle age may perhaps develop new perspectives and/or relationships. Many seem to have found this time period to have been a time of restructuring and redefinition. Two issues suggested by Lugo (1975) that arise during this time of self-discovery include appropriate roles (parent, spouse, child) and career plans.

During her forties, because of the changing roles vis-a-vis her husband, children, and parents, a woman may go through an identity crisis.

. . .people at middle age must redefine their identity just as they did at adolescence. . .both ages involve answering the important questions, 'Who am I? Where am I going? What is life about?' . . .the middle-aged, like adolescents, face an identity crisis (Rogers, 1979: 123).

Thus, according to the literature, middle age is a time of restructuring and redefinition for most women in our society.

### Middle-aged women in higher education

Many middle-aged women begin asking themselves basic questions about who they are and what they want to be. Key issues include questions such as: What do I do now? How do I do it? One response is to obtain an advanced degree in order to advance in one's career, to update skills, or to embark upon a new career. So many women are (re)entering graduate school that the majority of women in graduate school are over thirty years old (Havighurst & Levine, 1979).

Once the decision to return to graduate school is made, a woman must then decide on the type of advanced degree she wants to obtain. Many women in graduate school obtain terminal master's degree partly because ". . . women tend to aspire at a lower level than men. . ." (Freeman, 1979: 230). It should be noted that many fields women enter (e.g., nursing, education, library science) generally require no more than a master's degree. There is also the possibility that men might fear competition from women, and thus, women are not always encouraged to obtain a doctorate.

Autonomy, competence and self-esteem are three developmental tasks of college (Barnett & Baruch, 1978). Older women have generally not been socialized to manifest these traits in abundance and it is hard to undo all that socialization. There are tasks in graduate school for older women over and above those for younger women in either undergraduate or graduate school. These include the acceptance of individuals

of any age as authority figures (sometimes faculty members may be younger than their students), and the acceptance of younger people as peers (Eckhard, 1977).

Not only do older women have extra tasks to accomplish in graduate school, but there are often problems external to the academic environment which impinge upon them. In a study of marital disruption among professional women Houseknecht et al (1984) concluded that most women do not enroll in graduate school in response to marital problems but problems happen before they graduate. When studying the psychological problems of women reentering education, Brennan and Towns (1980) found that graduate women reported increased conflicts with their husbands and parents; they also felt alienated from friends. This conclusion was based on an analysis of questionnaires completed by five hundred fifty women over the age of twenty-five at three different institutions of higher education.

We do know that the older married students in school face changes in their home lives. Douvan (1981) indicated that some of these women are searching for independence and self-definition. This often leads to role overload for women, which results in feelings of guilt. Thus, "one category of student less likely to complete graduate work at the doctoral level is the returning 'older' woman who has children." (Cantor, 1974: 66). This is confirmed by Havighurst and Levine (1979),

who pointed out that the attrition rate for women in graduate school is higher than for men.

For reentry women in higher education, in addition to the developmental tasks of autonomy, competence and self-esteem, there are the tasks of accepting individuals of any age as authority figures and the acceptance of younger people as peers. Further, there are also problems external to the academic environment (e.g., family, friends), especially for married women.

### Professional Socialization

Before looking at the concept of professional socialization it is best, not only to briefly consider the broader concept of socialization, but also to briefly consider the concept of professions.

#### Socialization

Socialization is the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society. It is important to note that socialization is viewed as a two-way process between the socializer and the socializee (Hurley, 1978).

Socialization is a life-long process of adaptation to society. It is not only true that boys and girls are socialized differently as children, but that men and women are socialized differently (Birren, 1981; Levinson, 1978; Rubin, 1979). Havighurst (1979) and Neugarten (1968) expounded

on the concepts of developmental theory which maintains that each age group, from childhood to old age, has different developmental tasks to master in the life-long process of socialization, and these tasks vary by sex.

Socialization is fostered by the stressing of similarities within groups. The group provides chances to rehearse future roles (anticipatory socialization). The learning of roles depends, in part, on the effectiveness of both external and internal sanctions -- rewards and punishments (Hurley, 1979).

### Professions

Involved in any definition of a profession is not just a body of information or skills, but a commitment to a calling, no matter how that is defined (Moore, 1970). Extrapolating further, Lidz (1980) noted that people's occupations do influence whom they interact with, the goals they pursue, the roles they fill, and their ethical standards. The theoretical base of a profession is often esoteric and generally takes a long time to learn (Jackson, 1970). The training process has changed over the years.

Traditionally, the basic method of professional education was the apprenticeship method, that is 'learning by doing', or 'on the job training',. . . Subsequently examinations were introduced as a test of professional competence. . . The realization that such tests. . .were an inadequate assessment of the amount of theory which the member had acquired, has led occupational groups to recognize the importance of a full-time educational

process. The typical pattern of education and training for a profession today, is thus one in which the required body of systematic theory is obtained by individuals in a formal academic environment (Harries-Jenkins, 1970: 74).

In addition to providing for the transmission of skills, each profession has its own domain, which it tries to protect from encroachment from those outside of the discipline. Further, to keep outsiders out, each profession tries to maintain a means of monitoring and regulating itself (Lum, 1978).

Since professionals share norms and attitudes there is a tendency, within each discipline, towards homogeneity. Each profession has a characteristic model of the appropriate career lines to be followed. Each profession has its own timetable for advancement.

### Professional socialization

Professional socialization refers to the process through which a person learns the characteristic knowledge, skills and values (including norms) of a particular profession. These skills include the creative (e.g., writing), or technical (e.g., computational). "Professional socialization, however, is not a totally homogenizing process whereby students blindly accept all dominant ideologies." (Leserman, 1981: 191).

While a student is learning primary aspects of professional socialization (s)he is also learning a technical language,

a code of ethics, and a set of norms that reflect the values of that academic discipline. The professional acquires his/her social identity during this process. (S)he is learning from both the faculty and fellow graduate students.

The norms of a professional group are the guides to behavior in social situations. There is a range of appropriate behavior for seeking admittance into the profession. There is a proper way to interact with superiors, peers, and even subordinates. These are all part of the value and attitudinal systems that are more informally learned than are the skills and theory of a discipline.

It is the values that just may be the most important of the three to be mastered by graduate students during the process of professional socialization. As Merton indicated, people who train future colleagues and successors are not solely interested in turning out competent professionals; they also want their trainees to develop an identity with that profession and to think act, and feel as a member of the profession (Merton, 1957). One basic issue upon which the granting of a degree is based seems to be: is (s)he one of us? That implies that a shared value system may be more important than theoretical knowledge or the possession of technical skills. It is probably the knowledge that this may be the case that makes graduate student life so stressful. One can be tested to see if one has mastered a body of theory and possesses the right skills, but it is hard to objectively test for shared values. It can be even harder for many

students to simply discern what these values might be. Nonetheless, all three -- knowledge, skills and values -- are obligatory if one is to reach the end of the process of professional socialization.

### The process of professional socialization in graduate school

As Katz (1976) noted in his general description of the process of professional socialization, first year students encounter an edifice of theory, skills and information that seems almost impossible to master. They buckle down to long hours of work and exertion. Once this first task of assimilation is accomplished a student begins to develop a sense that the work is not all that unmanageable. Students begin to think like professionals. By the second year, many feel more secure.

There seems to be little difference between work and play. There may be relaxing during the day in a departmental lounge or hangout. Late at night, after long sessions of generally solitary labor, some graduate students may meet socially. It is an informal setting with the discussion probably still focused on the discipline. The development of a professional identity begins after the first two years of the graduate experience.

Socialization that takes place during the formal years of education plays an important part in the development of a professional self-identity. However, students progress at different rates through the program. . . . Thus, while students in general assimilate a central core of values emphasized by the

faculty and the profession, within a collection of graduate students there can be found wide divergence in types of professional role assimilation, varying degrees of self-awareness, a difference in professional behavior and knowledge (Lum, 1978: 154).

As Bucher and Stelling (1977) indicated, the process of professional socialization is often planned, but the trainees do manage to have some impact on their experiences. For example, students often discount criticism from faculty and peers when they feel it does not apply (Bucher & Stelling, 1977).

Oleson and Whittaker summed the process of professional socialization up well, if sarcastically, when they said:

Once the education system has formally started work on the student, his empty head is filled with values, behaviors, and viewpoints of the profession, the knowledge being perfect and complete by the time of graduation (Oleson & Whittaker, 1968: 5).

#### Professional socialization for women in graduate school

The process of professional socialization that occurs during graduate school helps set women's self-identity and perceptions of themselves as professionals. "Women in the university system are women in a male world. Therefore, these women sometimes feel out of place and self-conscious about being women." (Pottker, 1977: 402)

Whatever the motivating and facilitating factors might be in the decision to seek a professional career, it is not until entrance into the graduate or professional training school that the first important step in a person's commitment to a profession

takes place. Here again, an important difference occurs between males and females. For females the establishment of a new self-identity takes place at two levels instead of one - internalization of the occupational role and identification with a specific profession. The male's concern is with the latter only (Grose, 1971: 20).

It must be remembered that in many different ways, men have been expected and encouraged to go on with their advanced education and have little problem picturing themselves in professional roles (Freeman, 1979).

There are several options available to women in graduate school:

Women can develop a counterculture and form their own system. . . .women can join the enemy camp or emulate the male. . . .women can 'live on the fence' and be marginal persons, attempt to strike out to find and retain an identity in a profession or a field and at the same time continue to work. . . to form coalitions (McCune, 1974: 61).

Not all women take the same option, but at least there are options.

### Graduate departments

Graduate school is the setting for professional socialization for almost all academic disciplines. One of the main functions of graduate and professional schools is to identify and screen out individuals who are prospective deviants from the professional culture (Greenwood, 1966). The experience from the graduate student's perspective is that life is ephemeral and uncertain.

Most students have a sense of transitional identity as graduate students. Many view their graduate experience as a 'rite of passage' -- that is, an ordeal that weeds out those unable to master special skills and knowledge, tolerate discipline, and persist despite distress (Lozoff, 1976: 143).

It is the graduate departments that one must turn to for an examination of the role of peers in the process of professional socialization. For example, some departments structure graduate school life so that whom the students interact with is almost predetermined. Bucher and Stelling describe a biochemistry department's treatment of its graduate students:

The program was organized so that students spent the first twelve to eighteen months getting through courses and examinations. As they completed these requirements, they gradually became involved in laboratory work and began working on their own research. They were encouraged to spend all their time in the department, and when not in class, they were generally to be found in their advisors' laboratories. Because they were taking many of the same courses, and spending much of their time in class, the peer group during the first year was a cohort group. Subsequent to that, as the students began to work on research, their primary peer contacts were with students in the same or adjacent laboratories, and their peer relationships consequently included students from other cohorts (Bucher & Stelling, 1977: 263).

Becker and Carper, in their study of the development of a professional identity in three graduate departments (philosophy, physiology, and mechanical engineering) confirmed the importance of student to student interaction in the development of a professional identity. They noted that students spend a great

deal of time talking to each other about the value of their disciplines and how they will perform once they graduate (Becker & Carper, 1956). In a more recent study, at a large state university, Holahan looked at three types of graduate departments: those with fewer than thirty per cent of their student bodies being female (minority), those with over fifty per cent of their student bodies being female (majority), and those departments with between thirty and fifty per cent of their student bodies being female (egalitarian). Holahan sent questionnaires to women in each type of department and received useful responses from eight-six women in minority departments, one hundred seventy-seven responses from women in egalitarian departments and one hundred fourteen women responded from majority departments. The questionnaire was designed to assess the areas of emotional stress and the need for support. These women claimed that the supportive climate provided by the department was the key to understanding stress experienced in graduate school. It was also found that the lack of time and one's marital status was related to stress (Holahan, 1976).

### Faculty

Two major categories of significant others in the process of professional socialization in graduate school are the faculty and fellow students (peers). Not only does the faculty influence peer interaction (e.g., by assigning people to the same laboratory), but the faculty is of great importance for a variety of other reasons. They control the process of

certification for competency. They can prevent a student from getting through school, or can make his/her passage through school difficult. On the other hand, as Mechanic (1982) pointed out, the faculty can provide support and prevent anxiety by providing information, approaches, and methods for organizing materials, and by giving reassurance.

