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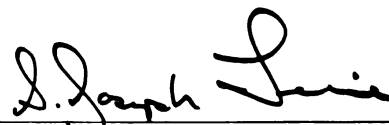
Emergent Status Passage: A Case  
Study of Transition, Change and Adult  
Learning in a Religious Order  
of Women in the Catholic Church

presented by

Zohra Miriam Gideon

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

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EMERGENT STATUS PASSAGE:  
A CASE STUDY OF TRANSITION, CHANGE  
AND ADULT LEARNING IN A RELIGIOUS ORDER  
OF WOMEN IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

By  
Zohra Miriam Gideon

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## ABSTRACT

### EMERGENT STATUS PASSAGE: A CASE STUDY OF TRANSITION, CHANGE AND ADULT LEARNING IN A RELIGIOUS ORDER OF WOMEN IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

By

Zohra Miriam Gideon

The research is a case study of experiential and intellectual learning involved in an emergent status passage in the Catholic Church. Rapid changes in contemporary society are triggering and creating many transitions to new roles and new statuses. The primary theoretical focus of the research is an exploratory, descriptive case study of change, transition and adult learning in a dynamic religious order of women as they faced and grappled with the effects of the mandates of Vatican II for renewal and relevancy.

The sample was twenty finally professed nuns from a midwest religious order in the age group 35 to 50. Six broad areas of inquiry served to guide the research:

#### Demographics

Triggers: Specific events for learning

Preparation: Anxiety and Upheaval

Transition: Pain and Coping

Synthesis: Adaptation and Satisfaction

Evaluation: Implications for the Future.

The research instrument was an intensive interview structured by an interview guide that included standardized scheduled, standardized nonscheduled, and nonstandardized questions. The study has a qualitative focus and uses grounded theory methodology. Data were presented under the six broad areas of inquiry. Quotations from the nuns were widely used so that the emergent status passage was documented in the words of the subjects, themselves.

Conclusions drawn from the data showed that education and leadership played a major part in the manner in which they managed their status passage. Specific events that triggered the learning were in the areas of identity, ministry/jobs, and life crisis.

These women have faced ambiguity in terms of their future and data suggest the principles of bonding and networking are now being used towards defining a corporate identity as women religious, rather than of a particular order. A formidable powerful force of highly dedicated women, unafraid to act is being formed which may have implications for the future of the Catholic Church.

To Bruce, with love.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My gratitude and appreciation are extended to my major professor, committee chairman, and dissertation director, Dr. S. Joseph Levine for his kindness, patience, understanding and guidance throughout my program. Also to my committee, Dr. Richard Gardner, Dr. Charles Jackson and Professor Ruth Koehler for their time, interest and wise, effective suggestions.

To my mentors Marylou Bagley with whom everything began, and Dr. Maura Pierson, who from the first time we met on campus during my first term and her last, gave me so freely of her time and shared so generously, her experience and wisdom.

To Dr. Charles A. Burch, Chief of Psychiatric Social Services, Sinai Hospital for making it possible for me to arrange time for my classes.

To Bruce, beloved physician, best friend and mate, my love and thanks.

To the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a most sincere thank you for their generosity, warmth and support from beginning to end.

## PROLOGUE

Dear Reader,

Born and raised in a traditional Indian family, I came to the United States for my Master's degree, dressed in a sari with my hair in two long braids down my back and a caste mark. My thinking was very traditional. Three years later, I had my Master's degree and was working at my first job as a clinical social worker in after-care in a mental health agency in Detroit. In spite of three years in this country and a Master's degree, I still dressed and looked the same and my thinking also was still essentially the same.

Among my patients that year was a brilliant young male who had a fixation about being a Moslem. He would come to visit me dressed in beautiful suits, but always wore a middle-Eastern headdress which made him look conspicuous and a little bizarre. One of the treatment goals with him was to have him dress a little more conservatively before he started looking for a job. One day, while I was talking to him about this, he looked at me and said, not rudely, but in a matter-of-fact way, "What about you? Why do you still wear a sari?" Change had started for me four years ago with the decision to come to the United States, but the trigger that started effective learning for me was that remark, as I was forced to look at myself as I had never done before.

Changes and effective learning took place in all the major

areas of my life. I changed fairly soon after to Western clothes for work and I cut my hair. My identity, my interpersonal and work relationships all changed. I went through a period of profound excitement and deep trauma. Intellectual and experiential learning for me was rapid and in many areas. Since then, I have been deeply interested in what happens when an individual is confronted by massive change, what triggers actual learning, and in what areas does learning take place. This study is a result of that interest.

Zohra Miriam Gideon

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women in the United States have been in a period of accelerated transition, both psychological and social, since World War II. Rapid technological and social change have created the need to renew existing abilities or acquire new proficiencies. Areas of expertise need constant reassessment. Today's adult appears caught between the human inclination to resist change and the pervasive survival pressures that are insisting on updating and relevancy. Change is not an option--it is a necessity. Carol B. Aslanian and Henry M. Brickell, in their research on Americans in Transition (1980) found that 83 percent of the adults in their study learn in order to cope with some change in their lives. Being in transition from one role in life to another, from one status in life to another, requires learning --learning new information, new skills, new attitudes, new values and new roles. The learning can come before, during or after life's transition. "Frequently a specific event in an adult's life triggers the transition and, thus, the learning. If the learning isn't accomplished, the adult cannot make the transition to the new status effectively" (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980, p. 33).

In addition, Crow and Crow stated in 1963:

The concept of change is inherent in the concept of learning. Any change in behavior implies that learning is taking place or has taken place. Learning that occurs during the process of change can be referred to as the learning process (p. 1).

While many learning theorists see learning as a process by which behavior is changed, shaped or controlled, others see it in terms of fulfillment of potential within the perspective of humanism. Humanistic adult educators are concerned with the development of the whole person, with special emphasis on the emotional and affective dimensions of their personality. Their focus is on experiential learning. Their emphasis is person-oriented. Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, well known proponents of this philosophy, see education, i.e., learning, as a means of fostering self-actualizing and fully functioning individuals.

Malcolm Knowles, one of the most influential educators of our time, has developed the term "androgogy" to describe the key characteristics of adult learning. Adults typically approach learning experiences determined to control the process in their search for information that will lend itself to the solution of existing problems. Unlike children, adults, with their wealth of living experience, are likely to seek information that will assist them in seeking practical solutions to problems that frequently relate to their own process of development in their life cycle.

One segment of society, faced with tremendous change and the need to learn and acquire new roles, are the religious orders of the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council, with its mandate for renewal and relevancy, had a massive impact, not only on organization and governance of religious orders, but on every major area of the intimate and public lives of the individuals who were part of these

religious orders. After Vatican II, many of the predictable values, goals, roles, missions and structures that for centuries had provided the security of unchanging continuity, were gone.

Religious orders provide a rich resource for knowledge of adults as learners, when faced with change and transition. Yuhas (1976) states, "No other area of Church life has responded so totally to the challenge of renewal as women religious of the Catholic Church" (p. 216). The transition of the pre-Vatican II robbed inhabitants of the cloisters, with religious names, whose every moment was regimented and accounted for, to a sister of the eighties, with very often nothing that immediately distinguishes her as she goes about her mission in society, required complex adult learning at intellectual and experiential levels.

#### Purpose

Glaser and Strauss (1971), who gave us the first formal theory of status passage, characterize the emergent passage as one which is created, discovered and shaped by the parties as they go along. San Giovanni (1978) expanding on their work, added another dimension to the definition of emergent passage--one in which persons either create new roles or modify the institutionalized pathways of existing ones. Gail Sheehy (1981), referring to the anatomy of a passage, states, "Examination of the most fruitful passages made by people who emerge as pathfinders, indicates that the process consists of four important phases" (p. 78). The first stage, anticipation, involves preparing to meet transitions. The second stage she calls separation

and incubation.

Change always involves loss. Part of the experience of the separation phase is, of necessity, some degree of anxiety and depression. In this acute and often painful phase, we separate from a former stage and give up aspects of an old self so that an expanded personal identity can take its place (p. 83).

The third phase Sheehy calls expansion--stretching, plunging into new territory, being in flux. The expansion phase is a demanding one, but new possibilities present themselves for personal and moral development, and for progress towards reconciling some of the recurrent conflicts of maturation. (For instance, dependency versus autonomy, risk versus security, pleasing others versus self-validation, personal status versus social responsibility.) Sheehy refers to the fourth stage as the incorporation phase. After the hurly-burly of expansion comes a resting, dormant phase, during which we attempt to process what has changed and integrate the meaning of these changes into our philosophy of life.

It is this type of role passage--transition in relation to change--that needs to be explored in the context of learning strategies, in view of the fact that rapid changes in contemporary society are triggering and creating many such transitions to new roles and new statuses. Minorities, youth, women, handicapped, all are questioning their roles in society and beginning to forge new social structures and new images for themselves. The explicit and primary theoretical focus of the research was an exploratory descriptive case study of change, transition and adult learning in a dynamic religious order of women as they faced and grappled with the effects of the mandate of

Vatican II, and embarked on a journey that questioned the major facets of their personal and corporate identity, their roles as women religious and, indeed, their very reason to exist. In an attempt to discover the patterns of adult learning at very personal levels during this passage, a research survey was devised in the form of an intensive interview, combining standardized scheduled, standardized nonscheduled, and nonstandardized questions (Richardson et al., 1965) to seek information from twenty nuns in a midwest congregation, the sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHMs). The sole mission of this order, until World War II, was education.

Intellectual and experiential learning is explored and described in the following major areas that comprise the components of change and learning:

Triggers:	Specific events that triggered the need to learn
Preparation for change:	Anxiety and upheaval
Transition:	Pain and coping
Synthesis:	Adaptation and satisfaction
Evaluation:	Implications for the future

These major areas have been derived by integrating and synthesizing the work of Aslanian and Brickell (1980), Gould (1978), Knox (1977) and Sheehy (1981). In addition, a demographic profile was compiled.

These major areas of inquiry served as a sensitizing tool for presentation and interpretation of findings. They also served as the

as the organizing principles around which the study was shaped.

### Background to the Study

The sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, Michigan, trace their origins back to 1845. Located in the midwest, the congregation is an integral part of the history of the Catholic Church in Detroit, the fifth largest diocese in the United States. The congregation began by serving French immigrants along the River Raisin in Monroe, Michigan.

Responsibilities for the affairs of the community rest with the officers who are elected by the membership. Their controlling agent is from within. The financial affairs of the congregation are the concern of the entire congregation. Its relationship to the broader Church resembles that of state and business corporations. The sisters do enjoy independence, yet, the normative beliefs that permeate the entire structure make it unique in secular society (Seferella, 1981, p. 56).

The order is composed of highly educated, professional competent and articulate women. The IHM congregation, in pre-Vatican II days, was confined to one major ministry, namely, education. By early 1981, over 90 percent of the sisters held degrees over the Bachelor's level. Over the years, but especially in the 1950's and 1960's, a number of sisters were sent to universities in the United States, Canada, and Europe to acquire Doctorates of Philosophy, Psychology, Education, Natural and Social Sciences and Theology. With the Second Vatican Council, many sisters moved out of formal classroom



teaching, into religious education, pastoral ministries, and social services. While the knowledge and skills acquired as teachers were readily adapted to these new ministries, some required special courses and programs. The congregation adapted its policies to meet new needs in ministry, and sisters began taking workshops and special programs to prepare for these ministries. Because of the emphasis on education as its mission during pre-Vatican II years, those admitted to the order needed to have a demonstrated academic proficiency.

According to Ebaugh (1977), before Vatican Council II, religious orders in the United States were quite homogeneous, both in exterior manifestations and in the purpose and spirit that permeated them. The structure and authority in religious orders was clearly defined and strictly hierarchical in nature. Members of an order elected a group of representatives known as the "general chapter," which served as the major governing group of the order. The representatives elected the Mother General who, as the highest official in the order, wielded considerable authority in the administration of the order. The Mother General, in addition to her other functions, had the power to assign sisters to do jobs they were to perform, to decide where and with whom they were to live, what daily schedule they were to follow, and who was to be the local superior in each house in which the sister resided.

The life of a nun in these orders was highly prescribed and routinized. Formal and informal mechanisms of control were elaborated to govern the nuns' thoughts, beliefs and behavior. Enforced

isolation from the outside world and rigorous resocialization within the religious community served to generate the radical change in identity, commitment, and behavior required to be a nun. The making of a nun was the result of careful, extended resocialization that took place over the three distinct stages. At each stage, the young woman was encouraged to give up her prior self-image, commitments, world view, and learn to find rewarding those values demanded by her role as nun.

The postulancy was the first stage of this preparation and lasted, generally, for one year. As a postulant, the young woman was given a black or blue uniform, stripped of her personal possessions, strictly limited to infrequent contacts with family and friends, and segregated with other postulants, who collectively began to learn the general expectations of being a nun. If she successfully completed this initial period, the postulant proceeded to the next stage--the novitiate. The novitiate year was one of total isolation from anyone except other nuns. In a rich ceremonial rite of passage, novices received the habit or dress of a nun, a religious name, and a new identity as brides of Christ. This year was dedicated to prayer, introspection and preparation for formal entrance into the order. The final stage of becoming a nun was termed professed religious life. If she was officially accepted by the Mother General and the council, the nun took vows of poverty and chastity and obedience, which were renewed annually for a specific number of years, ranging from three to six years, depending on the order. During these years, the nuns

continued to be closely supervised. Their access to the outside world through personal contact, exposure to mass media, and physical mobility, was highly regulated. The vows required renunciation of material goods and services, the abandonment of all sexual activity, willing and complete submission to the authority of her superiors. If her dedication to this way of life was personally acceptable to her and her superiors, she then made a permanent commitment to religious life, and took final or perpetual vows which bound her, for life, to God and community. To be a nun, then, prior to Vatican II, was to live in total institution that demanded complete conformity of thought, belief and action. A nun had to abandon her prior identity and way of life, and willingly take on new modes of being and living. (San Giovanni, 1978)

If the Monroe congregation differs from other congregations, it is because, in pre-Vatican II days, it was considered nationally to be one of the strictest congregations among active orders, even though its membership was not confined to a national or ethnic group.

From October 11, 1962, to December 8, 1965, the Vatican Council held sessions to discuss all facets of Christian life, at the request of Pope John XXIII. The Vatican called bishops, cardinals, theologians and representatives from various leadership groups, to assess the major role and mission of the Roman Catholic Church in the world. This type of gathering has occurred approximately every two hundred years. Although there are sixteen promulgated texts, five of the decrees attempted to redefine the role of women religious, some

indirectly and others directly. The most important to the study is the decree of Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life. In this decree (Perfectae Caritatis, October 26, 1965, Article 2), the Vatican II encouraged every religious order to analyze its goals and structure by: 1) continuous return to the source of Christian life, and 2) an adjustment of the order to the changed conditions of the times. In addition, specific changes were mandated by Pope Paul VI, in his letter, Motu Proprio: Ecclesiae Sanctae, August 6, 1966), to all major superiors (heads of orders). These specified: a) a special renewal chapter should reconvene within three years to promote adaptation to renewal; b) experimentation with diverse forms of life-style should be initiated; and c) interim by-laws could replace formerly approved constitutions of the order. Vatican II also declared, in the Universal Call to Holiness, that the calling to religious life (nuns and priests), hitherto considered the highest of all callings and reason for them to be set apart as special and elite, was equal to other callings, such as the calling to the holy state of matrimony. Vatican II had a major impact on the Catholic Church and, most especially, on religious orders and, from 1965 until the mid-seventies, there was a major exodus of men and women from religious orders. Those who stayed were faced with the massive challenge of critical examination and experimentation with alternate structures, different roles, clothes, names, lifestyles and relations that formed the core of life in religious orders. How did they do it? How did they learn to accommodate themselves to the dilemmas, entice-

ments and changes in themselves, and ties with others? What did they learn, what learning strategies were used, by what learning processes did they learn, as they modified existing modes and discovered, created, shaped their new identity in a role passage that had no precedents. How did they organize their learning activities, how did they use their resources for learning and, most importantly, how can other groups undergoing the same struggle benefit from their learning experiences? During the long, painful years of growth and change that followed the Mandates of Vatican II in the call for "aggiornamento," did the educational skills and knowledge acquired during the years when education was the main mission of the order play a major part in how the sisters prepared for change and coped with transition? The research, through exploration and description, will attempt to answer these questions.

### Contributions

The study explores adult learning theory in action. It deals with change that was rapid, expansive and massive, but was planned and self-directed. It focuses on women, the development of a female, feminine identity and, as such, could be of interest to all women in search of their personal identity. It also documents the search of this group for a balance between an individual and a corporate identity. Erikson (1964) calls identity the resiliency of maintaining an essential pattern in the process of change and says that only a well-established identity can tolerate radical change. The documentation of this group's learning experiences as they managed their

passage can be of tremendous help to other institutions faced with inevitable, massive change.

The study explores areas of bonding, networking and community life, all relevant to this era of women's movements. One hundred and twenty-six million Americans who are 25 years of age and older, are in transition continually throughout their lives (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980). Learning experiences from these case studies can be transferred to groups making the transition to new roles.

There is a wealth of literature from sociological and theological research that covers organization, governance and attitudes of the religious, however, there is a paucity of literature on adult learning in this area. The study, in exploring the complex adult learning that took place in a religious order, attempts to close the gap and taps a rich resource for adult learning theory.

#### Definition of Terms

Canonically, there is a distinction between sisters and nuns, and between orders and communities. This is based on the type of commitment made. Throughout the study, popular usage is employed, i.e., nuns and sisters are women who have made the commitment to live in a community or order.

**Communities or religious orders:** These terms are used interchangeably. These are specific congregations of women religious, e.g., the IHMs, the Dominicans, the Adrians.

**Ministry:** Identifies the work the community assumes as its commitment to service.

**Sister Formation:** The training (schooling of a nun), the series of learning experiences given to a candidate in the process of making her final vows to become a finally professed sister.

**Sister Formation Movement:** A permanent organization, started in 1954, that stands for the education of sisters in the formal and nonformal sense, and includes the influences, preservice and inservice, which go to make a better religious and better professional person.

The Sister Formation Movement came into existence in response to a felt need among teaching nuns to integrate the spiritual, social, intellectual and professional apostolic preparation of a sister for her work within the Church, and to do it before this work was begun. Its aim was to develop the sister as a whole person, thereby enabling her to realize her true potential as a woman, sister and professional individual. Sister Mary Emil Penet, an IHM, was a leader in this movement, and traveled the length and breadth of the country, speaking to groups of sisters in orders across the nation, in an attempt to implement the ideals of this movement.

### Assumptions

Basic to the study are the following assumptions:

- 1) That change and transition require learning, that moving from one status of life to another requires the learning of new knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.
- 2) That people have a natural ability to learn. That adults

undertake learning frequently for pragmatic reasons. As their self-concepts change with maturity from dependence in childhood, adults tend to display independence and self-direction as they take the responsibility to learn in order to satisfy immediate needs. The nature of their life experience shapes their concern for utility and application.

- 3) Frequently, a specific event in an adult's life triggers the transition and, thus, the need to learn.
- 4) That intellectual and experiential learning are both necessary for healthy growth and development of an individual.

#### Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter Two is the literature review, drawn from four sources:

1) Adults as Learners; 2) Adult Developmental Theory; 3) Literature on Grounded Theory; and 4) Literature on Women Religious. The literature review serves as a foundation for the study.

Chapter Three is a description of the methodology followed in the study. In Chapter Four the data is presented. Chapter Five presents the summary, implications, and concluding remarks.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the study is to explore adult learning patterns in terms of change and transition. A review of literature is drawn from four sources: 1) Adults as Learners; 2) Adult Development Theory; 3) Grounded Theory and 4) Women Religious.

#### Adults as Learners

Andragogy, the art and science of helping adults to learn, is a contemporary learning theory promoted by Malcolm Knowles. However, the basis for the formation of the assumption that comprised the theory of andragogy took shape in the early 1900's, as educators began to look to the study of the adult learning process. Where previous educational practice viewed education as a function of transferring knowledge, Lindeman (1926) began to understand that learning was, instead, a process--a process of evaluating experience. He came to see that, for adults, experience was a measure of high value. "Experience is the adult learner's textbook. We learn what we do" (p. 9). For Lindeman, the theme of the experiencing adult took the form of a stance that he called his basic law. "You don't change until you do something. You don't change by listening. You don't change by talking. You actually change when something happens to your muscles. When you step or move in a new way, then the change becomes really significant" (Gessner, 1956).

Lindeman perceived that the sense of education, which must initially come from within adults, laid a foundation for a system of education that lasts as long as life itself (Lindeman, 1926). Adult education, Lindeman believed, does not only change a person from illiteracy to literacy, it rebuilds the total structure of life's values (p. xviii).

A contemporary of Lindeman, Dewey (1938), sought to introduce social reform from the platform of a democratic education in common schools. A constant theme in Dewey's writings is a need for a combination of education and personal experience, in the social context, if experience is to be seen as growth-producing. Experience, itself, was not seen by Dewey to be growth-producing. Experience, instead, was classified as educative or miseducative, along a continuum. Experience was seen as educative to the extent that it enabled continued learning in the social milieu, and miseducative to the extent that it stultified, halted or distorted future growth interaction with others. To Dewey (1916), learning that is real is learning that includes the elements of the longitudinal and horizontal, the historic and the social, and the orderly as well as the dynamic.

Dewey would agree with Lindeman that the acquisition of knowledge or skill is a mutual experience, not the imposition of knowledge with later evaluation and conformity to it. In 1938, Dewey proposed that the education that is most likely to produce growth is an education that fosters individuality, advocates learning by doing,

is predicated upon the satisfaction of immediate needs, and exemplifies learning by active involvement, rather than by static imposition of learning techniques and procedures.

Whereas the Freudians and behaviorists who preceded him, looked at psychology analytically, Maslow sought a holistic approach in his investigations of human nature. Maslow's inquiries lent an important understanding of adult behavior that led him to investigate the motivation of individuals to assuage human needs. He understood motivation to mean not an isolated drive, but an involvement of the whole being to bring about satisfaction of a specific desire. To Maslow, a satisfied need is not a motivator. Successive studies indicated to him that the human nature strives, instead, to attain needs not yet realized. Basic to our existence are our needs for food and shelter, closeness, order, safety and love. All other human needs were felt to rest in the satisfaction of those survival requirements. The physical and psychological needs for food and shelter are the most important of all human needs. There would be little desire, Maslow said, to be creatively productive or to contribute to society in a meaningful way if these needs were not attended.

Maslow (1954) proposed that when survival needs have been met, other needs arise in the area of safety, stability, dependency, protection, freedom from fear, from anxiety, and chaos. These represent the human need for structure, order, law and limits. Only then, Maslow suggested, do belongingness and love needs emerge. A human will then "hunger" for affectionate relations with people in

general, namely, for a place in his group or family, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal. Also central to the human condition is a desire for a stable, firmly-based, high evaluation of ourselves in the form of self-respect or self-esteem, and the esteem of others. Maslow (1954) proposed that the satisfaction of self-esteem needs "leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, adequacy, being useful and necessary to the world" (p. 45).

The highest and most rarely attained need is self-actualization. It is only meant when all other needs are met. Maslow (1954) described this as

an inner restlessness of what an individual is fitted for, what we must do to be at peace with ourselves. It is what we must do to be true to our individualized nature. It refers to a desire for fulfillment--a tendency to become actualized in what we are potentially--to become everything that we're capable of becoming (p. 46).

In later years, Maslow (1971) defined self-actualization as "full humanness." He continued, over the years of his life to search the depths of human understanding and found, from personal experience that, in becoming more fully human, life's experiences have far more importance than classes, listening to lectures and memorizing. He believed that educators could best facilitate their assessment of the learner's needs if they, themselves, experientially understood the social and psychological factors that combine to form the world in which the learner lives. He felt that a learning atmosphere that reflects safety, encouragement and self-respect, is likely to produce a synergistic advantage to both individuals and society. "With

increased personal responsibility for one's personal life, and with a rational set of values to guide one's choosing, people would begin to actively change the society in which they lived" (p. 188).

Like Maslow, Carl Rogers felt that interpersonal interaction is most effectively accomplished in an atmosphere that engenders a creative, active, sensitive, empathetic, nonjudgmental and listening stance. These qualities can speak clearly to educators, whether the adult participates in formally structured classes, small, informal groups, or touches base with educators as infrequently as resources in self-directed learning activities. Malcolm Knowles (1973) observed that both Maslow and Rogers acknowledge their affinity with the work of Gordon Allport (1955, 1960, 1961) in defining growth not as a process of being shaped, but as a process of becoming. The essence of their conception of learning is captured in this brief statement by Rogers: "I should like to point out one final characteristic of those individuals as they strive to discover and become themselves. It is that the individual seems to become more content to be a process rather than a product" (1980, p. 42). Both Maslow and Rogers reflected the humanistic approach to building an atmosphere where interaction takes place in a setting where adults take responsibility for their own actions in terms of their own choosing. Rogers (1980) mirrored the philosophies of both Dewey and Lindeman, that to be growth producing, learning takes place with the knowledge of the individual's responsibility to the community as a whole. This central premise is summarized in the following statement:

I have found that if I can help bring about a climate marked by genuineness, prizing and understanding, then exciting things happen. Persons and groups in such a climate move away from rigidity and towards flexibility, away from static living toward process living, away from dependence toward autonomy, from defensiveness toward self-acceptance, away from being predictable toward an unpredictable creativity. They exhibit living proof of an actualizing tendency (pp. 43-44).

