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**DAUGHTERS IN THE CHURCH BECOMING MOTHERS OF THE CHURCH: A
STUDY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

City University of New York

Ph.D. 1986

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DAUGHTERS IN THE CHURCH BECOMING MOTHERS OF THE CHURCH:

A STUDY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

by

DIANA TREBBI

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1985

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

DAUGHTERS IN THE CHURCH BECOMING MOTHERS OF THE CHURCH:

A STUDY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

by

Diana Trebbi

Adviser: Professor Joseph Bensman

This study concerns a social and religious movement internal to the Catholic Church which I call "the Catholic women's movement." The empirical portion of the study derives from a sample of 48 women members of three of the principal organizations of the movement; and 8 members of an organization which claims to represent the vast majority of United States Catholic women who are not movement members.

Official Church documents are studied which function to define women's roles in Church and in society along traditional lines. They also provide religious rationale for these definitions. The 48 movement members comprise either of two status groupings for women which exist in the Church: "religious" (nuns) and laywomen.

Relying on the sociology of religion of Max Weber, I attempt to trace the historical and social determinants of similarities and of differences between the two status groups of women. Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is brought to bear on locating the sources of thought underlying the worldview of the members of the three organizations sampled. I call this thought structure "religious feminism." I also

investigate the sources of several related ideological modes of thought employed among movement leaders and members; i.e., liberation theology and feminist spirituality.

The empirical data present similar and contrasting views nuns and laywomen have of each other, and of key movement issues such as wages and work opportunities, birth control, abortion, divorce, and ordination for women. Similarities and differences between the two status groups of women studied are taken as indicators of strengths and weaknesses in the movement as a whole.

I also explore how movement women experience a sense of power in various social and religious contexts. Catholic feminists are beginning to wield this power to attain their goals, as evidenced in the interviews.

Lack of strong interest in ordination among the sample indicates a movement whose nature is "prophetic" rather than "priestly." Predominantly religious justifications employed for the various movement goals suggest that the Catholic women's movement is not a secularizing force; rather, its divided loyalties seem directly associated with religious beliefs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the inestimable and steadfast guidance which Dr. Joseph Bensman provided me throughout the course of this study. His sociological insights, concrete suggestions and uncounted hours of editorial work helped to shape the raw material of this thesis into its final form. Dr. George Fischer urged me on with his intellectual enthusiasm for the fields of liberation theology and the feminist movement. Dr. Patricia Kendall undertook the difficult task of aiding me to impart a particular qualitative flavor to the data collected. The empirical material which forms the basis of this study was gathered through the cooperation of the 56 respondents who gave generously of their work time, lunch hours, and evenings in order to provide me with the interview data. The entire undertaking was funded by the financial help of the late Georges Dailly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	viii
INTRODUCTION	1

PART I. THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S MOVEMENT-- HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE MATERIAL

Chapter

I. THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES . .	13

PART II. THE EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

II. THE QUEST FOR SISTERHOOD	86
III. IDEOLOGICAL ALLIANCES OF THE MOVEMENT	156
IV. THE ETHOS OF JUSTICE AND ITS APPLICATION TO WOMEN'S ORDINATION	222
V. SOURCES OF CATHOLIC MOVEMENT WOMEN'S SENSE OF POWER. .	264

PART III. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

VI. CONCLUSION	318
.	

APPENDIX

I. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	335
II. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND QUESTIONNAIRE	342
III. DEMOGRAPHIC TABLES	363
SOURCES CONSULTED	370

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1.1	Selected Data on Organizations Included in the Study as of December 1983	72
2.1	Main Concerns Expressed by Movement Women	97
2.2	Main Reasons Given by Respondents for Recruitment into a Particular Movement Organization	101
2.3	Respondents' Ranking of Reasons for Choice of Work	103
2.4	Orientations Derived from Sources of Satis- faction Reported by Both Status Groups	105
2.5A	Laywomen's and Nuns' Perceptions of the Distinction Made by the Church Regarding Each Status Group	108
2.5B	Laywomen's and Nuns' Perceptions of A Communi- cations Gap between the Two Status Groups . . .	108
2.6	Themes Employed by Laywomen when Describing Nuns	111
2.7A	Instances of Equality between Nuns and Lay- women Offered by the Two Status Groups	127
2.7B	Instances of Inequality between Nuns and Lay- women Offered by the Two Status Groups	128
2.8	Priority Issues for the Catholic Women's Movement	130
3.1A	Books Reported by Respondents to Have In- fluenced Their Thinking on Women's Issues, by Category	181
3.1B	Theologies Studied by Respondents which Helped Shape Their Ideas about Women	183
3.2A	Personal Influences on Movement Respondents-- Members of the Catholic Women's Movement	185

Table

3.2B	Personal Influences on Movement Respondents-- Other Persons	186
3.3	Do You Consider Yourself a Feminist?	187
3.4	Religious Feminist Authors Read by Respondents . .	189
3.5	Agreement or Disagreement of Respondents with Four Non-Religious Feminist Goals	191
3.6A	Feminist Goals of Importance to Respondents . . .	193
3.6B	Feminist Goals Unimportant to Respondents	194
3.7	Should Women Be Compensated for Fulltime Household Work?	196
3.8	Respondents' Perception of Differences between Non-Religious and Religious Feminisms .	198
3.9	Opinions on Whether Notions of "the Goddess" Are Helpful to Catholic Women	203
3.10	Movement Respondents' Opinions of the Appli- cability of Liberation Theology to Women's Issues	206
3.11	Proportion of Movement Respondents whose Thought Has Been Influenced by Leading Liberation Theologians	210
4.1	Attitude toward the Clergy/Lay Distinction among Respondents Who Discussed the Distinction in Terms of Liberation Theology	231
4.2	Is the Priest's Work More Valuable than That of a Layperson?	236
4.3	Reasons Given by Movement Women to Account for Catholic Women's Failure to Obtain Priesthood .	237
4.4	Respondents Who Feel Called to Ordination by Organizational Membership and Status Group . . .	239
4.5A	Respondents' Justifications for Claim that Women Should Be Ordained	242
4.5B	Analysis of Religious or Ideological Character of Justifications Offered	243

Table

4.6A	Degree of Respondent Satisfaction with Catholic Liturgy as Now Composed	245
4.6B	Respondents' Explanations for Dissatisfaction with Liturgy	245
4.6C	Effect of Dissatisfaction with Liturgy on Mass Attendance	246
4.7	Respondents' Opinions on Events Most Likely to Speed Women's Ordination	251
4.8	Movement Women's View of Future Priesthood by Role Orientation	253
4.9	Comparison of Role Expectations of the Priest among Three Groups Studied	257
5.1	Summary of Tables 5.2, 5.3, 5.4A, 5.5 and 5.6--Contexts where Respondents Reported Experiencing a Sense of Power	272
5.2	Sense of Power in Ritual Contexts	273
5.3	Sense of Power through Organizational Membership .	277
5.4A	Sense of Power at the Workplace	280
5.4B	Direction of Power Experienced by Movement Women at Workplace	281
5.5	Experience of Power as a Result of the Practice of Prayer or Meditation	285
5.6	Sense of Power in Consciousness-Raising Groups . .	288
5.7	Types of Organizations Mentioned by Respondents in All Contexts where They Experienced a Sense of Power	291
5.8	Contexts where Respondents Experienced A Sense of Community	295
5.9	Groups Mentioned by Respondents as Sources of Support	297
5.10	Groups Considered by Respondents as Most Effective in Achieving Stated Goals	299
5.11A	Types of Groups Considered as Sources of Community by Movement Respondents	303

Table

5.11B	Types of Groups Considered as Sources of Support by Movement Respondents	304
5.11C	Types of Groups Considered as Goal Effective by Movement Respondents	306

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1	Organizational Networks of Three Groups Studied .	74

INTRODUCTION

In the 1960's a new Catholic women's movement developed alongside the re-emergence of women's movements throughout the United States. This movement is made up of those Catholic women who, having developed new forms of consciousness, now find traditional thought and language modes employed by Church officials and others regarding women inadequate to their life experience. Their grievances and collective discontent are the motor of a social and religious movement which is internal to the institutional Church.

The dominant view of the Church hierarchy with regard to its women members emphasizes their "nature" and familial role. This view also underlies the two principal statuses ascribed by the Church to women: nuns and laity. This thesis is concerned with the problem raised by Catholic movement women as they resist the status quo and attempt to develop their movement while maintaining allegiances to both religious and non-religious spheres of life. I will attempt to ascertain the quality of these relationships as they function for movement members to aid them in obliterating the lay-religious dichotomy. This also raises the possibility of the emergence of a consolidated group of churchwomen.

As we shall see, the Catholic women's movement may have had a number of sources. First, there was the "elective affinity" to some of the goals of the non-religious feminist movements. Secondly, there was the participation of Catholic women, both lay and nun, in activities

which were not specifically Catholic in orientation. These have included activism in the civil rights movements of the 1950's and 1960's, and some interest in the ideology of the school of thought known as "feminist spirituality" which focuses on feminine aspects of divinity, or "the Goddess" as she has existed historically. Thirdly, women in the Reform Jewish tradition in the 1950's and in the Episcopal tradition in the 1960's succeeded in placing the question of women's ordination before their highest decision-making bodies. Since that time, both Reform and Conservative branches of Judaism, and the Episcopal and Anglican churches have approved women's ordination. Ordination is perceived by Catholic feminists as an advance in women's ecclesial status; thus, these events only serve to increase their own status discontent. In addition, nuns historically have been actively engaged in ministering to members of marginal and economically depressed groups. They may have felt a good deal of empathy with these groups when they become the focus of analysis by social and political theorists, seeking to alleviate their conditions of life.

The desire of the Church to take a new stance in its relation to the "world" was evident from the first document published by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Nine days after the opening sessions of the Council, a "Message to Humanity" was issued "by its Fathers, with the endorsement of the Supreme Pontiff." For the first time in the history of Ecumenical Councils, a Council addressed itself to all humankind, not just to members of the Catholic Church. This brief statement exhorts "all our brother Christians, and the rest of men of good will" to work with the Church in responding to two issues confronting the

world of the 1960's: peace between people, and the achievement of social justice.¹

The Council did not make specific dogmatic changes. Rather, it ushered in an era which would involve all Catholics in the renewal and adaptation of religious practice to modern life. Vatican II may also have raised expectations among Catholic women, especially nuns in congregations engaged in active ministries, for sweeping changes.

The Second Vatican Council was to influence the membership of the Church in two ways: 1) those who were satisfied with Church traditions and practices at the time of the Council were presented with a fait accompli regarding the initiation of changes which, once the structural mechanisms took hold, would be difficult to reverse. Some of these changes, particularly the practice of conducting the Mass rite in the native language of each country, had already been in place since 1957, when sweeping liturgical changes were promulgated, at least in the United States. These changes were perceived as threatening to this group of Catholics, and initiated other internal movements of resistance to them, including members of the hierarchy and the clergy. For instance, efforts to include laity in religious functions which formerly had been the province of the lower clergy, such as the distribution of Communion and the reading of Scripture during Mass rites were seen by some priests as an erosion of their own power. This provoked an identity crisis among some priests; it seemed that the firm boundaries of their role and ministry were crumbling. 2) The second group of

¹Walter M. Abbott, S.J., ed., The Documents of Vatican II (New York: Guild Press, 1966), pp. 4-7.

Catholics comprised those who had been calling for further change since the promulgation of new norms in 1957. Among this group were those calling for a greater accommodation of Church practices to the "world." The scope for change was great. In one of the most important Council documents (Lumen Gentium) for instance, the self-understanding of the Church was turned upside down. In that document, in which the Church itself is defined, the first section deals not with the hierarchy, but with "The People of God." Thus, the equality of all members as the body of Christ is recognized. The hierarchy and the Pope are viewed as "the servants of the servants of God." At the same time Lumen Gentium reiterated the divine mission entrusted to the episcopacy.

The Catholic women's movement is different from other women's movements. First of all it suggests that those who belong to it accept the Catholic belief system, at least to the extent that they have not abandoned it to join non-religious movements. We shall see that much of the justification for that movement was based on religious sources and made meaningful in Catholic religious terms, although this does not preclude non-religious influences, as suggested above. Beyond this, the Catholic women's movement was largely addressed to reforms or rebellions against Catholic religious ideas and institutions which were perceived to be prejudicial to women. Its focus may even be the hierarchy; otherwise, there would not have been a specifically Catholic religious movement.

In investigating the sources and the history of the Catholic women's movement since the early 1960's, I have attempted to examine and to assess the sources of the religious issues and grievances of Catholic women; i.e., between lay and nun members, and how these grievances have

contributed to solidarity or division among movement members. One issue that clearly emerged was that of women's ordination, a goal which women of some branches of Judaism and Protestantism have already achieved. I wanted to see how strong and how specific was this issue of equality with the clergy, and how it contributed to the movement. A second set of issues seem to apply more to lay members: these include questions of birth control, divorce, abortion, equality within the family, and marriage option for celibates. A third possible question might have been movement women's sense that the Church hierarchy had lost its initiative on a whole variety of issues of social justice. One of the Council's grand themes had been to urge upon Catholics, as something good in and for itself, a sense of responsibility for society and its transformation. The importance of social justice as a Christian concern has been reiterated in documents issued by popes subsequent to 1965. Movement women may consider this issue to be central to present-day Church priorities.

In order to ascertain the weight and priority of these grievances, and to assess the extent to which they contributed to consolidating the two groups of women into one, I interviewed 48 movement women and 8 members of the National Council of Catholic Women, who served as a control group. The latter 8 women are closely attached to the Church through membership in diocesan and parish organizations and programs. Of the 48 movement women, 23 were nuns and 25 were laywomen. In dealing with my sample movement women, I attempted to discover the specific sources of their attachment to the movement: whether these sources came from their religious background and study, from other ideas of justice which while not specifically religious, may have been consistent with a

religious orientation; whether their membership was based on other movements within the Church, e.g., liberation theology; or whether they drew their commitment from totally secular feminist ideas and ideologies, outside mainstream Catholic traditions.

I also attempted to ascertain whether the commitment to the Catholic women's movement was based on a desire for mobility within the Church structures and on the feeling that women are ascribed a low status by Church hierarchy. Finally I wanted to understand what gratifications were involved in belonging to a women's movement. I speculated that some of the benefits derived might include a sense of solidarity, the opportunity to contribute significantly to religious renewal, and a sense of participating in major causes. Another aspect of the movement to be investigated is the source of movement women's sense of power, or lack of it, both on a personal level and in the movement's ability to implement its claims and goals. The collective sense of power present in the movement, I reasoned, might be an indicator that lay and nun members of the movement are forming a consolidated group of churchwomen, but with separate interests and priorities.

In my search of the sociological literature outside feminist sources, I found no interest regarding women's low status in religious institutions. There are further methodological problems regarding previous sociological treatment of both religion and women as subjects for study. Sociologists studying the behavior of religious populations before the 1960's opposed traditional elements in religion, or "religious" factors, to modernizing elements, or non-religious "secular" factors. Since then, many members of religious denominations and sects who profess a significant degree of commitment to religious values, have

become involved in social and political issues of national and international life. These persons located both on the left and on the right of the ideological spectrum, have managed to reconcile other-worldly and this-worldly aspects in their religious worldview. We might say that the Catholic women's movement represents an example of the evolution of social protest from the more generalized societal division made by the "New Left" of the 1960's of "establishment" and "dissenters" to a more limited but focused dissent of differing interests and power inequalities within a given institution, which has occurred in the two following decades. In depicting social change, one might expect to bring the insights of Karl Marx to bear on the process. But he gave sparse attention to purely religious questions; i.e., the internal dynamics of religious organizations, and viewed religion as an agency opposed to change. Marxist sociologists are thus not numbered among the investigators of religious phenomena.

But there are also problems in the sociological literature which do explain religious behavior, particularly in relation to women. As scholars studying the religious "revival" in the U.S. during the 1970's, sociologists of religion Peter Berger (1980) and Robert Bellah (1970) have called for a radical new methodology for writing about religion. Robert Bellah's well-known collection of essays in religion, Beyond Belief, includes an analysis of the low status of women in Islam¹, but his chapters on Christianity are based on androcentric assumptions. Peter Berger hardly mentions women in his works. The typologies worked out by Joachim Wach in his Sociology of Religion (1944) and Marshall

¹Robert N. Bellah, Beyond Belief (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 154-164.

Sklare's Conservative Judaism (1972) are based exclusively on male experience, including the "religiosus"--the "plain man" who also lives a highly religious life.

The literature of traditional sociologists of religion shows a consensus on the encroachments of "modernity" on the religious spheres of life. Proponents of modernity claim that religious influence has diminished in proportion to the expansion of other areas of life such as science, technology, art and social concerns. Yet the claim of liberation theologians, as first articulated by Gutierrez in 1973, is that it unites all areas of life under the struggle for justice. As mentioned above, it is just this claim of liberation theology which has attracted the "elective affinity" of Catholic feminists.

Religious feminists Rosemary Ruether and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza employ non-religious feminist notions in constructing their theories. Thus, non-religious ideas have become part of the substance of Catholic feminists' religious belief. Bellah would see this process as one of "unbelief", resulting from Catholic women's incorporation of competing claims on truth. But it does not seem that women, at least the subjects of this study, form their religious beliefs in this manner. Rather, new material is absorbed according to its capacity to harmonize with the belief system already in place in each individual.

Some recent studies in sociology of religion have centered on the identification and measurement of the "religious" dimension, representing one of the significant advances in the discipline.¹ My study employs an analytical position based on the work of Professor Gert

¹ John Wilson, Religion in American Society: The Effective Presence (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1978), p. 442.

Mueller, who has worked out a number of dimensions of religiosity, both for the Catholic and Protestant religious traditions.¹ Drawing on the work of Max Weber and Karl Jaspers, Mueller contracts a wert-rational analysis of both the Protestant and the Catholic "ethic," deriving from their respective realms of subjective religious truth. In his examination of religion as a cultural system, Mueller perceives the religious worldview as an amalgam of two fundamentally different elements: transcendence and partisanship. In Mueller's view, the transcendent aspect of religion comes close to that of Spinoza's definition of religion, which is the human view of material things sub specie eternitatis et universi.² Mueller defines partisanship as the world-affirming aspect of religious commitment, which includes aspects of personal allegiances (solidarity), ideals and ideologies, and the ethos of justice, or moral element. Based on my study of Mueller, I will analyze movement members' religious commitment, or partisanship, as it is enacted in these three elements. The study also draws on the sociology of knowledge to study a group of Catholic women who, while thinking, are also acting. By attempting to uncover their purpose, not in addition to their perceptions, but their purpose in their perceptions³, I hope to reveal the qualitative richness of their particular worldview.

The study of such a group demands what Friedrichs has called the "pluralistic motif of social science," where he argues that a single

¹Gert H. Mueller, "The Protestant and the Catholic Ethic", The Annual Review of the Social Science of Religion (The Hague, 1978), pp. 143-166.

²Cited in Mueller, "The Dimensions of Religiosity", Sociological Analysis 1980, Vol. 41, No. 1:1-24.

³Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1936), p. 295.

paradigm no longer suffices to explain complex phenomena.¹ The Weberian and feminist theoretical viewpoints discussed above, which I employ to interpret Catholic women's responses to the questionnaire, are of the "middle range", and point to a future elaboration of a more comprehensive sociological theory of how women contribute to change in both the social and religious spheres of life. The work of Carol Gilligan, a Professor of Education at Harvard University, also has direct bearing on what may be unique contributions women have to make to the content of religious traditions. Gilligan attempted to modify what she felt were male-biased theories of psychological development elaborated by Erik Erikson, Vaillant and others.² She found that her samples of women, in solving moral dilemmas, tended to impose constructions distinctive from those of the samples of men reported by Erikson and Vaillant. Studies regarding women's style of work and power relationships undertaken by Jean Baker Miller, Elizabeth Janeway and Rosabeth Moss Kanter also provide a basis of comparison with the sense of power as it is experienced by movement respondents of this study. The anthropological studies of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, although focused on African tribal life, yielded findings which proved useful to my study of the dynamics of group status transformation.³

¹Robert W. Friedrichs, A Sociology of Sociology (New York: Free Press, 1970), p. 325.

²Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1982).

³Victor W. Turner, The Ritual Process (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969).

My study is organized into two parts. Part I provides historical and descriptive material of the Catholic women's movement. Part II is concerned with an empirical survey.

While the body of this work will be the result of a survey of my 56 respondents, I have located the specific questions I asked within a framework that dealt with a dialogue between the movement, and the Church hierarchy and its representatives. In some sense, then, this study also presents a part of the as-yet unwritten history of the Catholic women's movement, in its confrontations with the hierarchy, both in the United States and in Rome.

' PART I

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S MOVEMENT--
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE MATERIAL

CHAPTER I

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Historical Background: Catholic Women in Ecclesial Context

The history of the Jewish and Christian religions contains a wealth of evidence regarding the development of carefully circumscribed religious and social roles for women. In his essay on "Religion of Non-Privileged Classes," Max Weber observes that the routinization of early Christian community relations militated against pneumatic manifestations among women, which came to be regarded as dishonorable and morbid.¹ In several of his letters, Paul acknowledged women as his equals "in Christ," and allowed his female co-workers a wider range of activity than traditional Jewish congregations did.²

He did not, however, advocate their equality in society and in politics. The role of women in Christianity was to be relegated to the private sphere and has thus helped to legitimize their limited role in non-religious spheres of life.³

The exact position of the women in Jesus' entourage is a matter of conjecture, but we do know that he himself violated Jewish social

¹Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff, with an Introduction by Talcott Parsons (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 104.

²I Corinthians:19; Galatians 3:28 (The Jerusalem Bible).

³I Corinthians:7-12.

conventions by talking openly with women, and he included them among his companions. Even after the middle of the 2nd century, women played a prominent part in the establishment of the fledgling church, as widows and deaconesses, prophets and teachers. Then, as now, most of the poor were women, a fact which has been cited to explain Christianity's appeal to women. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, a prominent Catholic theologian, thus states: "The Jesus movement articulates a quite different understanding of God because it has experienced in the praxis of Jesus a God who called not Israel's righteous and pious but its religiously deficient and its social underdogs."¹

Weber also contends that Christianity at its inception was religion of disprivileged classes, characterized by a tendency to allot equality to women.² The gnostic sects which developed rival versions of the Christian message in the first and second centuries accorded leadership positions to women, legitimizing this practice by preaching that God was both father and mother.

In his writings, Clement of Alexandria (c. 180 A.D.) attempted to reconcile gnostic views of the feminine aspect of divinity and Christian orthodox teaching, but most Christians adopted instead the views of Clement's contemporary adversary, Tertullian. This view forbade women from claiming any share in masculine religious functions. It is the tradition shaped by Paul and Tertullian which has circumscribed religious roles for Catholic women. The positions of Paul, Tertullian and other "Fathers of the Church" regarding women were strongly reaffirmed

¹In Memory of Her (Crossroads Press, New York, 1983), p. 130.

²Sociology of Religion, p. 104.

by Pope Paul VI in his Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood, issued in January 1977.¹ Section I of this document entitled "The Church's Constant Tradition" asserts: "A few heretical sects in the first centuries, especially Gnostic ones, entrusted the exercise of the priestly ministry to women; this innovation was immediately noted and condemned by the Fathers, who considered it as unacceptable in the Church."²

The Organic Social Theory of the Church

Ever since the first century, church leaders have sought to reconcile Jesus' legacy of cosmic love with the fact of unequal distribution of religious charisma among its members. By way of solution, they have evolved specific theologies to define the roles appropriate to various status groups among church members. Until the 20th century, the Catholic Church has based its theology on an organic social ethic³ derived from Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas' medieval compendium, the Summa Theologica, attempted a philosophical and theological reconciliation between rationalistic Hellenic thought and orthodox Christian teaching. The Summa assumes the existence of a "natural law," which determines the hierarchic character of creation, from angelic choirs down to the lowliest form of mineral life. There have been two important policies

¹The Declaration was promulgated at Rome October 15, 1976 and published January 27, 1977. See: James Coriden, ed., Sexism and Church Law (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), pp. 173-187.

²Drawn in part from Tertullian, De Praescrip. Haeretic. 41,5:CCL 1, p. 221.

³From Max Weber, Translated, with an introduction by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 338.

resulting from the manner in which the church applies its social ethic: 1) it legitimizes the stratification of church and society into a number of status groups of unequal power; and 2) it has a tendency to segment the immanent and transcendent aspects of human existence between specific status groups; i.e., laypersons are associated with the "secular" or immanent and mundane aspects of life, and those professing religious vows represent the "sacred" or transcendent element. Yet, as we shall see, all these diverse strata are reconciled under the leadership of the universal church.

The church was not to experience a significant shift in its self-understanding until the Second Vatican Council (1962-65); a shift evident in its most important document, The Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium). The first section of this document, "The People of God," emphasizes a desire to strengthen and integrate the personal and communal aspects of the church, rather than its institutional or hierarchical ones.¹ Since then, church theology has increasingly included open-ended variations. These include liberation and political theologies, and process theology, all of which employ inductive reasoning and begin with human experience. This experience in turn becomes a norm for further theological reflection, legitimating demands for social and political changes.

The Council documents contain several expressions of the principle of equality. With regard to church members, the chapter on "Laity" in the document representing perhaps the Council's most significant

¹Walter M. Abbott, S.J., ed., The Documents of Vatican II (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 24.

achievement¹, Par. 32 states in part: "...yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ." Gaudium et Spes contains a strong statement against discrimination against any group in the general society, including the two sexes: "... with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent."²

In my study on the Catholic women's movement, I will be referring to three status groups which have evolved traditionally in the Church: hierarchical priesthood, nuns³ and laywomen. Role descriptions of each status group are taken from texts in Lumen Gentium and other documents published as a result of Vatican II (1962-1965).

The Priest

The role of the priest is delineated by the Vatican Council as follows: "The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, molds and rules the priestly people."⁴ In the controversial Vatican Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial

¹Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Documents of Vatican II, p. 58.

²Documents of Vatican II, p. 228.

³The term "nuns" is employed in this thesis rather "women religious". The use of the latter term tends to reinforce notions of nuns in the "religious" sphere of life, contrasted with laywomen in the "non-religious" sphere.

⁴Lumen Gentium, Par. 10.

Priesthood, issued by Pope Paul VI on January 27, 1977, the normative character of church practice in ordaining only males to priesthood is reiterated in terms of the natural law. Thomas Aquinas is invoked regarding the symbolism residing in this tradition: "Sacramental signs represent what they signify by natural resemblance."¹ Therefore, the church reasons, there must be a natural resemblance between Christ and his representative in the sacramental office of priesthood. Organizationally, priests are expected to relate to their bishops in patriarchal fashion: "On account of this sharing in his priesthood and mission, let priests sincerely look upon the bishop as their father, and reverently obey him."²

The Laity

The principal mechanism of control employed by the institutional church is the sharp distinction it makes between the clerical and lay states of life. In the documents of Vatican II, that status of laity is defined primarily in terms of its secularity: "A secular quality is proper and special to laymen."³ The spiritual character of the lay state is adapted to the layperson's status in the general society, and even to his state of health: "The layman's religious program of life should take its special quality from his status as a married man and a family man, or as one who is unmarried or widowed, from his state of

¹ Saint Thomas, In IV Sent., dist. 25, q.2, quaestiuncula 1^a ad 4^{um}. Cited in: Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood, Sec. V.

² Lumen Gentium, p. 54.

³ Ibid., Par. 31.

health, and from his professional and social activity."¹ The relationship between the lay-clerical distinction and the Church's principle of hierarchy is expressed as follows: "It is for the hierarchy to provide spiritual principles, support and direction to the lay apostolate... The lay person should be an active member of society and... adjusted to its culture."²

Chapter VI of the document Apostolicam Actuositatem (Formation for the Apostolate) carefully defines the primacy of those under vows in discussing responsibility for the education of the laity. Lumen Gentium clearly envisions the subordinate position of laypersons to the clerical strata in the social hierarchy of the Church: "With ready Christian obedience, laymen as well as all disciples of Christ should accept whatever their sacred pastors, as representatives of Christ, decree in their role as teachers and rulers in the Church."³

Religious Life

The Constitution on the Church delineates the role of persons in religious orders or congregations in more ambiguous terms than that of priests or laypersons: "From the point of view of the divine and hierarchical structure of the Church, the religious state of life is not an intermediate one between the clerical and lay states. Rather, the faithful of Christ are called by God from both these states of life..."⁴

¹Apostolicam Actuositatem, Par. 4.

²Ibid., Pars. 24, 29.

³Lumen Gentium, Par. 37.

⁴Ibid., Par. 43.

One might concede that the "religious" state of life accords a passing bow to the "natural law", but Papal edicts over the centuries have consistently imposed a lifestyle on members of religious orders of a monastic character; i.e., based on vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to ecclesiastical superiors.¹ Vatican II documents presuppose a transcendent element in the religious life: "...it not only witnesses to the fact of a new and eternal life acquired by the redemption of Christ. It foretells the resurrected state and the glory of the heavenly kingdom."² The recently revised Canon Law repeats these same traditional norms where it defines religious life; it is "a life consecrated by the profession of the evangelical counsels", understood as poverty, chastity and obedience, which is professed by "vows or other sacred bonds."³

Organizationally, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, subject to the Secretariat of State in the Vatican, is charged with the approval of the Constitutions and Rules of the various religious orders. This is analogous to the secular professions which must secure licensing from official boards before they can practice or train aspirants. In a particular diocese, no religious congregation or order may initiate any works without the express permission of the local Bishop. Religious orders are placed under one of two hierarchical jurisdictions: Papal orders are under a "Cardinal

¹In the Papal bull Conditae a Christo (1900) and in the Normae (1901), the Church set down a system by which official approval of religious communities could be granted or withheld.

²Lumen Gentium, Par. 44.

³Code of Canon Law (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1983), Can. 573, p. 219.

protector" in Rome; diocesan orders are directly under the jurisdiction of the local Bishop.

Laywomen in the Church

In keeping with its worldview posited on the precepts of the natural law, the Church views women as primarily situated in family contexts. Here, biological differences are accepted as the determinants of moral meaning. These differences are understood as representing God's plan, and are therefore morally sanctioned. Recent encyclical letters issued by the Vatican concerned with the legitimate exercise of sexuality i.e., Casti Connubi of Pius XI in 1931 and Humanae Vitae of Paul VI in 1968, elaborate on the moral values based on applications of the natural law to married life. The final document at the meeting of the Latin American bishops at Puebla, Mexico in 1979 contains a section on the position of women in the church. While recognizing their importance in public life, the document goes on to state: "We wish to underline the fundamental role of woman as mother, the defender of life and the home educator."¹ Most recently, the encyclical Laborem Exercens of John Paul II in 1981 assumes a direct relationship between the level of the workingman's wage and the woman's social benefit: "The true advancement of women requires that labor should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family, in which women as mothers have an irreplaceable role."²

¹ John Eagleson and Philip Scharper, ed., Puebla and Beyond (Orbis Books), Maryknoll, N.Y. 1979), Pars. 845-847.

² National Catholic Reporter, 25 September 1981, p. 23.

By repeated emphasis on a primary biological function of women for church and society, Vatican officialdom defines a highly limited status position for laywomen located at the bottom of the church's social hierarchy.

A Brief Consideration of Women's Movements in the U.S.

In The Majority Finds Its Past, Gerda Lerner, a feminist scholar who has made major contributions in the field of women's history, distinguishes several 20th century U.S. women's movements. She defines the women's rights movement as those organizations and individuals who see the question of women's emancipation largely as one of legal change, while the feminist movement embraces more amorphous notions of women's liberation or freedom from oppressive restrictions imposed by sex; it demands self-determination and autonomy.¹ The National Organization for Women and groups advocating passage of the Equal Rights Amendment may be said to be women's rights groups, focusing on passage of laws which would assure women's legal parity in various aspects of public and private life. The ideology of feminism underlies programmatic statements of the National Abortion Rights League, Feminist Alliance Against Rape, Women Against Pornography, and Daughters of Bilitis (a lesbian organization).

Lerner points out that the reality of women's autonomy cannot be gained until financial and cultural independence are achieved by the women. Concerns with women's rights and feminism, she further argues, remain largely the domain of middle class women, who have some measure

¹New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 48-50.

of financial and educational resources which make possible the raising and realization of their claims for economic and social parity. This, we have seen, holds true for the Catholic women in this study, who are largely middle class.

Jo Freeman cites essential elements contributing to the emergence of the non-Catholic women's liberation movement in the mid-1960's. These include pre-existing communications networks, a constituency of women amenable to the ideas of the new movement, crises which galvanize people into action in the network, and organizational effort to weld spontaneous groups into an organized movement.¹ These characteristics of the women's movement have also existed during the birth of the Catholic women's movement, as will be related in this chapter.

Publications play an important role in both religious and non-religious women's movements where they function to publicize issues of concern to the women involved, and provide a forum of expression for grievances which exist among the membership. The Feminist Press, founded in the early 1970's, is one of the most influential publishers and distributors of publications by and about women.

The U.S. Catholic Women's Movement

The literature of religious feminism provides historical evidence that in the earliest days of the Christian Church, women seem to have been incorporated into the teaching role, but were eliminated early because the Church Fathers believed that women could never act as public

¹The Politics of Women's Liberation (New York: David McKay Co., Inc. 1975), pp. 44-47.

teachers. Ruether sees the ascetic lifestyle adopted by upper-class women of the 4th century as a relatively liberating choice for women. By contrast, Ruether goes on to argue, married women were not accorded equal social esteem; the exercise of sexuality in marriage was looked upon as a function of a lower order: it produced progeny. Augustine calls marriage "a remedy for concupiscence."¹ Since that time, isolated groups of nuns and laywomen have attempted to improve the status of women as a single grouping in the Catholic Church. It was not until the 20th century that Catholic women's personal discontents, perhaps intersecting with other changes, have resulted in an organized Catholic women's movement. In the United States, the Catholic women's movement advocates special goals of concern to themselves as churchwomen, as well as to goals affecting the welfare of women in the wider society.

Definition of the Catholic Women's Movement

The Catholic women's movement is defined as comprising a number of nuns and laywomen who share a feminist consciousness and who desire to improve their statuses in the Catholic Church. Total membership in the movement is not known; it may range from approximately 5,000 to 25,000 women. Catholic movement women are usually found to belong to one or more of the various organizations which constitute the movement; but

¹ See: Rosemary Radford Ruether, Religion and Sexism (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", pp. 150 et seq.; and Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1979), "Mothers of the Church: Ascetic Women in the Late Patristic Age", pp. 72 et seq. See also: Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza's discussion of the status dissonance experienced by wealthy women in Graeco-Roman societies and how this would have attracted them to the early Christian missionary movement. In Memory of Her (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), pp. 182-183.

organizational membership is not necessary to membership in the movement. The largest and best known organizations of the Catholic women's movement are: the National Coalition of American Nuns, the Women's Ordination Conference, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the National Assembly of Religious Women, and Catholics for ERA. There are varying degrees of consensus among movement members regarding the priority of specific issues advocated by the various organizations. These are: women's ordination, feminism, changes in the moral teaching of the church regarding celibacy, birth control, abortion, and equal opportunity and equal pay for women in church work.

The Catholic women's movement in the United States has its roots in several other women's movements. One movement which has influenced Catholic feminists is the "second wave" of non-religious feminism, emerging in the 1960's; the second influence dates back to the worldwide Catholic women's movement which began in the early part of the 20th century.

The history of the United States Catholic women's movement since the late 1960's falls into Blumer's analyses of the stages of a specific social movement: social unrest, popular excitement, and formalization.¹ Documentation of these aspects of the social history of Catholic women in the U.S. has been provided principally by "insiders"--members of the institutional church, relating the volunteer activities of nuns and laywomen, or the lives of founders of nuns' congregations. Little

¹Herbert Blumer, Principles of Sociology, ed. Alfred McClung Lee (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, Inc. 1969), cited in Serge R. Denisoff and Robert Merton, The Sociology of Dissent (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovitch, 1974), pp. 6-14.

analysis by professional sociologists has been brought to bear on Catholic individuals or organizations with respect to their alliance and relationships with non-religious social and political groups. Perhaps the best work in this area is to be found in the writings of Rosemary Radford Ruether, an historian of classic and Christian thought. Her book, New Woman New Earth¹ examines sexism in relation to other ideologies regarding women. Ruether argues that these ideologies have resulted in the subordinated position of women in church and in society. Several empirical studies deal with the impact of social and political ideologies on Catholics. Are Catholics Ready? by Maureen Fiedler and Dolly Pomerleau concerns itself with the influence of feminist ideology on Catholic laity.² The sample in their study was drawn from churchgoing Catholics in stable church-attending communities. It is noteworthy that in the Prologue to the study, Fielder and Pomerleau cite two grievances contained in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Declaration of Sentiments, ratified by participants of the first feminist congress held at Seneca Falls, N.Y. in 1848. The grievances concern the subordination of women to men in the Christian churches. The authors of the Prologue to Are Catholics Ready? comment: "In fact, what Stanton wrote in 1848 could have been written by a Catholic woman in 1978."

Fran Ferder has published a psychological study of 100 women desiring ordination in the Catholic church.³ Ninety percent of her sample groups did not define themselves as feminists. Similarly, a

¹New York, Seabury Press, 1975.

²Quixote Center, Maryland, 1978.

³Fran Ferder. Called to Break Bread (Mt. Rainier, Md.: Quixote Center, 1978).

study commissioned by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in 1980¹ was based on questions administered to a national sample of 950 women in parish ministries whose names were supplied to the investigators by the women's pastors.

In order to study more precisely the socio-political context from which the Catholic feminist movement draws its resources, I will present short histories of each of three major movement organizations I studied in 1982-1983. They are: the Women's Ordination Conference, the National Coalition of American Nuns, and Catholics Act for ERA. Much of the information for these histories was derived from a study of the archival papers and other materials of the three organizations which are the subjects of this study. In addition, leaders of the three movement organizations studied, and the leader of National Council of Catholic Women provided me, during their interviews, with further details of each organization.

There are, of course, long historical precedents in America for the engagement of religious leaders in social and political concerns. In 19th century America, Edward Beecher, the Calvinist minister, and in the 20th century Walter Rauschenbusch, the Methodist minister, contributed to the idea of the "social Gospel"; that is, that churches should be agents of social transformation. A modern expression of the social Gospel was evident in much of the civil rights movement of the 1960's, and it is not surprising that the biographical data of a number of Catholic women's movement members and leaders includes accounts of their

¹Florence R. Rosenberg, et al., Women and Ministry: A Survey of the Experience of Roman Catholic Women in the United States (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, July 1, 1980).

civil rights-related activities during the 1950's and 1960's. However, the story of the three Catholic movement organizations that form the basis of my sample cannot be reduced to political categories alone. The origins of the Catholic women's movement lie within the church, as well as outside it. An important internal impetus to the movement was provided by the climate of change initiated at the Second Vatican Council. The Fathers of the Council produced sixteen documents, each of which contained detailed recommendations for the modification of a specific aspect of Church life. The Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life sets forth norms for change in the religious orders, to be brought about by the application of simultaneous processes of "renewal" and "adaptation". In Par. 2 of the document, religious orders are given two criteria for the task of renewal: 1) the example of Christ in the Gospels and 2) the spirit of the founder as revealed in the original rules and ministry of each institute. Concurrent with renewal, the orders are to work out programs of "adaptation", defined as: "... an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the time." Par. 3 offers norms for the applications of adaptation by religious orders: "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 needs of the apostolate, the requirements of a given culture, the social and economic circumstances anywhere, especially in mission territories."¹

Another important concept found in Conciliar documents is the principle of subsidiarity. This term was originally formulated by Pius

¹The Documents of Vatican II, pp. 468-469.

XI in the Encyclical letter Quadragesimo Anno which reads: "This supremely important principle of social philosophy, one which cannot be set aside or altered.... it is unjust and a gravely harmful disturbance of right order to turn over to a greater society of higher rank functions and services which can be performed by lesser bodies on a lower plane."¹ At Vatican II, the principle of subsidiary was applied in setting down norms for appropriate economic relationships between and among nations; and in advocating parental freedom of choice in educating their children in schools; at the same time stressing limited state control over educational administration.² This principle was extended by orders of nuns in implementing their own adaptation and renewal programs from the 1960's onward.

In the 14 years of experimentation allowed by the Council's call for modernization of the religious orders, some congregations of U.S. nuns implemented far-reaching renewal programs. These have involved non-traditional approaches to the religious lifestyle and ministry. The initial changes in women's orders became visible when their traditional habits were replaced by secular clothing, making nuns indistinguishable from their secular counterparts. But deeper structural changes soon followed: smaller group living styles provided a context for liturgical experimentation. The practice of nuns being "sent" out on mission by their superiors was modified so that each individual nun was able to "discern" with her superior the work she would do, according to her

¹ Cited in Documents of Vatican II, p. 300.

² See: Gaudium et Spes, Par. 86, p. 300; and Gravissimum Educationis, (Declaration on Christian Education), Documents of Vatican II, Pars. 3 and 4, pp. 642, 644.

inclination or talent. The practice of "individual ministry" became a trend for numbers of nuns working outside the traditional ministries which historically have been the province of women's orders in the church; most particularly, teaching.¹ Nuns in individual ministries could receive a "stipend" or living allowance. They could maintain a checking account which gave them a limited sense of control over the economic aspect of their lives. Nuns whose work entailed extensive travel were given the use of a car. They began to adopt the use of credit cards, principally to purchase gasoline and airline tickets. While nuns were earning advanced educational degrees on Catholic and non-Catholic campuses, they were coming into contact with other currents of thought.

While the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity is not the only Council document that directly refers to the laity, it does contain one of the few specific references to laywomen in any document. Paragraph 9 states: "Since in our time women have an ever more active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they participate more widely also in the various fields of the Church's apostolate."² However, throughout this document, the scope for lay persons engaging in church ministry is carefully delineated. Paragraph 24 states: "There are many apostolic undertakings which are established by the free choice of the laity and regulated by their prudent judgment." But in entrusting to laity functions closely connected to pastoral duties, "...such as the

¹In 1966, there were 92,125 U.S. nuns engaged in teaching, or 58% of the total membership. In 1982, there were 24,179, or 23.1% of the membership. See: Sr. Marie A. Neal, Catholic Sisters in Transition (Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, Inc., 1984), p. 24.

²Documents of Vatican II, p. 500.

teaching of Christian doctrine, certain liturgical actions, and the care of soul...the laity are fully subject to higher ecclesiastical direction." Thus, the theological basis for sweeping change in the role of laity within the Church, at least in this document, seems more limited than for members of religious institutes.

The adaptation process has sometimes brought groups of lay persons, nuns, or entire religious institutes into conflict with Vatican authorities. When they involve movement women, these conflicts have had the effect of expanding personal networks among the women in day-to-day organizational activity and the fostering of publications dealing with feminist theory and practice.

External impetus derives from related social and political events of concern to women in the broader society, or from women in other religious traditions who are concerned with issues similar to those addressed by religious feminists. The relationship between the movement's internal and external dynamics is obvious when one considers that the social upheavals of the 1960's and the religious upheaval initiated by Vatican II left a legacy of rising expectations and a sense of frustration which impelled feminists and other minority groups to new demands for rights.

In 1963, a year after the opening sessions of Vatican II, Betty Friedan published The Feminine Mystique¹, in which she examined the discontents of U.S. middle-class housewives. The interest it provoked was a major impetus to the "second wave" feminist movement of the 20th century. Efforts of early "second wave" feminist theoreticians and

¹Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1963).

activists to confront what they perceived as oppressive patriarchal structures in the broader society provided ground for what Weber calls an "elective affinity" to the ideas and interests exhibited by groups of churchwomen. The rhetoric of justice espoused by non-religious feminists fueled the already emergent moral and ethical notions of justice for women which existed in progressive churchwomen's organizations. These organizations began to challenge traditional Church definitions of woman's role.

Points of difference exist between the ideology of the non-Catholic women's liberation movements and that of Catholic women. The most significant difference lies in their manner of addressing questions of sexual freedoms. These differences will be analyzed more fully in chapter 2 in respondents' discussions of celibacy, birth control and abortion; and in chapter 3, where movement women discuss religious feminism.

Progress of movement organizations toward their goals is episodic rather than linear. Separate organizations which constitute a large part of the movement perceive and respond to crises differently: each event of concern to Catholic movement women may evoke agreement or a show of resistance, reform or rebellion. While the leadership structure of three organizations has remained relatively constant, membership has tended to follow the ebb and flow of events. A case in point is the membership of the Women's Ordination Conference. In 1979, when there was relatively widespread movement optimism regarding women's ordination as a goal, its membership was 2,000; today (1983) it is 1,300.

Intellectual Precursors of the Catholic Women's Movement

The new interest in what was to become "women's concerns" was reflected in the emergence of a small body of literature by Catholic laywomen. Sydney Callahan, in a 1965 work entitled The Illusion of Eve, which was addressed to Catholic married women, argued that traditional family values, as espoused by the Church, were inadequate to aiding women with contemporary problems regarding the workplace and adequate childcare.¹ In 1968, Sally Cunneen surveyed a sample of readers of Cross Currents, a Catholic journal she had helped found. Cunneen found an increasing awareness among Catholic women that language was inadequate to a description of their current religious situation. The new thought currents Cunneen discerned among the respondents led her to conclude that there was no such thing as "the typical Christian woman."² That same year, Mary Daly published The Church and The Second Sex, which, in her own words "manifested some of the anger and ebullient hope that characterized the period immediately following the Second Vatican Council."³

Daly's feminist anger may be partially explained by news brought to U.S. churchwomen by Sister Mary Luke Tobin, a former head of the council of major superiors of nuns and the only U.S. woman admitted as an observer to the third session of the Council in 1964. Sister Tobin

¹ Sydney Callahan, The Illusion of Eve (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1965).

² Sally Cunneen, Sex: Female; Religion: Catholic (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 40.

³ This book spawned a sequel, Beyond God The Father (1973) which was to become Daly's best-known work. The quotation is cited from Beyond God The Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. xi.

revealed the fact that women were not consulted by Council fathers on such issues as marriage or the forthcoming statements concerning religious orders.¹ Indeed, the Council documents published in 1966 hardly discuss women as a group.

Nuns also contributed to the initial body of thought and literature focused on the concerns of Catholic women. Sister Mary Augusta Neal, a sociologist of religion, pointed out that the parish structure of the Church was inadequate to the changing thought climate of the 1960's because it still regarded "the laity as masses to be led...and the apostolate limited to parish boundaries."² Sister Maria del Ray also took up the thesis of Cardinal Suenen's 1963 work, The Nun In the World, in an article entitled "The Buried Talents" which advocated that Catholic women might be more effective if they focused their work in "the secular world."³ In 1967, Sister M. Charles Borromeo edited a compilation of essays entitled The New Nuns⁴ which explored new roles for members of orders and included the essay "Nuns in Ordinary Clothes" by Sister Jeanne Reidy.

¹In a talk given to the United Church Women, Board of Managers, National Council of Churches, April 23, 1965, New York City. Cited by Sally Cunneen in Sex: Female, p. 12.

²Values and Interests in Social Change (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 159. Cited in Cunneen, p. 65.

³The Sign, Oct. 1966, p. 18. Cited in: Cunneen, Sex: Female, p. 21.

⁴New York: New American Library.

St. Joan's International Alliance: Organizational
Precursor of the Catholic Women's Movement

The original Catholic feminist organization was St. Joan's International Alliance, dating back to 1910 when it was founded in Britain. At the time, British feminists were struggling for women's suffrage and, since the Catholic Church openly disapproved of feminists, a group of Catholic women founded their own organization to explore the possibility of achieving some measure of solidarity with advocates of non-religious feminist goals. Originally known as the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, it changed its name in 1923 to St. Joan's Political and Social Alliance; as the movement spread beyond national boundaries, the word "International" was adopted.

Over the years the Alliance has established formal relations with the U.N. Committee on the Status of Women. Thus, its focus has also included the improvement of work and family situations for women in third world nations. From 1962-1965 Frances McGillicuddy, who was to found the U.S. chapter of the Alliance in 1966, attended the Vatican Council in Rome as an observer. There, she lobbied among bishops and other high church officials for women's equality within the church.

The program of the Alliance has not changed since its inception: equality between men and women, based on Canon 87 of the church law, which declares that baptism makes one a Christian, regardless of sex. The Membership section of its British newsletter, The Catholic Citizen,¹ states: "All Catholic women are eligible as members...men (are)

¹The Alliance newsletters available to me in the archives of the New York City Public Library system were dated from Dec. 15, 1949 through May, 1966.

invited to join as Associates...with the exception that they may not elect or be elected to the Executive."

Frances McGillicuddy has carried out all the administrative work connected with Alliance programs at her own expense. She was also associated with the American Association of University women, and gained considerable organizing skills during that time. The present president of the Alliance resides in Waukegan, Illinois. General meetings occur occasionally, but ongoing business is conducted mainly by telephone. The Bulletin is its American publication, circulated to predominantly lay Alliance membership.¹ In a telephone interview,² McGillicuddy declined to provide me with details regarding total membership and source of funding for the U.S. chapter of the Alliance.

McGillicuddy is firm when articulating the original single dimension of St. Joan's program: "My idea of 'feminist' is one who supports the notion of equality between men and women. I think the feminist movement in this country has confused the issue by introducing abortion--now most people associate this with feminism, but what I stick to is Webster's definition."

Miss McGillicuddy is frank and outspoken in expressing her wariness of nuns and "how they operate." She feels that "nuns work for nuns' interests," i.e., how to support their aging sisters, conferring with bishops on details of operating ministries and managing convents, all of which, she argues, are not laywomen's issues. She thus expresses an underlying cleavage within the Catholic women's movement.

¹Alliance papers have been deposited in the archives of Sofia Smith Library, at Smith College.

²September 8, 1983.

Nevertheless, she expressed admiration for nuns like Sr. Margaret Traxler who are highly visible figures among U.S. Catholic women. McGillicuddy claims Sister Traxler was the only nun who defended Mary Daly at the time of her troubles regarding tenure at Boston College. She also feels strongly that nuns are the main impetus behind the ordination movement in the United States, and that nuns "used" lay-woman Mary Lynch "as a front at the Detroit Ordination Conference" which took place in 1975.

Regarding the strategy of the ordination movement, Miss McGillicuddy feels that the broadening of goals to these other issues will dilute its effectiveness because "bishops will grant them titles in administrative jobs, but no power."¹

The U.S. Alliance is associated with a worldwide organization "Country Women of the World" at the United Nations; and St. Joan's Alliance appeared on a list of Catholic organizations supporting the ERA in a flyer sent out in May 1982 by Catholics for ERA, of Mt. Rainier, Md.

The National Coalition of American Nuns

It might be said that NCAN began in the summer of 1969 at the Fullerton Ave. Cenacle, a Catholic retreat house in Chicago operated by nuns. The meeting was called "Sisters' Survival Strategies for the 70's" and attempted to further apply terms from Vatican II documents like "collegiality" and "subsidiary" to each sister's ability to choose in her own behalf whatever ministry she desired to engage in. Sister

¹Telephone interview, Sept. 8, 1983.

Margaret Ellen Traxler in the interview granted for this study, describes her recollection of the rest of the meeting:

...Such concepts were new at that time and we wanted to bring those to the fore--and I think we did. We published all this at a little paper called the "TransSister"--it's there on file now in the archives (of Marquette University) At that meeting we were also very enraged at the cavalier treatment on Cardinal McIntyre's part toward the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters in Los Angeles. At this particular meeting one of our speakers was Mary Daly, whom we considered then and still do, as a prophet in the women's movement. She had not been granted tenure by Boston College, and we all joined together, petitioning the Faculty Review Committee to do another review of the decision that had been made. They then did this. Not that we were decisive, but instrumental, among other things.

On August 20, 1969, Mary Daly wrote a letter to the National Catholic Reporter newspaper, endorsing the newly-formed NCAN and its program which she described: "... as described by Sr. Traxler... its focus is upon wider issues than the plight of religious women themselves and its recognition (is) of the universal sisterhood of all women."¹ Sisterhood is an important theme in Dr. Daly's work, especially in Beyond God the Father, which was published by Beacon Press in Boston in 1973. By December 1969 NCAN published a Statement of Purpose which defined the organization as "a group of Sisters united to study and to speak out on issues related to human rights and social justice." Their principle of action was to be the spirit and the way of life of Jesus in the Gospels.

In an interview of October 5, 1982, Sister Traxler recalled that after NCAN's efforts to secure tenure for Dr. Mary Daly in 1969, it began to articulate new interests and programs:

¹NCAN unpublished papers, Marquette University Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The second thing was to call upon the church to desist from interfering in the internal dynamic of the sisters' communities as they sought to carry out renewal according to Perfectae Caritatis. We had a special statement regarding the right of the sisters in Los Angeles (IHM order) to their own decision making. At that time it was a new idea, but you see they had to take the onslaughts of male interference and intrusion because they were among the first to initiate real community change among nuns. I think at that time it was news to many men that they should keep their hands off nuns. But now I think there is more consensus than ever before. This should have begun about 1950, because we then would have had a good 20 years in which to acquaint and familiarize men in the church with the equality of women--at least they could have known that we were calling for it, and they would have been a bit more careful. I think that men in the church now are much more aware, and the four nuns in the New Hampshire case have very definitely underscored that.

At that time NCAN was governed by an executive committee comprised of nine nuns. Sister Traxler of Chicago was its Chairperson. It defined itself as "an advocacy group" rather than a membership organization. The Executive Committee was formed to formulate policy for a national roster representing about 1,000 nuns, or 2% of the total, and this number has remained constant. The Executive Committee has grown to a 24-member Board representing major geographic regions of the U.S. At each annual Board meeting, which is open to membership, programs are set out for the ensuing year.

In 1969 Sister Traxler was serving as Director of Educational Services of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice. (NCCIJ). On December 15, 1969, NCAN issued a news release calling for full participation of nuns in church and in political affairs. At its inception, Sister Traxler took pains to assert, NCAN was not a sisters' renewal group, nor a local-level organization. In a letter to the NCAN membership written on October 24, 1969, she quoted an evaluation of NCAN which had appeared in another newsletter, and she wrote: "It is an

1800-member coalition through which nuns could take public stands on matters of social justice. This organization expects no conflicts with the National Assembly of Women Religious" (a larger organization of nuns). During this time, NCAN's newsletter, "TransSister," publicized the goals of the fledgling organization. They were: full participation of nuns in society and equality of opportunity in all social and political spheres of life. The publication was intended to inform disparate groups of nuns that if discontent existed among them, it was not confined to their individual convent.