The position of the graduate student is one of great tension. Unless a member of the graduate faculty is willing to take him on, his chances for survival in the graduate ordeal are poor. . . . If the student is promising, several faculty members may want him, and he may, as a result, be caught in a cross-fire. Sniping aimed at his mentor may be deflected toward him (Bernard, 1964: 140).

Thus, the student may have to walk a fine line in his/her relationships with the faculty.

As Hartnett (1976) indicated, students do not necessarily want the faculty to treat them as equals, but they do not wish to be treated as adolescents either. Students do not feel that they should treat the faculty with reverence. The exact nature of the relationship between faculty and student varies over time.

The expertise that separates student and teacher is one of degree rather than kind. The student, by virtue of being taught, comes closer to, and may even become, the teacher's equal in expertise. As the student acquires the knowledge that the teacher imparts, his student status is less and less a subordinate status, and on the graduate level of education the lines between student and teacher may become blurred to the point where the two are working together in essentially collegial rather than hierarchical fashion (Fowlkes, 1977: 22).

While this may be the ideal, the reality is that generally students and faculty are unequal. Many times faculty members are destructive because they treat their students as inferiors. As a result, many graduate students often feel exploited by their professors. In 1983 Kleinman published the results of interviewing twenty-one male and female first year graduate students in sociology about their concerns. It is Kleinman's conclusion that students felt that if they were found interacting with other students by the faculty it would be interpreted as an inability to work alone. Doing a thesis or dissertation is a rather private project done outside of the peer context. Students in Kleinman's study seemed to fear that peer interaction would indicate to the faculty that they were incapable of working alone and doing a thesis or dissertation.

Faculty as role models. If the biochemistry department, described by Bucher and Stelling, is at all representative of graduate students in general, it would appear that few students concentrate on just one faculty member as a role model. Bucher and Stelling also pointed out the importance of negative role models who embody traits that one tries to avoid. They see the negative role model as a useful concept since it delineates what is unacceptable to the trainee (Bucher & Stelling, 1977).

Many women students have lower aspiration levels and less self-confidence than men with equal talent; it would

seem reasonable to assume that women professionals would make exceptional role models and serve as an inspiration. Gilbert (1985) studied the importance of the sex of the faculty role models on students' self-perceptions. This study involved thirty-three women and twenty-four men graduate students in a psychology department. One conclusion of this study was that women role models may give women students more support and encouragement than they get from others.

Women role models could also provide practical tips in such areas as self-assertiveness and socially acceptable ways to handle social problems in research situations. They could also be advocates for women students and help them establish networks.

Though it is by no means essential that role models for women students be female. . .all factors being equal, women role models are more effective than men (Dresselhaus, 1984: 129).

Dresselhaus elaborated further on the role of women professors as role models by pointing out that women students often seek out professional women not only for career counseling, but for advice on how to combine their professional lives with marriage and a family. When there are more women faculty role models, newly entering women graduate students will start with a better understanding of the nature of the commitment they are making (Rees, 1974). Gilbert et al (1983) noted, on the basis of a study of the importance of the sex of the faculty role model on students' self-concepts, that women students with female role models reported higher satisfaction with their

student role than did men or women students with a male role model.

It is certainly true that the 1980's has seen an increase in the number of women on faculties in colleges and universities in the United States; however, it is too soon to find a discussion in the literature on the impact, if any, these women are having on women graduate students.

The process of professional socialization in graduate school involves not only the learning of skills and knowledge, but, equally as important, absorbing the values, norms and attitudes of a discipline. The process of professional socialization in graduate school seems to be different for men and women. Since students spend most of their time within their own department, the supportive climate of a graduate department seems to be important during the process of professional socialization. The faculty influences the process of professional socialization in a variety of ways (e.g., in direct interaction with students, and by controlling the peer interaction of students).

### Peers

While the role of the faculty, especially one's advisor, is important, this research focuses on the more informal socialization involving one's peers; for "the basis of role identity is in the group." (Carlton, 1978: 119).

For the purpose of this dissertation, the word peers is defined as being synonymous with fellow students in one's department. The role of peers seems to be of importance in almost every academic discipline.

A student's most important teacher is another student. . . .relationships with close friends and peer groups or subgroups, are primary forces influencing student development (Chickering, 1969: 253).

One reason it may be hard to make generalizations about graduate students is because there is probably no typical graduate student. They are of different ages, marital statuses, educational backgrounds, economic statuses, and have different employment backgrounds. As Sharp (1966) suggested, the "deviant" student is probably the norm.

Rosen and Bates (1967) noted that the entering graduate student is faced with two interrelated roles, each of which involves relationships with other members of the socialization system. A student must not only prove his/her competency to be certified as a specialist in a particular field, but (s)he must also learn to be a student.

There is a recent study of women in industry done by Kram and Isabella (1985). This was a study to learn if peer relationships supported psycho-social development and/or career development. Three groups of women aged twenty-five to thirty-five, thirty-six to forty-five and forty-six to sixty-five were randomly chosen. Since only five women in each group were interviewed, there were only fifteen in the entire

sample. One result of the interviews was that these women felt peers were important for career development because they provided job information. These women claimed that peers do support a sense of competence. Peers, according to this study, were important at each stage of professional growth, with some peers serving as mentors.

Initial levels of anxiety can be abated as individuals are exposed to those who have successfully weathered a particular experience. Feedback from supportive peers can reduce feelings of self-recrimination and boost self-esteem. Peers can also provide problem solving strategies (Norris, 1984). While the literature mentions the importance of peers, one rarely finds either descriptions or analyses of the nature of the relationships between peers. One exception is the study of women doctoral students by Hite (1985). In this study, male and female doctoral students, aged twenty-one to forty, in different departments were compared to see if they perceived experiences differently, even though they were in the same classes, worked together, and shared the same advisor. The result was that the sexes did feel they had different experiences.

Female graduate students experience stress and lack of motivation to continue their studies because of the lack of encouragement from male peers and faculty members, and because of perceived negative attitudes of men towards women in graduate school (Hite, 1985: 19).

Another interesting conclusion Hite drew was that, even in 1985, male students had stereotyped expectations of female peers and saw them as less competent.

It is most likely that interaction will occur more often between students within a department than between students of two different departments. Graduate students in a department interact with each other in a variety of ways. Companionship, for example, is a personal choice. In contrast, association might result from a faculty member requiring graduate students to work together (Becker, et al, 1961).

### Sex

When discussing peers several factors must be taken into consideration. In a recent study by Rose (1986) of same and cross-sex friendships, it was reported by both men and women that cross-sex friendships provided less help than same sex relationships. This was based on a study of thirty single graduate students aged twenty-two to twenty-eight and thirty married graduate students aged twenty-two to twenty-eight; half were men and all were white. Women in Rose's study preferred same sex friends because they mistrusted men's motives for establishing friendships. Not only is one's sex important in peer relationships, it is important within one's department. For instance, women often find a void in graduate school which makes them feel invisible.

Jo Freeman coined the term 'null environment' to describe the graduate experience for women in the fifties and early sixties. She means that there is no support, no encouragement, none of the ordinary systems for helping oneself as a future scholar, . . . (Tobias, 1974: 69).

### Marital status

Another factor to be considered is marital status. For many married women, the transition from home to graduate school is a major life change. They are either adding a new status, or they are replacing one status with another -- a more drastic step. In either event, the transition is obviously important.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of the reentry woman is that she is in the process of a personal, situational and social transition. She is typically moving from a traditional non-career, family orientation, which she has followed for several years, toward a professional orientation (Lantz, 1980: 5).

Lantz is referring to married women only. Married women have the most demands placed on them and generally feel guilt and confusion when roles collide. Married women are under great pressure to drop out of school, and, if they stay, are less involved in anticipatory socialization. Marriage for most women tends to increase the conflict with professional life (Adler, 1976). In a comparative study done by Erdwins and Mellinger, two groups of women aged twenty-nine to thirty-nine, and forty to fifty-five were divided into four status categories: homemaker, marriage/career woman, single/career woman, and reentry student. There was a total of one hundred sixty women surveyed in this study. Erdwins and Mellinger concluded that there were no significant differences due to age or family situation. Surprisingly, differences between groups were

rare and included such minor items as students feeling they had less control over their destiny than other women (Erdwins & Mellinger, 1984).

### Age

In 1982, Erdwins et al published results of a survey on the affiliative needs of young adults and middle-aged women. Twenty were single eighteen to twenty-two year olds at a state university in Virginia, twenty were aged forty to fifty-five, married and reentry students at the same school, and twenty were housewives aged forty to fifty-five. According to these researchers, both groups of older women showed more independence than younger women; older students did better academically than younger students; older students had fewer affiliation needs than the older housewives. The desire to excel is stronger in both groups of older women, while older housewives had the greatest need for affiliation. Affiliation and achievement needs were weaker for younger women. It will be of interest to compare the results of this study to the survey of twenty-four women in this dissertation.

Another study that compared women on the basis of age was done by Goldman et al (1981). This was a study of the continuities and discontinuities in friendships of ninety women who were divided into six age groups ranging from age twelve to over sixty-five. This study showed that long standing friendships were important to women in their twenties as well as to women over forty-five. The result of this study is different from that of Erdwins, et al (1982).

Ryff and Migdal's study (1984) tends to support that done by Goldman et al. In the Ryff and Migdal study fifty women aged eighteen to thirty were compared to fifty women aged forty to fifty-five. The younger women were undergraduates and the older women were graduate students. These women responded to questionnaires about intimacy and affiliation. Intimacy, according to these authors, included not just affiliation but interpersonal affect as well. This 1984 study indicated that intimacy seemed to be more important to younger women, while breadth of interest, dominance and innovation were more important to the middle-aged women.

#### Student interaction

After admission, some women maintained that in the midst of a crowd of fellow graduate students they experienced loneliness and discomfort, especially the first year. Women -- single, married, divorced or separated -- are less likely than men to see their fellow students socially (Feldman, 1974).

Sometimes the first year of graduate school revives the distress students felt the first year of undergraduate school. There is a tendency to see other students as better qualified, brighter. . .there is the trauma of adapting to a new community and finding new friends for security, nurturance, and pleasure (Lozoff, 1976: 144).

Loneliness seems to vary with age and department. The general complaint, however, seems to be that there is not enough time to meet students in other departments and, as a result, many students have few or no relationships outside of their own

departments. Indeed, the further students proceed in a given discipline the harder it seems to be to establish meaningful relationships with someone outside of the department (Hartnett, 1976).

It has been suggested that graduate student socialization is related to the degree to which one's work associations are with colleagues rather than outsiders, and the extent to which one interacts socially with the students in one's department (Weiss, 1981: 15).

Within departments, as Lozoff (1976) pointed out, students often establish meaningful relationships with fellow students of the same or opposite sex who have similar interests. These people often help each other with problems and share relaxation time together as well. Students who see each other informally often help one another in the learning process. Kleinman (1983) published a study which claimed that male and female first year graduate students in sociology felt that discussing intellectual problems with peers indicated a weakness and an inability to work alone. Students in her study felt that time spent with peers was not work time; they saw peer interaction in personal not professional terms. This was the only instance uncovered in the literature that indicated students felt peer interaction on a professional level was not desirable.

### Student culture

Students turn to other students for a variety of reasons during the process of professional socialization.

. . .in a situation where the requirements of an adequate response are vague, or at best uncertain, individuals are likely to view their progress in terms of those around them (their peers). The attitudes they develop concerning what constitutes successful adaptation are dependent on how they perceive their adaptive potentialities as compared with others in similar situations. Since a social comparison is essential in evaluating one's progress, the individual's preparation is influenced by what he perceives others to be doing and by the progress they are making (Mechanic, 1962: 82).

In a study done by Rimmer et al (1982), graduate students responded to a questionnaire about their needs. Forty-six were female, thirty-six were male; sixty-three were white, nineteen were non-white; fifty-eight were unmarried and twenty-four were married; sixty-eight had no children. The mean age of this group was 27.79 years. These students listed thirty-one needs, ranging from the most important -- departmental workshops for career planning and placement -- to number thirty-one -- child care. The other five major needs included: a place to obtain information on graduate social activities, workshops on professional development, orientation programs, and the need for a graduate student newsletter. It is clear that peers were important to this sample of graduate students at Miami University. Not surprisingly, single graduate students saw a need for more social events.

. . .these students expressed definite needs for increasing and improving social interaction with peers. They perceived a central location and a newsletter as the best way to provide them with activity and an opportunity for information (Rimmer, et al, 1982: 191).