Rogers echoed Dewey, Lindeman and Maslow in his belief that a combination of cognitive and affective personal experience leads to experiential learning. In a climate of safety and trust, Rogers proposed a person-centered learning, where facilitators learn, together with adults, by providing learning experiences that foster learning and cooperation with others in an atmosphere enriched by caring feedback. Both Rogers and Maslow posited that if there is safety, then growth is possible. Rogerian philosophy proposes that individuals must have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. Rogers sees choices about learning decisions reflected by experience in adult life that are made in a climate of a caring community, as essential, if adults are to grow in a changing society.

Self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, concern about personal growth and development, and an orientation to learning that is both problem-centered and pragmatic, are concepts that are central to the androgogical approach. The concept of androgogy, developed by Malcolm Knowles, is predicated upon the assumption that the majority of experiences of adults predispose them to the need to be self-directing in their learning activities, and to be perceived as self-directing by others. Building upon teaching theory and behavioral and humanistic psychology, Knowles proposed that physical and psychological

needs in the self-directed learner, combined with experience and ability, create an interior disposition that is receptive to continued learning. Andragogy emphasizes the development of an attitude towards self-directed inquiry in which the individual is capable of creativity using learning resources to satisfy unique learning needs.

The three characteristics that Knowles (1950) believed to be essential to the learning process are a desire to learn, a willingness to expand the efforts needed to learn, and a sense of satisfaction that is received in the learning process. In these characteristics, Knowles reflected Dewey's early summation of the processes of need, effort and satisfaction. Recognizing that there are numerous ways to learn, Knowles would agree with both Maslow and Rogers that an understanding of learner needs is essential and that successful programs start where people are.

Andragogy as a learning theory centers about the concept that self-directed learning is proactive learning. Proactive learning moves the responsibility for the initiative and sense of discovery from the teacher to the learner. Traditionally, pedagogy requires the learner to react to teacher stimuli. Reactive learning has, thus to be considered as a poor preparation for lifelong learning. The proactive approach is begun by the learner's attempt to meet needs and to satisfy goals (Knowles, 1973). It is Knowles' opinion that experiences that involve the individual most directly in self-directed inquiry are apt to produce the greatest learning.

In reflecting Dewey and Maslow, Knowles (1970) suggested that

societal and institutional needs and goals will have to be congruent with the needs and goals of the individuals as attempts are made to offer learning that will enable self-directed learners to develop in directions that are beneficial to themselves and to the society as a whole. Knowles would agree with Rogers that it is most important to establish a climate for learning that characterizes trust, informality, openness, mutual respect, warmth and caring. It is also important to engage the learners in diagnosing their own needs for learning. Knowles (1973) found success in using a learning contract that allows the self-directed learner to establish needs on the basis of a contemporary model. The learning contract that is drawn and the strategy for their use are evidence of accomplishment and, finally, a criterion to be used as a means of validating the learning experience (Pierson, 1983).

In proposing andragogy to expand the theoretical concepts of adult learning, Knowles recognized that an adult brings motivations, goals, expectations and experience to the learning situation that are totally different from children. He suggested that adult educators recognize not only these differences but, also, the adult need to be self-directing in the quest for the development of their own resources.

Working in the field of educational psychology, Cronback (1963) developed a format of five human needs that are directly related to learning. Cronback asserts that these needs must be present and satisfied if effective learning is to take place:

- 1) The need for competence and self-respect. This embodies the intention to know one's strengths and weaknesses and to set realistic



goals.

2) The need for independence, which encompasses such motives as the desire for autonomous thought and action and the striving for creative expression.

3) Approval by peers.

4) Approval by authority. Cronback (1963) states that social interactional factors are directly evident in these two needs, that seem to conform to the socializing process that is part of learning and change. The motive to learn stems partly from the learner's perceptions of others' attitudes towards him, perceptions that serve as an impetus to go on with learning for intrinsic value and to garner approval from colleagues and authorities.

5) Desire for affection. This shows how significant learning evolves from serious interpersonal relationships. The basic principal is that an experience that is associated with other gratifications come to be desired for itself. As an individual is involved in a cooperative, intimate, or otherwise satisfying relationships, the gains coming from the experience encourage him to seek other relationships that may yield similar satisfactions. The possibility that the environment cannot or will not gratify this motive introduces the issue of contingency. Cronback observes that, from time to time, changes in the social surroundings or in the demands placed on the person, make it impossible for need satisfaction to occur by usual means. This condition frustrates the person's motives and calls for the kind of new learning that will fulfill these motives in different ways. If opportunities are available, these changes may spur new

growth and a greater elaboration of learning potentials, competency, and eventual need fulfillment.

Howard Goldstein (1981) describes strategic learning as learning that can be understood as a deliberate activity or problem-solving venture enacted to achieve a more or less preconceived objective. It could involve acquisition of knowledge and data for decision-making purposes, improvement of technical or motoric skills, for performance purposes, master of steps or procedures to achieve greater effectiveness, control or responsibility, or development of wisdom to enhance self-esteem or motivation. In any case, learning experience expresses a particular intent, narrowly or broadly conceived.

Goldstein (1981) further describes tactical learning as learning that involves the maneuvers required to adjust to unexpected contingencies of living. It is, in some ways, more responsive or reactive than strategic learning, inasmuch as it concerns chance happenings that interfere with plans and intentions. The person calls upon his practiced techniques for problem resolution to arrive at proper decisions and to find other alternatives or to determine what other information might be needed.

Goldstein (1981) describes adaptive learning as referring to an over-arching form of learning and can be used interchangeably with social learning and existential learning, since all three terms connote the involvement of self, one's construction of reality, and the implications of learning for the person's present and future place in

his world. He states that adaptive learning serves as a nexus, i.e., an experience that affects the individual's interactions with his environment, as perceptions of his past are linked with his projections of the future. This learning is integral to making choices and decisions and to the quality of relationships with others, and to the kind of planning that shapes future conditions. It is employed in the seemingly minor decisions that are part of day-to-day living and, also, when more radical determinations need to be made.

#### Summary of Literature on Adults as Learners

Observations in the early 1900's led educators to propose that adults were not only able to learn, but that they appeared to enjoy the learning process when certain conditions were met. They seemed to learn most effectively when they learned by doing and by experiencing the learning process as they became involved in it. Learning conditions were perceived to be most favorable when teachers were viewed as facilitators of knowledge, who aided adults in an atmosphere of mutual interrelationship. In such a milieu, adults could see that the combination of their life experiences, seen in the light of new knowledge, could unit to both promote and enhance their social interaction. Viewing humans holistically, development psychologists have suggested that the total need of the individual is seen to encompass the physical and psychological. The total need can be seen as a powerful motivator toward the fulfillment of needs that have not yet been met. Although the combination of an unmet need in an adult can give rise to an educative opportunity, this is not always

the case. The atmosphere that is seen as most conducive to learning is seen as that where a learning environment is created that fosters the self-respect of the individual, as well as promotes mutual esteem of the others involved in the learning situation. These qualities are most apt to lead to educative experiences that enhance self-confidence, self-worth, ego strength, a sense of awareness and a sense of usefulness in the world.

Developmental psychology has proposed that adult life cycle is composed of growth stages, interim periods of tranquility between periods of predictable crisis can offer periods of time that are seen as favorable teaching opportunities for those educators who are prepared to elarn with adults as, together, they meet developmental challenges. Current adult learning theory builds upon the assumption that today's adults can be seen as expecting to become involved in their own learning process. Their self-direction, born of life experiences, leads them to prefer inquiry of a practical nature. It is their natural inclination, therefore, to display persistence and responsibility in their quest of both traditional and nontraditional resources, and their concern for utility and application.

#### Adult Development Theory

Adult development is a theoretical perspective for the consideration of adult behavior and motivation as characterized by the division of adulthood into a series of age-related groups, with each stage having a critical task or crisis requiring resolution (Erikson, 1950; Havighurst, 1957; Gould, 1978; Sheehy, 1976 and 1981). In a

theory of ego-development, Erikson laid out eight stages of human development, three of which apply to adults. Those applying to adults were broadly defined in terms of years and crisis for ego expansion as:

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Ego Crisis</u>
Early Adulthood	Intimacy vs. ego isolation
Middle Adulthood	Generativity vs. stagnation
Late Adulthood	Ego integrity vs. sense of despair

Havighurst (1957) linked Erikson's definition of adult development to education, referring to the ego expansion crisis as a developmental task and defining education as the effort of society to help an individual achieve certain tasks when the body is ripe, as society requires, and the self is ready to achieve a certain task. When this happens, the teachable moment has come. Knox (1977) in a massive work, expanded Havighurst's concept, refining it in the light of the considerable research on the subject conducted over the intervening twenty year period between these two publications. Knox, writing for practitioners who worked with adults, attempted to clarify the concept of adult development and touched on a multitude of aspects affecting its course. Knox built from the crisis model of adult development broadly sketched by Erikson and refined and related it to the more traditional cultural setting of the 1950's encompassed by Havighurst. His work epitomized the complexity of adult development as a growing area of concern and interest.

Knox characterized adult development as a process, the orderly

and sequential changes in characteristics and attitudes that adults experience over time. Research backing up this view has been conducted by Levinson (1978), Vaillant (1977), Gould (1978), Sheehy (1976 and 1981), and Lowenthal et al (1975). Like Havighurst, Knox sees the work of education as linked to individual adults in their encounter with external and internal change. A study, Americans in Transition, by Aslanian and Brickell (1980), corroborated his view. They found that in a national representative sample of 2,000 U.S. residents, 83 percent describe changes in their lives as reasons for learning. Aslanian and Brickell elaborated on the idea that adult life transitions might be reasons for adult learning. They concluded that moving from one status in life to another requires the learning of new knowledge, new skills, and/or new attitudes or values. They concluded that the important thing was not the method, but that learning takes place. Moving from status one to status two is a transition and, during the movement from status one to status two, learning takes place. They also concluded that some identifiable event triggers an adult's decision to learn at a particular point in time. The need and the opportunity and even the desire are necessary, but not sufficient. Something must happen to convert a latent learner into an active learner. The effect of the event is to cause the adult to begin learning at that point.

Concluding that transitions are reasons for learning, Aslanian and Brickell (1980) state that adults see some benefit to be gained by moving from one status to another. The purpose of the learning is to

gain that benefit. The transition is the change in status--past, present or future--that makes learning necessary. The adult needs to become competent at something he or she could not do before in order to succeed in the new status. Citing that triggers are times for learning, they state the trigger may or may not be connected to the transition. Thus the topic of learning may not be related to the triggering event, e.g., a person who is studying accounting may be a traveling salesman who suffered a heart attack. Adaptation to change was the focus of the previously cited authors, for it is a successful resolution of the predictable crisis of life (Sheehy, 1976) which brings an individual to a stable plateau in each period of development. Gould (1978) entitled his research on adults, Transformations. He wrote of growth as "the obligation and opportunity of adulthood." Growth is necessary to cope with a predictable sequence of changing patterns and preoccupation of adult years.

Adulthood is not a plateau; rather, it is a dynamic and changing time for all of us . . . . Adults may view their disturbed feelings at particular periods as a possible sign of progress, as part of their attempted movement toward a fuller adult life (Gould, 1978, p. 14).

Gould found that most problems of adulthood are related, and that adults take a characteristic view during each era.

Vaillant (1977) in his longitudinal study of adult men examines specific ways in which men alter themselves and the world around them and concluded that "health is adaptation." Levinson (1978) linked the changes in adult men's lives to changing seasons, and Sheehy (1976) saw change periods as passages which involve the shedding of a

protective structure for entering a stable, more tranquil period. These researchers varied somewhat in chronological ages they assigned to the various stages of adult development, but basic similarities in the progression of concerns by stage emerged so that there began to be a common language for these stages. In a composite description, Lehman (1978) combined the stages described by Levinson and Gould. Patterns he found evident and common to other researchers already mentioned are setting a life structure in the twenties to establish a place in adult society about 21 to 28 years, re-evaluating that stance at about 30 and digging in again on a path more critically evaluated for one's own personal set about 29 to 36 years, midlife transition period in the early 40's, resulting in a re-orientation toward a second half of life about 37 to 43 years, middle adulthood with physiological and family pattern changes about 44 to 50, late adulthood with the preparation for retirement about 51 to 60, and old age as a period of decreased social activity and increased life review about 61 and over.

Sheehy (1981) speaks of the phases of the passage:

To approach a passage with some confidence that we can guide our way through, it calls for an openness of mind--what we have called the period of anticipation. Once receptive, we are ready for the separation and incubation phase. Separating from the restrictions of a former self, from an old role and set of rules that may have served ideally in the former stage, but will not transfer, intact, to the next one, without inhibiting future development, does not mean our identity will be lost. We are changing, and change means transforming old patterns of thinking and acting. We are about to engage in the untidy but exhilarating process of reassembling our identity. With effort, that identity will be a broader one, composed of some mysterious new personality parts, fitted back together with our more sustaining aspects, but some of the old self--its outgrown "shoulds" and immature



defenses, its former supports and earlier certainties, must be let go. The expansion phase of the passage is the time for deliberately intervening in our own life script. We might ask ourselves, at this point, what can be done, here and now, to change a constricting situation into one alive for expansion? What am I contributing to the situation that is constructive? What am I doing that is destructive? Am I really helpless? Is it an impossible situation, or have I learned helplessness?

The natural resolution of a fully-realized passage is the incorporation phase--a resting. We need time to absorb what has changed and to integrate it into a new way of thinking about ourselves in the world (p. 92).

Glaser and Strauss (1971), in their book, Status Passage, state:

The phenomena of status passages were enduringly called to the attention of social scientists by Arnold Van Gennep's Les Rites de Passage. In that book, the French scholar remarked on various types of passages between what, in modern vocabulary, are termed statuses. Mainly, he analyzed such passages as those which occur between age-linked statuses, such as birth and childhood, adolescence and adulthood, and being unmarried and married. Sociologists have expended considerable effort studying status passages that occur within occupations (careers and socialization, for instance) and within organizations (mobility, for instance). These status passages reflect conditions for changes in structure and its functioning (p. 1).

Speaking of the emergent passage, Glaser and Strauss further state:

The emergent passage is an open-ended, innovative one. In figuring out the passage that is occurring, passagee and agent are discovering each other's and their capacities for controlling the shape of the passage--as they decide on its shape. They build a relationship with some degree of reciprocity regarding what they do for each other and what they gain from the passage. They selectively discount, as they gather and appraise the facts of what is happening, and negotiate a balance of control over what is happening. They may borrow from similar, older passages as they discover new ways of acting. If made public, their transactions and innovations will be followed by other people (p. 35).

#### Adult Development Summary

Building upon Erikson's concept that human development continues throughout life, a variety of researchers working in the

1970's--Levinson (1978), Vaillant (1977), Gould (1978), Sheehy (1976 and 1981)--have come up with the theoretical perspectives of adult development that have basic similarities. They all conceived of adult development as a process, occurring in a relatively orderly fashion, through stages, with intermittent periods of upheaval or change at a crisis time, a reorientation or constructing time, and then a stable period before the next onset of a crisis. There has also been a rough agreement among these authors as to the progression of concerns by stage in adult development with the following six periods, each about seven years in length, spanning adulthood; setting a life structure; reassessment, readjustment and recommitment to life structure; mid-life transition; middle adulthood; late adulthood; and old age.

Havighurst (1956), Knox (1977) and Aslanian and Brickell (1980) related learning, education and adult development to transitions described above. Knox (1977) emphasized the holistic nature of adult development, including its relationship to the societal context, role performance, physical condition and personality, and sense of self. Sheehy (1981) elaborated the stages involved in fruitful status passage and Galser and Strauss (1971) elaborate on the phenomena of status passage.

### Grounded Theory Methodology

The discovery of theory from data systematically obtained and analyzed is "grounded theory." Grounded theory was discovered and described by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in their book, Discovery of Grounded Theory, published in 1967. Grounded theory

methodology focuses on generating theory, rather than verifying theory. Theory that is generated by means of this methodology is derived from data, rather than being deduced from an existing body of theory. The emphasis, therefore, is not on hypothesis testing, rather, on generating insights, sensitizing concepts and hypotheses. The end product of a study using this approach is a theory, or set of hypotheses, that account for much of the relevant behavior noted in the area of study. Validation can come later, if appropriate.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that theory based on data rarely can be completely refuted by more data or replaced by another theory. Grounded theory stands the test of additional data because it meets four essential criteria for practical theory. To be practical, a theory must have fit, relevance, and must work (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Later, Glaser (1978) added a fourth criterion--that it should be modifiable.

The criterion of work, according to Glaser (1978) refers to a theory's ability to explain "what happened, predict what will happen, and interpret what is happening" in the area of study (p. 4). This criterion is met through systematic gathering and analysis of data. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), a theory's fit refers to the conceptual elements of the theory emerging from the data. This is in contrast to deductive forms of research in which data is considered in relation to existing theory or pre-established hypotheses. In 1978, Glaser described a theory as meeting the criteria of modifiability if it can evolve and change and respond to expanded understanding of a

problem area. Although core concepts remain intact, specific aspects of a theory are expected to change with ongoing investigation of a problem area.

The grounded theory approach is transcending in nature (Glaser & Strauss, 1977). The scope of grounded theory extends beyond the major area of study and existing theories related with the focus of the study. Theory grounded in data integrates relevant variables from any source from which they emerge. This quality of grounded theory facilitates the expansion of the theory into a broader, more comprehensive theory. "Grounded theory is ideational. It is a sophisticated, careful method of idea manufacturing. The conceptual idea is its essence" (Glaser, 1978, p. 7).

Although grounded theory differs from traditional research methodologies, it is a systematic, organized effort. The specific process to be followed in a grounded theory methodology, according to Glaser (1978), is summarized in the following ten steps:

1. Identify a general problem
2. Review the literature in areas related to substantive area of study.
3. Collect research data.
4. Concurrently with #3, code and analyze.
5. Generate memos with as much saturation as possible.
6. Decide what data to collect next.
7. Continue data collection analysis, coding and memo writing, focusing on emerging code theory.

8. Write memos on data, memos on memos, until saturation is achieved.

9. Sort memos to develop a theoretical framework.

10. Write and re-write the report.

The review of literature in grounded theory is used to build theory, rather than negate or confirm existing theory.

### Theoretical Sampling

Glaser and Strauss (1967) state:

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find it, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. The collection of raw data, coding into conceptual elements (categories) and conceptual aspects of categories (properties) and analyzing of the codes, categories and properties are done concurrently. This joint collecting of data, coding and analysis is a key to generating theory. It provides the basis for constant comparisons. By comparing the data as it is collected, the researcher creates more abstract levels of theoretical connections. The theory is gradually built up inductively from the progress states of analysis of the data (p. 45).

Theoretical sampling serves as a means for monitoring the emerging conceptual framework instead of verifying preconceived hypotheses.

### Collecting Data

The initial decisions for collecting data are based on the general subject of problem areas. The types of data sought are not based on a preconceived theoretical framework. Beyond the initial decisions for collecting data, further data collection cannot be planned in advance. Criteria for selecting groups should be related to the purpose and relevance of the research. Initially, groups are used that will most likely provide data and subsequent leads for

collecting more data. Progressively, groups are selected that will help generate as many properties of the categories as possible, and that will help relate the categories to each other and to their properties.

Noncomparable groups are not regarded as a problem by Glaser and Strauss. The key is not difference or similarities between groups, but the ideational characteristics of groups that, in turn, delineate behavioral and attitudinal patterns (Glaser, 1978). Comparison groups add richness and depth to data.

### Coding

Coding is described as providing the link between the data and the theory. In the process of coding, the data is dissected into categories and properties. The categories and properties, when fully saturated, i.e., when nothing emerges, eventually provide the basis for a theoretical framework.

Glaser (1978) suggests the coding be guided by the following set of questions: "What is the data a study of?" "What category does this incident indicate?" "What is actually happening in the data?" These questions help the researcher focus on the emerging conceptual patterns.

As coding progresses, all data can be classified as indicators of some category. Ultimately, a total saturation of conceptual codes (theoretical concepts) occurs when all the data are incorporated in the conceptual codes (Glaser, 1978). Here he also describes the concept-indicator model which explains how a conceptual code is

generated. This model is based on constant comparative analysis. The data, categorized as indicators, is compared to each other. Each indicator is compared to every other indicator. When a conceptual code is generated, each indicator is compared to the emerging conceptual code. The comparisons of indicator to indicator and indicators to a conceptual code provide a means of determining the consistency of the meaning of determining the consistency of the meaning of the indicators or the variations they represent. Variations are not ignored but provide a means for adjusting the conceptual codes to more accurately represent "what is." Finally, conceptual codes are compared to each other. The conceptual codes, grounded in data, comprise a generated theory.

### Analysis

Analysis begins with coding and progresses with memo writing. "Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding" (Glaser, 1978, p. 83). Memos reflect the researcher's thoughts on indicators and codes, and/or the relationships between indicators and codes, and between codes.

In the beginning of the study, the memos are generated from the constant comparison analysis. Later, memos generate memos. Sorting, writing and reading all result in more memo writing, also.

### Core Categories

As data are collected, coded and analyzed, several codes are generated, but it is more important to identify the core categories or

"main themes." Glaser (1978) recommends criteria to use in determining which categories are core categories: Among the criteria are:

1. It must be related to several categories and their properties more so than other categories.
2. It must recur frequently in the data.
3. It will take longer to saturate a core category because it is related to many other categories.
4. It relates meaningfully and easily with other categories.
5. It has "clear, grabbing implications for formal theory."
6. It is essential and vital to the analysis of the data.
7. It is highly dependent, variable in degree, dimension and type. Conditions vary it easily.

### Sorting

Theoretical sorting of memos is the basis for formulating theory for its presentation to others. Sorting puts the dissected data back together. It is the ideas as they appear in memos, rather than the raw data that is sorted. Theoretical sorting produces a generalized, integrated model by which to write the theory. The initial sorts are virtually the first draft of the manuscript.

Sorting is completed when theoretical completeness is reached--that is, the problem under study is explained with the fewest number of concepts and the greatest possible scope, including as much variation as possible. The final result is an integrative, constructive, contribution to the area of study. It is expected the theory that emerges will continue to be enriched and modified.

### Development of Theory from Insights

An insight, whether borrowed, or original, is of no use to the theorist unless he converts it from being simply an anecdote to being an element of theory. A more systematic method is that the researcher



regard all statements about events pertaining to the area under study as being data. Any contest between insights and existing theory becomes a comparative theory, while generating a more general one. The theorist's task is to make the most of his insights by developing them into systematic theory. His perspective is never finished--not even when he writes the last line of his monograph--not even after he publishes it since, therefore, he finds himself elaborating and amending his theory, knowing more now than when the research was formally concluded (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

#### Summary of Grounded Theory Methodology

Grounded theory methodology was discovered and written about by Glaser and Strauss. It is defined as the discovery of theory from data which has been systematically obtained and analyzed. The grounded theory methodology, which incorporates comparative analysis, is generally the main method of choice for ethnographic studies, whose intention it is to explore and describe phenomena.

#### Women Religious

The Church, the religious orders and the Catholic laity have recognized the massive changes that have resulted since the implementation of the mandates of Vatican II.

Marie August Neal SHden (1971) suggested that the growing anomie of religious orders at the time of her investigation was due to the Church's emphasis on relieving the consequences of poverty, rather than on the will to suppress the causes of human misery. Radical social reforms and creation of a new social order were, according to

Neal, the mandate of Vatican II. The outcome of conflicts with the groups posing limits to the work of renovation would determine the ultimate direction of renewal. Harmer (1974) interpreted changes among the congregations of religious sisters by isolating factors which distinguish groups by their rates of change, i.e., nonchanging, incremental and radical. The primary objective was to understand the factors that predisposed to change, hindered change, or increased tolerance for its stress. With emphasis on the psychological, the study arrived at several conclusions: Religious congregations are different from one another, changing at different rates and in different ways because they have consistently attracted different types of women. Stress is found to be related to the resistance to change, as well as to change, itself. Hammersmith (1976) compares the changes made within two different types of religious congregations-- a large teaching order of 1400 nuns, and a contemplative order of 14 nuns. In analyzing their social organization, especially those by which the nuns' radical ideology and lifestyles were traditionally sustained by comparing their organizational process, she contrasts the changes wrought in both groups as a response to the directives of Vatican II. How nuns managed to sustain a sense of community and tradition, despite the dramatic transformations of the Vatican II, is analyzed, as well as the dilemmas and ambiguities associated with sustaining commitment and ideology in a less radical way of life. On the other hand, Calabro (1976) focuses on the effect certain internal structures of a congregation have on the sisters' stance on the issue

of personal autonomy and structural change. Relationships of individual members are examined at two levels for their influence on sisters' attitude toward change: 1) formal and informal relationships within the convent; and 2) scope of relationship with groups and persons outside the convent. Data on 12,000 members who were engaged in a variety of social apostolates within the New York Metropolitan area was analyzed from the National Sisters survey. Their order had adopted a policy toward change which emphasized slow, incremental modification of traditional practices and procedures. A significant number were dissatisfied with both the nature and direction of renewal. Calabro found present organizational rank and length of service the most powerful predictor of the sisters' change orientation. Those who supported the order's policy on renewal were more likely found among Superiors and more senior sisters. Among all categories of sisters, those having warm, expressive relationships with their peers are most likely to express satisfaction with current convent conditions. Ebaugh (1977) does a thorough study of the modifications and innovations wrought by Vatican II, and looks at organizational and ideological changes as major determinants of role passage. Ebaugh's work is considered one of the most comprehensive and astute descriptions of changes in the congregations of women religious spanning a period of 25 years. The study combines three types of data: 1) a mail survey on organizational data; 2) case studies of three orders, each at a different stage of the change process; and 3) interviews with women who had left the three orders. Change is defined

empirically in terms of structural revisions.