NCAN also publicized its confrontations with Vatican authorities and local bishops; e.g., it issued a letter highly critical of Cardinal McIntyre of Los Angeles, calling on him to cease interfering with the renewal process of the Immaculate Heart of Mary nuns in his diocese and to allow them to control their own experimentation process mandated for nuns by Vatican II. This had the effect of organizing American nuns around cases of Vatican "managing" the renewal efforts of some congregations of nuns. On the individual level, the newsletter gave nuns advice on the management of personal finances and arenas of possible political involvement.

In 1973, "TransSister" ceased publication because it was thought that the renewal process following Vatican II was well under way and it was time to direct attention to the larger society and its problems. That same year NCAN condemned the church's exercise of rule through Canon Law, calling it "an outdated rule without consent of the governed." It did not change its position after the 1983 revision of the Code by a Vatican Committee made up of experts in the field. The NCAN Newsletter of December 1982 carries a "Declaration on Canonical Status" which states

in part: "NCAN calls on all religious congregations and individual women religious to accept full responsibility for the regulations and principles governing our life in community. At present, this involves the acceptance of non-canonical status...."

NCAN Activities on Social Justice Issues

As in the case with the other two movement organizations in the study, NCAN derives its financing from grants from religious congregations, social justice groups, foundations and individual contributions. From its early beginnings, NCAN's program included civil rights advocacy for black Americans. In September 1969 the organization supported the efforts of Rev. Jesse Jackson and Dr. C.T. Vivian to obtain 10,000 construction jobs for black men because "justice demands it." On December 17, 1969, Sister Traxler wrote to the NCAN membership that the organization had begun formal relations with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, chaired by Roy Wilkins, and pointed out that the NCCIJ was among 100 other human rights organizations holding this position. In the same letter, Traxler reveals that telegrams had been sent in NCAN's name supporting the Memphis hospital strikers and that NCAN had called upon Judge Julius Hoffman to grant appeal to alleged conspirator Bobby Seale "so that he may be defended by a lawyer of his choosing and to see that the immoderate sentence (4 years) be revoked." Following the publication of the letter, several of Seale's Black Panther supporters visited Traxler's office to thank NCAN in person.

A member of NCAN's Board, Sister Jofstetter, wrote Solicitor General Erwin Griswold on December 10, 1970 in behalf of dropping charges against a Walter Collins, who had been jailed for refusing to be

drafted. She pointed out that he was drafted by an all-white board in a neighborhood two-thirds black. In that same year, NCAN members voted to urge that the first collection from the newly established Bishops' Campaign for Human Development be given to the National Office for Black Catholics. From the early 1970's NCAN also gave strong support to Cesar Chavez in his effort to organize farmworkers in the U.S.; and sent nun and lay volunteer staffers to a Farmworkers' dispensary and clinic in McAllen, Texas.

From the foregoing it can be seen that NCAN was strongly influenced in its early social policies and programs by Traxler's alliance with NCCIJ interests. The first 17 NCAN newsletters were written on NCCIJ letterhead, and NCAN's leadership model became based on that of the Leadership Conference of Civil Rights, a group which NCAN joined in 1971.

Other Organizational Alliances

In a memo to NCAN dated November 24, 1969, Sr. Traxler urged that each member participate in already existing human rights organizations: these included the International Fellowship of Peace, NAACP, PAX, the Urban League, the Catholic Interracial Council, the League of Women Voters, Negotiation NOW, and the National Organization for Women. In 1970, NCAN joined the National Assembly of Women Religious, an organization of nuns seeking to disseminate information on implementation practices, following the mandates of Vatican II for adaptation and renewal of religious life. As a constituent, it had one delegate's seat in the National Senate of NAWR.

NCAN's leadership is not new to feminist struggle: Sister Traxler is still actively involved in NCAN, while also with the Chicago Catholic Women, the Women's Ordination Conference, NAWR, NOW, the American Jewish Committee, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, and B'nai B'rith. Donna Quinn, its present president, was heavily involved in the founding of the Women's Ordination Conference and is Chairperson of the Women of the Church Coalition whose primary emphasis is on women's issues. Its 15 organizations across the nation include Chicago Catholic Women and the Women's Ordination Conference. Sr. Ann Patrick Ware, the present Vice President of NCAN, works on the staff of Church Women United in New York City.

Sr. Ann Gillen, another Board member of NCAN, has become recognized internationally for her work in behalf of Soviet Jewry. In April 1972 she urged NCAN to issue a statement urging all Christian leaders to give President Nixon a mandate on his upcoming visit to the USSR to intervene on behalf of Soviet Jews. In February 1974, Ann Gillen wrote to Gloria Phillips, the ERA Legislative Coordinator in Elmhurst, Illinois, supporting passage of the ERA. On May 10, 1974, Phillips wrote Sister Gillen regarding the ERA attitude in the diocese of Joliet, Ill.: "...our last hope is the women religious." (nuns) Ms. Phillips was also ERA coordinator for the DuPage Chapter of NOW. In the Spring of 1982, NCAN members joined Sonia Johnson, a Mormon woman ex-communicated from her church because of her advocacy for ERA, and other women including Maureen Fiedler, president of Catholics for ERA, in a fast for justice at the Springfield, Illinois capitol building.

NCAN has also been active in peace efforts. It was part of the "Stop Vietnam" movement in the late 1960's as an organizational member

of a Christian coalition made up of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Clergy & Laity Concerned, a Quaker group, and the Berrigan brothers. In 1970 it protested the constitutional authority of the United States to bomb Cambodia in an amicus curiae brief of Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman before the Court, against the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Air Force. In 1974 Mary Ann Guthrie, a Board member of NCAN, successfully ran for the legislature in the 8th Congressional District in Memphis, Tennessee.

A regular procedure of NCAN is to sound out its membership regarding domestic and international issues of the day. In an opinion poll conducted during the 1970's (undated), members mentioned as important the following issues most frequently: equal rights for all women, amnesty for Vietnam War resisters, justice for the American Indian, and passage of the ERA. Women's ordination was given medium priority on the list.

The NCAN Challenge to Internal Church Structures

In August 1970, soon after its inception, NCAN representatives began meeting on occasion with the Bishops' Liaison Committee on Women. The group included philosopher Mary Daly and representatives from five other Catholic women's organizations. But soon thereafter, NCAN adopted a confrontational stance toward individual bishops. In January 1972, NCAN supported a priest who sued Bishop A. Zuroweste of Cairo, Illinois for back salary after he was allegedly fired because of his activities with the Black United Front. The priest was excommunicated because he took his grievance to a civil court for mediation of the dispute instead of a church board.

On June 30, 1982 NCAN, in conjunction with the leadership of NAWR, published a statement vigorously defending the four nuns in New Hampshire who sued their local bishop for reinstatement to their teaching posts from which they had been fired, apparently without due process. As in this case, NCAN has not lost opportunities to make statements which publicize the subsidiary status of nuns in the church. Thus in 1974, NCAN sent a letter to the editor of the National Catholic Reporter, an independent weekly newspaper, regarding the recently published wish of a conservative group of nuns to retain male spiritual directors: "We criticize Consortium Perfectae Caritatis for ...mainly calling on men to tell sisters who they are and why they exist."¹ Earlier, on November 24, 1970, Sr. Traxler wrote of her concern to the editor of The Christian Century regarding the alleged repression of U.S. contemplatives, especially Carmelite women, who are governed by male superiors under their male-written constitutions. A year later, on December 1, 1971, Sr. Mary Thomas Aquinas Carroll, president of the Major Superiors of Women and a member of NCAN, addressed a letter to Ildebrando Cardinal Antonutti, director of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, in the Vatican regarding the Statutes published for the nuns of the Discalced Carmelite Order: "We believe legislation such as we find in the Statutes is contrary to the spirit of Vatican II which was so mindful of the changing cultural patterns and psychological needs of our times."² She enclosed a Resolution taken by the General Assembly of the International Union of Major Superiors in Rome concerning contemplatives: "I believe the content expresses our desires for our cloistered sisters in searching out their renewal with self-determination."³ On December 15, 1971

1, 2, 3 NCAN Papers, Marquette Univ. Archives, Milwaukee, Wisc.

Cardinal Antionutti addressed his reply, not to Sister Carroll, but to Bishop Leo A. Pursley of the diocese of South Bend/Fort Wayne, Indiana, upholding the Vatican prerogatives for guiding contemplative renewal. He chided the IUMSW for "dealing with affairs regarding contemplative nuns who are not members of your Conference."¹ Included was a copy of a letter dated December 23, 1971, supporting the Cardinal's position which he had received from Federal Abbess Rev. Mother Amata Rose, P.C.C. (Carmelites), stating that she represented "the entire Collettine Poor Clare Federation of Mary Immaculate, and a great number of contemplative nuns in the U.S. who do not favor the International Union's resolution." Copies of this correspondence were sent by the Cardinal to the members of the National Council of Catholic Bishops, the overall administrative organ for the U.S. Catholic Church, and to the bishops of the Chicago Diocese. Sr. Traxler, on behalf of Chicago-based NCAN, responded in a letter to Cardinal Antionutti, challenging the judicial authority of the Sacred Congregation for Religious over U.S. congregations regarding religious dress and upheld the right of sisters in the United States to wear habits in designs of their choice, "subject, perhaps, to the suggestions of the Conference of the Major Superiors of Women." But according to Traxler, far more disturbing was the continued harrassment of contemplative nuns in the United States.²

In 1974 Sr. Traxler and Anna Wolf of the American Jewish Committee founded the Institute of Women Today, in anticipation of the 1975 "Year of the Woman." This would continue until 1985 when the Decade of Women would close. The Institute is sponsored by church-related Protestant,

^{1, 2} NCAN Reports.

Catholic and Jewish women's organizations "searching for the religious roots of women's liberation." It is headquartered in Chicago in the same building as the National Coalition of American Nuns, the National Federation of Priests' Councils, and the Interreligious Task Force for Soviet Jewry. The Institute has ten sponsoring organizations, among them NCAN, Church Women United and the American Jewish Committee on Women.

The Institute's prison programs began in the early 1960's when Sr. Traxler helped to develop programs of liturgical music in the Cook County jail. The programs expanded to a series of workshops including lawyers, psychologists, historians and theologians speaking on such issues of concern to women as ERA, sexist language in sacred scriptures, "herstory," self-image and values clarification. Today it has a faculty of over 100 women professionals and laypersons who volunteer their services in the Cook County jail. Its program is the largest in the United States. Related activities were initiated at the Alderson Federal Facility in West Virginia and at the women's division of a Kentucky prison. Prison programs now include training in carpentry trades and quilt-making, Progoff journal sessions, basic literacy courses and counseling services. One of the first members of the "prison faculty" was Dorothy Day, the journalist, publisher and social activist.¹

In an interview on October 1, 1982, Donna Quinn, then president of NCAN, reiterated the theme that a woman's agenda was its primary concern. She defined the agenda as having two aspects: 1) questions of sexuality

¹Adade M. Wheeler with Marlene S. Wortman, ed. The Roads They Made: Women in Illinois History (Chicago: Charles Kerr Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 153-158.

which are not being addressed by the church; and 2) in light of the inflexible position on sexuality, the lack of opportunity for women to participate in important decisions made by the church. Since the interview, NCAN's activities have included a joint protest with NAWR, the Institute of Women Today and Chicago Catholic Women against the decision of the National Catholic Educational Association to hold its 1981 and 1982 meetings in states which had not ratified the ERA.

Perhaps the most publicized feminist issue with which NCAN has been recently engaged is its stand on abortion. On April 14, 1982, its 24-member Board of Directors issued a statement opposing the Hatch Act, which proposed giving legislative power to individual states to determine the legality of abortion within the respective state. After noting that..."states vary greatly in their perception of the common good... and enforcement of laws in this regard", the statement went on to say: "While we continue to oppose abortion, in principle and in practice, we are likewise convinced that the responsibility for decisions in this regard resides primarily with those who are directly and personally involved."¹

NCAN called on public institutions and private individuals everywhere in the U.S. to provide a more humane environment so women might no longer need consider abortion as an option. The statement concluded: "NCAN underscores its opposition to abortion as it offers our conclusions, the result of an intense and corporate prayer, consultation and study." The statement received unprecedented media coverage, given NCAN's limited organizational scope, and included articles in the New

¹NCAN Newsletter, June, 1982; p. 2.

York Times, PEOPLE magazine, and an appearance of four Board members on the Phil Donahue TV morning program. In taking its public position, NCAN attempted to justify an ethic regarding abortion which distinguishes between the private view held by any one individual about the practice, and her or his public support for the extension of abortion as a legal choice for all U.S. women. It appeared at that time to be attempting to avoid a direct confrontation with the Church on this issue. As of 1984, NCAN remains the only one of the three organizations under study to publicly support abortion from a position which has come to be known as "pro-choice, anti-abortion."

NCAN has also publicly supported Sr. Mary Agnes Mansour, who in 1983 was summarily ousted from her religious congregation by Vatican authorities after they failed in an attempt to pressure her into leaving her State Social Welfare directorship in Lansing, Michigan (a position which administers considerable funds designated to underwrite abortions) or to make a public statement indicating that she opposed the practice of abortion.

The Women's Ordination Conference

In December 1974 Mary B. Lynch, a member of the St. Joan's Alliance and a seasoned advocate for the ordination of women, called a meeting of 31 persons in Chicago to sponsor a gathering the next year to ascertain public interest in the ordination of Catholic women.¹ This became the Detroit Ordination Conference which, in November 1975, enrolled 1200

¹Rosemary Ruether and E. McLaughlin, ed., Women of Spirit. Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), pp. 378-79.

registrants including 2 bishops, along with 500 unregistered attendants. It was apparent at Detroit that women's ordination was an issue which attracted intense interest and generated excitement among selected groupings of Catholic women. At the conference participants witnessed a large number of public declarations of aspiration to priesthood on the part of some of the women. This was only one part of a process designed to create an experience of solidarity for those women whose desire for priesthood had heretofore been experienced in isolation. The conference also served to emphasize publicly a large body of Scriptural and theological literature that already existed to legitimize ideological claims for women's ordination. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza addressed the theme of a "new Christian sisterhood" and called for demolishing traditional Church theology and structures which "divide women into two classes: nuns and laywomen."¹

In the wake of the Detroit Conference, an emerging group calling themselves the Women's Ordination Conference began to organize an institutionalized drive for the ordination issue. Its first Core Commission of 1976 was chosen from a field of 183 women nominated, all of whom had been involved in the Detroit Conference. They included both nuns and laywomen. In 1979-80, there were 6 men on the 14-member Advisory Board, 3 were Jesuits. Of the 8 women Board members, 4 were nuns and 4 laywomen. The Conference published a newspaper New Women/New Church which covers Catholic bishops' activities of interest to movement women. One such activity was the official statement of the bishops at the Puebla

¹ Anne Marie Gardiner, ed., Women and Catholic Priesthood: An Expanded Vision. Proceedings of the Detroit Ordination Conference (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) p. 100.

Meeting in Mexico in 1979, reiterating the important biological function of women for society. In addition the paper features biographies of church-women appointed to non-traditional posts, such as to the marriage tribunals of dioceses formerly open only to ordained males. It also features "WOCgram," a record of the achievements of outstanding women. In November 1979, Sr. Theresa Kane was singled out for a "WOCgram" for her statement urging full participation in ministry for all U.S. church-women to Pope John Paul in the Washington National Catholic Shrine on October 7, 1979.¹

In 1982 seven Core Commissioners were nuns and 8 were laywomen. In 1983, the 14 women on the Commission were listed on WOC letterhead without the convention of initials which formerly distinguished nuns from laywomen. In the July 1984 issue of an official WOC publication, only four of the 14 Core Commissioners are listed as nuns. In 1983 a new WOC governing body was proposed which would replace the former 12-member Commission. A "WOC Assembly" is envisioned to be operational by 1985, made up of representatives from local WOC chapters. It would be the policymaking body, accountable to its constituencies across the U.S. and would facilitate interaction between local groups and the national body. The Conference is a member of Women in the Church Coalition and works closely with the National Coalition of American Nuns, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual, the Women's Auxiliary of the Knights of Peter Claver, the Institute of Women Today, the National Assembly of Religious Women, the Quixote Center, the Center of Concern, and New Ways

¹New Woman/New Church, November 1979, p. 2.

Ministry. The principal financial support derives from annual membership dues (\$15 in 1983), donations, and a few grants from religious communities. The national office has one fulltime staff person and part-time help. It relies on volunteers to do some administrative tasks. WOC headquarters are currently located at the Quixote Center in Mt. Rainier, Maryland (1984).

One of the special support groups to arise in the wake of the Detroit meeting was the Christian Feminist Group in Washington, D.C. It founded the Catholic Women's Seminary Fund, which aids women desiring to attend seminaries but who do not have the means to do so. In March of 1976, a Long Island conference on the ordination of women attracted 700 lay and nun women interested in extending the momentum begun by the Detroit meeting. The main talk by Sister Elizabeth Carroll addressed the philosophical and theological questions regarding "the proper place" of women in the church's institution and its ministry. The speakers began with the assumption that Catholic women's "place" was one of equality with Catholic men. Among the responders was the Rev. Suzanne Hiatt, who had been ordained in a controversial Episcopal ceremony at the Philadelphia Cathedral in July 1974 along with ten other women. Following up on this conference, a New York local chapter of national WOC was formed in 1976. This was repeated all over the U.S. By 1983, approximately 23 local chapters of WOC were known to be operative in 16 states.

In response to the impetus generated by the Detroit meeting, the Vatican was prompted to reassert its position on the ordination of American Catholic women. On January 27, 1977 it published a Declaration, On the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial

Priesthood. The document re-stated the church tradition of ordaining only males and tried to separate definitively the notion of entry into the priesthood from that of the social advancement for women. Response by Catholic women was swift, stormy, and galvanized the U.S. Catholic women to new modes of activism. The Women's Ordination Conference began "Project Priesthood", an effort to identify all women who believed themselves called to orders. 410 women were identified as seekers by October 15, 1978. That same year Sister Frances Ferder, Ph.D., published Called to Break Bread?, a psychological investigation of 100 women who "feel called to priesthood in the Catholic Church."¹ Quixote Center in Maryland published its survey of Catholics, Are Catholics Ready?, by Sr. Maureen Fiedler (present head of Catholics Act for ERA) and Dolly Pomerleau, which attempted to demonstrate that acceptance of women clergy in the Catholic church already existed to a significant degree.² Between February 18 and March 21 of that year, 21 Catholic groups sponsored three independent Gallup Surveys of Catholics on their acceptance of the notion of women's ordination. The Survey found that support for ordination increased more sharply in the two months following the Vatican Declaration than in the three-year period prior to its release.³

During this period the WOC published a number of pamphlets called Backgrounders which set forth theological, philosophical and social scientific theory and arguments for women's ordination. Nationwide demonstrations of dissent were carried out at local WOC chapter levels.

^{1,2} Mt. Rainier, Maryland: Quixote Center.

³ Maureen Fiedler and Dolly Pomerleau, "American Catholics and the Ordination of Women." Reported in AMERICA, January 7, 1978, p. 12.

January 27, 1978, the date of the Declaration, was to become known as "Equality Sunday." During each subsequent year, movement women would mount programs espousing equality and continue to express dissent from the Declaration. On each anniversary, a blue armband is worn as a symbol of dissent, and women attend male ordination ceremonies, standing in silent protest wearing the armbands as the bishop prepares to anoint the candidates for orders.

The Proceedings of the Detroit Conference incorporated in its publication the major statements of the various addresses, aimed at answering the major arguments against the ordination of women. These materials along with other movement publications which were emerging at that time provided theoretical grounding to members of organizations seeking equality for women in the church.

A second national meeting of WOC was held in November 1978 in Baltimore attended by 2000 women, including 25 men and several bishops. Participants and observers noted a significant change in mood at the Baltimore Conference. It recognized that WOC was engaged in a struggle with powerful institutions and that it might take some time to achieve the ordination of women. The meeting was also marked by more tension between groups of women. Some argued directly for ordination into the present church. Others argued that ordination was not enough: they called for a complete restructuring of the organization of the present church, expressed as a "renewed priestly ministry." This was also the stated goal of the Conference.

Ideological alliances with secular feminist thought were more clearly evident than at the Detroit conference. This first major speaker, Sheila Collins, a liberation theologian of the United Methodist

Church, presented her analysis of religion in terms of sexism, racism and classism, and claimed as sources for her ideas the work of Marxist and socialist feminists Viana Muller and Katya Weinbaum. The conference at Baltimore indicated that new elements would be increasingly drawn on to legitimate the drive for women's equality in the church. This would include the use of findings from the social sciences, and more overt feminist language. The Detroit Proceedings were based on scriptural and theological themes, while at Baltimore two of the major addresses contained the word "feminism" in the title. This shift of movement ideology may be seen from comparison of the final chapter from the Detroit Proceedings, "The Assembly Speaks" which gives voice to women desiring ordination in these words: "A major focus...is our firm conviction that we as women are indispensable to the full humanity and wholeness of the priesthood.... We believe that women in the priesthood will inevitably produce those sorely needed new models."¹ Here we have a hint of the shift to come but its theme is not phrased programmatically. At Baltimore three years later, Mary E. Hunt, in the second major address to the women gathered there entitled, "Patriarchal Past, Feminist Future," stated: "This change will result not simply in equality, but in new forms of mutuality. We are seeking not some form of ecclesiastical ERA, but a complete structural change which turns the power model upside down by giving those who have been excluded, blacks, women, gay people, the poor, equal voice in the church."² Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, a main speaker at Baltimore, expressed one of the main themes

¹Proceedings, Detroit, 1976.

²Proceedings, Baltimore, p. 33.

of the Catholic women's movement at that time: that sexism was institutionalized in the church; had historical roots; and that strategies for resistance would have to take these facts into account. If this were the case, then movement strategy should give priority to overcoming hierarchically imposed divisions among Catholic women, especially the division between nuns and laywomen.

In the wake of the Baltimore meetings, the national office of WOC initiated the "Second Argument Project" which attempted to undertake a dialogue with U.S. bishops and to urge them to petition the Vatican to withdraw the second argument contained in the 1977 Declaration, which relies on Thomas Aquinas' theory of the role of natural signs in sacramental signs: "The same natural resemblance is required for persons as for things: when Christ's role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally, there would not be this 'natural resemblance' which must exist between Christ and His minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man: in such case it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ."¹ A packet was sent to local WOC chapters containing copies of the Declaration, theological arguments supporting the petition, excerpts from the bishops' May 1977 statements, and petition sheets for signature gathering. (From a letter circulated by National WOC, Lent 1979).

The visit of Pope John Paul II to the United States in October 1979 was the occasion for the next period of popular agitation in the Catholic women's movement. Two events seemed to represent the symbolic embodiment of the collective discontent with Vatican policies regarding

¹Declaration, Sec. 5.

women. One was that prior to the Pope's arrival in the U.S. in the Fall of 1979, it became known in the Catholic community that he wished only clergy be given the task of distributing communion at the large public stadium Masses which were to be highlights of his tour. This had the effect of downgrading U.S. laity (including nuns) who heretofore had been allowed to distribute communion. Secondly, the Pope addressed a gathering of priests, nuns and seminarians of the Philadelphia diocese on October 4, 1979, and reiterated the reasons why women should not be admitted to the priesthood. On October 7, during a Mass for nuns in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the campus of Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., Sister Theresa Kane, then President of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, representing about 90,000 nuns in the United States, greeted the Pope and then presented her request for consideration of ordination for women: "Our contemplation leads us to state that the church in its struggle to be faithful to its call for reverence and dignity for all persons must respond by providing the possibility of women as persons being included in all ministries of our church."¹

As she delivered her address, a number of nuns, wearing blue arm-bands, stood silently in the pews as an expression of solidarity with Sister Kane's message. The first result of Sister Kane's statement, televised to millions around the world via satellite, was a voluminous mail response, a significant portion of its hostile. A small order of German-based nuns took a quarter page ad in the Washington Post, at a cost of \$3,000, to protest: "We, who most likely speak for the large

¹The Catholic News, New York, 7 October 1979, p. 1.

majority of religious women in the U.S., apologize to Pope John Paul II for the public rudeness shown him by Sr. Theresa Kane. Sr. Kane was not only impertinent to the Holy Father but she also offended the millions of us who love him and gladly accept his teaching."¹

Among the groups which supported the ordination statement were the Women's Ordination Conference, the National Coalition of American Nuns, the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry, Priests for Equality, the Institute of Women Today, the Unitarian Universalist Women's Association, St. Joan's Alliance, U.S.A., the National Council of Churches and the National Catholic Reporter newspaper. Two days before Sr. Kane's request to the Pope, Rosalie Muschal-Reinhart, a member of the National Commission of WOC, in an interview with the New York Times, asked for the Pope to meet with women representatives of the Women's Ordination Conference. She did not receive a reply. Sr. Margaret Traxler, in an interview, praised Sr. Kane's courage and likened her to Joan of Arc, adding: "for a week, the sisters saw that the Pope did not listen... in Chicago alone, they spent \$65,000 on chrysanthemums. And the Pope stood up and told us to remember the poor." Traxler declined an invitation to the White House reception for the Pope, on the grounds that his visit excluded women and the poor.²

Around this time a number of Catholic priests gave public support to women's ordination. A New York Times article of March 28, 1978, while reporting that a record number of Catholic women were entering divinity schools, stated: "Last week, the Senate of Priests in the

¹Cited in: The Catholic News, New York, 7 October 1979, p. 4.

²New York Daily News, 25 January 1980, p. 9.

Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa issued a resolution calling for the full participation of women, and such a reaction is not unusual." For several years prior to 1979 Priests for Equality had been operating from a center in Mt. Rainier, Maryland. The number of priest members in this organization is not known, but thought to be around 2,000. In its program is a resolution that "men and women have a right to equal opportunity for ordination to priesthood." Along with WOC, Priests for Equality extended its alliances on the women's ordination by supporting this issue during the Episcopal Triennial Convention of 1976.

In November 1979, the Father General of the Jesuit Order removed William Callahan, S.J., National Secretary of Priests for Equality, from his post because of his outspoken views on women's ordination. Dolly Pomerleau, one of the authors of "Are Catholics Ready?", was quoted in the New York Times article which reported the firing: "She stated it is a pattern of harassment to get the priests out of it, to allow the women's issue to be suppressed and marginalized." She continued: (If) "male priests could be silenced, then the only people left will be the women, and everybody knows we don't count."¹ By January 1980, there was evidence of a growing awareness of the new hostile attitude of the church hierarchy. An ad hoc coalition was formed to counter it, which included Catholics Act for ERA, New Ways Ministry, an organization dedicated to the interests of Catholic homosexuals, Priests for Equality, the Quixote Center, and the Women's Ordination Conference. The coalition circulated a letter asking for endorsement of a statement entitled, "Even the Stones Will Cry Out," which protested the signs of a

¹New York Times, 26 November 1979, p. 28.

growing repression in the church. This included theologians coming under Vatican "investigation and intimidation," women, and homosexuals. The statement was published by the National Catholic Reporter in February 1980 over several thousand signatures.¹ The number of religious and lay organizations participating in the Advocates for Equality coalition had grown to 44. The high degree of militancy achieved after the Baltimore meetings was still evident in 1981. On November 15 of that year WOC, in concert with the Quixote Center, sponsored a march, rally and celebration attended by 200 women. Their march, from Lafayette Park to the Washington Hilton, coincided with the arrival of the American bishops for their annual meeting at the hotel. The theme of the demonstration, "Take Back the Church," included a symbolic re-enactment of Joshua and his band (complete with trumpeters) attempting to topple (hierarchical) walls. Part of the march to the Hilton hotel included a street liturgy led by women.

Perhaps the most visible achievement of WOC since 1978 has been its ability to engage American bishops in a dialogue about women's ordination and the problem of sexist language in liturgical texts. A proposed "Lenten Project" issued by the WOC national office in 1980 suggested that members write to key Curia members in Rome and bishops in the U.S. regarding the excising of sexist language from sacred texts. In 1982, the bishops' Committee on Women in Society and the Church declared that Scripture provided some basis for ordaining women as deacons. At the Bishops' worldwide Synod in Rome in September 1983, Pope John Paul II demanded that the U.S. hierarchy "withdraw all support

¹National Catholic Reporter, 15 January 1983.

from individuals or groups" promoting priesthood for women.¹ But on November 12-13, 1983, 90 bishops accepted invitations to attend a dialogue with eleven national women's organizations. The latter included the National Council of Catholic Women, the Leadership Conference of Religious Women, WOC, Las Hermanas, and the National Black Sisters' Conference.

Since then, Catholic feminists have sustained a pattern of dialogue with U.S. bishops, specifically with the Bishops' Committee on Women in Society and in the Church. This Committee has announced it will publish a Pastoral Letter on Women in 1988. It has appointed a group consisting of six bishops and five U.S. women to draft the letter. The women are drawn from the disciplines of theology, philosophy and psychology. In October 1984, one of the signers of a New York Times advertisement endorsing a pluralistic approach to abortion was a Committee member. The woman subsequently withdrew from the Committee, reportedly after the Committee head (a bishop) suggested to her that perhaps she might consider resultant damage to the women's pastoral process.¹ Catholic feminists decried the resignation, publicly voicing fears that opinions on abortion might henceforth become "a litmus test" for acceptance of women's opinions on other subjects of concern to the church. Among other Catholic media, WOC's newspaper New Women/New Church is closely monitoring the controversy.

In an interview in December 1982, one of the national leaders of WOC provided evidence that ordination is still the primary goal of the

¹National Catholic Reporter, 19 October 1984, p. 21.

organization, but other programmatic interests were being articulated as well:

...the Core Commission just came up with new goals... ordination is still our top priority but from now on, when we say "WOC" we are going to put under it, working for the rights of women in the church. That means renewed priestly ministry, inclusive language, new definitions of human sexuality, and breaking down the lines which divide women according to marital status, sexual orientation, class or race.

Illustrative of WOC's broadened interest is its coverage of the controversy between the Sisters of Mercy (while Sister Theresa Kane was serving as its President) and the Vatican.¹ When the Mercy order announced it would undertake a feasibility study concerning tubal ligation in its nationwide hospital system, it hoped to move the issue to a new level of discussion in the church. But Vatican threats of sanctions against the Order if the project were to be activated caused Sister Kane to circulate a notice to all Mercy hospitals in effect prohibiting all future tubal ligation practices.

Catholics for the ERA

Catholics for the ERA,² founded in January 1978, is the most recent organization to emerge of the three organizations whose members are sampled in this study. It has a single issue: the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, which failed on March 22, 1979. Since then, there has been an increased effort to include more Catholic women in a new drive for passage of ERA.

¹New Women/New Church, July 1984:10.

²Until mid-1982, Catholics for the ERA had been known as "Catholics Act for ERA". I use both designations for this group throughout the study, as well as the shortened form: C/ERA.

Catholic involvement with the ERA dates back to the early 1970's, when the ERA Committees of the National Organization for Women approached Catholic feminists seeking to involve them in advocacy work in states with large Catholic populations which had not ratified the amendment. At this time, NETWORK, a Catholic religious lobby in Washington, D.C. issued a pamphlet entitled "Catholics and the ERA" justifying the ERA by citing notions of female equality in statements made on the subject at Vatican II. It also explained the need for and the purpose of the ERA, and listed various Catholic lay and religious individuals who endorsed ERA. The only Catholic women's organization listed was NCAN. In an interview in May 1983, Sister Maureen Fiedler detailed the early days of the founding of the organization and its advocacy of its single goal:

In late 1977, Elizabeth Alexander, a laywoman and attorney in Virginia and myself, had gone to a meeting at the Center of Concern, where we spoke of what we might do as Catholics about the ERA. By 1978 it was clear to Betsy and me that someone had to do an independent organizing job--you couldn't just have lots of Catholic organizations doing bits and biddles of the thing. So we started, with no money except for \$200 from NETWORK, our first contribution. I flew to Illinois on that money, I recall, and began to investigate organizing. In six months we had raised \$15-16,000; I don't know to this day how the money came. We went to other pro-ERA organizations in Washington and said: "We think there needs to be a campaign among Catholics, and presented them with 3 pages of ideas. There was also a clear crisis with Catholics on the issue: the bishops had not endorsed it, and although they were neutral on ERA they were perceived to be against it. The NCCW was officially opposed to it, and you know, went around testifying before state legislatures about it. They have been opposed to ERA since 1923.

There was no effort to build membership in ERA in 1978 because it was thought the Amendment would pass the following year. The fledgling organization opted for bloc recruitment: it attracted the support of religious organizations like the Sisters of Loreto, the Xaverian

Brothers, NAWR, LCWR, the Quixote Center, and NCAN. Membership in 1983 was estimated at 3,000. Main funding sources are from annual dues (\$15 a year) and contributions from allied organizations and individuals. Male membership is estimated at 10-20% of the total, and laypersons are thought to be slightly more numerous than nuns, although this estimate has not been verified.

In a speech before an ERA march and rally in Washington, D.C. on July 1, 1979, Sister Fiedler, wearing the white dress and tricolor sash of the suffragettes of the 1920's, revealed her feelings after the Amendment failed to pass in Congress; she recalled that during the 1960's "there was a time in Pittsburgh in 1968 when I was one of the few white folks attending an NAACP dinner...but I did not fully understand what the black people in that room understood: the fury of anger at rights denied. I have just returned from Illinois, and now I understand." In that same speech Sister Fiedler also criticized the American bishops for electing to remain neutral on the ERA issue, calling them a "special problem" for Catholics. That same year, she collaborated on a study regarding women's ordination, and hired part-time women to work for passage of ERA in Illinois and Nevada, which was having a referendum on the Amendment. This ad hoc manner of operating was characteristic of the early days of the organization when it decided to concentrate its limited resources at points of crisis, where its leaders thought it could exercise the most influence.

As the three-year extension of the time available for the ratification of ERA became a reality in 1979, Sister Fiedler launched a membership drive and released new printed materials on ERA. She also began research for articles which would stress the separation of the

abortion issue from that of ERA. This separation was thought necessary in order not to offend potential ERA supporters who accept the church's position on abortion. Sister Fiedler undertook trips to Florida, Missouri and Illinois to establish a network of communication with local women leaders sympathetic to the passage of ERA. In Missouri, she suggested to Bishop McAuliffe that his testimony in behalf of ERA before the state legislature might be helpful. Sister Fiedler put him in touch with a leading labor leader in Missouri who was pro-ERA. Several days later, the bishop gave testimony on ERA's behalf, and this was considered a major victory for the Catholic women's organization. By June 1982, 23 Catholic bishops were calling for ratification of the ERA.

Sister Fiedler is a seasoned activist in civil disobedience. To publicize the ERA issue, she and a group of women chained themselves to the fence outside the National Republican headquarters when that party took ERA out of their 1980 platform. She was arrested on August 26, 1981 for again chaining herself to the White House fence. After the 1982 defeat of ERA, she poured blood on the Archives where the Constitution is kept. Before the deadline ran out for ERA in June 1982, Sr. Fiedler fasted for 37 days at Springfield's state legislature in the company of Sonia Johnson, along with others.

In the Spring of 1980 Sister Fiedler worked closely with NOW in Illinois, addressing statewide coalitions, organizing local chapters of Catholics for ERA, and generating mail campaigns and phone calls to the state legislature. Much of this activity was to be repeated in the final days before ERA's defeat in 1982. An "Action Alert," issued to constituents by Catholics for ERA in January 1980, reprinted Bishop McAuliffe's testimony and requested mail support for him. The Alert

also suggested that readers might write to local Catholic newspapers as well as to the National Catholic Reporter in support of passage of the ERA. It also suggests that letters of support be sent to the recently excommunicated Mormon, Sonia Johnson.

On March 3, 1981 a press release was issued from C/ERA headquarters giving details of the decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Court refusing to use the state ERA as a basis for reinstating Medicaid abortion funding. This decision effectively separated the issues of ERA and abortion. Sister Fiedler saw the Massachusetts decision as a vindication of the position of Bishops McAuliffe and Maurice Dingman of Des Moines, who had long argued for the distinction of the two issues. This was also perceived as a good portent for future membership of C/ERA, recruited from those Catholics who were opposed to abortion. In May of that year, the National Federation of Priests' Councils, representing about 32,000 priests, voted to endorse the ERA. In August 1981 the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the official organization of leaders of men's U.S. religious orders, voted to endorse the ERA. At the end of the March 31 news release there appears an expression of self-definition of the organization: "Catholics Act for ERA is a national organization of more than 2,000 members which actively mobilizes Catholic support for the ERA."

Other materials sent from the C/ERA office in 1981 include a call from NOW for feminist "missionaries" to travel to Utah to gain support in the "Mormon state." On April 12, 1980, a lead article by Sister Fiedler and Elizabeth Alexander: "The ERA and Abortion: Separate and Distinct" was featured in America magazine, the official publication of U.S. and Canadian Jesuits.

In 1981 Catholics for ERA escalated its level of activity in the states of North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma and Illinois which had not yet ratified the ERA. But the real struggle in the state legislatures was not expected until 1982. An undated letter sent from C/ERA headquarters at the end of 1981 provides members with materials to aid in their advocacy and action during the remaining six months before the ratification deadline. These included a flyer with Catholic teachings on equality, an updated list of Catholic organizations endorsing the ERA, and information on legislative sessions in unratified states, a list of bishops in key unratified states and a plea for letterwriting to the bishops in behalf of ERA, and requests for continued financial support of the organization's program.

As the June 30, 1982 deadline neared and no additional states had endorsed the ERA, a Spring newsletter from the staff of Catholics for ERA suggested that members write to the Governor of Illinois with the aim of changing the "3.5 rule" which requires a 60% "yes" vote for ratification rather than the usual 50% +1. It also asked additional financial aid. The newsletter announced a "Congress of Women" to be held at the end of June in College Park, Maryland to assess the women's movement and discuss future priorities and goals, whatever the outcome of the vote on the Amendment.

In 1982 the religious contingent of ERA proponents adopted prayer and fasting as a tactic to achieve their goal. On May 17, 1982, a "Women's Fast for Justice" began at midnight with seven women fasters at the State Capitol building in Springfield, Illinois. The C/ERA newsletter of Summer 1982, "Rising Up," contains a photo depicting the President of Illinois NOW holding a banner behind the fasting group

which reads "Women Hunger for Justice--Day 8." The Prayer Vigil was publicized to express the conviction that the struggle for women's rights would not die, even if ERA legislation failed. On Mother's Day, ERA sponsored celebrations titled "Give Mom Equal Rights for Mother's Day," and local churches were urged to conduct liturgies appropriate to this theme.

Special efforts were exerted by the C/ERA national office to legitimize the ERA cause among Catholic constituents. These included a "Florida Report," featuring statements from the parents of one of the four churchwomen murdered in El Salvador in December 1980, in behalf of their deceased daughter, "martyred in the cause of human rights." A news release on June 2, 1982 informs readers that 23 bishops have called for ratification of the ERA, and reproduces the bishops' statement.

After the June 30, 1981 deadline passed without a single holdout state ratifying the ERA, the Summer newsletter imputed the failure to pass the Amendment to corporate interests, religious right-wingers, and a handful of male lawmakers. The newsletter also publicized that, as of March, 1983, new plans would be launched to organize Catholic support for a second attempt to pass ERA. Membership fees would not be levied for ERA activities, but the organization would simply "beg" funds on an ad hoc basis to cover the cost of mailing and organizing. This suggests that the organization would join other proponents of the ERA in a full-scale coalition lobbying effort in the U.S. Congress, as the Amendment would once more be introduced in that body. Sister Fiedler also announced that she still considers it important to seek backing for ERA from the National Council of Catholic Bishops, the U.S. bishops' official body.

Other Catholic Movement Organizations

The National Assembly of Women Religious¹ was not included because at the time of the sampling procedure (1982) it did not seem to have as well-defined a program as other Catholic movement organizations. Its total membership in 1982 was 1700, or comparable in size to the three movement organizations selected for sampling. It was principally comprised of nuns.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious was not selected because it is made up of administrators of orders of nuns. I did not envision a large proportion of official church leaders in the sample, although I have incorporated data from an interview with the Executive Director of the LCWR.

The Grail

The Grail, in contrast to the three organizations chosen for the study, is international in scope and character and describes itself as a "movement of women." Founded in 1921 by the Jesuit Jacques van Ginneken in The Netherlands, the Grail's early purposes were to attract laywomen to work with non-Catholics and youth groups.² Shortly after the founding of the U.S. chapter of the Grail in the 1940's, a pamphlet published by a leader of the Grail called on women to revitalize the

¹In 1983 this organization changed its title to the National Assembly of Religious Women, in an effort to emphasize its belief that all women may be called "religious," and to attract more laywomen to its ranks.

²Joan Dilworth, ed. The Grail in the Eighties, (The Netherlands: Bloemendaal, 1982), p. 14.

concept of "true womanhood", based on the traditional notion of the complementarity of gender roles.¹ In the United States, the Grail's programs revolved around the education of women, social action and the liturgical arts. In 1972, after the Second Vatican Council and the feminist movement, the Grail underwent a "sea change" in its self-understanding.² It formed a Women's Network, to be activated in 19 nations where it operated programs for the purposes of enhancing a universal solidarity of women and to effect social change. Each year, at its U.S. headquarters in Ohio, the Grail sponsors major conferences and meetings which promote scholarly exchange in the field of feminist theology, liturgy, and spirituality.

The National Council of Catholic Women

I have interviewed some members of the National Council of Catholic Women, which is not a movement organization. I have conducted a few interviews with NCCW members because it is the most important Catholic laywomen's organization closely allied to the institutional church. NCCW is an umbrella organization; individuals become affiliated with it usually through membership in local parish organizations. It claims a membership of about 10 million women in thousands of diocesan and parish women's organizations, or roughly 20% of the total U.S. Catholic population. The NCCW might be considered a broad frame of reference for all American Catholic laywomen in church organizations.

¹Janet Kalven, The Task of Woman in the Modern World (Des Moines, Iowa: National Catholic Rural Life Conference, 1946), pp. 15-17.

²Alden W. Brown, "The Grail Movement in the U.S. 1940-1972. The Evolution of an American Catholic Laywomen's Community." (Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1982), p. 321.

Thus, use of data from their interviews provides a rough basis of comparison with the results of interviews with members of movement organizations.

The chief characteristics of the three movement organizations chosen and the NCCW, used as a basis for selection of respondents, are summarized in the following table:

Table 1.1

Selected Data on Organizations Included in the Study
as of December 1983

	Movement Organizations			
	WOC	NCAN	Catholics for ERA	NCCW
Total Membership	1400-2000	1800	1200-1800	About ten million women in 8,000 parish organizations and diocesan councils
Proportion of nuns to laywomen	N.A.	Mostly nuns; a few lay members	60% lay; 40% nuns; about 10-15% men	All laywomen
Organizational structure	12 Core Commissioners to be replaced by National Assembly in 1986	Chairperson and 24-woman Board representing all regions of the U.S. 3-year term of office for all	Director plus part-time help.	National Board; President and Executive Director elected for 2-year term. Programs administered through 5 Commissions
Leadership style	Independent of the church hierarchy	Independent of the church hierarchy	Independent of the church hierarchy	Affiliated with the National Council of Catholic Bishops
Funding sources	Donations; religious congregations; individual dues; foundation grants	Grants; religious congregations; social justice groups; individual contributions	Formerly: yearly dues. 1983-: charge for mailing list; individual contributions; donations from NOW, other organizations	Dues from affiliated organizations
Primary goals	Ordination to priestly ministry; feminist theology and spirituality; inclusive language; human sexuality; equality in church work	Equality for churchwomen at all levels; new understandings of sexuality	Passage of ERA; formal endorsement of ERA from U.S. bishops	Education of Catholic women to important issues affecting all women, in cooperation with U.S. bishops

N.A. = Not Available

The illustration below shows the three organizations chosen for the study, both in relation to groups allied with each organization, and to other, larger groups in which they share common membership. The illustration depicts all three groups as members of LCWR and NARW, two other major organizations which form part of the Catholic Women's Movement.

The Women's Ordination Conference and Catholics for ERA both are allied with the interests of several organizations of the liberal clergy; i.e. Priests for Equality and the National Federation of Priests' Councils. These organizations have in the past supported some of the activities and goals of WOC and C/ERA. The Women's Ordination Conference for the most part interacts with other Catholic groups. Catholics for ERA operates in networks which are partly inside and partly outside the Church. The National Coalition of American Nuns is concerned with questions of broad human rights as well as feminist ones. Its networks, therefore, are located mainly outside the Church.

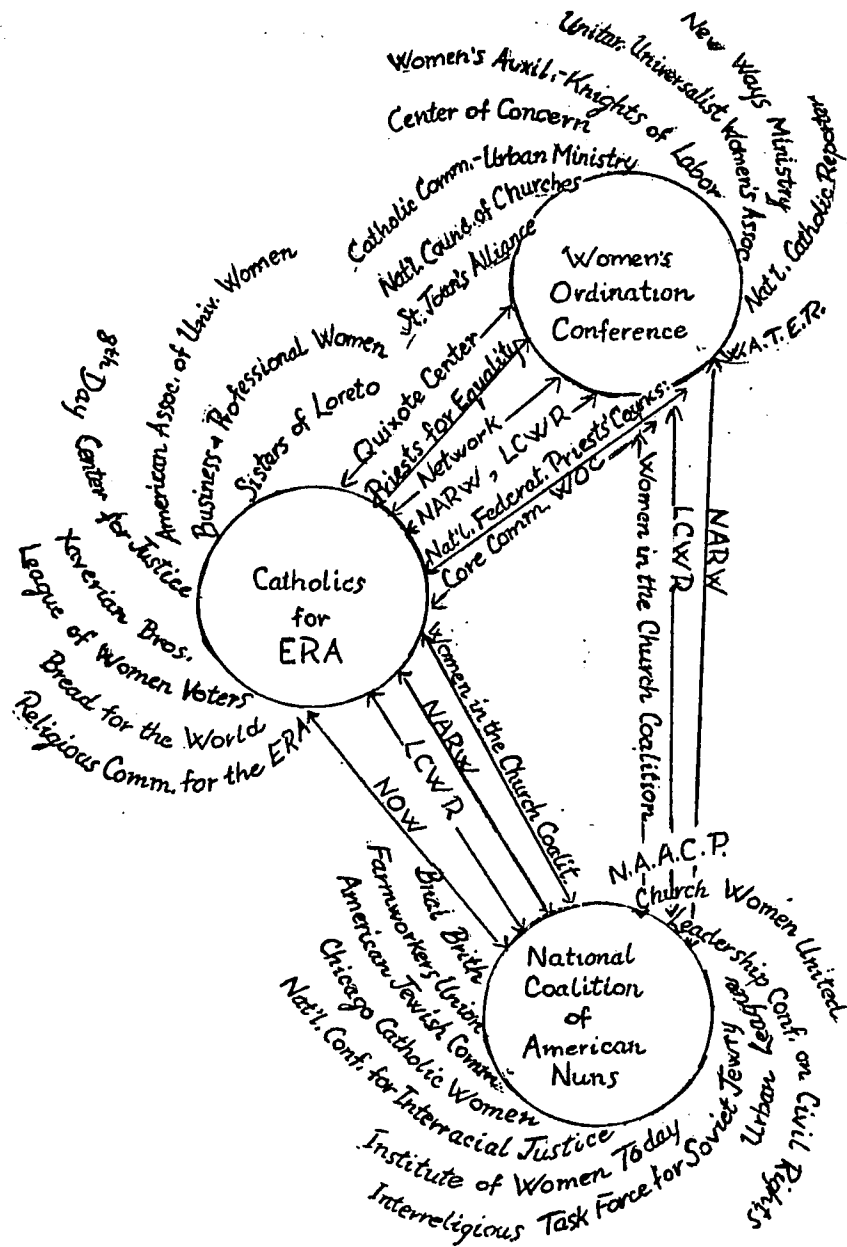


Fig. 1. Organizational Networks of Three Groups Studied

Summary - The Catholic Women's Movement in the United States

The brief history of churchwomen presented in this chapter traces their social location from one of charismatic centrality and near-equality in the early Christian church to one domesticated by tradition and by Papal decree to the confines of home and family, into the 20th century. The particular ecclesial position of Catholic women is also understood in terms of the overall social ethic of the church, whose principal organizational division is into stratas of "clergy" and "laity." The Vatican bureaucracy, and the bishops and priests who are always and everywhere accountable to it, together make up the strata of "hierarchy" which officially controls the "laity". The women in this study belong to the latter strata.

My analysis of pertinent documents shows how the official church maintains its view that clergy, laity and members of religious orders occupy a particular "place" in the social scheme of the church. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the turbulence in the civil society during the 1960's and 1970's brought many traditional policies of the church into question. Both sets of events may have raised expectations among Catholic nuns and laywomen--as the civil rights movements did almost everywhere else--that great changes in their favor were forthcoming. Recent efforts of Vatican to demonstrate that no woman can be admitted to the ministerial order of the priesthood has had the effect on some members of the Catholic women's movement of disengaging their previous identification as "religious" women (i.e., nuns) and identifying more with the "lay" status. The extent and implications of this phenomenon will be examined in the course of this study.

From its inception, NCAN has been heavily involved and politically active in protesting the oppression of individuals and groups in the U.S. Its Board of Directors has issued statements of support and engaged in direct actions in behalf of Catholic and non-Catholic women, blacks, Chicanos, prison populations and other minority groups in our society. Members of NCAN have testified before Congressional Committees on subjects ranging from women's rights to the unjust repression of Soviet Jews.

NCAN has also engaged directly in confrontation with Vatican policies regarding U.S. nuns. It has joined in coalition with the National Assembly of Religious Women (originally an organization of rank-and-file nuns, now seeking to attract lay members) in efforts to stabilize the adaptations to modern social life achieved by the experimentation that orders of nuns have undertaken since Vatican II.¹ NCAN's Board membership interlocks with that of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, made up of heads of nuns' congregations and which is liberal in outlook. Instances of NCAN's defiance of recent Vatican directives, therefore, may represent a significant portion of leaders of American orders of nuns.

NCAN is the only organization studied to have taken a public stand on abortion. In the process it has developed a stand known as "pro-choice, anti-abortion." In many ways this appears as an attempt to reconcile totally opposed positions taken by the Vatican and "radical" theologians and lay persons in the church. Many of the respondents who

¹The experiments in lifestyle and ministry for nuns resulted from their implementations of the Vatican II Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life, issued at Rome, 1965.

participated in this study, as we shall see, based their views on abortion according to this position.

The programmatic interests of the Women's Ordination Conference have focused more on the internal workings of the Catholic church. In 1984, WOC's primary goal was still the ordination of women to the priesthood. This goal is probably the most threatening to Vatican authorities because it involves a radical restructuring of the organization of the church hierarchy. The popular excitement generated over the ordination question begun at the Detroit Conference in 1975 prompted a formal response from the Vatican, in the form of a Declaration in January 1977. This document restated traditional policies which denied eligibility of women for Catholic priesthood. Within two months of its publication the degree of opposition the Declaration had evoked became more pronounced: Catholic and Gallup polls of American Catholics showed a marked increase in acceptance of the idea of women's ordination. In addition, coalitions of allied groups supporting women's ordination widened. Various priests' organizations published statements of support for Catholic feminists. The national secretary of one of these organizations was removed from his post for the public pro-ordination statements he made during the Papal visit to the U.S. in 1979. It was also during the Papal visit that Sister Theresa Kane, then President of the Leadership Conference of Religious Women, directly confronted the Pope in a public address with a plea for opening all church ministries to women.

During its ten-year history WOC has formed coalitions with groups of Catholic women and worked toward passage of the ERA. The organization also gave public support to the first eleven Episcopal U.S. women to be ordained.

In order to render its claims for women in the priesthood more plausible, WOC also seeks to ally itself with the U.S. conference of bishops. To this end it has begun an ongoing dialogue regarding the question of ordination with the Bishops' Committee on Women. Thus far, American bishops have responded with the establishment of a special Committee which plans to publish a pastoral letter on U.S. Catholic women in 1988 and will speak for the U.S. body of bishops.

Catholics Act for ERA has focused its program activity on securing passage of the Amendment, which at this writing has been re-introduced into the House of Representatives. Throughout the first two attempts at passage, which ended in failure on June 30, 1983, Catholics for ERA made vigorous efforts to dissociate the campaign for the Amendment from any nationally supported pro-abortion policies. This separation was also sought by various liberal Catholic bishops who were aware that separation of the two issues was the only method of attracting any sizable support for ERA from their constituencies.

Between 1978 and 1982, C/ERA leadership formed alliances with the National Organization for Women, in particular those chapters of NOW which were located in states that had yet to ratify the Amendment. C/ERA also supported the causes of other prominent churchwomen; notably, that of Sonia Johnson of the Mormon Church, who was excommunicated for her pro-ERA stand.

In 1983, Maureen Fiedler, C/ERA president, announced that she was initiating a program of coalition-building with other ERA proponents for a full-scale lobbying in the U.S. Congress aimed at securing passage for the Amendment. In addition, an old confusion had once again to be clarified: that the Amendment does not automatically endorse abortion.

This tactic was adopted in hopes of reducing the level of controversy accompanying the Amendment's path through both houses of Congress. By keeping the drive for ERA at the level of equality of rights and opportunity, it was hoped that ERA will be more acceptable to liberal Catholic hierarchy and clergy and will minimize the risk of Vatican disapproval of clergy involvement in the passage of the Amendment.

Sister Fiedler has been successful in convincing at least one bishop to endorse the Amendment's passage before the legislative body of his home state. She is hopeful that others will follow suit, especially in light of the effort to dissociate support of abortion from the intent of the ERA bill.

Similarities and Differences among Movement Organizations Studied

WOC, NCAN and Catholics for ERA are similar in the following respects: they are financially independent of the institutional church. They are based on the ideology of religious feminism with an admixture of transcendent religious ideas. They were founded in response to perceived oppression of women both in and outside the church; they are roughly equal in size of membership, and all are located in Catholic and non-Catholic organizational networks capable of rapid mobilization in times of crisis.