Student culture has been created to help students blend their world with that of their profession and the institution they find themselves in.

Graduate student organizations can provide an ideal mechanism for students to develop the interpersonal and professional skills which contribute to their sense of collegueship and apprenticeship (Sells, 1975: 18).

As Oleson and Whittaker (1968) pointed out, student culture aids students in getting through school with the least effort. Student culture has its own communication network which mixes gossip with information. According to Mechanic (1962), this communication structure is invaluable during the examination process. In addition, those further along in a department's program often help socialize newly recruited graduate students.

. . .the less advanced students derive both cognitive and affective cues from those farther along in training. . . One of the ways in which nominal peers are influential in socialization as significant others is that those who are more advanced and exemplify the norms, and thus are accorded respect as well as liking or affection. . . .it is the expectation of significant others that induces compliance. . . (Moore, 1970: 76).

In sum, peers seem to reduce the initial levels of anxiety in neophytes because they prove that one can successfully weather the process of professional socialization in graduate school. They provide feedback and support for each other; they bolster self-esteem, and they provide problem solving strategies to aid individuals to adjust to this particular life event (Gottlieb, 1983). The relationship between peers seems to be limited to a student's department. The further along the

student proceeds in the process of professional socialization the more narrow is her/his focus in terms of peer interaction. Peers can work together or compete or both, it depends on the academic environment and the individual.

The purpose of this review of the literature was to provide background information for the interviews. It would not be feasible to compare each of the statements made in this chapter to the responses of each subject interviewed.

## C H A P T E R   I I I

### METHODOLOGY

This study explored the perceived relationships between women in graduate school and their fellow students during the process of professional socialization. A total of twenty-four women from four selected departments were interviewed; half of these women were thirty-nine years old or older and half were twenty-five years old or younger. Each woman participated in an open-ended interview in which she described her experiences as a graduate student with respect to professional socialization, peers and the relationship between peers and the process of professional socialization.

#### Subjects

Twelve women graduate students thirty-nine years old or older, who had been back in school at least a year, were randomly chosen as subjects. The names of students in the "older" age cohort in each department were put into a hat and three names were chosen. Each of these women was contacted and if one was unable to participate in the study another name was chosen. Since there were not enough women aged forty or older, the names of women aged thirty-nine were added to the selection process. There are three subjects thirty-nine years old, but all other students in the older category were forty years old or older. The same procedure of putting names into a hat and removing them one at a time was used to obtain

three students in each of the four departments who were twenty-five years old or younger.

The four departments, at a large public university in New England, included three disciplines in social science and one in the humanities. These departments were chosen because each had significant numbers of women graduate students in both age categories from which to draw an adequate sample.

On further examination, all the departments selected had an interesting contrast between the sex ratio of the faculty and that of the graduate students. All these departments had an overwhelmingly male faculty, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE FACULTY MEMBERS AND THE PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE FACULTY MEMBERS IN DEPARTMENTS A, B, C, D

Department	Male	Female	Percentage Female
A	27	6	18
B	40	10	20
C	62	8	11
D	17	6	26

The two departments with the highest proportion of women faculty members (including the adjunct staff) were departments D and B. In contrast, all four departments had more women than men graduate students, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2

NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS AND THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS IN DEPARTMENTS A, B, C, D

Department	Male	Female	Percentage Female
A	14	26	65
B	38	59	61
C	65	118	65
D	26	50	66

The number of women twenty-five years old and under, twenty-six to thirty-eight and those over thirty-nine in each of the departments is presented to Table 3.

Table 3

NUMBER OF WOMEN AGED TWENTY-FIVE AND UNDER, TWENTY-SIX TO THIRTY-EIGHT AND THIRTY-NINE AND OLDER

Department	25 & under	26-38	39 & older	Total
A	6	14	6	26
B	16	39	4	59
C	19	93	6	118
D	8	31	11	50
Total	49	177	27	

The marital status of these twenty-four women varied, ranging from never married to married to divorced, with or without children. Only three of the women twenty-five years old or younger were married and only one of these three women had a child. Only three of the older women had never married; eight of the older women had children. Only one of the older

married women was childless. Two of the older women were remarried, one was a widow and three were divorced. All of the children of these older women were, with one exception, at least eleven years old, and most of them were adults.

All of the older women and eight of the younger women were doctoral students. Three of the younger women (in department C) were M.F.A. students, and one younger woman was not sure if she would stop at the master's degree level or continue on for her doctorate (see Table 4).

All the subjects chosen claimed to be full-time students. Many older women were not taking classes, but were writing their dissertations; all but two of the younger women were still taking courses.

### Instruments

Two instruments, an open-ended interview protocol (see Appendix A) and a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) were used. The demographic questionnaire provided needed background information on the subjects (e.g., marital status, number of children and their ages, degree sought, major, current employment). All of the items on the demographic questionnaire were closed questions.

The personal interview had the advantage of combining some structure and standardization with the flexibility of open-ended questions (Fowlkes, 1977). Because early professional career development in graduate school is not a well known area, it was decided not to predetermine the form

Table 4

MARITAL STATUS, NUMBER OF CHILDREN, AGES OF CHILDREN AND DEGREE SOUGHT FOR EACH SUBJECT

Subject	Dept.	Marital Status	Number of Children	Age of Children	Degree Sought	
Older Cohort	TX	B	S	0	-	Ph.D.
	MN	B	S	0	-	Ph.D.
	MB	B	Widow	1	11	Ph.D.
	NL	D	Remar.	3	26, 24, 23	Ph.D.
	EL	D	M	0	-	Ph.D.
	NC	D	M	2	24, 21	Ph.D.
	BE	A	Remar.	4	32, 30, 26, 23	Ph.D.
	KL	A	Div.	5	30, 29, 28, 26, 23	Ph.D.
	TS	A	S	0	-	Ph.D.
	FD	C	M	1	1 month	Ph.D.
	DI	C	Div.	1	15	Ph.D.
	BS	C	Div.	1	19	Ph.D.
Younger Cohort	LI	B	S	0	-	Ph.D.
	FQ	B	S	0	-	Ph.D.
	ET	B	S	0	-	Ph.D.
	KX	D	S	0	-	Ph.D.
	TQ	D	M	0	-	Ph.D.
	DU	D	S	0	-	Ph.D.
	CR	A	M	0	-	Ph.D.
	KC	A	S	0	-	Ph.D.?
	TT	A	S	0	-	Ph.D.
	BB	C	S	0	-	M.F.A.
	UB	C	S	0	-	M.F.A.
	BL	C	M	1	1	M.F.A.

of the responses through a forced-choice questionnaire or some other method that would limit both the option and focus of response. As Churniss said,

. . .the pursuit of knowledge should ideally be a developmental process in which descriptive research with the goal of discovery precedes the testing of correlational and cause and effect hypotheses (Churniss, 1980: 269).

Another reason for using personal interviews was the basic interest in the process of how one becomes a professional. Rather than selecting responses which divide up large parts of the subject's personal experience, the personal interview attempts to approach the entirety of that experience.

The interview was divided into six sections. The introduction provided each subject with background information about the research being conducted, and was used to establish rapport with the subjects. In the second section, a few general questions were asked about, for example, the subject's choice of a particular field of study, why she was returning to higher education at this time, and what it was like to be a graduate student in her field at this time. The third section dealt with the perceived norms and values of that discipline, and what it meant to be a professional in that field. The fourth section dealt with the perceived importance of interacting with other students, the nature of the relationships with peers in their departments and the incidence, if any, of the issue of discrimination due to age and/or sex. The fifth section of the interview covered the issue of the relationship of

peers to the process of professional socialization, including specific instances of cooperation and competition and the feelings they had regarding group solidarity. The last section of the interview provided each subject with the opportunity to make additions or changes to what she had said regarding such issues as the interpersonal climate in the department, and the values, norms, traditions of each department. There was also an opportunity for each subject to comment on her feelings regarding the process of professional socialization and the role of peers in that process, as well as anything else she wanted to add before the interview ended.

#### Pilot study

Pilot studies were conducted to determine the utility of the interview protocol. Based upon the pilot studies, revisions in the interviewing methodology were made. There were four pilot subjects -- two older and two younger -- for each of three cycles of interviews. The pilot interviews followed the same sequence as the interviews previously described. The subjects for the pilot study came from the School of Education. It was easier locating women over forty than under twenty-five. The few women twenty-five and under located in the School of Education were used in the first two pilot studies. By the third pilot study the two younger women were older than twenty-five -- both were twenty-seven years old. The entire approach and about half the questions were altered between the first and second pilot studies while the third,

and last, pilot study was merely a refinement and fine-tuning of what had become the final interview protocol. By the third pilot study, it was clear that the statements obtained from students were insightful and reflected concerns regarding the issues under study.

### Procedures

Once permission to carry out the study at the University was granted, registration records of the graduate departments were obtained in order to identify students from the selected departments.

#### Contacting the subjects

A letter was sent to each woman in the four selected graduate departments. The letter explained the nature of the dissertation and requested volunteers, if the student was either twenty-five years old or younger or forty years old or older (see Appendix C). There were only four volunteers, and this method proved to be unsatisfactory. The ages of the women in each of these departments was then obtained. Names of appropriate prospective subjects were randomly selected from the appropriate departmental list and each prospective subject was contacted by telephone. After a brief description of the nature of the study, it was ascertained if the prospective subject was suitable for, and willing to participate in, the study. If the prospective subject agreed to take part in a tape recorded interview, an appointment was then arranged, and a follow-up letter was sent to each prospective subject (see

Appendix D). Included in this letter was an explanation of the project as well as assurances of confidentiality and a reminder as to the time and place of the interview. A brief demographic questionnaire, which was to be returned at the time of the interview, was also enclosed.

### Conducting the interviews

The twenty-four interviews were conducted within a two month time frame. The shortest interview lasted fifty minutes and the longest took two hours and twenty minutes. Each interview followed a prescribed sequence. There was an introductory explanation of the study, reaffirmation of confidentiality, and an attempt to establish rapport. Assurance was given that the subjects interviewed would have access to the findings of the study. There was also an explanation of the informed consent form each subject signed before the interview began (see Appendix E).

All interviews were tape recorded with the consent of the subjects. No one expressed concern about being tape recorded. Subjects were allowed to turn off the tape recorder at any point in the interview if they objected to the taping of what was being said, but that never happened.

### Data Analysis

The primary goal is a theoretical understanding that 'makes sense' and can be supported by the data without any claim that it is the only or even the best possible interpretation (although the best possible interpretation is the ideal. . .) (Churniss, 1980: 279).

The first step was to tabulate the information obtained from the demographic questionnaires. Similarities and differences between the two groups were noted.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Each interview yielded about eighteen pages of double-spaced typed copy totaling approximately four hundred pages of transcribed material. The data were organized and analyzed for similarities and differences within each of the five major sections: general background, professional socialization, peers, the relationship of peers to professional socialization, and closure.

After reading the transcripts several times, it was decided that the best approach would be to deal with issues and not do an analysis of each question. For example, in the general background section the main issues appeared to be the motivation for being in graduate school, the perceived hurdles and a comparison of peer interaction from last year to this year. The section pertaining to professional socialization focused on the issues of what the perceived norms and values were, and professionalism. The major issues in the section on peers was the perceived relationship between peers, the relative importance of peers and faculty, and the issue of perceived discomfort because of age or sex. In the last major section, the major issues pertained to the role of peers during the process of professional socialization (e.g., whether peers helped or hindered the subjects during professional socialization and how the subjects viewed their peers). Once the issues were

defined, a comparison of responses by subjects in the two age cohorts was made. Since the sample was so small, and the study exploratory in nature, there was no statistical analysis. The interviews will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## C H A P T E R I V

### INTERVIEWS

#### Introduction

This chapter contains a description and analysis of the twenty-four tape recorded interviews. The chapter is organized along the lines of the interview protocol, which has six sections (see Appendix A).

The major focus of this chapter will be on the sections of the interviews dealing with professional socialization, peers, and the relationship of peers to the process of professional socialization (sections 2, 3, 4, 5). The discussion of each section includes a comparison of the responses of both age cohorts. Tables are included where appropriate.

Women twenty-five and under will be referred to as the younger cohort, and women thirty-nine and older will be referred to as the older cohort. There are really two groups of women in the older cohort: those who returned for advanced degrees, and those who returned to complete undergraduate degrees and then went on to graduate school. Seven of the older women came after they had received their bachelor's degree, five began as undergraduates and, with one exception, continued on in the same department as graduate students.