San Giovanni (1978) establishes a sociological model using two relatively recent studies on roles. Riley, Johnson and Foner (1972) and Galer and Strauss (1971) then explores the transition by Roman Catholic nuns from a convent community to secular society.

Seferella (1980), in an unpublished dissertation, explores in a midwestern congregation Etzioni's five step paradigm of societal guidance and attempts to discover if Etzioni's framework can explain the process of organizational change experienced by women religious in response to Vatican II.

#### Summary of Literature on Women Religious

While the scientific investigations cited above add a great deal to the general study of change and, in particular, to the research about women religious, most of the literature reviewed were from the disciplines of theology, psychology and sociology. The emphasis has been on organizational and ministerial changes. The study gives an adult education perspective to the effects of the mandate of Vatican II and attempts to close the gap in literature from this discipline.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Methodology has a direct relationship to the information being sought and the use to which it will be put. The study explores and describes experiential and intellectual learning and uses the primary principals of grounded theory described in Chapter II.

#### Problem Area

The problem area for the study of transition, change and learning, was identified through readings on adult development, on change, and on transition, also, through information garnered through the media and through personal experiences.

What specific triggers start the process of change, transition and learning? What do adults learn when faced with massive change that challenges their identity? How do they shape, create new roles for which there are no precedents? What experiential and intellectual learning goes into the passage from one status to another during: 1) the preparation for change, the period of anxiety and upheaval; 2) during transition, pain and coping; 3) through the period of synthesis, when learning to adapt; and 4) how do adults evaluate the learning as they prepare for the future?

The present exploratory research was undertaken from the perspective of an information-gathering process. This form of inquiry

departs from the dominant formal research paradigms because the nature of the research lends itself to personal histories, anecdotal reports, and the use of descriptive material for data. Throughout Chapter IV (Presentation of Data), quotations from the sisters are widely used. Thus, the emergent status passage was documented in their own words.

### Population

The population for this study is 985 members of the congregations of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, Michigan (IHM's). These women were faced with massive change when the mandates of Vatican Council II required renewal and relevancy. The overview of women religious, before and after Vatican II, is a description of the order of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

### Sample

A convenience sample of 20 subjects was drawn from a computerized list of sisters provided by the president of the congregation. The women were drawn from the age group of 35-50. This age group covers finally professed sisters (those who had taken their final vows), who would have been old enough to have knowledge of pre-Vatican II life, and have intimate experience with the post-Vatican II era of change. This age group covers women who are still young enough so that they could have made a choice to leave religious life. This age group also eliminates those sisters who are no longer actively practicing their career.

### Qualitative Research

The decision to use qualitative rather than quantitative methodology is consistent with research that is of an exploratory nature. The value of exploratory study has been to increase understanding in areas in which existing research is either scant or nonexistent. The primary research tool used to gather data in an exploratory study of this nature is the interview procedure.

### Research Instrument

The data for the study was collected through the use of an intensive interview. Riley (1963) points out: "Responses to questions, although they do not always report interaction, as the observer might perceive it, have the peculiar merit of reflecting directly subjective states of the actor, the underlying disposition to act" (p. 167). She goes on to say that questioning reveals the structure of orientation--subjective patterns and attitudes, feelings, mutual expectations in interpersonal relationships among the members that underlie overt interaction (in this case, learning). The selection of the interview technique was made to capture subjectively experienced interplay between the personal and structural factors involved. The study attempts to get as full a picture as possible of what emotions were activated during transition that led to learning, how the sisters accommodated to dilemmas, enticements, changes in themselves and in their outer world.

The intensive interview was structured by an Interview Guide. The interview used a combination of standardized scheduled,

standardized nonscheduled, and nonstandardized questions (Richardson et al., 1955). The questions were asked in the following major areas: 1) Demographics (standardized scheduled); 2) Preparation for change, anxiety and upheaval (standardized nonscheduled); 3) Transition, pain and coping (standardized nonscheduled); 4) Synthesis, adaptation and satisfaction (standardized nonscheduled). A key question (standardized nonscheduled) was asked of all respondents. The question, "Can you name/identify three or four significant events that have had profound influence on your life since you have been in the order?" is based on research done by Aslanian and Brickell (1981). They concluded,

. . . there's always a specific event in an adult's life that triggers the transition and, thus, the learning. It's those events that set the time on the learning clock. To know an adult's life schedule is to know an adult's learning schedule (p. ii).

The key question formed the basis for all other questions in the Interview Guide. A copy of the Interview Guide will be found in Appendix G.

Standardized scheduled questions were used to collect the same information from all respondents--objective pieces of data which respondents could easily answer. This was used for background information and included age, date of entry into the order, date of final vows, work and living situation.

Standardized nonscheduled questions gather the same class of information, but the types of questions used to derive information are not the same. The standardized nonscheduled interview formulates the classes of information and then asks questions appropriate for each



respondent while, at the same time, asking them in such a way that they have the same meaning for each respondent. Standardized non-scheduled interviewing seems to be used more frequently when the topic is sensitive and is not discussed widely and openly (Richardson et al., 1965).

The nonstandardized questions have great advantage, in that the interviewer does not have to formulate or order questions in advance of each interview, but can be guided, in part, by what is learned from talking and listening to the respondent. Although standardized questions have a prerequisite, and can be used at all stages of the articulation and conceptual development of the study. Nonstandardized questions can be used to uncover insights or anticipated areas of relevance to a study which can then be followed up and capitalized on with the same respondent in the interview. One of the unique assets of nonstandardized questions is that the interview content can be varied from one respondent to another on the basis of his conceptual grasp of the overall subject matter of the study, each respondent given the information in ideas that he is best suited to provide (Richardson et al., 1965).

The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis originated by Glaser and Strauss in their book Discovery of Grounded Theory (1971) was used for the analysis of data. Comparative analysis is a general method, just as are the experimental and statistical methods. All use "logical comparison." Furthermore, comparative analysis can, like those other methods, be used for social units of

any size. Comparative analysis is a strategic method for generating theory. It can be described in four stages: 1) comparing incidents applicable to each category; 2) integrating categories and their properties; 3) delimiting the theory; and 4) writing the theory.

1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category. The analyst starts by coding each incident in his data into as many categories of analysis as possible, as categories emerge or as data emerges that fit an existing category. Glaser and Straus (1971) state: "Coding need consist only of noting categories on margins, but can be done elaborately (e.g., on cards). It should keep track of the comparison group in which the incident occurs" (p. 106). They suggest while coding an incident for a category, to compare it with a previous incident in the same and different groups coded in the same category. The constant comparison of the incidents very soon starts to generate theoretical properties of this category. The analyst starts thinking in terms of the full range of types of continua of the category, its dimensions, the conditions under which it is pronounced or minimized, its major consequences, its relation to other categories, and its other properties. After coding for a category perhaps three or four times, Glaser and Strauss (1971) suggest, "Stop coding and record a memo on your ideas (p. 107)." This rule is designed to tap the initial freshness of the analyst's theoretical notions and to relieve the conflict in his thoughts. In doing so, the analyst should take as much time as necessary to reflect and carry his thinking to its most logical (grounded in data, not speculative) conclusions. From the

point of view of generating theory, it is often useful to write memos on, as well, "the copy of one's field notes." Memo writing on the field note provides an immediate illustration for an idea. Also, since an incident can be coded for several categories, this tactic forces the analyst to use an incident as an illustration only once, for the most important among the many properties of diverse categories that it indicates. He must look elsewhere in his notes for illustrations for his other properties and categories. This corrects the tendency to use the same illustration over and over for different properties. Glaser and Strauss (1971) state:

The generation of theory requires that the analyst take apart the story within his data, therefore, when he rearranges his memos and field notes for the writing of his theory, he sufficiently 'fractures' his story, at the same time that he saves appropriate illustrations for each idea. At just this point in his writing, breaking down and out of the story is necessary for clear integration of the theory (p. 110).

2. Integrating categories and their properties. As the coding continues, the constant comparative units change from comparison of incident with incident, to comparison of incident with properties of the category that resulted from initial comparisons of incidents. Thus, the theory develops, as different categories and their properties tend to become integrated through constant comparisons.

3. Delimiting the theory. As the theory develops, delimiting occurs at two levels: The theory and the categories. First, the theory solidifies in the sense that major modifications are mainly on the order of clarifying the logic, taking out nonrelevant properties, integrating, elaborating details of properties into the major outline

of interrelated categories.

4. Writing theory. Glaser and Straus (1971) state,

"At this stage in the process of qualitative analysis, the analyst possessed coded data, a series of memos and a theory. The discussions and memos provide the content behind the categories, which become the major theme of the theory presented in the chapter on conclusions. When the researcher is convinced that this analytic framework forms a systematic, substantive theory, that it is a reasonably accurate statement of the matters studied, and that is couched in a form that others going into the same field could use--then he can publish his results with confidence" (p. 34).

One may return to the coded data when necessary to validate a suggested point, pinpoint data behind an hypothesis or gaps in theory, and provide illustrations. Using the constant comparative method makes probable the achievement of a complex theory that corresponds closely to the data, since the constant comparisons force the analyst to consider much diversity in the data. The constant comparison of incidents in the manner described tends to result in the creation of a "developmental" theory. Although this method can also be used to generate static theories, it especially facilitates the generation of theories of process, sequence and change pertaining to individuals, organizations, positions and social interaction. The strategic method of comparative analysis for generating theory was adhered to strictly as methodology used for the research.

Pilot Study

The research instrument was tested by a pilot study. Five sisters were selected by a convenience sampling from a list given to the interviewer by the president of the congregation. Identical

criteria anticipated for the main study were met. The responses were recorded, analyzed, using the method of constant comparison. It was decided to add one more heading to the list of demographics. This was living arrangements. Criticism and suggestions were asked of the participants. It was not found necessary to change anything else.

### Participants

The difficulty of gaining access to religious orders is well known (Ebaugh, 1977). However, the researcher had a very positive experience with the IHM nuns. Meetings were arranged first with provincials and then, after the literature had been reviewed, with the president of the congregation. The theoretical concepts were thoroughly discussed and permission was given to use the archives and libraries at the Mother House and in other facilities. The researcher was invited to and attended seminars and the community was told about the study. Thus, the researcher was able to meet many of the criteria for subjective validity suggested by Bruyn (1966). These are described in the paragraphs following. The president made available an inviting, comfortable room on the Marygrove Campus and all interviews for the main study were conducted there. Though four of the sisters selected by the use of random convenience sampling were known to the inquirer, they were retained in the study sample. It was felt that their involvement would not pose any threat to validity. Only one sister approached for the pilot study declined, giving the reason of lack of time. All other sisters approached for the pilot and the main study agreed to participate. A letter (see Appendix) was

sent to each sister drawn by convenience sample from the computerized list of sisters meeting criteria for age and finally professed status. This letter explained the qualifications of the researcher and the nature of the study, and invited the sister to participate in the study. The letter also indicated that the researcher would be calling in a few days to answer any questions that the sister might have and to set up an appointment time if she were willing to participate. This letter was accompanied by a letter from the president of the congregation. Phone calls were made within a few days, at which time there was the opportunity to establish a good rapport and to alleviate any qualms that the person might have regarding any issues but, particularly, the issue of confidentiality.

#### Interview Protocol

The interviewer went ahead of the time of the interview to make sure the room was in order, to turn on the lights, and to set up the tape recorder. The letter asked for two hours of the interviewee's time. The shortest interview was an hour and a half, the longest three and a half hours. The time allotted for each interview depended on the participant's willingness to talk and the time she had available. The interviewer made certain that each person was relaxed and comfortable before taping was started. Because the interviewer was the researcher, data collection, coding and analysis was done concurrently. Probing questions were asked in all the major areas. The intensive interview format already described was structured by an Interview Guide. The Interview Guide used a combination of

standardized scheduled, standardized nonscheduled, and nonstandardized questions (Richardson et al., 1955). Stewart and Cash (1974) and Borg and Gall (1979) complement the work of Richardson. According to these authors, the format 1) allows the interviewee to do most of the talking while the interviewer listens and observes; 2) helps put the interviewee at ease because she can determine the nature and amount of information to be given; 3) is more effective in learning about feelings and attitudes and the intensity of feelings and attitudes of the participant; 4) is less likely to lead (influence) the participant to respond one way or another and 5) enables the interviewer to determine the participant's frame of reference. Disadvantages relate primarily to the interviewer's skills and replicability.

The disadvantages were not regarded as significant, since the researcher served as the sole interviewer and has considerable knowledge of and experience with interviewing. The interviews were taped starting from the moment of the use of the Interview Guide. Time was spent in making the participants comfortable and relaxed and in answering again any questions they had regarding the study. The tapes were used later for a thorough analysis and were the main means of using the comparative analysis methods of generating theory through main themes. The main themes were quantified and represented in Tables in Chapter IV. These tapes were the source of quotations used throughout the study. They also served as a permanent record of verification of the findings reported and were evidence of the reliability of findings.

Brief notes were made and memos noted while participants were talking. This was done in an unobtrusive manner, which did not detract from the interview. These were used, along with the taped material, on worksheets (see Appendix G). Immediately after the participants had left, notes were made on the impression the interviewer had of the participant (punctuality, dress, attitude) and of anything else that needed to be noted because it was significant. Recapitulation was constantly done by using restatements and brief repetition of the participant's articulations but, throughout the interview, the interviewer made every effort to remain empathetic by nods, smiles, and gestures of agreement with the participant. Many participants wanted to talk after the tape was turned off. Notes were made of significant things said that provided insights and contributed to sensitizing concepts. Tapes were reviewed in their entirety within two days of the interview and then utilized several times, later. The names of the participants were not on the tapes. They were identified by numbers. All interviews were done within two days of each others.

As data was collected, coded and analyzed, several codes were generated. These served to identify the core categories or "main themes." Theoretical sorting of memos put the dissected data back together. Theoretical sorting produced a generalized integrated model by which to write the theory. These formed the initial basis for the first draft of the manuscript. To give a feel for the interview and the kind of material collected, one interview was transcribed from the tape, and is included in as Appendix B.



### Validity and Reliability

In most ethnographic research, the researcher attempts to meet subjective adequacy, such as recommended in Bruyn's Indices (1966), quoted by Pierson (1983). They are as follows, when applied to the present study:

1) Time: The more time that is spent with those being studied, the more accurate the interpretation of social meanings is likely to be.

2) Place: The more closely the researcher works in the geographical locations of those being studied, the more accurate the interpretation is likely to be.

3) Social Circumstances: The more the researcher can relate to the subjects, the more accurate the interpretations are likely to be.

4) Language: The more familiar the inquirer is with the subject's language, the more accurate the interpretations are likely to be.

5) Intimacy: The greater the degree of intimacy obtained with the subjects, the more accurate the interpretations of the remarks are likely to be.

6) Consensus of Confirmation of the Context: The more the researcher reiterates and recapitulates the meanings of what is said, the more accurate the interpretation of them is likely to be.

These correspond to Homan's Indices (1950).

The researcher made several visits to the Mother House and

visited with many nuns in the metropolitan Detroit area. The researcher attended seminars that were arranged.

With regard to reliability, Janesick (1977) states that qualitative studies were not as concerned with reliability. There are no standardized instruments or statistical tables to rely on for the descriptions that emerge from qualitative studies. In fact, to impose categories prior to research would violate the tenets of descriptive methodology, according to Janesick. Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Glaser (1978) state the same view. Nonetheless, the study attempted to ensure reliability in the following ways:

- 1) All interviews were conducted by a single, experienced interviewer, the researcher, herself. This also served to lessen the threats to the study by interviewer behavior.
- 2) The time frame for conducting the interviews was established and kept.
- 3) All interviewees for the study were interviewed in the same place.
- 4) Careful documentation was made of all aspects of each interview and session.
- 5) An audio recording provided a permanent record of interview sessions.

An attempt was made to lay to rest rival hypotheses by presenting material in Chapter IV, in the words of the sisters, themselves. After the study was completed, a letter of thanks was sent to all participants, with an offer to share findings with those who were interested.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of the study is to explore and describe intellectual and experiential patterns of adult learning in a group of dynamic women, the IHM nuns. When faced with massive change, they negotiated an emergent role passage for which there were no precedents.

Data collection from intensive interviews are presented in the adult educational framework described in Chapter I. The major areas are:

#### Demographics

Triggers: Specific events that triggered the need to learn

Preparation for change: Anxiety and upheaval

Transition: Pain and coping

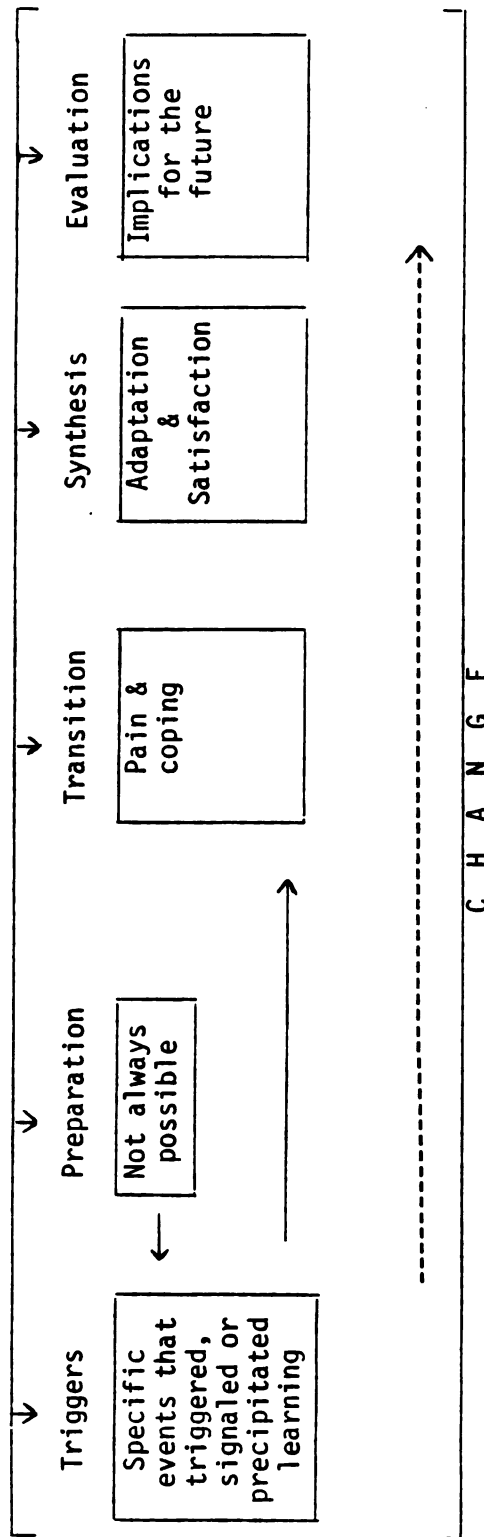
Synthesis: Adaptation and satisfaction

Evaluation: Implications for the future

These major areas of inquiry were derived by integrating and synthesizing the work of Aslanian and Brickell, Sheehy, Knox and Gould (see Figure 1).

Constant comparison methodology was used to extrapolate main themes from data collected from the sample, so the main themes represent information from data grounded in theory, not on bias of researcher. A brief description of each of the women in the sample is included in Appendix C.

Figure 1. Flow Chart  
L E A R N I N G



### Emergent Status Passage

Moving from Total Institution of Pre-Vatican II  
to New Role of Post-Vatican II Women Religious

### Demographics

Age - Table I gives the demographic information on the study sample. Though there are nuns in the order in the age group of 35 and 36, they did not appear in the random convenience sample of twenty nuns. Of the 20 interviewed, two were 37, three were 39, one was 40, four were 41, one was 42, two were 43, two were 44, one was 45, one was 46, two were 47, and one was 50.

Age of Entry - With regard to the age of entry, one sister joined at 16, one at 17, 15 joined at age 18, one at 21, and two at age 22.

Age of Final Vows - With regard to the age of final vows, it was noticed that everyone in the sample hesitated when asked the date of final vows, as if it were an effort to remember. This was followed up in later interviews and it was said that most significant to them was the date they took their first vows, when they made their first commitment to God and had the honor of being accepted by the community, and received the ring of the IHM's. It was this original commitment they returned to, time and again, when faced with the resolution of difficult situations and problems. One sister's response sums it up best: ". . . and so there were a lot of personal changes which meant kind of a turning point for me. When I was in the novitiate--that year of intense prayer, intense searching out for the direction of my own life--at that time, I realized that this was, indeed, where I belonged, and it wasn't only an intellectual knowing of it. I knew from the inside out--from my heart out--I knew I would

Table I. Demographics.

NO.	AGE	AGE OF ENTRY	AGE OF FINAL VOWS	EDUCATION	JOB	LIVING ARRANGEMENTS
1	40	18	25	Masters+	Treasurer, NW Province	With 6 other sisters
2	45	19	24	Masters+	Coordinator, Area Agency on Aging	With 2 other sisters
3	50	18	21	Masters+	Hospital Ministry	With 2 other sisters
4	47	18	26	Masters+	School Principal	With 1 other sister
5	43	18	25	Masters+	Jail Chaplain	Alone
6	41	22	31	J.D.	Attorney, Poverty Law, Social Justice	With 2 other sisters
7	37	16	26	B.A.+ B.S.W.	Ministry to Haitian refugees, Florida	With 2 other sisters
8	42	22	27	Masters+	Director, School Public Relations	With 5 other sisters
9	41	18	27	Ph.D., Theology	Professor of Theology Marygrove College	With 5 other sisters
10	46	18	26	Masters+	Bookkeeper	With 3 other sisters IHM, other orders
11	44	18	26	Masters+	Freelance hospital ministry	With 1 other sister
12	41	18	25	Ph.D., Psychology	Private Practice	With 3 other sisters
13	39	18	30	M.S.W.+	Social Worker Inner city agency	With 2 other sisters
14	37	18	27	Masters+	Hospital Chaplain	Alone
15	47	21	26	Masters+	School Principal	With 3 other sisters
16	39	18	26	Masters+	Free-lance ministry	With 1 other sister
17	39	18	26	Masters+	Pastoral work	With 3 other sisters
18	41	18	23	Masters+	Pastoral work	With 1 other sister
19	44	18	26	Masters+	Provincial	With 1 other sister
20	43	17	25	Masters+	President of Congregation	With 2 other sisters

never be happier than I would be here . . . I've never doubted that decision, and when I made vows after that, that was simply making them public" (Sister T).

Educational Level - The educational levels in Table I show highly educated women--16 Masters, 2 Ph.D.'s, one J.D., and one with 2 B.A.'s. In addition to these degrees, all had a primary education in Theology and many educational credits from workshops.

Ministry/Jobs - The demographics also show a variety of ministries. The ministries are more individualized, and require an individual or smaller numbers of people than those required for the running and staffing of the schools, through the IHM's still run some schools.

Living Arrangements - The demographics show a variety of different living arrangements. "Home" no longer represents the Mother House; only two of the sample lived alone and, of the two, one said she lived alone and loved it, but the other said that she was only living alone for practical reasons--because her place of ministry was located too far for her to get congenial people to live with. Others, living in groups of more than two sisters said this was the lifestyle of choice and preference for them. One traveled from Detroit to Warren to work every day, in order to maintain her living situation. ". . . We pray together, sing together. This is important to me." Living in twos is not looked on favorably by the people in the sample, as they felt it fostered unhealthy dependencies. One sister lives with sisters of another order, reflecting the tendency for women

religious from different orders to grow closer.

### Triggers: Specific Events that Triggered Learning

Using the method of constant comparisons of grounded theory, it was found that three main themes evolved: 1) Identity, 2) Ministry, and 3) Life Crises. Table II shows the main themes and subthemes that appeared in the major area of triggers, along with the number of sisters who responded in each category.

The first two, Identity and Ministry, had direct relationship to the effects of the mandates of Vatican II. The third area, Life Crises, is age-appropriate to the life cycle development of adults, as 14 of the trigger events centered around death of parents and mentors, sickness, and the vulnerability of one's own body, or that of dear ones. Twenty sisters said they had to think about things they had not thought about in a long time.