There are also important differences existing among the three organizations. While WOC and Catholics for ERA follow a policy of cultivating cordial relations with the U.S. Catholic episcopacy and clergy in hopes of winning them over to their cause, and in hopes of winning legitimation from the Vatican, NCAN represents a broader

opposition to the present social arrangements within the Church. WOC and Catholics for ERA contain a sizeable proportion of laywomen to nuns. NCAN's members are almost all nuns. WOC and Catholics for ERA up until now have kept to a focused goal in their respective programs, while from its beginnings, NCAN has expressed concern for all oppressed sectors in the Church and in civil society: women, blacks, and those imprisoned on both criminal and political grounds. WOC has decided in 1984 to adopt a "circular model" of government, through a National Assembly to be comprised of locally elected delegates. In contrast, NCAN and Catholics for ERA operate from a more elite central body.

Despite these differences among movement organizations, I have used their membership lists as the basis for my selection of respondents. While I was not able to measure precisely the degree of membership involvement with goals and programs of each of the three organizations studied, I suspected that there would be much evidence from respondents' interview material of the existence of "crossover sympathies", or as Weber would put it, "elective affinities" on the part of leaders and members regarding the goals of all three movement organizations. For example, NCAN has always supported ERA. In November 1972, its Newsletter challenged the opposition of the National Council of Catholic Laity to ERA as "out of touch" with present needs. Sister Fiedler, co-founder of Catholics for ERA, was also a member of WOC from its inception and now serves on its Core Commission. But there is also lack of agreement on certain issues. Some laywomen repudiate abortion as a choice to be desired for all women (detailed in Chapter 3). This would not make them sympathetic with NCAN's pro-choice stand.

Another problematic area is a shift now occurring among the WOC leadership regarding the broadening of its programs to include questions other than ordination. This might change both the programs and the pattern of organizational participation on the part of WOC members and leadership. The National Council of Catholic Women has never endorsed the ERA; thus, we can safely assume that NCCW is not sympathetic to the goals of Catholics for ERA. Furthermore, a resolution taken by NCCW at its meeting in October 1981 to support and work for the Hatch Human Life Amendment separates its position on abortion from that of NCAN. Because of these basic differences, NCCW can be regarded only as a control group.

The similarities and differences between the groups selected as my basis for interviewing thus constitute a purposive sample. It has been selected to provide a wide range of possible responses to basic and strategic issues within the Catholic women's movement in contrast to attitudes on these issues by NCCW laywomen. Given these issues, the major basis for analysis of interview data will be differences on attitudes between movement laywomen and nuns and, to a lesser degree, differences between both groups and non-movement Catholic laywomen.

This method of analysis means that the respondents interviewed are not a representative sample of Catholic women. Rather, it means that we can study some of the problems and processes of an emerging social movement within a religious institution.

Description of the Sample
Organizations

I have chosen the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC), the National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN), and Catholics Act for ERA (C/ERA) as the subjects of the empirical portion of this study because their members are prominently involved in advocating issues of concern to Catholic movement women. They also are actively engaged in coalition with numerous Catholic and non-Catholic groups on wider issues concerned with social justice. The three organizations, whose history is presented earlier in this chapter, comprise an important part of the history of the Catholic women's movement in the United States. In addition, leaders of the three organizations are known to me; this expedited the procedure of obtaining lists of names for interview purposes. From these lists I was able to select and interview 43 movement members, and five movement women who were national or regional heads of the three organizations chosen. The lists provided an almost equal number of lay and nun respondents.

Members of the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) were included because they might be considered an embodiment of the worldview of a much broader segment of U.S. Catholic women located in parishes, who are in the main loyal to the policies of the church hierarchy, particularly in the matter of sexual practices. This places them outside the Catholic women's movement as it is defined in this study. Their views on many of the issues central to those expressed by movement members may enable me to ascertain the ideological sources for alliances or alienation between movement and non-movement women.

Members

The names of the 48 movement women who participated in this study from September 1982 to March 1983 were drawn principally from membership lists obtained from the headquarters of WOC, NCAN, and Catholics for ERA. Of this number, a smaller group were names suggested during the interviews of the leaders and members of the movement organizations. The names of the 8 NCCW women were obtained by snowball sampling of local NCCW leaders, whose names had been provided by the national office of the organization. From a list of 27 names, I was able to contact and to interview eight NCCW members, including the national President of NCCW.

All 56 respondents described themselves as Roman Catholic and could be divided for the purposes of analysis into two status groups: nuns and laywomen.

Most movement women earning a salary were located in the "helping" professions or occupations: education, social work, or advocacy work. Fourteen nuns and seven laywomen were in salaried posts which were church-related; while nine nuns and fourteen laywomen were in non-church work. The median income reported by nuns (individual income) was between \$10-15,000; laywomen reported a median (family) income between \$20-25,000. Of the 46 movement women who completed the biographical section of the questionnaire, only two nuns were in salaried parish work. No laywoman held a salaried post in a parish.

Three NCCW women were in non-church related work; one was a full-time homemaker. Four were in church-related occupations. Of this group of four, two received a salary; the remaining two did volunteer service. The median family income reported by this group was \$25-30,000.

The individual and family income ranges reported by all 56 respondents places them in the middle class.

Of 48 movement women, 41 reported earning a B.A. degree or above. Of this group, eight went on to earn a Ph.D. degree. Four additional respondents reported having had some college training. I did not ascertain the educational attainment level of the remaining three respondents. By contrast, none of the eight NCCW women interviewed reported earning a B.A. degree, but four of the eight had had some college training; two had completed high school, one did not. I was not able to determine the educational attainment level of the 8th NCCW respondent.

The median age for movement women was 44; for NCCW women, 62. The 18-year difference in the median age of the two groups represents the probability that NCCW women have a more conservative generational outlook on matters presented in the questionnaire. The difference in median age may also be accounted for by the fact that NCCW women in my sample were all located in leadership positions in their respective dioceses or parishes. They had achieved these positions after some years of service to the Church; therefore, they tended to be older and thus more conservative than movement members, particularly on issues of sexuality.

All 56 respondents were located in 8 northeastern and north central states.

A more detailed description of the demographic characteristics of the sample is found in Appendix III.

PART II

**THE EMPIRICAL STUDY OF
THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

CHAPTER II

THE QUEST FOR SISTERHOOD

Introduction

Until the Vatican Council of 1962, sisterhood was a term applied by the Church to consecrated women living in religious communities. Nuns can be considered, in Weber's terms, as female religious virtuosi in the Catholic church; i.e., those who work methodically at their salvation and become a distinctive religious "status group" and attain a social honor of their own within the community of the faithful.¹ But in the Catholic church, the status honor accorded nuns has been defined in relation to the clerical strata. Joseph Cardinal Suenens, in his highly influential book, The Nun in the World, argued for a liberalization from traditional practices regarding nuns which in effect cloistered them. Suenens wrote that: "The parish is not well balanced unless nuns complement priests' work," and: "Nuns are a direct extension of the office of the priest."²

The intensity of emotion among Catholic movement members regarding its various programmatic issues may make for a new solidarity between

¹Max Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, from the 4th gen. ed. of Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, Johannes Winckelmann, ed., Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1956. Reprint ed. edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et al. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), p. 539.

²The Nun in the World (Baltimore, Maryland: Newman Press, 1963), p. 100.

the lay and nun status groups. This solidarity may effect a breakdown in nun's monopoly of the "sisterhood" designation.¹ Problems still remain regarding the degree of consolidation possible between nuns and laywomen. In this chapter, I will examine the first question of this study: whether difference in outlook, interests and source of status present in the two groups of women is a divisive issue in the Catholic women's movement. I will examine this question by first presenting brief self-portraits of each group, then examine the kinds of distinctions the respondents employ when referring to a member of the opposite status group. This involves an item analysis of responses to questions regarding their opinions on ecclesial status distinctions between the two groups of women, the quality of communications between nuns and laywomen, opinions relative to their power and privileges, and the importance of their differing lifestyles.

My second question concerns the degree to which women in the Catholic feminist movement are able to diminish status differences that may exist between them. I will explore the extent to which rank and status distinctions between movement nuns and laywomen are diminishing. If they are, then it may be useful to examine how solidarity is

¹Sheila Collins, a feminist theologian, locates the origins of the term in the socio-economic upheavals brought about by modernization processes. At the Detroit Conference, 1975, Collins acknowledged that feminist elements in theology have their roots in secular women's activism, which brought to feminism an understanding of the links between various kinds of oppression. Non-religious feminism provided models of women's groups who gathered to tell their stories and to hear each other in a way that had not been possible since the rise of industrial capitalism, when the extended family was broken up and middle class women were isolated in their own homes. Collins stated: "In these small groups a new word was born among us: sisterhood." J. Torres & J. Eagleson, ed., Theology in the Americas. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 365.

maintained among the movement women studied. I will use the term "solidarity" as it was employed in the writing of Gert Mueller, and in my conversations with him on the subject. At its lowest level, according to Mueller, solidarity has an unreflective, taken-for-granted element which Graham Sumner also describes as the "in-group" feeling.

Movement women display a marked degree of alienation from the official Church. As Catholic movement women become detached from their fixed place in the social structure of the Church and seek a new, higher status, I will investigate whether the kind of communitas they are building conforms to the one which Victor Turner has described as typical of "liminal" groups. Turner's definition of communitas is as a group resulting from the bonding of social relationships in the "liminal" phase. Turner developed the notion of "liminality" while studying initiation rites of the Ndembu tribe of Zambia.¹ He describes "liminality" as a state of being which emerges in the period between childhood and the adoption of custom, convention, ceremony and law for young initiands. Thus, Turner understands communitas as an alternative societal structure, emerging during a "liminal" period. It results from the high degree of solidarity apparent when rank and status disappear among members of a group who experience the common "liminal" state of passing from one cultural status to another in a stable society.

These terms, taken from anthropological studies, may be applicable to an analysis of how Catholic movement women experience the passage

¹Victor Turner, The Ritual Process (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 94-96. Turner's investigation is an elaboration of van Gennep's work (1960) on the liminal phase of group rites de passage. See also: Arnold van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, transl. M.B. Vizedom and G.C. Caffee (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960).

from a lower status to a higher one in the relatively "fixed" social structure of the Church.

Pressure for a change in status has not only come from movement women themselves. There has been pressure on the part of some lay theologians to disassociate nuns from the purely clerical strata. They are concerned with more than women's equality in the church. They would like to see a reform of the church hierarchy itself, which would give more power to laypersons; i.e., women regardless of clerical status. In a talk given to the first women's ordination conference in 1975, feminist theologian Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza noted that: "as the reform discussions and conflicts of women's congregations with Rome indicate, dependency on ecclesial authority is as important as biological virginity." She went on to remark that the healing of the nun-laywoman split must be given priority; otherwise, the gain of ordination for women will be nullified: "In all probability, the ordination of some nuns who evidence a dependency on church authority will lead...to a further clericalization and hierarchization of the church...".¹ At the same conference, Leonard Swidler, Professor of Catholic Thought at Temple University, proposed to nuns that a way of counteracting their identification with clergy, which he called "expanded clericalism" was to work toward providing laywomen with opportunities to serve in leadership capacities in the church.²

¹ Anne Marie Gardiner, ed., Women and Catholic Priesthood: An Expanded Vision. Proceedings of the Detroit Ordination Conference (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), p. 100.

² Gardiner, p. 134.

Groups of Catholic women on both intellectual and activist levels have put forth efforts to achieve a closer bonding between nun and lay groups. Diann Neu and Maria Riley, O.P., both staff members at the Center of Concern in Washington, D.C. executed a project entitled "Women Moving Church". It began with a survey of Catholics on various issues, went on to sponsor a women's conference attended by 200; published proceedings of the conference and a directory identifying over 100 Catholic women's "base communities" in the U.S. and abroad. These materials are distributed with the purpose of increasing solidarity among Catholic women, and to identify potential adherents for mobilization to future issues of concern to the movement.¹

In the period since 1970, there has been a proliferation of newsletters of movement organizations. They contain analyses of women's situations in the church by prominent feminist theologians and other scholars; news items of concern to Catholic women, and reports of feminist activism in behalf of churchwomen. By publishing newsletters, groups of Catholic women are attempting to expand their newly emerging "solidarity" in order to construct a worldview where all women become aware of their common exclusion from the centers of power in the Catholic Church.

On the theoretical level, the work of Schussler Fiorenza has been devoted in part to the question of "bonding" of Catholic women into an ekklesia, which she claims "can take place only after we have named the powers and effects of our bondage through the critical process of

¹Diann Neu, ed., Women's Base Communities: A Directory for Networking (Washington, D.C.: Center of Concern, 1982).

consciousness-raising and conversion."¹ In a more comprehensive work, In Memory of Her, Dr. Schussler Fiorenza elaborates her notion of the ekklesia of women. This term describes gatherings of unmarried, independent women who seem to have formed their own house church and religious association, created by "the gradual patriarchalization of the early church and its leadership."² Schussler Fiorenza defines ekklesia as a civil-political concept, rather than as a religious one. Its importance for movement ideology is that it has a past-future orientation: "...the ekklesia of women is as much a future hope as it is a reality today."³ Schussler Fiorenza's Gospel hermeneutics is exemplified by her interpretation of the incident where an unknown woman anoints Jesus' feet as he sits at dinner in a public official's home. She asserts that while Luke presents the woman as a repentant sinner, he ignores her prophetic gesture, one which places women at the beginning of the revelation of Jesus' mission. Thus, the feminist vision of the Gospel narrative is that it calls all women to wholeness and selfhood without designation of rank or status.⁴ In exploring why women from various Graeco-Roman social strata of the first century A.D. converted to Christianity, Schussler Fiorenza theorizes that the status discontent experienced by women in that society might impel them to join a

¹Probe. Newsletter of the National Assembly of Religious Women, Feb./Mar. 1982, p. 1.

²Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: Crossroad Press, 1983), p. 315.

³Ibid., p. 344.

⁴Ibid., p. 153.

missionary movement which would have allowed them to gain new dignity and status.¹

Schussler Fiorenza's observation can also be employed to explain why nuns and laywomen in the Catholic movement are seeking status changes. The demographic section of this study (Appendix III) indicates that movement women interviewed are located in the lower middle class, a socio-economic position where women are vulnerable to a high degree of status discontent. Status discontent is a term employed by Nancy Cott and Gerda Lerner in their explanations of the emergence of the 19th century feminist movement in the United States. Cott and Lerner claim that the most status-deprived group will be the most revolutionary, an argument also employed by Alice Rossi.² Cott claims that organized feminism between 1840-60 was a "revolution of rising expectations."³ Lerner makes the same point regarding the Seneca Falls feminists.⁴

Max Weber's analysis of the erotic element of life is useful in interpreting the rationale used by the Church when it divides its membership into clerical and lay groups. In Weber's essay "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," he states that in the erotic sphere, the brotherly ethic of salvation is in profound tension

¹In Memory, p. 153.

²Rossi develops her argument regarding "status deprivation" of 19th century U.S. feminists in her essay: "Social Roots of the Women's Movement in America", The Feminist Papers (N.Y.: Columbia U. Press, 1973), pp. 241-281.

³The Bonds of Womanhood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 204.

⁴The Majority Finds Its Past (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 27.

with sexual love, which Weber calls "the greatest irrational force of life."¹ while the status rank of all members of religious orders is not equal to that of the clergy, nuns have nevertheless been identified with priests. Due to nun's celibate and communal lifestyle, the Church has imputed a "special" charism to them.² Viewed in ontological terms, this means that a specific charism of the "sacred realm of life is proper to nuns; laywomen dwell in a "secular" realm.

By virtue of their vows, nuns are subjected to explicit and specified rules. Chapter 1 describes religious vows as viewed by the Church, and expressed in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, one of the central documents of Vatican II. In the Constitution, chastity is understood as an eschatological element in the nun's life, which witnesses to the presence of Christ's "Kingdom" already here on earth.³ Another less symbolic but equally traditional interpretation emphasizes the functional aspect of religious chastity. By choosing not to pair-bond with another individual, a nun frees herself to love the "universal other" encountered in her ministry and which gives priority to her religious wellbeing.

Earliest orthodox church writings view sexual intimacy as appropriate only with marriage, a state proper to the "secular" realm of life. The 1983 revision of the Canon Laws of the Church shows no change

¹H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, ed., From Max Weber (N.Y.: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1946), pp. 347-48.

²Lumen Gentium, Par. 43.

³Ibid., Par. 44.

⁴Code of Canon Law (Rome: Vatican Press, 1983), Cans. 1055-1165; 1671-1707.

in the traditional prohibition of divorce. However, more liberalized laws regarding marriage annulments granted the United States in 1970 have been incorporated into the 1983 universal Canon Law code. Church records show that in 1969, the number of U.S. annulments granted was less than 500; in 1983, it was more than 40,000.¹ Papal pronouncements as recent as 1983 continue to limit sexual activity to the marriage bed and continue to reject the practices of artificial birth control, premarital sexual relations, homosexuality and abortion.

The effect of the Catholic Church's definition and sanctioning of sexual roles has been to accord a primacy to the biological role of motherhood among its lay female members. In a study of women in Vatican documents of the past 25 years, Nadine Foley, O.P. concludes that: "The familial view of women is essential and normative."²

In attempting to ascertain how nuns and laywomen relate to the foregoing distinctions, I first of all tried to listen to respondents' "stories" as they gave replies to the Questionnaire. Husserl claims that the time of memory is an "immanent" time, during which even transcendent experiences, in the relation of them, are subjected to rational scrutiny.² Therefore I proceeded to analyze the "stories" heard by rational sociological techniques and categories. Weber states that rationality has always been a powerful element, even in the mystical life of historical persons and noted an increasing trend toward the rationalization of mystical experience in the pursuit of an integrated

¹James A. Coriden, ed., Sexism and Church Law. Equal Rights and Affirmative Action (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), p. 98.

²Edmond Husserl, The Paris Lectures, based on Ger. orig. Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 1, as reconstructed by E. Strasser, transl. by Peter Koestenbaum, with an introduction (The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 1950), (The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 1970), p. 32.

foundation for the conduct of life.¹ But even here, the underlying principle is the understanding of the life and actions of the actual, historical individuals and hypothetical "types," a key notion of Weber's verstehen methodology.² The telling of one's story is also a rational methodology of liberation theologies. In his seminal work on the subject, Gutierrez emphasizes that the basic notion of "liberation" is the self-expression, whether rational or not, of the aspirations of an entire oppressed group on the social or political plane.³ These concepts can be utilized to analyze the bases of difference in the protocols of nuns and laywomen, as they are asked to give views of each other. In addition, I will attempt to analyze how respondents' religious faith confers the status of ethical imperatives to the activities designed to end injustices regarding women in the Church.⁴

The Interviews

The principal instruments for gathering empirical data were questionnaires, administered to movement laywomen (Version I) and nuns (Version II). A separate and more abbreviated questionnaire was administered to movement leaders with the intention of gathering

¹Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion, p. 161.

²Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, ed. with an introduction by Talcott Parsons, transl. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1964), pp. 96-98.

³Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, transl. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 36.

⁴On this point, Max Weber observes: "Only...dogmatically bound sects are able to confer on the content of cultural values the status of unconditionally valid ethical imperatives." Cited in: "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy", in The Methodology of the Social Sciences, transl. and ed. by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch, with a Forward by Edward A. Shils (Illinois: Glencoe Free Press, 1949), p. 57.

information about the organization involved: its origins, history, questions of recruitment and leadership, funding sources, alliances, and program. This latter information has been primarily combined with the results of my readings of archival materials and other documentation regarding movement organizations, reported in the preceding chapter.

The members' questionnaire was divided roughly into three areas, each of which contained questions designed to elicit responses which would serve as indicators of the presence or absence of elements of solidarity, ideology and the ethos of justice existing in the sample group. These responses are treated in the succeeding chapters.

By way of preliminary discussion, members were asked seven questions which would give them opportunity to describe in broad terms their relationship to the movement as a whole, and its issues and grievances. The opening question was: "Could you tell me what are the main issues that concern you regarding women in the Church?" The most pervasive concern reported by 41 of 48 respondents was the subordinate position accorded women in the Church. It was expressed in two main ways: 22 respondents cited the exclusion of women from decision-making positions in the Church; 19 others mentioned the low status of church-women. There is little difference between nun and lay responses in the table as a whole.

In the group of 11 laywomen whose main concern was "the low status of women in the Church", I analyzed their responses by marital status and found some differences between single and married women (including those who were divorced or widowed). Seven respondents were married and 4 were single, implying that more married women had experienced a low status designation than had single women.

Table 2.1 Main Concerns Expressed by Movement Women

<u>Main Concern</u>	<u>Status Group</u>		
	<u>Lay</u>	<u>Nun</u>	<u>Total</u>
Exclusion of women from decision-making structures of the Church	11	11	22
Low status of women in the Church	11	8	19
Women's talents are wasted	-	1	1
Women are apathetic regarding their own situation	-	1	1
Women are divided among themselves	1	-	1
Women are seen as "threats" by churchmen	1	-	1
Church does not provide clear leadership on social and political matters	-	1	1
N.A.	1	1	2
Total	(25)	(23)	(48)

The example most employed by respondents in discussing women's subordination was their exclusion from ordination to priesthood. It was mentioned 20 times: by 11 laywomen and by 9 nuns. Other examples of women's "second class" statuses were: Church attitudes on sexuality, reflected in unchanging positions on birth control, abortion, and divorce; and sexist language employed in pulpit vocabulary and in hymn texts. A number of women also cited the example of lack of work opportunities in the Church, combined with the low salaries for posts in ministry, and the scarcity of positions entailing leadership in the institutional ranks of the Church. A related grievance expressed in the women's discussions of their main concern was women's powerless position in the Church, which they perceived as structurally caused.

The main concern expressed by 4 of 8 NCCW women was that rank and file churchwomen become better educated regarding new possibilities

existing in the church since Vatican II for their increased participation in its life and ministries. A second group of 3 women expressed concern regarding the limitations of women's roles, but it was expressed as criticism aimed at the lack of hierarchical leadership in this regard, which they felt was detrimental to women. One NCCW respondent was critical of all change brought about by Vatican II and expressed a wish to return to the former traditional modes of Church life.

In the discussion of main concerns, laywomen tended to level more specific criticism at the hierarchy than did nuns. Among practices singled out for grievance were: the Pope's prohibition of laity from distributing communion during his 1979 visit to the U.S.; sexist attitudes in passages from the letters of Paul which are still read in the churches; the especially low status ascribed to married women by clergy members, mentioned previously, and trenchant criticism of the language concerning women contained in the 1981 Program of Priestly Formation, issued by the National Council of Catholic Bishops.

Among the responses to questions 1 through 7, a nun at a major Catholic university, a member of NCAN, demonstrated a consciousness of the "second class" status of women, typical among the movement respondents. The nun felt that until 10 years ago, women attempting to serve the Church have been "invisible" and their contributions taken for granted. She feels that women's concerns are heard usually in an atmosphere of great conflict, and went on to note:

The responsibilities they have are incommensurate with the responsibility and authority they are given; salaries reflect that lack of being taken seriously; and there's a heavy reliance on women as volunteers...women are kind of compliant in how they play their roles...and don't recognize how they're being used. I think that's another area for women to help women to move to. And right now in our Church, the decision-making levels are clerical. There's no way women are included in that.

For me it's the pivotal issue in the Church, because it surfaces so many other things, once you start exploring it.

Some movement women couched their criticism of the church's position on women in terms of structural failure. A nun leader of a local chapter of WOC told me:

I would say the inability of the Roman Catholic Church to be an agent through which the gospel is truly proclaimed, and to accept women as full, active, adult members of the Church. In general, I feel that the Roman Catholic Church has another agenda and it's an agenda of power, an agenda substantiating that power in political and economic spheres, and a collusion with the state in other issues as a result of not really releasing the message of the Gospel.

Laywomen's perception of their low status in the Church is fraught with pain and dismay. When asked why the women's issue was important to her, a lay member of WOC replied: "Because I'm a woman. Because I see that the denigration of women causes me pain, causes other women that I know lots of pain. And I believe that if women's status in the Church is raised, women's self-image will be raised and there will be less pain in the world. And that would be a good thing."

A 76-year old member of Catholics for ERA looked back at her path as a woman in and member of the Church. She still recalls the shock that accompanied her life change from the status of "professional woman" to that of "married woman."

I was a social worker for 10 years, probation officer 8 years. In that period, I met many priests, became friendly with them. In some cases they would refer girls in trouble to us and in other cases, the family members, for counseling. I visited many rectories and talked to the priests as a fellow professional. I respected them and they respected me, and it was quite a shock when I gave up this work to be a mother, and then to return to my former status, just a woman in the parish. The attitude of the priests in the parish where I lived was to be friendly to the women, but they paid no attention to them. For instance, I begged an assistant pastor for permission to start a Boy Scout troop for my boys, in particular, and he refused.

The nostalgia with which some laywomen recounted their present situation suggests that laypersons have been more vulnerable to the vagaries of the policies of local bishops and pastors than have orders of nuns. The following recounting of a laywoman who has achieved international prominence for the founding and administration of a movement dedicated to Christian families, is a case in point:

I've felt that in this city, and I've been in this diocese many, many years--that women do so much in the diocese but they are really not consulted at all. I feel a lack of lay participation--not talking about nuns, but laity. In the past 8 or 9 years, with our Cardinal, of course there's been very little lay participation, especially of women - whereas there was more before that era. The two predecessors of our current Cardinal were really very good about allowing the laity to do things--they didn't always help a lot--but they allowed them. That's why so many movements were started here...That will be what (our new bishop) will have to meet up with...the laity had a freedom which has been taken away, really.

I then attempted to ascertain some of the reasons why members were attracted into the Catholic women's movement. Each respondent was asked to name organizations of which she was a member and to offer the main reason why she chose a particular organization. The main reasons are grouped into seven categories (Table 2.2). A perusal of the table shows that women's recruitment into movement organizations seems to result from occurrences both internal and external to the Catholic Church. The reason cited most frequently, by 7 laywomen and 8 nuns, was that, in various ways, they perceived the official Church as unconcerned with issues of interest to movement women. The next most frequent reason, given by 9 respondents, was that the respondent had already been either a member or a leader of an organization whose goals were related to those of the organizations in the Catholic women's movement. Seven laywomen gave this explanation, but only 2 nuns did. A smaller group, made up of 3 laywomen and 3 nuns, said they had become acquainted with

the movement organization in question through a woman friend. Three laywomen and 2 nuns said that they joined a movement organization because it offered them opportunities for greater involvement with issues of personal concern. One laywoman and 2 nuns reported that they had become acquainted with Catholic women's organizations while studying on a college or university campus. "Other" reasons given by one laywoman and one nun, were that the organization they joined carried on an official dialogue with the hierarchy of the church; and one respondent cited the Detroit 1975 conference as the occasion where she became radicalized concerning women's ordination.

Table 2.2 Main Reasons Given by Respondents for Recruitment into a Particular Movement Organization

<u>Main Reason for Joining An Organization</u>	<u>Status Group</u>	
	<u>Lay</u>	<u>Nun</u>
1. Respondent perceives that the institutional Church does not address issues of concern to her	7	8
2. Respondent was already a member or leader of another organization with similar goals	7	2
3. Respondent was introduced to organization by another woman friend	3	3
4. Respondent found in organization greater opportunity for activism in behalf of issue of interest.	3	2
5. Respondent came into contact with a Catholic movement organization at a college or university campus	1	2
6. Respondent read about organization	1	2
7. Other	1	1
8. N.A.	2	2
Total Movement Women*	(25)	(22)

*See: Appendix I for an explanation of variations in total Ns reported.

Categories 1 and 4 of the above Table express concern with various questions both internal and external to the official Church. Yet three times as many respondents (15 to 5) seemed to feel that these questions need to be addressed by Church policies, rather than by their own personal activism. This is true of members of both status groups. However, in Category 2, more laywomen than nuns reported having belonged to an organization with related goals, such as NOW, groups endorsing the ERA, e.g., the American Nurses Association, and the American Association of University Women. In addition this group of laywomen mentioned previous experience in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam movements of the 1950's and 1960's.

Self-Images of Movement Laywomen and Nuns

Movement respondents were asked a series of questions designed to elicit their self-image. Table 2.3 incorporates the results of a key question: "I am going to mention a number of possible reasons for doing the work you do. Could you tell me whether each of these was very important, moderately important, or not important in your choice of work?"

In constructing Table 2.3, the rating "very important" given in response to reasons presented for work choices was changed to "High"; "moderately important" to "Medium" and "not important" to "Low." The number of times a particular reason was selected by the respondent groups is listed in descending numerical importance in the "High" category. In both "High" and "Low" categories, the highest numbers indicate the most important and least important reasons for work choices made by all respondents.

Table 2.3 Respondents' Ranking of Reasons for Choice of Work

Reason for Choice of Work	L A Y			N U N		
	<u>R a n k i n g</u> High	<u>Med.</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>R a n k i n g</u> High	<u>Med.</u>	<u>Low</u>
personal fulfillment	16	6	1	12	5	1
serving others	15	7	0	14	4	0
feeling I'm part of a larger world	13	5	4	13	5	0
helping solve social problems	12	7	2	15	3	0
economic reasons	11	8	4	2	6	10
expression of my love for God	11	7	3	12	5	1
promoting equality for women	10	9	3	13	3	2
	(N=23)			(N=18)		

Sixteen out of 23 laywomen marked "personal fulfillment" as the most important reason for making a work choice. In contrast, 15 of 18 nuns marked "helping solve social problems as God's work" as the most important reason. The item "serving others" was the second most important reason for both status groups, chosen by 15 laywomen and 14 nuns. This was an unexpected finding, as the expression "serving others" has a traditional ring when applied to women's work. On this point, movement women studied might be compared to a national sample of 950 women who were parish members, including 52 nuns. They were subjects of the study Women and Ministry, carried out in 1980 under the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. When the women were presented with a similar question regarding reasons for choice of work, the second highest ranking item of importance (82% of 950) was "helping or serving others".¹ In

¹Florence A. Rosenberg, et al. Women and Ministry (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1980), p. 177.

the present study, both status groups also gave third place ranking to the item "feeling I'm part of a larger world". This suggests that movement members had sought involvement in the larger society. "Promoting equality for women" was more highly valued by nuns (13 mentions as important) than by laywomen, who gave it the least number of "high" rankings; i.e. 10 times.

Table 2.3 lists the two items ranked least important by laywomen: "economic reasons" and "feeling I'm part of a larger world" marked "Low" in priority four times each. In the "Low" category, nuns' rankings of reasons for work choices falls off sharply, with the single exception of "economic reasons," mentioned by 10 nuns as an unimportant reason. This was not surprising when one recognizes that traditionally, nuns received total economic support from their religious orders. Laywomen's choices demonstrate somewhat more scatter. This may also suggest that while nuns' self-image is more focused with regard to reasons for work choices, laywomen's approach is more diffused.

Summary

In their choices of highest ranking reasons for making work choices, sixteen of 23 laywomen were oriented to personal development while 15 out of 18 nuns demonstrated an orientation to solving social problems. The relatively high preference of nuns for working at social problems, including women's equality (ranked first 15 and 13 times, respectively) as opposed to laywomen's medium and low preference for these reasons (ranked 12 and 10 times, respectively) for work choices indicates divergent interests between the two groups. Laywomen identify primarily with personal, individual pursuits, and nuns identify primarily with institutional and cooperative enterprises.

Sources of Respondents' Personal Satisfaction

The foregoing findings were corroborated by an analysis of the results of the question: "From what do you derive the greatest personal satisfaction?" Table 2.4 summarizes the responses from both status groups, including NCCW women. I have grouped these responses into two categories: social and individual.

Table 2.4 Orientations Derived from Sources of Satisfaction
Reported by Both Status Groups

Orientations:	<u>Status Group</u>	
	<u>Lay</u>	<u>Nun</u>
<u>Social, cooperative</u>		
relationships with others	3	4
friendship with others	1	4
working with others	-	5
instrumental in developing others	4	4
participating with other believers	1	-
Total	(9)	(17)
 <u>Orientations:</u>		
<u>Specific, personal</u>		
family, children	5	-
success in my work	8	1
self-express, developing talents, discipleship	3	-
prayer	3	-
affirmation of ministry	1	-
independence	1	-
running	1	-
Total	(22)	(1)
Overall Total	(31)	(18)

Table 2.4 shows that the orientations of 17 out of 18 nuns are concentrated in the "social" category, while laywomen's are scattered along the two categories of orientation, with "specific, personal orientations" receiving more than two-thirds of the responses. In the "personal orientation" category, "work success" as a source of satisfaction was given priority the highest number of times (8). Another finding is that the greatest area of common interest between the two groups lies in the categories concerned with relating to and helping others. "Relationships with others" was marked four times as an important source of satisfaction by nuns and three times by laywomen. Four nuns and four laywomen mentioned being "instrumental in developing others", be it through teaching, advocacy, or simply lending moral support, as the activity giving them the greatest personal satisfaction. However, no one orientation received a large number of first place choices.

Five of the 11 married laywomen participating in the survey marked some aspect of family and children as providing the greatest personal satisfaction. Only one nun spoke in terms of "success" in her work, which is puzzling, since the high concentration of nuns' responses in the "social, cooperative" category would dispose them to value professional success. The scatter in laywomen's specific sources of satisfactions may well reflect their exclusion from the more prestigious church posts, and a wider, more diffuse locus of action they pursue outside official church circles by virtue of their lay status. It may also express the reality of their holding low-status jobs, with little hope for mobility in the civil society.

Lay and Nun Respondents View Each Other

Respondents were asked a series of questions designed to stimulate discussion of their respective images of the other status group. The most significant results emerged from replies to the first two questions, which were: "How do you understand the distinction made by the church between nuns and laywomen?"¹ and "Is there a communications gap between laywomen and nuns?" Tables 2.5A and 2.5B show how respondents, including NCCW women, replied to these questions.

¹In my original question regarding the distinction made by the church between laywomen and nuns, I had included the adjective "canonical" before the word "distinction." After 5 interviews, I removed "canonical" as a qualifier because several respondents had raised a question as to whether or not Canon Law distinguishes nuns from laywomen. In the 1983 revision of the Code of Canon Law, Can. 588 states: "in itself, the state of consecrated life is neither clerical nor lay." But it goes on to distinguish between a "clerical institute" under the governance of clerics, which presupposes the exercise of sacred orders; and a "lay institute" which does not exercise sacred orders. Several nun respondents alluded to the canonical element in their lives; one pointed out that nuns' orders must have canonical approval to exist. No subsequent respondent employed the word "canonical" to describe their status group, although many references were made to the requirements of their institutional structure. See: The Code of Canon Law, Eng. trans., (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. E. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), Canon 588, Pars. 1,2,3. In Roget's Thesaurus, nuns are listed with other nouns, under the entry "clergy". (New York: New American Library, 1978), p. 71.

Table 2.5A Laywomen's and Nuns' Perceptions of the Distinction Made by the Church Regarding Each Status Group

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Perception of Other Status Group</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Makes Distinction</u>	<u>Does not make Distinction</u>	<u>Don't Know, N.A.</u>	
Lay	23	6	2	(31)
Nun	17	5	-	(22)

Table 2.5B Laywomen's and Nuns' Perceptions of a Communications Gap between the Two Status Groups

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Perception of a Communications Gap</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Makes Distinction</u>	<u>Does not make Distinction</u>	<u>Don't Know, N.A.</u>	
Lay	24	5	2	(31)
Nun	18	3	1	(22)

The first part of Table 2.5 shows that 17 out of 22 nuns and 23 out of 31 laywomen perceived that the church makes distinctions between nuns and laywomen. Six laywomen and five nuns did not. Of the 11 respondents who did not perceive these church-made distinctions between laywomen and nuns, 8 were movement members (5 nuns and 3 laywomen) and 3 were NCCW members.

The second portion of the table shows the extent of perception of a communications gap between nuns and laywomen. Twenty-four out of 31 laywomen, and eighteen of 21 nuns believed a gap exists. Three nuns and five laywomen disagreed. These eight were in the group of 11 respondents who, in the first part of the table, did not report that the church makes a distinction between laywomen and nuns. The 40 respondents who replied that there was a church-made distinction between nuns and lay-

women tended to agree that a communications gap exists between the two groups. There were only 2 or 3 "crossover" responses included in the 53 interviewees' protocols; i.e., those who agreed that there was a church-made distinction between laywomen and nuns but disagreed that a communications gap existed between them, and vice versa.

The following sections present a summary of the respondents' discussions of the two questions shown in Table 2.5. Where it applies, I have added the results of the question: "Who is responsible for the communications gap?"

Laywomen Look at Nuns

Twenty-four of the laywomen's protocols yielded several themes which could be employed to characterize their own view of nuns. Not unexpectedly, lay respondents' overall perception was that nuns' lives were situated in a social context different from their own; i.e., they lived a communal lifestyle which itself was a component of a larger institutional structure. Four laywomen expressed the idea of "structure" in terms of religious orders; 7 laywomen saw nuns primarily as members of the institutional aspect of the church. When it came to discussing their own position, it was understood that a laywoman "would perceive herself as part of a larger whole; i.e., society at large." Several laywomen acknowledged that nuns' orders represented the church's historical recognition of the value of women outside the marriage situation. But the security afforded nuns by their institutional lifestyle was seen by laywomen as a liability when it came to nuns' understanding of "the world." A member of Catholics for ERA, who teaches at a major Catholic university, viewed the difference this way, although conceding

that: "It's a great deal less than it was": "...I used to think during World War II when we all had coupons, that we had to get food, shoes, and everything else with, that the nuns had no idea what a coupon was, because all those coupons just went to the motherhouse, and they never had to deal with them. While now that might be an exaggeration, it's not too much to claim that religious don't have the same worries concerning pay, rent, food, clothing, etc." Other expressions of nuns' dependency were couched in terms of: "they're beholden to the order," or "a nun is taken care of by the order."

Only six laywomen mentioned that nuns were better educated than they were. But some laywomen pointed out that religious communities are able to provide a financial base for advanced education for nuns, while laywomen "most often do not (study), unless they have an understanding husband." Laywomen gave some recognition, however, to the fact that nuns have been segregated and perhaps professionalized by their advance training, with the result, as one laywoman felt: that "they...don't want to deal with women who are grappling with other issues in their lives."

While I began the study with some notion about differences in outlook between laywomen and nuns, I was surprised by the degree of inarticulateness on the part of lay respondents when they described their own situations. Many of the laywomen easily provided specific content when discussing nuns' lives, but did not do so in referring to themselves. Nuns were "members" of something (meaning apparently religious orders), while laywomen were not; nuns had "commitment" to something, laywomen outside marriage did not; nuns did things that "were very easily spotted," while a number of laywomen concluded they were invisible in the church.

It cannot be said that laywomen as a group perceived nuns as "other-worldly." However, various aspects of nuns' lifestyle dominated in laywomen's discussions of them as a status group. An examination of the protocols of the 31 laywomen included in Table 2.5A revealed some terminology employed by laywomen when discussing nuns:

Table 2.6 Themes Employed by Laywomen when Describing Nuns

<u>Terminology Employed</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>
Nuns' lives have a "spiritual aspect"	12
Nuns are members of the institutional church	7
Nuns are "aloof"; "distant"	5
Nuns are members of a community	4
Nuns are more educated	3
Total	(31)*

*Included in the 31 mentions are 9 cases where laywomen also noted that their perception of nuns is in the process of changing.

For laywomen, nuns had a specific focus to their lives which was provided by integration into the church as an organization and as culture: i.e., the spiritual aspect. For 5 laywomen, this meant nuns were "distant," "aloof," cut off from laypersons.

Regarding the place of sexuality in nuns' lifestyle, there were traces of a "mystique of virginity" toward nuns on the part of several laywomen. Younger respondents, both single and married, had the most to say on this subject. A young computer programmer, a member of WOC, summed up the feeling regarding the "mystique": "Now I'm very good friends with nuns. But there is a lot of sense of differentness and sort of fear. There's also a certain amount of weird feeling by

laywomen about the whole celibacy thing. What does it mean that a woman has decided that she wants to be celibate, and how to relate to somebody like that. Mysterious, yes."

There is general uncertainty about how nuns perceive themselves in the area of sexuality. For both nuns and laywomen, being a nun meant suppressing one's identity as a woman. Some laywomen though the celibate lifestyle exerted a "neutering" effect on nuns. As one lay respondent expressed it: "Well, I am not convinced that nuns really see themselves as women in the same sense as I do. I think there is sort of a neutering process--some of that is going through changes. ...since Vatican II, orders began to question what they are all about...Nuns have so many concerns that I've already worked through...so that when they talk passionately about women's issues, I'm not sure we're talking about the same thing." When asked "Do you think their vow of celibacy enters into this 'neutering' process?" this respondent replied: "I don't think it should. Because what I'm talking about - I don't mean physical expression of sex; I'm just talking about themselves as women."

Other divergences in interest might be a contributing factor to cultural differences between the lay and nun groups. One interest which was spontaneously mentioned was the question of ordination to priesthood. Several laywomen felt that nuns' major concern was to work exclusively for ordination, while they were primarily concerned with convincing the Church to put their talents to better use.

Instances were given where nuns and laywomen found that every aspect of their shared daily lives brought the two status groups into conflict. A laywoman reported that during a period of migrant ministry in Appalachia with a group of nuns: "...the kind of stuff where every-

one brought their dishes to the sink after meals never happened" in the case of the nuns. When the group gathered each evening for prayer, it was made clear to the laywomen that it was "the nuns' prayer hour."

Source of status differences for laywomen came into focus most sharply when laywomen spoke of economic issues involving the two groups. The consensus of both status groups regarding job opportunities in the church is that it puts laypersons at a disadvantage. A nun member of WOC, who teaches in a Boston college, senses that "there are a tremendous number of nuns who are available to fill the traditional and not-so-traditional jobs in parishes, as teachers and in pastoral capacities." The question of a nuns' stipend, or the living allowance accorded nuns by diocesan officials or by their own religious superiors, is a prickly one. While stipends are perceived as instrumental to the survival of a number of schools and health care services, especially in economically depressed urban areas, as one laywoman put it: "...if they are willing to do that at very small pay, then they are like being scabs to a union." Some called for the establishment of a "just wage" scale, applicable to lay and nun groups alike, working in particular dioceses, and scaled to "the mean income for the diocese." The situation of a mother of three small children, member of WOC, with an M.A. degree in theology, is fairly typical of movement laywomen's sense of their plight regarding church-related employment. She reported a lengthy experience in the teaching of religion, which had not brought her much upward mobility:

...right now, I could be made Assistant Director for Religious Education in this diocese, but our bishop is looking for a sister "who is of the old mode"--and who wears a veil, for that particular post...many times, people are less qualified and allowed to run programs simply because they are ordained or

professed. ...I think this bishop is driving a wedge between women, because he is describing them as being married and lay on the one hand, and virgin and professed on the other...not in terms of professional competency, and this also¹ separates salary and benefit schedules for women in his diocese.

In the minds of lay respondents, both the institutional church and the religious orders are not consistent regarding the remuneration of nuns. Referring to nuns who now live in small groups or singly in apartments, a member of NCCW commented that "most lay people don't think it's fair" for a nun in such a situation to receive a stipend, because while doing the same work and living in the same circumstances as a layperson, a nun is remunerated as if she were living in the more economically supportive environment of convent life. A member of Catholics for ERA commented that when the church thinks of nuns as women, it treats them like laity; on the other hand, in certain instances "it's very anxious to emphasize the distinction between nuns and other laywomen; this tends to be in cases of employment, where it is still possible to employ nuns at noticeably lower salaries."

Nuns were perceived by laywomen as having more power because they were placed in a higher status category by the church. This was put succinctly by a laywoman member of WOC, who reminisced that in the 5th grade, she was taught that: "when you went to confession, the greater sin was to be uncharitable toward a priest, then toward a nun, then your parents, and finally, to your peers."

¹This situation has a historical precedent, as noted by Weber: "In the late Middle Ages it was possible for religious institutions to accumulate wealth because of...The cheap labor of ascetic bachelors who underbid the indispensable minimum wage required by married male workers...and the secular education offered by the cloister was able to underbid the education offered by married teachers." Weber, The Sociology of Religion, p. 218.

Laywomen also claim that most of the published writing about women in the church is done by nuns, as well as speaking up in public forums regarding church roles for women. Nuns recognize that among themselves, communication networks are superior to those of laywomen, and a lay local WOC state leader reported: "it's amazing that (in this state) 60% of WOC membership are laypeople, yet registration for the upcoming conference on women is mostly nuns." The reason offered for this discrepancy is that information of a feminist nature is not disseminated by pastors of parishes, where 99 per cent of laywomen are found. Nuns have their own communication organizations at their disposal, giving them better access to events of concern to churchwomen occurring in the U.S. A laywoman who was interviewed in the pre-testing phase of the survey, and who is an editor of a distinguished Catholic quarterly journal, put it this way: "There is no forum in the church between sexed persons. Celibate issues dominate the picture."

Laywomen thus gave content to the notion of a "communications gap" by mentioning cultural differences, economic disparity and superior power positions of nuns when considered in the context of the "official" church. Where lay respondents interacted with nuns in public situations, they reported that nuns "dominated" the scene: nuns displayed an "instant connectedness" between and among themselves which laypersons could not enter. "Code words" were reportedly used when nuns conversed with each other in the presence of laywomen, making for an exclusive approach to the subjects under discussion. Nuns were also "cliquish"; they projected a "sorority kind of thing". Some laywomen admitted that they had accepted an image of nuns as being authoritarian because they themselves had been educated by them, and this involved the feeling

that: "nuns...somehow aren't part of the same struggles." They expressed the conviction that nuns' understanding of women's networks is too narrow. They must now make room for the laity. A young law student, a member of WOC, explained the communications gap between the two groups of women in these terms:

I think it stems really from looking in two different directions. Laywomen have been much less concerned about their own position in the church in an active sense, than religious women have. And so religious women have taken over the leadership of the women's movement in the church. And I think that's to an extent unavoidable, because the lifestyle choice of the religious woman frees her to be involved in other things more than a laywoman is free to be. And I don't know if that gap is ever going to be completely closed

A number of laywomen pointed out that their only contact with nuns in the past was in institutional services, and that contact with nuns was further limited because their conversations revolved around "objective" problems, such as a child in a school or in a hospital. The quotes below describe some of these experiences.

An Illinois State Assemblywoman, member of Catholics for ERA and mother of seven daughters, put it this way:

I don't know if any one person is responsible (for the communications gap). I think it's happened that a lot of nuns have been doing much self-evaluation and thinking, moving in a direction. Growing, while a lot of laypersons just haven't known about it. When one goes to school, for instance, to talk to a teacher, usually the subject is one's child, the student, not the teacher's personal life. And in the hospital, the child as patient--the nuns' needs never get discussed.

And another member of Catholics for ERA, a free-lance editor, related:

"I think in many cases there probably is (a communications gap); because again, I think the average Catholic laywoman who is either a wife and

mother or a fulltime worker, or both, probably doesn't have a lot to do with nuns, except that if they have nuns in the school that her children attend."

About one-third of movement respondents claimed that inequality between nuns and laywomen is built into Church structures. When asked: "Who is responsible for the communications gap between lay and nun groups?" 10 of 26 laywomen and 7 of 20 nuns replied: "The institutional Church." The next most frequent response was "Differences in life-style;" given by 7 laywomen, 4 nuns and 2 of a separate group of 7 NCCW women. A third group referred explicitly to nuns in their responses: 2 laywomen and 4 nuns, 2 of whom attributed the gap to both nuns and laywomen. Two of 7 NCCW women also replied that nuns were responsible.

Of the 11 respondents who did not perceive any distinction between lay and nuns in Table 2.5A, 8 movement women reported that they had not experienced any difference when relating to a member of the other status group. One laywoman revealed that she had both a sister and a brother who had been members of religious orders, then left these orders for the "world". Two nun respondents pointed out that distinctions between the two groups are being erased. One nun saw women's struggles in the movement diminishing the social distance between laywomen and nuns: "Five years ago, I was much more aware of the difficulty. Now, because of the increased oppression of the church, the two groups have been forced into a kind of sisterhood, joined to fight perceived oppression."

While the 3 NCCW women in the group of 11 disclaimed any difference between laywomen and nuns, they nevertheless reported in various ways that they bore a "special reverence" for nuns, whom they viewed as

having a "separate calling." One NCCW member acknowledged that she had experienced a communications gap at meetings where nuns interacted with laywomen.

Discussion of those respondents who did not make a distinction between laywomen and nuns is very brief because those involved did not discuss at length the lack of difference between the two groups.

Summary--Laywomen Look At Nuns

In their discussions of nuns, half the 24 lay respondents emphasized the special quality of spirituality or "holiness" they felt nuns personified. A smaller group identified nuns with the institutional church. Laywomen also tended to express differences in terms of nuns' celibate lifestyle, which for some provides them with an aura of mystery. There was some identification of nuns with the demand for women's ordination but not to a great extent. Nuns were also recognized as having greater opportunities for higher education, especially in the field of religion and theology. Ten of 26 laywomen also felt that nuns receive preferential treatment in hiring for ministry on the part of hierarchy and clergy. Six felt this preference was detrimental to the interest of laywomen. They also felt that nuns had a higher status ranking in the church, and cited nuns' greater control over organizational networks and resources, access to media, greater opportunities for participation in liturgical functions and predominance in leadership positions in the Catholic women's movement.¹

¹Two of the three movement organizations in the study are headed by nuns and the other two important movement organizations not included, LCWR and NARW, are also headed by nuns.

Regarding the communications gap, laywomen felt that the two groups have historically been separate from each other: nuns were confined to the traditional women's ministries in Catholic schools and hospitals, while laywomen's activities were more limited to family, home and church; and that outside work tended to be voluntary.

Ambivalence in laywomen's perception of nuns surfaced most clearly over the question of personal freedom. Some lay respondents saw nuns as freer than themselves because nuns' life situation enabled them to engage in difficult ministries. At the same time, it protected them from the financial strains involved. Other lay respondents said that in exchange for the advantages of institutional life, which included a sense of purpose, nuns sacrificed freedoms, a price not exacted of laypersons. The constraints of nuns' lives were variously named as: "nuns are a kind of arm of the church," or: "they don't have the freedom of sociability that laywomen have."

The rapid modernization achieved by some orders of nuns regarding lifestyle and ministries, and the increased contact between nuns and laywomen in the women's movement is probably the basis for some laywomen's changing perceptions of nuns, mentioned in the discussion of Tables 2.5 and 2.6. However, although 14 of the 25 lay movement women interviewed were single, they expressed a realization that their lives have undergone a transformation much less radical than seems to be the case with many nuns. This in itself may contribute to the existing "gap" in the communication between the two women's status groups.

Most laywomen who did not see a great difference between lay and nun groups based this perception on personal experiences. Only two respondents discussed equality between nuns and laywomen in structural

terms. They stated the fact that both groups belong to the category of "lay" in the social schema of the church.

Nuns Look At Laywomen

Seven of the 23 nuns interviewed saw laywomen as more oppressed than they were. This oppression took various forms: nuns were favored by church employers for ministerial opportunities; laywomen were excluded from nuns' institutional support structures; laywomen felt inferior because they did not have the educational opportunities afforded nuns. In several cases, nuns mentioned that they were given a certain kind of status and even adulation not ascribed to laywomen. A nun member of NCAN highlighted problems laywomen face in the church: "Many of my friends are lay people and I see that their gifts are just not being recognized, as they could be. It's all right for them to bake cookies and make coffee, and be around. The gifts they possess for ministry, so valuable to the church, are being overlooked."

In a discussion of nuns' institutional lifestyles, a nun member of Catholics for ERA pointed out that their own lifestyle was subject to special church scrutiny and approval, while laywomen were simply ignored: "...but a single laywoman--they barely exist in the church! Where do you ever read a theological statement regarding the single woman? Where have you ever seen a church ceremony for the single woman?"

Nuns provided several instances where they perceived lay-nun differences sharply in those settings where hierarchy or clergy were present. One nun put it: "...where nuns and laywomen serve on official church panels; i.e., diocesan commissions or parish councils, and clergy are more likely to be in attendance--on these panels nuns predominate, if not in numbers, in influence with the clergy." Another nun, a local

WOC leader, also saw priests exerting "styles of deference" toward churchwomen: "...father will be very much less willing and able to intimidate me as a nun than he might if the woman that comes in feeling uneasy about birth control, feeling uneasy about her relationship to her husband...nuns, in general, are more educated, are articulate."

An examination of nuns' protocols shows that 15 nuns felt that their lifestyle is sometimes used by the hierarchy and clergy to divide women. A nun member of WOC commented: "Nuns and priests are often put together as a category. Very often, what is written and said about nuns is by males. Father will talk on Sunday about religious life, and puts nuns in with the men in their examples. Most women don't have a sense of who nuns are by personal experience, but from definitions given them by others. So the mode of relating comes from that; whether it's anger, hostility, or whatever."

Another nun member of WOC also sees nuns identified with the "official" aspect of the Church: "I see a confusion of roles very often--laity consider nuns as necessarily carrying the official views and language of the Church, and they don't separate our lives from those of the hierarchy. It divides the two groups of women."

A smaller group of nuns conceptualized the same problem as follows: the attitude of the church toward nuns is based on a "state of perfection" model, which makes distinctions feminist liberation theologians are attempting to eradicate. This view might also explain some laywomen's attitude, mentioned in the previous section, that nuns somehow are "holier" or called to be "holy" while laypersons are not. This group of nuns understood themselves as being socialized to be models for

the ascetic lifestyle, demanding complete celibacy, and that this has had a "distancing" effect on laity.

Some shifts in the fields of ministry traditionally carried out by nuns has incurred resentment from laywomen. The founder of NCAN told me: "You can't have a free labor force for 150 years in this country, and then in 15 years have that labor force, as it were, dissolve, leaving the hospitals, schools and so forth; and not have some complaints."

Nuns tended to discuss the communications gap between the two status groups in terms of differences in their total lifestyles which make for cultural conflicts. One nun claimed that a life based on vows of poverty, chastity and obedience: "...is definitely not the laypersons' style."

In the first and second instances, nuns' responses regarding who is responsible for the communications gap between laywomen and nuns were similar to laywomen's. Out of 20 nuns, 7 replied that the institutional church was responsible. Four of these 7 respondents perceived "patriarchy" as endemic to the Catholic Church. A second group of 5 nuns gave the reason "differences in lifestyle."