The identity of each subject will be protected by using initials other than those actually belonging to each subject. The four departments, in both the social sciences and humanities, will be referred to as departments A, B, C. and D.

### General Background of Subjects and Major Departments

Issues in this section include: the reasons these women were in graduate school; whether they had any regrets about being in graduate school; what it was like being a graduate student; what the hurdles were in each department; and the relationships between peers over time

### Motivation

The reasons for being in graduate school not only varied within each age cohort, but between the two age cohorts as well. Most younger women claimed to have gone to graduate school because they were ready and anxious to do so.

When I was originally going to college I was sure I wasn't going to go on once I graduated. No more school. But in my senior year I decided I wanted to go on to graduate school. I was ready to do it. . . . I was shocked. I never thought I would go right to graduate school, but I suddenly felt it was the right thing for me (U.B.).

Younger women came, in part, because there were few job opportunities.

When I graduated from college it was probably the worst year to graduate from college job-wise. There were absolutely no jobs. None of my friends got jobs. . . . No one could get jobs (sic). They had such a struggle and I knew it was going to be hard, so I

figured I'll go right on to graduate school since I wanted to do advanced study anyway (E.T.).

The only younger woman who did take time off between undergraduate and graduate school managed to find work in her field of interest.

Some older women had negative reasons for returning to graduate school: job dissatisfaction, "burnout", or constraint.

I was burned out for high school teaching. I really believe that rather than just holding on to the meal ticket, if you are starting to not like working with children you should stop. I had done the best teaching in a high school setting that I was going to do. It was time to leave (F.D.).

One older woman had a varied career background but found none of her jobs rewarding.

I've had a lot of crummy jobs, all of them were interesting, but the pay scale was not in line with what I was doing. . . . I was sick of menial jobs. I was sick of interesting jobs that paid poorly (N.L.).

Thus, while younger women were in graduate school either because they wanted to be there or because there were no jobs, older women returned to graduate school because there were job related problems.

### Regrets

Younger subjects were asked if they regretted not taking time off between undergraduate and graduate school. This is an area of consensus among younger women. Only one young woman clearly regretted not taking time off, while seven claimed they had no regrets at all. Older women also tended

to express no regrets about being in graduate school. Only one older woman had regrets about her current situation.

### Experiences

An issue reflecting greater unanimity among the younger women than the older women pertained to the question: what is it like to be a graduate student in the field at this time? (see Table 5). Five of the younger women discussed how hard it is to be a graduate student.

From my experience it is a lot of hard work. It is a seven day a week job, fourteen hours a day. It tends to be isolated in the sense that although in the department we all have a common interest, because everyone is so specialized you are isolated or alone in your field because you are doing your type of research. People tend to be workaholics in the sense that they don't lead very social lives (F.Q.).

This not only represents how the younger women felt about graduate school, but is an example of the negativism that can be found among younger women. In fact, both age cohorts were often negative in their responses.

Older students accepted the fact that graduate school was hard work, but did not feel it was a problem worthy of special attention. They had their own issues they expressed negative feelings about.

It is difficult being my age and having gone through the turmoils and the trials of being a graduate student, which you take a little easier at a younger age. But having lasted so long I get annoyed at being treated as a student (B.S.).

Table 5

Q. 2. What is it like to be a graduate student in your field at this time?

Dept.	Women twenty-five years old & younger	Women thirty-nine years old & older
A	hard academically poor job market hard for women no challenge	negative feelings marital problems money problems
B	hard academically (3) easier now have support group have friends people are too close	exciting boring negative feelings students support each other
C	poor job market competitive restrictive program financially burdensome	not part of it anymore age problems graduate school is a luxury opportunity to meet a variety of people
D	hard stressful money problems	exciting feel unappreciated poor job market (2)

One of the most negative comments regarding the graduate school experience came from an older single woman. "I have found this to be the most negative experience of any academic setting I've been in." (T.S. She further claimed that she had seen a great deal of favoritism in her department towards younger men and very young women. She found the dynamics in her department to be very discouraging, and felt that students completed their degrees despite not because of the faculty.

While none of the twenty-four women said that graduate school was lonely, many did say that they experienced difficulty in meeting people. One young woman felt that people tended to know only other people in the department because there wasn't time to establish friendships elsewhere.

### Hurdles

Hurdles are divisible into academic and non-academic matters, with the former predominating. The first thing one notices about the responses from the younger women in this sample is that there is very little unanimity (see Table 6). One younger woman expressed her concern about working alone.

You are really on your own here. You have to motivate yourself. You have to force yourself to do things. . . . I have learned that things just don't happen, you have to make them happen . . . (E.T.).

Table 6

Q. 4. What are the major hurdles to be mastered in your department?

Dept.	Women twenty-five years old & younger	Women thirty-nine years old & older
A	develop self-confidence survival in the dept. working with peers personal issues prove oneself to be a professional getting a committee formed	develop self-confidence being a woman pass comprehensives
B	dissertation working with peers being young meeting people balancing work & personal life passing comprehensives courses deciding on goals motivation money	routine passing comprehensives (2) courses (3) dissertation (2) working with peers money
C	prove oneself to be professional survival in the dept. (2) playing politics	qualifying examinations (3) dealing with the faculty money
D	field experience meeting people doing things in the dept proving oneself to be professional passing comprehensives dissertation money	being older being a woman working alone dealing with the faculty proving oneself to be professional dissertation money doing things in the dept.

Another academic hurdle mentioned by a younger woman was that one is expected to show a commitment to the department by taking part in a variety of activities and serving on various committees or ". . . in some way doing something for the good of the department." (K.X.)

Some of the younger women also had mentioned separating their personal life from their academic life as a hurdle.

I think you could easily fall into a rut of working constantly, so you really have to establish a balance. You must set your limits and make them clear to your advisor and the rest of the faculty. . . . You must keep that balance of social life versus academic life so that you can establish friendships (F.Q.)

A younger woman, from a different department, also tried to separate the personal from the academic, but realized that it was not always possible nor advantageous to do so.

It may hurt me at some point down the road in that someone doesn't give me the scoop on a job; someone doesn't ask me to write a paper with them; stuff like that. . . . I think there are clear advantages to having social relationships with people in your department (T.T.)

She acknowledged that peers are important in terms of future careers. The same idea is couched slightly differently by a young woman who talked about the importance of establishing a reputation for yourself. K.C. realized that she could not do this on her own; others had to take an interest in her. She felt that since peers get to know each other faster than the faculty gets to know the students, peers are the people one should cultivate. There seems to be little agreement among the younger students in terms of the academic hurdles.

Half of the older women saw passing comprehensive examinations as a major hurdle in their departments. Nine of the older women had completed course work, and five of them had taken qualifying examinations.

One older woman who had completed her course work said that, "I want to get my dissertation done. . . I don't have time to learn anything right now." (N.L.) An older woman who had finished her course work was still not very secure academically, and she saw this as a major hurdle.

I think this year I am beginning to feel more confident about having enough of a grasp of the material. . . . I am more comfortable about critiquing on my own, but I am still a little unsure of myself. I feel as though I am making progress (N.C.)

An older woman, who had just passed her comprehensive examinations, claimed that she could notice that people, especially the faculty, treated her differently since she had passed.

#### Peer interaction over time

Related to the fact that that most of the older women in the sample had completed their course work is the fact that they have less interaction with peers than in the past. An older woman was well aware of the fact that during her first two years she was more involved with peers than now. She once used these people to measure her own achievement levels but now that she is no longer taking classes she has very little personal contact with peers; most of her relationships are outside of the department.

One older woman discussed a marked contrast between the past and the present.

I became a mother figure. But that isn't even so much anymore because I don't spend so much time. I don't mind people coming in to chat for a few minutes, but when they come in and sit down. . . I've just gotten very impatient with that. I've got to finish, but previous to that I would meet with people before they took their exams; tell them my experiences because people also did that for me (B.S.)

Another older woman chose to have less student interaction because she felt she did not need much support. She said that she deliberately chose her friends from outside her department. On the other hand, three of the older women (all in the same department) who had finished their course work claimed they went out of their way to maintain contact with peers. An older woman who had been very negative about her department remembered her cohort interaction fondly. "The support was quite good during the two years we were in class together." (T.S.) Her only regret was that she was the only member of her cohort still on campus. By choice, she has not had anything to do with the other graduate students in her department for years.

In sum, five of the older women claimed they had less student interaction this year than last; this would be expected since so many of the older women are no longer taking classes on campus.

Younger women felt that time had brought them closer to their peers. As one young woman explained,

I know people better this year, so I am closer to people. There is more of a camaraderie among advanced students than there is between them and the first year students. First year students are a group and they tend to always stay together. As you advance the contact increases (L.I.).

A younger woman made the comment that she had experienced a change in student interaction from last year to this year, ". . .I don't see them as students anymore but as colleagues." (K.X.)

### Summary

Younger women came to graduate school for two main reasons -- they felt they were ready and/or jobs were scarce. The most frequent response from older women was that they came to graduate school because they were, in one way or another, dissatisfied with their jobs. Only one older and one younger woman regretted being in graduate school.

Younger women claimed they interacted with peers more than the older women did. Younger women, by and large, felt closer to peers than the older women did. There is no evidence that age is the reason for this difference. It is suggested that one's status in a graduate program may influence relationships with peers. Taking courses involves peer interaction. Once one is past that phase and writing a thesis or dissertation, there is less peer interaction.

## Professional Socialization

After defining how the concept of professional socialization is used in this dissertation, questions were asked about values, norms, traditions and life styles associated with each subjects' discipline.

### Values

There was agreement among the younger women in terms of the interrelated values of research, scholarship and publishing. The importance of this was seen in two of the questions relating to values (see Tables 7 and 8).

It is definitely a research oriented degree. The value is to turn out scholars. You have to know how to teach because it is something that is expected of academics, but the emphasis is definitely on research. . . . There are opportunities to learn how to teach, but I don't know that they teach you how. There are opportunities and we are supposed to pick it up ourselves (T.T.).

This is reinforced by the knowledge that, ". . . professors don't get rewarded as much for teaching as for research." (K.C.)

Half the younger women emphasized research that would involve making significant contributions to their fields.

I want to feel the research I do is important. . . . For me it is important for something to have some kind of applied value. . . when you do something it should be important and relevant (T.T.)

Another young woman concurred with the idea of making important contributions, but felt frustrated in her attempts to do so.

Table 7

Q. 5. What are some of the values in your profession?

Dept.	Women twenty-five years old & younger	Women thirty-nine years old & older
A	teaching scholarship research objectivity side with underdog work together	working hard high standards publishing teaching research scholarship (3)
B	politics (2) being ethical respect for individual confidentiality honesty in research (2) honesty with peers (2) research based on theory sharing, especially cross disciplines behave professionally (3)	hypocrisy professionalism interacting at conferences objectivity meanness being active in dept. accountability being ethical (2) publishing (2) research (3) competition
C	publishing (2) elitism (2) bigotry	teaching (2) expertise keeping up with the field humanism elitism scholarship (3) hypocrisy
D	total commitment (2) macho life style research sharing cross discipline behaving professionally hard work hypocrisy	teaching self-reliance cultural relativity side with underdog honesty realizing biases hypocrisy publishing

Table 8

Q. 6. What are the attitudes, norms, traditions and traits of members of your profession that you have especially noticed?

Dept.	Women twenty-five years old & younger	Women thirty-nine years old & older
A	work hard publish research scholarship defer to faculty aloof from social institutions	work hard interrelated to other disciplines
B	being professional pooling knowledge working hard (2) keeping low profile politics	tunnel vision (2) working hard hypocrisy cooperation
C	publish scholarship no editorializing in writing	competition defer to faculty elitism
D	work hard do not upset others respect for clients publish	hypocrisy academic honesty care for details teach

There is work which to me is really important to do. More than that, I am willing to do, that I am very interested in doing and that is a very strong pull. In addition, there is a lot of crap. There are a lot of things about how departments are set up, . . . basically to succeed you have to either be a white male. . . or willing to do everything you can to be like that (K.X.).

Even the older women understood the value of research and publication as well as scholarship. An older woman put it well when she said:

Despite the fact that some institutions install pop culture courses, there is respect for the lineage of the page. There is a real respect for knowing your field. . . to be involved with the literature. . . having a broad understanding, but at the same time, having a specialty because being an expert is a value (F.D.).