#### 1) Identity

Of major importance to all women interviewed was the change that took place in terms of identity. To become more relevant with the times, the order decided that they would experiment with a modified habit (robe). Fifty women were invited to take part in this experiment by the leadership. They called for all types of women--tall, thin, short, chubby--to send their names in. The result of this experiment was a collarless blue suit, worn with the veil that showed the hair. The suit revealed legs and a feminine silhouette. One sister remembers: " . . . I thought we would look like airline stewardesses, and we did" (Sister A). Change to the new look was optional but, even today, diversity in dress and appearance



Table II. Triggers: Specific Events That Triggered Learning  
Main Themes

Area	N
I. Identity	
A. Appearance	20
1. Clothes	16
2. Role Models	8
3. Diversity	12
B. Male Relationships	16
1. Long-term male relationships	5
2. Clashes with male hierarchy	6
C. Title or name	6
D. Reaction of the Laity	10
II. Job/Ministry	
A. First missions	16
B. Experimentation with new professional roles	16
1. Inner city experience	6
2. Sit-ins for peace (jail sentences)	3
C. Overseas experience	6
III. Life Crisis	
A. With death	14
B. Sickness, own or others	10
C. Other experiences	3
1. Viet Nam war	1
2. Being fired	2
3. Dealing with mentally ill superiors	2
4. Self-awareness	3

causes some friction. ". . . and I questioned the middle-class (America) look . . . the earrings, the make-up. . . we are witnessing to the world poverty, chastity and obedience (Sister G)." Another sister states: ". . . I think we learned something from other professional women because we are all more or less, in professions, still. I think we learned, also, that how we dress, let us say, expresses who we are, and so we do give a message. Like, I notice the variety in our own group. Some sisters dress as if tomorrow were doomsday, and others dress as if they're not sure who they are. The still have a big question mark about themselves" (Sister T).

But the struggle to come even to this point was tremendous. ". . . I remember my personal days. I could relive them as if they were yesterday. Getting my robes! The habit was very important to me. Acceptance of your community was the big thing." For this sister, the robe symbolized acceptance, belonging, and her identity as a religious and an IHM nun. ". . . Too much of the old was too sacred to me. I don't remember bucking the change . . . I had to think a great deal about changing. You knew if you did it, you would pay the price . . . you would be crucified for changing " (Sister D). This was because some sisters felt that change from the habit was a betrayal of the values of the Church and the order. Some sisters never changed, but all in my sample wore civilian (regular) clothes. One sister, talking about these changes, expressed her anger in these words: ". . . I think in the beginning I was naively surprised that everybody did not like the way we were doing things. I liked the whole

package. I bought it . . . I was surprised with the quickness with which they wanted to change. They had been resenting so much, and I had never realized it" (Sister J). Another sister said, "We did a lot of dumb things. We changed habits at the time of mini-skirts. From being in all in habits to being less than professionally dressed. We wore a lot of K-Mart's! There were a lot of cut-down habits" (Sister A).

And then they changed back to their own names, giving up the religious names, often exotic males names, chosen with care and love, for significance and symbolism. One sister, who is a professional, and whose work requires her to move in many different circles, is still working through her identity. She states, "I now no longer tell everybody I meet that I am a sister. I don't choose to deal with people who have two agendas. . . . Some people, as soon as they know that you a religious, want to tell you all about themselves. It also works the other way. When I was applying for a scholarship, I knew the woman would remember who I was, and she did. . . . There was this woman at work who simply didn't relate to me for a long time, and I didn't know why. Then, when we went out to dinner, another woman, unknown to us, who was dressed in a modified habit, came up and my colleague greeted her effusively. Then it struck me--she doesn't like me because I don't look like whom I'm supposed to be. . . . My mother wanted to buy me a cross, so people would know I was a nun . . . you can't hid behind the cross" (Sister F).

So the sisters reviewed their values and adjusted, each according to what she believed. There are still nuns who are in habit, but these are older nuns.

Social learning is a value experience. If learning is to occur, in the first place, its value needs to be recognized and needs to take precedence or be accomplished at the expense of other values. Value-strain or dissonance arises when personal or social changes are viewed as desirable but, to fulfill this intent, other values must be relinquished.

The learning experience may express the instrumental value. Learning is the enactment of instrumental values when it is the means used to achieve certain outcomes that correspond with the person's preferences and priorities. Learning is, in many ways, a uniquely personal experience. Although certain generalizations about the process of learning can be made, within these generalizations it is necessary to take account of the symbolic characteristics of the learning and the specific style in which one tends to represent his reality (Howard Goldstein, 1981, p. 238).

In addition to their own struggle in community to cope with these changes was the effect that the change of habit had on the lay people. For centuries, the habit, the unchanging look of the nuns and priests presented security. Now the lay people were confused, hurt and angry, and they did not hesitate to let them know. A sister states, ". . . A lot of of people were mad about the liturgy. Then the nuns changed their habits. The parishioners were very angry with everything that we tried to do. Some were very rigid, and folks were caught in the midst of it, and none of us had enough experience to figure out how to resolve it. . . . And it was a time when people threw things at me, called me names, and it was knowing (learning) what it was to be a symbol of something, because people were angry with me who didn't even know my name . . . I was the Church, and the Church had hurt them" (Sister P).

Another sister stated, "I think that the firm grounding in education that I received in Monroe, in theology, made me very certain that, while I might not be able to articulate completely everything I needed to be able to from that situation, what I had been taught was, in fact, the way the Church was going and, in fact, the way the Church should go--so that I was not shaken by these years when the impact of Vatican Council II was first becoming clear to lay people, and they were reacting to this." She goes on to say, "The fact that sisters were not only not wearing their habits or not the same habits that they always had, were doing new ministries, were not all in schools any more, or the fact that they would be involved in politics, or were at night meetings--this was difficult for them (parishioners) to adjust to. The fact that simply a sister was outspoken as she was, you know--that was a terrible shock to them. We said what we thought about things. We were not quite so overawed by either our role or the way we were supposed to relate to them through our role . . . I think there was confidence. We weren't trained to do that--I mean, heaven knows we were in struggle in the community at that time, too, because we were not sure of our direction, but we had been grounded so finely in our Biblical theology, our sense of the Church, because our whole formation had been anticipating and rejoicing in what was happening in the Vatican Council, and during the Papacy of John XXIII. We were, I think, a generation of religious women who had a great sense of confidence in the direction in which the Church was going" (Sister S).

These two views show the importance of the personality in the way situations were interpreted and negotiated.

This generation of women who come from a generation of high school students who, having dated, had achieved a certain level of psychosocial maturity and experience before they came to the order. "So we were not like naive babes in the woods of a previous era. We had certain, maybe an even more sophisticated level of sex education that had been characteristic of classes before us. We were more explicit in our understanding than, say, my mother's generation" (Sister S). Sixteen of the twenty women interviewed cited emotional encounters with men as significant events. They worked through their sexual spiritual identity through these relationships that were close, intimate, but celibate. All felt these relationships enriched their lives, and gave an extra dimension to their ministry and to their understanding of people. All relationships described were with priests, making it easier for them to reassess their values, to reconfirm their commitment and vows. For five of the sisters, these have continued as long-term relationships that are an integral part of their lives and have generally achieved the status of warm friendship. One sister put it like this: "Nobody can live the celibate life without friendship." ". . . I do not know how much good I would be if I couldn't love" (Sister A). These were not hidden relationships.

All sisters that I interviewed felt that they had not lost their femininity when they joined the order, just sublimated the sexual part of it. One said, "You always retain what you want to retain" (Sister

B). Another sister's reflection: ". . . Well, I think, again, that religious community does provide you with a lot of models. A lot of role models. And I was fortunate in the kind of education I got, that I came into contact with women who were very deeply religious people, but also were very much women--very proud of their femininity and very feminine--if maybe not always at a time when we were emphasizing physical attractiveness and dealing with it quite the way we do not. But they were very much women, to the core, and had very sensitive hearts, and they were very articulate about the experience of being a woman. They were very articulate about being a loving, human person, about being a compassionate person, about learning how to become a friend, and so I think one way in which I was helped, I learned to deal with it, was that I was lucky to have a lot of women around me who helped me by the way they were women, and religious women, to learn how to deal with being a woman" (Sister S).

". . . I think one of the luckiest things that ever happened to me was I was fortunate enough to have many good, kind, close women friends of my own age, and they were the kind of women who were such good friends that they verbalized about the struggle that someone goes through in ordinary adult roles. Learning how to relate as an independent person, who is capable of intimacy--and then capable of intimacy that is appropriate to the style of life we have chosen. I was fortunate enough to know women who were willing to go through as a community and together in relationships, the struggles that it took to become that kind of person" (Sister O).

However, to come to this point of maturity was a growth

experience for both the individuals and the community. In the mid-sixties, a sister describing the experience of another sister with whom she was living, who fell in love with a priest, ". . . . But there was nothing wrong with it, and I couldn't believe that it was wrong, and I couldn't understand how people turned on them because they loved each other. . . . The parish and the nuns turned on the priest, who had been a very good friend. Like maybe, the night before had been there for dinner, in a good relationship and, all of a sudden, he loved somebody, and now he is an enemy. I couldn't understand how loving somebody was a problem. What was so bad about that? So I had to do a lot of searching, and I was very integral to their sorting out, because they really didn't want to leave. . . .but they had to leave because of pressure" (Sister P). The struggles of the community to learn to grow in shared experience is reflected in the words of the same nun, who, some years later, fell in love, herself. ". . . We talked a lot about marriage, and should we marry, and what was the price if we married? He is a priest. He has a similar struggle, and we both--we're still in a relationship. It's no secret to people, and that was critical for me. It was very critical for me that I presented him and my love for him to the IHM's before I my final vows, and I spoke to Margaret Brennan (the president of the congregation), and I spoke to the provincials. They met him. We talked, and I said to them, 'You need to know this--that I love this man, and I will continue to love this man, and I want to make vows to the community, and I don't know what you're going do with this. . . .



I feel they handled it really well. The provincial said, 'I'll get somebody from out of town to talk to the two of you, and whatever that person says about how they evaluate the relationship, I'll accept.' I thought, 'Oh, my God! This is the real test,' but she selected a young man to talk to us, and he was from out of town. We spent the whole day with him--and he said, 'I don't see what's really wrong--I can't see anything bad about this relationship,' and we agreed to be a relationship (counseling) with that man on a regular basis, and that lasted for two or three years, and when he wasn't helpful, any more, we didn't need it any more, and we kind of outgrew it" (Sister P). This sister felt that leadership did not let her down, and that they did not ask her to choose and, even when posed with a very difficult issue, that they really didn't want to get involved with, they helped her work it out. There were many such situations, because the new lifestyle led to much greater proximity with males, particularly priests.

The Catholic Church, by history, is male-oriented, male-dominated, to this day. Many sisters in this period of change have run into chauvinistic practices that have forced them to withdraw from parochial work. One sister describes the experience of having her contract not renewed because a priest wanted to take the job that she had held. One provincial mentioned having seven cases on this issue presented to her in one day.

The sisters do most of the work, which makes the Catholic Church a visible and important element in everyday lives of laymen. Therefore, if sisters were to go out of existence, or be reduced to insignificant levels, one must wonder how viable the Church could continue to be (Calabro, 1976, p. 71).

One sister relates this experience: ". . . I can remember when one of our sisters, not living in our Gesu House (residence for sisters teaching at Gesu School), but in another house in our community, was involved in the march at Selma, being stopped on the street corner by a Jesuit priest and lectured, scolded publicly--what in the world were IHM sisters doing participating in that kind of public demonstration? . . . To some people, the fact that it was a priest doing it would have been very threatening--that would have meant that the person who was a Church person, you know, God's spokesman, was questioning what you were doing, and maybe you'd better be leery about that. . . . But I think we were already beginning to experience the first stirrings of a certain amount of feminism or independence, but we were learning the hard way. It was the sense that we were doing our very best to be very true to our calling, and that we were going to do that, no matter who criticized us" (Sister S).

## 2) Ministry/Jobs

Another main theme that evolved was ministry. The Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life declared:

The manner of living, praying and working should be suitably adapted to the physical and psychological conditions of today's religious and, also, to the extent required by the nature of each community to the needs of the Apostolate, the requirements of a given culture, the social and economic circumstances anywhere but especially, to mission countries (Abbot and Gallagher, 1966, p. 81).

All 20 of the nuns cited work experiences relating to ministry as significant events. "In the seventies, we moved into a variety of ministries, including political ones and, in the decades of the

eighties, beginning with an assembly we had in 1980, we came to recognize that we have certain goals in ministry and we express them in different functions for different jobs, and some of our goals and most important values are contained there, so, in a sense, we put what we're doing as less important than why we're doing it--I think that's been an important learning process, as a congregation. Changes came about in terms of reviewing and re-evaluating, and then going out and doing" (Sister B).

In 1983, Immaculata High School, a familiar landmark in Detroit, closed, but missions to South America, Honduras, Africa, to the global poor, thrived, and sisters involved themselves in nuclear peace sit-ins, and went to jail, and pioneered different work settings. "What we did was to go out and train people in critical thinking, so that they would become leaders within their neighborhood community. We did this out of a gospel perspective" (Sister T.)

". . . I think we used the skills that we had as teachers and employed them in a number of other ministries. This changed the congregation, because we could no longer say a good IHM equals a good teacher, so it made us plumb the depths of what it is that makes us a congregation. It is not only our function in ministry, but it is much more--our whole value system . . . reviewing and re-evaluating. . . . It wasn't always done neatly or in an orderly fashion. We learned as probably most people do, along the way, and in the school of hard knocks" (Sister R).

Significant events clustered around first missions, missions to the inner city, and missions abroad. One sister recalls, "I went from

Benton Harbor, God's backyard, to inner city Detroit. I opened a day care center there. The experience developed my faith level, giving me the courage to do a lot of things. It simplified my life, drew me inward, downward, and made me reach out in ways I never thought possible . . . I worked ten hours a day, six days a week, twelve months a year. I said, 'If I'm going to get it, I'm going to get it, but this work must be done.' For six years, I was never afraid of break-ins, but then it happened, and when we saw they had taken food (in addition to other things), we said OK, they were in need, and put in our insurance claims, and kept right on. There was no room for naivete. I was doing it out of my ignorance and their need. They were the most loving children. They were open and shared their lives with me. I had a terrible time dealing with state and social services, but I learned . . . I learned to deal with chauvinism and bureaucracy, with manipulative survival skills--do what you have to do, but do it quietly. If it needs to be done, do it, and set up a system that gets it done" (Sister C)

Another sister spoke of her experience in the inner city of trying to be flexible in terms of ministry. "I left teaching to go into parish work. On the first day of school, I kept expecting the phone to ring, for them to call me and say they couldn't manage without me. They didn't call, and I cried, because they could do it without me. Now I had to create a new job. I did this for six years. Then the people came to me to ask me to take over the principalship. I said, 'No way,' and I fought God hard on this one, but I

took it. I've been very comfortable there, since. These are my people--the black community. I live right there, by choice" (Sister O).

Six sisters spoke of their work in other countries as significant events. "Three of us were sent by Margaret Brennan to Europe for doctorates in theology. We were three women in a class of 72 men, from all over the world. My dissertation was on moral theology-- the area of real people--social ethics, moral ethics, business ethics-- all strongholds of the priests. Eventually, they came to appreciate our experiential learning. We went to the program after work in the field. We were pioneers, but we were all teachers before, and went there poised and confident in our ministerial proficiency, because of the excellent training during our formation. We won them over with confidence and competence. Going abroad to study there was part of the 'impossible dream' of Margaret Brennan . . ." (Sister I).

Speaking of the experience of going to Chile as a new missionary, "I was learning Spanish, but going to a new country, to a new culture, was like becoming a child again. The experience of social justice can make or break you . . . you never quite fit again. I had to redefine my citizenship. I learned that life is painful. You let it crush you, or you hold on to hope. They really teach you to hope. I am so changed in my values. . . dogs ran around there in packs, they were so hungry. I was attacked there, once, by dogs. One of the sisters, a Maryknoller, was killed. I was amazed at my own

inner courage to go out alone. I learned self-awareness and the utilization of new skills, but I learned through pain" (Sister I).

"I was 26 when I went to Brazil. Everything was different and I think, when I got there, I felt that I had to accept everything, because I had been told that everything would be changed and, gradually, I discovered that some of my personal needs for friendship, my own privacy in my life, my own personal need for beauty, for music-- I didn't have to let go of all those. I might rediscover them in new forms. I am a great lover, now, of Brazilian music, but I think that was part of my learning" (Sister T).

"One sister, returning from Japan, had outgrown her tolerance for her previous living situation and is now making new arrangements" (Sister G).

### 3) Life Crises

Another main theme that emerged was life crises. One sister cited an experience with a relative in the Viet Nam war, 14 sisters cited experiences with death as significant events. Two cited personal illness, and eight cited coping with illness and aging in relatives as significant events. This appears to be in keeping with the adult developmental cycle. "The illusion of mortality is challenged from two directions--the illness or death of a parent in a complex set of signals about mortality as part of the life cycle" (Gould, 1973, p. 227).

One sister talked of having a rare blood disease that is life-threatening. The disease is presently in remission and was diagnosed

in her thirties. " . . . I had to find a way to be myself with this albatross. I had to have friends help me to do this" (Sister K). Faced with death, she had to make decisions of how she wanted to live. She participated in an experimental program in Bethesda, Maryland, and had to face, head on, the depersonalized world of medicine and withdrew from it. She had to make decisions about not taking the drastic medication offered and explained to concerned family and friends that she had to control the caliber of her life. Because she cannot be boxed-in by a nine to five job because of her health, she freelances and has used her many talents creatively for this. She works with the Home Health Care Agency, on an oncology unit, working with the terminally ill, and as a consultant for a pastoral ministry, working on a one-to-one basis with people living with loss. She lives a full and satisfying life.

Another sister (Sister I) talks about being called home from an absorbing mission in South America because her father was not expected to live. Her father didn't die until four years later. She talked of having to work through many emotional feelings and frustrations, but she grew closer to her mother, as never before, admiring her untiring devotion to her dad. She also grew to admire her father's ability to cope with pain and suffering of a long-term illness with great dignity. The experience touched her deeply, reaffirming and strengthening her. She felt that this experience made her more sensitive and compassionate in her ministry.

Another sister (Sister J) talked about her having to take over all the planning for her aged parents, because she was the only single

one in the family. Another sister talks of her own illness, of having to work through her terrible feelings of guilt that she was a burden to the community (Sister C). Other sisters talked of the pain they experienced as they watched sisters who were dear to them, mentors, suffer through terminal cancer and exacerbation of multiple sclerosis (Sisters M and R). They became aware of the feelings of abandonment and loneliness and had to go through pain before recognizing that life goes on.

Two sisters (Sister L and R) talked of the devastating experience of being fired from their jobs, through no fault of their own, and learning to understand and forgive weakness in the personality of others who had drastically affected their lives.

Two sisters (P and R) talked about having to cope with superiors who were mentally ill, but were still left in positions of authority. "So, eventually, the provincial said something like this, 'How come you're not participating in any congregation things?' I said to her, 'So and so is causing me a lot of trouble,' and I broke down and cried and sobbed. She said, 'I know it. She should have gotten help a long time ago, but we haven't known how to, and . . . ' I was livid. I was livid" (Sister P).

These were learning experiences for the individuals, but also for the community, for just as society learned about mental illness and mental illness came out of the closet, so it was with this order. Now sisters who need it can go into therapy and, where necessary, it will be funded by the order. Eight sisters mentioned being in therapy.



one sister (Sister G), in her quest for finding herself, speaks of her dream for a group to work and live in the same area. She thought she'd found a group who believed in the same dream, but, one by one, they moved away. ". . . I was left alone (with the vision) wondering what had happened. They didn't have the same commitment. I came out of the experience a sadder, wiser person. I learned not to take one single step when you meet with resistance. You cannot force people. I learned. I am a person who beats something to the ground, or on other people. I learned very painfully you can't do that. I've never made that mistake again. It makes for a lot of waiting, but I haen't lost the vision."

Another sister gave this articulate and touching significant event. "There were, in my own life, lots of personal moments of change that had a profound effect upon me. They are somewhat related to religious life, but my--well, I mentioned Viet Nam, because my own brother, David, was a conscientious objector to the war in Viet Nam and, because he was a Catholic, was unable to have his moral convictions recognized, and so he became a draft dodger. In late 1968, he went to Canada. He had just graduated from Catholic college and was sent a draft notice, and had already done other things in advance, anticipating this, to be able to find some sort of alternative service so military conscription, something like the Medi-corps, something like that--the Peace Corps, or something and, bacause, as I say, he was a Catholic and Catholics were not recognized --they were not exempt--he finally went to Canada. I took him

physically, drove him to Canada. I did that fully expecting to be arrested for aiding and abetting a draft dodger and, while our community was in the throes of this kind of thing, I did this on my own. I didn't ask anybody. I just went and did it. I don't know what I think about that now, being a leader, doing that, but then there was no other course of action. So when I got David to Toronto, and he took all of the small amount of physical possessions he owned in a duffle bag and got out of the car and walked away, that was one of the most profound turning points in my own personal life because, here I was, the one in the family who was, in a sense, the professional religious person, acting out of values and convictions and standing for God and God's word--but it was my brother David who had, in a sense, more to lose, and he was doing a very good job of putting his life on the line for his moral convictions, and that was both a very affirming moment for me and a very--it was a moment of profound change for me--because all of the things that I had been reading and thinking and saying about how we are all called to follow God's way--there isn't any higher or lower estate than that--other than that which we choose for ourselves in terms of our sincerity and our dedication in the way we live it out. I got a very profound personal lesson and I think that that was. It really redirected my life, in a sense. I became, from that time on, growingly more concerned with social issues and growingly more concerned to be involved in the kind of education that prompted social awareness and enhanced more growth. And so, my own involvement in the specific field of religious education

that I had become interested in intensifying and, I think, maybe my own sense of what religious life was all about, had turned a corner. It became much more in the direction of the area I talked to you about before--more profoundly aware of global realities, more profoundly concerned with social transformation and, maybe, above all, on a personal level, far more concerned about the interior core of religious values and how that really got lived out in life, than the external forms that religion takes--the external forms of my own religious congregation--external forms that divide us denominationally. It just put things in a different perspective" (Sister S).

#### Preparation for Change: Anxiety and Upheaval

The main themes that emerged were: 1) Education and critical thinking; 2) Leadership; 3) Return to original commitment and 4) Prayer. Table III on the following page shows the main themes and subthemes that emerged in the major area, preparation for change, along with the number of sisters who responded in each category.

##### 1) Education

All 20 sisters talked about the experiences, in formation, as preparation for the significant events they saw as profoundly affecting their lives. Time and again, they have reiterated it was the original commitment and the excellent theological training that prepared them for the changes and learning experiences they encountered. Some sisters describe instances where they were unhappy with their immediate superiors, or had months that were difficult.

Table III. Preparation for Change: Anxiety and Upheaval  
Main Themes

Area		N
I.	Education	20
	A. Critical Thinking	10
II.	Leadership (Appeared in other major areas also)	20
III.	Return to Original Commitment	14
IV.	Prayer (Appeared in other major areas also)	20

Some have talked about the large classes--70 to 90--that precluded the advantages of the one-to-one. One sister spoke of the "authoritarian kind of heavy-handedness that was characteristic of one at one point" (Sister H), but these sisters were the beneficiaries of the Sister Formation movement of the fifties. One of their own, Sister Mary Emil Penet, was a leader in the movement which paved the way for the excellent education that these sisters received. This education that emphasized the growth, development and preparation of the whole sister, embodied the concepts and philosophies of the humanistic educators. Sometimes the sisters felt that they were not prepared for meeting the real world, but other sisters said they were prepared as much as they could be for meeting contingencies, but reiterated that nobody could be for Viet Nam or the Civil Rights movement, or really, the specific incidents that related to the laity's reaction to Vatican II.

One sister (Sister B) said, "It used to be said of us that

joining the IHM order was like going to a finishing school. We were taught how to behave with grace, femininity, courtesy and appropriateness." Another sister, in terms of atmosphere, regulation: "There was little choice-making, however, at the same time, because we were a congregation of educators, we were given the best scholars the congregation could offer, and we were given the time to study, and we were taught, if nothing else, critical thinking . . . and because we were taught critical thinking, even though it wasn't always applied in our lives, we had those skills developed and I think it was, in part, those skills which enabled us and, particularly, those a bit older than us, to be able to sustain the changes. Our leadership was always challenging us to read more, to read better, to discuss."

## 2) Leadership

"Our leadership has always been in a process of education, and they shared the fact that they, also are learning . . . I would say that the congregation was most concerned that we would be good religious, but they were very concerned that, professionally, we would be very well-trained so that the students would get only the best. . . so, it was always working--kind of the interlocking of the personal, social development, even while we were here, going through the formation at prayer, we were always in study, as well. And it was always--even in the novitiate, which was a somewhat cloistered year--we would have monthly a program in which we had to develop global concerns. We were kept conscious of world concerns . . . unfolding of

the concern for the poor, with Vatican II, is the new approach to missions--that we do not supply, dole out, services, but that we train the people to assume direction of their own lives" (Sister T).

### 3) Return to Original Commitment

"The purpose of all our works is somehow related to making the world a better place. It helped us to focus on the fact that we are here for the service of the poor . . . I think we were prepared unbelievably well, or amazingly well. It's hard to see how anyone could have anticipated, for example, the changes coming in the Church, and might have seen that there would be a growth, a more integrated society in America, but nobody was prepared for what happened in the Civil Rights movement in the sixties. I mean, how could you be? Certainly, nobody was prepared for what was going to happen us in the moral watershed that was the Viet Nam war. But circumstances had prepared us with a kind of seminal understanding that was going to stand us in good stead for that time" (Sister E).