In economic terms, nuns understood the system of remuneration by living allowance both as an advantage and a disadvantage, when compared to laywomen. Fourteen nuns out of 22 asked saw this as a disadvantage. This group felt that the stipends paid to nuns was an important factor in maintaining unequal relations between the two groups of Catholic women. They recognized that the church is more willing to pay for nuns' ministry, albeit at a stipend level, than it is for laywomen's. One nun member of NCAN claimed that nuns' lower wages were only apparent: the

nuns are actually getting more because of "fringe benefits." When asked what these might be she replied: "convent life, job security, and car availability." Many nuns' congregations have experienced drastically reduced levels of new membership and are faced with the support of a burgeoning "senior" population.¹ This is one reason that the notion of a "just wage" for nuns continues to be elusive: "...we don't want to make our salaries appear so high that we can't work for poor parishes, yet because of the situation occurring in our communities, we have to ask for a higher salary..."

And the notion of job security for nuns is changing, according to a member of NCAN, who is one of the youngest respondents. She reported that her congregation had instituted a policy, followed by a number of religious congregations involved in active ministries, of "open applications," where nuns must compete for ministerial openings. In addition, this young nun pointed out that she had never worn the habit from the time of her entrance into the order: "I haven't had privileges nuns have had, nor do I want them."

Another significant theme in nuns' perception of laywomen was the area of marriage and family. In a discussion of inequality between the two groups of women, one nun admitted that because nuns are viewed as sexually inexperienced, laywomen tend to see them at a disadvantage, lacking in real understanding of what it means to sustain a family. A member of the board of a Conference of Religious Superiors pointed out,

¹ In a survey representing 75% of all U.S. nuns, it was found that between 1948-1952, 23,302 women entered religious orders; between 1976-1980, only 2,767 entered. See: Sister Marie A. Neal, Catholic Sisters in Transition (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1984), p. 20.

however, that Church officials in some instances give preferential treatment to nuns:

In the old days...there was an awful sort of hierarchic treatment of women; those of us who were pure and undefiled were more perfect, more holy, more something, than those who were touched by sex. And I think that's still behind some of those creepy priests who let nuns give out communion but not married women. Then, with Vatican II changes, it began to seem to many laywomen that nuns have the best of all worlds, with total freedom and no constraints. Now, ability to dress without looking bizarre. As a laywoman put it to me, it's like all the advantages and none of the disadvantages. But I think it's serious: there is growing resentment there.

A leader of NCAN commented on laywomen's resentment, noting that it possibly had a basis in a common perception of the "single" lifestyle: "There's a kind of freedom unmarried women have that sometimes seems most desirable to those who do have families and family commitments."

By their vows, nuns create a type of community life which all church members perceive as possessing distinctive qualities. It is understood as an alternative to, and sometimes is in conflict with, the biological family. A nun member of WOC who teaches in a state prison and was campaign manager for another nun during her bid for a State Legislature post, pointed out the difficulty by citing Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, who, she said, "speaks to that a lot":

She (Schussler Fiorenza) uses the terms "laywoman and nunwoman." She feels there is a false distinction between nuns and laywomen. I've heard her speak of this twice. Now I'm beginning to realize that married laywomen are striking me the same way--they talk about "My husband, my children"; and we don't have those, so we talk about our community. Fiorenza doesn't think we should talk about communities when nuns are with laywomen. And yet if that's our "family", how can we not?

Another nun acknowledged that as a member of a congregation, her lifestyle provided her with a structure of social supports unavailable to

laywomen, who are individually isolated in the "private" world of family life.

An unexpected finding in all the nuns' responses was a lack of clarity about the social world in which laywomen live. For example, questions of work and family which overburden middle class women were rarely raised at length by nuns. Only a few did so. On the other hand, the social supports of convent life also extend to subgroups within nuns' congregations who are lesbian in sexual orientation. In talking with a member of NCAN who heads a prominent ministry for Catholic homosexuals, she reported that in her experience, lesbian nuns tended to identify more with "straight" nuns than they did with their lesbian laysisters, because their lifestyle "connected them more with nuns."

Some nun respondents characterized celibacy as a "price" one had to pay in exchange for the spiritual and organizational benefits provided by religious orders. A former nun, member of NCAN, stated:

Organizations and networks for laywomen are very few, if any. There are some, but laywomen don't know about them. Now, religious women have that organization and access to it has been through celibacy, by and large. I mean, you have to make a commitment to celibacy. And as we look at the sexuality issues and realize that's one option, and not the only "holy" option as has been in the past, that calls for the creation of new forms of community. The gap is a sexuality one.

Summary of Nuns' View of Laywomen

Overall, nuns perceived laywomen as more oppressed than they were. Nuns were aware of advantages in their lifestyle along lines similar to those expressed by laywomen: they were more privileged in educational experiences, living in more supportive communal environments, and were, especially for older nuns, the recipients of social esteem. Nuns were for the most part aware of their higher status ranking within the

Church. They are favored by clergy in Church ministries, but close identification with the clergy distances them from some laywomen. They feel that their celibate lifestyle has an equally "distancing" effect on laywomen. Nuns did not, with one or two exceptions, mention celibacy directly as a basis of difference from laypersons when given opportunity to discuss variations in lifestyle. This suggests that as a group, nuns have not yet fully reflected on, or take for granted, or repress the relationship of their life of total abstinence from sexual relations to the lives of non-religious persons who are free to engage in sexual activity.

The process of experimentation with lifestyle and ministry carried out by congregations of nuns during the past 20 years has involved the pursuit of advanced educational degrees, both in theology and non-religious fields of study. Nuns are also engaged in a shift of identity which involves a struggle between traditional notions of religious commitment and socio-economic forces exerted from the wider society. The problem is compounded by the fact that the latter realms are viewed by the hierarchy of the Church as those properly belonging to the "lay" status group. Nuns feel that laypersons have not always understood their efforts to develop an increasingly professional view of themselves and their ministries. This "adaptation to the times" mandated by Vatican II has involved the abandonment of traditional service institutions managed by orders of nuns, such as schools and hospitals, which formerly operated to the benefit of Catholic laity.

Perceptions of Equality and Inequality between Laywomen and Nuns

Further refinement on the question of respondents' perception of lay and nun statuses was attempted by asking: "Can you give me an

instance where nuns and laywomen are equal (and unequal) in the Church?"

Table 2.7A tabulates respondents' notions of equality; Table 2.7B, their notions of inequality between the two groups.

Table 2.7A Instances of Equality between Nuns and Laywomen
Offered by the Two Status Groups

<u>Instances of Equality</u>	<u>Status Group</u>	
	<u>Lay</u> (N=23)	<u>Nun</u> (N=17)
<u>In Structural Settings</u>		
Both groups are equally oppressed	2	5
Both groups are marginalized	4	-
Both groups are discriminated against	1	1
Both groups are denied ordination	-	2
Both groups are ignored	1	-
Both groups are equal only when hierarchy deems it so	1	-
Total	(9)	(8)
<u>In Situational Settings</u>		
Teaching in schools, hospitals, dio- cesan and parish ministries	8	1
Working together in the women's movement	1	3
Competing for Church jobs	2	-
When both groups work together at differentiated tasks	1	1
In educational opportunities	-	1
As readers in liturgical settings	1	-
In the charismatic renewal movement	1	-
Total	(14)	(6)
<u>Other Instances</u>		
The two groups are not equal	-	(3)

Table 2.7B Instances of Inequality between Nuns and Laywomen
Offered by the Two Status Groups

<u>Instances of Inequality</u>	<u>Status Group</u>	
	<u>Lay</u> (N=23)	<u>Nun</u> (N=18)
<u>Nuns Are Superior/Treated as Superior</u>		
Nuns have greater resources, privileges	3	2
More respect given nuns; they are "on a pedestal"	2	-
Nuns are "cliquish", "know it all"	1	1
Nuns are preferred over laywomen in distribution of Eucharist; in liturgical reading	1	3
Official Church pronouncements favor nuns	2	-
Nuns teaching in schools intimidate parents; laity feel powerless	2	-
Nuns have better religious/theological education	1	1
Nuns are oppressed than are laywomen	-	1
Total	(12)	(8)
<u>Nuns Are Inferior/Treated as Inferior</u>		
Church hiring policies prefer nuns' low stipend	(3)	(5)
<u>Other Instances</u>		
Nuns have betrayed their traditional calling	1	-
Historically, a lack of communication exists between the two status groups	-	1
Depends on the effort made by each individual to be equal	1	-
Total	(2)	(1)
No Answer	(6)	(2)
Don't Know	-	(2)

In Table 2.7A, instances of equality offered could be grouped into two categories: structural settings, and situational settings. The source of equality ironically mentioned by almost equal groups of laywomen (9) and nuns (8) was that in one way or another, they were equally discriminated against. Non-ironic instances of equality between

laywomen and nuns were offered in the areas of traditional women's church work: teaching, hospital ministry, and various official church ministries, cited by 9 women (8 of these were laywomen). Four women thought working in the women's movement brought the two status groups into a relation of equality. The significance of the findings of Table 2.7A for the Catholic women's movement is that while the 17 responses under "Structural Settings" employed the term "equality" ironically to denote structural subordination, a slightly higher number (20) of respondents saw women themselves working for equality in specific situations involving groups of laywomen and nuns.

The source of inequality between the two groups tabulated in Table 2.7B revolves mostly around nuns' superior status. Twelve laywomen and 8 nuns gave scattered instances revolving around nuns' greater resources and privileges. Eight women (3 laywomen, 5 nuns) cited church policy of extending preferential hiring to nuns and a low stipend as factors contributing to inferior treatment of nuns.

The noteworthy result of Table 2.7B is that out of 31 respondents who offered an instance of inequality, only two respondents referred to both groups of women indiscriminately. When discussing inequality between laywomen and nuns, twenty-nine respondents utilized nuns as the reference group.

Only three out of seven NCCW women asked dealt directly with the question. All three replied that they felt nuns and laywomen were equal in the eyes of the Church.

Ranking of Issues for Catholic Women's Movement

Movement women were presented with a list of issues which I selected from movement publications and deemed to be of concern to them.

In order to ascertain the relative priority they would assign to each issue, I asked them: "Which of the following issues do you think should be given priority by change-oriented Catholic women?" Table 2.8 is a tabulation of their responses. The subjects were instructed to mark each item numerically from 1 to 6, with number 1 denoting the most important priority.

Table 2.8 Priority Issues for the Catholic Women's Movement

<u>Item</u>	<u>Number of Times Item Marked No. 1 in Importance</u>		
	<u>Lay</u> (N=20)	<u>Nun</u> (N=17)	<u>Total</u> (N=37)
1. Equal wage for women in church work	8	9	(17)
2. Legitimation of birth control practice	7	3	(10)
3. Women's ordination	4	5	(9)
4. Marriage option for celibates	7	1	(8)
5. Legitimation of abortion in cases of incest/rape	0	1	(1)
6. Legitimation of abortion on demand	0	1	(1)
Duplicated Total (26)		(20)	(46)

In constructing Table 2.8 I determined first an overall correlation (r_s) between rankings of nuns and laywomen on all six items presented. This was obtained by assigning an arbitrary ranking to each response ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 6. Low ranking means high priority, and high ranking means low priority. I found a high positive correlation between lay and nun respondent rankings of movement issues. Since this correlation is considered a crude measure, it might be more revealing to demonstrate the items ranked high and low by each group of women. Accordingly, Table 2.8 analyzes only the 37 out of 42 responses given No. 1 rankings for all six items by status group. Five cases were

discarded because of the total of six items presented, they had marked more than three items with No. 1 priority. I arbitrarily made the judgment that these respondents had not sufficiently discriminated among the six items to warrant analysis. In overall order for the 37 cases included in the analysis, the three highest ranking items considered priorities for the movement were: equal pay for churchwomen doing the same work as men, ranked No. 1 seventeen times. The second highest overall choice for No. 1 priority was: legitimization of birth control practices, and the third was: women's ordination.

The important findings from Table 2.8 emerge when responses are stratified between lay and nun groups regarding the birth control and marriage options. While laywomen designated "legitimation of birth control" as first priority, seven times, nuns did so only three times. Similarly, laywomen marked "optional celibacy" first priority seven times, and only one nun did. This suggests that except for abortion, laywomen are equally concerned with the sexuality issues presented to them as they are with equal wages for women. In contrast, nuns marked the equal wage issue first 9 times, while all other items were ranked comparatively low. Questions of marriage and family represented by the birth control and optional celibacy items were of equal importance among laywomen, but of much lower concern to nuns. These findings give empirical evidence to my leading question: that differences in outlook and interest may be divisive for the Catholic women's movement.

The low frequencies in the abortion categories reflect a certain moral hesitation on the part of both groups of women regarding this practice; an attitude discussed in detail below. The low frequencies regarding the abortion items also indicate the high degree of agreement

among all respondents that this is not an important (or discussable) issue for the Catholic women's movement.

Where items were ranked high or low, respondents were then asked "Why is this issue important (or unimportant)?" Reasons given for top ranking of equal wages were based on the view that in the Church, as in the wider society, power is economically based. Respondents report experiencing wage discrimination on pastoral ministry teams. They feel that higher salaries would make them more valued, and this in turn might enable them to set their own ministerial priorities. Some of the nuns expressed the opinion that economic independence would make their order less dependent on male structures in the Church. Respondents feel that Church wage policies concerning women are violating a claim to justice put forward by feminists and others in the wider society. It has been established that most people living in poverty in the U.S. are women, especially single female heads of households. Only one respondent gave "equal wages" a priority as low as No. 5, explaining that "it seems like nitpicking, when women are still unequal in other ways."

The high degree of concern displayed by all respondents with obtaining wage levels equal to those of churchmen puts them in direct alliance with a primary goal of the non-religious feminist movement, which seeks equal wages for women in the workplace.

The birth control issue was second in overall ranking of issues. It was the only item ranked by all respondents on higher priority levels 1 through 4, though, as indicated, this issue was rated much higher by laywomen than by nuns. Reasons given for ranking the birth control issue at the No 1 level were: that church policy on contraception epitomizes the total oppression of women; that church policy on this

matter has separated laity from their church; and that there are many troubled consciences which would be allayed by public legitimation of contraception. Concern was also expressed that a Papal edict prohibiting artificial contraception is being ignored. It was noted that the Church has yet to face up to this question; it is the most attainable of goals, because it is believed no doctrinal changes are involved in changing Church policy; it is an important element in the notion of responsible parenthood; many priests have been torn by the Papal position on contraception contained in the Encyclical Humanae Vitae (1968). One respondent who marked this item No. 4 in priority explained the lower ranking thus: "People have already worked out ways of living with this." When respondents ranked birth control below the No. 2 level, they generally echoed this sentiment. Westoff and Jones provide evidence that among Catholic and Protestant women, contraceptive practices have increasingly become similar.¹ In only two cases did respondents give a low rank to this item because they disagreed with artificial contraception on principle.

The item "women's ordination", although third highest in overall top frequency, was so ranked by only 4 laywomen and 5 nuns. This was surprising in light of the frequency with which it was mentioned as a main concern among both groups of women. Where it was given low priority, there was agreement that women did not wish to enter the priesthood as presently constructed; and there was some feeling that: "most women did not consider this an important issue." One nun

¹ Charles F. Westoff and Elise F. Jones, "The Secularization of United States Catholic Birth Control Practices," Family Planning Perspectives, Vol. 9 (1977): 203-207.

respondent did not see ordination for women as "liberating" at this time.

The relatively low ranking given the women's ordination item held even for respondent members of the Women's Ordination Conference. They did not rank this item differently from members of the other organizations studied. While a local chapter leader of WOC ranked this issue No. 1 in priority, she also gave the same ranking to the issue of abortion on demand.

In late 1982, The Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church, a group allied with Catholic movement women, undertook a membership survey regarding which areas of concern ARCC should address. The results were published in its newsletter of June 1983. One hundred eighty-five responses were received. Respondents were asked to rank a number of areas in priority order on a checklist to suggest directions for future ARCC programs. The largest proportion of the total, or 83.2% of 154 respondents, gave highest priority to "the issue of women's ordination." At this writing (March 1984) WOC is processing the results of its 1983 survey regarding future program focus. That survey elicited 510 responses. Question 14 of the survey asked: "What should be national WOC's three top priorities in the next three years?" The No. 1 ranked item was "grassroots education in theology/feminism; consciousness raising", mentioned 109 times. This was followed by "dialogue with hierarchy, especially bishops" marked 77 times. Women's ordination ranked third, with 76 responses. The WOC survey's preliminary results seem to confirm a tendency of the responses of this study: that the ordination question, when placed in a context of rights and freedoms for all women in the Church, acquires more importance, as in the case of the

ARCC survey of Catholic laywomen and men. However, in the narrower context of Catholic movement women's specific goals, it seems that feminist ideological goals acquire greater salience than ordination. The lower ranking given to ordination for women as a movement priority might also indicate some of the sources of alienation felt by movement women with regard to the clerical strata of the Church. The medium-to-low priority given equally to the goal of women's ordination by 20 laywomen and 17 nuns belies the claim of some Catholics that this is a "nuns' issue." At least in this segment of the Catholic women's movement, it does not seem to be the case.

"Marriage option for celibates" ranked overall fourth out of six in top frequencies, but since laywomen gave this item a No. 1 ranking seven times (3 more than the ordination item), it warrants some explanation. Reasons given by laywomen for giving it a No. 1 priority were: concern for priests who wished to exercise ministry but were prohibited from doing so because they were married. Thus, the priority was related to males (priests) and not to feminist issues. Optional celibacy, it was believed, would strengthen the priest's commitment to religious life; mandatory celibacy was a source of division between religious and lay groups; it was observed that priests leave for a supportive relationship but do not cease to desire to exercise ministry. Celibacy was regarded as a means by which the institutional Church imposed control over its clerical members. Several respondents qualified their rankings by explaining that they referred only to diocesan priests, not to priests who were members of religious orders. The latter group live a structured community life, similar to the nuns, while diocesan priests do not.

It is noteworthy that nuns marked the item concerning optional celibacy with the same low priority as they did the items on abortion.

Both abortion items presented were ranked at the No. 1 level only once each by nuns. No laywoman gave top priority to either abortion item. For both groups of respondents, the overall objection to abortion was on moral grounds. Objections took the form of outright disagreement with abortion, expressed by 13 laywomen and 10 nuns. Two laywomen who ranked the abortion item low felt the question "needs a lot more qualification and explanation." One nun commented that while she personally did not agree with abortion, she had adopted a "pro-choice" position regarding the practice. Other reservations expressed concerning the importance of abortion were: that it was the distantly-attainable goal for the Church; that it was believed to affect fewer Catholic women (one laywoman and one nun explained their low ranking by saying that "it doesn't apply to me.") Some objected to the use of the word "legitimation" in the question, and suggested it should be replaced with "allowed."

Respondents' Relationship to the Church

I attempted to elicit respondents' feelings of centrality or marginality in their relation to the institutional church by asking the questions: "What is your relationship to the Church now?" On the whole, respondents indicated that they felt a close relationship to the notion of "church." In most cases, this was accompanied by some expression of alienation from one or more features of the Church. Expressions employed were "a member of the loyal opposition"; "Catholic in good standing"; "a loyal daughter"; "a loving critic". A few admitted that for all their questionings, their relation to the Church deepened as

time went on. This was not unexpected, since none of our sample was so alienated as to have left the Church. (One respondent was wavering in this regard.)

An outstanding element in nuns' ideas of relationship to the Church was that of communal belonging. Several acknowledged that it was primarily through their religious orders that they related to "church". Another group of nuns replied that their need to gather with others to pray and to participate in ritual was met by the institutional Church. A nun member of WOC who is an expert in Vietnamese Hmong culture in her city¹ and directs educational and support programs for a large Hmong refugee population, relates to a "local" church in her life situation, creating community and rituals with others of her religious order and with those to whom she ministers. A leader of a major nuns' organization is alienated from the institutional Church but finds relationships with ecclesiastical authorities rewarding when "...this guy happens to be a nice guy." The mainstay of her image of the "church", however, is "little groups, like the ones I saw in Latin America, struggling over justice or on trying to be church, and so on. Then I feel like I'm part of something that's really important and important to me." Nuns mentioned several times being "deeply hurt" by the official Church; and of the search for belonging in small groups perceived by the hierarchy as "marginal." Yet on the whole, nuns projected an awareness

¹The Hmong peoples were formerly Chinese settlers who were unwilling to accept Chinese political and cultural domination. They migrated south to border areas, eventually settling in Laos, Thailand, and North Vietnam in search of new lands. Recent estimates of Hmong populations show that they are principally concentrated in the highland areas of Laos, where they number about 250,000. The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mankind (Marshall Cavendish, Ltd., London, 1974) p. 841.

that they are an important element in the institutional Church.

As typified by the nun who works with Hmong refugees, movement nuns' descriptions of "church" contained strong identification with small local communities oriented to a degree of struggle for social change. This corroborates the finding discussed earlier in this chapter, where nuns reported a high degree of personal satisfaction in "helping solve social problems as God's work." Their notion of communitas and church is closely tied to small, local groups where extra-familial social relationships are primary. Their sense of alienation from the official Church is lessened by the strength of these relationships and by the higher status ascribed to them by individuals and groups to whom they minister, and with whom they form communitas. Thus, where they disapprove of Church policies or are hurt by them, their congregational membership and social ministry fosters a self-image that theirs is the "true" vision of the Kingdom which Jesus attempted to realize, wherein the supreme value would be one of social justice.

All of these responses may be serendipitous affinities to the idea of renewal as originally conceived by the Fathers of Vatican II. Through the application of the key Conciliar notions of renewal, adaptation, and subsidiarity, congregations of nuns in the U.S. have enabled their members to develop a kind of "spirituality" of ministry based on personal convictions. In the case of movement nuns, they revolve around struggles for social justice, for whatever groups or individuals they encounter in their self-chosen ministries. This represents a significant shift of focus from institutional ecclesial ministries, a trend which became visible in the 14-year experimentation period allowed by the Council for religious orders, and discussed in Chapter 1 in greater detail. This

shift in ministries has multiplied the possibility that conflicts will occur between the interests of the Roman Curia and those of individual religious congregations (of men, as well as of women).

In responding to the question of their relationship to the Church, movement laywomen expressed a significant discontent with the official Church. They convey a sense that even while their faith position places them at the heart of the church, it is accompanied by feelings of sadness, regret and alienation. Grievances revolve around the hierarchy's attitude toward women; and in particular, married women. This manner of relating to the Church may partly explain laywomens' high degree of concern with the Church's policies regarding birth control. One laywoman is struggling with the decision to stay in the Church or to leave it. Another grievance expressed by laywomen was male domination of the liturgical practices in the Church. Many expressed their relation to the Church or lack of it in terms of whether or not they attend church on Sundays, or whether they are presently relating well to individual diocesan or parish clergy.

Summary-Relationships to the Church

While expressing a significant degree of discontent with the official Church in the wording of their replies, laywomen and nuns employed terminology which connotes a feeling of centrality rather than marginality in the church. Therefore, I must reject Mary Daly's notion of universal "sisterhood" as applicable to the analysis of Catholic movement women because her vision of female solidarity is located at the margins of patriarchal institutions.

Summary: Measuring the Tensions between
Laywomen and Nuns in the Movement

In the analysis of data gathered, the two status groups were seen to differ significantly in areas of self-image, (personal outlook), interests and source of status. In Tables 2.3 through 2.8 I have tried to ascertain the extent of these differences. In the areas of work preferences and sources of satisfaction, laywomen presented a self-image more oriented to specific, personal goals than did nuns. Nuns saw themselves oriented to working with social problems and valued social, cooperative situations more than laywomen did. The differences in lay and nunwomen's responses in Tables 2.3 through 2.5 cause me to modify my understanding of Victor Turner's notion of communitas as it exists among the women. The structures of organized religious community life made it possible to respond to the demands of Vatican II for experimentation. This resulted in more radical suspensions of traditional religious structures, especially in the case of liberal U.S. women's orders, and the subjection of nuns' social consciousness to a higher degree of "liminality." However, movement laywomen, in particular those burdened by work and family responsibilities, have not experienced the same kind of "liminality" regarding their social status. Laywomen, when questioned regarding issues for the movement, gave priority to more basic sexuality and economic questions, as shown in the relevant tables of this chapter; while nuns preferred more volatile social issues. It therefore cannot be claimed that Catholic women experience a common "liminality" as is the case with the social groups presented in the anthropological literature of van Gennep and Turner. Rather, Catholic women's "liminality" is more commonly experienced regarding a few

specific issues regarding the improvement of their Church statuses and which might be best exemplified by the issue of women's ordination.

A majority of 53 respondents asked agreed that there is a distinction made by the Church between laywomen and nuns (Table 2.5). To a large extent, they also acknowledged that a communications gap existed between the two groups. Laywomen feel that nuns' lifestyle, education and institutional resources confer higher status on nuns. These responses suggest some degree of resentment of what laywomen perceived as the favored position of nuns in their dealings with hierarchy and in church-derived work opportunities. Twelve of 31 laywomen (Table 2.6) when discussing nuns, stressed the "spiritual" aspect of nuns' lives. Nine laywomen, however, mentioned that their image of nuns has undergone a change in recent years.

NCCW, or non-movement women, spoke of nuns as deserving of their "special reverence." They did not indicate that their image of nuns was changing as radically as did movement laywomen.

Nuns, perhaps because their lifestyle is not central to the general norms of society, offered more explanations of themselves in relation to discussing laywomen than was the case with laywomen discussing nuns. The majority of 22 nuns who were asked the question acknowledged that the Church preferred nuns when hiring for ministries because they are able to subsist on a living allowance (stipend) and recognized that this was a source of resentment among laywomen. A smaller group of nuns mentioned that the historical divisions between lay and nun groups has created a lack of understanding among nuns regarding the joys and problems of laypersons in marriage and family situations.

When considering priorities for the movement as a whole, both nuns and laywomen ranked "equal wages with churchmen" as the top issue. But laywomen also gave high rankings to the items concerned with birth control and optional celibacy, in contrast to nuns' rankings. This difference shows that laywomen give salience to issues of importance to their particular status position; i.e., as members of families and in marriage relationships. It also suggests that on second opportunity to express their personal priorities for the women's movement, laywomen put forth issues of marriage and family which they feel need to be redressed by the official Church. These issues provide additional content to the source of laywomen's alienation from the Church. Their importance is borne out by results of studies carried out by Andrew Greeley at the National Opinion Research Center in Chicago between 1963-1974 on a general Catholic population. He found that the variables of birth control and Papal authority during this time period accounted for 65% of the decline in Mass attendance among the Catholics in his survey sample. Greeley expressed this finding as follows: "The birth control issue alone (as opposed to the "sexual revolution") seems to be the occasion for the substantial decline in religious behavior which has occurred among American Catholics since the early 1960's."¹ Greeley follows the definition of the institutional church regarding specifically "religious" behavior: it includes attendance at Mass and reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist. According to this definition, laywomen, therefore, may be considered more alienated from the official

¹ Andrew M. Greeley, Crisis in the Church (Chicago: Thos. More Association, 1979), cited in Conscience, Newsletter of Catholics for a Free Choice (Washington, D.C., July/Aug. 1983.): 5-6.

Church than are nuns because a central aspect of their "religious" lives has suffered a "chilling" effect. Laywomen are inhibited from seeking to relate to the Church through its central sacrament because Church officials have continued to issue condemnations of the practice of artificial contraception.

Elements of Solidarity between
Laywomen and Nuns in the Movement

There are a number of elements at work in the Catholic women's movement which impel the two status groups to an increased degree of solidarity. Some of these have already surfaced thus far in the findings of the study. They exist in the overall concern with the exclusion of women from decision-making positions in the Church; in the degree of agreement on the high priority of equal pay and the low priority of abortion as goals for the Catholic movement. Descriptions of relationship to the Church by the movement women as a group reveal a high degree of alienation from its official strata, though sources of alienation were different for the two groups. Seventeen out of 46 movement women agreed that the institutional church policy was responsible for the communications gap between the two groups; only 6 laywomen and nuns mentioned themselves as responsible for the gap. Half the movement respondents asked employed irony regarding the notion of "equality" among groups of Catholic women. They discussed equality in terms of being equally oppressed.

These findings explain to some degree the presence of a strong "in-group" feeling I perceived among the 48 movement women interviewed, despite the presence of differences discussed in the previous sections of this chapter.

Although the 48 movement women interviewed represent a tiny minority among all U.S. Catholic women,¹ in their self-portraits, they do not consider themselves "marginal" members of the Church. This may be understood by referring to the fact that a number of respondents occupy positions of leadership in the organizations or congregations with which they are involved. Their perception of their centrality precludes the application of Mary Daly's notion of "sisterhood," because it applies to a spiritual community outside the realms of patriarchy on the margins of society. In addition, the respondents' protocols give strength to Oberschall's refutation of the notion that populations segregated from the rest of society are those most likely to spawn protest movements. Oberschall found that groups with a high number of organizations and high membership network participation will initiate conflict groups.² Although nuns historically have existed in tightly-knit communities and in strong organizational networks, laywomen's demographic data also reveal a high degree of membership in overlapping movement organizations. Laywomen leaders create their own but often different networks. The personal histories of both lay leaders and members of the movement also contain a significant incidence of social activism. This may have made them susceptible to rapid recruitment into the women's movement and predisposed them to bloc recruitment regarding the equal wage and ordination issues and other grievances not yet fully conceptualized in ideological and programmatic forms.

¹Andrew Greeley identified 50 million Catholics in the U.S. in 1976. See The American Catholic (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977) p. 35.

²Anthony Oberschall, Social Conflict and Social Movements (N.J.: Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 125.

A changing self-image is particularly marked in the case of movement nuns. As early as 1968, Sally Cuneen documented a consciousness change among nuns, in a survey taken of the subscribers of the quarterly journal Cross Currents¹. Cuneen observed that: "...because of their current search for a new relationship to the world, ...the sisters showed the greatest concern for a theology of women." In a pre-Vatican II effort at modernization during the 1950's, nuns began for the first time to graduate in greater numbers than ever before from non-Catholic as well as Catholic colleges and universities. Demographic data of my own study reveals that movement nuns have achieved professional levels of education with a higher frequency than their lay counterparts. (See: Appendix III).

In an effort to diminish the gap between outlook and status among nuns and laywomen, the ideology of "sisterhood" in the speeches and writings of movement intellectuals has fueled attempts to achieve solidarity between the two status groups. "Sisterhood" as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, is a relatively new notion as applied in the women's movement. Out of 56 interviews conducted, only a few respondents used the term "sisterhood", despite the fact that a majority of respondents reported they had read Mary Daly and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Catholic feminist theorists whose work contains significant themes of sisterhood.

The following excerpts from nuns' protocols contain their assessments of the possibilities and problems of "sisterhood" between laywomen

¹ Sex: Female; Religion: Catholic (New York: Holt Rhinehart, 1968), p. 37. See also: pp. 92-108.

and nuns and between other groups of Catholic women. A nun member of the Central Committee of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious pointed out that even highly educated laywomen find that at times their accomplishments are insufficient to enable them to obtain a ministerial post or even a speaking engagement; they are passed over in favor of nuns.

About the elite laywoman-I mean in contrast with the average woman in the pew-they have a great deal of education, of exposure to many publics, their name has recognition value and all that. I often find them feeling that their merits and talents and abilities are not recognized because we are given priority, say for jobs, we are given priority for speaking engagements. They believe that it is in part a money problem... that we'll do it for cheap and they can't do that... I think they feel deprived in relation to their peers in religious life ...all women are underprivileged in the Church, but we are the least underprivileged, if you will.

This same respondent also recounted her experience of the divisive tactics employed by individual bishops among groups of women. This policy does little to foster solidarity among these groups of women.

Now...the bishops, at meetings where LCWR is represented, when we voice these things, we've been told millions of times: "the average Catholic woman doesn't think that way-they're very satisfied with things." So in a sense they use that kind of big group to undermine our efforts. When for example they (the bishops) were having endless discussions about whether to drop "men" from the formula for consecrating the host at Mass, they got a really angry letter from an ordinary, nice Daughter of Isabella, or someone like that, saying this is all a nuns' thing, we are not so offended by the word "men"...and resent having nuns speak for all women. This continues to be used by Rome as an important strategy; and the division of nuns against nuns also continues to be strong; Rome knows how to use that strategy quite well.

A nun member of WOC feels that there is little affirmation of sisterhood in the general society:

I continue to see a role for sisters as such. I feel that the sibling relationship has been the most neglected of all the roles in human relations. Sister and brotherhood are primarily

seen as something which happens when you are very young in the family; then these become fractured or distant relationships as you grow up. They don't have the strength of relationship as do husband and wife; parent and child. Yet I think that so many of society's problems are there: there isn't this feeling of sister or brotherhood.

However, the term "sisterhood" was used several times to explain the newly-emerging solidarity perceived between nuns and laywomen in the movement. A nun leader of NCAN remarked, in the course of discussing liberation theology:

That distinction (between nuns and laywomen) I think is in the process of being erased. I see this happening more among women than men, in North America. Somehow, maybe in our struggle together we have understood that the more we can free each other and the more we can call forth gifts in each other instead of setting up classifications, and saying we are sisters—we come together instead of staying apart.

While it would seem that differences found between lay and nun groups regarding outlook, interests and source of status would seriously limit the solidarity possible between the two groups of movement women, it must be noted that deliberate efforts are being made to minimize these differences.

The effects of steps being taken to increase unity between all movement women is, however, more difficult to assess. The principal element of the solidarity now existing between laywomen and nuns seems to be a common awareness of the powerless position of all Catholic women; and a more painful awareness on the part of the subjects of this study that there is a scarcity of opportunity to utilize their energy and talents in the service of the Church. Feminist scholars have constructed a theological basis for a new ideology of "sisterhood" based on the historical precedent of the ekklesia of women; at the same time, a number of movement nuns are emphasizing the "lay" aspect of their statuses. This has contributed to a common feeling of alienation from

the hierarchical strata of the Church. One-third of laywomen and almost all the nuns interviewed felt that hierarchy and clergy exploit differences between lay and nun groups. In response, movement women report a desire to achieve a new homogeneity between the two groups.

The search for status change among movement nuns is a function of their sense of powerlessness. They seem to identify increasingly with the lay stratum of the Church, as opposed to clergy. This tends to increase their solidarity with laywomen. Evidence of this is the practice of employing the title "Ms." and of dropping religious order identification when referring to themselves. In addition, there is an increased involvement of nuns in what heretofore was an area of life defined by official Church authorities as "secular" in character; e.g., questions of sexual practices. This has brought some nuns into confrontational attitudes towards Church authorities. The crises precipitated by these confrontations function to increase solidarity not only between nuns and laywomen, but to elicit "elective affinities" from other sectors of the Church whose interests are allied with those of movement women. The most recent case in point is the present controversy regarding a public statement made in October 1984 by U.S. priests, nuns and laypersons (including Rosemary Ruether and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza) in support of public discussion regarding the morality of abortion. On October 7, 1984 the names of 97 Catholic scholars and activists, among them 24 nuns, appeared in a full-page advertisement in the New York Times entitled "A Diversity of Opinion Regarding Abortion Exists Among Committed Catholics." The 97 were identified as "The Catholic Committee on Pluralism and Abortion." This was widely interpreted in the Church

as a response to New York Archbishop O'Connor's strong anti-abortion stand, which he had publicly taken toward the end of the 1984 Presidential election campaign. On November 30, 1984, the Sacred Congregation of Religious and Secular Institutes in Rome, which has administrative jurisdiction over all religious orders in the church, sent letters to the heads of the religious congregations of those signators it could identify as members. The priests and nuns would be expelled from their respective orders unless they publicly recanted their published stand on abortion. In December 1984 the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church issued a nationwide press release, decrying the Vatican ultimatum to religious superiors as a way of disposing of the controversy, and urging "people of good will everywhere, especially Catholics, to...support the women and men who have been threatened." As of January 1985, indications are that while some of the clergy and male members of religious orders involved have publicly recanted their statement of October 7, 1984, most of the superiors of the women's orders under Vatican ultimatum have indicated that they intend to stand by their unrepentant members. In January 1985, the Board of Chicago Catholic Women mailed out an appeal for signers and for financial aid toward the publication of a statement: "A Call to Dialogue." It calls on Vatican authorities to move from their threat of dismissal to a process of dialogue and invites "all Catholics" to sign the statement.

Laywomen also are calling for changes in their status. A number of lay respondents questioned church policies which distinguish between groups of Catholic women. Among several of the married laywomen interviewed, there was some resentment expressed at the Church for its continuing tendency to regard married person as somehow not capable,

because of their state in life, of exercising autonomous religious leadership. Schussler Fiorenza and Ruether, both married laywomen who exercise influence on the worldview of movement members, have in their published works attempted to break down the dichotomies of lay/nun and single/married among women. I refer to Schussler Fiorenza's notion of "bonding" between nun and lay groups, and to Ruether's work in early Church history. Ruether shows that the views on sexuality of Augustine and Gregory Nysaa, two fourth century "Fathers of the Church", elevated the status of the virgin and ascribed marriage a lower status in life.¹ The views of these and other "Church Fathers" on women have dominated the magisterium (teaching authority) of the Church in this regard.

Conclusion

The first empirical finding of the study was the main concern expressed by almost all movement respondents regarding women's subordinate position in the Church, seen mainly in terms of exclusion of women from decision-making levels of the Church. An additional group of women offered as an example of subordination, the low status accorded to women. More of the married women in the sample gave this example than did single laywomen. This reflects in part the history of the official Church view of marriage as a "lesser" calling than religious life, put forth by Paul, Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and others. The low esteem

¹Rosemary R. Ruether "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", in Religion and Sexism, edited by the author. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), pp. 150-183.

ascribed to married women in the Church has been treated by both Ruether and Schussler Fiorenza in their work.¹

The main concern as expressed by 4 NCCW women was to provide opportunities for advanced education for Catholic women. This reflects the first priority concern of NCCW's national agenda, as expressed by its President in her interview. A separate group of 3 NCCW women also mentioned women's low status in the Church as their main grievance.

None of the NCCW sample of 8 has attained a college degree. In addition, their median age (62) is 18 years older than the median age of movement women (44). Thus, the age and education variables probably account for the more conservative responses offered by the NCCW women as a group throughout the interviews, as compared with movement women. The latter's concerns are also expressed in terms of perceived inequalities between nun and lay status groups. In Table 2.5B, they appear as a "communications gap", and in Tables 2.7A and 2.7B, in terms of "pseudo" equality for all Catholic women, and inequality between lay and nun groups. The principal reason given for relative inequality between the two groups and their lack of communication is the degree of control the hierarchical church is able to exert over women. For both groups of women, this seems to be the main source of alienation from the institutional church. However, the content of this alienation differs between lay and nun groups. Nuns' alienation seems to stem from a status ambiguity which results in a waning loyalty to the clerical and hierar-

¹ See: Ruether, Religion & Sexism, pp. 150 et seq.; Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "Toward A Christian Feminist Spirituality," in an address to the conference "Women Moving Church," May 1981. Reprinted in the tabloid Women Moving Church, Washington, D.C.: Center of Concern, 1982, p. 25.

chical church stratas and an intensifying loyalty to laywomen. While nuns seem to be the recipients of superior status ranking from laywomen, they themselves feel they do not not receive that higher honor from the clerical strata. Several nuns mentioned that the clergy is more powerful than they are, given the overall social schema of the Church. This is aggravated by the fact that since the 1950's, when nuns were sent to acquire advanced educational degrees at Catholic and non-Catholic campuses, they experienced rising expectations in terms of opportunities for more responsible ministries. This may have been the result of their having acquired a more "professionalized" self-image. Yet nuns continue to be excluded from ordination and other decision-making positions in the Church. A great deal of frustration and chagrin resulted from the publication of one of the principal reasons, given by the Vatican in its 1977 Declaration, why women may not be admitted to priesthood. It seemed to revolve around the fact that one must be a male to qualify for sacred orders in the Church. A few nun respondents have reacted to this state of affairs by defining themselves as "pseudo clergy". This turn of events spawned a greater solidarity of movement nuns with laywomen, a stance which sometimes involves the denial of some traditional aspects of the religiously-defined lifestyle.

Laywomen's alienation derives from a resentment that in comparison with nuns, they are for the most part "invisible" in the Church, and are excluded from many paid ministerial posts therein, even as compared with nuns.

Despite the fact that when initially offering their "main concerns" respondents mentioned the ordination issue with second highest frequency, they ranked it lower when considering ordination among other

priority issues for the Catholic women's movement. This suggests a high but not pivotal degree of alienation concerning the present structure of priesthood existing in the Church.

Beginning from their fixed position in the ecclesiastical social scheme, movement women are attempting to build a solidarity based on an understanding of past sources of differences. Table 2.7A shows a slightly higher number of respondents perceived "equality" in positive terms than in negative ones. These aspects of their common endeavor, where "liminality" exists regarding justice questions for women, help to sustain the "in-group" feeling where laywomen and nuns are "sisters." But "sisterhood" is an ontological designation deriving from shared experiences, and laywomen and nuns in the Church are still differently situated regarding these experiences. Almost all the tables in this chapter contain evidence for sources of difference between the two groups. When confronted with questions of identity and concern, laywomen respondents displayed a pervasive consciousness that they are either "nonexistent" in the Church, or are ascribed the lowest status in its official rankings. Yet nuns, in their church positions, have a focus to their activities which laywomen do not possess. The latter have, on the other hand, a wider variety of situational identifications than nuns do. The nuns, in addition, gain satisfaction from the "sisterhood" of working in small focused groups. In effect, these groups provide a basis for sisterhood that is more personal than the cosmic sisterhood of their participation in the wider Church. When discussing their own status, laywomen were markedly inarticulate; by contrast, they offered more content when discussing nuns. For nuns, the higher status conferred by their lifestyle was negated by their feelings of relative powerlessness

when interacting with the clerical strata, a situation which could be defined as "status ambiguity."

Although movement laywomen and nuns reported feelings of alienation from the official Church in equal numbers, the sources' of this alienation differ. Movement laywomen find it more difficult to relate to a church which condemns their practices of birth control as "sinful", and which regards laywomen as virtually invisible. During the process of adaptation following Vatican II, nuns discarded numerous rules and customs which formerly prescribed their religious life and which had been scrupulously observed by the various women's religious orders; in many cases, from the time of their foundation. As one nun put it, "It's only the last few years that we've been liberated from rules and regulations that were up to our eyeballs." All the movement nuns interviewed have undergone this change in attitude. This means that this group of nuns will no longer be the bearers of certain religious conventions and spiritual practices which traditionally have been the basis for the status honor conferred on religious virtuosi. For nuns, the conscious stripping away of the uniqueness of status is a risky venture. Whether or not it will result in an improved status for movement women and by extension, all churchwomen, is a question for future investigation.

Solidarity between groups of Catholic women is relatively new in Church history. To the extent that it exists among movement women, as conveyed through the interviews, it may be seen, as Mueller suggests, as a response to their perception that the Church has betrayed women as a group.¹ Movement women point to official Church policies as the cause

¹"Dimensions of Religiosity," p. 13.

of their common subordination. The succeeding two chapters will investigate the intellectual sources which ground movement women's resistance to their subordinated statuses, and the elements which fuel their collective attempts to achieve their programmatic goals.

CHAPTER III

IDEOLOGICAL ALLIANCES OF THE MOVEMENT

In the previous chapter, I sought to assess the degrees of solidarity and of division which exist among the Catholic women studied. This chapter will examine the ideological dimensions of religious partisanship as it exists in the worldview of Catholic movement women. The nature and sources of the ideologies will be examined in detail. Before presenting empirical data on the subject, I will briefly describe the various ideological positions which movement respondents reported as having influenced their thinking.

The term "ideology" as employed in this study parallels that of Mannheim; i.e., it is "concerned with the character and composition of the total structure among concrete historico-social groups of advocates."¹ In seeking the source of movement ideologies, I will employ some of the ideas provided by the sociology of knowledge, which seeks to clarify and interpret the mode by which subjects conceive of the world in their historical and social setting. In doing so, I will investigate the women's worldview at the point where purely religious ideas and ideological orientations meet. Investigation of the sources of the

¹Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge. Orig. Ger. titles: Ideologie und Utopie (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1929), and Handwörterbuch der Soziologie (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1931); reprint ed. translated by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1936), p. 56.

various ideological positions taken by movement organizations and their members will enable me to ascertain how these positions underlie the assertions made by movement women regarding roles and statuses of Catholic women.

A corollary of the new self-understanding of the Church which resulted from Vatican II is that it adopted a world-affirming rather than a world-rejecting religious stance. Priests and religious in particular were encouraged to exercise more methodical and rational control over every aspect of their lives as they went about the tasks of "adaptation and renewal." I found that the various ideologies which influence movement women's thinking, whether considered "orthodox" or "heretical" from the viewpoint of the official Church, are all representative of the world-affirming element of religion.

Feminism and the Catholic Church

In Chapter 1, I pointed out that when dealing with women as a status group, papal pronouncements generally emphasize the importance of biological motherhood, a practice which results in limiting women's scope of activity, both in church and society. But other sectors of the episcopacy have suggested alternative roles for Catholic women. Joseph Cardinal Suenens, an influential Belgian theologian, in a book advocating expanded public roles for Catholic laywomen, and nuns in particular, commented on a observation made by Canon J. Leclercq on the failure of Catholics to find any affinity with the 19th century feminist movement and its notions of women's advancement:

There is no doubt that the position of woman as established by the laws and customs of the 19th century was not entirely in conformity with her rights and her mission, but it is regrettable that in this feminist movement there

were too few Catholics drawing their inspiration from the tradition of the Church. In general, Catholic intellectual circles adopted a defensive attitude consisting of defending, as if it were Catholic tradition, a civil code inspired by a man's world in the throes of becoming pagan...

While in his book, Cardinal Suenens goes on to make a persuasive case for the need to encourage Catholic women to pursue advanced education to prepare for more active public roles, he still was of the opinion (in 1963) that: "...there is nothing in women's advancement which militates against her submission to her husband at home."²

In its ideology of family life, the Church assigns a limited place to women, similar to that assigned to all women in the United States. Studies like Nancy Cott's point out how the idea of a limited "woman's sphere" shaped 19th century middle class domesticity in our country. Cott, in addition, asserts that: "the church was...even more instrumental, overall, in shaping female friendships."³ Thus, attempts to limit women to a domestic sphere of life provided ground for personal solidarity to develop between and among them. Perceptions of "woman's place" persist into the 20th century. Vidich and Bensman's study of the life of a small town in New York State after World War II included the analysis of the social structure of its four Protestant churches. They found that with regard to the role of ministers' wives in the churches,

¹Joseph Cardinal Suenens, The Nun in the World (Baltimore, Md.: Newman Press, 1963), p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), p. 179.

the most socially acceptable position for the wife was as "helpmate" to her minister husband.¹

The term "woman's place" has resulted in the privatization of women and of their work. In the 1950's and 60's, Betty Friedan, having personally experienced this privatization, responded to it by writing The Feminine Mystique (1963).² The book launched the present feminist movement in the United States. In light of the foregoing, it is hardly a coincidence that the title of the opening talk of the 1975 Detroit Ordination Conference, given by Sister Elizabeth Carroll, former head of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, was "The Proper Place for Women In the Church." In her talk, Sister Carroll called on U.S. bishops to give serious consideration and study to the question of the ordination of women to priesthood. At the same time the Detroit Conference was focusing on women's issues in the Church, national media attention was given to the first eleven Episcopal women to be ordained priests in their tradition, in the Philadelphia Cathedral, July 1974.

The writings of Joseph Cardinal Suenens referred to above represented an initial effort on the part of all sectors of the Church to fashion a stance less separatist vis-a-vis "the world." During the 1950's a major Catholic liberal quarterly, Commonweal, consistently published editorials which disagreed with the fact that there is a "Catholic" party line on all secular matters. Efforts of the official Church at change were focused at first on the pastoral level. Norms for

¹ Arthur Vidich and Joseph Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958). Reprint ed.: (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1960), p. 245.

² New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc.

liturgical changes were published in 1957; experimentation was encouraged outside the format of the traditional parish Masses.

From 1958 onward, the work of Catholic women theorists began to be published, read and discussed by Catholic women.¹ In fact, theological development of women's issues has received an important impetus from the first groups of women theologians who experienced discrimination on being admitted as faculty or students to all-male seminaries and synagogue schools during the 1970's and 1980's.¹ Over the past 25 years, a body of Catholic feminist thought has developed which can be classified into several distinct schools. These will be discussed below, and will serve as a basis for the analyses of our interviews. That analysis will attempt to assess the religious and ideological origins and influences upon the current leaders and members of the Catholic women's movement.

Religious Feminism

When movement respondents were discussing the statuses of churchwomen, I noticed that they employed religious feminism as their principal frame of reference. Broadly conceived, religious feminism is partly derived from notions of equality between women and men, stressed by adherents of the U.S. non-religious feminist movement which emerged in the 1970's. In the case of Catholic movement women, the ideology of equality is blended with religious elements. These religious elements are formed from various sources: 1) the religious beliefs of movement women, which have been informed by the new feminist hermeneutics issuing

¹Jo Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation (New York: David McKay Co., 1975), p. 197.

from Catholic Biblical scholars, philosophers, theologians, historians, sociologists and others; and 2) from the influence of feminists in the Jewish and Protestant traditions, who simultaneously emerged in the struggle for status advancement in their traditions. Some branches of these two traditions have now granted the rabbinate and the priesthood to their women members. Religious feminism may be considered to be at the base of other religious and ideological modes of thought displayed by movement women and discussed below.

Religious feminism functions in a manner to be differentiated from feminist theology, although for purposes of analysis, both modes of thought are at times combined under the category "religious feminism." Religious feminism seeks to focus on and to criticize women's low status rank in a particular religious tradition, with the aim of devising strategies to improve it. Feminist theology seeks to analyze the assumptions in the entire Christian (or Jewish, as the case may be) written and oral traditions which have appeared detrimental to women's status in these traditions.

To a lesser extent, movement women interviewed were influenced by the body of thought known as feminist spirituality. Its principal application might be that--as we shall see--it provides new categories which religious feminists can employ in discourse about God.

Latin America liberation theology, which came into being in the early 1970's, seems to have acquired some importance in the worldview of most women interviewed. A few respondents mentioned that there are problems involved in applying a male-constructed theology to women's issues: they feel it has not developed a specific analysis of the oppression of women on its theoretical level.

Feminist Theology

In the 1950's and '60's, efforts were made to publish literature dealing with "the woman question" in the Church. They were isolated and reflected the lack of a unified theory from which the advancement of women could be derived. In a survey in 1965, Sally Cunneen found a significant percentage of her 141 nun respondents agreed with the statement: "A new theology of women is definitely needed;...because women have been treated as second class citizens."¹ The history of NCAN (Ch.1) attests that from its beginnings, members engaged in sociological analysis of women's powerless position in Catholic ecclesial structures. The theoretical perspective was to be developed by religious feminists; and in particular, feminist theologians. Since the 1970's feminist theological scholarship has brought specific focus to bear on the traditional exclusion of women from important religious roles.

Among the most respected Catholic feminist theorists are theologian Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza and religious historian Rosemary Radford Ruether. Along with Mary Daly, whose work has been more controversial in its radical departure from Christian tradition, these women have produced a body of literature which attempts to demonstrate that women have made important contributions to Christianity from its inception and throughout its history. They claim that this has been obscured by male historians and theologians (the "Church Fathers") who have written and interpreted the orthodox history of Christianity from androcentric assumptions, and thus subordinated women. Elaine Pagels, for example,

¹Sally Cunneen, Sex: Female; Religion: Catholic (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), pp. xii, xiii; p. 37. Cunneen surveyed 695 women and 814 men readers of a Catholic lay journal on their attitude to churchwomen's roles.

has provided independent support for Catholic women's claims by suggesting that one reason why gnosticism was repressed by the early Church Fathers as heretical is that some gnostic groups granted women leadership of religious functions.¹

Rosemary Ruether has sought to illuminate the historical roots of the subordinate social position of churchwomen. In Religion and Sexism (1974)² she brought together articles by Christian and Jewish women to present a history of the relationship of patriarchal religion to both feminine imagery and to the psychic and social images of women. In 1979, Ruether published Women of Spirit,³ another collection of writings, with co-editor Eleanor McLaughlin. In the Introduction, the editors cite the book's sources, "heretical" as well as "orthodox," which make a contribution toward the recovery of important aspects of women's religious history. Ruether and McLaughlin express the hope that the book might present "paradigms of possible female leadership in various theological worldviews." The last section of the book contains a history of recent struggles in the U.S. of Episcopalian and Catholic women to obtain priesthood, in their respective churches. In New Woman New Earth (1975)⁴ Ruether undertakes an examination of sexist

¹The Gnostic Gospel (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 59-60. Pagels refers here to the Valentinian sect of Gnosticism. But Schussler Fiorenza has disputed the importance Pagels places on the place of women in Gnostic sects. Schussler Fiorenza argues that gnostic dualism "shares in the patriarchal paradigm of Western culture. It... defines femaleness relative to maleness." cf. Schussler Fiorenza's essay: "Word, Spirit and Power" in: R. Ruether & E. McLaughlin, eds., Women of Spirit, p. 50.

²New York: Simon and Schuster.

³New York: Simon and Schuster.

⁴New York: Seabury Press.

ideologies as they exist in the Christian religion and their relationship to human liberation. She argues that women's liberationists, in their analysis, must deal with the problems of class and race differences, and become self-critical in so doing. She advocates giving attention to women of oppressed classes, who cannot separate their struggle as women from that of the struggle of the poor or of oppressed races. In her insistence on consciousness of class and race factors, Ruether has allied herself intellectually with the claims of liberation theology.

Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza's principal contribution to Catholic feminist revisionist scholarship has been in the field of theology. In a journal article, Schussler Fiorenza discusses the nature of feminist theology: "...feminist theology deals with theological, ecclesial, and cultural criticism and concerns itself with theological analysis of the myths, mechanisms, systems and institutions which keep women down...insofar as it promotes new symbols, myths and lifestyles...and opens up new horizons, feminist theology shares in the concerns and goals of liberation theology." It is not purely an abstract theology to be studied, since: "...feminist celebrations (rituals) do not separate the sacral and the profane, the religious and daily life." Of course, effective theologies always influence daily life. But feminist theology derives its legitimation from religious ideas: "...the eschatological vision of freedom and salvation, and its radicalism from the realization that the Christian church is not identical with the kingdom of God."¹

¹"Feminist Theology" Theological Studies, December 1975: 616-17.