Two younger women emphasized the value of total commitment to the discipline.

The ideal student would attend every department function, every kind of meeting; write a paper every semester; help other people in sharing their skills or running workshops or things like this. . . there is the expectation that your professional engagement is the most important thing (K.X.).

K.X. was uncomfortable with the concept of working hard. She claimed people maintain an image of being overworked. The concept of being a workaholic had become glorified, and she felt that those who wished to have a life apart from school were not appreciated in her department.

A value mentioned by an older woman but never by any of the younger women was competition. This older woman did not see competition as a negative; she felt that there is

competition for status not only among the faculty, but among graduate students also.

Both groups of women seemed to be open about the problems they had with some of the values espoused by their departments. Three older women talked about the difference between the values expressed and what actually happened in their department. As D.I. noted, "there seems to be a discrepancy between the way they (the faculty) live their lives and what they say in class."

There seemed to have been a conflict in the minds of many of the women in both age cohorts as to which was more valuable - - teaching or scholarly research. Where the issue arose, the subjects always saw it as an either/or proposition, both could not coexist satisfactorily. An older woman talked about the devaluation of teaching in her department. "Several people mentioned an interest in students and teaching, and they were considered to be malingering from the real work." (B.E.) She bemoaned the fact that each new cohort of students arrives on campus to be thrown into teaching assistantship positions without any training. ". . .there are no standards of any sort. . . . I suppose they (the faculty) value teaching assistants because they make their work easier." (B.E.) The confusion between research and teaching is nowhere more evident than in the comments of a younger woman whose primary interest is research, but who found that this could only be done in an academic setting.

I want to do research and primarily focus on the non-academic aspect, but everything ultimately feeds back into the academic because this is the distributing center. . . . academia provides more freedom than any other type of job in terms of hours, vacations, interaction opportunities. That is the rub. . . . In reality, the only option is to combine. . . . You can't do research without having a network within which you will have time to analyze it, research it, get feedback, criticism, present and publish. There is no way you can do research without having that academic component (D.U.).

This kind of conflict between teaching and research was also reflected in what another younger woman discussed. C.R. realized that in order to do research she has to teach. She has never taught, and was not looking forward to it. She was especially unhappy with the idea of teaching undergraduates.

In sum, the major values expressed by both age cohorts pertain to scholarship, research and publishing. Teaching, although considered essential, is not as important to the majority of subjects in this study.

#### Adoption of values

While both age cohorts claimed that they had adopted most of the values they had been exposed to, older women seem to have adopted more of them uncritically. Half of the younger women felt they only adopted values they were comfortable with. Apparently younger women were not as accepting as older women, or perhaps the values espoused by the departments were simply more appealing to the older women. Only two older women

indicated they adopted some values reluctantly, but they did adopt them. An older woman presented an interesting and valid point. She refused to answer the questions because,

The personal self melds with the professional over time and you don't know which is which. What you have become as a professional is partly what you are as a person. You can't say these are newly adopted values because they have been so well integrated and internalized that I can't give you an answer. (T.S.).

One of the older women expressed reluctance in adopting some of the values of her department because she was so uncomfortable with some of them.

Some of the values I've absorbed because I need to survive and unfortunately at this point, if that is what it takes to get through this next year, I'll do a little pussy-footing around. I won't do any data finagling, but I will talk to the right people. . . . I need to get through much more quickly than things are going. . . . I've taken on the value system to get through (N.L.).

### Professionalism

The issue of research versus teaching is not limited to a discussion of values but is also to be found in the discussion of how one defines a professional. Is a professional one who teaches or does research? The issue is never satisfactorily resolved by any of the women in this sample. It is best summarized by an older woman who said:

I feel that I have seen some. . . professors who were wonderful instructors and very good to their students, and helped us a tremendous amount but who did not get tenure because of that publish. . . idea and I don't agree.

I think that if your life's work is to be a teacher, your first priority should be to your students, and I disagree with the idea that the amount of publications comes before the kind of teacher that you are. . . (N.C.).

The younger women seemed to be more consistent in their answers than the older women were when discussing what it meant to them to become a professional (see Table 9). Younger women stressed making significant research contributions. The older women were not as clear and consistent when responding to this question.

Both age groups again stressed the importance of research and publishing in response to the question about what makes one more professional than another (see Table 10).

One difference between the two age cohorts of women was that the older women felt they were more professional already. Perhaps this is because older women, by and large, have progressed further academically than their younger colleagues.

### Learning values

One area where there was an overlap between the two age cohorts was in the area of how they learned to be professional. Both cohorts felt they had learned values primarily from both the faculty and peers. However, six of the older women also listed the home as being a place where they learned their values. The academic context (faculty and peers) seemed to be of greater importance than the non-academic context (family and friends).

Table 9

Q. 7. What does it mean to you to become a professional in your field?

Dept.	Women twenty-five years old & younger	Women thirty-nine years old & older
A	well trained make significant research contributions (2) publish teaching being ethical unsure	achievements use knowledge daily prestige freedom to travel mentoring leadership
B	make significant research contributions (2) be true to oneself being an adult being accepted more of a professional self-image well trained	behave appropriately be objective be thoughtful publish not manifest tunnel vision accountable make significant research contributions (2)
C	being successful publishing (2) teaching commitment	no more tests unsure commitment no money worries
D	behave appropriately make significant research contributions (2) publishing	honest research theoretical research publish teaching

Table 10

Q. 9b. What traits would you say make one person more professional than another?

Dept.	Women twenty-five years old & younger	Women thirty-nine years old & older
A	confidence having published being serious attitude behavior play academic games more skills going to professional meetings	more research experience published (2) dress approach to work
B	attitude working on dissertation having published be serious more research experience more teaching experience being older acting more adult behavior play academic games	asking fewer questions earning money better focus self-confidence more skills acting adult more research experience having more knowledge sense of direction doing consulting work
C	having published (2) being older understand marketplace be serious being sensitive to students play academic games	going to professional meetings more research experience published (2) sense of responsibility organization dress
C	having published (2) more research experience (3) act more adult more skills (2)	self-confidence more research experience published (2) active in dept.

K.X. put it well when she talked about the advantage of learning from students more than from the faculty:

Faculty talks about what one ought to do, about this is the way it is done. . . It is much more past tense kinds of things whereas with students they are in that process and they are talking about that process right now as it happens to them (K.X.).

Half of the older women felt that observation and interaction with both students and faculty was the main source of obtaining their values. It was best summed up by an older woman:

Through watching interaction between students, among faculty and between faculty and students. Also by sending out your own signals and seeing how they are received. When you send out signals that are received more negatively than you expected them to be, you begin to get a picture of how you look within that department. . .from the faculty. I don't remember having any problems with the students, but I certainly felt very different from the faculty (T.S.).

### Acceptance

Younger women seem to be surer of acceptance than older women. Five younger women expressed no doubts that they would be accepted as "one of them". One young woman felt sure that if she went to another school and was hired, she would be accepted. "I wouldn't be the student anymore, I would be the colleague." (B.L.). Three younger women qualified their answer by saying acceptance would depend upon whom it was. "I don't want to be one of them if that means total exclusion of the rest of my life. I don't want to jump through certain kinds of hoops that it seems necessary to do right now. . ."

(K.X.)

One young woman did express a doubt about being accepted but did not care, "sometimes there is a doubt in my mind, but it doesn't bother me. . . . If they scoff, I don't care. I'll just do my own thing." (E.T.).

In contrast, the older women were not as sure of acceptance as the younger women were. Three of the older women were sure they would never be accepted. Only three of the older women felt sure they were accepted already, a small number considering the advanced academic standing of many of the older women. Four older women expressed doubts about acceptance.

Internally I feel one of them, especially in terms of my skills. But what matters to the world is your pay. Are you labelled faculty or teaching assistant? What is the difference in the earnings? It is that discrepancy between who I feel I am and what the paycheck says. I think we are really defined by our paychecks. The status of graduate student is demeaning in many ways, and that is not just for someone my age. I just don't think people should be treated that way (B.S.).

Equally as articulate was her colleague, who was almost playful when she said,

There are days when I am absolutely sure I won't be accepted, that they will say. . . .  
'How did she ever get that degree?' You know you have those nightmare days when you walk out the door and you are not who you thought you were. . . . (F.D.)

In anticipation of the time when she would be accepted as a professional, one older woman sighed and mused about getting a decent salary for a change. She looked forward to having a place in the social and economic structure. She anticipated not being a graduate student any longer. "I won't be labelled

as something potential. I'll be labelled as something manifested." (B.S.)

### Summary

Subjects in both age groups were uncertain about how the interviewer defined values and norms, and as a result, the concepts were used interchangeably. Subjects in both age cohorts agreed on the importance of research, scholarship and publishing. Younger women were less willing to accept the values of their departments.

Despite the fact that older women were further along academically, younger women felt that they would have less trouble being accepted into their chosen profession. Younger women primarily saw the learning of values in an academic context and the role of faculty and, especially, students as important in this process.

### Peers

#### Friendship

Seven younger women and three older women saw that friendships within the department were important to the process of professional socialization. Friends are primarily of the same sex.

One issue that arose mostly for the younger women was how one meets peers. In fact, when one young woman was asked how she met students socially, she looked puzzled. "I have no idea how people meet people outside of courses. . ." (U.B.).

Older women seemed to have satisfied their need for friends by going outside of their departments. Many are married, some are divorced with older children. Older women do not seem to have the same needs as younger women for friendships within their departments.

### Faculty and peers

The issue of the relative importance of faculty and peers is a key to understanding this section. Younger women maintained that students were more important than the faculty. "While professors' recommendations may be important later for references, your peers are there on a day to day basis to give support." (L.I.). C.R. took the concept a step further when she said, "relationships with my friends probably take up a lot more time than relationships with my professors do." K.X. explained why she felt students were more important:

There are not a lot of role models in the faculty because there aren't many faculty. There is not a lot of variety in the faculty. In the student population you have a lot more variety (K.X.).

D.U. put it slightly differently, "I've seen more graduate students doing their thing than I've seen professors."

One young woman explained why peers were needed to make it through the graduate school experience:

It is important because sometimes you go through things and you wonder, is it me? Did I read the situation right? Am I the only stupid one here? Am I the only one freaking out because I haven't taken my comps yet, and I'm so nervous? It is good to meet with them (peers) to know that you are not the only one, and no one else notices that you did something stupid or that you

define as stupid, when in fact it may be a very common thing other people have done too. It is good in that sense because you get a sense that you are actually okay after all (T.T.)

An interesting issue was raised by a younger woman concerning the importance of interacting with peers. She dreaded that someone would steal her ideas. While she claimed the problem had never happened to her, she was concerned about the future. This may help explain why she felt ambivalent about interacting with her peers.

One young woman mentioned the practical value of establishing contacts while in graduate school. "Professionally, these people will be my contacts that I will keep in touch with. They (the faculty) told us that our very first day." (L.I.)

One young woman felt that neither group was very interested in her:

Initially I wanted to say faculty, but I didn't say it because I thought how awful that must sound. . . . They don't give me any socio-emotional support, but then I don't get it from my peers either, not on a real consistent basis. (T.T.)

She shared these feelings with another younger woman in her department who said, "you need support from the peer group as well as the faculty. . . . I think I am not getting enough from either, rather both." (K.C.)

Only one young woman felt that the faculty was more important than students. One young woman could not decide which group was more important.

It depends on what the issue is. If you are looking for a particular method or piece of information you go to the person who knows it, whether it is a faculty member or a student. (T.Q.)

The faculty was considered more important by four older women, and at least as important as students by five of the older women. The most common viewpoint was expressed by M.N.:

I think faculty members are the ones who really turn you on, show you where to go, catch your interest, make you work, crack the whip and all that good stuff. . . They are the ones you have to struggle to keep up with and they are the ones who always ask for a little more than you think you can give; but peers are the ones in an interpersonal sense that you have to come to day after day. They are the ones who really have to be there. My statistics professor is not going to give me sympathy while I slobber in terror. I think as far as a net or a network goes, peers are just critical. (M.N.)

Seven of the older women cited the importance of the faculty for professional development (see Table 11). Five of the older women felt that students were important for support. Only one of the older women denied that students provided any support.