### 4) Prayer

All sisters talked about prayer as one of the main and strongest strategies they used for preparation and coping. One sister, talking about her constant return to prayer for preparation said: "I remember Margaret Brennan [the then Mistress of Novices] saying, 'Sisters, pray. If you don't, you have nothing to offer the Church'" (Sister R).

Transition: Pain and Coping

The main themes that emerged were: 1) Acceptance of the reality of change; 2) Loss of friends; 3) Learning through shared framework; and 4) Mutual growth of individual and community. Table IV shows the main themes and subthemes that emerged in the major areas of transition, along with the number of sisters who responded in each category.

Table IV. Transition: Pain and Coping  
Main Themes

Area	N
I. Acceptance of the Reality of Change	
A. Individual adaptive mechanisms*	16
1. Workaholic	1
2. Substance abuse (controlled)	1
3. Fasting, week-end retreats	3
4. Daily Mass	1
5. Therapy	8
6. Year of Renewal	8
7. Involvement with family	6
8. Closer friendship with other sisters	10
II. Loss of Friends	12
III. Learning Through Shared Framework*	
A. Discernment	20
B. Learning by Listening	6
C. Workshops organized by leadership	18
IV. Mutual Growth of Individual and Community (appeared in other areas also)	18

\* appeared in several major areas throughout the study. Figures were documented as they appeared throughout the study, not only in this section.

### 1) Acceptance of the Reality of Change

The sisters moved into the mid-sixties and seventies. Some handled the changes better than others, but there was no escaping it. Every sister in the study relates a significant event back to this period. "It was mind-boggling . . . lots of things were let loose" (Sister E). "A lot of people didn't know how to handle the changes" (Sister H). Some were overwhelmed. Sisters left in droves, sometimes as many as 25 to 30 at a time. Some felt pushed out of religious life as a consequence of changes taking place. Others were attracted by options and alternatives unavailable to them as long as they remained. All the nuns in the study did not seriously question their commitment.

Some never caught up with change, because they did not participate in it. ". . . I was good at math, so they sent me each summer for six years to another state to get my math degree. But summertime was when everyone came home (Monroe Mother House) and that was the time that all the decisions for change were made, and I was never part of it. I don't always see in myself the results of what all these changes are. I don't always understand why we did the things we did. Some of them were not good. 'I'm letting these things go--what am I putting in their place? I miss the music, the Gregorian chants'" (Sister J). This sister said, "I need Mass every day. Daily Mass is very important to me. It is one way I have of keeping continuity" (Sister J). Another sister, who lives in Detroit: "I return one weekend every month to the Hermitage and pray and fast" (Sister E). Another sister: "I'm more comfortable, now. I like



spiritual leaders. I go to all the workshops" (Sister H).

## 2) Loss of Friends

"I admired the older nuns. Lots of the older nuns left. My friends were leaving because they could not accept the changes. It was getting too wordly. It was not just the habit. The prayer forms changed" (Sister H).

". . . You do what you have to do, then you get used to it. You go along" (Sister B). I learned I had a proclivity for alcohol and had to stop this tendency.

". . . I was hurt. My friends were gone. For a while I didn't care about people--then I became a workaholic. I got involved in everything. I still am one, today . . . I became a peacemaker--a bridge between the powers that be and the other sisters" (Sister H).

Another perspective was how wonderful and exciting this period was. For instance, a sister says, "I was professed in 1966. The Council was over, and rapid, radical changes started right away. . . It was wonderful because, for me, what it did--I used the word radical in the sense of route--I knew, intuitively, it was going to take us, individually and as a congregation, and as a Church, back into our pristine values, and it was going to be a falling away of the clutter that accumulates in anything that's let stand for a long time--be it a closet, library, or an institution of people" (Sister T).

"I think, to go back a little bit in our history, we had such a strong, centralized and very authoritarian structure in the congregation, that one of the effects of Vatican II when it liberated

us, in a sense, or gave us new horizons, was that I think we had each to come to grips with, given the new face of religious life, could we personally choose it again? When I came to religious life in the late fifties, in 1958, what I committed myself to, then, may not, in its core religious meaning, but certainly in externals, have completely changed. But the people with whom I made my commitment--half of them are gone so that in a sense, the community, a sociological group that I pledged myself to, doesn't really exist any more. It's a new group, now--part of that group--but it's different. When I came, it was a large community, and there were many people. So I think through these last fifteen years, individually people have been, first of all, discovering what was this new thing called religious life in our community, what was it going to look like after Vatican II, and then deciding, for themselves, whether they thought it was worth it to hang in with that and whether they thought they, themselves, personally wanted to do that" (Sister N).

### 3) Learning Through Shared Framework

Eighteen of the twenty interviewed said that they went to all the workshops and teaching experiences offered by the community. This shared framework was very important to the sisters I interviewed. "One of the best workshops I went to was on solidarity. It enabled me to cope with diversity that was bothering me. Each member of the workshop was asked to share an oppression that she had gone through. Hearing about how difficult things had been for some members establishing their ministries, I learned to appreciate, to trust

more. God is bigger than my mind. There can be diversity. But you have to be exposed . . . then something happens inside" (Sister H). ". . . I will go anywhere we get to share. I would be willing to bet that those who come together have less trouble, now, than others (those who remain isolated) . . . I like directive retreats. I learn from them. I get directions" (Sister G).

To cope with people with anxieties, and who need a time of contemplation and prayer, to reintegrate and regroup, the sisters established a House of Prayer and the Hermitage. Sisters who need it can take "a year of renewal" to think through things. Eight sisters interviewed had taken a year of renewal. Each sister has a spiritual director with whom she can talk things over. When a sister needs it, funds are provided for psychotherapy. All sisters mentioned the following strategies for problem-solving: "We discern together. The sisters bring problems to a group. It's sorting things through together, in a group. It is trying to sort through the motives and the spirit of what is going on--testing. Kind of testing motives. It is a process that has to happen with a group of people." Another very important learning strategy mentioned by six was learning by listening. This had been utilized for centuries. Over and over, sisters reiterated that the process is more important than the product, i.e., ". . . the manner by which you come to a decision is most important" (Sister P).

#### 4) Mutual Growth of Individual and Community

One of the most important strategies used repeatedly was to

bring the problem to the leadership and then back to the group. As one sister stated, "The leadership did not always know what to do about it, did not always want to touch the problem, but they did. They did not shy away from what had to be faced. They trusted and respected us" (Sister P). Thus, there was mutual growth of individual and community.

### Synthesis, Adaptation and Satisfaction

The main themes that evolved were: 1) Experimentation with lifestyles and organizational structures; 2) Re-examination of values; 3) Bonding, networking and corporate identity. Table V shows the main themes and subthemes that appeared in the major area of synthesis along with the number of sisters who responded in each category. This section's themes were not as clear cut and there is some overlapping.

Table V. Synthesis: Adaptation & Satisfaction  
Main Themes

Area		N
I.	Experimentation with Lifestyles	20
	A. Organizational structures	12
II.	Re-examination of Values (Appeared in other major areas also)	20
III.	Bonding, Networking and Corporate Identity	14

#### 1) Experimentation with Lifestyles and Organizational Structures

Sisters learned to cope with diverse ministry, diverse dressing styles and, along the way, they had to accommodate to different

living arrangements and evolve a lifestyle that was practical and suitable for what they had to do.

"We used to have very predictable patterns of community life. We live basically in groups of all IHM sisters. We lived in our groups, not by our own choice. We were sent to live in them. When I first went on mission, I lived with 30 women, then I lived with a group of about six or seven, of changing individuals, but the group remained that number. By the seventies, I was living in a group of about 10 women, and it was no longer IHMs. These were women from other congregations living with us for convenience. In the mid-seventies, I lived with four IHMs, all in different ministries. At the present time, I live with one other IHM, in a rented town house, in an apartment complex" (Sister Q).

". . . In our province, there are 220 women. We have 110 houses. Our largest has 20 sisters living in it, and we have about 49 women living alone. Some of our women live with lay women who are involved in this type of ministry" (Sister S).

". . . What I see happening in some places where sisters are living alone in apartments, is that the apartment they are living in has a number of other sisters also living in apartments which are adjacent or in the same complex, and they are coming together on a regular basis, for meals and for prayers, etc." (Sister M).

"I think one of the underlying reasons women wanted the different styles and patterns of living is for more physical space and for more quiet for study, and for reading, and, I think, frankly, for

prayer. . . . But there is another sense in which, you know, the space that gives you personal psychological space to be yourself, to provide you with some privacy, might be a more realistic assessment of what human beings needs are. . . . Most of our women are freely choosing their pattern of life or choosing from selections available. A lot of it has to do with ministry, but that's not it, exclusively. Some of it is also their personal needs, their personal desires. There's a lot more clear sense about, 'If I'm going to be a good woman religious, then I have to be a good and healthy human being. I have to find a psychologically whole, life-giving climate, as well as having to find one that simply physically enables me to be close to my ministry" (Sister S).

"I think the other element of it that maybe hasn't been so pronounced in the past years, but is becoming increasingly more so, is precisely that sense of wanting to have some community ties. Living in some form of community. Now, I don't see us as ever being able to go back to the kind of life that we had before that we called community--by virtue of physical togetherness. I think now there is a growing awareness of the desire to live in community from the point of view of the fact that its an enriching psychological religious ministerial lifestyle" (Sister B).

Another sister said, "One of the things that I realized as we were having the celebration is that, as much as there were negatives involved in our formation, and all that--we can laugh about some of them, now--there is, nevertheless, a great deal of affection involded,

a great deal of concern for each other--a great deal of dedication and good will and sincerity and, sometimes, I miss that we don't have enough opportunities to spend some time together, now, to get to know each other, so that we could really be friends. The other structure (the old one) specifically kept us away from being friends and I think that, you know, we came together in community. We always suspected that we were all there because we were really such wonderful women--and now we have the opportunity to discover that, and not to be only sisters but to be friends to each other" (Sister B).

## 2) Re-examination of Values

There was constant reexamination of values in the lives of these sisters and there appeared to be particular emphasis in this area. One sister relates her experience: "I think right now we are on the verge of rediscovering one of the values we had before that maybe we didn't recognize because we didn't like all the trappings, which was our corporate sense that there are a lot of movement within the community to rediscover. For example, this whole program that perhaps others have talked to you about, now--our whole corporate renewal is designed to give us, again, a sense of what it means to be ministering and to be in community precisely as a corporate entity, so that what we do, individually, is enriched and enhanced and strengthened and extended by the power of our being a group" (Sister O).

". . . and one of the concerns is that the gains that we made about our individual ability to make life-directing choices will not be sacrificed as, in a sense, the pendulum swings back a little bit more

toward the middle" (Sister I).

"Another specific thing that impacted that in the post-Vatican Church was that, before that, the notion of the religious vocation was --the emphasis there was that this was a very special, in fact, a higher calling--and one of the things that came out of Vatican II was that the whole emphasis on the universal call of holiness which tended to make some people who were getting their identity, perhaps, or their sense of their position in all of this from a sense of being more than lay people--that pulled the pins out from under some people--for some people that was really problematic. It also tended to make sisters look around and say to themselves, 'Well, what is it about my life that is worth going on doing that makes me any different than I could do if I were a lay woman?' The second thing that happened, right in with that, was we had very, very great devotedness to our own individual religious institute, you know, the IHMs were the best of all, and then there were the Dominicans and everybody else--there was a certain being not only set apart from other religious communities but, in a subtle way, being set against them. So, for example, in our history, there was a long-standing rivalry between the Adrian Dominicans and the IHMs, fueled by the mistakes of the bishops, and all that sort of stuff, but it was there. There was not exactly--there certainly was no such thing, fifteen years ago, you know, of friendships between other groups of sisters. You just did not associate with other religious communities. That's all broken down. And I think, while it was very, on the whole, extremely positive, it



also tends to relativise that sense of identification with your corporate group. We used to put so much stress on what it meant to be an IHM, and then we discovered that it meant pretty much the same thing to be a Dominican and a Franciscan. The decor of our life was alike and, so, just like we were discovering that we weren't all that different from lay people, we were also discovering we weren't all that different from other religious communities, so I think those things, in their own, subtle way, impacted on maybe our pride and our corporateness" (Sister D).

### 3) Bonding, Networking, Corporate Identity

A sister stated, "There is a move towards the renewal of the corporate sense. I think my own experience that people in leadership in the community, who are looking at the whole picture, have noticed this and, at least in this particular administration, had a concern to take steps to revitalize this. I get this sense, just from specific things that have happened to me in the province, that there maybe isn't an explicit or articulated sense of it among the newer sisters, but there is very much an implicit kind of--on the feeling level--either sense of loss for what used to be, or a desire to revitalize together. Let me give you what is a very small but concrete example. We recently had our northwest province assembly and, for the first time, we came together for three days, and we did it at the new conference center in Monroe (the Mother House). So we were all together, back in Monroe, at the province, and the women in our province were extremely happy about the location that we chose and enthusiastic

about being in Monroe, and you heard them--they were saying to me all the time, 'It's good to be back home, again, it's good to touch our roots, it's great'--all those kinds of things were said to me that, while they might not have said, 'Oh, let's go home and become a corporate group, again,' there was an--I don't know--whether it's not nostalgia--but it was something at the feeling level. There is the need to rebond" (Sister B).

In their search for relevant government in relationship to bonding, the sisters have been searching for structures that will accommodate their dwindling numbers but, also, to emphasize an underlying participation by the sisters at a grass roots level--from an authoritarian, hierarchical structure, it is getting more and more democratic in nature. ". . . another part of it, right now, because of where we are in relation to our future structures, is we are moving into a system where the individual sisters are grouped into representational groupings, somewhere between ten and twenty groups--so I do a lot of community building through trying to work with the people in these representational groups, as they discover what the process of group roles are for them" (Sister E).

"Because a lot of our processes are going into some of either the pastoral or the decision-making activities that used to be centered in the relationship between the provincial and the person in the community are now coming to be more centered in the group that she relates to. For example, before someone would come to me (provincial) to talk about a possible change or development in her ministry, she

would hopefully have already talked about that with the women in her local community and with the women in her wider representational grouping, to get their input and decision so that, by the time she comes to talk with me, it isn't so much that she's come to ask me-- she's come to tell me about the steps she's taken to find out, take advice, hear from others, how they view this. Because we have so many women, now living either alone or in twos or threes, in these communities, mostly because of the nature of their ministries, they very frequently use their representational group, or cluster group, as a kind of extended local community. . . . We've been very concerned and involved in developing the new models that we hope will emerge. Partly, this is based on representational groups. I am concerned that we kind of experiment with and focus on what does it take to build those kind of human relationships and those kind of processes. We are much involved with pioneering work in, I would say, the emergence of new structures" (Sister T).

One of the provincials said: "Now one of the things about my role is that--the way we are presently structured in community--the provincial leadership people have the role within the province, but then the provincials have a congregational role, as well, because of directions in decision-making, policy-making decisions for the congregation were set by the governing board, which is the combination of the central administration personnel and the provincials. So when we meet, at least twice a year, at that level, we are bringing experience with what the sisters are concerned about, thinking about, how

they would be liable to react, plus your own insights into decision-making about the congregation in a wider scope, so now the provincial has a kind of dual role. Most of your daily work is in the province, but there is a lot of congregational work, too, and in relation to the governing board and all the subcommittees thereof, or the other concerns that come to the governing board. I would say that most of the provincials would be doing quite a bit of congregational work. It is sometimes frustrating because, in a sense, you're between--you're always one of the--it's really one of the purposes of the provincial level of government--that you're a link between the corporate whole and the individual persons, so you're always the go-between in many ways, and you'd better have your finger on the pulse of what it is" (Sister S).

In addition to the representation groups that were described as an extended community, the sisters that were interviewed said they had support groups that consisted sometimes of a group of IHIs that they were compatible with or with groups of people related to their work, but were not IHMs. Six in the group said they still had very firm support and interaction with their families.

Another aspect noted is that sisters mentioned their hobbies. One sister came to the interview from her golf game. Another sister told me that she was very interested in tennis, and another one in bicycling. Many sisters go on vacations on their own.

Evaluation: Implications for the Future

The main themes that emerged are: 1) Adaptation to dwindling numbers; 2) Facing ambiguities; 3) Hope and optimism for the future, and 4) Sister of the future. Table VI shows the main themes and sub-themes that appeared in the major area of evaluation along with the number of sisters who responded in each category.

Table VI. Evaluation: Implication for the Future  
Main Themes

Area	N
I. Adaptation to Dwindling Numbers	18
II. Facing Ambiguities	20
III. Hope and Optimism for the Future	18
IV. Sister of the Future	20

1) Adaptation to Dwindling Numbers

In the fall of 1983, the constitutions of the order that were sent to Rome were not approved, and sisters had to take stock, once more, of where they were at. The sisters have faced the fact of their dwindling numbers. They were able to do a study in terms of projecting the "manpower" that they had relevant to the dwindling membership and retirement of older sisters. The ministries reflect, rather than schools which require a large number of people, ministries that are more individualistic. One sister told me, "If you had talked to us about six years ago, you might have had a different feeling than what

you have now. We are optimistic and hopeful" (Sister A).

## 2) Facing Ambiguities

All of the sisters--each and every one of the twenty sisters--talked about coming to terms with ambiguity as being their greatest learning experience. One sister said, "We are now considered the young ones, but I have gray hair. We have a concern for the older sisters. Each earning sister supports two or three that have retired, but I have learned to deal with ambiguity about the future with faith and prayer, and trust in ourselves and our leadership. I am very grateful for being where I am. I am at peace" (Sister A). Another sister said, ". . . if you put all your emphasis in surviving, you are not living creatively. The reality is education and prayer . . . we are dogged women. We have survived so much. We keep on going. In our formation years, we prayed continually for the gift of perseverance" (Sister R). Another response: "I'm not sure what will come, but I want to be a part of what will come. The challenges are to make all the ambiguities creative . . . we come back to the center of things: 'Be not afraid if the Lord is leading you--be not afraid--trust in the Lord.' We don't have to know where he's leading us at this point. We have to prepare by discernment and trust in God. We have to move ahead--educate people first, rise, and then move ahead. But we have to be involved, we have to be supportive, and we have to rely on bonding. It's not a solo journey. Look what we've survived. Changes don't come that hard, anymore . . . I'm open to the community

dissolving but, for the present, I want to live it and life to the fullest. I've learned never to say never" (Sister E).

A sense of pessimism did not exist with these sisters. They indicated that they had faced facts and were at peace--that they valued one another, they valued their community, and they knew that this is where they belonged and this is where they would be. They seemed to feel that they wanted to be a part of new evolvments and, perhaps, if this is an emergent role passage, then this could be described as the closure, a recognition that their role as a member of a canonical order, might end, but it would only begin again, in another form, with their values intact.

### 3) Hope and Optimism for the Future

Throughout the study, every sister mentioned the impact of leadership upon her and, in this section also appeared to be emphasis on this phenomenon and because of this, faith and optimism for the future. The sisters talked about the strong women (in the order) by whom they were influenced. The sisters frequently mentioned names like Mary Emil Penet, Mother Theresa, Margaret Brennan, Mary Kinney, Mary McDevitt. They are proud of this leadership and expressed their faith and trust that it would continue, and would take them through whatever changes lie ahead of them. Sisters articulated that lecturers were brought in and workshops made available, so it seemed like leadership was always there, providing them with what they needed. "In a sense, I really hope the tradition is being passed on. I think

that what it is is that we have such a long-standing record now, one of the expectations of leadership being not only good management--and we certainly have had good management--but even more important than that--the ability to be visionary--to see and anticipate what the future holds for the congregation and, in a sense, kind of play the role of being sure that that's brought to the attention of the congregation, being sure that the congregation is kept in touch with the wider world, with the wider Church, with concerns that seem to be emerging and developing, and moving the congregation in that direction. I think the leadership emerges from the group, itself, and the congregation, as a whole, in various ways, is involved in calling forth that leadership. When it gets down to the decision of actually, for example, choosing the president of the congregation, choosing the chief officers of the congregation, it's a representative process, it's democratic through a smaller body. We don't have, for example, open election of the president of the congregation, although the candidates for that office certainly emerge by a congregational line process" (Sister F). The sisters believe in themselves and their leadership and believe that the leadership will always provide them with that they need to carry on.

Three sisters mentioned this anecdote: When the sisters made their commitment to follow through with the ideals of Sister Formation movement, the bishop told the Mother, 'You know, you are making a big mistake educating your sisters, because once they are educated, you will lose control,' and the Mother answered, 'We will risk that. I'm



not afraid.' And perhaps it's this willingness to risk in a responsible way in order to move forward that is characteristic of the leadership and training offered by and to these sisters. The sisters called it critical thinking. One sister said, "It seems like the leadership was always sophisticated enough to know what was going on. They always had their fingers on the pulse of the community--the women and their needs" (Sister H). One sister said, "You see the supernatural, God's hand at work. We were always given the leadership that we needed. In the fifties, Mother Annamarie Grix made sure that we got the best education and the kind of education we needed. Then there was Margaret Brennan. We used to sing 'The Impossible Dream' to her. She took advantage of all the liberal changes that Vatican II Council afforded and ran with them" (Sister D). One sister, commenting on Margaret Brennan: "She went too fast for me, but the changes were needed, and I was happy with them." Another sister, "I was very glad that Mary Kinney followed Margaret Brennan. She came through the ranks. She was one of us. She gave us administrative procedures that were very important" (Sister O). Speaking of Carol Quigley, their present president, "She has given us a year of corporate renewal. It is exactly what we need, this trend towards global concerns. It has given the community the opportunity to grow and become closer in a common identity of women religious" (Sister O).

#### 4) Sister of the Future

Sisters were asked, "Who is a sister of the eighties?" "What

have been her learning experiences that lead her into the eighties and nineties?" Seven sisters said that she was a person who had to be very strong, that she was a person who had to understand ambiguity and live with it. She was a sister who had to be sure of her mission, but one sister summed it all up in this way: "I think probably sisters in the eighties and, more important for now, sisters in the nineties, are going to have to be women of deep personal conviction and deep awareness of the rightness of their calling for themselves. They have to be very secure in their sense of being called by God, personally, to do a particular style of life--not that that means their calling is any higher than anybody else's but meaning that it has a particularity and a specificity about it, and the rightness of it comes out of their personal experience of God, which they have tested in community, so when their challenges come to them from events that happen in the world or events that transpire in their personal lives or things that happen in the congregation, or things that happen in the Church, their ability to go on living what they consider to be the fundamentals of their life--they can go on doing that because what they're doing comes from their own inner conviction and commitment. It isn't dependent upon structures that are external to them, or statuses that are supportive to their position, or their recognition by the Church. They can really stand up against changing times and changing events with a firm sense of direction and a sense of happiness with their choice because the basic way they're judging that is that inner stand. . . . And they're women who are very, very aware that they don't live

in a vacuum, so they know they need friends, they need to be in community, and various kinds of relationships. They are women who are convinced that life is about growing, it's not static--and so it goes on--it's dynamic, it develops. They're prepared to cope with that development. I think they're very positive about that development. I think they have to be fundamentally women who believe that, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, the world is created good by God and is, in fact, getting better, and that it's our job to do everything we can, humanly and humanely, to accelerate the transformation. I don't think that they can be women who are pessimistic about the future. I think they have to be very creative of the future and see themselves as being meaningfully involved in that. I think we might very well have to be courageous women, because I think some of the challenges ahead of us, just as they have been in the past, are going to turn out to be maybe even more dramatic than we thought. We reluctantly do not know all the future will hold. I think that the women religious in the future are going to be a little different, ministerially, than they were in the past. In the past, we ministered in a much more visibly corporate way. Now we're going to have to minister corporately, but it will be the root convictions that we share about ministry that will account for our corporateness, not our being together in bodies in a specific place in the same ministry. I think the sister of the future will be in ministry much more of a catalyst, specifically recognized as a catalyst, for helping the ministries of lay women and men in the Church to emerge, activate, be

prepared for, than even is true now. I think we've been going in that direction. I think it's going to be much more so. So, for example, rather than having a dozen sisters in the school, we may have a sister in the school, and she will be a very influential person, maybe by the position she holds but, maybe, more by the kind of person she is, in being the cause of the growth of that kind of community. . . . The visible supports have been breaking down, already, in our past, but it's quite possible that in the future or, at least, for a time, religious communities will have to even risk what status they have now in the Church to be able to do the things that need to be done for the Church, whether it knows it or not. It's risky. We have been preparing for it for 20 years, whether we know it or not, through a great deal of personal struggle and coming to grips with the community on a personal basis that now enables us to put that experience together collectively. It's one of the great things about--that's one of the pluses in leadership--that you have the opportunity to meet and know other women religious from other congregations, and you see the parallel experience that they have, and the unifying experiences that women religious are having, in general, so that this whole challenge, for example, from the Vatican in terms of studying religious life in the United States, women religious responded to that together because we recognized, having growingly recognized the unity of our experience" (Sister S).