In the article, Schussler Fiorenza articulates four characteristics of feminist theology. Feminist theology: 1) is composed of non-dualistic categories; 2) recognizes the importance of new symbols and myths for women; 3) is allied with the goal of liberation theology (but, she claims, is more radical and universal in scope); and 4) contains an eschatological reference to the still-to-be-attained Kingdom of God, which it does not equate with the existing institutional Church. It is noteworthy that Schussler Fiorenza, like Ruether, employs orthodox religious sources for her theoretical constructions, as well as those which the official Church might deem heretical. In the above-quoted article, Schussler Fiorenza acknowledges her debt to such non-religious feminist writers as Vivian Gornick, Betty Friedan, Elizabeth Janeway, Theodore Roszak, and Sheila Rowbotham, among others.

Intellectual differences exist between Schussler Fiorenza and Ruether, and the ideas of radical feminist philosopher Mary Daly. They claim that Daly's social categories are located totally outside Christian religious ideas.¹ Daly repudiated the reformist position of her first major work of religious feminism, The Church and the Second Sex (1968) in the Introduction to the book's second edition in 1975. Henceforth, Daly would identify herself and her work as that of a "radical postChristian feminist."² Ruether claims that Mary Daly, among

¹See: Rosemary R. Ruether: "A Religion for Women: Sources and Strategies," Christianity & Crisis, 12/10/79:307-311. Also: Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: Crossroad Press, 1983), pp. 21-26.

²Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex. With a New Feminist Postchristian Introduction by the Author (New York: Harper Colophon, 1975).

others, has categorically rejected the Bible because it is an irredeemably sexist patriarchal work of literature. Ruether objects to Daly's labeling her own position as "radical," while designating as mere "reformers" those who find some use in the Bible tradition as it applies to women's issues. Ruether, while recognizing that all culture inherited from a male system has been biased, asserts that every significant cultural work contains valuable ideas other than the sanctioning of sexism. For her, the liberating tradition in the Bible is what she calls the "prophetic-messianic" tradition. This tradition includes the concept of God who will vindicate the oppressed. Ruether notes that her understanding of the function of religion is a far cry from the notion of "sacred canopy" offered by such theorists as Peter Berger as a paradigm of religion and which does not adequately explain the processes of religious change.

In 1983, Schussler Fiorenza published In Memory of Her, representing her most serious effort to date to construct a scholarly feminist theology of Christian origins. In this book, Schussler Fiorenza acknowledges her debt to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, whose critique of Christian Scriptures from a feminist perspective was published as The Woman's Bible in 1895. Schussler Fiorenza's approach to the New Testament is that, while it is a source for the patriarchal subordination and domination of women, it is also a source of revelatory truth. This demands the application of a new feminist paradigm of biblical hermeneutics. Schussler Fiorenza also criticizes Daly's notion of "sisterhood" as elitist: it is not the bonding of the oppressed, but rather a gathering of the ideologically "pure," the "elect" and the "holy." This elite locates itself on the margins of patriarchal society. For Daly,

women experience "non-being" in a patriarchal culture. They are erased from its language and its consciousness; and only those women who have moved into the sacred new feminist Time/Space outside patriarchy participate in history and in its making. Schussler Fiorenza counters that, if patriarchal history means non-being for women, then they are also excluded from early Christian history. Thus, Daly rejects the notion that it is possible to reinterpret early Christian beginnings from a Christian feminist perspective. For Schussler Fiorenza, the task of the Christian feminist is one which reassesses the androcentric assumptions of sacred scriptures and tradition. These reinterpretations are the basis and legitimation of a Christian feminist theology. She endorses Ruether's argument that it would be "feminist romanticism" not to reappropriate and transform patriarchal culture and androcentric texts.

Schussler Fiorenza sees her contribution as a reconstruction of the Gospel message so that it again explicitly places women in Christianity on a par with men. She claims this is not only a religious but also an important cultural-political task, since existing biblical religion still contributes to the oppression and exploitation of all women in our society.¹

The body of the work represented not only by these women authors, but by many others, has resulted in the ideology of "Christian feminism." A definition of Christian feminism which would perhaps elicit the widest agreement is the one given by Maureen Fiedler and Dolly Pomerleau, in the published results of their survey: Are Catholics Ready? Paraphrasing Webster's Dictionary definition of feminism, they state:

¹ In Memory of Her, pp. 25-31.

"Catholic feminism...asserts that women should have ecclesial rights equal to those of men. It believes that biological sex differences do not determine who should carry out the ministries of the Church, including priesthood. It recognizes a Scriptural call to equality: 'There does not exist among you male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus.' (Gal. 3:28)."¹ The passage just cited is from the New Testament letters of the apostle Paul; Schussler Fiorenza has hailed the Galatians quotation as "the magna carta of Christian feminism."² This passage contains Paul's teaching that, as a consequence of Christian baptism, "...there are no more distinctions...between male and female..."

Feminist Spirituality

Another intellectual system not based on sacred scripture which has acquired some allegiance among the women surveyed is that known as "feminist spirituality." While it shares the ideological connotation of "feminist" with the ideas of certain women theologians, it diverges from feminist theology in its major sources. Adherents to "feminist spirituality" reject sacred scripture as the principal blueprint for women's spiritual development. They celebrate women's experiences, unique life histories (storytelling), and their bodies as powers in the universe. Some groups personify this women's power as a god or a goddess; others relate women's powers to nature, or to relationships in the social sphere.

¹Are Catholics Ready? (Mt. Rainier, Md.: Quixote Center, 1978), p. 48.

²Theological Studies, December 1975, p. 617.

The first conference on women's spirituality was held in Boston in 1975, with 1800 women in attendance. In 1976, Lady Unique, a journal dedicated to theory and research on the goddess symbolism, was launched. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, two advocates of feminist spirituality, published a compendium of essays on the subject in 1979,¹ Christ's essay, "Why We Need the Goddess," emphasized the affirmation of womanhood in its totality. For Christ, the goddess symbol is important because: 1) it affirms the legitimacy and goodness of female power; 2) it affirms woman's body and the life cycles expressed in its changes; 3) there is a positive valuation of woman's will in the goddess-centered rituals, especially in feminist witchcraft circles; and 4) it is a revelation of women's bonds and heritage.² Woman's ties to the natural world also link this thought system with those feminists in the ecological movement.

As editor of Diving Deep and Surfacing (1980), Christ presents five 20th century women authors whose works embody the female "spiritual quest," or the search for a new female identity in the dominant patriarchal culture.³ For Carol Christ, the relating of one's story has a "sacred" character, and she agrees with Crites that storytelling orients one to "the great powers that establish the reality of their world."⁴ In Diving Deep and Surfacing, Christ also claims that women's mystical experiences differ from those discussed by classical theorists like

¹WomanSpirit Rising (San Francisco: Harper & Row).

²Ibid., p. 277.

³Boston: Beacon Press.

⁴Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," Journal of the American Academy of Religion (September 1971): 295.

Henry James, R. C. Zaehner, or Evelyn Underhill in several ways:

1) there is a notion, especially in Underhill's presentation, that reality is split into a dichotomy of spiritual and worldly realms, which, Christ claims, women's spiritual quest seeks to overcome, and
2) women often experience the great powers of mysticism in nature, or through social groups or movements, where the quest for truth or justice is rooted in the powers of being.¹

A more radical view of women's spirituality which seeks to re-examine the applicability of women's rituals, as they have existed and been suppressed, to modern feminism, is propounded by writers like Starhawk (The Spiral Dance and Dreaming the Dark written in 1979 and 1983 respectively);² Merlin Stone's When God Was A Woman (1976);³ and Z. Budapest's The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries.⁴ These writers may be said to pertain to the neo-Pagan movement, which differs from patriarchal religions in that it recognizes female deities, accepts female leadership in ceremonies and group structure, and encourages women to participate in the religious and civil realms of life. Starhawk is a licensed minister of the Covenant of the Goddess,⁵ a group which practices some of the rituals of the Old Religion. In The Spiral

¹Diving Deep, pp. 20-23.

²Starhawk is a pen name used by Miriam Simos. The Spiral Dance: Rebirth of the Ancient Goddess. New York: Harper & Row. Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics. Boston, Beacon Press.

³New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

⁴Volume 1. (Oakland, California: Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1, 1979).

⁵A coalition of Goddess-worshipping congregations that encompasses some 50 local congregations in 14 States. The Covenant was incorporated in the State of California in 1975.

Dance, Starhawk understands the goddess as a power inherent in all aspects of woman's life cycle: as Virgin, Mother, Lover, and Crone. On the other hand, she interprets the notion of goddess as: "...that which cannot be told; it is thousands of names; the goddess is omnipresent in each of us." The goddess also has a male aspect. For Starhawk, the practices of witchcraft bring about a balance to the traditional dualism of good and evil as envisioned by traditional Christianity and other religious thought systems. Starhawk works to bring polarities in balance: energy moves in cycles, and too much emphasis on maleness brings its own need to assert femaleness.¹

The practices and rites of witchcraft in a radical feminist mode center around an awareness of relatedness to the forces of nature. They also emphasize autobiographical elements which give meaning to the ritual and "bond" the participants, which may be male or female, into a cohesive grouping, conscious of its powers. Starhawk sees feminism as "the strongest mythogenic force at work today."²

In 1981, Judy Chicago, a California artist, conceived and mounted the exhibit "The Dinner Party," a 48-foot triangular table celebrating women's contributions to world culture in various historical periods. The exhibit was seen by the public in half a dozen major U.S. cities. Thirty-nine women, beginning with early fertility goddesses, are

¹The Spiral Dance, Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of Goddess (New York: Harper & Row, 1979). The need for restoring a worldview incorporating female values is one of the themes of Edward C. Whitmont's recent work. See: Return of the Goddess (The Crossroad Publ. Co., N.Y., 1982). While Whitmont, a renowned Jungian analyst, writes from the Jungian perspective, there is no reference to Jung in The Spiral Dance.

²Ibid., p. 196.

honored, each by a place setting that features an oversized, specially designed china plate and a needlework runner several feet in length which together tell the particular "story" of the woman involved. Oversize silverware and a large gold and enamel chalice complete the place setting. Chicago explains in one of the exhibit's catalogues that she employed the religious metaphor of "The Last Supper" as a vehicle to present the larger issue of feminine values, which she feels have been denigrated by both religious traditions and the civil social institutions.¹ The impact of the exhibit, Chicago hoped, would evoke a sense of the cumulative achievements and influence of women throughout history.

A major criticism of feminist spirituality, expressed by some religious feminists is that it has not developed a "transcendent" element in its insistence on immanence as the route to spiritual power. In her introduction to a compendium of 50 essays by women who offer alternatives to male-dominated religions, editor Charlene Spretnak claims, for instance, that: "In truth, there is nothing mystical or other-worldly about spirituality...it refers merely to functions of the mind."²

Nevertheless, the effervescence generated by shamanistic WICCA (witchcraft) rituals signals a re-emergence of female religious charisma among that segment of feminism known as "feminist spirituality." Whether its strength will be adequate to the task of breaking the "iron

¹Judy Chicago, Embroidering Our Heritage: The Dinner Party Needlework. (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Bks., 1980), pp. 262-269.

²The Politics of Women's Spirituality (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Doubleday, 1982), xv.

cage" of bureaucratic regimentation characterizing modern social life, as envisioned by Max Weber, is yet to be demonstrated. It seems certain that the bureaucracy of the Catholic Church, particularly at the high level of the Vatican bureau charged with defending the magisterium, will not tolerate public outbreaks of female liturgical leadership before granting approval of women's ordination. Official Church intolerance of liturgical functions led by women has a long history. In a recent work on the resurgence of Goddess symbolism, Whitmont quotes Bachofen on this point: "Through his mystery Dionysos...works on the imagination, that for the woman, is the starting point of all inner emotion and on her erotic feeling, without which she can do nothing, but to which, under the protection of religion, she gives an expression that surpasses all barriers...(in) women's roles as priestesses, seeresses, prophets and magical healers, they have been ruthlessly persecuted wherever the Christian church has set foot."¹

Liberation Theology

Liberation theology came to North American theological communities from Latin American theologians. Its best-known exponent is Gustavo Gutierrez, Peruvian priest and social critic, who published A Theology of Liberation in 1971.² In effect, it would be more correct to speak of "liberation theologies," as was pointed out by Gregory Baum: "...each such theology is based on a community struggling for freedom in a concrete historical society, and while they share in a common

¹Edward C. Whitmont, Return of the Goddess (New York: Crossroad Publ. Co., 1982), p. 139.

²Trans. and ed. Sr. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973).

faith...they do not wrestle against the same enemy and hence for the time being remain somewhat distinct in their efforts."¹ Ronald Robertson, of the University of Pittsburgh, a sociologist of religion, places the origins of liberation theology in various historical developments: 1) its ideational content derives partly from the work of Johannes Metz, a German theologian;² 2) from papal pronouncements regarding post-Vatican relations of Church and world; 3) efforts of Latin American theologians to forge an indigenous religious identity after Vatican II; and 4) the relationship of liberation theology to Marxism. Robertson concludes that liberation theology is not entirely indigenous to Latin America: in the 1960's and '70's, a shortage of priests in that continent brought replacements from the United States and Europe. Their particular theological outlooks doubtless influenced the content of liberation theology as it has been elaborated by Gutierrez and others.³

In his book, Gutierrez attempts to deconstruct two traditional functions of theology: that of defining revealed truth; and of defending orthodox Church doctrine which relays these truths to the body of the faithful. For Gutierrez, theology can only be effective in the modern world to the degree that it re-appropriates the element of

¹Theology in the Americas, ed. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 425.

²Johannes Metz, Theology of the World, trans. William Glen-Doepel (New York: Seabury Press, 1973. Original edition: Zur Theologie der Welt, Mainz, Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag, 1968.

³Ronald Robertson, "Toward a Sociological Understanding of Theologies of Liberation." Lecture given at the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Annual Meeting, Toronto, Canada, Aug. 23, 1981.

spirituality which was separated from it in the 14th century. Gutierrez finds in the Gospels some analytical tools which enable one to work for social change. He acknowledges his debt to Marx, who reflected on "the meaning of transformation of this world and the action of man in history."¹ This recognition also leads Gutierrez to rediscover the eschatological dimension in theology, which gives history a future orientation. The process of liberation requires the active participation of the oppressed.

In an interview for the National Catholic Reporter in December 1982, Gutierrez traced the development of liberation theology during the past 10 years in Latin America: "As persons, the poor have always been here, but not as active, conscious subjects, as protagonists of their own history. This, it seems to me, is new in Latin America during the last 20 years." In the same interview, Gutierrez notes that liberation theology is not directly transferable to North American Christian communities; rather, it is necessary to adapt its theory and practice to different locales. The historical precedent of liberation theology, at least in the modern era, is mentioned in Mannheim's analysis of the Anabaptist movement of the 16th century, led by Thomas Munzer, priest and scholar. Munzer dissented from the teachings of Luther, which he felt had compromised the true message of Christ by alliances with state apparatuses. The Anabaptist movement was based on the German peasantry as a class and spread with remarkable rapidity. The movement combined religious millenarian ideals and social revolution into a single revolutionary movement. Mannheim locates the Anabaptist Movement as the

¹ A Theology of Liberation, p. 9.

beginning of participation of all classes in the general political process.¹

The institutional implementation of liberation theology has fostered the beginnings of a populist church in various Latin American nations; and although the hierarchical divisions of a geographical parish system is still the prevailing organizational mode of "church," there is no doubt that comunidades de base, small local Christian communities engaged in worship, reflection and social action, are a significant new configuration in the Catholic church in underdeveloped nations. These comunidades sometimes spawn political movements which advocate "liberation" of oppressed stratas and offer resistance to the dominant political powers which they perceive as oppressive. In Nicaragua and Brazil, to name two instances, these liberationist movements have been perceived as a threat to "national security" and as such, have experienced severe repression. The proliferation of community-based local churches has attracted the concern of Pope John Paul II, who publicly condemned the notion of a "people's church" in Latin America during his visit to Nicaragua in 1983. Liberation theology's admixture of religion and politics has also drawn criticism from some sociologists of religion. Ronald Robertson of the University of Pittsburgh has expressed reservations concerning the work of liberation theologians, who "mix science and theology, as does fundamentalism."²

¹Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1936), pp. 211-217.

²In a talk given to the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Toronto, Canada, August 23, 1981.

In August 1975, about 25 Latin American theologians met in Detroit with 175 North American theologians, laypersons, members of minority races and women's groups. On the agenda were discussions of the possible impact and influence of the Latin American liberation experience on North American experience. In the Preface to the proceedings of the conference, published as Theology in the Americas,¹ Robert McAfee Brown states: "What makes the book significant is that it represents a whole new way of doing theology." Brown apparently was referring to the fact that at the end of the book, the editors formulate one of the goals for North American theology as: to explore the dynamics of power and powerlessness in present day American experience. Theologizing will thus no longer mean the study of ideas and sources. It will be done primarily but not exclusively by the oppressed themselves, and will arise out of their particular experiences. In addition, "the meaning of revelation is to be discovered in the midst of experience and struggle for change and conversion."²

The relationship of theology to the social sciences is not made explicit, but two points of certainty emerge: "One of the major responsibilities of Christians is to study more scientifically how (sociological) Christianity as a superstructure functions ideologically in maintaining domination."³ And, presented as a further goal for North American theologians: "...it is necessary to demystify the so-called

¹ Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976.

² Theology in the Americas, p. 435.

³ Ibid., p. 51. Gutierrez is quoting Philip E. Berryman here.

value-neutral analysis of social scientists who interpret U.S. reality."¹ The first point regarding how domination is maintained was echoed by Rosemary Ruether, in presenting to the conference a methodology by which feminist theologians might proceed: "The whole psychological and social structure of oppression is to set the oppressed in multiple relationships of intrastructural tension and therefore to allow most of the control to take place by the way the oppressed control each other... Only as these situations are drawn out in their particularities and we relate them to each other do we begin to get a total picture of what oppression is all about."²

Having set forth the main theoretical currents potentially undergirding Catholic movement women's claims, I would like to emphasize here that because religious feminism and feminist theology are based, in part, on sacred scripture, they contain a particularist transcendent element which intersects with ideological orientations. Catholic women's adoption of feminist ideology, in addition, places them in the ranks with U.S. liberal feminists who might work on a broader basis to remove sex-based injustices in the workplace, support passage of the ERA, and to a lesser degree with advocates of reforms regarding women's sexual freedoms. However, the feminism at issue in this study cannot on a priori grounds be reduced to an ideology, representative of middle class interests. As Weber points out, a religious ethic, even when influenced by the wider society, "receives its stamp primarily from religious sources, and first of all, from the content of its

¹Ibid., p. 435.

²Ibid., p. 373.

annunciation and its promise...reinterpretations adjust the revelations to the needs of the religious community..."¹ Therefore, it will be necessary, as the data are presented, to interpret the source and function of the religious elements in the feminism I found among respondents in this study.

Religious and Ideological Influences on
the Worldview of Movement Respondents.

The main concerns of movement women presented in the previous chapter revolve around an attempt to improve the statuses of all Catholic churchwomen. This includes the realization that churchwomen themselves must engage in the struggle to achieve it. Through participation in the movement organizations included in the study, members have become increasingly aware of the "intrastructural tensions" existing between laywomen and nuns. Catholic movement women are now engaged in attempting to demolish status differences which they perceive have existed historically between nun and laywomen church members. The resulting feminist solidarity emerging among the women studied, which I attempted to document in Chapter 2, may be based on religious or social worldviews held by movement women. In order to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of these worldviews, and how they function, I asked respondents a series of questions designed to ascertain the sources of their religious, ideological and intellectual influences.

¹From Max Weber, p. 270.

Intellectual Influences Reported by Catholic Movement Women

Early in the interviews, after each respondent was given opportunity to state her main concerns regarding women in the Church and to describe how she came to join various women's organizations, I asked: "which books have you read that have helped shape your ideas on these subjects?" Analysis of the responses reveals that 59 authors were mentioned by 44 respondents.

Categories were constructed from the kinds of books mentioned. Each individual group of books mentioned by each respondent was placed under the appropriate category. This allowed for an unduplicated count.

Table 3.1A shows that the principal intellectual influence on movement respondents' outlook on women's issues is religious feminism. Twenty-five women mentioned titles of books which included feminist authors, while 14 mentioned other works, and 5 responded that no books had influenced their thinking regarding women. In the first part of the table, it can be observed that 19 women gave groups of books which were entirely feminist-related; while the remaining 6 gave titles representing some feminist and some non-feminist authors. Liberation theology did not emerge as a single important category.

Table 3.1A Books Reported by Respondents to Have Influenced
Their Thinking on Women's Issues, by Category

<u>Categories</u>	<u>No. of Mentions of Category</u>	<u>Total Mentions</u>
<u>I - Feminism</u>		(25)
Religious feminism	9	
Feminist spirituality	0	
Both	7	
Religious feminism and liberal Catholic press	4	
Religious feminism and liberation theology	2	
Religious and non-religious feminism	1	
Feminist spirituality and non- religious feminism	1	
Non-religious feminism	1	
<u>II - Liberal Press</u>		(10)
Liberal Catholic press:		
Books	3	
Periodicals	2	
Both	1	
Liberal Catholic press and liberation theology	2	
Liberal Catholic press and non-Catholic periodicals	1	
Non-Catholic literature	1	
<u>III - Religious Literature</u>		(4)
Sacred Scripture and human rights	2	
Sacred Scripture - Eastern religions	1	
Catholic spirituality	1	
None		(5)
	Unduplicated Total	(44)

Authors represented in Table 3.1A with the highest frequency in all categories containing religious feminism were: Rosemary Ruether, 10 times, followed by Mary Daly, 8 times, and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza,

4 times. No one responded with a group of authors exclusively in the category of "feminist spirituality." However, women mentioned works in the categories of feminist spirituality and religious feminism 7 times; and feminist spirituality and non-religious feminism once. The former two categories appear under "Both" in the Table. Authors of works on feminist spirituality mentioned the highest number of times were: Carol Christ (6), followed by Judith Plaskow (4 mentions). In the group of 5 authors mentioned with the highest frequency, religious feminists Ruether, Daly and Schussler Fiorenza are Catholic, while those of the feminist spirituality school, Christ and Plaskow, are of mixed Christian and Jewish traditions respectively. Fifty-four other authors were mentioned with a frequency of three times or less. Women authors mentioned at least three times were: religious feminists Joan Ohannsen and Arlene Swidler. The only man mentioned three times was Leonard Swidler, who with his wife, Arlene, is co-author of one of the works mentioned. Thirteen other men were mentioned twice or less. These were: Catholic liberationists Paolo Freire and Jon Sobrino; pacifists Daniel and Philip Berrigan; spiritual writers Henri Nouwen, John Power, Thomas Merton and Matthew Fox; sociologists Gregory Baum and Jonathan Kozol; historian George Tavard; liberal theologians Hans Kung and Robert Kinast.

The formal study of theology and religious theory appeared to have different sources and impact than did sources of intellectual influence. To the specific question: "What theologies have you studied which have helped shape your ideas on women?", I received replies which could be classified into various theological schools of thought.

Table 3.1B Theologies Studied by Respondents which
Helped Shape Their Ideas about Women

<u>Theological school</u>	<u>No of Respondents</u>
liberation theology	11
liberal Christian theologians	7
feminist theology	6
women's spirituality	2
none	17
Total	(43)

Eleven of 43 movement women mentioned the formal study of liberation theology, but for the most part, specific authors were not named in this category. The 7 respondents who mentioned "liberal Christian theologians" did mention them by name. They included: Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan and Hans Kung.

To a lesser extent, women's disciplines were mentioned as having influenced respondents' thinking. This perhaps reflects in part that courses in women's studies are not as numerous on Catholic campuses as are those in mainstream theologies. In addition, the median age of movement women, 44, would place them on college campuses in the late '50's and early '60's, before the advent of liberation theology, and when courses in women's studies were virtually non-existent. Nevertheless, there is evidence that movement women have educated themselves on women's issues since that time. While feminist theology was studied formally by only 6 persons, the data gathered for Table 3.1A showed that 31 respondents mentioned religious feminist authors as having influenced their thinking about women. Again, while only 2 women reported studying

in the field of feminist spirituality (Table 3.1B), a much larger group, while discussing influences on their thinking, volunteered that they had been influenced by works in this field. Despite the higher number of respondents who reported formal training in liberation theology, a greater proportion of women reported interest in female authors who write on aspects of religious feminism.

Seventeen respondents said that no theological system presently contributes to their intellectual outlook. Some of this number indicated they had studied neo-Thomism, but disclaimed its influence on their thinking at this time. The number of movement women who claim not to have been influenced by any kind of theology attests to the fact that traditionally, theology has not concerned itself with women's experience and viewpoints. In addition, feminist theology is just beginning to be accepted as part of the curricula of some institutions of higher religious learning; and hardly any seminary offers courses on the subject.

Personal Influences on Movement Women

Respondents were also asked the question: "Which persons have influenced your ideas on the subject of women?" Responses were classified into two broad categories: members of the Catholic women's movement, and other persons. Movement women interviewed did not show consensus as to any one overall leader or role model for their movement. Only 14 of 44 women mentioned specific Catholic movement leaders more than twice as a personal influence. In four of the 5 cases shown in Table 3.2A, persons mentioned as influential by respondents were nuns. This gives additional credence to laywomen's perception, reported in Chapter 2, that nuns possess more powerful networks, through which they

can gain access to broader societal institutions such as major media; an advantage which applies to nuns both within and outside the Catholic women's movement.

Table 3.2A Personal Influences on Movement Respondents--
Members of the Catholic Women's Movement

<u>Person Mentioned</u> <u>as Influential</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>No.</u> <u>of Times</u> <u>Mentioned</u>	<u>Total</u> (N=44)
Marjorie Tuite	Nun	Pres., Nat'l. Assoc. of Rel. Women	6	
Theresa Kane	Nun	Pres., Sisters of Mercy, former head, LCWR	3	
Margaret Traxler	Nun	Founder, NCAN; Dir., Institute of Women Today	3	
Maureen Fiedler	Nun	Pres., Caths. for ERA	2	
Anonymous women:	Lay	Women's Ordin.	(5)	
leaders		Conference	2	
members			3	
		Total	(19)	

Respondents mentioned other persons who had been influential on their thinking regarding the position of women. These responses are categorized in the second part of Table 3.2.

Table 3.2B Personal Influences on Movement
Respondents--Other Persons

<u>Persons Mentioned as Influential</u>	<u>No. of Times Mentioned</u>	<u>Total</u> (N=44)
Women outside kinship network	30	
Teachers (sex not specified)	10	
Women's groups:	(9)	
WOC	3	
Religious order	2	
LCWR	1	
Academic women	1	
Justice center	1	
NETWORK	1	
Priests, ministers:	(9)	
male	8	
female	1	
Women inside kinship network	5	
Men inside kinship network	2	

What is immediately evident from Table 3.2B is that movement women influence each other in associational situations, as can be seen by the 30 times "women outside kinship network" was mentioned in this regard. To a lesser extent, teachers, women's groups and clergypersons also played a role in forming their ideas about women. Family members appear not to have exerted significant influences regarding movement members' outlook on women's issues.

Self-Characterization of Respondents
as "Feminist"

A series of questions was posed to respondents concerning the origin of ideologies regarding women. I wanted to ascertain which groups in society constituted an ideological "reference group" for movement respondents. In particular, I wanted to know to what degree

Catholic movement women saw themselves as "feminist" in the same sense as do their non-religious sisters, and how they diverged from this image. Because the NCCW women's responses differed sharply from those of movement women in this instance, they are included in the table below. Respondents were asked: "From your understanding of the term, do you consider yourself a feminist?" Thirty-seven of 46 movement women asked considered themselves feminist without qualification, while none of the NCCW women did.

Table 3.3 Do You Consider Yourself a Feminist?

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Mixed Feelings</u>	<u>No Answer</u>	<u>Total</u>
Lay	22	-	2	-	(24)
NCCW	-	3	4	-	(7)
Nun	15	-	6	1	(22)

Six nuns expressed mixed feelings about considering themselves feminists. Their explanations revolved around aspects of non-religious feminism. One nun qualified her reply by saying she had no hesitation being a feminist, but did about labeling herself as one; another nun explained that she did not endorse abortion, which she felt many automatically identified with feminism; another admitted to confusion about the term; one nun felt: "...feminism has many sides--'Cosmopolitan girl' is not for me--nor is 'the new woman'."

Two laywomen who had mixed feelings about feminism expressed the same reservations as did the nuns. One laywoman claimed she was a feminist, but: "...not the Gloria Steinem screamer type." The other laywoman expressing doubts about identifying herself as a feminist displayed the degree of allegiance to it which might be characteristic

of many Catholic women: "I have mixed feelings regarding feminism. I feel very strongly that women should have equal pay. Let me discuss the ERA just briefly: it's ridiculous that ERA didn't pass; it got bogged down with the abortion issue--I could never understand why they were all mixed into ERA. I could not support ERA for this reason. So, I'm a feminist in some respects."

No NCCW woman identified with feminism without qualification, and 3 of 7 asked did not consider themselves feminists at all.

I also wanted to learn the degree to which movement women were acquainted with religious feminism. I asked respondents: "Have you read any works of religious feminist writers?" It can be seen below, from the group of authors mentioned, that respondents did not distinguish between the various types of feminism. Only 2 of 7 NCCW women asked could name any religious feminist they had read; so they are not included in the analysis.

Almost half the movement women asked mentioned reading Rosemary Ruether, while one quarter of the women mentioned the works of Mary Daly and of Judith Plaskow. Other authors mentioned by 3 or more respondents were: Carol Christ, 8 times; Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, 6 times; and the Swidlers, 3 times.

Table 3.4 Religious Feminist Authors
Read by Respondents

<u>Author</u>	<u>No. of Times Mentioned</u>		
	<u>Lay</u> (N=23)	<u>Nun</u> (N=21)	<u>Total</u> (N=44)
Rosemary Ruether	6	12	(18)
Mary Daly	5	6	(11)
Judith Plaskow	5	6	(11)
Carol Christ	3	5	(8)
Eliz. Schussler Fiorenza	2	4	(6)
Arlene & Leonard Swidler	1	2	(3)

The remainder of the authors mentioned is not shown. Rosemary Haughton was cited once each by a laywoman and a nun. Sixteen additional women authors were mentioned two times or less by lay respondents only; and 15 additional women authors were mentioned two times or less by nun respondents only. In all, the 44 movement women asked mentioned 38 different women authors and one man. Only 7 authors were named by both nun and lay groups (Table 3.4).

Even though about half the nun respondents expressed mixed feelings about calling themselves feminist (Table 3.3), they named all 7 authors appearing in Table 3.4 with consistently higher frequencies than did laywomen, who professed themselves feminists in greater numbers (Table 3.3). From this analysis, I concluded that both nun and lay groups in this study read a wide variety of religious feminist writers, representing the basic ideological and religious support for the Catholic women's movement, be it feminist theology, religious feminism, feminist spirituality, or to a lesser degree, liberation theology and non-religious feminism.

Agreement and Disagreement with
Specific Non-Religious Feminist Goals

I also attempted to ascertain the degree to which all respondents in the study allied themselves with liberal non-religious feminist goals. They were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with four goals which might be important to adherents of non-religious feminisms. They were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with four statements. These were: "I believe all women should have the freedom to: 1) work in any profession or occupation of choice; 2) receive equal pay with men doing the same work; 3) choose any method of birth control, except abortion; and 4) choose any method of birth control, including abortion." Table 3.5 shows total agreement by all sampled groups with Items 1 and 2, concerning work and pay issues. For Items 3 and 4, the birth control and abortion issues, there were differences within each separate group sampled. The differences regarding Item 3 will be discussed below. Analysis of Item 4 showed that nuns appear to be more ready to accept freedom to choose birth control, including abortion, than were laywomen.

All 6 NCCW women responded positively to the first two goals presented, but 5 of the 6 disagreed with the goals of birth control and abortion for all women.

Table 3.5 Agreement or Disagreement of Respondents
with Four Non-Religious Feminist Goals

Status Group	Goal 1 Work in any profession or field of choice			Goal 2 Equal pay for same work as men			Total (N=52)
	Agree	Disagree	N.A.	Agree	Disagree	N.A.	
Lay Movement	23	-	-	23	-	-	
NCCW	6	-	-	6	-	-	
Total Laywomen	(29)	-	-	(29)	-	-	(29)
Nun	21	-	2	21	-	2	(23)

Status Group	Goal 3 Choose any method of birth control except abortion				Goal 4 Choose any method of birth control including abortion				Total (N=52)
	Agree	Qualif.	Dis-	N.A.	Agree	Agree	Dis-	N.A.	
		Agree	agree				agree		
Lay Movement	13	1	9	-	7	3	13	-	
NCCW	1	-	5	-	-	-	5	1	(29)
Total Laywomen	(14)	(1)	(14)	-	(7)	(3)	(18)	(1)	
Nun	8	1	12	2	11	1	9	2	(23)

In responding to Goal 3, the freedom to choose birth control methods except abortion, 13 movement laywomen out of 23 gave unqualified agreement, as did one NCCW woman of 6; while one movement laywoman gave a qualified assent to the item. Eight of 23 nuns agreed, and one gave qualified agreement. Nine laywomen and 5 NCCW women disagreed with Goal 3. While analyzing the responses to Goal 3, I found that the wording "except abortion" resulted in an ambiguity in the responses of those who disagreed with this item. Thus, 7 of the group of 9 laywomen who disagreed with Goal 3 are the same group of 7 under the "Agree" column of Goal 4: "Choose any method of birth control, including abortion." Thus, in actuality, only 2 laywomen of the 9 disagreeing with Goal 3 can be said to disagree with any method of artificial birth

control. Similarly, the group of 12 nuns disagreeing with Goal 3 contains 10 who did so because they would give broader assent to the statement in Goal 4, which includes the freedom to choose abortion. Thus, these 10 nun respondents are also in the group of 11 nuns who agree with Goal 4. We can then say that only 2 of the 12 nuns in the "Disagree" column of Goal 3 are disagreeing with the practice of any method of artificial birth control. Among those disagreeing with Item 4 were 9 nuns, 13 laywomen and 5 NCCW women.

The 5 NCCW women who disagreed with any freedom of choice presented in Goals 3 and 4 did so because they were unilaterally against any form of artificial birth control and abortion. This position is in line with current official Church teaching on birth control, which condemns both practices of artificial contraception and abortion.

I also wanted to see whether there were any differences between single and married laywomen's responses on the two items regarding contraception and abortion. Analysis of Goal 3 along this line yielded no discernible differences. Of the 13 laywomen who agreed with the Goal, 6 were married. One married respondent gave the qualified agreement, and 7 were single. Of the 9 laywomen who disagreed with this Goal, 4 were married and 5 single. Laywomen's responses to Goal 4, however, did yield a difference between married and single groups. Of the 7 who agreed with this goal, 2 were married and 5 were single. The 3 qualified agreements were from single laywomen. Looking at the 13 who disagreed with the practice of abortion, 9 were married and 4 were single.

While the numbers in the above analysis are small, they nevertheless seem to be an indicator that married women are more conservative in their outlook on abortion than are single women and nuns.

The women were then asked which of the four goals they thought important. For movement women, work and equal pay issues maintain their importance when envisioned as goals for all women. Sexuality issues are secondary, while abortion elicited a low response.

Table 3.6A Feminist Goals of Importance to Respondents

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Lay</u>		<u>Total</u>	<u>Nun</u>	<u>Total</u> (N=43)
	<u>Movement</u>	<u>NCCW</u>	<u>Lay</u>		
work in any field of choice	4	2	(6)	6	(12)
equal pay with men doing same work	6	-	(6)	4	(10)
both work and pay issues	3	1	(4)	2	(6)
sexuality issues	3	-	(3)	2	(5)
all items important	2	1	(3)	2	(5)
birth control choices	3	1	(4)	-	(4)
abortion issues	-	1	(1)	-	(1)
Total	(21)	(6)	(27)	(16)	(43)

The pattern shown in the above table appears in approximately the reverse order of priority when the question is put in terms of "What issues are unimportant?" There, sexuality issues are the most unimportant, while work and pay issues are less so.

Table 3.6B Feminist Goals Unimportant to Respondents

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Lay</u>		<u>Total</u>	<u>Nun</u>	<u>Total</u> (N=32)
	<u>Movement</u>	<u>NCCW</u>	<u>Lay</u>		
birth control choices	3	2	(5)	5	(10)
abortion issue	3	-	(3)	2	(5)
sexuality issues	3	1	(4)	1	(5)
none are unimportant	3	-	(3)	2	(5)
equal pay with men doing same work	3	-	(3)	1	(4)
both work and pay issues	1	-	(1)	1	(2)
work in any field of choice	1	-	(1)	-	(1)
Total	(17)	(3)	(20)	(12)	(32)

When compared with Table 2.8, the equal wage question maintains its importance for movement women. When laywomen apply birth control issues to all women (Table 3.6B), they acquire an unimportance they do not have in Table 2.8. This is probably because respondents know that for women outside the Church, use of artificial birth control methods does not carry a personal onus of illegitimacy.

A comparison with Catholic movement women's position on abortion as it appears in Table 2.8 in the preceding chapter shows that when considering abortion as a goal for Catholic women, 13 laywomen and 10 nuns out of 42 asked expressed outright disagreement with abortion, on moral grounds. In Table 3.5, disagreement with abortion on moral grounds was expressed by 14 movement laywomen and 8 nuns. This shows that whether considering abortion as a goal for Catholic women or for all women, Catholic movement women's position on the question does not change significantly.

Yet the fact that 19 movement women out of 44 agreed with Item 4 in Table 3.5, which included the right to choose abortion, contrasts with the low priority they gave to abortion when considering it as a goal for the Catholic women's movement. This suggests that 19 movement respondents have adopted a "pro-choice" position on abortion, meaning that while they themselves may disapprove of it, they would not oppose making abortion an option available to other women. This "pro-choice" position is in line with that officially published by the Board of Directors of the National Coalition of American Nuns (see Chapter 1). It also enables organizations like NCAN to attract support for its own goals from other non-religious feminist groups like the National Organization for Women, which advocates the right to abortion as one of its programmatic goals.

Discrimination within the Church

In addition to the foregoing analysis of respondents' identification with some major non-religious feminist goals, I tried to discover what ideological basis existed for respondents' position on the specific grievance of discrimination against women in the Church. The question: "Do you feel that there is discrimination based on sex in the Church?" brought a "yes" response from all 42 movement women asked--20 nuns and 22 laywomen. Four NCCW women also responded affirmatively to the question, while three said they did not see any evidence of such discrimination. The respondents who agreed with the statement were then asked: "On what grounds should it be eliminated?" Eighteen women quoted Scriptural passages or alluded to Scriptures in general as a justification for the elimination of the sexism they believed was evident in the

Church. Twenty women invoked non-scriptural notions of social justice; and 8 women thought the elimination of sexism could be justified both on Scriptural and on justice grounds. In the group of 46 respondents, 3 NCCW women justified the elimination of sexism on social justice grounds; one invoked notions of Scripture and of justice.

Attitudes to the Family and Childrearing

Respondents were asked questions regarding their attitudes on changing ethical standards and practices in the realm of family and childrearing. Responses to these questions are summarized below. The first was: "Do you think it's o.k. for a woman and man to live together without a marriage ceremony?" "Under What conditions?" Nineteen of twenty-two laywomen and seventeen of eighteen nuns answered "Yes." The majority of both groups answering "Yes" offered as a condition that some form of commitment be present on the part of both parties. None of the 7 NCCW women replied to this question in the affirmative.

The question "Do you feel that women working in the household should be compensated financially for the service they give to other family members?" elicited responses presented in tabular form below.

Table 3.7 Should Women Be Compensated for Fulltime Household Work?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Movement</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Laywomen</u>	<u>Nuns</u>	
Yes	11	15	(26)
No	8	1	(9)
Don't Know	3	1	(4)
Should be an individual choice	-	1	(1)
Total	(22)	(18)	(40)

Eleven of 22 movement laywomen replied in the affirmative, with 8 others replying in the negative. Sixteen of 18 nuns replied affirmatively; included in the 16 was one conditional response that it be left to the individual's choice. Of those replying "don't know," (3 laywomen, 1 nun) two of the 3 laywomen said this notion had not occurred to them before. To those replying in the affirmative, I asked the follow-up question "By whom?" Six laywomen thought the government should finance women's housework, five said it should be her spouse. Seven nuns thought it was government's task to extend financial aid to women working in the home, while 4 thought the spouse had this responsibility; and 4 didn't know. Nuns seemed more liberal than laywomen on the question of household compensation for women. Both movement status groups were divided about equally as to whether the government or the spouse should take this responsibility. NCCW women exhibited a scatter in their replies and thus were not analyzed.

Equality of Authority in the Family

Respondents were then presented with four family issues, preceded by the query: "Who should have the final say on this?" The issues were: 1) financial matters; 2) moving to another location; 3) disciplining children; and 4) education of the children. With one or two exceptions, the 40 women questioned indicated that both husband and wife should share equally in family decision-making. Nuns and laywomen had almost identical responses. Although all 7 NCCW women disapproved categorically with the notion of cohabitation before marriage, their views on equality of family authority was substantively similar to that of movement women.

Summary

Movement women on the whole were liberal in their responses concerning extra-marital relationships, but less so on the question of economic recognition for fulltime houseworkers. In the discussions of decisions affecting the entire family, all respondents showed a preference toward egalitarian relationships between women and men in marriage.

Religious and Non-Religious Feminism

In order to determine the strength of respondents' adherence to non-religious (secular) feminist ideology, movement members were asked if they perceived any differences between the religious and the non-religious varieties of feminism. NCCW women were not asked these questions.

About half the 45 movement women asked did distinguish between the two kinds of feminism. Twenty-five respondents saw differences between religious and non-religious feminisms; 9 saw no differences; 7 responded "don't know," and 4 did not answer.

Table 3.8 Respondents' Perception of Differences between Non-Religious and Religious Feminisms

<u>Distinctions Made</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>
Saw differences:	(25)
Employed terminology of:	
Religion	17
Ideology	8
Saw no difference	9
Don't Know	7
No answer	4
Total Movement Women	(45)

Among those who saw differences between the two varieties of feminism, 17 presented these differences in purely religious terms and 8 described the differences in ideological terms. In the group of 17 who saw differences in religiously defined terms, the emphasis was either on the shared faith aspect of religious feminism or the lack of shared faith in non-religious feminism. Three of the 17 referred to the abortion issue as a basis for making the comparison with non-religious feminism. The 8 who saw differences between the two feminisms in ideological terms expressed these differences in a widely scattered manner and show no central theme.

If the 9 respondents who saw no difference between religious and non-religious feminisms are added to the 17 who did see a difference, and expressed that difference in terms of religious feminism, then one can conclude that 26 out of the 45 asked were committed to religious feminism. I include below excerpts from the protocols of 3 respondents who replied to the question in religious terminology, and in the process, tried to articulate their notion of "religious feminism."

A lay member of the WOC national commission perceived differences in terms of those Catholic women, who although alienated from their religious tradition, remain within it in hopes of effecting change:

WOC--in contrast to NOW, one thing that has encouraged me is that WOC has really tried to keep a dialogue open with bishops. It really tries for face to face communication. NOW hasn't, and in some ways has alienated people with a certain harshness. But I'm not sure that WOC's approach has gotten us anywhere in the Church, except that we hear through WOC about groups of women in the U.S. who are worshipping without a priest. I think that gives us courage and provides a solidarity.

For this respondent, membership in a Catholic feminist organization, while representing a certain degree of alienation from the Church, also

functions to give a sense of being connected to its institutional strata.

A second laywoman illustrates a tendency to evaluate the social sciences from a religious worldview existing in this group. She believes that even the non-religious feminist base their approach on values that are ultimately "religious."

Faith orientation is a specific orientation to reality, including a theological perspective. I'm not sure that you can have any kind of anthropology that would be totally without a theological perspective. What I would call the non-religious anthropologists today would be those who have no theological basis or normative understandings of religion. On the other hand, these same women are looking into the psychology of what it means to be woman and are coming up with some new symbols and rituals, in effect celebrating womanhood in a religious sense.

A third lay respondent expressed a common bias existing among respondents who favored religious feminism. This "bias" is not shared by other feminists, in her view.

I think that the Ms. Magazine variety tends to be rather materialistically based and has a tendency to concentrate on the workplace and material rewards. I think religious feminism is based on a wish to see people treated as equals before God. I've been equally entitled to share in the worship of God at all levels and the leading of the community in prayer and worship. While it involves the social justice element in that it expects that women should be treated fairly in the world and in the workplace; it also, I think, is much deeper.

A further perusal of the protocols of the 8 respondents who saw differences between the two feminisms in ideological terms reveals a penchant in this group also toward religious feminism. I inferred this from the various ways respondents found a religious justification for their ideological statements of difference. Two respondents presented a wholly negative view of non-religious feminism: they employed terms

like "hatred of men" "bra burning" and "shrill aggressiveness" when referring to non-religious feminism.

Bias toward religious feminism was expressed by 3 other respondents of the group of 8, as follows: one felt religious feminists were more responsible and less radical in tone; and that they desired to stay within certain traditions. Two others saw religious feminism providing a support base and a validation for other spheres of life.

Another respondent perceived the faith element in Christian feminism as problematic in a sense not applicable to secular feminism:

One of the distinctions between religious feminism for Christians themselves is that they've got to decide what they're going to do with that. I think there are two basic decisions...some are going to work to retrieve the Scriptures for women, those I call revisionist feminists. There are others who say it is completely ridiculous to have a main religious symbol around men, there's nothing that can be retrieved from there...these are "post-Christians." Some of these don't feel that bad about the time they've spent being Christian; others are very angry because they feel they've been duped for x number of years --the time they were Christian. Secular feminists in America don't spend all their time deciding whether they want to be Americans or not. They just accept that, and so they have very different attitudes toward the heritage question.

Still another respondent in the group of 8 employing ideological terms for this discussion feels that Catholic feminists' primary agenda is to change the institutional Church:

I think the Catholic women's movement is part of the larger women's movement, but I think their perception is to change the institutional Church. We see it as influential and a power base within society; otherwise, we wouldn't bother to change it. So we work toward this at the same time trying to also give our energy to other women's issues, like equal pay and freedom over our own sexuality...so in some ways you can't separate it out; those are issues we walk with every day. But I think we could say...we are focusing on the hierarchy in the institutional Church.

There was only one response in the group of 8 couched in ideological terms which did not contain an explicit religious connection between the two feminisms. It came from a former nun, who is co-founder of a religious feminist group:

There's also the socialist variety (of feminism), the Marxist variety, etc. I think that feminism in any tradition, is women speaking--Jewish women speaking what's important for women within their tradition, or Catholic women doing the same within their tradition. Or, we can look at it in terms of feminisms within alternative political systems. I think the connection, the common thread is seeking alternatives to the patriarchal system.

Summary - Movement Respondents' Adherence to Religious or Non-religious Feminism

Whether or not the 45 who responded to this question did so in religious or ideological terms, further examination of their protocols revealed an overall tendency toward religious feminism. Seven of the 8 women who initially described the difference between the two feminisms in ideological terms ultimately justified their response in religious terms. Therefore, adding these 7 to the 9 who saw no difference and the 17 who used religious terminology in describing differences, we can say that 33 of 45 movement women who answered the question expressed an attachment to religious feminism.

Movement Women's Assessment of Feminist Spirituality

After asking respondents to consider various aspects of feminist ideology, I presented them with various aspects of feminist spirituality which are not confined to Catholic feminist thought. In Table 3.1A, authors who could be classified under "feminist spirituality" were mentioned 8 times as intellectual influences on respondents; and in

Table 3.1B, 2 women reported that their study of feminist spirituality had affected their ideas on women. In order to discover the outer limits of this influence, movement women were asked the following question: "Feminists like Carol Christ are developing a women's spirituality which revolves around aspects of female divinity such as the Goddess and The Mother of All. Do you think this development is helpful to the goals of Catholic women?" Table 3.9 shows that slightly over half of both nuns and laywomen felt these notions of feminist spirituality were helpful. Only 5 did not. The rest did not know enough about the subject, or felt the issue was problematic.

Table 3.9 Opinions on whether Notions of "the Goddess"
Are Helpful to Catholic Women

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Helpful</u>	<u>Not Helpful</u>	<u>Problematic</u>	<u>Don't Know About It</u>	<u>Total Movement Women</u>
Lay	11	3	3	3	(20)
Nun	11	2	1	5	(19)

The 22 women who endorsed notions of a female divinity principle in the Goddess movement said they did so because they could not identify with the male images of God enshrined in traditional Christianity. Some expressed the conviction that if the feminine aspect of divinity is recognized and given importance, then "the feminine aspect of humanity can't be ignored any more to the same extent that it has been." Several thought that improved status through wider acceptance for the "Goddess" notion would give new meaning to Mary's image in the Catholic tradition. The manner in which the historical figure of Mary has been presented is

recognized by Catholic feminists as problematic for women seeking improved statuses within the Church.¹ One respondent felt that studies of ancient goddess images and female myths might exert a significant influence on Catholic religious tradition:

I think if you went to the women on this block who are Catholic and talked about goddesses, that's not going to have an immediate impact. But I think that Carol Christ's findings will have an impact on traditional theology and that is going to have an impact on women's spirituality. Studies about the feminine in God done by Hebrew scholars and Christian ones are going to be eventually compared, and enrich our tradition.

Of the remaining 17 respondents to the goddess question, 9 gave answers which were mainly negative or problematic, and 8 said they did not know about the subject. The negative reactions to the notion of a goddess were: there is no advantage in conceptualizing God as female; there is a compounding of the theological problem around naming God by merely switching a sex-based image of God; and a prominent NCAN leader felt that movement organizations which had ordination as a goal had betrayed their purpose by incorporating goddess notions into their ideology. This respondent perceived interest in the goddess as a diversion of Catholic women's "real agenda": that of achieving equality of status in the Church. The problematic replies mentioned that it would push the centrality of Jesus to one side; that the primacy of the goddess notion does not match the experience of many Catholic feminists; and that some of the writing on witchcraft and women rejects the Judaeo-Christian traditions entirely.

¹For discussions on the problematics of traditional Mariology, see: Rosemary Ruether, New Woman, New Earth (N.Y.: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 37-62; also, Marina Warner, Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1976).

Although Judy Chicago's name was cited only once as an intellectual influence on movement women in Table 3.1A, several other respondents mentioned Chicago's exhibit of women's history, "The Dinner Party," while responding to other questions put to them. One woman related that she had brought her daughters to view the exhibit, and this had been a profitable experience; another volunteered that she had been instrumental in bringing "The Dinner Party" to the City of Chicago for exhibition.

There is emerging acceptance among movement women of the use of female images in religion. Of 39 movement women, more than twice as many (22) gave positive responses, compared with negative or problematic ones (9) regarding notions of the helpful aspects of a "Goddess" (Table 3.9). Some related the acceptance of a divine image in feminine terms to the improved status of women in religious traditions. This illustrates once again that movement women studied tend to justify their claims for equality in terms of religious norms, but not necessarily ones which could be considered exclusively Catholic.

Two-thirds of the movement women who knew about a notion of "the Goddess" were favorably disposed to its application to their situation. This finding invites comparison with Turner's description of "liminal" groups (see Ch. 2), and suggests the presence of a new symbolic development in the group, a hallmark of liminality.

Liberation Theology and Its Relationship to the Women's Movement

When considering Tables 3.1 and 3.4, presented earlier in the chapter, it seems that the strongest intellectual influence on movement women is that of the religious feminist authors. Yet the frequency with which respondents referred to women's status in the Church and to social

issues in general in terms of liberation theology suggests that this latter system of thought plays a more influential role in their thought processes than is evident from the specific data presented in Table 3.1B. When additional questions regarding liberation theology were put to respondents, they indicated substantial familiarity with it. They were first asked: "Are you acquainted with the notion of liberation theology?" Forty women replied in the affirmative. All 23 nuns said they were acquainted with it, as did 17 of 24 laywomen. The question was not asked of NCCW women. When requested to name leading proponents of Latin American liberation theology, 24 respondents named Gustavo Gutierrez.¹ The next ranking liberation theologian named was Juan Segundo, (6 times). Other liberation theologians were cited 5 times or less.

Table 3.10 Movement Respondents' Opinions of the Applicability of Liberation Theology to Women's Issues

<u>Applicability of Liberation Theology</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>
Applies	31
Does not apply	2
Problematic	4
Don't Know	7
N.A.	3
Total	(40)

On the whole, respondents were not able to articulate precisely the central tenets of this theology as it was originally developed in its Latin American context. However, when the women were asked: "Could you relate it (liberation theology) to women's issues?", 31 movement

¹This is more than twice the number of respondents who mentioned that liberation theology, which they had formally studied, was influential in shaping their thinking about women (Table 3.1B).

respondents of the 40 asked said they could apply some notions of liberation theology to issues directly concerning women.

The 2 respondents who did not think liberation theology applicable said it was not geared to women's issues. The 4 who said it was problematic indicated that its assumptions were either Marxist or patriarchal.

The 31 respondents who thought liberation theology could be applied to women's issues cited 4 major reasons. They were: 1) liberation theology reminds women of their oppressed situation and aids militancy; 2) it allows for a direct connection between theological relevance and personal experience; 3) it provides a basis for solidarity; and 4) it is action oriented. In the group of 31 respondents, 17 linked liberation theology to women's issues in terms of liberation from oppressive situations, perceived variously as freedom from "patriarchy"; from hierarchical and other systemic oppressions; from oppressive cycles of childbirth; from dependency and horizontal hostility between and among women; and the achievement of new social roles for women, involving autonomy and freedom. A smaller group of 7 respondents understood liberation theology as a tool for developing a solidarity among women which would lead to the power necessary to achieve their goals. Several others linked liberation theology to a general advocacy of justice, such as the opportunity for ordination. Other respondents felt liberation theology gave women a forum in which to articulate experiences which they felt the church ignored. A nun respondent expressed this idea: "It seems to me that it's related to the idea that it is people's own experience which determines how they are going to respond to life. Women's experience is not being listened to in the Church...so, that's why some

of the things are imposed on women because someone else's experience is considered the norm--not theirs."