An older woman felt student interaction was not really important except in an academic sense, and even then its importance was limited. A few older women were unsure of their feelings. An older woman thought student interaction might have been important to her at one time but no longer was. By and large, the comments from the older women were positive. One older woman smiled when she said, "you can complain to each

Table 11

Q. 16. Are peers more, less or of the same importance as the faculty? Why?

Dept.	Women twenty-five years old & younger	Women thirty-nine years old & older
A	peers give support faculty gives degree faculty important for professional development peers important for survival	peers give support (2) faculty provides resources faculty important for professional development
B	peers give support (2) students more important	peers give support faculty provides resources students are friends faculty important for professional development
C	students are friends faculty important for professional development faculty gives references faculty inaccessible (2)	work with students students are friends faculty important for professional development
D	students are friends work with students peers give support faculty gives degree faculty has contacts faculty provides resources faculty has more experience	peers give support (2) faculty gives degree faculty important for professional development

other and do it safely. . ." (M.N.). Another older woman said of her peers,

They give me a sense of being in the profession. They give me a sense that there is something to this besides me and the material. That there is a world associated with this profession. (D.I.).

Age alone may not be an explanation for this difference between the two age cohorts. Perhaps marital status may have something to do with the fact that older women do not turn to other students for support as much as the younger women do. Older women, divorced or married, have children they can turn to. Only three younger women are married while nine of the older women are or were married. Perhaps the older women feel more comfortable with the faculty who are probably closer to them in age. It could be that since older women are further along academically they identify more with the faculty than with their peers.

#### Age and sex

Even though younger women felt that interaction and friendships with peers were important, half the younger women felt out of place with their peers because of age. As a young woman said, "I am instantly intimidated by people who are older. . ." (U.B.). Only one of the older women felt uncomfortable with other students because of age. B.S. felt different but not uncomfortable about being older. She thought there was no camaraderie and that the younger students seemed frightened while she was not.

Two older women saw their age as an advantage. One felt that because she had had some real life experiences she was given more respect by her fellow graduate students. N.L. had the idea that her age was a potential advantage for her when it came time to look for a job, and so she felt that age was not an impediment.

You have it made for tenure because they only have you for about twenty years because we are going to die. They won't have to worry about you for so long. I think it is an advantage to be older. (N.L.).

B.E. had anticipated that there might be an age issue when she arrived on campus. She found that her age was an asset when relating to her peers, but not when relating to the faculty.

I think, if anything, they (peers) are supportive. They tell me it is great that I am doing this. . . . I do think that some of the faculty have the idea that any woman past the traditional student age is dabbling. I think it bothers some to have a mature woman in their class. I think they are used to young students who sit at their feet and worship them (B.E.).

Age was an issue for few older women, and they all seemed to handle it well. "I've learned how to deal with people who can help me out even though they are younger than me," (N.L.) was a rather typical response.

Three of the younger women felt uncomfortable with their peers because of their sex, while only one of the older women felt that way.

Three younger and three older women felt uncomfortable with the faculty because of age. Two older and three younger women claimed to be uncomfortable with the faculty because of their sex. One older woman accused the faculty of blatant discrimination. She claimed that women students were ignored in favor of male students, and that younger professors were overly interested in younger female graduate students (T.S.)

One young woman felt alienated from both the male faculty members and her male peers.

I just feel a big gulf. . . .I also think it is the male students who are considered to be serious candidates. You are not quite condescended to, . . .but it is not the same as if you were a guy. . . . The male students give the impression that they are the department (U.B.).

Why younger women feel more uncomfortable with their peers is unclear. Perhaps it is because the majority of women in all four departments are between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-nine and probably have more work experience than the younger women do.

### Relationships

The rest of the questions in this section focused on the relationships between peers. Women in both age cohorts claimed to have good relationships with peers. There were a few exceptions among the younger women. One young woman considered her peers in the department to be merely acquaintances. A young woman saw her relationships with peers in a purely professional light. Three younger women, one of whom was

married, claimed not to be close to their peers at all. To one young woman it was important that she have friendships outside of the department as well.

It is important to me to maintain friendships with people who are not part of the so-called intelligensia. I like all different kinds of people, but from all different types of backgrounds. . . . I do have people in the department I can turn to for help both personally and in terms of academics. It is really several different individuals and not a collectively because a lot of the individuals would not get along with each other (C.R.).

She also expressed a desire to talk about academics with peers. She felt that her peers were opposed to shop talk on social time.

We don't sit around and talk about what we are doing all that much. There are a few people who do like to do that, but the group of people I know doesn't. . . . The department does not give us any formal opportunities to do that either. I would like to see such things as a brown bag conference, either student or faculty, where they informally talk about what they are doing. . . . There is nothing like that. There are no seminars. . . there is no on-going intra-departmental seminar series and I think there should be (C.R.).

She claimed that peers preferred to talk about the department and its politics rather than the subject matter of her discipline. She is the second younger student in the same department to feel that way.

Usually at parties there isn't much talk of school stuff. Not to say that I want to stand around and talk about school. . . all the time, but every so often it is nice to strike up an interesting conversation about (name of discipline) (K.C.).

On the one hand, K.C. wished her peers would talk more about the discipline; on the other hand, she refused to share ideas with them because she was afraid she would have her ideas stolen. This was a fear she shared with another young woman in a different department.

Aside from these few instances, younger women claim to have good personal and professional relationships with their peers.

Older women seemed to have had as positive an attitude toward their peers as the younger women did. One older woman put it best when she said, of the relationships in her department,

It was all, everything. We went through divorce, marriages, babies. . . everything like that. Then we went through getting jobs. We went through writing papers, revisions of things; we shared our papers a lot (E.L.).

An older woman with a facility with the language said, I have friendships that do not revolve on trauma." (F.D.). Most of the comments from the older women were similar to those cited. One of the rare exceptions was an older woman who maintained that she had not completely isolated herself from the department, but added, "I have learned over the years not to share personal matters." (T.X.)

The difference between the two age cohorts seems to be in degree not kind. The differences in their responses were in the degree of comfort they felt with each other, not whether or not they were close.

### Learning from each other

When asked what graduate students learned from each other, seven of the younger women clearly felt that survival in academia was the most important lesson. In other words, the younger women were teaching each other how to be students, and how to play the academic game. The same was true for the older women, but to a lesser extent. What each age cohort felt it had learned from peers dealt primarily with academic matters.

One older woman was unsure if she had learned anything from her peers. In fact, she rather doubted that she had.

I can't say I've learned anything from them. If there was, it was internalized and not recognized as learning. . . . None of them came from my background, so I couldn't say I learned anything from them. I already knew survival in an institution. Certainly I had better academic skills than most of them (T.S.).

### Summary

The greatest similarity between the two age cohorts was that both stressed the importance of peers for intellectual development in the process of professional socialization. The two cohorts differed when it came to the role of the faculty. Older women claimed the faculty was at least as important as peers, while five younger women felt students were more important.

Probably the most interesting difference between the two cohorts is that the younger women felt more out of place with peers, due to their age and sex, than the older women did.

Since there were more women aged twenty-five and younger than there were women aged thirty-nine and older in the four departments studied, this is an interesting response. One possible explanation may lie in the fact that most of the students in these departments are between the ages of twenty-six and thirty-nine and they probably have more work experience than those twenty-five years old and younger.

### Professional Socialization and Peer Relationships

There was a brief introduction to the last major section of the interviews. During this time, the purpose of the questions was explained. This section continued to look at the role of peers, but in the specific context of their relationship to the process of professional socialization in graduate school.

### Reaffirmation

One of the major issues was whether peers reaffirmed one's skills, abilities, hopes and plans. The learning of skills is essential in the process of professional socialization, and the affirmation of one's abilities is important in the development of a professional identity.

I think the most helpful part of my experience has come from people, mostly women. . . . If you listen to the men when they give you feedback it is very easy to start thinking there is something wrong with you. I thought I was the only one that felt my reading of the situation was unreliable. . . .that it is a relief to have someone say that I am right (K.X.).

Eight of the younger women did see that their peers reaffirmed their skills, abilities and hopes. Only one younger woman was clearly negative and felt estranged from her department.

I am not finding things I hoped to find from those around me. . . . In order to get support, you have to know people with like interest, like goals; people doing the same things you are doing. . . . It is not like you are alone because you know there are other people in other graduate programs going through the same thing. . . . But just to know that other people have the same problems doesn't make your job any easier. (K.C.).

Another younger woman was reluctant to attribute any support to her peers, but did not want to give the totally opposite impression either. She felt that no one knew what her hopes were because they were never discussed. Yet another younger woman felt that her peers were just not capable of the kind of support she felt she needed.

There is not much difference in the responses of older women when compared to the younger women. Only one older woman felt that there was no affirmation of abilities or support.

One's department might play a role in the responses of these two cohorts. Five of the six women in both cohorts in department B agreed that peers reaffirmed their skills, abilities and hopes. Four each in departments A and D felt the same way, but only one younger and one older woman in department C felt that way. In sum, there is not much difference between the two cohorts due to age, but there

seems to be a different in their responses by department.

### Help/hindrance

Another issue in this section pertained to incidents of help or hindrance by fellow graduate students in one's department. This is a basic issue in the understanding of the role of peers in the process of professional socialization. Most of the younger women did not detail specific instances of peers being especially helpful; they talked, instead, about the day to day support that they needed and received from other graduate students in the department. Younger women claimed to turn to peers for support less often than older women. Two younger women claimed that no one had ever gone out of his/her way to be helpful. This is surprising considering that younger women claimed to be closer to peers than the older women did. Perhaps younger women are so helpful to each other that special instances do not stand out as being unusual or worthy of mention.

Older women recalled instances of special help from peers more often than do their younger colleagues. An older woman discussed several incidents of how people went out of their way to help her. Of interest is the comment of an older woman about someone who had gone out of her way to help her and she wished it had not happened. "It cost me; it wasn't a freely given gift. Rather, it was a case of 'I'll get you back when you are vulnerable'." (T.X.)

Like five of the younger women, seven older women felt the aid was mostly for academic issues.

This has to be. This department makes that very plain. . . We are very much conscious that our own success is ultimately dependent on the success of our peers. That, in fact, the jobs that the graduate students get when they leave here creates the climate for the next set of graduate students. Where your peers get their jobs will include where you get your job. . . When people go for job interviews, . . . , they present a paper first to us. . . We go out to these interviews prepped (E.L.)

The reverse question asked the subjects about incidents in which peers may have made life more difficult. Five younger women claimed there was never a time a fellow graduate student in their department ever made them feel uncomfortable. While women in both age cohorts were willing to concede such incidents had occurred, few were willing to discuss the details.

One issue that emerged more than once was the animosity between subdivisions of a discipline, but the tendency in both age cohorts was to downplay negative experiences. For example, one young woman mentioned some academic instances of being made to feel uncomfortable, but quickly added, "I think there are more helpers and neutral people than those who hinder." (K.X.)

Half of the older women, like five of the younger women, reported that they could not think of any instance where a peer did something that made them uncomfortable.

### Group identity

Younger women were more comfortable with this issue. Their responses were consistent and coincided with their responses to other questions. The groups younger women felt they belonged to included: classmates, their entering cohort, all graduate students in general, or a particular subdivision of their discipline. Only two younger women felt that they did not belong to any group in their department; one young woman was unsure if she really belonged.

Where the concept of student versus faculty was raised, all younger women claimed that it was mostly non-hostile. Students sometimes wanted things and the faculty refused to listen or accede to their request. The distinct impression was given that this never really led to deep-seated resentment or hostility. As one younger woman put it, "there is definitely us graduate students and them, faculty, but not in any really negative way." (C.R.) It was also C.R. who mentioned that lately there had been a small rift between the male and female graduate students over what some women felt was favoritism towards males on the part of the faculty. She implied that the resentment was against the male students, not the faculty.

Older women are no more comfortable with the concept of "versus" than are the younger women. Only one older woman definitely felt that there was an us versus them aura in her department. The rest of the older women had a variety of noncommittal answers. One was pragmatic when she said, "of

course there is a difference between students and faculty; they have the power and you need them." (N.C.) But when questioned further, she denied there was any animosity or hostility. However, she felt that where there is inequality there is often some resentment or hostility. Another older woman saw a difference between faculty and students but not in terms of "versus" or hostility.

There is definitely a we feeling among graduate students. . . . We know our place. We are students. We have little power and I see a huge differential in power (B.E.).