In the context of the future, one sister spoke of the importance of networking. She said, "I think that networking is a

learning experience, not only in the sense that by the mere exchange of experience and information we are better able to cope with our own, but I think it has accelerated our learning and growth in another sense. We have learned that we need to be organized. We need not only to network to share, to talk, we need to network to act together in wider circles, in order to be more effective--in order to be heard --in order to really witness to what has, in fact, been the experience of religious women, not just the experience of a small group of women from Monroe, but everywhere--the micro to the macro--to the rest of the world, as well. I think one of the lessons that people can learn from religious life--at least it ought to be--I hope it's what our life is beginning to make clear, for example, in terms of the whole feminist movement, in terms of the whole change regarding sexual roles, sexual identity--that it's another way to me of saying that we ought to be putting a lot of affirmation in the value of the person, irrespective of sexuality or roles assigned to people by gender, or even by virtue of sexual performance, but the human person is God's greatest creation, and we ought to realize that we need to do everything to maximize the value of the human person, not let accidentals of race or creed or national origin or economic status or gender be obstacles to full human growth in society. I think that is one of the things that we have to offer the rest of the society. I think some of the lessons are--like, in some ways, maybe characteristic of the feminine humanity, that have been accentuated by women religious

congregations more than anything else, are those graces of human compassion, service, the capacity of human beings to love" (Sister M).

### Summary

In evaluating and summarizing the data presented above, the work of Lee Cronbach and Howard Goldstein reviewed in Chapter II were found useful for giving perspective to the findings. Cronbach (1963) developed a format of five human needs that are directly related to learning. He asserts that these needs must be present and satisfied if effective learning is to take place. These needs are: 1) the need for competence and self respect that embodies the need to know one's strengths and weaknesses and to set realistic goals; 2) the need for independence which encompasses the desire for autonomous thought and action and the striving for creative expression; 3) approval by peers; 4) approval by authority and 5) the desire for affection.

Material documented from the intensive interviews suggest that these needs were frequent and were satisfied and that effective learning took place with these sisters.

The material documented from the intensive interviews also suggests that the sisters learned through strategic, tactical and adaptive learning described by Howard Goldstein (1981).

1) Strategic Learning. The sisters were involved iwth deliberate activity and problem solving ventures enacted to achieve pre-conceived objectives. They were involved with acquisition of knowledge and data for decision-making purposes and improvement of

technical and motoric skills. They mastered steps and procedures to achieve greater effectiveness, control and responsibility, and developed wisdom to enhance self-esteem and motivation.

2) Tactical Learning. The sisters learned by getting involved in maneuvers required to adjust to unexpected contingencies of living. They called upon their practiced techniques for problem resolution, to arrive at proper decisions and to find alternatives to determine what other information might be needed.

3) Adaptive Learning. The sisters learned through social and experiential learning, through involvement of self through the construction of reality, through the implication of learning for their present and future place in this world. Goldstein (1980) states: Adaptive Learning serves as a nexus that as an experience that affects the individual's interactions with his environment, as perceptions of the future" (p. 97). This learning, he asserts, is integral to making choices and decisions and to the quality of relationships with others, and to the kind of planning that shapes future conditions. It is employed in the seemingly minor decisions that are part of day-to-day living and also, when more radical determinations need to be made.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study was conducted to explore and describe experiential and intellectual learning patterns of twenty nuns as they embarked on an emergent status passage for which there were no precedents. It explores and describes adult learning in relationship to change and transition. The findings of Chapter IV document this passage in the words of the sisters interviewed. The major areas that were chosen to guide this inquiry are as follows:

#### Demographics

Triggers: Specific events that triggered the need to learn.

Preparation for Change: Anxiety and Upheaval

Transition: Pain and Coping

Synthesis: Adaptation and Satisfaction

Evaluation: Implication for the Future

Chapter V presents a summary of findings and the conclusions that were drawn from findings in data obtained from intensive interviews with twenty fully professed nuns in the age group of 35 to 50, from a midwest order, the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The summary of the findings are presented in the six major areas that were chosen to guide the study. Conclusions from findings follow. Recommendations for future research and concluding remarks complete the chapter.



Using the methodology of grounded theory, main themes were extrapolated under five of the major areas chosen to direct the study. In the area of demographics, information was gathered under predetermined headings.

### Summary

#### Demographics

A brief description of each of the participants is included in the Appendix. The women who were interviewed were punctual and appropriately dressed. None of them wore make-up, but appeared attractive. They asked questions about the research, and volunteered information in an open manner. They seemed eager to talk and share their feelings, and came across as strong and optimistic.

Age - Most of the women were clustered in the age group of 41 to 47.

Age of Entry. Fifteen of the twenty women entered the order at the age of 18, suggesting for this generation of women entry after high school was most popular.

Education - Data showed these women to be highly educated.

Final Vows - Were not viewed as important as first vows.

Ministry, Jobs - All women interviewed had jobs.

Living Arrangements - Data suggest the sisters preference to live in small groups that give them space but still allowed for a valued life style.

Triggers: Specific Events  
that Triggered Learning

The main themes that evolved were 1) Identity, 2) Ministry, and 3) Life Crises.

Identity. This area had direct relationship to the mandates of Vatican II for renewal and relevancy. Through documentation of quotations of the sisters, the change in individual and corporate identity was revealed. Twenty of the sisters mentioned change in appearance. Of these, sixteen spoke of dress, that is change in habits. Many of the older sisters in the order had retained the wearing of robes/habits. Some wear modified habits, but all in the study wore civilian (regular) clothes. All dress appropriately, but there was a considerable degree of difference in terms of style. No sister in the study wore make-up, but the remarks documented showed considerable diversity and considerable reaction to this diversity.

Identity was shaped and changed as rules regarding interaction with others relaxed. Renewed relationships with families led to additional family supports and responsibilities. Six sisters spoke of this. Data showed sisters taking time off to attend to health needs of family and reliance on family support through their own personal crises. Increased pastoral work led to increased contact with families in the parish and friendships that gave depth and dimension to their work. Ten sisters spoke of this.

As time and work restrictions lifted, and the authoritarian nature of leadership became more flexible, and the sisters became more individualistic in their lifestyles and had more privacy, there was

closer proximity to males. Sixteen sisters documented close, warm ties with males that enriched their lives. Five mentioned long term relationships. However, all relationships, however close, maintained celibacy.

Ten sisters spoke of deeper ties of friendship with other sisters. Friendships with other sisters, particularly intense friendships during the years of total institution were discouraged. Data documented showed development of friendships rather than just sisterhood among the nuns, and relationships outside the order developed because of work and recreation ties. The heterosexual relationships are viewed as normal and healthy by the twenty women interviewed.

As values were reviewed and thought through, sisters were able to work through their attitudes towards the male hierarchy in the Catholic Church, to become more sure as to where their true commitment lay and to whom. Six sisters documented clashes with the male hierarchy. Ten sisters mentioned reaction of laity as shaping their identity and six spoke of having to work through what was the right name and mode of address for them.

Work/Ministry. Twenty sisters mentioned work and ministry as triggers. Triggers in these areas of ministry and jobs were directly related to the mandates of Vatican II. The nuns, in reviewing their callings in ministry, did much pioneering work and retrained for new jobs. They were willing to take risks and many are in missions

abroad, in unstable countries, and by thoughtful experimentation, they found what was suitable to them in terms of the mandates of Vatican II and their own personalities. Sixteen triggers in this area were related to first missions, sixteen to experimentation with new professional roles, and six related to missions overseas. As identities shaped and changed and developed, it became increasingly clear that the role of the women religious today is a very challenging one. One cannot hide behind the habit or order--one has to be a thinking, contributing member of the order and society.

Life Crises. The specific triggers documented are in keeping with those anticipated in the adult development life cycle. Adults in this age group grappled with illness (10) and death (14). Eight spoke of other experiences. These included the war in Viet Nam (1), being fired (2), dealing with mentally ill superiors (2), experiences of self awareness (3). Ebaugh (1977), San Giovanni (1978) and Glaser and Strauss (1971, p. 31) speak of "arrested passages" in which persons do not move with peers though the typical sequence of roles associated with their age and sex. Arrested passages are examined in terms of their implications with the person's ability to negotiate role changes. This phenomenon was not noted in the sisters interviewed, suggesting that the exposure to the media, interaction with couples and families, the opportunity to travel, and engage in recreational activities and, most of all, their holistic education and sex education in schools prior to their entering the order, shaped more sophisticated women. In the women interviewed, there appeared to be

awareness rather than naivete.

Preparation for Change:  
Anxiety and Upheaval

The main themes that emerged are: 1) Education with emphasis on critical thinking, 2) Leadership, 3) Return to original commitment, and 4) Prayer.

Education. This generation of nuns was beneficiary to the holistic approach to the education of the nun prior to her being sent out on mission. These ideals were formulated and implemented by the Sister Formation Movement. All twenty of the sisters spoke of education as being highly significant. Ten spoke specifically of critical thinking. One sister felt that, though the education received was a good one, she was unprepared for the real world. Her view re-emphasized the part that individual personality plays when life situations are negotiated. All twenty sisters interviewed spoke of the excellent preparation they received. When sisters needed new skills, they returned to the school room. When challenged, data shows they were able to transfer skills in education readily to other areas. Education plays a major part in keeping the sisters aware of what is happening in the wider world through workshops, and programs such as the current year of study and awareness of corporate renewal. Older sisters from the mother house also attend and participate actively. Ten sisters who mentioned "critical thinking" thought of this as a specific learning strategy. During the years of formation for this group, when leadership was authoritarian and total institution

meant total conformity, critical thinking was not utilized but, later, it was most meaningful for problem-solving.

Leadership. Leadership was another main theme that emerged. All twenty sisters spoke of leadership. Data showed the significant part that leadership plays in this type of aggregate status passage. In all the major areas of inquiry, sisters mentioned the effect of leadership. Leadership was expected to provide good management and to be visionary. In this order, the criteria were met, though not without mistakes. Data documented shows the leadership in this order to be forward-thinking and, when required, was flexible. They were willing to risk. It changed from authoritarian to democratic gracefully and, in doing so, placed a heavy responsibility on its members to participate and contribute and the sisters met this challenge.

Return to Original Commitment. Another theme that emerged was the return to original commitment in times of trauma. Fourteen sisters spoke of this.

Return to Prayer. All sisters spoke of prayer as a problem-solving strategy consistently used. Contemplation is used to return to balance.

#### Transition: Pain and Coping.

The main themes that emerged were: 1) Acceptance of the reality of change; 2) Loss of friends 3) Learning through shared framework; 4) Mutual growth of community, individuals and leadership through respect and trust of individuals and trust in leadership.

Acceptance of the Reality of Change. Nineteen sisters spoke of having to accept change because of the mandates of Vatican II was inevitable. This correlates with Gail Sheehy's second phase of fruitful passage--separation and incubation. She states that change always involves loss and, therefore, of necessity, some degree of anxiety and depression. She also says that even those who view changes with excitement admitted to a sense of loss. Sixteen sisters spoke of individual adaptive mechanisms. One became a workaholic. One recognized her proclivity for alcohol and arrested this tendency. One goes to mass daily. Eight entered therapy, eight took a year of renewal, six became more closely involved with family, ten grew closer to other sisters.

Loss of Friendship. Twelve sisters mentioned the pain of seeing friends leave. The pain for some appears to be very real, even today.

Learning Through Shared Framework. Eighteen sisters spoke of this. Sisters coped by using old and tested methods of problem-solving. These included discernment, learning by listening, through contemplation, guided retreats, and by taking time off for renewal and through constant prayer.

Mutual Growth of Community. The leadership and individuals grew together by leadership showing respect and trust for the individuals as they encountered new problems engendered by change, and the individuals bringing their problems and experiences to leadership and community, the leadership and community that did not let them down

or ostracize them by forcing them to choose.

### Synthesis: Adaptation and Satisfaction

The main themes that evolved were: 1) Experimentation with lifestyles and organizational structures, 2) Re-examination of values, and 3) Re-emphasis on bonding, networking and corporate identity as women religious.

#### Experimentation with Lifestyles and Organizational Structures.

As sisters went into varied ministries, living arrangements changed to accommodate their new needs on a practical and psychological basis. Twenty of the sisters interviewed spoke of experimentation with lifestyles and twelve spoke of experimentation with organizational structures as contributing to synthesis. Varied ministries along with dwindling numbers and new values throughout the Catholic Church, caused the order to experiment with varied living arrangements and new organizational structures for the order. The emphasis was on pragmatism and health of the whole individual and on getting the participation of all individuals in the order.

Re-examination of Values. All twenty of the sisters spoke of this throughout the different phases of change. The pendulum that swung so definitely towards individualism in the late sixties and seventies appears to be returning to the middle, again. Re-examination of values took place in all major areas of their lives,



but appeared to be particularly evident in this area of synthesis.

Re-emphasis on Bonding, Networking and Corporate Identity.

Fourteen sisters spoke of this. With the realization that they were no different in calling than lay people came the realization that there were no major differences between them and sisters of other orders, thus leading to a greater trend to a corporate identity as "women religious".

Evaluation: Implications for the Future

The main themes that appear in this section were: 1) Adaptation to dwindling numbers , 2) Facing ambiguities, 3) Hope and optimism for the future, 4) Sisters of the future.

Adaptation to Dwindling Numbers. Sisters have had to face the fact of dwindling numbers and the fact that in the previous year the constitutions of their order that were sent to Rome were not approved.

Facing Ambiguities. Twenty of the sisters spoke of this. Sisters have been faced with the fact that the order, as they have known it, may not exist and have had to evaluate, individually and together, that the order might dissolve. The sisters have faced this challenge, as they have done others, with courage and grace. If there are other changes, they want to be part of it. If they are forced to dissolve, canonically, they will dissolve and reform again. They have been forced to reaffirm where and with whom their true loyalties lie.

Hope and Optimism for the Future. Eighteen sisters spoke of this specifically. However, all sisters in the study came across as

realistic, but hopeful. Through their strategy of shared frameworks, they have faced what they have had to, and have emerged with an optimistic faith. Goldstein (1982, p. 442) states,

Social learning and problem solving deal with literal and symbolic dimensions of human cognition. One of these symbols is hope and expectancy of possible outcomes. . . . What is needed is a quality of hopeful realistic anticipation of future experience.

Sister of the Future. The sisters have given thought to the sister of the future. They see her as having to be very strong, very flexible, and totally committed to being where the discerned need is. They rely heavily on their past strength and on a leadership that always guided them in the right direction and trust that leadership will now guide them into the future that, though ambiguous, is exciting. The emphasis is on global ministries.

### Conclusions

The women in the group were sophisticated, highly educated women showing no signs of "arrested development" phenomena found in earlier studies done on nuns and ex-nuns. This suggests that the nun of the eighties is a normal, well rounded person, equipped to deal with the many challenges ahead of her.

Data show that while there is much mystique surrounding the nuns, they follow the pattern of normal adult development. All who had male relationships in the study claimed to be celibate in spite of closeness. It is possible that this situation may not be able to be maintained as they strive for a healthy, relevant lifestyle, and will

have to be addressed in the future.

One of the most significant conclusions of this study is that it suggests that nuns all over the United States using the principles of bonding and networking, are developing a corporate identity as "women religious" rather than as IHMs, Dominicans and smaller groups. In doing so, these bright, articulate women have defined and underlined their commitment to God and His work. They appear to be forming a formidable force of dedicated, thinking women who are unafraid to act on what they believe; an ever increasingly powerful force that would need to be reckoned with if ever a return to conservatism and blind allegiance is advocated again. With a Pope who is as conservative as the present one, this might have some very serious implications for the future of the Catholic Church.

The study suggests the importance of education throughout the history of this order. Data show that education made the difference in the calibre of survival of this order--that they were aware of this and used the principles of formal and non-formal education continuously and together in structuring their varied activities through every phase of change.

The study suggests that an aggregate emergent passage demands good leadership that is visionary, dedicated and flexible. It suggests the importance of defining and working towards a common goal in a group situation, and that a strong identity can handle diversity in a group situation. An atmosphere of mutual trust and respect is necessary if growth is to take place.

Once the trigger or specific event started the learning took place in many areas of the individuals' lives simultaneously. This suggests that learning is processual and that when the teachable moment described by Havighurst eventually arrives, learning is rapid and in many areas. However, the data show that whatever the circumstance or situation, the success of the outcome is dependent on the individual, personality, and how he or she uses learning, survival and manipulative skills to negotiate a situation.

The study documents some specific learning strategies --critical thinking, learning by listening, discernment, return to original commitment--unique to religious orders can be easily transferred as learning skills for groups undergoing a similar experience of change or transition.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

The present research has brought to light some learning patterns in a small sample of nuns in a midwestern order. The methodology used in the research can be applied to wider samples, and it would be interesting to see whether conclusions reached in this study of a small number of people will be congruent when larger samples are used.

Would a similar study of a group of priests yield the same conclusions?

The data in this study is quite considerable and many learning strategies have been documented. It would be most useful to see if

the strategies that were so successful for them could be transferred to other groups, making similar transitions from one status to another, or if other groups use similar strategies.

### Concluding Remarks

One way of understanding transitions is to view them as consequences of processes that reflect changes in how a society is organized or functions. Diverse group of social thinkers have suggested, we are now on the threshold of a radical change in consciousness, which, more than technological and scientific advance, will serve to dramatically alter modern society. The data documented in the study seems to complement this thinking and suggests the critical importance of adult educators to be aware of this as they serve adult learners. The research offered the opportunity to study a unique set of Adult Learners. Their story documents the emergent status passage of a group of strong, bright, dedicated, self-sufficient, caring women. They made the journey from a sister in total institution of the pre-Vatican II era to the autonomous, self-directed sister of the eighties, and they did it with grace and intelligence.

The development of critical awareness, that customs that have been institutionalized in the past, need not continue to be, is what Friere in 1970 called "conscientization." These women have achieved this, and in doing so, recall Maslow's (1954) description of the quest for self-actualization. "An inner restlessness of what an individual is fitted for what we must do to be true to our individualized

nature. It refers to a desire for fulfillment--a tendency to become actualized in what we are potentially--to become everything we're capable of becoming." Their's is a role model rich in learning strategies that are worth consideration. The study has offered the opportunity to observe an interaction between a group of unique adult learners and a situation that had no precedents. Their experience, rich in learning strategies will, hopefully, provide insight and direction for society and individuals undergoing a similar experience.

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

Appendix A  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Number:

Date:

Part I           Demographics

1.   Present age.
2.   Age when you entered the order.
3.   Age when you took your final vows.
4.   Present job/occupation.
5.   Educational level.
6.   Living arrangements.

Part II           Triggers:   Specific events that triggered  
the need to learn.

1.   Can you name/identify three or four significant events that have had profound influence on your life since you have been in the order?
2.   When did these events occur?
3.   What precipitated these events?

Part III          Preparation for Change:   Anxiety and Upheaval

1.   Did you sense these events prior to their happening? Were you able to prepare for them? If so, how?
2.   Did these events also affect others in the order in similar ways as they affected you?
3.   What happened after the event?
4.   What changes came about in your life?

(continued...)



## INTERVIEW GUIDE

(continued)

### PART IV

#### Transition: Pain and Coping

1. In what major areas of your life did learning take place in order to cope with the significant events described in Part II?
2. What learning did you undertake in these major areas?
  - a. by yourself
  - b. in groups

Were these initiated by yourself, by the order, or by someone else?

### PART V

#### Synthesis: Adaptation and Satisfaction

1. What major changes have these learning experiences brought about in your life?
2. Are you presently involved in any learning projects?

### PART VI

Evaluation: Implications for the Future  
(general dimensions, nonstandardized questions, e.g., Who or what is a sister of the eighties? What has she learned that will take her into the future?)

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW WITH SISTER P.

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW WITH SISTER P.

Z: The first thing I want to do is ask you a few very prosaic questions, but this will form the basis for a psychosocial profile, so to say. May I ask you your present age?

Demographics

S: Forty.

Z: And the age when you entered the order.

S: Let's see--it must have been 18.

Z: And when you took your final vows?

S: How old I was, you mean?

Z: Yes.

S: I might have been 29 or 30.

Z: And what you do at the present time--your job or occupation?  
You know--

S: Well, I'm free-lancing in pastoral ministry

Z: OK. So, free-lancing would mean you go where you're needed?

S: Yes.

Z: And that people will ask for your services?

S: Yes. And some of it are things that I create and offer to people, and some of it people ask me to do.

Z: Oh, that's fascinating. Because I understood that you did some workshops on--I know it was on femininity and spiritual femininity...

S: Yes, that's right, or how the women's movement affects people's faith, because there's not many people talking about that.

Z: That's right.

S: And in the meantime, the women's movement is happening and there's no theological input that helps people put those two things together. That's what I wanted to teach, so I started offering things along those topics.

Z: Would you give me examples of the workshops you've done?

Work Experimentation  
New Profession

That's fascinating to me,  
because that's what my study is  
all about.

S: Well, my hope is, my sense is,  
that there are all kinds of  
women who feel like I do--a  
whole lot of things I'd like to  
give, but there's no particular  
form to give them in--nobody  
invites people to share their  
experience, talk about them, and  
how their own personal questions  
shape their life.

New Professional  
Experience

Z: That's right.

S: And I felt that happened to me,  
and nobody asked me about it,  
but I want to teach it, partly  
because I knew it was important  
to other people, and I needed it.

Discerning New Needs

Z: Am I lucky I found you! Because  
that's what I believe. I think  
that--there are so many things,  
values, roles, identities that  
are learned.

S: Yes, that's right.

Z: And it helps so much when somebody who's been through it is willing to share and teach.

S: And I think that a lot of the experiences that people have, they don't trust them because they happen privately.

Z: That's right.

S: And if they begin to say it, then other people hear their own stories and hopefully they are empowered by that.

Z: That's the whole ...

S: That's what the series is about.

Z: That's what the study is all about. I want to document your learning experiences and teaching experiences, because I think that it's awfully important for women to learn and to read and to ...

S: And they're not asked, so they don't--the women, themselves, don't trust it, so the series is

Discerning New Needs

Experimenting with  
New Profession

a chance to do that. You see, I coordinate it and I do one of the talks, but other people do the talks. There are actually about 45 women who share their stories, so that each time you hear it, it's a completely different thing, so we're trying to engender leadership in women, in terms of the women's movement and the faith, so that women who have struggled with trying to integrate have a chance to tell their own struggles to other women.

Z: I think that's fascinating.

S: So, that's my love--and I just do other things to earn a living.

Z: Oh, that's great. I'll come back to this, OK? I need to know your educational level.

S: I have a Masters's in religious studies.

Z: And then you've had all these other trainings on other levels,

Experimenting with  
New Profession

Demographics

- the workshops and all the other experiences that have all led to qualifications. OK. Then I'll come to my key question. Can you name, identify three or four significant events that have had profound influence on your life since you've been in the order? And we'll just take it at your own pace and time, there are certain things that I want to cover with regard to your answers.

Key Question:  
Triggers

S: OK. I think in terms of shaping the ministry and my sense of myself, for sure, had to do with six years of experience in Windsor, when I was an associate pastor for a Protestant church.

Trigger-Specific  
Event, Ministry  
Related

Z: How did that come about?

S: Well, I had been teaching school in Michigan, and I was teaching in an elementary school, and both of the schools that I



taught in at the beginning of my teaching ministry closed after two years--the first one in a very bitter, bitter experience, and the second one in a very good pastoral experience. It was very healing the way that school was closed. And when that school was closed, then I was involved in adult education in the same parish. After the first school closed--it was such an awful experience--

Trigger-Specific  
Event, Ministry  
Related

Z: In what way?

S: It was how it was dealt with. I had only been teaching two years, so I didn't have much experience, and I was in shock about what--what living in a religious community was like in a local house--because there was a lot of hostility, bickering, all kinds of things that were surprises to me and, in the parish that I was working in,

the first year, the assistant pastor and a classmate, a friend of mine, who was a year older than I, and taught in the same school, fell in love--about maybe October or November of my first year teaching school, and I was part of the threesome.

Z: Oh, I see. Was she a nun?

S: Yes. And we were extremely good friends, and I was in the middle of this thing, and I was also trying to learn how to teach, and coping with all the rest of it--and then it was like, all of sudden I thought, 'Oh, my gosh! They fell in love, here!' But it was OK. I wasn't upset by it. It was a beautiful thing.

Z: Sure ...

S: But it caused a lot of problems in the house.

Z: I can imagine ...

S: And I didn't have enough

Experiential  
Learning  
Relationships

Dealing with Ambiguity

experience or insight to know how to deal with it. So the first year was a lot of personal turmoil. The second year, the leadership in the parish changed, and the new pastor who came in was dreadful. He was a very poor administrator and he was bigoted. He was very bigoted. And it was a racially mixed environment, and he handled it extremely poorly. It was also the sixties--the end of the sixties. They were picketing, protesting, all that was going on, too... He would like to have kept control of it, wasn't able to, and it exploded on every single front--the Hispanic people were angry because the priest who left was an Hispanic priest--was a priest for the Hispanic people. The principal fired a black teacher,

Backdrop - 1960's

Racial Unrest -  
1960's

and the black teacher went to the NAACP and had a court trial in the parish.

Z: Oh, my ... You did have a lot ... Gosh, yes ...

S: Then they renovated the church, so a lot of people were mad about the changes of the Liturgy, then the nuns changed their habits, then the Diocese announced that they were going to close the school.

Z: Now what precipitated all that? Was it the unrest of the sixties --the civil rights movement ...

S: I think here it was much bigger than that. I mean, the Vatican II certainly had a lot to do with the upset in the parish--the trauma in the parish, and the changing theologies--and the theology that I had been educated in, because basically, my theology was Vatican II theology

Directly Related-  
Vatican II Mandates

Changes Related to  
Vatican II

Preparation in  
Formation

Individual Perception

--nobody told me--or I did not click--that that's not where the parishioners were, so that when I got into the parish, the parishioners were angry at everything we were trying to do ...