In addition to the 31 respondents who were positive about the applicability of liberation theology to the statuses and roles of churchwomen, 2 respondents, a laywoman and a nun, did not believe that liberation theology could be effectively applied to women's issues. Both based their opinion on the fact that liberation theologians do not bring women's interests to the fore. As the laywomen put it: "It's very sexist. I don't really see any real consciousness among these activists regarding the liberation of women. There's a book--can't remember the title, but it's saying the civil rights movement was about the freedom of the black male, the Latin American liberation movement is concerned about latino males--so it seems again that the women's issue is taking last place."

Four respondents, two nuns and two laywomen, felt that liberation theology provided a viewpoint regarding liberation that at best was problematic for women. One of the four, a nun, disagreed with the Marxist class analysis employed in some liberation theology; while a laywomen expressed a doubt that women in Latin America would profit by a flowering of liberation theology there, because "it still operates in a patriarchal culture."

A further question designed to test respondents' ability to relate liberation theology to women's issues was: "Could you relate liberation theology to the distinction made by the church between nuns and laywomen?" Twenty-seven women of 44 were able to apply liberation theology's conceptual framework to the status of "lay" and "nun" regarding churchwomen. Eighteen of these were also in the group of 31 who said they were able to

apply women's issues in general to liberation theology. In the group of 27, 17 were nuns and 10 were laywomen. The major finding from these responses is that all who employed liberation theology to the lay/nun distinction made by the church hierarchy perceived that distinction as a means of social control, which results in either: a) a "false distinction" made by the church, which in reality views all churchwomen as members of a single class; or conversely, b) encouraging the bonding of women from both status groups, who have become conscious of their common oppression.

With regard to the power of liberation theology's conceptual scheme to remind churchwomen of their oppression, a laywomen observed: "If you accept the idea that each person has the strength and power within oneself, then it doesn't matter whether it's a nun or a laywoman. You look at who is oppressing both groups instead of fighting with each other. You look ahead and try to struggle with the person who is really doing the oppressing."

A nun respondent echoed the same sentiment: "I guess to deal with it is to look at ourselves first of all as women. And to recognize we're women called to live different lifestyles in different ways, but yet bound together by the same oppression and by the same systems that are oppressing us regardless of whether we are a nun or a laywoman."

Awareness that the hierarchy of the Church sometimes uses the lay/nun distinctions as a means of social control was also expressed as a false distinction. A nun respondent observed: "Nuns are considered as part of the laity in the Church, the hierarchy doesn't distinguish between them. They identify us together. The traditional divisions between nuns and laywomen is breaking down; I think this is a good thing."

And a laywomen had this to say: "I think liberation theology would have to say that those are false distinctions. I know that it would go back to a basic outline of what it means to be follower of Jesus. In particular, Boff and Sobrino (liberation theologians) are really strong on the point that this means a suffering in love, and does not mean an acquisition of privileges."

The foregoing quotations from laywomen and nuns alike attest to the fact that over half the movement women asked have taken some of the basic tenets of liberation theology and applied them to arrive at a new understanding of their particular social situation in the church (status distinctions, in this instance), and the "intrastructural tensions" inherent in this situation. Their testimonies reveal how these religious feminists have extended a particular ideology to include women's issues, even if this had not originally been intended.

Finally, respondents were asked to consider whether their readings of leading liberation theologians influenced their present thinking. Thirty of 44 movement respondents felt their thought had been influenced by liberation theologians; 3 did not; 2 didn't know. In 9 cases they were not asked, or did not answer the question.

Table 3.11 Proportion of Movement Respondents Whose Thought
Has Been Influenced by Leading Liberation Theologians

<u>Degree of Influence of Liberation Theology</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>
Experienced influence of leading liberation theologians	30
Did not experience any influence	3
Don't know	2
N.A.	9
Total Movement Women	(44)

Earlier in the interview, when 43 movement respondents were asked whether they had studied any theologies which helped shape their ideas on women, only 11 mentioned liberation theology (Table 3.1B). In response to the question analyzed in Table 3.11, almost three times as many respondents reported that liberation theology has influenced their thought. This points to the fact that while the movement women have not studied liberation theology as a formal discipline they have adapted it as part of their understanding of feminism. (Tables 3.1, 3.3 and 3.4)

The responses of the 30 women who were positive regarding liberation theology's influence on their thinking yielded several themes. The first concerns the extent to which liberation theology organizes and gives meaning to personal experiences. A nun member of the governing body of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious made a connection between liberation theology and religious feminism: "I think it begins with the methodology of the experiential, obviously the whole thing about consciousness-raising and the constant reference of women to their experience of oppression, both personal and systemic, is an important part of all this feminism...In addition to that, though, the sense that feminism has as liberation theology is that we have to liberate images of God which we've had in the past." Another nun respondent felt, like several others, that her readings of theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez and Juan Segundo "articulate a direction that could be taken; and I'm a person who learns only from experience. In other words, it (liberation theology) confirms my experience."

A laywoman summed up the effect she perceived of her readings of liberation theologians: "It informs my feminism."

The second theme which emerged from the responses was that liberation theology, for some, represents a reliable connection between one's faith life and the struggles which engage people.

Speaking of two feminist authors, Rosemary Ruether and Sheila Collins, who explicitly employ liberation theology in their analyses of women's situation in North America, a laywomen commented: "Collins and Ruether integrate race, class and sex divisions in our society and speak of this in relation to God, which is pretty much how I understand God. So, the faith dimension is very integral to their social analysis. This is very significant and energizing for me."

A nun cited authors employing liberation theology, who she said helped her become aware of the specific oppression of churchwomen: "They have certainly influenced my understanding of what theology is--broadened it; I'm more aware of the kinds of struggle in which people engage; the connection between faith life and those struggles." Another nun, a member of a charismatic prayer community, remarked that liberation theologians had influenced her "because they're Scripturally based people."

A laywoman put it this way: "(liberation theology) has really changed my thinking; it has given me a new pair of glasses to see the world of theology, to see the Church, and now, after 15 years of being in existence, the writings have begun to systematically show what the social implications of it are."

The third theme touches on the functional applications of liberation theology. This was recognized as valid, but limited, by a nun who remarked: "By reading them (Gutierrez, Sobrino) it has made me realize that there are a number of different theologies--I grew up with Thomism, but now I realize that the newer schools are appropriate for our world

today." And another nun, describing her intellectual make-up, emphasized her partial allegiance to liberation theology: "I would not say that I'm an adherent of liberation theology, but rather a dedicated eclectic. I take from some of all the thought currents. I don't think any one theological school can say it all today."

This emphasis on liberation theology would seem to contradict the results of Tables 3.1 and 3.4. In those tables, religious feminist influences seem overwhelmingly important to Catholic women, and liberation theology and other male-inspired movements were regarded as less influential. This suggests that movement women prefer to read other women writers who are developing religious feminist positions, while incorporating some of the methodology and viewpoints of liberation theology, without formal study of it as a theology. It is striking that of the 47 respondents asked to name liberation theologians of note, 24 women mentioned Gustavo Gutierrez, yet not one woman acknowledged that he had been a significant intellectual influence in her own case. This also suggests that in the minds of respondents, there exists a division between the application of the notion of "liberation" among the men and women authors whose works they read. While giving attention to the influence of male liberation theologians, some movement women seem to be educating themselves in an ongoing fashion by reading almost exclusively female exponents of feminist theology who incorporate the assumptions of liberation theology in their work; others are reading female exponents of women's studies who work from different feminist assumptions.

Summary--Ideological Alliances of
the Catholic Women's Movement

Interest in issues of concern to women were in evidence in Catholic publications from the 1950's onward. The findings reported in this chapter show that the strongest intellectual affinity developed and adhered to by Catholic movement women since the 1960's is that of religious feminism. Influences from secular feminism and religious feminism of other traditions has expanded the narrower concept of "sisterhood" as it has existed among Catholic women. In Chapter 1, I detailed how the three movement organizations under study joined coalitions of other women's groups seeking to advance the statuses of women, both in and out of the religious context. The National Coalition of American Nuns has exerted influence on Catholic hierarchy and on national public opinion regarding women's advancement in concert with the National Organization for Women, the American Jewish Committee, B'nai Brith, The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, Church Women United (comprised of women of Protestant denominations), Mormons for ERA, and Quaker groups. The Women's Ordination Conference has issued statements to, dialogued with, and testified before official episcopal bodies in behalf of women's ordination, together with Unitarian Women and the National Council of Churches. Maureen Fiedler, leader and founder of Catholics for ERA, worked closely with bishops and with those chapters of the National Organization for Women in states whose legislature had not yet ratified the Amendment, in hopes of influencing the political processes.

One result of the solidarity which Catholic women have experienced through their work with broader segments of U.S. women's groups has been to join with them in articulating the sense of specific oppressions of other women. NCAN, for instance, through its affiliate, the Institute of

Women Today, ministers to large populations of women prisoners in several state and county prisons, and acts as an advocate in behalf of female prisoners.

The notions involved in religious feminism afford movement women "purpose in perception," a term taken from Mannheim and discussed in the Introduction to this study in terms of his understanding of the activist element in knowledge. The activist element for movement women resides in each one's personal experience of her subordinated status in the church. This element is incorporated on the theoretical level by Christian feminist theologians, philosophers, historians and sociologists. Religious feminism also allows movement women to respond with the greatest degree of freedom to the directives of Vatican II. It reconciles their faith position, which looks to build a just society according to Christian principles, with feminism, which impels them to act in their own behalf.

Movement women give great ideological importance to scholars working within the broad parameters of religious feminism. Catholic authors Rosemary Ruether, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Mary Daly provide elements of feminist theology, philosophy and women's history. Non-Catholic authors Carol Christ, Judith Plaskow and Naomi Goldenberg provide elements of feminist spirituality. These writers, and many others mentioned but not listed in the tabular analysis of authors, provide the ideological links between the claims of movement women's religious worldview and those of a wider feminism.

An examination of the intellectual and personal influences on the women surveyed shows that they derive their ideational systems principally from other Catholics. Regarding social models, it was shown

(Table 3.2) that prominent women members of movement organizations provide the principal reference group for the respondents. This is a further impetus toward the construction of a "sisterhood" among movement women which at the present writing is still incipient. The previous chapter showed that most respondents agreed that a communication gap exists between nun and laywomen; subsequent discussion of this "gap" revealed that in the minds of respondents, historical and sociological causes exist for the perceived divisions between the two status groups.

Movement women's religious feminism provides a bridge between two collective social dimensions of their situation in the church: that of communitas, and of formal structure. The element of communitas resides in the protocols regarding religious feminism and liberation theology, where movement women showed that on the whole, they have experienced a consciousness of their own subordination in the Church, both as individuals and as members of a group. This group, to use Victor Turner's language, may be considered "liminal" in character; e.g., passing from one fixed point in a stable society to another. In the liminal phase, sharply defined roles and statuses have disappeared, and relationships are spontaneous, immediate and concrete; nor are they shaped by prevailing norms. Status reversal and anonymity are leveling mechanisms in the service of communitas. Regarding the first point, Catholic women in the study are beginning to level role and status differences as they are perceived between the groups; secondly, nuns' efforts to be "laywomen," in light of the basic clerical/lay dichotomy of the church, coupled with laywomen's budding aspirations for more important roles in the church, constitute a kind of status reversal for each group. This has the effect of leveling the two statuses and of increasing solidarity between them.

Solidarity, or sisterhood, powers the drive for structural changes regarding women's roles and statuses in the church. Some of these changes have been stated clearly in the programs of movement organizations, others are only in process of being articulated.

The liminal position experienced by movement women also represents a period of impoverishment of formal structure, resulting from the rejection of traditional viewpoints of churchwomen's "place" in the social schema of the church. The women are ideologically oriented to the past and the future as they actively attempt to develop new myths and symbols, an important aspect of the women's communitas in the church. This communitas is understood as similar to, but not identical with, the ekklesia of women described by Schussler Fiorenza (Chapter 2.) About half the movement women in the study feel it important to salvage feminine elements of divinity which existed in pre-Christian feminine archetypes. This group is interested in and knowledgeable about the "Goddess" movement, which incorporates elements of the past, but is oriented to future reconstructions of women's religious presence and powers into a not-yet-existent place in the formal social structures of the church. This blend of "old" and "new" is also found in Rosemary Ruether's thought, when she argues for the retention of some of the "old" elements in christianity, advocating "...a constant fruitful interaction and reintegration of critical principle and historical tradition."¹

When considering feminist goals for all women, Catholic movement women gave highest priority to the issues of equal wages and equal work

¹ Rosemary Ruether, "Asking the Existential Questions," The Christian Century, April 2, 1980, p. 376.

opportunities. These are also high priority goals for non-religious feminists in the general society. Catholic women are thus in line with the "liberal" variety of feminism when it espouses normative equality of women with men. But even these goals are legitimized by Catholic feminists, in part, on religious grounds. In their choices of responses to questions regarding sexism in the Church, movement women justify its elimination by referring equally to precepts of Sacred Scripture regarding equality between women and men, and to "secular" notions of justice which guarantees equal rights to women and men before the law. Thus, half the respondents understand sexism in the church as a problem of misinterpretation of the scripture; the other half perceive it in terms of a denial of broader human rights.

The unanimous espousal of the importance of work and pay issues given by movement respondents places them in line with non-religious feminists, and groups with similar goals, like the National Organization for Women, and groups seeking the passage of the ERA. I have discussed the manner in which these activities lead to an expanded notion of "sisterhood". But Catholic women also derive a sense of power from locating themselves in organized coalitions, a sense which eluded them when they were still isolated as a separate social groups within their own religious tradition. As described in Chapter 1, the leadership of the organizations studied is working to broaden the base of support for work and pay issues for groups within and outside the Church by working with non-Catholic organizations like the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, the Farmworkers' Union, the American Jewish Committee, and Church Women United.

The high degree of disagreement with the non-religious feminist goal of freedom of choice regarding abortion, especially marked in the case of laywomen, combined with a perusal of movement women's discussions of religious and non-religious feminisms, strongly indicates that movement women have developed a feminist position regarding abortion more congruent with the teachings of their faith. Those laywomen who disagreed with the idea of free choice of abortion for all women are presumed to oppose NCAN's "pro-choice, anti-abortion" position, presented in Chapter 1. Here again is evidence of some weakness in the "sisterhood" between lay and nun groups in the movement. The "pro-choice, anti-abortion" position is presumed to provide consistency between the low priority respondents holding this viewpoint gave to abortion as a goal for their own movement, and their higher tolerance of it when involved in a discussion regarding the sexual choices they see as desirable for all women. Thus, when Catholic movement women consider questions of sexuality affecting all women, they continue to do so in terms of religious feminism.

The great majority of respondents who were conversant with liberation theology felt its premises can be applied to a feminist analysis of the subordination of churchwomen. The prevalent mode in which they applied the term "liberation" is from structures and systems which oppress churchwomen, including liberation from male-constructed God language. The tendency toward inclusive language in the women's vision of "Church" is also a feature of a more "open" structure which they seem to prefer, rather than the traditional "closed" one which has prevailed to the present.

Liberation theology, when discussed by respondents in terms of its Latin American context, was not well understood. Nevertheless, movement women consider it of importance because it enables them to make connections between their religious belief and their experience as women. When asked to relate liberation theology to women's issues, thirty-one of the forty movement women did so; an equal number said it had influenced their thinking about issues of concern to women. A smaller number applied it to the "lay" and "nun" statuses imposed by the institutional Church. The principal finding regarding liberation theology is that despite the fact that its originators never included the situation of women in their analyses, movement women have taken its ideas and extended them to their own situation in North America. Similar to the methodology of feminism, liberation theology emphasizes reflection on one's personal experiences in a group setting. This has aided movement women to achieve a new identity and solidarity as members of a subordinated group in the Church. The premise of liberation theology that all theologizing must begin with personal experience serves as a basis for a status politics which Catholic movement women can justify through their religious feminism. This blend of religious and ideological elements allows movement women's adversary relation to official authority structures of the Church, where at decision-making levels, they are accorded a legitimacy which at best is controversial.

The strength of religious elements present in movement women's feminism precludes making a symbolic reduction to mere claims for civil justice for churchwomen. The ideology of feminism in this case is blended with feminist theology and history, so constructed as to be a

vision of the "Kingdom" spoken of by Christ, providing a powerful religious element. The discussions of the Goddess have shown that movement women are able to use their acquaintance with this movement to strengthen their conviction that the exclusion of feminine experience and female religious power has been detrimental to the traditional Christianity promulgated by the hierarchical strata of the Church. Their search for new myths and symbols constitutes a symbolic development which includes transcendent elements. These, however, may be considered heretical from the standpoint of traditional theology.

The incorporation of selective aspects of non-religious feminism includes a critical consciousness which functions to aid movement women to achieve a new subjectivity in the realm of religious knowledge. This position is an anti-dualistic one, in contrast to traditional teaching of the Church which polarizes the "worldly" and the "non-worldly" aspects of reality. As the conclusion of his investigation of the role of the sociology of knowledge, Mannheim rejects the dualism of an "as such"¹ sphere of knowledge; i.e., a knowledge not based on particular situations. It seems that Catholic movement women are similarly rejecting notions of a woman's sphere "as such" within the Church. Chapter 4 will show how the ideological and religious sources which movement women draw upon to justify their programs are also the base for their ethos of justice. In the process of putting forward their claims, movement women are beginning to demonstrate several styles of power, which I will attempt to delineate in Chapter 5.

¹Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovitch, 1936), pp. 301-306.

CHAPTER IV

THE ETHOS OF JUSTICE AND ITS APPLICATION TO WOMEN'S ORDINATION

In Chapter 2, I attempted to portray the unity and the strains in solidarity between nun and lay groups as they grapple with various issues that concern their movement. I found that laywomen and nuns are attempting to narrow status distinctions, in order to create ground for the growth of solidarity between the two groups. In Chapter 3 we have seen how the ideologies of religious feminism and liberation theology are incorporated in the movement women's efforts to justify their claims. Insofar as possible I have tried to trace the process by which the respondents, within movement networks, have connected elements of feminist liberation, derived from the non-religious feminist movement in the U.S., and of "liberation from oppression" derived from the civil rights movement here and Latin American liberation theology. Ideas of solidarity and ideology, which give much of the Catholic women's movement its impetus, may also combine to form the base of the third element of movement women's worldview, or its ethos¹ of justice. These three dimensions, which I employ to analyze the Catholic women's movement,

¹Mueller, "Dimensions of Religiosity", p. 13. Mueller's association of ethos with custom and mores agrees in the main with the definition given by Keck, as: "a Gestaltic term, gathering up into itself the practices and habits, assumptions, problems, values and hopes of a community's lifestyle." Leander E. Keck, "On the Ethos of Early Christians", Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 42 (1974):440.

appear in the work of Mueller (see Introduction) and seem to provide an adequate framework to explain the women's religious worldview.

Mueller limits the modern notion of morality to an "ethos of justice" and envisions it as a spontaneous protest against injustice.¹ The ethos of justice implies partisanship. Catholic women apply this ethos in trying to gain plausibility and moral acceptability in the Church for the ordination of women. Thus, I will apply the movement's conception of justice as the ethical dimension of partisanship to examine a single case: the ordination issue as it is addressed by Catholic movement women. Thus far, despite the claims of movement members and other groups of liberal Catholics, Vatican authorities have refused to acknowledge ordination as a legitimate goal for Catholic women.

An analysis of the ordination question will also focus upon the movement women's tolerance or intolerance of the present degree of clericalism in the Church. I will attempt to ascertain whether respondents apply a radical ethic, oriented to ultimate ends, or a reformist ethic, oriented to limited means,² in assessing the kind of transformation they call for among the clerical strata.

Moral Pressure Exerted by the Vatican against the Ordination Issue

From the time the ordination issue began to be publicized after the Detroit meeting in 1975, the Vatican has repeatedly attempted

¹Ibid, p. 13.

²Max Weber, Sociology of Religion, p. 95.

to reassert its authority in the matter. The history of the Women's Ordination Conference (Ch. 2) describes how the Vatican sought to contain the popular swell of sympathy for the ordination of women (including several supportive bishops) which swept the Catholic community in 1975 and 1976. By then, it was evident that the Detroit meeting marked the beginning of a significant new movement in the Church, containing sectors of unknown strength. Around the United States, local chapters of WOC sprang up (as of 1984, there are 23) actively seeking converts to the cause of women's ordination. The official response of Rome to the excitement among Catholic feminists and their supporters in the ordination issue was given in the Vatican Declaration On the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood, in January 1977, which argued against the ordination of women. In this document, approved by Paul VI, the principal arguments for the exclusion of women from priesthood are based on Thomas Aquinas' theological interpretations of the natural law (Ch. 1). In the last section of the Declaration, the hierarchy asserts its authority on the question: "... priesthood is a particular ministry of which the Church has received the charge and the control, authentication by the Church is indispensable here and a constitutive part of the vocation...." Lastly, we are reminded that: "priesthood does not form part of the rights of the individual, but stems from the economy of the mystery of Christ and the Church. The priestly office cannot become the goal of social advancement...." In September 1983, John Paul II essentially repeated the previous arguments to a group of American bishops at the Vatican.

Although the Declaration assumes that Catholic women's desire for ordination is grounded in an ethic of justice, it is doubtful that the

Vatican would accept arguments on theological or religious grounds in favor of ordination. As far as movement women are concerned, this re-assertion of exclusive control over the sacrament of orders derives from the same worldview which they claim has resulted in the continued subordination of churchwomen. In my analysis of interview data concerned with issues of priesthood, I will examine to what extent ordination is a question of status advancement, as the Vatican claims, and to what extent it derives from religious aspirations.

Catholic women studied claim their drive for priesthood does not revolve around individual social advancement but rather, they would eliminate a theology of priesthood based on gender distinctions. This view is buttressed by the finding shown in Table 4.4, where 32 of 46 movement women asked did not experience a personal call to priesthood because they apparently do not relate to its hierarchical element and feel it has become a "status symbol" in the Church, to quote one respondent. Another response pattern revealing their attitude towards the present status of the priesthood is that only 6 of the 46 said they would be interested in ordination, even if the present form of it changed. Thus, I had to consider the possibility that ordination holds symbolic importance for movement women as a group. Moreover, ordination acts as a goal of equality which serves as a moral imperative for the entire movement. In 22 cases, movement women spoke pejoratively of their experience with priests, and called for equal recognition regarding their own ministerial competencies. In only seven cases was it mentioned that priests should command respect because of their commitment to works designated as "religious."

The unyielding position of the Vatican regarding the ordination of women has served to activate movement networks, provoke new statements of solidarity and harden the resistance of the Catholic women's movement. In the two years following the 1977 Declaration, WOC staff collected 16,000 signatures as part of its "Second Argument Project." The signatures came from 47 states and 15 nations. They represented 30 religious denominations as well as members of groups of Catholic activists. The petition was presented to the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Status of Women.

Recent Church legislation has not provided movement women any ground for developing plausible positions regarding ordination. The new Code of Canon Law, promulgated in late 1983, did little toward developing new norms for women. While it does allow for advancement of women in administrative posts in the Church, such as Chancellor of a diocese, it explicitly forbids women to serve as acolytes or deacons--"line" positions which constitute preparation for priesthood. This kind of change demonstrates the conservative reformism which is characteristic of the official Church.

Priesthood as a Goal for Catholic Women

Although respondents ranked the ordination question third in order of importance when asked to rank six issues for the Catholic women's movement, I have noted that in their protocols, they referred to ordination a number of times when discussing examples of discrimination against women they feel exists in the Church. An examination of concerns mentioned by movement women at the beginning of their interviews shows that the goal of ordination was ranked second in importance only to the

concern regarding women's secondary status within the church, and its related powerlessness. Its lower ranking (third) as a priority issue for the movement was in comparison to church and non-church related issues. I have tried to show, particularly in the case of NCAN, that previous alliances with non-religious organizations in a common pursuit of issues of civil justice helped fuel the drive for equality among Catholic feminists. Catholic women's quest for equality, quite apart from the issue of justice within the church, has in general been grounded over the past 20 years in the convictions of religious feminism shared by most movement members. The relatively high concern about the ordination issue shown by respondents seems to suggest it is associated with equality of persons and equalization of power in the church. The notion of equality in the church is not only held by feminist movement members. The NCCW women in this study fall into this category.

In 1976, Sister Fran Ferder, a clinical psychologist, interviewed 100 women who desired ordination for themselves.¹ This group of women understood ordination primarily as an expression of the equality of persons, but resisted couching the ordination issue in feminist terminology. The group of 100 women in the sample were chosen from a list of 211 women who had indicated at the 1975 Detroit ordination conference that they had experienced a call to priesthood. Among the sample, 72 were nuns and 28 were laywomen. The findings of the study tended to counter various stereotypes of women Ferder felt was prevalent among bishops and others in the church at the time. The theory is what

¹Published under the title: Called to Break Bread?, Quixote Center, Mt. Rainier, Md. (1978).

Ferder called "the Strident Feminist Theory" which, she claims, sees women desiring ordination as a radical "liberation" group which would break down the structure of the priesthood as it is now constituted. In rejecting the Strident Feminist Theory as a motivation for ordination among subjects interviewed, Ferder observes that

...it was found that over 90% of the women interviewed do not identify themselves with women's liberation as a radical movement in society... these women tend, as a group, to be "middle of the road" women whose primary belief is in the equality of all persons... they are women who support ERA and motherhood... they are more apt to organize street vigils than street corner demonstrations. They are angry about the injustices done to women in society and in the Church.... It is clear that the majority of the women interviewed are not irrational feminists who are motivated to seek ordination in order to score another point for women's liberation.¹

Ferder takes care to point out that respondents who adhered to a strident feminist ideology did not seem to be good candidates for ordination. In her conclusion, Ferder notes that "while there were women in the study who seemed preoccupied with women's liberation, and seem strongly motivated by strident feminist concerns...none of these women were seen by the interviewers as having good potential for ordination."²

Over 90 percent of the 100 women studied by Ferder in 1978, then, obviously would be outside the Catholic Women's Movement in 1984. One cannot know the degree to which the non-feminist approach to ordination found in Ferder's sample has been modified, in the years since it was conducted. Ferder's study is of interest because she has identified a

¹Called to Break Bread?, p. 93.

²Ibid., p. 96.

group of women outside the Catholic Women's Movement who desire ordination based on the ideology of equality of all persons. This ideology is the primary justification employed by non-religious feminists, in putting forward their claims.

Other groups see ordination as a high priority issue for the church. Results of a poll taken of the New Haven chapter membership of the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church in November 1982 show that of 185 respondents asked to rank 12 areas of concern to the ARCC, 83.2% or 154 persons, ranked the issue of women's ordination first.¹ (I was not able to ascertain whether any one ideology predominates among this group.)

The important point for this survey, then, is that the ordination question does not uniquely attract feminists; those who adhere to other ideologies also justify it.

For Catholic movement women, ordination represents a high degree of freedom in choices of ministry within the church. Data in table 3.5 showed movement women regard "freedom to choose one's field of work" as one of the highest priorities for all U.S. women. This goal, reformist in nature when considered in the civil context, becomes a radical one in the institutional context of the Catholic Church. If religious feminists were to convince the hierarchy of the legitimacy of their claims, this would certainly open the way for the ordination of women. This event is perceived by the institutional church as a grave threat to its social arrangements, which it has carefully maintained within ecclesial boundaries over the centuries.

¹ARCC Newsletter, June, 1983, p. 8.

Finally, the women's movement presents a threat to the magisterium (teaching authority) of the church because the organizational structure of the three women's groups, which comprise an important part of "the movement" in the study, is independent of the hierarchical strata and thus allows for a minimal degree of accountability to it.

Catholic Movement Women's Views of Priesthood

Having set down the broad parameters of the question of Catholic women and priesthood, I based my empirical investigation on ascertaining whether or not there exists a consensus among movement women regarding the role of priest. For the moment, we will leave open the question as to whether that consensus is based upon the immediate mobility interests of women. Education and income levels of movement women studied places them in the middle classes, but location in a social class is not necessarily the primary determinant of ideas. Ideological elements in the group studied are also influenced by religious ideas and ideals. Therefore, purely religious influences must be assessed when considering the group's worldview, even without attempting to assess the ultimate truth of those beliefs. By beliefs I mean ideas held as truth statements, derived from the original charism of the founder of the Christian religion, or from the newer movements, such as the feminist spirituality or the "goddess" movements. Goddess religion and liberation theologies may contain elements of ideology bound up with notions of socio-political advancement, but these ideas may be held because respondents not only believe that they are congruent with their religious world view, but in fact extend it.

The Clerical-Lay Distinction

I was able to obtain information on movement women's general attitude toward clergy/lay distinctions as they now exist in the church by asking a question in a series discussing liberation theology. The question was: "Could you relate liberation theology to the distinction made by the church between clergy and laypersons?" Of 47 women asked, 30 were able to find some relationship, and 17 could not. Table 4.1 includes some unsolicited additional items in other discussions on the subject of priesthood during the course of the interview. The latter data add important elements to respondents' views on the clerical status and thus are incorporated in this table.

Table 4.1 Attitude toward the Clergy/Lay Distinction
Among Respondents Who Discussed the
Distinction in Terms of Liberation Theology

<u>Attitude toward Distinction</u>	<u>Status Group</u>		
	<u>L a y</u>	<u>N u n</u>	<u>Total</u>
1. Clerical/lay distinction needs "liberation"; i.e., to be diminished	4	9	13
2. Distinction gives clergy too much power and privilege	5	3	8
3. Laity could do theologizing and ministry equally well	1	4	5
4. Nature of clerical commitment warrants special recognition	2	1	3
5. Priest should be in a servant role	1	-	1
TOTAL	(13)	(17)	(30)

It can be seen from the above that 13, or almost half the thirty respondents, felt that the church-ordained distinction between clerical and lay statuses needs to be diminished. The next most frequently mentioned attitude was that the position of "priest" itself is accompanied by an

aura of power and privilege. The association of the priest with status honor has been attested to by NORC surveys carried out in 1925, 1947, and 1963.¹ In the 1963 version, respondents were asked to rank statuses of 90 U.S. occupations. The ranking for "priest" was No. 21, only 5 points higher on the scale from the status of "sociologist," ranked No. 26. This ranking was found to have remained relatively stable over the course of two generations. Among five respondents who felt that laity could equally well serve as theologians and carry out duties now done by priests, four were nuns and only one was a laywoman.

Perhaps the strongest indicator of the view of priesthood taken by respondents on the whole is the feeling that the clergy/lay distinction separates the priest from his flock; which puts him in a superior position. Typical of the outlook of the thirteen who emphasized the drawbacks of clergy-lay distinctions are the following quotations. A nun member of WOC commented: "Our distinctions are overdrawn. As for liberation, I see so many priests who need it. They don't want the separation from laymen. They do not want this rectory living situation, they are very aware of the call to priesthood but somehow they are not at ease with the distinctions that are made."

A nun member of NCAN summed up her understanding of how liberation theology looks at the priesthood: "Probably the most significant example or understanding is that the layperson today is the model par excellence for the Christian clergy, which is clearly a reversal in the roles."

¹Cited in Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, The Hidden Injuries of Class (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 221-25.

Concerning liberation theology's assessment of the clergy, a laywoman member of WOC stresses this separation in terms of status relations:

Liberation theology calls the clergy to the role of servants. I could certainly enjoy seeing some of that in this country. I think the distinction would be virtually eradicated....it would become a matter of chosen lifestyles, those choosing to live in community and other lay people. (Priests) live in a special way. They don't live like laypeople do, they have a higher status. I think liberation calls that distinction into question.

Comments on the power and privilege attendant to priesthood came typically from laypersons, who felt priestly authority stifles opportunities for laypersons to act out their own religious preferences. The following comments were offered by a laywoman member of WOC: "That's the kind of stuff I'm doing now--helping laity to see that they do have the strengths, skills, and talents to do God's will without having to have it cleared by a clergyperson before doing anything. And I think for a great many years the clergy has managed to instill an attitude that anything done under religious auspices has to go through their hands, and they keep the power."

A second laywoman's concern was that the suppression of laypersons' results in a loss of spiritual quality for the entire body of Catholic religious believers: "I think it has a parallel in oppressive structures all over the world. The idea that the truth trickles down from the top must be changed because the Lord has told us that the truth is in each of us. And if we are all truly to be made free, that truth must be given an opportunity to be heard and it must be given a value within the institution.... Not the way we have that set up, in clerical/lay..."

Nuns in particular felt that some clergy use their prestige to manipulate and divide nun and laywomen. In the section discussing nuns' views of laywomen in Chapter 2, I quoted a nun who was aware that priests are less able to intimidate nuns than they are laywomen because nuns as a group, she felt, are perceived as "more educated, articulate." A nun leader of NCAN echoed this feeling:

Clerics like to keep us (nuns and laywomen) separate--as nuns, in a nowhere land; and they dominate over the diocesan laity conferences. A recent example was the diocesan lay conference held in Chicago. The priests and pastors of the parishes chose which women of the parish would participate as "laity"--only laywomen were chosen, nuns were deliberately left out. I think as nuns become more and more articulate, that is what will happen.

Several laywomen resented being reminded of their powerlessness in relation to priests. They couched their observation of it in feminist terms; reporting that while expected to call priests "Father," they themselves were addressed by clerics on a first-name basis.

Finally, on the point that laypersons can do as well as clergy in areas formerly regarded as "priestly" ministry, three respondents emphasized the equality in charisma among lay persons and priests. In this sense, they deny the certified charisma of priestly office, and assert the validity of charisma wherever it occurs. This notion of the charisma of the congregant is a basic tenet of liberation theology.

"In the past clergy would have been seen as the only ones capable of doing theology--liberation theology now involves both strata of clergy and lay."

"Well I think lay people have just as valid a spirituality and a ministry as people who are ordained or in religious orders."

"When you talk about the laity being baptized into Christ and as king, prophet, priest and so forth... I think that call has a right to be evaluated...so many jobs priests presently do could be done by any other baptized person called to that ministry...I guess I wish they (priests) would look at themselves and realize what their call really is and how many things have been clericalized."

There was some indication on the part of three respondents that the priest's role should remain distinct from that of the laity. This group felt that "special recognition" be accorded clergy because of a lifestyle marked by what one respondent characterized as "the mystique of celibacy," echoing the same phrase employed by a laywoman when describing her view of nuns in Chapter 2.

The Value of Priests' Work

In conjunction with the general attitude conveyed by responses to the previous question, I also put more specific questions to the movement women regarding their views on priesthood. The first question was: "Is the priest's work more valuable than that of a layperson?" Of the 51 who answered, 32 women did not feel that a priest's work was inherently more valuable than that of the layperson. Only one respondent gave an unqualified "yes" to the question; 8 women gave qualified answers.

Table 4.2 Is The Priest's Work More Valuable than That of a Layperson?

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Qualified Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Total</u>
		<u>In Certain Areas</u>	<u>Depends on Individual</u>			
Lay	-	1	2	14	6	(23)
NCCW	1	1	1	3	2	(8)
TOTAL LAY	(1)	(2)	(3)	(17)	(8)	(31)
Nun	-	1	2	15	2	(20)
TOTAL ALL	(1)	(3)	(5)	(32)	(10)	(51)

The fact that 32 respondents, or 3/5 of the women asked, did not feel the priests' work was more valuable than a layperson's is not surprising when one considers that all 52 women asked to give an opinion of feminist goals chose the issue of "freedom to work in any field of choice" as one of highest priority. (See Table 3.5). It would seem that respondents' adherence to freedom of work choices as a goal for all women allows them to value highly their own chosen work. It also suggests their relative devaluation of priestly work.

Respondents were asked to suggest reasons why, in contrast to the Protestant and Jewish women who comprise one of their "reference groups", Catholic women have thus far field to obtain priesthood. The respondents in some cases offered several reasons. All responses were dichotomized into two categories: reasons which had to do with the structure of the Church; and "other" reasons. In the "Structural" category, there were 20 references to the traditional hierarchical Church structures which prevented women's ordination. An additional 20 responses cited the deep entrenchment of male celibate domination, fostered by tradition or theological justification. There were 2 mentions of fear of women on the part of hierarchy and clergy; one respondent felt that women rabbis

and priests in other religious traditions only served to convince Catholic hierarchy that the Church alone possesses the truth in the matter.

Table 4.3 Reasons Given by Movement Women to Account for
Catholic Women's Failure to Obtain Priesthood
(N=46)

Reasons Related to Hierarchical Structures of the Church	No. of Times Mentioned		
	Lay	Nun	Duplicated Totals
Traditional, conservative hierarchical Church Structure	11	9	(20)
Entrenchment of male celibate domination:	(12)	(8)	(20)
- in historical existence	11	4	
- in theological justification for same	1	4	
Fear of women on part of hierarchy and clergy	1	1	(2)
Catholic Church truth claims rein- forced by achievement of ordination by women of other traditions	1	-	(1)
<u>Other Reasons</u>			
Women in other traditions have longer history of struggle	1	2	(3)
Failures of women themselves:			
- by a lack of self-awareness	1	-	(2)
- by a subservience to clergy, encouraging exclusion	-	1	
Don't view it as a failure to women	1	-	(1)
N.A.	1	2	(3)
Don't know	-	1	(1)

"Other" reasons offered were: that women in other religious traditions began the struggle for ordination at a much earlier point in history (given 3 times); failures on the part of Catholic women themselves (mentioned twice); and one respondent did not agree with the assumption of the question that women have "failed" regarding ordination.

In the main, there were no differences in frequency of responses between lay and nun groups. The only noteworthy difference between the two status groups lies in their views of male celibate domination. Laywomen tended to view celibacy as an undifferentiated feature of the Church; while nuns distinguished more between the historical existence of celibacy, and the continuing theological justifications for it.

Eligibility for Priesthood

In response to the question: "Who should be eligible for priesthood in the Catholic Church?", 22 women of 43 replied: "all who are called" without qualifying their response. Two of 7 NCCW women also offered a similarly unqualified response. Twenty additional movement women and one NCCW member also said "all who are called" but qualified this by mentioning that the priest should be accountable to either a local group or a central authority. An additional movement woman in her '70's thought nuns should be given first preference if priesthood were granted to women.

When asked whether they thought homosexuals ought to be included in those ordained to priesthood, 30 of 43 movement women replied "yes" without qualification (additionally, one NCCW woman did so); 4 replied "yes" with the condition that they be non-practicing homosexuals; 3 women said "no". Six respondents felt either that the whole issue of homosexuality was a problem for them, or said they didn't know.

Catholic Movement Women and Their Experience of a Personal Call to Ordination

One of the most unexpected findings of the study is that proportionately few movement women are interested in obtaining priesthood for themselves. When asked "Do you personally feel called to ordination?"

five of 46 movement women responded in the affirmative; three were laywomen and two nuns. Six additional women replied they would be interested in ordination to a transformed priesthood. Thirty-two women responded negatively. In Table 4.4, NCCW women are separately accounted for because when I considered their protocols in entirety, together with their collective negative response to this question, it suggests that as a group, they do not consider ordination as a desirable goal for any Catholic woman.

Table 4.4 Respondents who Feel Called to Ordination
By Organizational Membership and Status Group

<u>Organization</u>	<u>L A Y</u>				
	<u>Yes, As Is Now</u>	<u>Yes, If Changes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Total</u>
WOC	3	2	7	-	(12)
Catholics for ERA	-	-	10	-	(10)
NCAN	-	1	1	-	(2)
TOTAL MOVEMENT LAYWOMEN	(3)	(3)	(18)	-	(24)
NCCW	-	-	6	2	(8)
TOTAL ALL LAY	(3)	(3)	(24)	(2)	(32)

<u>Organization</u>	<u>N U N</u>				
	<u>Yes, As Is Now</u>	<u>Yes, If Changes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Total</u>
WOC	2	1	7	-	(10)
Catholics for ERA	-	-	3	1	(4)
NCAN	-	2	4	2	(8)
TOTAL MOVEMENT NUNS	(2)	(3)	(14)	3	(22)

	<u>Yes, As Is Now</u>	<u>Yes, If Changes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Total</u>
MOVEMENT WOMEN	5	6	32	3	(46)
ALL WOMEN	5	6	38	5	(54)

When compared with the number expressing concern about ordination as an issue for the movement, the number of respondents interested in ordination for themselves is small. Therefore, I have concluded that movement women regard priesthood as an important ministerial opportunity and a goal for all Catholic women, towards which they are willing to work, but not an important goal for themselves. Priesthood, perceived as a group goal to which Catholic feminists adhere, may account for the medium priority accorded to ordination among feminist issues.

A more adequate explanation of why so few movement women are interested in ordination for themselves may lie in Max Weber's description of groups which historically have enabled priests to maintain their power: "The priesthood unquestionably welcomed the characteristic virtues of these classes; viz., humility, patient resignation to trouble, humble acceptance of existing authority and friendly forgiveness and passivity in the face of injustice."¹ It does not seem that the ideological positions held by movement members would attract groups possessing the sociological characteristics described by Weber.

Weber's characterization of groups who would lend support to the authority of the clerical strata also illuminates Ferder's sample of respondents who desire ordination. The women studied by Ferder did not tend toward activism; they held more traditional views regarding women's Church roles, and did not consider themselves "feminists." Therefore, they might be more acceptable to the hierarchy as future pastors of parishes than movement women, who by their activism are perceived as more "radical" by both hierarchy and non-feminist Catholic women, as

¹Max Weber. The Sociology of Religion, p. 224.

well as others outside the movement. This explanation was voiced by a laywoman and former nun whom I interviewed. She saw male priesthood as blocking women's access to decision-making Church bodies. When commenting on how movement women must work outside central Church institutions, she was asked, if those same women were ordained, whether they would become more acceptable to the wider Church community. Her reply was: "I don't think they would be accepted because they are coming from a social and political edge which even men in the Church have difficulty dealing with."

In the course of the discussions on priesthood, movement and NCCW women were asked: "From where do you obtain legitimation for the claim that women should be ordained?" I undertook a count of each time a respondent gave a different justification for her position on ordination, shown in the duplicated totals in Table 4.5A. I found that among 54 respondents asked, the most frequently mentioned justification was the notion of equality of women and men, invoked 26 times. The "equality" justification was about evenly distributed between one related to civil rights, and a notion based on religious Scripture and tradition. However, in the analysis of some of the respondents' extended discussions, it became clear that movement women justify ordination by resorting principally to religiously-based reasoning, rather than resorting to a generalized ideology of equality. The women cited a Scriptural basis for women's ordination 10 times. Next in order of frequency (8 times) was the experience of a personal "call" to priesthood, and 7 allusions were made to the culture of Jesus' time by way of justification. Respondents in this group claimed either that Jesus treated women on a footing equal to that of male disciples, or, given

of women's roles in the general society, that female religious leaders could not have existed at that time. Theological opinions in support of ordination were cited 4 times, and personal reading and study of the question was mentioned twice, as were "other" reasons. Two respondents, both members of NCCW, were negative on women's ordination.

Table 4.5A Respondents' Justification for Claim that
Women Should Be Ordained

Justification for Women's Ordination	No. of Times Mentioned			
	Lay	NCCW	Nun	Duplicated
	Movement (N=24)	(N=8)	(N=22)	Total (N=54)
Notion of equality:				(26)
- women are equal to men	7	1	4	12
- God created women & men equal	7	-	7	14
Scripture either mandates it or offers no obstacle to it	3	-	7	(10)
Belief in authenticity of "call" in self or another	5	-	3	(8)
Basis in religious culture of Jesus' time	4	-	3	(7)
Theological opinions support women's ordination	1	-	3	(4)
Reading and study of the question	1	-	1	(2)
Other	1	1	-	(2)
Negative on women's ordination	-	2	-	(2)
N.A.	1	4	1	(6)

I also wanted to determine the relationship of religious to ideological justifications for women's ordination, as offered by respondents. To do this, I classified 42 of the 54 respondents' duplicated justifications into either of 2 categories: "religious" or "ideological". It was not possible to classify in this way the 4 cases in the "Reading and

study" and "Other" categories, therefore, they were omitted from the analysis, together with the 8 cases in the "negative" and "N.A." categories. The 42 justifications, arranged in this fashion (Table 4.5B) reveal that insofar as it was possible to determine, the proportion of religious to ideological justifications offered for women's ordination was 4:1, in favor of religious reasons.

Table 4.5B Analysis of Religious or Ideological Character of Justifications Offered

<u>Justification Offered</u>	<u>No. of Times Mentioned Duplicated Total</u>	<u>Total Mentions</u>
Religious authentication:		(43)
a) God created women & men equal	14	
b) Interpretations of Scripture and theology	14	
c) Belief in authenticity of "call" in self or another	8	
d) Basis in religious culture of Jesus' time	7	
Ideological authentication:		
e) Women are equal to men		(12)

Further study of the various items in the above table also yields the information that the underlying ethos of justice regarding the ordination issue is in part a radical one, exemplified by items b), c) and d), and partly a reformist one, exemplified by items a) and e).

The preponderant weight given by respondents to religious justifications for ordination bears out the findings of Fiedler and Pomerleau's 1978 study.¹ In a study undertaken of 5,500 Catholic women and men in stable worshipping communities, the authors asked questions designed to

¹Maureen Fiedler and Dolly Pomerleau, Are Catholics Ready? (Quixote Center, Mt. Rainier, Md., 1978), pp. 63-66.

explain respondent views on women's roles in the Church. These views were classified on a spectrum with poles labeled "feminist" or "traditional." Through path analysis they found that when considered together, the two factors which influenced subjects' views on women's roles the most were, in order of importance: theological beliefs (beta +0.45); and orientation toward ecclesial authority (beta +0.24). A third factor, civic culture, diminishes in importance with regard to feminism when considered with the other two factors (beta +0.06). However, when considered separately, the civic culture index exhibits a strong relationship between beliefs about sex role in society and theological beliefs about men and women (beta +0.51.)

Attitudes Toward Catholic Liturgy

In addition to ascertaining movement women's attitude to ordination, I wanted to investigate how they related to Catholic liturgy as it is presently structured. I questioned them regarding the Mass in particular. The Mass is the primary arena for the expression of religious belief as a communal relation of priest and congregants. I asked several questions about their experience of Catholic liturgy. The first was: "Are you satisfied with Catholic liturgical ceremonies as they are now composed?" Thirty-five of 49 women replied that they were not satisfied with present forms of liturgy in the church. Five thought it depended on the local situation, while nine reported satisfaction with their experience of liturgy. Nuns were slightly more dissatisfied than laywomen; and only one NCCW woman was dissatisfied.

Table 4.6A Degree of Respondent Satisfaction with
Catholic Liturgy as Now Composed

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Depends On Local Situation</u>	<u>Total</u>
Lay	4	17	3	(24)
NCCW	4	1	-	(5)
Nun	<u>1</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>2</u>	(20)
Totals	(9)	(35)	(5)	(49)

The forty women who were not satisfied with their experience of liturgy or felt it depended on the situation were asked to give reasons for their dissatisfaction. The various aspects of their dissatisfaction are grouped into the following Table:

Table 4.6B Respondent's Explanations for
Dissatisfaction with Liturgy

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>E x p l a n a t i o n s</u>				<u>Total</u>
	<u>Male Presence Dominates</u>	<u>Hierarchical Structure of Liturgy</u>	<u>Sexist Language</u>	<u>Other</u>	
Lay	6	5	4	5	(20)
NCCW	-	1	-	-	(1)
Nun	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	(19)
Totals	(13)	(12)	(9)	(6)	(40)

Twenty-two of forty responses shown in the table above were couched in overt feminist language: thirteen women felt that exclusive male presence of the celebrant of liturgy limited the quality of their participation in liturgy; while nine had been made aware of the sexist nature of liturgical language: i.e., God-language was exclusively male; the texts and hymns referred to "mankind", the "sons" of God, the "brotherhood of all men" and other similar examples of exclusive language. The one NCCW woman who was dissatisfied with her experience of liturgy

explained her dissatisfaction in terms of the hierarchical structure of the liturgy. She felt it highlighted the subsidiary status of the congregation, and this sentiment was echoed by eleven other movement women. Other reasons given for respondent dissatisfaction were widely scattered.

I further explored the nature of the dissatisfaction with liturgy of the 40 subjects who were dissatisfied with church liturgy, or who said "depends on the local situation" by asking them a question regarding the frequency of their attendance at Mass, the most important liturgical event in the church. Since Church law mandates Mass attendance for Catholic members, the question of frequency of attendance becomes a delicate one. After asking about their satisfaction with liturgy, therefore, I put the question: "How does this (their dissatisfaction) affect your attendance?" Sixteen women replied that they attended liturgy regularly, while sixteen attended sporadically, for one reason or another. Only five women said they never attended liturgy, while three respondents did not answer the question.

Table 4.6C Effect of Dissatisfaction with
Liturgy on Mass Attendance

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Frequency of Attendance</u>				<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Attend Regularly</u>	<u>Only Attend if Meaningful</u>	<u>Attend Sporadically</u>	<u>Never Attend</u>		
Lay	9	3	3	3	2	(20)
NCCW	1	-	-	-	-	(1)
Nun	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	(19)
Totals	(16)	(11)	(5)	(5)	(3)	(40)

For laywomen and nuns, the overall pattern of regular Mass attendance is the same. There is however, marked variance between lay and

nun groups under the category "Attend only if meaningful." The number of laywomen who said they attended only if the liturgy was meaningful dropped sharply from those who attended regularly--from 9 to 3; the number of nuns who attended liturgy "only if meaningful" rose from those who attended regularly, from 6 to 8. This seems to point to nuns' greater intolerance towards liturgy as presently experienced.

Regarding the group of 21 respondents who attended irregularly or not at all, I scrutinized their responses more closely to see whether there were specific identifiable points of dissatisfaction among nun and lay groups, which kept them from participation in liturgy. I found that the two principal attitudes among this group were based on feminist ideology.

The first grievance regarding experiences of liturgy revolves around negative references or no references at all to women in the liturgical texts themselves. Three nuns and three laywomen mentioned this reason for their alienation from local celebrations of liturgy. Typical of this attitude was that of a nun: "The language--and the fact that if women are given any role at all to play, it's always subordinate. And many times, it's only if there's not a male around, that women might be able to distribute communion or read the Gospel." And that of a laywoman: "I don't like the God language now used; 'brothers' still is used interchangeably with 'community'. I don't like male priests; I feel excluded and angry and can't take the liturgy seriously."

Women's dissatisfaction with their limited roles in liturgy has resulted in informal celebrations in which women hold principal or promi-

nent roles.¹ Speaking of the ubiquitous male presence at conventional liturgies, a laywoman added: "It just heightens my feelings of oppression. That's very different from the kind of life you find in women's spirituality groups." A nun reported that in regard to liturgy, "...when I have a reason, I attend. Last summer I co-celebrated a liturgy with a priest."

Another nun responded that once a month, she attends a women's group where only women celebrate liturgy.

A second grievance among those who attended liturgy irregularly or not at all revolved around thwarted desires for connection to and commitment to a meaningful group of others, a communal bonding. Four laywomen and three nuns gave their inability to "bond" with a meaningful group of others as a primary reason for a decline in loyalty to their regular Mass attendance. As one young laywoman put it negatively: "(sexist language, poor preaching) affect my ability to commit myself to one particular place and become part of that worshipping community because I keep hopping around, hoping for something better, which I've yet to find."

One nun remarked with regard to the Mass, "the Sunday obligation is gone for me"; and went on to say: "I go mostly to be with and to pray with a community." A second nun echoed this sentiment in her response: "...I only attend when I know that priest will celebrate in a manner which will bring about contact with the people emotionally...or if I am with people for whom the meaning of celebration is a common bond between us, then I go, even if the liturgy isn't so great." A third nun referred

¹Liturgies where a male priest in good standing is not the celebrant are considered invalid by Vatican authorities.

to what she sees as symbolic impoverishment in official Catholic rituals, led by male priests. She is at once attracted to and cautious about the possibilities inherent in witchcraft rites:

Any religious experience, cult, whatever, has a primal origin that is rooted in the same mysteries and realities that are the basis of Wicca. The Roman Catholic Church liturgy has become so truncated, removed, and detached that I see Wicca making a contribution, for instance, to the revitalizing of the symbolism of water. I mean, our Easter Vigil ceremonies, perhaps the most sensuous festivals of the Church, have become so stylized and removed from their original form. I value what Wicca has done in allowing some exploration into other rituals and symbols. I don't want to sound like I'm willing to use what they have, but every event can speak of a religious dimension, and Wicca allows that to happen.

Lastly, two laywomen, both married and mothers of children in their teen years, provided a clue to the explanation of the higher tolerance of laywomen toward liturgy, despite their dissatisfaction with it (Table 4.6C). In both cases, respondents felt that the mother-child relationship is an important factor which exerts a subtle pressure on the mother to carry out religious functions. One woman, whose attendance at liturgies has become irregular, commented:

Up until 2 years ago, I attended (Mass) regularly. Now I go maybe once a month...my two sons think I'm a fanatic about religion. They see all women like this; men as "scientific and detached," like dad. (He feels that all Christian religion is hypocritical). They (the children) don't notice that I don't go to Mass, because they still have a mental picture that mom goes to church all the time.

Another laywoman in the dissatisfied group who attended Mass regularly, added: "If I didn't have children it might affect my regular attendance at liturgies...there's a certain amount of being sure that I go to church and do all the things I'm expected to do as a Catholic parent."

By way of contrast, nuns did not mention any sense of accountability to a specific role in explaining why they did or did not attend Mass. At the end of Chapter 3, I mentioned that movement nuns as a group are involved in disclaiming status privileges which formerly accompanied a lifestyle of religious virtuosity. Related to this is the status ambiguity which movement nuns are experiencing. The absence of a clear role for them in the church may predispose movement nuns to a higher intolerance of traditional Mass liturgies than it would in the case of laywomen.

Strategies for Obtaining Women's Ordination

In order to ascertain how important a goal the ordination question was for movement women, I provided respondents with five hypothetical strategies for dealing with the ordination issue. The alternative strategies ranged from "large numbers of women celebrating Mass and carrying out work now done by priests" to "wait until the Pope proclaims women's eligibility for priesthood." The answers might indicate a gradualist or radical ethic as applied to ordination.