Another older woman thought there might not be any real hostility, but since there was so much joking about the issue perhaps the adage about where there is smoke, there is fire, might apply.

### Conformity

There is a clear difference between the two age cohorts in their responses to the question about pressure from peers to conform. Five younger women said they had been subjected to pressure to conform and it had had an impact. A younger woman felt that when she first came to the University there was an attempt to make her conform and it worked. "Someone said I dressed up a lot. . . Subtle digs. Yes, I have changed." (T.T.)

Two younger women felt that while there was an attempt to make them conform it did not succeed. One who refused to conform said,

People will say that they study everywhere. . . . It becomes a sort of challenge -- are you studying as hard as I am? Are you devoting your whole life to it? If you call someone up and want to go bowling or you want to go out for a drink you are told, "no, I have to study." It is said as a sort of challenge. Not having a tan implies that you are in the library studying. (B.L.)

All but one older woman claimed that they had never felt any pressure to conform. This may reflect an age difference. Perhaps women thirty-nine and over are not pressured to conform by those younger than themselves simply because of the age difference. Perhaps younger women, who are still taking classes, came into more contact with peers and were subjected to more opportunities for peer pressure to occur. There is a difference between the two cohorts, but the cause and significance of the differences is uncertain.

#### Friends/fellow sufferers/competitors

Only one of the younger women considered the people in her department as acquaintances not friends. Five older women and four younger women saw peers as friends.

Seven younger women saw their peers as fellow sufferers (see Table 12). Two younger women did not like the concept of fellow sufferers because, as one suggested, if you do not like to be here you can leave. Some of the older women put more emphasis on fellow than sufferer. Perhaps K.L. put it best when she said succinctly, "suffering is part of the student role. . . ."

Table 12

Q. 21. Do you see peers as fellow sufferers, competitors, friends, or a combination of any or all of them?

Dept.	Women twenty-five years old & younger	Women thirty-nine years old & older
A	fellow sufferers (2) not competitors perhaps competitors	fellow sufferers (3) not competitors competitors (2)
B	friends (2) possibly fellow sufferers not competitors (2) perhaps competitors	friends fellow sufferers (3) competitors (2) possibly competitors
C	friends fellow sufferers (3) competitors	friends (2) fellow sufferers (2) competitors (2) possibly competitors
D	friends fellow sufferers (2) not fellow sufferers not competitors competitors sometimes competitors	friends (2) fellow sufferers (30) not competitors possibly competitors

Two younger women definitely felt that peers were competitors. A younger woman talked about "competition for tidbits, the little goodies that get tossed to us; the crust that is thrown us. . ." (B.L.) The bitterness in her voice was clear. Two younger women felt that there was the possibility of competition. There seemed to have been a reluctance on the part of younger women to admit to competition. They did not like to talk about it, and felt uncomfortable with the concept.

Every once in a while there is a twinge of that, but not enough or long enough to be of any importance. I guess it comes up mostly when we see male students being buddy buddy with the faculty. (C.R.).

The older women seemed to be more at home with the concept of competition. Six older women saw peers as competitors and four saw the possibility of competition. Some of the older women seemed proud to be competitive.

I am competitive in class but that is me. I want to do well, and I don't care what anyone else does. I like to do well for myself, but if I do better than anyone else that makes me very happy (T.X.).

An older woman related that she had been told that she was competitive, but she was not conscious of it. Instead, she felt, "we all want to do well, but I don't think we want to do it at the expense of somebody else." (E.L.)

The only clear difference between the two age cohorts was that older women acknowledged the existence of competition more often than younger women did, and two older women maintained that competition is not necessarily evil. The greatest

similarity is that both groups regarded peers as fellow sufferers.

### Summary

An unexpected response was when two of the younger women felt that they never had help from peers; none of the older women made that claim. Considering the emphasis the younger women placed on the importance of peers for support this was somewhat surprising. Perhaps helping is so automatic among younger women, they simply could not recall anything special.

Seven younger women and six older women reported that they had never been made uncomfortable by other graduate students. Careful analysis revealed that the younger women seemed to have had more serious complaints about peers than older women did.

Both cohorts generally found peers supportive of their skills, abilities, hopes and plans. Women in both cohorts saw their peers more as fellow sufferers than as friends, but they spent most of the time talking about competition -- a concept the younger women were especially uncomfortable with.

Eleven older women claimed there never was any pressure from peers to conform, but younger women felt the pressure was there. Neither age cohort was comfortable with the concept of "versus" used in the question regarding group identity.

Thus, there are minor differences between the two age cohorts in terms of how they perceived the role of peers in the process of professional socialization, but there are also similarities.

## Closure

### Background and department

The closure section seemed, at times, to become a gripe session for the subjects. Women in both cohorts became negative towards their departments.

The formal demands the department makes make developing interpersonal relationships tough. It is hard to make friends outside of the department. You just literally don't have much time to do it. Even. . .within the department, if you are a relatively disciplined person about your work, it is hard. . .to keep up regular social contacts because I have too much work to do (T.T.).

As this indicates, younger women have concerns regarding friendships both within and outside of their departments.

There was the often repeated complaint that the department doesn't make its requirements clear. Perhaps a younger woman put her finger on a problem in her department when she said, "I think there is a kind of cold edge to the interpersonal relationships in my department." (U.B.). The comments of another young woman may provide further insight into why the younger women in her department did not seem to be very happy. "The values here are not conducive to being a well-rounded person; they are particularly prohibitive for women." (B.B.).

Half of the older women talked about their departments in negative terms also. Four older women wished the faculty would be more involved. Two older women in the same department talked about the environment being unpleasant. As one older woman

said, on behalf of her peers, "encouragement would go a long way; they (the faculty) have the attitude of we dare you to make it and we don't care if you don't.: (B.E.)

### Professional socialization

An addition to the discussion came from an older woman who said, "I haven't seen any real examples of students becoming professionals. The student role is total." (B.E.) Another older woman pointed out the importance of students emulating the faculty if they wished to become professional. "You have to look like them (the faculty) in order not to scare them." (B.S.)

### Peers

Younger women had little to add. An older woman mused that she may not have done as much for those coming after her as those who came before her had done for her. Another older woman summed up the appropriate attitude of an older person vis-a-vis younger graduate students.

An older person returning, . . . , had better come in prepared to accept and be understanding of the other graduate students or they're going to have a terribly hard time. You should come in open and say, 'whatever you want to do, I'll go along with', rather than coming in with an attitude of 'I know better than you because I am older'. . . It will be twice as difficult because you need the other students. . . (K.L.).

Rather than comparing the responses of the twenty-four women to the literature cited in chapter two, the next chapter will focus on the major findings and their implications.

## C H A P T E R V

### MAJOR FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

#### Introduction

An analysis of the interviews revealed three major findings. First, there were no major differences between the two age cohorts. Secondly, the concept of being off time did not seem to apply to the older women in this study. Thirdly, certain characteristics of the students' major departments were of far greater importance in the process of professional socialization than had been suspected. Each of these findings will be discussed separately and related to the appropriate literature cited in chapter two. There will also be a brief discussion of the implications for further research of each of these major findings.

#### Major Findings

##### No major differences between the two age cohorts

Women in both age cohorts agreed on the importance of peers in the process of professional socialization, and they shared similar ideas about professionalism. The differences between the two age cohorts were minor. For example, the fact that older women had friends outside of their departments and the younger women generally did not is not surprising. Older women, either through employment and/or their family situations, have had more time to establish friendships. Women who have

been married and settled in an area for many years have an opportunity to establish social ties. Younger women, going from undergraduate to graduate school, were, in contrast, leading more transient lives; they lacked long-term employment which might have afforded them the opportunity to establish friendships outside of the university.

Field (1982) claimed that younger women have a greater need for affiliation. The twelve younger women in this study expressed a greater desire for peer affiliation than did the older women, but that does not mean to imply that older women in this study did not express a need for affiliation -- merely that they chose to affiliate with either faculty members or people outside of the department as well as with peers. Thus, the twenty-four women in this study supported the conclusion of Goldman et al (1981), who found in their study of friendships among ninety women aged twelve to sixty-five that friendships were as important to women in their twenties as they were to women over forty-five.

Older women felt that faculty members were at least as important to them as peers were. This difference can be accounted for in several ways. First, most faculty members are closer in age to older women. Secondly, the older women in this study were closer to graduation than were the younger women, and probably had developed a stronger identity with the professionals (faculty members). While older women reported that relationships with faculty members were important,

they generally did not deny the importance of peer relationships. The difference between the two cohorts is in degree of importance of peers, and not that one cohorts sees peers as important and the other does not.

Older and younger women had similar responses concerning other issues covered in the interviews. Of the twenty-four women interviewed only one younger and one older woman expressed any regret about being in graduate school. Women in both age cohorts expressed similar concerns over the relative merits of teaching and research in their professions.

It was also found that marital status was not a significant issue to women in either age cohort. Older women in this study reported as much familial support as the younger women did. Marriage, according to several authors (e.g., Adler, 1976; Feldman, 1973; Cantor, 1974), increases the conflicts with professional life and reduces the likelihood of successful completion of graduate school. Brennan and Towns (1980) in a study of five hundred women over twenty-five years of age, found that reentry graduate women reported increased conflicts with their families. It is inappropriate to make any generalizations about the role of marriage in the process of professional socialization based only on the sample used in this study. No women who have left the university, possibly because of family problems, were interviewed; this limits any generalization only to the population studied. All that can be said is that marriage was not seen as an impediment to the women in this study.

Both age cohorts acknowledged and appreciated the benefits of student culture. The women in this study clearly felt that peers helped them make it through the academic process. This corresponds to Mechanic's (1962) conclusion about the importance of peers during the process of preparing for doctoral comprehensive examinations.

The concept of off time does not seem to apply to older women studied

It was anticipated, based on the review of the literature, that older women would have felt off time. This was not the case. Older women reported no discrimination from their peers because of age, nor was there any pressure felt by these older women to conform. A few older women saw their age as an asset when seeking employment, as well as when dealing with peers.

As Sarason and Sarason (1983) pointed out, events have a higher probability of occurring at certain ages, but can happen at different ages. Higher education is generally associated with young adulthood, but more and more non-traditionally aged people, particularly women, are attending colleges and universities.

In theory, older women in graduate school would seem to be off time. That is to say, younger women, as far as society is concerned, are at the right time on the social clock for attending graduate school. It would appear that older reentry women, who are receiving their occupational education later in life than is usual, are out of synchronization

with the norms of society. There are, however, fewer sanctions imposed upon these older women than even a decade ago. The social clock, referred to by Neugarten, as governing our behavior during our adult lives is not as rigid and inflexible as in former decades. The majority of women in graduate school at the university studied for this dissertation were over thirty -- well beyond the traditional age for graduate students twenty years ago. Perhaps our norms for "appropriate" graduate students are shifting. Maybe, as Neugarten (1979) suggested, we are becoming an age irrelevant society. The older women in this study tend to suggest the idea of an age irrelevant society.

Chronological age seems to be of less importance today than even a decade ago. After studying the psychological changes of one hundred twenty-four women aged thirty to sixty, Ellicott (1985) claimed that psychological change was associated more with phases in the family life cycle than with the chronological age of the women studied. Huyck and Hoyer (1982) also supported the idea that we are witnessing a breakdown of roles allocated on the basis of age.

Not only are middle-aged women going back for advanced degrees, but as can be seen by the increase in the number of doctorates awarded to women, many are not stopping at the master's degree level. In 1970, less than fifteen per cent of doctorates awarded went to women; by 1980, one-third of the doctorate degrees being awarded went to women.

Finally, if the older women in this study were considered to be off time by other graduate students, one would have expected older women to have reported some lack of acceptance by peers based on age, or pressures to conform to younger ways, but the twelve older women reported no such instances. While the older women in this study acknowledged an age difference, they were not concerned about it. Younger women, in contrast, felt they would have liked to have had more professional experience before coming to graduate school, and several younger women considered their youth to be a disadvantage.

#### Importance of major department

While not a major concern of the interviews, it became clear that women in two departments felt more secure and self-confident, and in general more positive about graduate school than women in the other two departments. It would appear that the more satisfied students are in departments B and D while women in departments A and C seemed more dissatisfied. The climate of departments A and C are perceived as being less supportive. Women in departments B and D reported that requirements were clear, the faculty was supportive and available when needed. This is in contrast to women in Departments A and C who reported that requirements were not clear, and the faculty was not very supportive and often inaccessible. It is interesting to note that two of the variables relating to stress experienced in graduate school, according to a study by Holahan (1985), were clarity of degree requirements and faculty support.