Z: They were of the old school, their expectations ...

S: And so was the pastor, the associate wasn't, some of us on the faculty weren't, some were very rigid, and folks were caught in the middle of this, and none of us had enough experience to figure out how to resolve it. By the end of the second year in that parish, every single person who was in leadership in that parish left, because it was so--it had gotten so destructive, that nobody who was there could have healed it. The pastor left, the entire faculty left, all of the sisters, the school was closed.

Transition  
Pain, Coping

Everybody who was in leadership left.

Z: That was really traumatic ...

S: It was bitter, yes. And it was the first time ... Well, and I was just learning to do--and it was the time when people threw things at me, called me names, and it was knowing what it was to be a symbol of something, because people were angry at me who didn't even know my name.

Z: What did you become a symbol of?

S: Well, I was the Church, and the Church hurt them--

Z: How?

S: --By changing, and the ultimate-- hurt for those folks was closing the school without their participating in the decision. They did not have a chance to participate in the decision. They felt like their children's future was jeopardized, and it

Reaction of the  
Laity to Changes  
Mandated by Vatican  
II

Transition--Pain,  
Coping

Importance of  
Individual Participi-  
pation in Change

was out of control, and the sisters didn't stop it. And the leadership was cruel--the leadership said--and I was not in leadership--except that I was a nun and people presumed that I had some leadership--and I was young, and I was inexperienced, and there were petitions to get rid of the pastor, petitions for this, and petitions for that. My friends were on all sides of the issue. I didn't know what I thought--

Reaction of Laity

Experiential  
Learning

Z: So it affected you on a very personal level.

S: Oh, yes--also professionally.

Z: Because there were so many things? How did you cope? First of all, let me ask you, so that I can, in my head-- Did your friend leave? Did she get married, or ...

S: Yes--and they're still real good

Relationships

friends of mine. They have two children who are eighth grade and sixth grade--and we've been friends all through this. And I think that I had to sort out a lot of things around their relationship and around their friendship, because it was against all the rules--

Z: That's right.

S: --But there was nothing wrong with it, and I could not see what was wrong with it, and I couldn't believe that it was wrong, and I couldn't understand how people turned on them because they loved each other.

Z: This was both in the convent as well as the--

S: In the parish. And the nuns turned on the priest, as well, the associate priest who had been a very good friend--Like, maybe the night before had been there for dinner, in a good rela-

Relationships

Values Re-evaluation



tionship and, all of sudden, he loves somebody, and now he was the enemy. I couldn't understand how loving somebody was a problem. What was so bad about that? So I had to do a lot of searching, and I was very integral to their sorting it out, because they really didn't want to leave, but they were forced to leave by a whole lot of circumstances. Both still have a sense of ministry and call, but the form didn't fit them, and then the pressures were so bad ...

Z: Were you--was this a time when you had to make some decisions?

S: No, that was not when I had to decide. It was not an issue for me at that point, about staying or leaving. It was their issue, and I was privileged to their struggle. And I loved both of

Re-evaluating

Experiential  
Learning

them, deeply. But I wasn't--it wasn't my struggle.

Z: That's right. I see what you're saying ... But it must have gone a long way towards--the experience, itself--towards shaping your identity as a nun, as a teacher.

S: Oh, yeah. And I think all the stages that our friendship has been through, since then--because there was a period when we had nothing in common with each other except old hurts--and then there was a period when I said to them, 'I don't want to see you any more, if that's all we have together--unless we have a new friendship--

Friendship,  
Relationships

Z: Yes.

S: It just was dead. And then we had to build a new friendship. And then the struggles in their marriage. So it's a genuine

friendship. It's been through a lot of stages...

Z: Well, you helped them grow.

S: And they helped me grow... And I think I was a place where they could talk about their confusion, because I didn't--

Z: You weren't judgmental.

S: I wasn't judgmental. I didn't feel judgmental about it. I felt like there had to be something wrong that to love somebody would cause that much anger. What was wrong with the system.

Z: How do you feel about it, now? How did it affect you? Your faith and your feelings about staying?

S: Well, I think because when I eventually became very close to a man and had to struggle with all that, myself, and to say, 'Wait, there's something wrong with a system that says loving

Working through  
of Values

Trigger: Specific  
Event

Male Relationship

Questioning Values  
of Order

somebody is a bad thing, so how does that make sense with the gospel?' And the gospel was, for me, the issue. The religious congregation was never the issue, for me, and I think, for me, the conflict between the religious community system and the gospel, was right from the very day I entered, because my sense was that religious community was so structured that I didn't experience it as Christian--I experienced my family as much more Christian and loving than religious community, by my family was saying I was the holy one, and my whole experience, internally, was rules, not the kind of spontaneous service and love that I had known at home. So it was almost as soon as I entered I thought, 'There's something wrong with this.

Values

Family and  
Outside Support

There's something wrong that we call all this Christian loving, and I saw it better before I got here.'

Z: How did you learn to handle that? That's a tough thing for ... You're a warm, loving, giving person. I can see, when you saw this thing with your friend, you were very young. You must have been just 19, 20, or--

S: I had been away to college. I had loved some people there, but I felt like we didn't share any values. They were nice fellas, but sharing ...

Values

Z: But when you did meet someone that you did get close to--I mean that's when it's really--

S: That's when it was the worst. I think that for me, it was my family. It was my family, mainly my two sisters. I'm the

Family and  
Outside Support

sixth of seven children. And my sisters were married before I started school, so they're more like my mother, although my mother's living and my mother and I are close, my sisters were more communicative about what was going on in them. And they were the ones, consistently, who asked, 'Are you happy? Are you doing what you want to do? If you don't want to stay, don't stay. If you want to come home and you're worried about mom and dad, we'll help.' And they shared their struggles in their marriage and a lot of their struggles with their children-- they both have large families-- and they were real honest with me all along, and they were real concerned that my experience in religious community was emotionally healthy--and it's almost

Family and Outside  
Support

like they took on that job.

Z: That's right ...

S: More than I recognized. More than I realized, till they helped me through a couple big crises. They were the ones who regularly cared that what happened to me was healthy. So I know for sure that it was the family--

Individual Adaptive  
Mechanisms

Z: Who really gave you the options of saying it's OK, whatever you do--

Closer ties with  
Family

S: Yes. Or to say, 'Mary, that's crazy. I don't know why you're doing that. It's crazy,' and I would say, 'Wait--that is crazy,' but it was hard to say it without their help, when you were taught that this is how its supposed to be. And I knew I wasn't happy doing it, but to call it wrong or crazy was real hard to do, without some other perspective

saying, 'Have you thought about,'  
or 'In a completely other con-  
text, Mary, you would never buy  
that. Why are you buying it  
now?'

Z: Had you--did you make the  
decision, then, because you're  
still here, not to go along with  
it because of your feelings of  
happiess in the community, or--

S: Not to go along with--?

Z: With marrying this man?

S: Oh, yeah. No. That was a  
real--that was a real conscious  
decision. We talked a lot about  
marriage and should we marry and  
what was the price if we  
married? He is a priest. He  
had a similar struggle. And we  
both--we're still in a relation-  
ship, and it's no secret to  
people, and that was real  
critical for me. It was very  
critical for me that I pre-

Relationship with  
Priest

Shared Experience  
with Community



sented him and my love for him to the IHM's before I made my final vows, and I spoke to Margaret Brennan, the president, and I spoke to the provincials. They met him. We talked, and I said to them, 'You need to know this--that I love this man, and will continue to love this man, and I want to make vows of the community, and I don't know what you're going to do with this.

Involvement of  
Leadership

Need for Approval

Z: How did they handle it?

S: Well. I feel that they handled it really well.

Leadership

Z: I can see ...

S: Yes. And I feel that they were really honest with helping cope with it, even when they didn't want to touch it--and Margaret Brennan was more open to it, but by the time I spoke with her, we had been through a lot of stages together, and I had--this is at

Involvement of  
Leadership even  
when they did  
not want to be

the second place that I was at--and the woman who was the principal of the school, who was an IHM (she wasn't head of the house, but she was the principal of the school)--that was a new experience for her. She was very insecure, was very frightened. She was a poor administrator. She was an art teacher, who had been made administrator of the school, and it was destructive--it was destructive to the school and it was destructive to her. And this man was the pastor, and he was in the position of helping to support her, and help to see whether she could make it or not--help her be a principal. But my friendship with him began to cause a lot of trouble. And she is mentally ill. That took a long time for me to say. It took a long time

Trigger: Dealing  
with Mental Health  
Problems

to come to that, because I was really confused, and I didn't know how to sort out what was going on, and to call her mentally ill was--that was too extreme for me. It was a long, long time before I told the sisters anything, because of all the loyalty, and ... but in the meantime, I think I was--I felt really isolated, I felt responsible for all the trouble, and I didn't know what to do, and I couldn't pretend I didn't feel like I felt ...

Z: Yes ...

S: So, eventually, the provincial said something like, 'How come you're not participating in any congregation things,' or something. I said to her, 'So and so is causing me a lot of trouble,' and I broke down and cried and sobbed, and everything, and

said, 'I know it. She should have gotten help a long time ago, but we haven't known how to ...' I was livid. I was livid.

Z: Why didn't they send her to ...

S: And why did they let it go on so long? So many people hurt. And why didn't somebody help the rest of us? I was just furious. And I told her. I told her I thought it was wrong, I thought it was destructive, I thought it was evil to let them happen, and for them to watch it, and not...

Z: How did they respond to that, looking at leadership?

S: I think that the woman--I think she was pretty good. She was scared to death. It was new to her and she did not know what to do. I felt like she was honest and, as far as I was concerned, that's what I needed. I didn't

need her to solve it, but if she was gonna lie to me, and that, for me, was good enough.

Z: Lie to you, you mean, in terms of this lady's

S: Well, or--and her own feelings--like finally she said to me, 'I don't know what to do either. I don't know how to cope with this. All of that, as far as I was concerned, was enough. She didn't have to fix it up. She just had to tell the truth.

Z: That's right.

S: So, I see it now--now that I have some distance and perspective, I think she did pretty good. Given who she was, given her own inadequacies, and...

Z: So that was resolved in that way by your experience, in terms of honesty and the strategy of confrontation or talking about it.

S: Yes.

Z: What about when you took your close relationship to them. How did they help you work it out, or...

S: I felt like they were very good. The same woman--the same provincials where I started. I said to her, 'I don't know what to say to you except that I'm in love with so and so, and we're in a work relationship together, and I'm afraid it's going to cause problems in the parish, and I don't want that to happen. I don't know how to prevent it from happening, but I don't believe it's right to give it up. It can't be right. And I said, 'I'm willing to talk to somebody about it, and he is willing to talk to somebody about it, although it's my--between he and I it was real clear. And I said to him, 'I need to do this, and I

need to drag you to--I did. And he said, "If it's that important to you, I'll do it." So he went.

Z: He went with you to the IHM's?

S: Yes.

Z: Isn't that wonderful?

S: Yes, he was...

Z: He just sounds like a--

S: He is. So I went to her and I said, 'We need to talk to somebody, and I need to do this, but I don't know how to do it,' and I said, 'Who should we talk to?' and she was really good. She said, 'Oh, my god. Oh, my god. I don't want to touch it.'

I said, 'Well, then what will we do?' And she said, 'OK, I'll get somebody for you to talk to...'

Z: From the IHM...

S: No. Because the person I was close to was fairly well known. So she said, 'I'll get somebody

Learning Experiences for Leadership

Learning Experiences for Individual Leadership

Mutual Growth Patterns

from out of town to talk to the two of you, and whatever that person says, about how they evaluate your relationship, I'll accept.' I thought, 'Oh, my god. This is a real test.' But she did. She called another man, from northern Ontario, and we didn't know what kind of person she was gonna call in. Like, she is gonna select a person, and who she selects could make it or kill it. We had an image of the kind of person she was going to select...

Z: Yes...

S: But she selected a young man. I was surprised. He was maybe a little bit older than I was at the time, and we spent an entire day with him. I spent the whole morning with him, alone. The other man spent the whole afternoon with him, alone, and



then we talked to him together and he spoke to the provincial about it, and then all together, and I thought that was really-- And he said, "I don't see what's really wrong. I can't see anything bad about this relationship," and we agreed to be in a relationship with that man on a regular basis for--I don't know what we agreed to, but it probably lasted two or three years. And then he wasn't helpful any more, and we didn't need it any more, and we kind of outgrew it.

New Values for  
Religion

Z: And, now, you are still friends with him?

S: Yes.

Z: So--and I don't mean to offend you in any way--you worked it through, in terms of recognizing that you could love somebody and love them very much, but not ne-

-cessarily enter into a sexual  
interaction because of the vows.

Am I right?

S: Yes.

Z: That's a wonderful learning  
experience because it means that  
--you know, one of the questions  
that has really--I shouldn't say  
intrigued--but one that I really  
wanted to know about--is how do  
women who are young and vital,  
etc.--because they are going to  
be attracted to men, and men to  
them--is how they work it  
through, and...

S: Well, we struggled a lot, but we  
talked and talked, and I think  
he had a similar experience, in  
terms of having been to seminary  
young. He didn't have much  
experience, either, about rela-  
tionships. He had been close to  
a woman before, but it was much  
more stilted.

Z: This was where you were at the point where you needed to make decision.

S: Oh, yeah, and it was very deliberate on both of our parts that there were no secrets. So, he met my family. He is part of my family, and I am part of his family. I mean, it evolved into that, but it was very deliberate and its very--how do I want to say it?--we're both committed to the fact that it's no secret. Everybody who knows either one of us...

Long Term Relationship with Male

Z: The affection and love is there, but--but you're able to handle it within your vows of celibacy, or whatever...(laughing)

S: Its been about fifteen years, so... (laughing)

Z: I mean, that's--that's the way --it was--I'm looking at it, again, from a growth point of

view, and your being the person you are, you know, you are honest and you've worked it through, but the interesting thing is that the leadership didn't let you down.

S: They didn't. And I felt like they dealt with us very honestly.

Evaluation of  
Leadership

Z: And they dealt with it, which is what is important and the fact is that the community, the congregation who saw it is not condemning in terms of an acceptance that there can be love, and that it can develop into a sublime kind of love.

S: Now, I didn't experience that, necessarily, among other people that I lived with, so there were a lot of struggles there. But the leadership ...

Diversity- New  
Values Did Not  
Come Easy

Z: Was there a lot of jealousy, or...

S: Yeah, and I think, confusion,

Ambiguity

and it wasn't a secret. So then they didn't know what to do with it.

Identity: Learning  
Through Confusion  
and Diversity

Z: How did it affect other people? Were they able to talk to you about their own love? And I'm sure it was not uncommon then.

S: Yes, that's right. It was not uncommon. I don't have a sense though, that very many people-- because there were a lot of people involved in those kind of relationships--they resolved it hundreds of different ways. I'm not--

Identity: Signifi-  
cant Event Shared  
by Others

Z: Can you give me some examples of how, when a person has been in-- you know, that's why, in the beginning of my introduction, I said I really want to know how women like this, who are educated and vital, as compared, say, to a nun pre-Vatican II, who was not exposed to the media,

who was--whose femininity, perhaps, was more suppressed, and who didn't have the proximity. You see, proximity brings about so many feelings--

S: --kinds of relationships...

Z: So, could you just give me--I mean, I'm only asking in terms of your own experience because I'm sure, your being so open about this, and the fact that it was known, must have had many repercussions, and many of them extremely positive, as well as negative...

S: Oh, yes. I know how much it has altered and shaped my ministry and his ministry. There's just ...it's just phenomenal.

Z: How has it altered and shaped your ministry?

S: Oh, I think because I have this experience, lots of people talk to me about what's going on in

Changes that Resulted  
from Trigger

Work - Major Area  
of Change

their relationships.

Z: So you've been like a confidante to--

S: Yes, in terms of marriages and things like that. And my sense is that because we have struggled so much to resolve things, we have a much better kind of friendship and relationship than a lot of people who got married.

Z: Absolutely...

S: And I kept... When I listen to them, I think, 'You two don't talk to each other--you don't fight things through, you run away from things,' and we had to figure it out because the price was too high for us to walk out of ministry. That was the crunch of it. I don't have any doubt that in another circumstance that we would be married, if the price wasn't ministry.

Close intimate male relationship within bonds of vows.

Original Commitment

Z: So ministry is the integral and

most important thing to you and to him.

S: Yes, and we had to solve that about children, because, ultimately, then, the only reason we would be married would be to have children, so did we want to have children, and what would having children mean, and was that essential to our relationship, or not--that was...

Z: You had to really talk and get your own values straightened around and his, and then put it in a broader context so, in that way, it has, because people were able to come to you--I mean, the congregation members, the community, to talk about their own difficulties, or whatever...

Re-evaluation

S: Yes...

Z: What are creative ways that you've learned through your ministry--and I'm talking about



the ministry of helping people resolve these very intimate and difficult issues.

S: I don't know if we're creative --I think some of the essential things were that it wasn't a secret, and that when we talked, we talked...

Z: Do other women, then in the community, who have had to face being in love, or being close to somebody, have they been able to resolve it and still stay in the community?

S: Yes. I know several, some of whom the relationship hasn't endured, but it's OK. I mean, it hasn't lasted as long as ours has, but they both grew, or they came to that peacefully together, but they didn't run away from each other.

Z: So, basically, then, in terms of the growth and development and

New values identity.  
New ways of coping.

the identity of a sister of the 80's, is really to--not to run away, but to look at it and face it, and the community then, perhaps, is not as judgmental as they might have been in a different time and place.

S: Oh, yes. And my experience was that they were not judgmental--they were not the most helpful people, to help me sort it through. I would say that they were, but they--they didn't put us in a corner and say, 'Choose.' And I wasn't sure what I would choose...

Leadership

Leadership Group  
Learning Experience

Z: So with patience, because perhaps you were the first one to bring this problem out into the open...

S: Well, maybe, in terms of saying --'What do you think about me making vows when this is the situation, and the situation is

Mutual Growth of Individual and Leadership

not going to change.' And I said to them, 'I don't know what I'll do if you ask me to choose. But I don't have any--there's nothing in my heart that says I should leave the congregation.'

Z: That's right.

S: And I love this man, and...

Z: So you must have been a tremendous influence on a whole lot of people--

S: Oh, I think so. I'm not--I think it has had a lot of impact on people, but I'm not sure what that is coming and going from me. I'm not sure that they share a lot of that with me.

Z: I see what you're saying--their own individual problem to sort out in the context of their own experience... If I can go back a little, it would seem to me that that first year, when you had those two experiences, you

know, this horrendous experience of having to cope with, again, the racism and all the civil rights unrest of the sixties--that was a horrendous kind of experience. What did you learn from it that shaped your decisions in your life, afterwards?

S: I think the memory--the strongest memory I have of that period and, in fact, the memory that this other couple shares a lot--is my anger. I was so angry, that I felt I was lied to about what I was going to do. I felt like the information that I had had didn't deal with the real problems at all.

Personality

Z: That's right. And that is really awfully significant in terms of--of how a nun developed after that.

S: Yes. I felt that the real issues that I had to cope with

Preparation - Education

the day I walked into that parish were worlds away from what we talked about in formation--although formation was good and solid and healthy, it was not--it wasn't psychologically sick--I can't say that--and the theological background was fantastic. I don't think I knew what they were telling me...

Preparation - Formation

Z: At the time...

S: ...till I got out, working...

Z: What did you do to sort of augment your learning experience there, in terms of preparing yourself for the real world, so to say?

S: Once I got out in the--

Z: Yes, once that place closed down.

S: Well, I did have some schooling, but I'm not sure...School helped the most, later on, after I had worked a lot more, then school

Preparation

was real helpful, that's when language...

Z: I see...

S: I went back to school to get my Masters after I had been working ...So I wouldn't say it was school. I guess I would say it was friends--

Coping through  
Individual Adaptive  
Mechanism.

Z: Was it outside the community, or...

S: Kind of both, I think. I don't have a lot of real close IHM friends, but the ones that I do are very significant, and there are people that I can tell the truth to, and I feel like they-- and those people have been with me through it. There's not a whole lot of them left in the community.

Friendship Within Order

Z: Is that right?

S: Like, my best friends who struggled with it both have left the community....Although they're

not angry--they didn't leave out of any kind of anger, they left out of personal things--so we still have something of ministry in common.

Z: So ministry is what keeps you in the community?

S: Yeah, I would say so. I would say so. It's not friendships.

Z: No. It's the dedication?

S: Yeah, and it's--it's the group Bonding  
of people that cause you to think of bigger things. I think my experience with the community pretty regularly has been to be involved for a while, to take some leadership, to be pretty involved in what was going on, and then to withdraw, to get real involved someplace else, or in something else, and in the period of the withdrawal, where I would wonder whether I still belonged--

Z: Yes--

S: And then, testing it out again, and finding out that the congregation had changed, too. So, in all that back and forth, so far I have never felt that we were really out of sync. I had come to grow--

Shared Framework

Z: 'Cause they've grown a lot, too, haven't they?

S: Oh, yeah. They were saying similar things. Or I heard my own conscience in the group. So then it was like--oh, well--then, OK.

Similar Experiences  
of Sisters

Z: That's right.

S: You see, I would say that's been a real regular thing for me. Even though I wouldn't say that a lot of people have heard--a lot of people in the community haven't necessarily heard my journey. By the time I--I feel like I came back--nobody knew



any difference but me--I felt my conscience was in the group, so I wasn't in conflict with them.

Z: That's very comforting, isn't it? Because it tells you that they're dynamic, they're moving along--they're not stagnating.

S: Yeah. I feel like that.

Z: Is that what drew you to this order?

S: Mmm. My mom and dad each had a sister who was an IHM.

Z: Oh, oh, I see...

S: ...and I had about seven cousins who were IHM's.

Z: Oh, I see.

S: So it was really familial. I am the only one left.

Z: Is that right?

S: I'm the only one left. But it was--

Z: Yeah, I see...

S: But I had some experiences with other communities that did not

impress me at all. I mean, it was real clear--I don't belong with them--I knew that, for sure.

Z: Can I go back to one of the things that you've mentioned when I said this, and you gave me a lot--some awfully good preparation experiences for the one that was in Windsor that you said was a very profound one. Could you tell me about the Windsor experience in terms of the experiential and growth experience?

Recapitulation

S: So, by the time I got to Windsor, the second parish, where I met this other man, I left there to take a year of renewal. And that was the place to decide whether I was going to make vows or not, and it was the place to decide if I was going to stay in the community, or not, and it was a place and a

Trigger: Specific  
Event - Ministry

time when he and I separated from each other a lot, physically. We had been together--and now we were physically very separated, but the friendship developed and grew a lot, but it wasn't real clear to me what it was gonna do, or where it was gonna go--it wasn't clear at all, when I went to Windsor, and the man who was the pastor of the church--what had happened--I mean, it was sort of a happenstance thing that I ended up there. Because the schools had closed, and because now I was doing adult education, I was unprepared for that, and I didn't want to be a religious administrator. I was not a principal, and I didn't want to be a principal. I wanted to be a pastoral person, but there was no place for somebody like that. No jobs. There

was nothing I could do with it, so I went looking for a place to go to school to get equipped for that, and I took some classes at U of D's clinic, but I went to the man--the director, there, and I said to him, 'I don't want to be a clinical psychologist, but I want to be able to do clinical sorting out. I need some skills for what I want to do, but I don't want to be a therapist.'

Preparation - Education

Z: Yes.

S: What courses could I take, just for that, and could I take some guest classes to do this?' And he put me in some senior seminars with--like we did taping of interviews, and things like this, and it was marvelous, but it wasn't exactly what I wanted to do--it was close to what I wanted to do, but it wasn't

Transition - Education  
an Important Tool for  
Coping

exactly. And then I found a program that's called Clinical Pastoral Education, where you work as a minister in a situation--you're immersed in a situation, and it's critiqued. You work with a team, and you write reports on what you're doing. It's like doing field work in social work...

Z: That's right...

S: Student teaching, but it was the ministry...And I took three months of it at a psychiatric hospital in Massachusetts, at a state psychiatric hospital, and that was real good. And I took some at a geriatric setting--I took eight weeks at a geriatric setting, and three months at a psychiatric setting, and then I thought, well, if I took some in a jail and some in a general hospital, then I could say to a

Coping through Education

parish, 'I have this background-- let me do patoral work, and don't put me in the other slot, let me do this--and I'm prepared.' And I was looking for a place to take this training in jail, and the one name that kept coming up was this fella in Windsor. He had been doing this kind of ministry traning in jails for twelve years, and he had just come to a parish in Windsor, so I made an appointment to talk to him about taking the training in a jail, and we hit it off immediately. I mean, in the inter--when I think of it now, and we've talked about it since, I met him at 10 o'clock in the morning, and I left at 5 o'clock at night, and it was like --it was like we were soul friends, immediately.

Z: I know the feeling...

S: It was marvelous! And then he said, 'Oh, you don't want to take it in a jail, anyway. You want to take it in a parish, so let's do it here. Let's do it as this parish. You have a chance to take the training--I can give you the training, but you know more about parish than I do. So, it was like, my gosh...

Z: And he was the Protestant minister...