Table 4.7 Respondents' Opinions on Event Most Likely to Speed Women's Ordination

Event Most Likely to Speed Women's Ordination	No. of Times Mentioned as Most Likely Event		
	<u>Lay</u>	<u>Nun</u>	<u>All</u>
Wait until the Pope proclaims women's eligibility for priesthood	-	-	-
Large numbers of women celebrating Mass and carrying out work now done by priests	10	9	19
Dialogue between bishops and organizations like the WOC	9	8	17
Persuade local bishops to ordain those who desire it, despite Vatican opposition	5	3	8
Coalition efforts with women in non-Catholic denominations which have offered ordination to women	3	4	7
Total	(24)	(20)	(44)

No respondents agreed with the strategy of waiting for a Papal pronouncement approving women's ordination, (indicating that all respondents desire a continuation of effort to obtain this goal.) The strategy mentioned most frequently as the fastest route to ordination--19 times by 44 women--was the extreme position: "women celebrating Mass and doing work now done by priests." Second most frequently mentioned strategy was the moderate one of "dialogue between bishops and women's organizations", mentioned 17 times. Another extreme position "persuading bishops to ordain the women who might present themselves to them for ordination," was mentioned 8 times. Mentioned the least frequently was a second moderate position, "coalition efforts with women in non-Catholic denominations...."

There was little difference between nun and laywomen's responses on all strategies. Both status groups are about equally divided between

the two most frequently preferred strategies: the "illegitimate" one of women engaging in all aspects of priests' work, and the "legitimate" one of engaging in dialogue with bishops on the ordination question. These alternatives combine both radical and gradualist ethics and may be the result of the ambivalent situation of movement women, who seek some radical changes within a traditional institution.

Throughout the interview process, I was able to discern in a number of cases that some women are participating in all-female liturgies. There has been an aura of secrecy around this practice, no doubt due to the fact that participants risk severe institutional sanctions were the practice to become public. Because this activity is carried out in private groups, it is not possible to assess its extent accurately.

At the end of the questioning on ordination, I encouraged respondents to offer their view of what an authentic future priesthood might be like, assuming that it would include women. From Table 4.8 we can see that the salient view of the role of priest is that of service to others; 14 of 41 respondents gave this view--12 laywomen and 2 nuns. The second most prevalent view was that it should embody a communal role, a view held by 6 nuns and 5 laywomen. The third ranking view of future priesthood was that of a spiritual guide, held by 3 laywomen and 4 nuns. The social justice aspect of the priest's role was offered by 4 nuns. No laywoman mentioned it.

The data of Table 4.8 show that for the laywomen who commented on future priesthood, there was distinct preference for the service orientation to the role. This finding is consonant with laywomen's reasons given for their choice of church work (Table 2.3). It is also consonant with a finding reported in a Gallup poll conducted on a national sample

of persons alienated from major religious traditions.¹ When respondents were asked what would bring them back to their religious tradition, one of the most frequent replies was: "If I can find a minister/priest/rabbi with whom I can discuss my religious doubts and needs."

The second ranking reason for both laywomen and nuns, when asked to give their reasons for their own choice of work was "serving others." But in the discussion of priesthood, nuns do not envision the service aspect as important as other aspects of the priestly role. For nuns, the communal, spiritual and social justice elements emerged as practically equal proportions of their view of the future priest. Thus, for laywomen, the principal element of the future role of priest seems to be that of service, with some admixture of communal and spiritual elements. The social justice aspect was not mentioned by laywomen.

Table 4.8 Movement Women's View of Future Priesthood by Role Orientation

<u>Role Orientation</u>	<u>Status Group</u>		
	<u>L a y</u>	<u>N u n</u>	<u>A l l</u>
1. <u>Communal Role</u> --variety of people, each called to contribute his/her gift to the local community	5	6	11
2. <u>Service Role</u> --serving others' needs; openness to others	12	2	14
3. <u>Spiritual Role</u> --strong commitment to Gospel values, spirituality, faith life	3	4	7
4. <u>Social Justice Role</u> --one who emphasizes social justice; priority for poor	-	4	4
5. <u>Other</u>	2	3	5
Total	(22)	(19)	(41)

¹The Unchurched American. Reported in Religion in America, Gallup Report No. 222, Mar. 1984. Princeton Religious Research Center, Inc., p. 85.

Taken in their entirety, movement women's views of future priesthood diverge somewhat from those of Ferder's 100 respondents whom she surveyed in 1978. Ferder's group chose the spiritual leadership aspect of priesthood as primary for the future; my own sample tended to emphasize the service and communal aspects of the role. Among the five respondents in my study who felt called to priesthood (Table 4.4), the one common characteristic of the role mentioned by all five was that the priestly call should originate or be exercised in the local community.

The four role orientations reported in the foregoing table can be considered as subjects' collective notion of a transformed priesthood. This was anticipated in the analysis of questions on liberation theology and on the clergy-lay distinctions made by the church. Table 4.1 indicated that the predominant view of the two statuses was that "...the clerical and lay distinction needs liberation." Table 4.8 offers a more detailed description of what a "de-clericalized" priestly ministry might be.

The remarks of a laywoman member of WOC are representative of views of the communal role of the future priest. She sees the priesthood less as a formal office than as a series of service functions for a community.

The community calls the person, and the actual ministry that the person does is in keeping with the person's gifts. For instance, there might be a counselor who doesn't do preaching--someone else is called to run for political office, someone takes care of the church...then they can come back and--I see a priest in the legislature coming back on Sundays and leading Mass, giving out sacraments, or whatever. I favor the "worker" priest--and that no priest makes his main economic gain from priesthood. I think they should get rid of stipends in exchange for Masses...

This was echoed by another laywoman: "I'd also like to see priests living within the community and getting employment in it; not living aside and apart from the people they serve... They should be working in factories, offices, wherever people are, if the charism is there for this work."

Others emphasized the service aspect, even in leadership: "Priesthood ought to be a strictly service position," or, "Priests should provide the kind of leadership which empowers others."

A nun gave this view: "The admission of women to priesthood will transform it--of course, you could get "male chauvinist" women into it...but overall, women will identify with service, including those seeking ordination, and it will dominate the new ministries...A life of service involves much more than preaching and performing sacramental tasks--it's necessary for clergy to practice social justice."

Emphasis on the spiritual aspects of the future priest's role, mentioned by seven respondents, revolved around issues mentioned by a laywoman: "I think it would be more of a sacramental priesthood, less concerned with government of the church, or with professions that are in themselves religiously oriented...and I think with the smaller number of priests, that they should focus on the spiritual life."

The nuns who felt that social justice should be the primary concern of the future priest presented a more radical view of the ideal future ministry. As one nun put it: "Priesthood must include priority for the poor and for those who do not have the Gospel preached to them. Now, in my opinion, the decision-making is based chiefly on real estate and caste and class...as long as you're male and have certain curriculum

requirements, you can be a priest. I'm very concerned about the quality of young men going into the priesthood--are they seeking an asylum?"

The illustration below compares the expectations of three sample groups regarding the role of the priest over three points in time. They are those reported by the Rev. Joseph Fichter, a sociologist of religion,¹ by Dr. Fran Ferder in her psychological portrait of 100 Catholic women² and by my own sample of Catholic movement women. The roles are listed for comparison only and are not in any order of priority.

Of course, Fichter's sample, taken in the 1950's, shared the widespread assumption that only males could serve as priests and the 9 reported roles reflect this social circumstance. In the other 2 samples, a priesthood including both sexes is assumed. Ferder's sample expressed a high degree of concern with the number of roles still expected of the parish priest. I was able to identify about 4 roles mentioned by her group of 100 with regard to priesthood. Similarly, the roles of the priest my own sample of women expressed in 1982-83 have shrunk to four. The role of the priest as spiritual leader might be said to be the only one common to all three sample groups. But although the same word is used to designate the role, in the case of Fichter's and my sample, there are differences in meaning. In Ferder's sample a different word is used for "spiritual": i.e., "sacramental", which comes closer to Fichter's "liturgical" role, but still can be interpreted as a facet of

¹Joseph Fichter, Social Relations in An Urban Parish (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1954) pp. 127-137. Cited in: Barbara Hargrove, The Sociology of Religion (Arlington Heights, Ill.: AHM Publ. Corp., 1979), p. 266.

²Ferder's work, reported in 1978, is discussed more fully in Chapter 1 and at the beginning of this Chapter.

spirituality. In addition, the spiritual role was mentioned by Fichter's group in terms of "supervising organizations of a spiritual or liturgical nature....," whereas the movement women of this study expect the priest to be someone more personally involved with the faith life and spirituality of both individuals and the community of believers. In the Ferder group, the spiritual element comes closer to Fichter's traditional notion of it, because the sacramental function is understood as embodied only in an identified, ordained spiritual leader.¹

Table 4.9 Comparison of Role Expectations of
the Priest among Three Groups Studied

<u>Fichter's Roles(1954)</u>	<u>Ferder's Roles(1978)</u>	<u>Catholic Movem. Women(1982)</u>
communal	sacramental (spiritual)	communal
administrative	service (effective interpersonal relationships)	service (openness to other's needs)
businessman		spiritual
civic	a team member who delegates minis- terial responsi- bilities	social justice advocate
recreational (boys' clubs, etc.)		
ameliorative (acts of mercy)	called by the local community	
educational (school, sermons)		
sociospiritual		
liturgical		

Fichter's sample understood the communal role of the priest as one which allowed him to relate to his parishioners as individuals and as a group. Catholic movement women assume that a democratization of charisma regard-

¹Ferder, p. 85.

ing priesthood will have occurred, so that a communal role becomes possible for those who are recognized to possess a charism for this function. The communal element is understood as the responsibility to share one's gift with others of the community of believers. The "service" role does not appear in Fichter but is regarded with considerable importance in Ferder's sample and among the laywomen of this study.

Fichter's sample of men and women residing in an urban parish provides us with a much more traditional view of priesthood than the change-oriented one of Ferder's sample and my own. In the two latter groups, the perception is that the priest's role is overloaded with unreal expectations. In my own sample, the women reflect a desire to curtail what they see as excessive power invested in the clergy by the Church hierarchy (Table 4.1, item 2), and a hope that this curtailment will give more scope for lay participation at more significant levels of power in the Church.

As recently as 1979, Barbara Hargrove commented on Fichter's 9 roles: "While changes in the (Catholic) Church since Fichter's study have made it easier for the priest to share many of these duties, in many parishes he still carries the responsibility of seeing to it that all these things are done...Similar lists have been made for roles of Protestant clergy...Rabbis, particularly in Conservative and Reform congregations, also find themselves caught up in the web of organizational leadership."¹

¹Hargrove, p. 267.

Summary--Women's Ordination and the Ethos of Justice

Despite the Vatican's view that women's ordination is contrary to Church teaching and tradition, Catholic movement women view ordination as an important focal point for their ethos of justice. As discussed in Chapter 2, almost half the 48 movement women interviewed used the exclusion from ordination as exemplary of their subordination in the Church. The conferral of priesthood on women, they believe, would bring about a status advancement for all Catholic women.

An important finding for the future of the Catholic women's movement is that most respondents did not envision ordination for themselves. The personal reluctance they displayed toward ordination becomes more plausible when viewed in light of the group characteristics developed by Max Weber, which he claims historically have enabled priests to maintain their power.

A comparison of movement women's and the Ferder sample's views of future priesthood shows that in general, the women in this study emphasize the service aspects of priesthood, tending to diminish what they perceive as an exaggerated status difference between the clerical and other stratas in the Church. In contrast, the Ferder sample prefer the aspect of spiritual leadership in the priesthood, which allows for a more divergent status ranking, between and among various Church groups.

Movement women's major view of the clergy-lay distinction follows the assessment of liberation theologians that it is a "false" distinction and needs to be radically changed. Most women felt that a priest's work was not intrinsically more "valuable" than their own lay ministries, in the spiritual sense. Most women asked attributed the

continued exclusion of women from ordination to sexist and hierarchical attitudes which persist in official stratas of the Church.

A direct question on celibacy was not included in the discussions on priesthood. However, when asked "Who might be eligible for future priesthood?" the majority of movement women responded "All who are called." This allows me to infer that both lay and nun respondents see celibacy as an optional feature of priesthood, although, as previously mentioned, this issue was given higher priority by laywomen than by nuns. Most respondents felt homosexuals ought to be included in those considered eligible for priesthood. Three times as many respondents cited religious sources as did ideological ones in justifying the ordination of women.

There was dissatisfaction experienced with existing liturgical practices among a majority of movement respondents. This dissatisfaction revolved around: 1) its hierarchical structure; 2) the sexist language used in liturgical texts; and 3) the fact that ritual specialists are always male. As such, the liturgy is perceived as an example of how clergy-lay distinctions, as interpreted by these respondents, become operative in the life of the Church.

Almost half of the group expressing dissatisfaction with liturgy, however, attended it regularly. Chapter 2 may provide an explanation for this apparent inconsistency: while movement women report alienation in varying degrees from the Church, on the whole, their responses tend to a feeling of centrality rather than marginality in the ecclesial community. Among the group dissatisfied with liturgy, nuns exhibited greater intolerance for the current liturgical practices than did laywomen. The entire group who reported attending liturgy irregularly or

not at all offered criticism of it from a feminist frame of reference. Several laywomen reported feeling pressure to attend liturgy regularly in their roles as mothers in families, thus providing a clue to laywomen's greater tolerance for liturgy with which they are dissatisfied.¹ In three cases of those attending liturgy sporadically or not at all, reference was made to participation in liturgies led by a female ritual specialist. These, of course, are considered "invalid" events, officially speaking, by the Church hierarchy, which if held publicly, would run the risk of incurring severe official sanctions.

In discussing strategies which might speed ordination for women, respondents asked desire to continue efforts toward this goal. The two preferred strategies which were thought likely to speed women's ordination were based on differing ethics: the radical one involving large number of women acting as ritual specialists and carrying out functions traditionally regarded as the domain of the clergy; and the more gradual ethic of continuing the dialogue between bishops' groups and Catholic women. I would infer that the former group ranks women's ordination as a more important goal than the latter group because they are willing to risk ecclesial sanctions against its illegitimate practice. The second, more moderate group, is willing to postpone the fact of ordination until it is officially legitimized.

Most respondents felt that Catholic women thus far have not been successful in obtaining ordination because of the structural domination, exerted at the hierarchical levels of the Church, over all women's issues. This line of reasoning may further explain the finding,

¹Ten of the 24 movement laywomen who were married, widowed, or divorced reported having children.

discussed in Chapter 2, that women's ordination received medium priority ranking by respondents as a movement goal. Since the hierarchy continues to view women's ordination as implausible, movement women seem to have adjusted their priorities according to the feasibility of achieving each stated goal.

When giving their views of what future roles of the priest might be, nuns and laywomen diverged sharply over the service aspect of the role. Over half the lay respondents chose "serving others' needs" as a primary role orientation for future priests, but nuns were divided almost equally among the communal, spiritual and social justice advocacy roles for priests. They did not emphasize the service element. Most respondents felt the call to priesthood should come from the local community.

A comparison of my own sample with those of two other studies on priesthood reported in 1954 and 1978 shows that over time, the spiritual aspect of the priest's role remains constant, among other changing roles mentioned. However, the notion of a spiritual role of the priest varies with sociological characteristics existing in each sample.

The ethos of justice as applied to priesthood combined radical and gradualist elements. Radical elements exist in movement women's justification for women's ordination based on a feminist interpretation of Scripture and on their individual authentication of the experience of the priestly "calling." Specific features of future priesthood which reflected a radical ethos were: the democratization of qualifications for candidacy for priesthood to include women and homosexuals, the location of the origin of the call in the local community (although views on sources of legitimation of the call wavered between a central

authority and the local community); and the primacy of an advocacy role for future priests with regard to disprivileged groups. A gradualist ethic underlying suggested changes in the priest's role were: the encouragement of dialogue among women's groups and representative committees of bishops; and the introduction of changes in gender-exclusive language in liturgical texts now in use, a step which might possibly attract more women to ritual events.

Movement women were more consistent in reporting dissatisfactions with various aspects of present priesthood than they were in presenting a view of future priesthood. Furthermore, divergent ethics on how to obtain ordination reflect a lack of consensus in the movement regarding this particular goal.

When envisioning the future priest, both status groups put medium emphasis on the communal aspect of the role, or the aspect of "shared charisma." Nuns' indication of the communal element in future priesthood was one of several role orientations preferred by them as a group, but laywomen overwhelmingly preferred the service aspect of future priestly roles.

CHAPTER V

SOURCES OF CATHOLIC MOVEMENT WOMEN'S SENSE OF POWER

In the long sweep of history, women have rarely been in a position to develop any discernible pattern of power in public life. In my attempts to ascertain how movement women define their sense of power, I searched the literature on the topic of women and power. I found little information on how women as a status group experience power in the public realms of religious life.

A definition of power. In my analysis of the Catholic women's movement, I will apply Weber's definition of power: "the probability that a person or a group will realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others."¹ I will not employ Jean Baker Miller's definition of women's power which she formulated at the end of a recent study on the psychology of women. Miller does not develop her notion of women's power beyond stating that it may be defined as "the capacity to implement" their own talents and abilities.² But I will apply the notion of "implementation" to my analysis of Catholic movement women's power. By this I mean that aspect of power which Catholic movement women must wield to achieve the goals of their

¹H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, ed., From Max Weber (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1946), p.180.

²Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977), p.116.

movement. Miller also makes the observation, which is applicable to my study, that her sample of women does not prefer to exert the kind of power traditionally understood as power "over" others.¹

Examination of the emerging feminist literature on women and power reveals the importance of several aspects of power and empowerment for women. I use "empowerment" as defined by Kanter in her study on women in corporate settings, i.e., as "allowing one to have control over conditions which make action possible."²

The first element of importance in women's unique styles of power reported in the literature is that based on interpersonal relationships. In her psychological study of women's development, Gilligan contrasted her findings with those of Kohlberg in his study of human development.³ When Kohlberg's all-male sample was faced with a moral dilemma, they tended to solve it by invoking rights and rules. Gilligan carried out three separate studies of men and women, focused on moral dilemma and choice. She found that women tended to solve moral dilemmas by resorting to an ethic of "care and responsibility in relationships."⁴ These contrasting ethics also appeared in both the Kohlberg and Gilligan studies when subjects were asked to resolve hypothetical situations of adult life, calling for the exercise of some form of power. Gilligan claims that the epistemological basis for modes of knowing seems distinct for

¹Ibid., p.116.

²Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 166.

³Reported in Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), p. 72.

⁴Ibid., p. 73.

women, based on her sample and on her review of the work of Miller and McClelland on women and power.¹

Elizabeth Janeway understands self-transformation for women as the root of all subsequent changes. She found that among those characterized as members of the "weak" groups in society, women being the primary paradigm, "the real basis for change comes with a new self-image, validated by others in the same boat."² To a certain extent Janeway derives her ideas on how women develop power from Jean Baker Miller, who has observed that women's socialization occurs in personalistic social settings; therefore, women derive values from relating cooperatively to others in a value-laden manner. These values are not time limited, nor limited to a narrow geographical scope, as men's tend to be, but are based in personal relationships.³ This, Miller argues, is why women's experience in groups might provide an important power base for the achievement of self-determination which must occur before they are able to cooperate creatively. When women no longer find themselves isolated in a restricted social context, then they will create the solidarity necessary to engage in conflict over a given issue.⁴ This sense of solidarity or group belonging may be important in aiding women to overcome a fear of the inevitable intra- and inter-group conflicts, which arise with attempts to control and to limit them before they can achieve their goals.

¹Ibid., pp. 167-68.

²Powers of the Weak (New York: Morrow Quill, 1980), p. 174.

³Ibid., p. 174.

⁴Toward a New Psychology, p. 132.

Miller also observes that for women, dominance usually ends when their children grow away from them and once again, women find themselves in position of unequal social status and power.¹ This may confirm McClelland's work, where he reports that men express power in the activities of assertion and aggression; by contrast, women express power in acts of nurturance.²

Mary Daly locates power for women in the processes of self-determination and collaboration. In Beyond God the Father, Daly envisions a new "space" created by churchwomen on the margins of patriarchy. However, it is not set apart from reality, but from the "contrived non-reality of alienation." Daly expresses social relationships in this new space as "cosmic sisterhood" and voices the hope that if enough women discover it and do not lose courage, "...it may be possible to move the world."³

Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza similarly claims that before mutuality between women and men will be possible, women must exorcise male prerogatives over them. She also adds that women's route to power involves the reclamation of their spiritual heritage. Commonality of self-actualization, according to Schussler Fiorenza, is possible in the ekklesia of women (discussed more fully in chapter 2). Her notion of the ekklesia is of an entity which is civil-political, resists all forms of patriarchal oppression, and is politically engaged in goals of liberation

¹Ibid., p. 65.

²David C. McClelland, Power: The Inner Experience (New York: Irvington Publishers Inc., 1975), p. 83.

³Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father. Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pp. 156-57.

and equality. Schussler Fiorenza provides ideological, i.e., non-religious grounding when she refers to the "subversive power" available to women who reclaim the struggles and sufferings of the "remembered past." Such a "dangerous memory" not only keeps alive the hopes and struggles of Christian women of previous centuries, but "allows for a universal solidarity of sisterhood with all women of the past, present and future who follow the same vision."¹

Potential sources of women's power are also postulated by theorists and practitioners of the "goddess" school, some of whom are ritual specialists. My own participant observation in ritual situations and a perusal of the pertinent literature shows that ritual celebrations center around an evocation of powers of the natural world. Rituals led by women also provide a source of strength for women participants. These experiences result in a psychic bonding with others located outside kinship networks. These bonds have both communal and associational aspects:² the solidarity gained by women in these extra-familial relationships leads them to identify with a particular female collectivity. The collectivity may use its power to confront institutions it sees as repressive in the wider society. In their discussions of feminist spirituality involving notions of "the goddess" in Chapter 3, some Catholic movement women indicated they had participated in ritual events where female practitioners of "the Craft" (or school of witchcraft dealing with powers in the natural realm) officiated. The rituals often comprise part of a larger event, such as a meeting concerning feminist

¹In Memory of Her, p. 31.

²From Max Weber, p. 183.

spirituality, or a demonstration focusing on anti-nuclear or ecological issues. Catholic movement women who had participated in these rituals with non-Catholics claimed to draw support from the collectivity which resulted. They also felt that they gave a sense of their own power to those with whom they demonstrated. In some of the demonstrations, the women risked being arrested; this deepened their sense of solidarity with others. Their specific contribution may have been in providing a sense of religious participation to a particular cause, especially in ritualized demonstrations which were not primarily religious in character.

I found a second element of power in the literature on women and power which is based on rational, formal logic, in contrast to the "psychological logic of relationships" characterized thus far.¹

In her study of men and women in business organizations, Kanter found that for both sexes, the structure of power was determined by informal personal alliances and by formal job characteristics.² In a related study on women and power (with Diane Fassel, 1977) involving all-female groups, Kanter found that task organization was of importance in shaping women's organizational behavior. For instance, in an innovative parochial school, women's leadership style was characterized by a more "open" participatory style of power; in a traditional service organization, women tended to behave in a more impersonal, bureaucratic fashion when they handed down policy. On the other hand, women who were

¹In a Different Voice, p. 100.

²Men and Women of the Corporation, p.247.

leaders of professional groups exhibited a style which was far more intellectual and abstract.¹

Sources of Power for Catholic Movement Women

Since 1983, Catholic movement organizations have adopted even more militant strategies than earlier for the achievement of their goals. In part, this is a response to increased Papal pressure to stem the tide of opposition to Vatican policies toward liberal American orders of nuns. In response to specific Vatican policies in 1983-84 which have opposed the activity of nuns in highly visible political and social welfare organizations, movement publications show an increased militancy regarding goals for Catholic women. Two cases in point are the July 1984 issue of New Women/New Church, the newspaper of the Women's Ordination Conference. In the first case is an article written by Sister Maureen Fiedler, President of Catholics for ERA, pointing out seven major areas of U.S. Catholic life targeted by the Church hierarchy for repression. She offered eight courses of action which feminists might take to counter the repression. In the second case of increased militancy, the December 21, 1984 issue of the National Catholic Reporter, a national Catholic weekly published by laypersons, contains a major article entitled "Nuns, the Battered Women of the Church?", written by a major superior of a women's congregation who chose to remain anonymous.

The militant mood among Catholic movement women was apparent in the responses of the women interviewed. The resistance exhibited by Catholic movement women may also reflect a heightened sense of confrontation, propelling demands for change within the movement itself.

¹Ibid., p. 300.

During the interviews, I attempted to locate some of the respondents' sense of power. I asked each participant a series of questions concerning her experiences of a sense of power. The question was as follows: "Could you tell me which of the following experiences (if you have had them) gave you the sense of giving or receiving power?" Contexts provided were: a) participation in ritual celebrations; b) going about one's work; c) private prayer or meditation; d) participation in consciousness-raising groups; and e) participation in the activities of an organization.

I then looked to see whether the principal characteristic of the sense of power presented by the interviewees would be based on cooperative and relational elements, as the work of Gilligan, Miller and Kanter, or on formal characteristics, also noted by Kanter in her study on women and power (with Diane Fassel, 1977).

The context which the highest number of respondents reported gave them a sense of power was participation in ritual celebrations, mentioned by 40 of 44 movement women. This was expected of a group whose worldview contains an admixture of religious elements, as previously discussed.

Second was participation in organizational activities--mentioned by 37 of 45 respondents. Next in order of importance for movement women was the workplace, cited by 34 of 44 respondents. Prayer and meditation practices were mentioned by 30 of 44 respondents--almost the same number given to the workplace; but 7 laywomen and 2 nuns said prayer and meditation practices did not give them any sense of power. Least important for the sense of power was participation in consciousness-raising groups. Only 9 of 23 laywomen and 11 of 20 nuns reported positive consciousness-raising experiences with regard to power; while 6 respondents said they

did not find this experience helpful. Another group of 7 respondents-- 5 laywomen and 2 nuns reported that they had never had a consciousness-raising group experience. These summary findings are presented below in tabular form. Each of the five contexts presented in the question on the sense of power are discussed individually.

Table 5.1 Summary of Tables 5.2, 5.3, 5.4A, 5.5 and 5.6--Contexts where Respondents Reported Experiencing A Sense of Power

<u>Social/Religious Context</u>	<u>No. of Respondents Reporting A Sense of Power</u>								
	<u>Lay</u>				<u>Nun</u>				
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Mixed</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Mixed</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Total</u>
A. ritual cele- brations	20	2	-	1	20	1	-	-	(44)
B. organizational participation	21	2	-	-	16	3	-	3	(45)
C. the workplace	17	2	3	1	17	2	2	-	(44)
D. prayer/medita- tion practices	14	7	-	2	16	2	-	3	(44)
E. consciousness- raising*	9	4	3	2	11	2	1	4	(36)

* 5 laywomen and 2 nuns reported never having experienced consciousness-raising. These 7 cases are not included in Item E.

A. Ritual Celebrations and Power

Table 5.2 shows that the primary context in which movement women experience power through ritual is at celebrations led by women, or in which women hold a major role. This was mentioned by 9 of 23 movement laywomen and 6 of 21 nuns. Four laywomen and 5 nuns described their work or ministry as planning or leading liturgical events (some of which

were all-female and which, if known, may invite negative sanctions).

They felt this was a source of power.

Table 5.2 Sense of Power in Ritual* Contexts

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Women Lead or Have Major Role in Ritual</u>	<u>Ritual Attended Only by Women</u>	<u>Ritual Is Part of Ministry or Work</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Lay	9	2	4	5	3	(23)
Nun	6	7	5	2	1	(21)
Total Movement Women	(15)	(9)	(9)	(7)	(4)	(44)

* The word "ritual" as used in the interviews refers to a communal gathering of believers for the purposes of worshipping their God, of sharing faith experience, or other religious expressions. It may also include symbolic eucharistic actions, such as the sharing of wine and the breaking of bread.

Rituals attended only by women afforded an important setting for providing nuns' sense of power (mentioned by 7 nuns); this was not an important context for laywomen--only 2 mentioned it. Rather, the context mentioned by laywomen with second highest frequency comprises various situations such as parish settings, or in one case, a liturgical dance group. These appear in the category of "Other" (Table 5.2). NCCW women are considered as a separate group of 8 in this analysis. Their responses (not shown in Tables 5.2-5.7) are reported, when appropriate, to provide some comparison with movement laywomen.

Out of a total of all 23 laywomen asked, 3 either did not answer the question, or reported that ritual did not give a sense of power, or had had negative experiences of rituals. Of 21 nuns asked, 20 reported

experiencing a sense of power through ritual. Only one did not answer the question.

In many cases respondents' statements of their sense of power involved experiencing an exchange of energy. Among the 6 nuns experiencing a sense of power where women led or had major ritual roles, several specific situations were reported: "...ritual celebrations with my women prisoners. When I lead liturgies for them in the Christian tradition, I feel that there is an exchange of energies with them." "...when I lead women's monthly liturgies, there is an exchange of energy among those involved. Most of the time it is in a non-political, prayer context...."

Among the experiences reported by the nine movement lay respondents who felt that viewing other women as ritual specialists provided a sense of power, one woman recalled experiences during a retreat:

Last year, we had an evening prayer service on retreat--a dozen women, and it was like a joint consecrated eucharist. It was one of the most powerful experiences of my life; something that has never really left me...it's like I can go back and be there, and it gives me strength, identity...I had felt very negative about being a woman until that weekend. For the first time, I felt good about being a woman.

Several laywomen mentioned taking on the role of lector at liturgies; reading Scripture passages to the congregation, as a source of power.

Typical of this experience was the following:

I have felt very strongly empowered as a lector. I have felt and still feel that this is one ministry that I have really been called to. I would be interested in preaching, because it's an opportunity to speak directly to women from a woman's experience, pain, learning and relationship to God. So often, I mean, it's perfectly natural to have a sexual bias in one's religious responses,

according to whether one is male or female...so women have not had the opportunity to hear that.

A laywoman's testimony regarding female ritual models also shows its strong influence in an interfaith group: "It was a mind-boggling experience for me to see an Episcopal woman priest, sending forth femaleness through the Eucharist."

The fact that two-thirds as many movement women noted that "ritual attended only by women" was important for a sense of power calls for interpretation. It is not surprising that nuns prefer "liturgies attended only by women" since they are members of an organized feminine culture, whereas laywomen are not.

For nuns, leadership in ritual events probably occurs with greater frequency than it does in the wider ecclesial community. In an all-female culture, movement nuns may feel freer to initiate changes in the official liturgical prescriptions than do others who are more bound to the Church as a total hierarchy.

This interpretation of nuns' experience with liturgy is also borne out by a recognition of difference between nun and lay responses regarding the direction of power experienced in ritual contexts. The 21 nuns responding to the question indicated that for the most part they either gave power or felt an exchange of it during rituals. Thirteen laywomen reported experiencing an exchange of power; three reported themselves as the recipients of power at liturgical functions, suggesting a more passive role. Three laywomen did not feel liturgy gave them any sense of power at all, and four did not discuss this aspect of power. One nun was quite clear concerning her liturgical role: "I can't say that (ritual) groups empower me, no. One of the strongest feelings I have to

be who I am is to facilitate or to lead groups in prayer. That's very strong in me and don't do it nearly as much as I would want to.... the power goes out from me in ritual celebrations." By functioning as ritual specialists, nuns increasingly usurp the traditional ordained male ritual role. This aspect of women's ritual activity brings its own problems. A former president of NCAN discussed this during a consideration of how she applied some notions of liberation theology to liturgical activity:

Carol Stuhlmuller (a male Catholic theologian) warned us in 1975 that there would be problems with the Catholic Church because women minister to each other. We would move further away from the eucharist as it could only be celebrated by male priests. The eucharist would become more protected... We (the respondents) ourselves believe it's immoral just to celebrate eucharist. Small group liturgies are going on across the country now. We have remained with it. Rosemary Ruether also warns us not to get off into individual sects--we must bring the eucharist back. I don't know where this may lead, but it has more of the hope and meaning of the original church than what is officially done now. In no way can we be just "Christian"; what we want is to be equal disciples in a community or looking at ourselves struggling with relational issues.

Taken as a whole, the discussions on various aspects of ritual presented in Table 5.2 show that nuns' lifestyles afford them more opportunities to develop all-female rituals and to take on the role of ritual specialists. The risk of sanctions is a calculated one, but it enables them to draw power from ritual experiences with greater frequency than laywomen. For most laywomen asked, identification with female leaders of ritual seemed to impart the strongest sense of power.

Five of 8 NCCW women who answered the question reported that their sense of power through ritual came through participation in more or less approved forms of liturgy. While one respondent did mention that she

composed and organized ritual events exclusively for women, she did not refer to female ritual leadership as an issue. All five who responded located their sense of power through participating directly in various parish liturgical events.

B. Sense of Power through Organizational Participation

Almost all lay and nun respondents (37 of 45) reported organizational participation as a source of the sense of power. Sixteen of twenty-two nuns asked reported experiencing power through participation in organizations, as did 21 of 23 laywomen. Three nuns and two laywomen did not feel that organizational membership provided them with a sense of power. Three nuns did not answer the questions concerning this phenomenon.

Table 5.3 Sense of Power through Organizational Membership

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Number of Respondents Reporting an Experience of the Sense of Power</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	
Lay	21	2	-	(23)
Nun	16	3	3	(22)
Total Movement Women	(37)	(5)	(3)	(45)

Some of the religiously based organizations mentioned as providing an increased sense of power were: the Women's Ordination Conference (mentioned 8 times); Network, a Washington-based religious lobby group; the Institute for Women Today; and various peace and justice advocacy groups. Non-religious organizations mentioned were: the National Organization for Women, the American Association of University Women; a college alumnae association, and a crisis center for rape victims.

I noted that in their discussions on organizational participation, a number of laywomen voiced a connection between ritual aspects present both in religious and in political gatherings where organizations were represented by constituencies. One laywoman reminisced: "When you've gotten out and marched in Washington for the ERA, as I did--there and in Chicago, there is a feeling of exhilaration from seeing large numbers of people banding together in a very orderly, positive way. This is inspiring--the marches and rallies for ERA; the Grant's Park Mass to welcome Archbishop Bernardin to Chicago. That to me is a big ritual, and inspiring also. ERA led by women; Masses led by men. There is an exchange of strength, energy, mutual support."

In the midst of discussing her work with an organization providing aid to migrant workers, another lay respondent remarked: "...also, one of the peak experiences for me was in August 1976, when I went to the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia."

Most of the organizations mentioned by 5 of 8 NCCW women were derived from local church or diocesan activities; and those providing a marked sense of power were of the same type.

On the whole, nuns expressed their mode of participating in organizations more precisely. One nun respondent pointed out one of the benefits she expected through organizational membership: "...that power is very clearly exchanged, because I've dropped out of organizations where I had felt a lack of that kind of mutuality and exchange. It's sort of a sense of receiving power and also releasing it. It happens in WOC." Another nun pinpointed the essential benefit to be gathered, in this case, from participation in an organization of women faculty in seminaries: "...beyond liturgical gathering, going through the simple

experience of meeting with women who share these views and their values, and you exchange experiences and are working on a common path, that is probably the most empowering experience for me right now."

A number of nuns mentioned organizational activity revolving around justice advocacy. One respondent experienced a sense of power in a manner typical of other nuns interviewed: "...sometimes, in peace movement demonstrations, like the El Salvador rallies to which I would go each Friday evening, at the Courthouse. In that setting I experienced a solidarity of purpose and an empowerment for me to go on with my own work with refugees."

A second nun respondent recalled her organizational experience while working for civil rights: "For a long time, I was on the Board of Common Cause. It was very exciting--where we were concerned about minorities' participation and development in government. Yes, we empowered others."

Another group of nuns found opportunity to exchange a sense of power with others when participating in activities or organizations related to or deriving from religious orders; for example, the National Assembly of Religious Women, or the National Coalition of American Nuns. One respondent in this group drew a parallel between what happens in organizational participation and her religious order: "...there's something about the common concern and the common interest and the common support. I think the same thing happens in your own group, in a religious community."

C. Sense of Power in the Workplace

I use the term "workplace" here to designate both what most nun respondents and a few laywomen called their "ministry", as well as those salaried positions which the term usually connotes. Thus, for most respondents, work issues relate directly to their religious commitment. For others, there is no relationship.

Seventeen of 21 nuns felt a sense of power through their work: two felt it "somewhat", and two did not experience it at all. Among movement laywomen, 17 of the 23 asked reported a sense of power at work; three replied "somewhat"; two did not find any power at work. One did not answer the question.

Table 5.4A Sense of Power at the Workplace

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Experienced Sense of Power</u>	<u>Experienced Somewhat</u>	<u>Did Not Experience</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Lay	17	3	2	1	(23)
Nun	17	2	2	-	(21)
Total Movement Women	(34)	(5)	(4)	(1)	(44)

NCCW women, not included in this analysis, did not discuss the sense of power in feminist terms. Of the six NCCW women asked, three reported that their work was a source of power; three others felt that God, or "prayer activity" provided them with a sense of power.

In my analysis of the total sample of nuns, which numbers 23, I found that 10 are in positions related to the Catholic women's movement and other pursuits related to social justice causes. Only two of the total of 25 laywomen do similar work. (See Table in Appendix III.) The remainder of the respondents work in various administrative, clerical or

professional contexts, in church or non-church related settings. The different focus of occupational commitment was reflected in the reports of nuns and laywomen regarding the kind of power experienced at work. Fourteen of twenty nuns reported an exchange of power occurred in their work; one gave, and another received power. I was led to expect a high proportion of nuns experiencing an exchange of power when considering the previously reported (Chapter 2) interpersonal aspects of their social ministry. Nine laywomen reported imparting power to others through their work, seven reported an exchange, four received power, and only two reported ad hoc experiences of power.

Table 5.4B Direction of Power Experienced
by Movement Women at Workplace

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Direction of Power</u>					<u>Total</u>
	<u>Give</u>	<u>Receive</u>	<u>Exchange</u>	<u>Mixed</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	
Lay	9	4	7	2	2	(24)
Nun	1	1	14	-	4	(20)
Total	(10)	(5)	(21)	(2)	(6)	(44)

The social activities of the nun respondents typically contained a certain degree of identification with privileged individuals or groups who are the focus of their ministry. This identification has its roots in their vow of religious chastity as it has been transmitted through monastic traditions. For nuns, chastity directs sexual energies toward the carrying out of the two great mandates of the Christian life: love of God, and a cosmic love of one's neighbor. Nuns also consider those with whom they work as their neighbor. Two excerpts of nuns' protocols help explain this identification. A young nun working with "bag women" of the Chicago streets reported being energized by the latter's sheer will to survive:

The women who touch my life would seem to have nothing going for them, so when...they discover that they can love each other and need one another, this can be a very basic recognition. We provide an atmosphere where the suspicions they normally have out there break down... they empower each other, and me too. There is a tremendous degree of energy. Some of these women overcome tremendous odds--for me, that's very life-giving.

A second nun administers a Federal grant for prisoners' programs. She explained the exchange of power at work this way: "I would say they (the prisoners) stimulate me--or reflect God to me in a way that I've never experienced before. And it comes right out of Pedagogy of the Oppressed; it's exactly the experience Freire talks about. As you become one with the oppressed, the gift you receive because of their hope, their endurance....it's definitely part of an exchange."

Three laywomen linked the sense of power with expertise at work, or of being able to locate in a non-church enterprise where one could exert some measure of control over the work flow. This notion of power was expressed by a young laywoman who managed a consulting business in film and video:

I would say (regarding power) that it depends on the job. Sometimes people come in with very specific requests and I almost have no power at all; I have to do what they ask. Generally, I make recommendations. At this point in my career, it's more that I'll make a recommendation and we'll go with that. It's a lot more powerful in that respect. When I started out, it was less so... I followed orders and then tried to improve on whatever had been suggested. Now I feel more authoritative.

A second laywoman remarked that her expertise at work also facilitated the "helping" aspect of work relationships, which she felt imparted a sense of power. Speaking of her post as a Representative in a State Legislature, this young mother of seven remarked: "My role as legislator

gives me a sense of empowering other people and having a certain kind of power myself, which I use to empower others"

One married laywoman with an advanced degree in theology directly expressed mobility aspirations because her high school teaching career limited her scope for gaining a sense of power. She went on to explain: "...men think me incapable of certain functions or roles."

The high number of women reporting an exchange of power in their work relationships may be a reflection of the fact that women as a group do not hold high administrative positions, which exist in vertical power structures; but this may also confirm the reports of Miller, Gilligan and others mentioned earlier that women prefer a cooperative mode of personal relationships, including those in the workplace. Two nuns and a laywoman felt the aspect of cooperation was the basis for the sense of power they gained through work:

"I believe that in groups working together, people empower each other in a commonality of activity. It has happened in my experience with Region 10, when I was the area supervisor. I found it was very easy to encourage others to work, and in turn they empowered me. And I think that the understanding of power as shared power is feminist."

"Even before you read that list I would have said that my sense of empowerment comes primarily from all the opportunities I have to work with women--from committee meetings to working together on a project, to giving workshops, or whatever...the inner action with women literally gives me strength and excitement."

The laywoman, in her archivist work at a local college, described how a woman colleague brought about a collegial style of functioning at work:

One of the real lessons I've learned is that I existed in a hierarchical structure there, in a pecking order from

chief administrator down. And yet in my department I have a person who has changed that into a collegial situation. And that's a real example of how you can create pockets of collegiality and equality. That has been very empowering for me. Now she is free to be more creative and feels a lot more support to go against the flow of the tide for the things she advocates in her profession. So I think she's had a kind of empowerment in liberation also.

In laywomen's discussions on work and power there are indications that they are uncomfortable with positions in which they are expected to exercise power over others. They prefer more "collegial" modes of work. Several women reported an increase in work satisfaction when they found themselves in situations where it was possible to relate to others cooperatively. This came as much from older women as from younger ones. A young computer programmer voiced the disturbing element many laywomen found in situations where they were forced to employ "power over" others. They displayed selective rejection of the opportunity. "Empowering others with my own ideas and being vested with power to do things...is actually frightening, disturbing, because it's a responsibility. Power is not necessarily good....I find now I feel sometimes inclined to do things because they will give me power, but I try not to do them."

A nun's description of the uses of power entailed recognition of what psychoanalysts call "secondary gains" or other neurotic aspects of power: "Often, I think I give up power. I give up in the sense of getting more benefits from being powerless. There is a certain reward at times for surrendering power."

This respondent also pointed out the contingent nature of women's power as experienced in liturgical groups and consciousness-raising

contexts: "...there is some residual power which remains after experiencing it.... But one must always work with this experience, because it's not once and for all."

D. Power Through Prayer/Meditation Practices

Of twenty-three laywomen asked whether they experienced a sense of power through prayer or meditation, fourteen agreed that they did. Of these fourteen, nine described their spiritual practices as performed individually, and five carried them out in group settings. Seven others said prayer was of little help or no help in gaining power. Two did not answer the question. Among the nun respondents, nine reported experiencing power during individual prayer or as a result of it. Seven preferred group prayer as inducing the sense of power, while two said prayer did not have any relationship to power. Three did not answer the question.

Table 5.5 Experience of Power as a Result of the Practice of Prayer or Meditation

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Context of Prayer Experience</u>			<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Individually</u>	<u>In Groups</u>	<u>Little or No Help</u>		
Lay	9	5	7	2	(23)
Nun	9	7	2	3	(21)
Total Movement Women	(18)	(12)	(9)	(5)	(44)

There are several points that can be derived from these responses. First, the twelve women reporting an experience of power while praying with a collectivity are part of a revived trend in Catholic spiritual activity. Traditionally, theologians of the church have emphasized the benefits to be reaped from both individual and more organized forms of

prayer. The proliferation of conventicles in prayer of a more informal nature might be considered an alternative to official settings which tend to prescribe the forms of prayer. One nun described a specific technique which had been employed in her experience of prayer groups:

...the whole "extrovert meditation" process offered in one of our graduate programs in theology and ministry derives from Matthew Fox's Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality¹ ...it's devoted, without calling itself feminist, to help people find more affirming ways of meditating that are not necessarily sitting down and having conversation between me and God, in the old sense of the word.

A second point is that there was a difference between nuns and laywomen in the benefits derived from praying in groups. Although the 12 respondents who reported a sense of power through group prayer were about equally distributed between lay and nun members, nuns were more articulate regarding the experience. The principal group types reported by the nuns were either justice advocacy groups or women's support groups; and the nuns reported an exchange of energies which are not only personally empowering, but enable them to strengthen others. "(My prayer group) empowers me so that in turn I can give power to others"; and "interacting with another life and relating it to Gospel values happens in my life every day (her prison ministry)... I find this mode of prayer far more eucharistic...than going to church and celebrating liturgy." Laywomen's prayer groups were focused on types of activities regarded as more formally "religious," i.e., retreat groups, parish groups, prayer

¹ A center for spiritual practices based on the teachings of Meister Eckhart and others, headed by Dominican Matthew Fox, and located in Oakland, California.

sessions with family and friends present or, in one instance, a charismatic group.

In the context of family or church-related prayer groups, laywomen reported experiencing an exchange of energies: "Community prayer can even be when my husband and I gather at friends' homes or they gather at ours and we share concerns--I very much have a sense of prayer...and I'm empowered by that sense of community." The theme of community resulting from group prayer was also brought out by another laywoman: "I experience this (community) especially at the folk masses on Sundays. Out of this community arises further opportunities for exchange at retreats."

Only half the group of 8 NCCW women answered the question referring to prayer or meditation experiences. Of these, 3 referred to themselves as receiving power from God, for whom they are an instrument; one respondent reported that in discussions with another Catholic woman regarding prayer, she had received insights that enabled her to experience what she called "the mystical element" in her personal prayer.

E. The Sense of Power and Consciousness-Raising Groups

Consciousness-raising as a specific activity was not perceived as an important force for achieving a sense of power by a majority of either nuns or laywomen. There were differences between nun and lay groups in their assessment of consciousness-raising. While eleven of twenty nuns reported positive experiences in this regard, only three offered negative or mixed reactions. Of twenty-three laywomen, nine expressed positive experiences with consciousness-raising and seven reported negative or mixed reactions to it. Two nuns and five laywomen, and four of six NCCW laywomen reported never having the experience.

Nun and lay groups equally reported some positive experiences of power in consciousness-raising groups, but more than twice as many laywomen said they had either mixed reactions, were negative or had never experienced consciousness-raising.

Table 5.6 Sense of Power in Consciousness-Raising Groups

<u>Status Group</u>	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>	<u>Reaction</u>	<u>Never Ex- perienced C.R.</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Lay	9	4	3	5	2	(23)
Nun	11	2	1	2	4	(20)
Total Movement Women	(20)	(6)	(4)	(7)	(6)	(43)

The positive experiences reported with regard to consciousness-raising and its related sense of power were most often reported as occurring in groups concerned with a relatively narrow agenda, usually related either to advocacy groups or feminist issues. The founder of the Institute for Women Today reported that the Institute had sponsored over 50 consciousness-raising groups for women. Another nun was involved in a group protesting the Pope's agenda during his visit to the United States in 1979. Another began raising her voice against Vatican policies after experiencing a raised consciousness while participating in a liberation theology group led by Gustavo Gutierrez. Laywomen also mentioned consciousness-raising in relation to single-issue groups. These included women teaching in Catholic seminaries; women who chose to be expatriates in Switzerland; and members of other advocacy groups such as the Legal Defense Fund. Only two laywomen reported experiencing consciousness-raising while attending retreats.

Typically, respondents reported that transformations of consciousness have an episodic quality. They have patterns similar to situations in which women reported the gain of power. A new self-awareness arises in diverse contexts and initiates the development of self-knowledge. A nun described the consequences of her consciousness-raising experience: "I have been thrust into them (consciousness-raising groups). I never went into them with that intention. But when I went to respond to the visit of the Pope and met the women planning to stand in protest during Theresa Kane's welcoming address, I entered an intense consciousness-raising experience. I was one of those who stood in the pews, at the Pope's Mass in the National Shrine in Washington." This respondent entered, essentially, an ad hoc consciousness-raising experience. It stimulated her to participate with other Catholic movement women in a confrontation with Catholic hierarchy in the Fall of 1979. It created her solidarity with the movement.

Summary--The Sense of Power

Overall results of the question on the sense of power were similar for both status groups. Equally high numbers of nuns and laywomen (20 from each group) reported that attendance at rituals provided them with a sense of power. Proportionately, a few more laywomen (21) than nuns (16) felt that organizational participation led to these feelings. Although both religious and non-religious organizations were mentioned by both status groups, laywomen associated the element of ritual a significant number of times with events sponsored by organizations they mentioned. For nuns, mentions of the religious element in organizational participation frequently was found in their religious order.

The workplace, while not deemed as important a source of the sense of power as the first two contexts, was also mentioned by an equal number of laywomen and nuns (17), next in order. Prayer and meditation practices were cited by 30 movement women as a source of the sense of power, but a group of 9 respondents did not feel this context was important. These 9 represented the largest group reporting ineffectiveness of any of the five contexts presented. Consciousness-raising activities were reported by the smallest number of respondents as important for developing a sense of power (20); and 7 of 43 respondents had never taken part in a consciousness-raising group.

The sense of power reported by movement women in all the foregoing contexts may have given them levels of expectations which have been frustrated in official religious settings.

Further Analysis of Organizational and Group
Membership as a Source of Movement Women's Power

The two most salient contexts where movement women reported experiencing a sense of power--the ritual and organizational contexts appear to contain the two elements of power referred to earlier in the chapter: ritual contexts provide solidarity; organizational membership a more formal type of power. I chose the organizational context as the more fruitful line of further investigation. The application of Weber's methodology of verstehen in a second reading of movement members' experiences in various organizations and groups might enable me to identify more precisely respondents' use of the more formal characteristics of power, not discussed in the chapter on solidarity. This involved a review of all five social contexts presented to respondents

regarding power, and classifying each mention of a group or organization by major type.

The organizational type receiving the highest number of mentions (25) was in the category of justice advocacy. Justice advocacy organizations are defined as groups committed to the redress of one or more social situations perceived as unjust. In this category, organizations in the women's movement were mentioned 8 times (by nuns) and 9 times (laywomen). Other social justice advocacy organizations were cited 5 times by nuns and 3 times by laywomen. Most of these organizations were church-related. Political organizations received mention 3 times by nuns. Nuns' religious orders were mentioned only twice. Laywomen mentioned church committees 4 times, professional or occupational groups twice, and other types of organizations were mentioned 4 times.

Table 5.7 Types of Organizations Mentioned by Respondents in All Contexts where They Experienced a Sense of Power

<u>L A Y</u>					<u>N U N</u>				
<u>Type of Organizat.</u>	<u>No. of Times Mentioned</u>				<u>Type of Organizat.</u>	<u>No. of Times Mentioned</u>			
	<u>Relig.</u>	<u>Non- Relig.</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Total</u>		<u>Relig.</u>	<u>Non- Relig.</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Total</u>
Justice					Justice				
Adv.	(8)	(4)		(12)	Adv.	(9)	(4)		(13)
women's					women's				
movem.	7	2		9	movem.	6	2		8
other	1	2		3	other	3	2		5
Church					Political		3		(3)
Comm.	4			(4)	Religious				
					Order	2			(2)
Other		4		(4)					
Profess'l./									
Occupat'l.		2		(2)					
None			1	(1)	None			4	(4)
Total	(12)	(10)	(1)	(23)	Total	(11)	(7)	(4)	(22)

As in the other sources of the sense of power presented, the mode of experience reported was almost exclusively in the exchange of energy with others. The following lay respondent provided an image of power gained through solidarity with other women:

I feel most powerful when I'm doing a political action... any kind of support from women, and I can carry on and face this patriarchal system... I had a neat revelation about the goddess at the NOW Convention in 1978; I guess that's been reinforced over these 4 years, and that is, to believe in my own talents and skills and use them. Up until now, I've been easily intimidated by conflict, or by someone stronger than I, and I tend to retreat. Now I just forge ahead, because I believe in myself.

In this instance, organizational participation was linked to a transformation of the individual and the raising of her social consciousness. This is not unexpected: some of the respondents mentioned the same organizations in this connection as those cited when describing their experiences in consciousness-raising.

A nun reported in detail how participation in organizational activities produced an effect similar to that of consciousness-raising:

...I was at the very first meetings of Network and the Women's Ordination Conference. These activities, stemming from the mandates of Vatican II, helped me, gave me new life. And we were able to change what went on in our community Chapter meetings. I felt that before Vatican II, I must have been killing myself a day at a time. You know, doing violence to myself through blind obedience and all that stuff...It was insidious... each day, a little bit of my spirit was killed. I didn't have an outlet--I was using all my energies trying to be what I was supposed to be--conforming, and I'm really not a conformist. I took a course on the theology of Vatican II which helped free me. I felt that what we had been trying to change was legitimate.

In the foregoing example, organizational participation provided the impetus for seeking additional knowledge to achieve power. Other respondents made connections between educational experiences and power. Thus, the law student, when asked whether being a fulltime law student empowered her in any way, responded: "No, but I find the study of theology empowering. I feel that I am getting access to the knowledge of which priests have a monopoly."

The questions of organizational membership and power was previously explored by McClelland in 1975.¹ He found that women's power motivation tended to associate positively with organizational membership. This positive correlation held across four stages of maturation, ("maturation" defined as possessing characteristics associated with adulthood), and was strongest at their highest stage of maturation. This suggests that one reason movement women report a strong association between organizational participation and the experience of having power is that they may possess a power motivation similar to that of the women in McClelland's sample.

In their descriptions of experiences in rituals, at the workplace, at prayer, in consciousness-raising groups and in organizations, movement women stressed the sense of power gained in cooperative contexts of value-oriented exchanges with others, whether they engage in these activities from the position of leader or follower. This tends to bear

¹David McClelland, Power, The Inner Experience. New York: Irvington Publishers, (1975), pp. 71-73.

out the findings of Gilligan, Miller and others regarding the salience of personal relationships and connectedness in women's experiences of power. It did not tell me much about the more formal aspects of power.

In the latter part of the interviews on the subject of power, respondents were asked to report their experience of power in a dichotomized fashion; i.e., where they experienced it as a sense of community and personal support, and where they experienced it as striving toward the achievement of specific goals and tasks.