A reasonable generalization applicable to most of the twenty-four women interviewed is that the further along they were in their programs the more self-confidence they seemed to have. Part of the reason for varying amounts of self-confidence may be traceable to the departments involved. Some departments have specific procedures while others do not. For example, department D provided each entering graduate student with a booklet listing the steps involved in obtaining the doctorate. There are concrete requirements with check points for students at every step. Students know exactly where they stand and how they are doing. The faculty in department D, according to the students from that department, are approachable and helpful. In contrast, the older women in Department C maintained that when they entered graduate school they were given a long list of books to read prior to their oral examinations. They claimed there were no further guidelines. These women felt the faculty was not very helpful or supportive. They often felt that they were floundering, and were unsure of what to do or how to do it. They reported that they simply took courses (none were required), did the assigned reading, and hoped they would make it through their oral examinations. The women in department B maintained that they were required to take specific courses and had the guidance of the faculty; they knew where they stood and what was expected of them. The women in departments B and D felt comfortable, safe and confident, while the women in department C felt less so. There was no consensus among the women in

department A. There were few positive statements made about the department and many complaints (e.g., little encouragement from the faculty, unfair treatment of students, unclear requirements). Department A had two major subdivisions, each located in a different building on campus. Women in this department indicated that there was some antagonism between these two divisions. Apparently the antagonism started with the faculty and filtered down to the graduate students. Bucher and Stelling (1977) stressed the role of the department in the process of professional socialization by noting, for example, that the departmental requirements can structure whom one interacts with -- as in the assignment of office space. Thus the actual physical location of faculty and student offices can influence the process of professional socialization in terms of whom one interacts with. Many of the twenty-four women in this study reported that they tended to interact primarily with office/lab mates.

The women interviewed indicated that they felt limited to their own department, both professionally and socially and they were not content with this limitation. This is in agreement with what Bucher and Stelling (1977) found to be the case in a graduate biochemistry department.

The twenty-four women reaffirmed what the literature had to say about the importance of the faculty. None of the women said they had a single role model of either sex, while several lamented the lack of a female role model. Dresshaus (1984) maintained that role models for women need not be other women,

however, she felt that women role models were more effective than male role models for women. Based on the study of the importance of the sex of the faculty role model on a student's self-concept Gilbert, et al (1983) conclude that women students having female role models reported higher satisfaction than did either men or women students having a male role model. In a more recent study by Gilbert (1985), of male and female graduate students in psychology, he concluded that women role models may give women more support and encouragement than they get from others. As can be seen from Table 1 (page 50), there are few women faculty members for the twenty-four women in this study to emulate. Table 1 also indicates that the greatest percentage of women were in department B and D -- the departments with the most satisfied students.

Many of the women in this study, especially in departments A and C felt neglected by the faculty. Hite (1985) reported that women graduate students experienced stress and lack of motivation to continue because male faculty members gave them little encouragement. It is not known how many women students at the university studied for this dissertation then left these four departments because of lack of faculty support.

#### Implications for Further Research

The literature on older women generally portrays them as insecure, lacking self-confidence and feeling out of place (Fisher-Thompson, 1980; Cross, 1974; Douvan, 1970; McCune, 1974). This exploratory study does not support that characterization. While the older women certainly experienced

the traditional trials and tribulations of graduate school (e.g., first-year difficulty, the inaccessibility of faculty, the pressure of publishing expectations, etc.) they articulated no particular anxieties that could be attributed to simply being older. However, this study sampled only women who had completed one year of graduate school. It may be that women who are older and who most feel insecure, and who not only manifest a lack of confidence but also feel out of place, drop out prior to completing one year. Research on older women who drop out of graduate school would add significantly to the results of this study.

An unanticipated finding of this research study was the degree to which the first year of graduate study was identified as being significantly more difficult than the following years. As this was not a focus of this study, the interview data lacks sufficient information and clarity to account for the difficulty. However, what data there was suggests that the difficulty had less to do with the traditional academic rigors of graduate school, and more to do with issues of gender, with appropriate advising, with clear department expectations, and with the relationships between faculty members and new students. Research on first year students, including drop-outs, may reveal invaluable information as to how graduate school can better serve new graduate students. And it is of no small significance that pieces of data from this study indicate that better service to first year students may have very little, if any, financial implications.

If one's academic department is of major importance in the process of professional socialization then more information is needed on the incentives and constraints within departments that either foster or inhibit the process of professional socialization. Research is needed to clarify specific aspects of the departmental environment (e.g., faculty support, clearly defined requirements) that are perceived to be important in the process of professional socialization. If these issues are important, departments, without restructuring or changing requirements, could help students succeed by providing more effective interaction and clearly stated requirements.

This research does confirm the importance of peer interaction within the department for emotional support, reduction of anxiety and the provision of information among students. Some of the older women, who are no longer taking classes, make it a point to keep up peer interaction by coming to campus for both social and professional reasons. This would indicate that departments ought to make provisions -- formally and/or informally -- for such interaction.

This study began with the assumption that graduate student status, like undergraduate student status, was primarily undertaken by young adults at the beginning of their career cycle. Consequently older returning women would experience some of the pressures, sanctions and insecurities that accompany the violation of age norms -- the so-called "off time" phenomenon.

Such was not the case with these respondents. The simple application of research on the experience of "reentry" women in undergraduate programs to the experiences of older women in graduate programs appears inappropriate. Some older women are already professionals seeking further training. Some are teachers or researchers and hence are not "reentering" a youth experience. Further research on the experiences of older graduate students will need a more complex developmental model. As in most research on adult development, that model should consider simultaneously factors in the individual's career cycle and family cycle as well as factors in personal development.

## Appendix

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I Establish Rapport: Provide background information on research. Discuss confidentiality, use of tapes; discuss informed consent form and have it signed. Thank subject for participating and ask if there are any questions before beginning. We will begin with a few questions about you and your department before discussing the process of professional socialization and peers in your department. If you do not understand any question or you want further clarification of an issue, please do not hesitate to ask. Ready? (10 minutes)

II General Background Questions About Subject and Her Major Department. Now for a few questions about you and your department (15 minutes)

1. I am wondering why you decided to pursue a graduate degree at this time in your life? Probes:
  - 1a. Why this field?
  - 1b. Why this time?
2. What is it like to be a graduate student in your field at this time? Probes:
  - 2a. For you personally?
  - 2b. What about the social climate?
  - 2c. Do you regret having returned?
  - 2d. Why do you say that.
3. Tell me a little about how things are different in school this year than last in terms of mastering the skills and knowledge of your field.
  - 3a. Now please tell me a little about how things are different in school this year in terms of interacting with other students.
4. What seems to be the major hurdles to be mastered in your department?

III Professional Socialization: Professional socialization refers to the mastery of skills, knowledge and theory. There are, in addition, also values, norms, traditions and even life styles associated with many professions. I'd like to get some of your thoughts on these values, norms, traditions, etc. If you have no questions, we will begin this section. (30 minutes)

5. Tell me what you think are some of the values in your profession?
  6. What do you see are the particular attitudes, norms, traditions and traits of the members of your profession that you have especially noticed?
  7. What does it mean to you to become a professional in your field?
  8. How much of the value system, including the norms, traditions, etc. do you think you have already adopted?  
Probes:
    - 8a. Tell me why you feel this way.
    - 8b. Do you ever wonder if you will be accepted as "one of them"?
    - 8c. Why do you say that?
  9. Would you say some of your fellow students in your department are more "professional" already? Probes:
    - 9a. In what ways?
    - 9b. What traits make you say one person is more professional than another?
    - 9c. Can you tell me about that please?
  10. Can you tell me how you think you learn these values, norms, traditions, etc. that are the informal aspects of professional socialization? Probes:
    - 10a. Where do you learn them?
    - 10b. Who teaches you these things?
- IV Peers: Now I'd like to spend some time talking about other students in your department. We'll look at some factual data. We'll share some of your impressions about the other graduate student in your department, as well as look at your relationship to these other students. Ready? (30 minutes)
11. Tell me about the opportunities to get to know other students in your department? Probes:
    - 11a. What about social contexts?
    - 11b. What about academic interaction?
  12. Do you feel interacting with other students in your department is important? Probe:
    - 12a. Why do you feel this way?

Suppose a prospective candidate in your department approached you and asked you what the other graduate students in your department were like.

- 13. How would you describe your peers?
- 13a. How would you describe your peers in terms of skills, interests, lifestyles or abilities?
- 13b. Would you say these students are the same age, or sex as you?
- 14. What sort of relationships do you have with those graduate students in your department that you know best?
- 15. What do you feel you have learned from the other graduate students in your department?
- 16. Do you feel that peers are more, less or of the same importance to you as the faculty during your years here? Probe:
- 16a. Tell me more about that, please.
- 17. The last question in this section deals with your feelings. Have you ever felt out of place due to your age or sex or both? Probe:
- 17a. Could you tell me something about this.

V Link of Professional Socialization to Peer Relationships:  
 Five years from now, presumably you and your fellow students will have become professionals and maybe even colleagues. I am wondering if these fellow students play any particular role now in helping or hindering you in the process of becoming a professional. So, I'd like to ask a few questions about how you see your peers in the process of professional socialization.  
 (20 minutes)

- 18. Can you think of any incidents in which your fellow students in your department were especially helpful to you? Probe:
- 18a. What kinds of situations?
- 18b. What kinds of help was involved?
- 18c. Does this happen often?

19. Can you think of any incidents in which fellow graduate students in your department (maybe unknowingly) made life more difficult for you?
- 19a. What was the added pressure like?
- 19b. Does this happen often?
20. Do you feel your fellow graduate students reaffirm your abilities, skills, hopes and plans for you? Probe:
- 20a. Could we discuss this more.
21. Do you see your peers as fellow sufferers, and/or competitors and/or friends or a combination of any or all of these traits? Probe?
- 21a. Tell me why you've said that.
22. Have you ever felt that any of the other graduate students tried to make you conform? Probe:
- 22a. What was your response?
23. Lastly, do you feel that you belong to a group of other graduate students that you regard as "us" as opposed to the "them" that is the faculty or graduate students in other departments? Probe:
- 23a. Please tell me more about why you feel this way.

VI Closure: Now that we have almost finished with the interview, I wonder if there might be anything you would like to add about:

24. The demands and the interpersonal climate in your department.
- 24a. The particular values, attitudes, norms and life styles that are part of your chosen profession.
- 24b. The process of becoming a professional and how your fellow graduate students may play a role in this process.
- 24c. Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experiences as a graduate student in your department?

Thank you. Needless to say, the results of this survey will be made available to you upon request.



APPENDIX CFIRST LETTER TO SUBJECTS

September 3, 1985

Dear :

I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education here on campus. My dissertation contains an analysis of the perceived relationships of peers during the process of professional socialization in graduate school. To that end, I will be interviewing two groups of women in graduate school: women twenty-five years of age or younger, and women forty years of age or older. The only requirement is that these women have had to be in attendance at the University, full or part-time, for at least a year.

The tape recorded interviews will be held on campus and should take no more than an hour and a half each. Anonymity is, of course, guaranteed to all participants.

Should you be willing to volunteer for an interview, or have any questions, please either drop me a note or call me any time (day or evening). Unfortunately, I will not be in Amherst this weekend (September 7th & 8th).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lois Langner  
248 Prince House (campus mail, no postage necessary)  
University of Massachusetts  
(54) 6-9986

APPENDIX DLETTER OF CONFIRMATION

Dear :

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for consenting to be interviewed, and to remind you that we will meet:

Enclosed please find the brief demographic questionnaire I mentioned when we spoke on the phone. If you would kindly fill it out and bring it with you to the interview, I would be most grateful.

If for any reason, you cannot keep our appointment, please call me at (54) 6-9986.

I look forward to meeting you, and thank you again for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Lois Langner

APPENDIX E  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that I am taking part in a study of the perceived relationships of peers in the process of professional socialization in my department. I understand that this interview will be kept confidential and any contribution I make to this research will be reported in such a way that I will remain anonymous.

I have been assured that no one will have access to the tape recording of this interview other than the researcher, and that the tapes will be destroyed within two years of this date.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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