S: He was a Protestant minister, but he had always worked ecumenically. And we were immediately friends. So I met him in the Spring, and in the Fall I went to that church. And he said, 'You have to come for nine months,' and I lived at a convent with Canadian sisters. I was part of that parish team and staff for nine months, with six

Corporate Identity of  
Women Religious

other people, of all different denominations.

Z: I see...

S: For me, it was just marvelous.

Z: And the congregation here--or your advisor, or whoever--this was fine with them.

S: Yes. As far as they were concerned, it was school. So I had a student grant, and it was academic preparation.

Leadership Support and Trust

Z: It was a neat experience.

S: It was just marvelous. And for me, it was just mind-blowing, because I didn't really know how Catholic I was. I didn't know how narrow my world was. And he had such a sense of Catholicism that he could translate what we were experiencing into things that I didn't recognize--

Reaffirm<sup>r</sup> Original Faith and Commitment

Z: Yes...

S: Like, he--I did not ever see...

Z: So he broadened your outlook.

Identity



He was like a mentor.

S: He was definitely a mentor. And he was also--he was married, and had three children, so it was real important for me to be that close to a married minister, and that marriage, and what that was like. So he was also a very big help to both of us...

Mentor

Identity

Z: To your growth...

S: And to both of us about what to do with ministry and deep friendship that's related to ministry. His marriage and his family was available to us, and it was just --it was very, very significant, and he and I just got to be very deep friends.

Identity: Work,  
Personal

Relationships

Z: I can imagine.

S: That was a kind of conflict, though. I mean, here were these two men in my life...(laughs) who knew about each other, and were very different from each

other...

Z: Yeah...(laughing)

S: And they both really loved me,  
and they loved me in real different ways.

Z: Yeah...

S: And neither one of them--I wasn't  
like either one of them.

Z: Yes.

S: And I couldn't minister like  
either one of them. Both of  
them are much more charismatic  
and they're much more--make a  
much more powerful presence...

Z: You're charismatic, yourself...

S: They make a very powerful presence,  
and I felt like I was more low key,  
but just a whole lot of things were different.  
But that experience--and then, I was there  
as a student for a year, and then I was there  
a second year, as a teacher, and I had students  
of my own--

Experiential Learning

Z: Who were training for--

S: Who were training for ministry, and I was the supervisor of the project, under him, because I said, 'Would you teach me how to be a supervisor?'

Z: So that was really getting away from all these, you know, Catholics and Presbyterians, etc. He sounds like a very enlightened person.

S: Oh, wonderful. And his wife-- his wife was just as significant--and he had three sons--the whole dynamic of that family-- but more than that, though, it was the community. There were about four hundred families, and it was the United Church of Canada, which is Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists-- those three denominations, united, in Canada, and formed this church. So the people who at-

tended this church were people who were already beyond denominational boundaries to start with, and there were a lot of searching people in the community. It was a suburban church --we had a lot of university people, professional people, strugglers-- and a lot of people in mixed marriages, and--I was there --I came back a second year and had students of my own, and then the parish asked me to stay, and I thought, 'I can't stay, how can I stay?' And they said, 'Can you be a Catholic sister and join the United Church of Canada?' I said, 'No. I can't do that.' They're two different faiths. Either you're Catholic or you're United--you're not both.

Re-Evaluation

Z: Yeah.

S: So then they said, 'Could you stay a Catholic sister and stay.'

Networking

I'd never thought of it. It never occurred to me. And the committee--Bob, the guy that I worked with--was real committed to ongoing reflection about what was happening, so there was a committee of parishioners--it changed that--there was a group whose job it was to critique the ministry, and we met with them about five times a year. And it was a place for us to talk about our problems with the ministry, and for them to say what they were hearing from the people. That was their job. That group is that group that asked me to stay. And then they said, 'Let's explore it, even if it never happens, because the question is so significant,' so then it was like 'What's ministry? What's church? What's ecumenism? Why would we call a Catholic? Why

Identity/Values

an American? Why a woman?'

Z: Mmmmm...

S: And they put that out for debate for eight months. It was an eight month discernment. It was the most--I would say the most profound religious experience of my life was that part of it, and it was also the loneliest I ever was in my whole life.

Z: Is that right?

S: Because nobody understood. Nobody got it. The people who were in the community--it was just dawning on them. Some of them really wanted me to be there, but they were afraid that it wasn't going to happen, so they didn't talk to me. There was a lot of hostility about Catholicism that didn't come out until --My gosh! We're going to hire her! Then it was all the ways the Catholic Church had ever

Learning Strategy

Trigger: Specific  
Event - Ministry

hurt anybody.

Z: Yes...

S: They came to tell me. One at a time. It was overwhelming.

Z: Wasn't that some---

S: The hurt--the hurts that the Catholic Church had inflicted on all these people. And then there was a whole bunch of people who did not want this to happen. There was probably a quarter of the church who had left the church on the head of this. That was real hard--to think that I was the symbol of their decision...

Z: People were wonderful, too. I think you're just such a special person, anyway.

S: Well, I don't know about that, but it was marvelous--it was marvelous. It was the crucifixion for me, though. It was---

Z: It was really going through a lot

to really--

S: And it was so lonely--that was the thing. Because anybody over here didn't know wh--they just said, 'Oh, why are you bothering those people so much? Why don't you leave?'

Pioneering Shared  
Experience Input  
From Community

Z: (Laughing)

S: (Laughing) Why don't you just leave them alone?'

Z: But here was an experience, of which you were a part.

S: Yeah. It was just marvelous.

Z: Because I don't think they were ever the same.

S: No. And we went--we went through hell and high water together over that, and for me it was real significant that the Roman Catholic Bishop said yes to it and affirm it--otherwise it was just cute... If I got a job in a Protestant church.

New Values Individual  
and in Catholic Hier-  
archy

Profound Changes in  
the Catholic Church

Z: Did he?



S: Well, eventually. There was a lot of struggle--that was a lot of debating. We wrote position papers, we wrote theological statements about it. He--

Z: But the Roman Catholic Bishop agreed, eventually?

S: He eventually agreed to it, the United Church officials eventually agreed to it. Bob and I had to sort out all kinds of things in our friendship, and his wife's, because he and I were very close. I would say that he and I are the closest in terms of the same kind of ministry viewpoint. The man that I love--we have real different styles. But Bob's and my style were the same. That was a problem for me and this wife. His wife and I talked a long time because I said, 'You know, we're really close--but how do you

Relationship/Identity

feel about that? Like, what if you don't want me here, after the parish says yes and you say no!'

Z: What did she say?

S: She was real good. She was real good, and she said, 'God, thanks for lettin' me talk about it.' She said, 'I'm not worried about my marriage, so what's goin' on with you?'

S: I said, 'I love your husband, and we can really work together.'

Z: But you're not a marriage breaker.

S: Yeah. And I was scared of that. I was scared. And Bob and I had talked about it. Because we knew how close we were to each other. So, eventually, after a long, long struggle, with the Bishop, and all that. And finally they said OK. But everybody in law said

New Values through  
Confrontation and  
Change

OK. When that happened we did lose about a quarter of the church. We did also gain people, because they said, 'This is what we believe the church is about.'

Z: And how long were you there?

S: So then I was there about four more years. I was there six years altogether.

Z: How wonderful.

S: It was marvelous. It was absolutely marvelous. And because of it, I was invited to lots of other things, to talk about...

Z: So one learning experience led to several other learning experiences.

S: A lot of them--and lots of places where people asked me to talk about--like, Roman Catholic religious life. So I had to figure out how to talk about it to people who had no connection.

Z: ...idea of what it's all about...

S: ...and no background, and in some there was a lot of hostility and because of it, I was involved with Salvation Army people, like I did services in the Baptist Church, and the Salvation Army Church, and all kinds of United Churches, and Anglicans...

Z: But it strengthened your own faith in recognizing that one, you were Catholic, because you went through that--you said earlier, you know, realizing, 'Well, I can't join it, but I can be hired by it, as a Catholic sister, and so, that defined what your position is.

S: It absolutely stripped my faith. Because I had to say, 'What's essential Catholicism, and what's cultural? And what can I say--it doesn't matter. And what do I have to say--this really

Corporate Identity  
of Religious Learning  
Experiences

Return to Original  
Commitment

matters. And there were so many things that I could give up. And I was surprised. I was surprised at how much of my faith was cultural and how much of Catholicism was cultural and was not essential. I don't know that I would ever have come to that if it wasn't for this experience. And it was like I wanted to be there so badly, and wanted to be with those people so badly, and Bob was really good, saying, 'How free are you? How really free are you in this? And if they say no, and if the Bishop says no, is that of God? Or would you--are you to the point of saying I'll give it up so that I can be here?' I don't know--that's--that's a real tough...

Re-evaluating

Z: Seems like as far as big decisions were, you went from the

frying pan into the fire in two--you know, your work life and your love life, you know. Oh, my. What a lot of interesting living you've done. This is, what to me what has happened. The identity was really changed.

Identity

S: Oh, radically changed...

Z: And the fact is that it evolved, wouldn't you say, like--which year did this happen?

S: It happened through the 70's. I was there six years, and I left-- I left in eighty, so I went in 1973.

Timing of Events

Z: So, given everything, do you think that kind of experience would have been possible, say, in 1960?

S: No.

Z: No way.

S: It wouldn't have, no.

Z: So that's part of the growth and

identity of a nun of the 80's?

S: Oh, yeah. And in that process--like the decision--all the questions that were on my mind to try to sort that thing out, because it was like--at first, I just called the Bishop and I called Margaret Brennan, who was the President, and I said, 'They're talking about me being co-pastor of this church. You might hear rumors about that, or something. It's true--but I don't know if it's going to happen, and it's a long ways away.' And they just said, 'Keep me informed.'

Re-evaluating

Changing Values of  
the Order

Z: You see, this is what I've been feeling--so they didn't tell you--'Look, come home right away. This is too--this is too volatile.'

S: No--and they just said--and then as it progressed, I told them

Mutual Growth of  
Community and Order

how it was progressing, but then the vote came faster than expected, and then it was like 'This is going to happen,' and then Margaret Brennan said, 'Well, gosh, we'd better talk,' and then I spent several hours with her, sorting it all through, and at the end of it, she was extremely supportive.

Z: She sounds like a wonderful lady.

S: She is--she is. And the thing that she did in that process, and Bob and I talked about it afterward. She said, 'How much of this is because you love Bob? And is that what's underneath it all?' And I said, 'No. I love Bob, but that isn't why this is happening.'

Z: But you weren't 'in love' with Bob.

S: No, I wasn't in love with Bob. He was a mentor to me. He was a mentor and--

Z: We have a saying in India--'soul mate/' That's the kind of thing-



S: And he would say that. He said,  
 'I never suspected I would pass  
 on all this to a woman!'  
 (Laughing)

Z: (Laughing) My gosh, he said  
 that? So, really, what you're  
 telling me is that, you know,  
 one experience in terms of your  
 love relationship and coming to  
 terms in terms of--and it's  
 really a tremendously profound  
 experience to say, 'I can stay  
 in the community and love  
 somebody'...

S: Yes...

Z: ...and that there is nothing bad  
 about it.

S: Yes.

Z: That's a beautiful experience,  
 because that frees one in so  
 many ways, to really minister.  
 Because love is what it's...

S: Freed of other people...

Z: ...what it's all about. And it  
 seems like you've developed your  
 identity very strongly at that

point, and then going here, it seems like your last remarks were, 'Well, I never thought I'd be saying this, especially to a woman,' then I'm sure he said, 'A Catholic woman...'

S: A Catholic woman!

Z: ...and then a sister! (Laughing)

S: An American!

Re-capitulation

Z: An American! So your growth experiences really covered identity, it covered your work, you know, your identity as a woman, your sexual identity, it covered the work very strongly, and many, many relevant things. I know that your workshops are very popular, because many people told me, mentioned your name, in terms of...What is--If I were to ask you, who or what is a nun of the 80's, and where she comes from, and what have been her learning experiences that are

Sister of the 1980's

going to shape and control where she's going? I understand the individualism, but I think what you said earlier is so significant--that here you are, a very forward-thinking person, open to ideas and things, and it was so significant when you said, 'I had this feeling but, but the time I turned around, the congregation had kept pace. That, to me, was so significant in terms of your individual personality.

S: Yes, and I feel like--and that's the test for me, I think. If what happens in my faith journey is with all the people that I love and minister with, I am really changed by all that, and if that puts me in conflict with the IHM identity, there are...

Z: There are problems...

S: There are a lot of problems, and

I think I would choose--I would not choose the IHM identity, but that has never been my experience...

Z: And that is really, really significant in terms of the IHM's, and...

S: And why I feel like I am part of it--like it is not in conflict with what happens to me and the most profound things that have happened to me have not been IHM investigated...

Individual Personally

Z: But you got the support from them...

S: Yes...

Z: If not the most helpful cohorts, so to say, they certainly didn't hold you back...

S: Yes, and that's what I would say...

Z: And would you say this would be typical if it was another sister --I mean if someone else had

been through the same exper--or,  
 you know, similar in the sense  
 of being very not controversial,  
 but knew, experimental-type  
 things--that they would still be  
 open and giving...

S: I feel like they were very  
 discerning, like they weren't  
 just open to anything--they were  
 critical--

Learning Strategies  
 Problem Solving  
 Critical Thinking

Z: And that discernment, could you  
 tell me--it seems like a phrase  
 that is used a lot in  
 community...

S: Discernment--I don't know how to  
 describe it, exactly, except  
 that it's trying to sort through  
 the motives and the spirit of  
 what is going on--testing--kind  
 of testing motives, and that  
 process--it's a process that has  
 to happen with a group of people,  
 so that it's tested. You don't  
 just say, 'This is what I want

Discernment Learning  
 Strategy

to do, no matter what...'

Z: So you bring it to the provincial or you go straight to the president, or, you know--or whatever the hierarchy---

S: Well, less and less of that, now. I have a little group of people that I meet with.

Z: The cluster group?

S: Well, my cluster group doesn't matter that much, to me, but I am in a little support group, at present, and right now, that would be a much more testing place for me--not the provincial or the---

Individual Adaptive  
Mechanism

Z: But these are friends, some of whom are IHM's...

S: This group is IHM's...

Bonding/Support

Z: I see, so that is what's meant by the grass roots. People talk...you know, I'm not saying that you're typical--you're not. You are individualistic in the

best sense, it's not like you're out there saying, 'Look at me.' It's like you're out there saying, 'Here is life, and I want to go to the new experiences with honesty, in terms of what integrity and faith means to me,' and that's the way you come across.

S: Thank you.

Z: Certainly, everything you've said bears that out, and but what I am saying is--because part of what I would need to do as I'm pulling out the categories, etc.--is to look at the individual in a role... And I have to keep coming back to what kind of atmosphere--allows a person this kind of growth, so would I be right, and I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, in saying that this is the current atmosphere

there--it's one of growth,  
rather than stagnation.

S: Oh, I would say that--but I think that, from my point of view, I feel like I was trusted. I wasn't--I don't feel like I was always understood, but I was trusted. That was more important to me, 'cause I had people who understood me...

Trust in Individuals

Z: You needed the trust--and you got it.

S: I felt like I got it.

Z: And would you say that's a real intrinsic, integral characteristic of the IHM leadership?

S: You see--that's confusing to me when you say that, because I don't know--I know other people have not felt as trusted as I have, but I'm also not sure how they presented themselves, either.

Z: I can see that. It's been an

Personal Negotiation  
of Situation



individual experience and, of course, what I am trying to do is draw from my other people, too, a consensus. Can I get back to that other question about the nun of the 80's. What have been her major learning experiences that are going to take her into the future? What will shape her future?

S: I don't know what order I would put them in--I would say that for me, it would be the commitment to the ministry, and that the commitment to ministry changes you and it changes what's called out of you.

Original Commitment

Z: OK.

S: So if you're willing to see where ministry takes you, then you'll stay free...

Sister of the Future

Z: Ah...

S: That's been my experience.

Z: That's right.

S: I have no intention of doing groups on feminism.

Z: That's right. Absolutely.

S: But because of all the things that have happened to me and because of what I hear--and then that changed me.

Z: That's right. So it's still ministry--it's not congregation and community in the old sense. It's still this devotion to God and doing His work.

S: Yes, I would say that. And I would say that what I need from the congregation of the future are other people who are committed to ministry and if they are, that's the support I need, and I want friends or peers or colleagues who want to see the ministry happen. I don't need to meet with them a lot--I don't need to talk over problems with them--I've got

Implications for the  
Future

friends to do that with, but I need a group of people who are committed to ministry that I can count on and I can say I'm related to them, somehow.

Bonding: Necessary  
for Future

Z: That's right. And that's really where it's going, isn't it?

S: Yes. And for me, the other things have to be--that's the top priority--and how you live--where your money is--anything else is so--However it helps that. If it helps that, fine, if it doesn't help it, it doesn't belong.

Z: It's been wonderful. I'm just so grateful for the things you've shared, because this is to me what it's all about.

APPENDIX C

DESCRIPTION OF THE SISTERS

APPENDIX C  
DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SISTERS INTERVIEWED  
(Identified by letters A through T)

A description of each of the sisters interviewed is given. Because of confidentiality, the descriptions are brief, so as not to embarrass the sample in the study. Letters have been given to each of the sisters and have been utilized in Chapter IV for identification of remarks.

Sister A. Attractive, quiet, self-possessed, punctual. Moved from a comfortable job and living situation in another city to Detroit because she was needed. Total committed to vocation as woman religious. Very honest about conflicts regarding change in habit and her concerns about dwindling numbers of sisters in the order, only recently worked through feelings of ambiguity about the future of women religious.

Sister B. Pretty, very tastefully dressed woman. Originally from the east. Joined this order because of its reputation for having forward-looking leadership. Very aware of the problems of the new women religious, but feels very strongly that, whatever happens, she wants to be there when it happens. Open, honest, totally committed to order. Excited rather than threatened by future. Very aware of femininity and spiritual identity.

- Sister C. A sister in poor health, about to take a leave of absence to take care of her sick father. Has a radiant quality about her. Has experienced some tough times, but is very content. Her faith is her strength. Did pioneering work in areas hitherto unexplored by the order, was successful. She is looking forward to entering a totally new situation when she returns from leave. Exudes optimism, strength and hope.
- Sister D. Has attained high position in education work situation. Willing to share, but has introverted personality. Says she uses ethnic origins to explain reserved personality. Very likeable, honest. Does what she has to do, does it well. Most important thing to her is the original commitment. All other things fall into perspective because of this.
- Sister E. Works in a very responsible area of new ministry that involves dealing with people of other faiths. Spoke easily of the massive changes she encountered, deals with life in a very forthright, pragmatic, honest manner. Very aware that it is possible that the order might dissolve, but feels that if this should happen it, she could handle it, but until such time, is determined to use, enjoy everything that the order offers. Keeps in close touch with

everything and goes home to the Mother house every month for fasting and prayer. She spends the whole week-end there. She projects realism and strength.

Sister F: Highly educated professional. Still working on getting comfortable with identity. Deeply involved with emotional relationship that she is working through. Comes across as extremely vulnerable, honest, very warm and giving. Tall, slender and attractive.

Sister G: One of the youngest interviewed and looks much younger than her stated age. Bouncy, energetic, projects enormous enthusiasm. Joined order at a younger than usual age, but has never seriously questioned her commitment, in spite of some difficult encounters with unjust superiors. Loves everything that the woman religious stands for. Is a thinking person. Bilingual, she is looking forward to a very special mission with foreigners in the United States. Is very lovable, totally honest, and comes across as a warm, giving person.

Sister H: Very bright. Graduated valedictorian of her class, in high school. A scientist, now works in a school setting, but not in teaching. Has used inventiveness and creativity in all job situations. More traditional and conventional than others in the study. Some changes hurt her deeply, and she was willing to

share these experiences, particularly loss of friends. Commitment to being a woman religious and to the order is unquestioned. Has faced all possibilities of the future of the order. Projects great strength, but, also, a sadness. An appealing personality. She is painfully honest.

Sister I: Highly educated professional who received higher education in Europe. Served in top educational positions. Has just been invited to assume position in male seminary. Very honest, very warm, had been through many emotionally wrenching situations recently, but appears to have a strong, warm, giving personality, that has helped her. Spoke more from the heart, rather than with distancing intellectualization. Very likeable.

Sister J: Very shy sister. Has a very special area of expertise that was developed by the order. All she wanted was to be a sister the way it was when she joined the order. Change came difficult to her, and still is. Her commitment to God and the order is total. Unassuming by personality, yet she has contributed much to the order. Painfully honest, aware of the difficult facets of her personality and has attempted to deal with this. She is very appealing in her vulnerability and dedication.

Sister K: Tall, soft-spoken woman, who has faced life-threatening



illness and who has, through creativity and intelligence, made a satisfying life for herself. Very honest about her feelings. Had no illusions. Projects strength, rather than depression.

Sister L: Came in a few minutes late because of her weekly golf game! Highly educated professional. Tiny, enthusiastic, very honest, seems to have a great love of life and is totally committed to being a woman religious but, within that context, wishes to explore all facets of life available to her. Has no illusions about the order, but is aware of its many strengths. Projects a joie de vivre that appears genuine.

Sister M: Pleasant, introverted, but happy to be in study. Shared experiences in open, honest manner. Totally committed to being a woman religious. Has demanding inner city job. Very involved with all activities that the order offers. Has given much thought to her future as a woman religious.

Sister N: One of the younger sisters, and still in the process of defining identity and finding herself. Exceedingly articulate, she was, at times, tangential. Appeared interested in all aspects of the study.

Sister O: Holds high position in educational system. Has never questioned commitment. Thoroughly enjoys being a woman religious. Was never among the

first to make changes. Nevertheless, adjusted to what had to be done. Very open, gregarious, honest, has a wonderful sense of humor.

Sister P: Very attractive, very articulate woman. Spoke freely. Has questioned everything and has been the instrument of many growth experiences for the order. With her permission, the interview done with her is included in the Appendix.

Sister Q: Tall, slender, charming woman, very honest, very idealistic. Her learning experiences have involved much personal pain. She shared freely. Experiences in another country have been a freeing experience for her, and she is in the process of branching out and finding herself.

Sister R: Attractive, attractively dressed woman, like others, open and honest. Misses much of the old life and organizes present existence to incorporate as much of the flavor of the old lifestyle as possible. Totally devoted to commitment and to the order.

Sister S: Tiny, vital, very articulate, very intelligent woman, of great sensitivity and energy. Has very important position in leadership. Has made contribution to government structures. Extremely well-read, gave thoughtful, appropriate answers that were enrichening to the study.

Sister T: Very tall, stately woman, of enormous charm and intelligence. Has attained high position in leadership. Forward-thinking woman of tremendous integrity, her answers were well thought through. Appears very aware of past, present and future of the order, and of the role of women religious in the future. Projects strength, integrity, pragmatism and optimism.

**APPENDIX D**

**LETTER TO SISTERS**

Appendix D  
LETTER TO SISTERS

Dear Sister:

I am a doctoral student at Michigan State University, College of Education, and I am a psychiatric social work supervisor at Sinai Hospital of Detroit.

By history, the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, have taken leadership roles in many significant areas of growth in religious life. I feel that a great deal of learning took place in several major areas during the past two decades, and I would like to explore adult learning on an experiential and intellectual level in relationship to a dynamic, articulate group of women and, therefore, have chosen the IHM as the population for my study.

Your name was picked from a computerized list of sisters meeting my criteria for age and fully-professed status. I would need approximately two hours of your time. I will be calling you in a few days to explain, in detail, about the questionnaire that I would like you to answer, and to clarify any questions you might have, at that time.

I do hope that you will participate in what I feel will be an exciting project for both of us.

Sincerely yours,

Zohra Gideon  
666 Purdy - Apt. 30  
Birmingham, MI 48009

**APPENDIX E**

**LETTER FROM PRESIDENT OF CONGREGATION**

APPENDIX E

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT OF CONGREGATION



SISTERS, SERVANTS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

610 WEST ELM AVENUE  
MONROE, MICHIGAN 48161  
U.S.A.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

July, 1984

Dear Sister,

I am writing to you today to ask you to consider an invitation I received and accepted. Ms. Zohra Gideon is writing her doctoral dissertation on adult learning, featuring our congregation in a special way. (letter included)

She has asked to interview some IHM's who are finally professed between the ages of 35 and 50 years old. If you would be willing and available for such an endeavor both Zohra and I would appreciate your collaboration.

She will phone you within a few days for your response.

My gratitude and love,

Carol Quigley, IHM

APPENDIX F

LETTER OF THANKS



APPENDIX F  
LETTER OF THANKS

Dear Sister [name],

Thank you so much for participating in my study. The information that you gave me was valuable, and I deeply appreciate your willingness to share some of your experiences with me. My material should be ready by November of 1984. I will be delighted to share the highlights of my findings with you. I can be reached at 644-9102.

Sincerely yours,

Zohra Gideon

Zohra Gideon  
666 Purdy, Apt. 30  
Birmingham, MI 48009

## **APPENDIX G**

### **WORK SHEETS**

Identification #:  
Date:

APPENDIX G  
WORK SHEET

DEMOGRAPHICS:

IMPRESSIONS:

TRIGGERS:

PREPARATION:

**PREPARATION:**

TRANSITION:

SYNTHESIS:



EVALUATION:

EVALUATION:

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