Contexts Mentioned by Respondents as Sources of Community

I asked respondents: "Where do you experience community?" Seven of 22 nuns mentioned their religious order as a source of community; three of this number mentioned the order alone, and four the order in combination with other groups. Eight of 23 laywomen felt their source of community lay in some form of devotional activity. Six respondents cited religious activity in retreats or in parish groups, and two mentioned it in connection with family. Second in order of importance for nuns (six nuns) was the workplace; for lay respondents, ad hoc lay and religious women's groups were second in order of importance (four laywomen). Third highest source of community, mentioned by five nuns, was women's groups. For laywomen, third place was the workplace, cited three times. The six NCCW women who answered the question divided their responses evenly among "family" and "workplace" as sources of community.

Table 5.8 Contexts where Respondents Experienced
a Sense of Community

<u>L A Y</u>		<u>N U N</u>	
<u>Social Context</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>	<u>Social Context</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>
Religious activity:	(8)	Religious order:	(7)
In parish liturgies,		alone	3
retreats, prayer		with other groups	4
groups, with friends	6		
In family groups	2	Workplace	6
Women's groups	4	Women's groups	5
Workplace	3	Present living	
Living arrangement	1	situation	2
Other	2	Other	2
None	4		
N.A.	1		
Total	(23)	Total	(22)
 <u>NCCW</u>			
Family	2		
Workplace	2		
Workplace/Family	2		
Total	(6)		

The slightly higher number of nuns reporting a sense of community at the workplace might be explained by the fact that many live in religious communities, unlike movement laywomen. Laywomen's reports of sources of community are more scattered than those of nuns. Movement laywomen differed from NCCW women in the relative importance given to family by the latter group.

Movement laywomen's assessments of their sources of community consisted of less intimate groupings than did those of nuns. This suggests that laywomen are seeking, in religious activities, women's

groups, or even at the workplace, like-minded "others" who are "in the same boat." This impulse of laywomen is referred to by Janeway as a first step in self-transformation.¹ Nuns are already "in the same boat"; their preference for their orders regarding community might indicate that the religious organizations perhaps function in somewhat the same manner for them. Further, it indicates that nuns do not feel alienated from their orders.

Groups Preferred by Respondents as Sources of Support

After questioning respondents about their sense of community, I asked them which groups they considered important in providing a sense of support. The question put to them was: "Which of the groups to which you belong offer you the most support?" For nuns, their religious order was mentioned as the primary source of support by 16 of 22 nuns. In this group, eight nuns cited the order alone and six mentioned the order together with the workplace, and two the order and other groups. A second group of nine nuns reported the workplace as the major source of support, including three who cited it alone, and six in combination (as previously mentioned) with the religious order. The remaining three nuns reported other scattered sources.

The largest number of laywomen (seven of 23) reported that the workplace provided them with the most support. Five laywomen mentioned a variety of women's groups in this connection. This was the second highest frequency. Four women stated that religious activities in various contexts gave them support. The remaining seven laywomen who answered the question provided a scattering of other major sources.

¹ Elizabeth Janeway, Powers of the Weak p. 174.

Four of six NCCW women felt that family gave them most support.

Table 5.9 Groups Mentioned by Respondents as Sources of Support

<u>Lay</u> ;		<u>Nun</u>	
<u>Group Named</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>	<u>Group Named</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>
Workplace	7	Religious order	8
Women's groups	5	Religious order/ workplace	6
Religious activities	4	Religious order/ other	2
Friends	3	Workplace	3
Living arrangement	1	Women's groups	1
Other	1	Living situation	1
None	1	Other	1
N.A.	1		
Total	(23)	Total	(22)

N C C W

Family	3
Family/Workplace	1
Workplace	2
Total	(6)

It is noteworthy that for nuns, the religious order was reported as the group lending the most support, while in response to the previous question, nuns cited as sources of community an equal division between the order and the workplace. If this is true, they have considerable approval and support from their orders. The comparable situation for laywomen, i.e., family or living arrangement, was relatively unimportant for both their sense of community and support.

Groups Mentioned by Respondents as Most Effective

I attempted to elicit respondents' opinions regarding how effective in goal achievement were the organizations or groups which they had previously mentioned in their comments on power. I asked them: "Which of the groups mentioned in the discussion on power, in your opinion, are most effective in achieving their stated goals?"

The most effective groups mentioned (by seven laywomen) were women's groups. Second was groups in their workplace, mentioned by six laywomen. Nine nuns mentioned their religious order alone, or in combination with other groups as most effective in achieving their goals. Second highest frequency among nuns (5), were groups advocating social justice. This was followed by workplace groups (4). The third most frequent single category (mentioned by 4 laywomen) was, on the other hand, ad hoc religious groups, mentioned three times alone and once in combination with work and family. Both status groups gave a low number of responses to their living situations. Laywomen and nuns also gave low ratings to living situations when they discussed sources of community and of support earlier in the interview.

Table 5.10 Groups Considered by Respondents as Most Effective in Achieving Stated Goals

<u>L A Y</u>		<u>N U N</u>	
<u>Group Named</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>	<u>Group Named</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>
Women's groups	7	Religious order	4
Workplace groups	6	Religious order, workplace groups	4
Religious groups	3	Religious order, other	1
Justice advocacy	2	Justice advocacy	5
Religious groups, work, family	1	Workplace groups	4
Other	2	Workplace groups, living situation	1
None	1	Other	1
N.A.	1	N.A.	2
Total	(23)	Total	(22)
 <u>NCCW</u>			
Workplace groups	2		
Workplace/family	1		
N.A.	3		
Total	(6)		

Although justice advocacy groups were mentioned as most effective in goal achievement by five nuns and two laywomen, this category has not been employed in the analysis of respondents' sources of community and of support.

One nun did not mention her order in connection with goal effectiveness but cited a justice advocacy group instead. Her response to an earlier question: "What are the main issues that concern you regarding women in the church?" provides one reason for her lower assessment of her order with regard to its goal achievement: "I don't see religious

communities exercising their corporate power¹ and confronting other corporate powers in society...I don't think they see themselves as having that kind of power. Most women, nun or lay, have not participated in the political and business worlds. Once you're involved in that, you become more aware of the vital importance of the use of corporate power."

This nun's perception of her religious order as ineffective in the exercise of power in the public sphere might help to explain other movement nuns' active involvement in the formation of coalitions that have been attempting to influence public opinion. NCAN has been presented as an example of the sense of women's autonomous collective power. Singly or in coalition with other religious or non-religious organizations, NCAN has issued position statements on civil rights, international human rights, abortion, corporate responsibility, and nuclear war.

Do Movement Women Experience More than
One Type of Power through Group Membership?

The link made between organizational membership and power (reported in Table 5.3) can be expected among members of an organized social movement. Among those who mentioned group membership, one type, the justice advocacy group, was mentioned with greater frequency than other types (Table 5.7). In addition, the justice advocacy group was considered more important for goal effectiveness than for community and support. Justice advocacy is, of course, a task-oriented activity, an attempt to acquire power to implement a goal and to subordinate its means to ends.

¹ i.e., collective power (ed.)

Elements of community and support, which provide solidarity, may be preconditions but not the sufficient means of those organizations which specifically strive to achieve specific goals. The former elements provide the sense of community, while the latter must strive for power if they are to implement desired ends. In this context, "goal effectiveness" involves the power to implement what R. H. Turner views as the theme of contemporary movements, i.e., the goal of achieving "normative innovations regarding what is just or unjust in society."¹

The foregoing analysis of respondents' discussions on power embodies another question: whether the type of group respondents identified in their discussions of community and support, (i.e., solidarity), contributed strongly to group effectiveness. In order to determine whether respondents were referring to this kind of effectiveness, I attempted another mode of analysis. I tried to ascertain whether differences exist between the various types of groups respondents designated as providers of community and support (solidarity) and those designated as being effective.

To provide a basis for comparison, I classified every group mentioned by each respondent for community, support and goal effectiveness into the following types: professional/occupational, social justice advocacy, parish and prayer, community service, and "other." Religious orders per se are treated as a separate group type. Unlike the other types of groups, religious orders provide total socialization for a "religious" lifestyle and for the achievement of religious goals. I treated the category of "family/living arrangements" in a similar

¹ Cited in Serge R. Denisoff and Robert Merton, The Sociology of Dissent (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1974), p. 21.

fashion in order to provide some basis of comparison of laywomen with nuns.

Tables 5.11 A, B and C report separately on the frequency with which respondents reported elements of community, support and goal effectiveness, experienced through membership in the various types of groups.

Analysis of Groups Mentioned by Movement Members, by Type

1. Types of Groups as Sources of Community

The highest frequency of response given by laywomen regarding sources of community was local parish and prayer groups. These categories included retreat groups and liturgical groups, as well as parish committees and prayer groups. The next most frequent mention of community by laywomen were divided between professional/occupational groups, 4 times, and family/living arrangements. Each was mentioned 4 times. This was followed by justice advocacy, community service and "other" groups, mentioned three times each. Community service groups included the League of Women Voters, a program for the elderly, and a PTA group. For both laywomen and nuns, the "other" category contains small ad hoc groups, and friends.

Table 5.11A Types of Groups Considered as Sources
of Community by Movement Respondents

<u>Type of Group</u>	<u>No. of Times Mentioned as Source of Community</u>		
	<u>Lay</u>	<u>Nun</u>	<u>Total</u>
Parish groups; Prayer groups	8	1	(9)
Professional, occupational	4	8	(12)
Family/Living arrangements	4	3	(7)
Justice Advocacy:			
Catholic women's movement	2	4	(8)
Other	1	1	
Community Service	3	-	(3)
Other	3	3	(6)
Religious Order	-	7	(7)
Total	(23)	(22)	(45)

The highest frequency of response given by nuns was that professional/occupational groups provided them with a sense of community. A number of these groups were sponsored by or funded by religious orders. Second in order of mention, 7 times, was their religious order. Next in frequency of mention (5) were social justice advocacy groups. This was followed by family/living arrangements and "other" groups, each cited 3 times. Unlike laywomen, nuns cited parish and prayer groups only once, and community service groups not at all.

In summary, laywomen seemed to find community mainly through parish activities and informal prayer groups. Nuns seemed to experience a sense of community within more formal organizational settings, primarily through memberships in professional/occupational groups, and their own religious order. It seems that for all respondents, the sense of community was not as strongly sustained by feminist or other advocacy groups.

2. Types of Groups as Sources of Support

Turning from types of groups which provided community to those which provided support, the table below shows the frequency with which respondents mentioned the various groups as sources of support, by type of group. Professional/occupational groups received highest number of mentions by laywomen (8 times). Parish and prayer groups, and justice advocacy groups were mentioned 6 times each. This was followed by "other" groups and family/living arrangements, 3 times each. Least frequent mention was given to community service groups, cited twice as sources of support.

Table 5.11B Types of Groups Considered as Sources of Support by Movement Respondents

<u>Type of Group</u>	<u>No. of Times Mentioned as Source of Support</u>		
	<u>Lay</u>	<u>Nun</u>	<u>Total</u>
Professional/Occupational	8	8	(16)
Parish; Prayer groups	6	1	(7)
Justice Advocacy -			
Catholic women's movement	3	-	(7)
Other	3	1	
Family/Living Arrangement	3	3	(6)
Community Service	2	-	(2)
Other	3	1	(4)
Religious Order	-	14	(14)
Total	(23)	(22)	(45)

Nuns felt their religious order gave them the most support; 14 nun respondents out of 22 mentioned their order. Second highest frequency of mention (8 times) was professional/occupational groups. Family/living arrangements were cited three times, followed by parish and prayer groups, advocacy groups and "other" groups, each mentioned once.

Summary - Types of Groups Mentioned as Sources of Community and Support

Laywomen cited parish and prayer groups as their main sources of the sense of community. They derived principal support from professional/occupational groups, followed closely by parish and prayer groups and justice advocacy groups. Nuns reported finding community in professional/occupational groups and, not unexpectedly, their order. Nuns again mentioned their religious order membership as their principal source of group support. Taking overall totals for both status groups together, professional/occupational groups were mentioned most frequently as providing a sense of community, (12 times), and of support (16 times). When one considers that these same respondents chose the equal wage issue as the top movement priority (Table 2.8), it is clear that movement women place great importance on the benefits to be derived from engaging in occupations and professions.

It should also be observed, however, that when controlling for status group, both laywomen and nuns report a solidarity based on activities which express their common religious belief. For laywomen these activities were carried out principally in groups sponsored by the local parish church, or in "purely religious" prayer and retreat groups. For nuns, their religious order was an important source of solidarity.

3. Types of Groups as Sources of Goal Effectiveness

We can now compare the sense of power as derived from experiences of solidarity reported by respondents with the sense of power they derive through memberships in task-oriented groups.

Laywomen considered goal effectiveness was best achieved by the justice advocacy groups, mentioned 11 times. These groups included the

Chicago Religious Task Force, the Chicago Catholic Women, the Women's Ordination Conference, the Catholic Connection for Social Justice, the Interreligious Task Force for Soviet Jewry, and Network.

Justice advocacy groups were also mentioned by an equal number of nuns. But they pointed out somewhat different groups: the Institute for Women Today, the National Coalition of American Nuns, the Eighth Day Center, the Boston Center for Peace and Justice, the Chicago Life Community, Women in Seminary Education, Liberation of Ex-Offenders, the Task Force for Women, the New York Center for Justice and Peace, Network, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and the Women's Ordination Conference.

Table 5.11C Types of Groups Considered as
Goal Effective by Movement Respondents

<u>Type of Group</u>	<u>No. of Times Mentioned as Goal Effective</u>		
	<u>Lay</u>	<u>Nun</u>	<u>Total</u>
Social Justice Advocacy	(11)	(11)	(22)
Catholic Women's Movement	7	3	
Other	4	8	
Professional/Occupational	8	7	(15)
Parish; Prayer Groups	5	1	(6)
Family/Living Arrangement	2	2	(4)
Community Service	2	-	(2)
Other	4	-	(4)
Religious Order	-	9	(9)
Total	(23)	(22)	(45)

Next most important to nuns was their religious order, mentioned 9 times. For laywomen, professional/occupational groups ranked second (8 times), followed by parish and prayer groups, cited 5 times. In third place for nuns were professional/occupational groups, receiving 7 mentions. In contrast to laywomen, nuns mentioned parish and prayer groups only once, and "other" groups not at all. Laywomen mentioned

"other" groups 4 times; these included the Christian Family Movement, the United Federation of Women, and the American Association of University Women. Family and living arrangements was mentioned 2 times each by laywomen and by nuns; community service groups received only 2 mentions from laywomen. These groups were not mentioned at all by nun respondents.

The analysis of Tables 5.11A, B, and C enables me to conclude that respondents' reference to the "sense of power" includes two kinds of power. The first is marked by solidarity, or a sense of power derived from relating to others "in the same boat". The second sense of power resides in the attempt to implement specific demands for social change according to a particular ethos of justice.

For laywomen, power derived from experiences in common with others was grounded in local parish groups and informal prayer groups oriented to providing community and support. By contrast, religious orders appeared to fulfill this function for nuns. However, for both groups, solidarity derives from shared experiences of religious belief.

The second type of power, aimed at implementing change, was located in formal, organized structures oriented toward the achievement of programmatic goals. For both status groups, the power of implementation derives from membership in advocacy groups.

Our findings on movement women's "sense of power" based on personal relationships seems to bear out the findings of Gilligan, Janeway and Miller regarding women's style of power. Kanter's finding (1977) that women's organizational behavior is shaped by the nature of the task at hand can also apply to movement women's "sense of power," which includes the power to implement social change.

Summary--Catholic Movement Women and Power

The literature on women and power, though scanty, reveals that some aspects of power may have different salience for men and women. Janeway, Miller and Daly have reported that the basis for women's power lies in a solidarity which is both fostered by and helps create a new self-image. Solidarity may enable women to overcome fear of divisive conflict and to engage in a more unified struggle to achieve their goals. Gilligan has pointed out that her sample of women tended to solve individual moral dilemmas by assessing the personal costs and individual benefits for all involved, rather than invoking impersonal rights and rules. Kanter and Fassel have argued that, even in all-female groups, specific tasks contributed to the manner in which they organized their activities.

Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, at a theological level, calls for the exercise of a "subversive memory" in the reinterpretation of Scripture as a basis for solidarity and the quest for power. Women in the "goddess" movements re-assert ancient, perhaps mythical, bonds between women and the forces of the natural world as the basis for a new female solidarity (Starhawk, Wittig). Writers like Carol Christ understand the quest for truth and justice as rooted in the very powers of being. Ritual leaders have emerged in groups focused on feminist spirituality, which may or may not include reference to female deities. The leaders represent a revival of claims to feminine religious charisma. Spiritualized forms of feminism also seem to share an emphasis on the feminine aspect of the divine wisdom. This fundamental notion is found in Judaism with reference to the Shekinah and in Christianity,

where it is embodied in the Holy Spirit. The feminine vessel not only receives that which is to be transformed, but it is also the power that nourishes what has been transformed and reborn.¹

Heightened resistance to the church hierarchy has involved, as previously indicated, the retention of both gradualist and radical claims for justice. The application of a radical ethos of justice toward some aspects of women's ordination has resulted in the escalation of the level of conflict between movement women and the hierarchy. This has led me to analyze what styles of power movement women employ in order to achieve their goals. I asked nun and lay groups to trace sources of the sense of power they had experienced in various situations. Ritual events was the context where the largest number of laywomen and nuns reported a sense of power. Laywomen gave great importance to discovering other women as role models in religious rituals, while nuns felt that rituals "for women only" were important for an immediate experience of the sense of power. Additionally, a number of nuns gave the impression that they are already established as ritual specialists in all-female liturgies. Some nuns acknowledged that this practice might result in official church disapproval, or in the formation of a separatist sect.

Catholic women's movement acceptance of "liturgical-type" actions, based on various traditions and occurring as part of anti-war demonstrations or other public events of a non-religious nature, is not unexpected if one recognizes (Table 4.6C) that half the 39 movement women asked were in some way alienated from purely denominationally-based ritual. In addition, participation in rituals outside hierarchical jurisdictions

¹Erich Neuman, The Great Mother (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 329-330.

carries no risk of church sanctions, while deviation from liturgical norms in intrachurch ritual carries with it significantly higher risks.

Nuns reported experiencing power through work commitments more frequently than did laywomen. One reason for this may lie in the fact that more than half the total sample of nuns (14 of 23) were engaged in occupations concerned with advocating justice. Only two of 25 laywomen were. Throughout their interviews, nuns often re-interpreted their vows in the light of principles derived from liberation theology, which places high premium on ministry among the poor. Nuns thus often deal with groups less powerful than themselves. Most nuns reported experiencing an exchange of power through their ministry or work. Many thus expressed the belief that empowering others brings closer the eventuality of social change in behalf of oppressed groups.

The "exchange" aspect of power prevalent in the work experiences related by most nuns may elucidate Chapters 2 and 3 regarding nuns' reported attitudes toward their work. Table 2.3 showed that nuns' highest ranking reason for their choice of work was "helping solve social problems". As discussed in Chapter 3, the majority of nun respondents reported they were influenced by that aspect of liberation theology which advocates a bias toward "marginated non-persons" of the society.¹ Nuns expressed strong spiritual identification with the subjects of their ministries. This may well be a psychological component in all movement women, who themselves appear to be struggling to emerge from the sense of being "nonpersons" in the public realms of ecclesial and

¹Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, ed. Theology In the Americas. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 312.

social life. They may value this process, which they share with other exploited groups.

About half the 25 laywomen participating in the study are involved in the "helping professions". Less than one-third related experiences of an exchange of power at the workplace; most laywomen reported giving or receiving power, depending on their location at work in relatively highly organized power hierarchies. Their view of power is closer to that operating in ordinary formal organizations. They either have power "over" or are subject to others. Table 2.3 showed that "personal fulfillment" was the reason laywomen gave most for their choice of work. They thus appear to be more individualistic than nuns in their approach to work. Table 2.4 also showed that laywomen cited "success in one's work" most frequently as a source of satisfaction. But the work life of movement women seems to provide fewer opportunities for total work satisfaction through personal relationships as compared with the number reported by nuns when describing their ministry. Laywomen also tended to link power through work with an increase in competency or career advancement, a notion consonant with their idea of "success" shown in Table 2.4. But the lack of a single institutional base and dependence on specific work content combine to make their access to power through work more dependent on specific situations than it was in the case of nuns.

The principal feature to emerge from our discussion of women's work and their sense of power was that for movement women, cooperative social relationships seem to be an important ingredient for work satisfaction and for creating the basis of a sense of power.

While group prayer was ranked second to individual prayer as a source of the sense of power among both laywomen and nuns, such a response may indicate that it is characteristic of a church trend stemming from the mandates of Vatican II. By participating in group prayer, laypersons¹ are demanding and taking more active roles in those religious activities traditionally centering around members of the clergy. The church, in attempting to implement this aspect of Vatican II, has stressed the importance of group prayer outside the official forms of the Mass and other public liturgical functions. In doing so, they may well have instilled in some Catholics the idea that prayer as a group activity is at least as important as prayer that is organized by the clergy. Participants may serendipitously have gotten the idea from this that the spiritual message of the church may be more important than its mediation and organization.

While neither status group perceived consciousness-raising activities, explicitly organized as such, as an important source of power, there were a few more positive reports from nuns than from laywomen. The most positive experiences of consciousness-raising, reported by both status groups, occurred in relation to their participation in a specific event not originally designed as "consciousness-raising ."

I also found high agreement among both nuns and laywomen regarding the sense of power through participation in the activities of organizations of which they were members. These organizations were for the most part church-related, and espoused religious feminism. Organizational affiliation seems to provide many movement women with experiences of

¹ Nuns are defined here as laity (see Chapter 2).

working toward collective goals in solidarity. Movement organizations have no doubt made possible a style of power that one nun describes as "feminist."

For some respondents, the opportunity to participate in a collectivity resulted only in transformations on the individual level; e.g., the affirmation of personal attitudes and goals, and the impetus to seek higher levels of educational attainment. For most others, it increased militancy and solidarity, which in turn served to strengthen the movement.

In the discussions on the various contexts of power, it is evident that an inequality of power exists between lay and nun groups, in favor of the nuns. Nuns are in a position to draw on institutional resources provided by their religious orders. These resources may consist of opportunities for liturgical experimentation in the privacy of their convents; financial support for their lifestyle, and in some cases, their ministry; and the everyday experience of participating in an all-female collectivity. Orders of nuns throughout their history have traditionally operated private educational, medical and social service institutions dedicated in part to "marginal" members of society, i.e., orphans, unwed mothers, the elderly and the poor. These ministries, which provide nuns with opportunities to occupy important administrative posts, also made possible "in-house" training for ministries in education or social work. Some orders of nuns in the United States have, within these contexts, evolved liberal social policies in their ministries and tend to support individual members' social and political activism. In their assessment of their orders, the nuns in the study felt somewhat alienated from their order regarding community; they were

much less alienated regarding the personal support provided by their order.

The discussions with respondents concerning the groups in which they found significant elements of community and support (solidarity) were contrasted with those which provided them with the incentives to strive toward specific tasks. The greatest number of nuns reported their religious order and the workplace as important sources of solidarity; the largest number of laywomen were divided between activities in religious and women's groups. With regard to major sources of personal support, the highest number of nuns again mentioned their order, while laywomen cited the workplace. But in judging which group they thought most effective in achieving specific stated goals, nuns in roughly equal numbers mentioned their religious order and the workplace, while an almost equal number of laywomen mentioned women's groups and the workplace.

A major difference between the responses of nun and laywomen lies in their assessments of the effectiveness of women's groups across elements of community, support and goal effectiveness. More laywomen than nuns felt women's groups provided them with community, support and were effective in goal achievement. This is probably explained by nuns' lifestyle, structured as a female collectivity where the cultivation of mutually supportive communal relationships is part of the socialization to religious life.

The salience of nuns' orders as sources of community and of support suggests that feminist nuns, as previously indicated, are not alienated from their orders. This provides a contrast to the sense of alienation

reported by both nun and laywomen respondents from the higher levels of the hierarchy.

In contexts of liturgical experience, power relations at work, and consciousness-raising groups, Catholic movement women studied prefer a style of power similar to the one reported by Gilligan, Miller, and Janeway in their descriptions of the personal and cooperative relationships among women; all of which is summarized by Gilligan's phrase: "...the psychological logic of relationships."¹ In the case of movement women's pursuit of movement goals, I found that they added ideas of an abstract ethos of justice. In addition, considering Kanter's claim that task organization is very important to women's organizational behavior, then community and support, i.e., solidarity, are merely preliminary to task organization and goal achievement. The personalist elements of movement solidarity appear to be insufficient to explain the type of power that is being wielded to achieve movement goals. It has been shown (Chapter 3) that the goal of achieving equal status between women and men was legitimated by respondents by appealing in almost equal numbers to notions of civil and of religious justice.

An indication of how movement women link relational and more impersonal elements of power emerged from analysis of Table 5.7, where movement respondents reported experiencing a sense of power through membership in organizations or groups advocating justice. The advocacy of justice is a set of goal-oriented activities, requiring elements of formal rationality rather than personal (Gemeinschaft) ones. This again raises the question: "What did our movement women understand by the

¹Gilligan, pp. 73, 100.

"sense of power?" Part of the answer came through analysis of which type of groups or organizations movement women preferred in their discussion on sources of community, support and as related to goal effectiveness. As a group, movement women ascribed goal effectiveness to organizations and groups advocating social justice. But these advocacy organizations and groups were not strongly believed to provide community and support.

It thus appears that movement women experience at least two kinds of power. One is related to personal elements derived from identification with "others in the same boat"; i.e., the sense of community and solidarity. The other is related to the more impersonal task of implementing specific goals (Gesellschaft). Thus, Catholic movement women's "sense of power" seems to derive both from movement solidarity and from its associative organizational structure. The two aspects of movement women's power allows us to interpret how respondents act with respect to their principal grievance of "low ecclesial status." Movement women are activated by an emerging sense of power in which the creation of solidarity serves as the "ignition key" for a more rationalized and impersonal drive for power, in order to implement movement goals and programs within their communities.

PART III

CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

While some of the claims of the Catholic women's movement had ancient roots, it came to life alongside the non-religious women's movements in the United States during the 1960's. To some extent, Catholic women took over some of the issues that were of concern to these non-Catholic movements. Some movement women, especially nuns, had previously participated in non-Catholic demonstrations and demands for institutional reform of larger societal institutions. Through their ministries, nuns possessed a special affinity to the disprivileged classes, and these affinities were a product of their organizational activities. In addition, Vatican II, with its demands for renewal and adaptation, resulted in rising expectations on the part of all Church members. The notion of subsidiarity, a key term employed by the Council Fathers in contexts apart from the religious life, was adapted by some religious orders as added justification to seek greater autonomy in making decisions regarding the lifestyle and ministry of their members.

The movement represents an effort on the part of members to raise the statuses of all churchwomen, and in the process, to eradicate status differences perceived between lay and nun groups. The 48 movement women respondents who participated in the survey comprise members of three organizations which employ a developed theological rationale for the religious feminism underlying their claims to justice. The ideological

element which serves to increase movement solidarity is the feminism adapted from the wider women's movements in the United States. The theoretical development of feminist theology, religious feminism and liberation theology tends to increase the rationalization of areas of theology and religious belief regarding roles appropriate for women and for men. Feminist theology also grounds churchwomen's claims for justice as it relates to issues outside the boundaries of the Catholic Church. The intellectual element contained in both religious feminism and feminist theology also reflects the rising class aspirations of the movement women sampled, many of whom possess advanced academic degrees.

If one regards Catholic movement women as a socially repressed strata, as they claim, or a group whose status is, in Weber's terms: "at least not positively valued", then they may be understood to be "nourished most easily on the belief that a special 'mission' is entrusted to them; their worth is constituted by an ethical imperative or by their own functional achievement."¹ This sense of mission which I discerned embodied in respondents' feminism, fuels the justice claims of the movement and its effort to achieve social equality for its members and for members of groups outside the Church structures.

Because the Catholic women's movement acts in behalf of other disprivileged groups, I have concluded that it is not merely another group claiming its rights. Rather, its grievances must be placed in the context of what Weber has called "...intellectualism as such, more particularly, the metaphysical needs of the human mind as it is driven to reflect on ethical and religious questions, driven not by material

¹From Max Weber , p. 276

need but by an inner compulsion to understand the world as a meaningful cosmos and to take up a position toward it."¹ The movement women studied have taken up a position of justice advocacy, characteristic of all modern movements, but they have done so by resorting to modes of thought containing varying proportions of religious and ideological elements, depending on which issue is addressed.

In constructing an adequate explanation of Catholic women's worldview, I have also relied on the sociology of knowledge in examining the various historical and experiential factors which influence the total mental outlook of the respondents, as a specific social grouping. To a much lesser degree, I have also applied this mode of analysis to a small group of 8 members of the National Council of Catholic Women. The main task of the study was to search out what Mannheim called the "activistic elements"² of movement members' subjective religious knowledge. These are three: the elements of solidarity, ideology and the ethos of justice, as I was able to discern them from the protocols of movement participants.

The conclusions of the study will include the findings regarding these three elements, and respond to the two questions posed at the beginning of Chapter 2: What are the sources of division in the movement; and What are the sources of its unity?

Sources of Division Found among Movement Women Sampled

In responding to various questions presented during the interviews, lay respondents exhibited differences from nun respondents in outlook,

¹Sociology of Religion, pp. 116-17.

²Mannheim, p. 295.

interests and source of status. Laywomen displayed a more individualistic personal orientation than did nuns in offering reasons why they chose a particular work or profession, and in their mentions of sources of personal satisfaction. Nuns preferred to undertake enterprises of a social and cooperative nature which brings them benefits differing from those sought by laywomen. In their comments on how the Church defines the statuses of "lay" and "nun", nuns were more articulate in their self-descriptions than were laywomen. When offering their self-description, laywomen tended to use nuns as a reference group. I found an element of resentment among some laywomen regarding what they saw as nuns' superior opportunities to pursue advanced education, to hold important ministerial posts, and to fill cultic roles in the life of the Church.

In explaining why they were recruited into the Catholic women's movement, more lay respondents than nuns reported previous membership in women's organizations outside the Church. Thus, on entering the Catholic movement, laywomen were more experienced than nuns regarding membership and activism in various types of women's organizations, both feminist and non-feminist. When asked to discuss themselves as "feminist", laywomen employed the term with fewer qualifications than did nuns. These findings have several implications: first, that laywomen were likely to have joined WOC and Catholics for ERA, the two organizations where the bulk of laywomen in the sample are found, because they are interested in supporting the organizational goals of a primarily feminist nature. Secondly, laywomen in the movement who were sampled represent a greater number of self-selected feminists than do nun members, who display more ambiguity toward feminism.

From nuns' interview data, it appears that they were recruited into the women's movement either directly from their orders, or in other ways not brought to light by my investigation. What is clear is that while some nuns were attracted to movement membership because of feminist concerns, a greater number of them were attracted by the opportunities it provided for a broader kind of justice advocacy in behalf of the less privileged classes they were encountering in their institutional or individual ministries.

Nuns were perceived as exercising greater organizational control of the movement than laywomen, and in fact they do. Two of the three organizations studied, NCAN and Catholics for ERA, are headed by nuns, as are NARW and LCWR. NCAN and LCWR are organizations expressly for nuns. Until recently, NARW was composed of rank and file nuns. No comparable organizations of movement laywomen have arisen in the U.S. Four of the five movement women who were reported as having exercised an influence on respondents' thinking regarding women were nuns (Table 3.2A). Lack of organizational structures in the Church dedicated to issues of particular interest to laywomen has resulted in laywomen's greater vulnerability to the vagaries of Church policy on the levels of the hierarchy and the lower clergy. With regard to the latter category, particular grievances were voiced by a number of laywomen against pastors of parishes.

Nuns, as carriers of institutional interests of their orders, participate in diocesan and parish ministries concerned with social justice to a greater degree than do laywomen. Nuns possess greater power than laywomen to operate independent ministries. Empirical evidence provided by questionnaire findings shows that nuns feel their

position in the Church, through their membership in religious orders, is more secure. They reported that their orders provided them with an important degree of community and support. Laywomen seem to derive these personal benefits from more scattered sources, including the Catholic women's movement itself.

I found differences between nun and lay groups regarding their assessment of priority issues for the movement as a whole. Nuns preferred issues along lines one would expect of religious "professionals": they thought questions of wage parity, work opportunities, and to a lesser degree, women's ordination, were the most urgent goals of the movement. Laywomen also considered work and wage issues primary, but accorded equal importance to questions of sexual freedoms, reflecting their social position as members of families and in marriage relationships; and perhaps, greater affinity with the goals of mainstream feminists. Regarding the distribution of sex roles within the family, nuns' attitudes were as equally egalitarian as laywomen's. But the similarity of attitude regarding family relationships apparently did not translate to similar ranking by laywomen and nuns of its importance as an issue for the Catholic women's movement (Table 2.8).

Although all movement respondents were clear regarding the desirability of including ordination among movement goals, no consensus existed among the sample on a single course of action for obtaining it. Respondents' attitudes on this goal reflect underlying ethics of radicalism and reformism which exist in the movement. Some respondents preferred that women immediately take on ministries and cultic roles traditionally carried out by the clergy; others in equal numbers advocated engaging in dialogue with appropriate episcopal bodies in hopes of

convincing them to effect change in the official Vatican position, which prohibits ordination to women. One leader of WOC characterized the problem of attitudes in the movement which are variously accommodating or hostile toward hierarchy: "There exists a negative solidarity among the women on this point."

With regard to the role of the future "ideal" priest, movement nuns blended communal, spiritual and social justice elements in about equal proportions when discussing priesthood; laywomen tended to prefer those aspects of the role involving service and interpersonal competency. Furthermore, the group sampled was not clear on whether that priest would be accountable to the community or the ecclessial levels of jurisdiction. Thus, they do not present clear structural alternatives to the present priestly role.

The finding that four-fifths of all women asked perceived that a "communications gap" existed between lay and nun groups points to the fact that by and large, both movement and NCCW women studied have differences, as presented in the findings. During the interviews, both movement and NCCW member groups indicated that efforts are being mounted to overcome some of these differences.

Sources of Unity among Movement Women Sampled

For most movement nuns and laywomen, strong religious factors were present in their justifications of their stand on specific issues. Movement women showed more liberality in matters of sexual freedoms than did NCCW women, but even here, their ideological positions were consistent with their religious worldview. This consistency was most marked in three cases: their position on abortion, the religious justifications

offered for women's ordination, and the predominantly religious language they employed in discussions of differences between religious and non-religious feminisms. These findings agree with those of the investigation undertaken by Fiedler and Pomerleau on factors which influence Catholics' views on women's roles.¹ When considered simultaneously with religious factors, they found that influences from the civil society on beliefs about women and men declined.

Both groups of movement women reported similar intellectual orientations and sources of personal influence. Analysis of movement respondents' protocols reveals the presence of two significant affinities with issues and movements located outside church boundaries. The issues in question are the primary importance given to equal wages and work opportunities, and the liberal abortion position taken by more than half movement respondents when discussing freedoms desirable for all women. Secondly, a review of documents in archives and files of movement organizations studied, and life experiences gathered from interviewees shows that the civil rights movements of the 1950's and 1960's exerted a significant influence on Catholic movement women, insofar as they were perceived to espouse the religious sense of justice. In presenting the material gathered for Chapter 4, on women's ordination, I found movement women feel, despite definitive Papal pronouncements to the contrary, that their exclusion from the role of priest is a prime example of discrimination and injustice within church structures.

Movement women's average level of education is at the Master's degree level. This is on par with or exceeds that of many priests. It

¹ See Chapter 4: explanation of finding reported in Table 4.5B

does not explain the very small number among them who reported a personal "call" to priesthood. However, as a group, movement women did not display the qualities which attract a docile following, described by Weber in his sociological portrait of groups who historically have maintained the power of the priest (Ch. 4). The women sampled by Ferder on the other hand, who advocated the primary of spiritual leadership in the priest, would more likely be acceptable to and representative of the class interests of 52 million U.S. Catholics, the vast majority of whom are located outside the Catholic women's movement

Because movement members as a whole do not experience a priestly calling, I have concluded that their ethos contains a strong component of prophetic religious belief. In the Judaeo-Christian prophetic tradition, the prophet considers himself the recipient of a divine calling which does not require the approbation of the existing official religion. The prophet's message contains an ethical imperative for redressing perceived injustices in the policies of religious or civic institutions. Movement ideology may be considered as collective prophecy which functions to point out a way to Church authorities by which they may "return" to what is claimed is the "true" exercise of justice.

Movement respondents' choice of equal wages as the issue of first priority for their movement may also have prophetic elements. Their grievances concerning wages and scarce work opportunities illustrates Weber's contrast between priestly and prophetic tendencies: "Priesthoods throughout history in the interest of traditionalism have always protected patriarchalism against impersonal relationships of dependence, whereas prophetic religion on the contrary breaks through patriarchal

social structures. The more a religion is aware of its opposition to economic rationalization as such, the more apt are the religion's virtuosi to reject the world, especially its economic activities."¹ Religious feminists believe they exercise a prophetic function in relation to the Church's official hiring policies because they equally reject a traditional male bias toward women in hiring and wage scales. In might thus be said that they similarly reject the "spirit of the (patriarchal) world."

The importance that ministry and/or work holds for movement women studied is consonant with the development of official Church teaching during the last century on the relationship of the individual and work. Papal documents have shifted away from viewing work as a remedy of necessity for the weakness inherited from primordial ancestors in the Garden of Eden to a position which considers it an aspect of the divine plan for "workingmen everywhere to dominate the earth."² The work ethic, especially as expressed in laywomen's reasons for choosing their work, is that work is valuable because it brings personal benefits. Commitment to work in various fields was reported by a number of movement women as the source of a certain sense of power.

Movement members in the sample apply an ethos of justice to their movement basically derived from their status discontent within present ecclesial structures. As their principal grievance, it serves as the "ignition key" to the solidarity elements in the movement. Working from

¹Max Weber, Sociology of Religion, pp. 216-17.

²John Paul II's Encyclical letter Laborem Exercens, Sec. 3, extends and modernizes notions of work expressed in Leo XIII's letter Rerum Novarum (1891).

this basic solidarity, movement theorists like Schussler Fiorenza provide models for a modern-day ekklesia, or church of women, where rank and status tend to disappear in behalf of "sisterhood" among all members.

Where movement members extend their ethos of justice to the various oppressed groups who comprise their ministry in the wider society, there is a sense, expressed at various points during respondents' interviews, that the official Church somehow has betrayed the ethical imperatives of Vatican II because they unequally apply justice toward groups both within and outside the Church. One nun expressed a feeling shared by other nun respondents that the religious orders have been delinquent in the exercise of "corporate power" in this regard. As a result, the orders, they claim, have no knowledge of the true extent of their collective power. The current controversy involving the Vatican and a number of U.S. women's orders over a media advertisement perceived by the hierarchy as "pro-abortion" is a test of the collective power of women's liberal congregations. It is to be seen how these congregations will fare in a power struggle with official jurisdictional bodies of the Church.

Movement women are increasing in militancy in the face of what is perceived to be a conservative and even repressive papacy. This militancy has led respondents to seek to enhance their power which they see as necessary to achieve movement goals. Movement leaders are presently wielding power to bring about what they think would be a more productive dialogue between Vatican authorities and local bodies of bishops on the one hand, and organizations of change-oriented Catholic women on the other. There were also some indications in the interviews that movement women are assuming power with regard to taking on ritual leadership

roles. The sense of power as related by respondents is characterized not only by what Gilligan calls "the psychological logic of relationship," but "the formal logic of fairness," or a style of power aimed at achieving justice for women in the Church, and for other groups perceived as oppressed.

The self-understanding of the Catholic Church as stated in Vatican II documents resulted in new theological development, which employed findings from the natural and social sciences and which addressed the relationship of all humankind to the major religious and political problems of our time. Efforts at modernization were similarly undertaken by the Jewish and Protestant religions. Women in these traditions who seek status changes have come to serve as one "reference group" for Catholic movement women. Their achievements in obtaining approval for woman as rabbis or priests, as the case may be, serve to hold out future hope for ordination to Catholic movement women. At the same time, these achievements reinforce their status discontent.

Problematics of the Catholic Women's Movement

The current climate in the Vatican poses some problems for liberal sectors of the Catholic Church in the United States, and for movement leaders in particular. In their future decisions, movement leaders will probably be influenced by the realities of differences and of unity among groupings in the movement when considering appropriate strategies to obtain their goals.

One of the problems I perceived in the sample for this study and which probably extends to the movement as a whole is an inconsistency regarding respondents' relationship to the Church. On the one hand, they disclaim marginality, yet express disinterest in ordination to

official priesthood, the central representative role for the members of local Church communities. This would seem to preclude respondents from gaining structurally-based power. This goal is inferred from the main concern that church-women are powerless, expressed in a majority of the interviews. It seems unlikely, furthermore, that this group of women will be chosen for high administrative Church posts.

It remains to be seen whether the power Catholic movement leaders are able to wield will be adequate to the task of achieving stated goals. Grievances about inadequate wages and a dearth of work opportunities for churchwomen are based in structural factors which, as we have seen throughout most of the history of the Church, usually change through policies of gradual reform. As for the prohibitions against women's ordination and the practice of artificial birth control, they could be removed by papal fiat. Given the conservatism of the present papacy, this is not likely to occur in the foreseeable future.

Another problem for the movement which became evident in the data analysis is the increasing interest of movement women in the pre-Christian Goddess tradition. This it seems, would impel them further toward the formation of new sects which include cultic leadership roles. Traditional Church teachings ascribe these roles exclusively to the hierarchy and the clergy. Movement respondents reported that their alienation from present official Church liturgy derives from their perception of it as inadequate because of its lack of female imagery and language. Through participation in female-led rites, including those of the "goddess", this group of women are developing both old and new feminine myths and symbols which serve to provide solidarity with other

Catholic women, women of other religious traditions, and non-religious feminists alike.

This enhanced tendency toward sectarian behavior on the part of movement women may be better understood by recourse to Mannheim. It lies with his observation that "the spiritual or irrational element is one of the few life spheres which have not yet been reduced to historical categories".¹ This may explain the attraction of female-led rites for religious feminists: they can find therein spiritual and/or mystical experiences based in feminine symbolism. They have found that these experiences are not available to them, even in the revised official rituals resulting from the liturgical experimentation which the Church initiated in the late 1950's. This group of Catholic women not only utilize increasingly rationalized religious elements in the form of theological elaboration and justifications for their ideological positions. They also reveal a desire to incorporate irrational and mystical strains of religion, wherever they are found compatible with their worldview.

It is difficult to predict whether or not the unifying trends I have identified in the movement will result in producing a consolidated group of Catholic women. A study of movement publications has enabled me to present the religious theory and practices which are aimed at eliminating differing ranks and statuses among movement women. Disparate events may also function to consolidate members of the two status groups. Planned and ad hoc meetings on a national or regional scale serve to intensify personal exchanges between and among movement women.

¹Ideology & Utopia, p. 144.

As a result of these exchanges, issues and grievances acquire more urgency than they possessed prior to attendance at the event. Crises occurring from time to time which threaten movement interests activate movement networks, move members to "close ranks" and increase solidarity as they address new challenges to their autonomy from Church authorities. Insofar as movement women are a "liminal" grouping; i.e., passing from one status to another in a fixed society, rank and status among them tend to disappear. This also seems to occur when respondents participate in rites which allow female religious leadership; and in their espousal of a non-clerical future priesthood.

There is a further problem for movement leaders related to current policies in the Vatican toward what it sees as too-liberal American religious trends. That is, how leaders of the movement are to relate to an increasingly conservative hierarchy, both in the United States and in Rome, at the same time placating increasingly militant rank and file movement members. These leaders understand that they must remain plausible as Catholics to the local bishops and to Rome. Thus, they continue efforts to gain moral acceptability for their movement in the United States Catholic community.

The Catholic women's movement does not number one per cent of all U.S. Catholics, yet it presents a real threat to Vatican authorities because despite some of its radical demands, it has gained a measure of moral acceptability in the American Church. The theological position of movement women regarding advancement for women in the Church has gained some credibility among U.S. hierarchy and lower clergy. This makes their claims more plausible to a wider group of Catholics who are not movement members. Liberation theologians, other Church experts, and the

liberal Catholic press have endorsed movement programs. In the wider society, the acceptability gained by some of the moderate claims of women's liberation movements and the approbation granted to women's status advancement in other religious traditions have the effect of isolating Catholic Church authorities as they continue to emphasize century-old traditional views of women's roles. In addition, the alienation of an unknown number of nuns from official Church rites and ministries represents a threat to vital Church interests in this country. In their former uniform habits and lifestyle, nuns were a highly visible sign of the presence of institutional Church interests. In the 19th century, the United States Catholic Church faced violent opposition and resentment from other sectors of society. It was the highly publicized presence of nuns tending the wounded on Civil War battlefields which helped gain public respect for Catholics.¹ In addition, many priests and young women and men entering religious orders have been primarily recruited from institutions managed by orders of nuns.

The main concerns expressed by the group of eight members of the National Council of Catholic Women is to increase educational opportunities for rank and file Catholic women so that they might participate more fully in the life of the Church. Although most of the eight women sampled exhibited an interest in economic and social justice for all women, none labeled herself "feminist". In matters of sexual freedoms and on the question of women's ordination, the entire sample of NCCW

¹Rosemary Ruether & Rosemary Keller, ed. Women and Religion in America: The Colonial & Revolutionary Period. Vol. II. (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 162.

women expressed opinions which were consonant with the positions taken on these issues by Church hierarchy.

As previously mentioned, sociologists of religion have tended to equate modernity with secularity. The case of Catholic movement women may signal something different. Movement women's pursuit of expanded roles for women in the Church is no doubt a modernizing influence on that traditional institution. The movement itself owes some of its impetus to the broader human rights and women's movements of this century. It also presents a threat to traditional modes of interpreting women's roles in the Church. In the worldview underlying the women's goals, the operative religious beliefs are a mixture of tradition and modernity. They are the basis for justifications for the ordination of women, and for the goal of status advancement for all Catholic women. These religious elements are of a world-affirming character. They represent movement members' affinity of interest with the mandates of Vatican II, which aimed at breaking the traditional world-denying stance of the Church, held over many centuries.

APPENDIX I

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The interview is designed to yield information on the dimensions of religious partisanship and transcendence, two elements employed by Mueller in his definition of a religious worldview.¹ Where the subjects, who are members of the Catholic religious tradition, give theological or other religious justifications for their views and behavior, the challenge for me as investigator is to provide interpretations of this data from the viewpoint of the sociology of knowledge or the sociology of religion. Whether or not a transcendent dimension of being exists or not is not important for the study. What I do undertake is to explain the social and political contexts wherein movement women come to hold a religious belief, while accepting Weber's claim that values cannot be scientifically validated.²

Where the total numbers (N) presented in the tables vary, it is due to various reasons: individual interviewees did not answer the question, or stated that they did not wish to answer it. In some cases, constraints of time dictated that a number of items be omitted. Differences in ideology between movement members and NCCW women necessitated

¹"Dimensions of Religiosity", p. 11.

²Max Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," The Methodology of the Social Sciences (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1949), p. 55.

that in the latter group, I reduce the number of questions administered to those most relevant to the interviewee.

The "Insider" Position and
the Validity of the Study

Two factors operated to place me in the position of an "insider" during the study. One was the 18 years I previously spent as a Catholic nun; the other, my extensive involvement in the Catholic women's movement since 1972. This undoubtedly provided me the advantage of a more fine-tuned listening power than otherwise would have been the case, especially with regard to nun respondents.

The "insider" perspective I bring to my study presents methodological problems which must be addressed. At issue is a basic question of the sociology of knowledge. Mannheim asks whether in areas of social knowledge, an investigator's position should be discernible in any presented findings.¹ He is of the opinion that a given perspective in the investigator is to be taken for granted. Anyone trying to get a picture of an object in space will get a perspectivistic view. Thus, Mannheim concludes that the problem is not how to get no perspective, but to juxtapose various points of view, so that each perspective may be recognized as such, and thereby a new level of objectivity attained. But this "objectivity" carries within itself the problem of how to distinguish between the validity of certain perspectives, as the subjects understand them, and the validity of the understanding of the investigator. I am thus confronted with the existential relativism of the women's religious worldview and the epistemological relativism of my

¹Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, pp. 296-97.

own. This is the contradiction which besets Mannheim's sociology of knowledge and which is yet to be solved. I would propose as a point of departure, that the validity of my study resides in understanding the women's struggle as an attempt to redefine traditional Judaeo-Christian notions of divinity and of religion. Insofar as they adhere to liberation theology, movement women are also engaged in re-introducing religious notions of justice and of morality into public discourse. Both these tasks are specific historical instances of questions which have had and continue to have universal validity in the religious sphere.¹

The Questionnaire

To determine the broad parameters of concerns among the Catholic feminist community, in the winter of 1981 I administered a preliminary questionnaire and open-ended interviews to 7 women leaders of the movement in the New York City and Washington, D.C. areas. The material I gathered from these interviews served as a rough guide for the items which appear in the final versions of the questionnaire (Appendix II).

The questionnaire was chosen as the primary instrument for gathering data. It contains 113 questions and 24 additional items concerned with gathering biographical information from respondents. Questions were placed in clusters throughout the questionnaire to reveal subjects' inner consistency (value affirmation) or discrepancy (value denial) of elements of ideology, solidarity and the advocacy of justice. Through qualitative analysis of these three elements across the two

¹Kurt H. Wolff, Beyond the Sociology of Knowledge, An Introduction and a Development (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 256-66.

status groups (laywomen and nuns) I identified similarities and differences between them; these were considered indicators of the degree of cohesion existing in the Catholic women's movement.

The 113 questions were clustered to operationalize Mueller's three dimensions of religious partisanship as follows:

Element of Religious Partisanship Sought	Subject of Questions	Question Nos.*	
		Laywomen's version	Nuns' version
solidarity	relationship to the church	9-16; 26; 78-79; 90-95; 106-110	47-51; 53; 96-97; 78-82; 108-113
	lay/nun distinc- tions	27-36	54-63
	self-description, sense of power	40-41; 66-70; 37-39	33-36; 86-88; 83-85
ideology	main concerns; rationale for organizational memberships	1-8	1-8
	non-religious feminism	17-25	67-77
	religious feminism	42-50; 87-88	9-17; 64-66; 105-106**
	liberation theology	54-65	21-32
ethos of justice	clergy-lay distinctions	71-77; 80-84	89-95; 98-102
	ordination to priesthood	96-105; 111	37-46; 52
	movement goals	51-53	18-20
	relationship of hierarchy, clergy & laity to church	85, 86, 89	103, 104, 107

*Twenty-seven questions, identical in both lay and nun versions of the questionnaire, were not administered. The criteria for omitting these items were: 1) the information sought by some of the questions omitted was provided by responses to other questions relating to the particular subject; and 2) the remaining questions not asked concerned intra-church matters which were not directly relevant to the thesis.

**These two questions, inadvertently left in the final version of the nuns' questionnaire, were intended to be omitted from both versions.

Sampling Procedure

In the summer of 1982, I obtained membership lists of the three organizations studied. The WOC list was national in scope and contained approximately 1400 names. The ERA and NCAN lists I obtained were regional, and contained 852 and 208 names respectively. Because it was possible for me to visit only eight cities, I drew names as systematically as possible from each list from those areas where I planned to visit. I mailed a total of 200 letters between August and September 1982, to roughly equal numbers of women on each of the three lists. I mentioned that I would contact them a second time regarding an appointment for the interview. On arrival in a particular city, I was able to contact a total of 46 movement women by telephone, to request an interview. Thirty women responded and agreed to the interview. The remaining 18 women were found by snowball sample, named by leaders and members of the three movement organizations in the various areas I visited.

The names of the 8 NCCW members were obtained by snowball sampling. NCCW leaders whose names were provided by the national NCCW office in Washington, D.C.¹ gave me in turn the names of 27 NCCW members in the greater New York area. I mailed the same letter which movement women received to the 27 NCCW members in late 1982. As a result of subsequent telephone contact, seven women responded and agreed to be interviewed. I requested an interview of the national NCCW President

¹There is no central NCCW office in the New York Archdiocese. The only alternative way of locating NCCW women would have been to contact the pastor of a number of individual parishes; a cumbersome and time-consuming process.

while she was attending a UN conference in New York City early in 1983, and was granted an interview at that time.

The Interviews

Fifty-six women were interviewed between September 1982 and January 1983. The questionnaire was administered to 54 women; two additional respondents participated in the survey by granting an in-depth interview of about the same length as the questionnaire. In most cases, the interview was located at each respondent's home or at her workplace. Where this was not possible, we arranged a meeting at a "neutral" place, such as a restaurant, campus cafeteria, or other public meeting site. The 54 interviews from the questionnaire were tape recorded in their entirety by permission of each respondent. Each of the 56 participants was assured that her anonymity would be preserved in the final report. The administration of the questionnaire was on the average one hour and twenty minutes in length. The transcribed interviews thus became the raw data from which I wrote the thesis.

Additional Primary Source Materials Consulted

In addition to the personal interviews, I consulted movement publications at the following sites: the NCAN Papers from 1969-1975 which reside in the Archives of Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; the national headquarters of the Women's Ordination Conference in New York City; and those of Catholics for ERA at the Quixote Center, Mt. Rainier, Maryland. The materials range from published books, surveys, articles, periodicals, proceedings of national meetings of Catholic movement organizations, and newsletters of each organization.

In writing the thesis I also made reference to unpublished reports, position papers, flyers and pamphlets distributed at movement protest meetings and marches, which I have collected both from the previously-mentioned offices, and as a result of my own membership in the movement.

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

For leaders of:

Catholics for ERA
National Coalition of American Nuns
Women's Ordination Conference
National Council of Catholic Women

I would like to discuss with you some aspects of (NAME ORGANIZATION).

1. What is the total membership?
2. What sources of funding exist for the organization?
3. Would the organization be more effective if it were under other auspices?
4. (IF YES). Which ones?
5. What are the goals of the organization?
6. From where does it obtain legitimation for its goals?
7. Would you say that generally, solidarity exists among the organization membership regarding:

(cover the following: priority of issues
feminist ideologies
lay/religious question
attitude toward hierarchy
sexuality/family questions

8. With which other organizations or groups do you work closely?
9. What advantages does your group hold out for women in families or in parishes?

10. How would you go about building a sense of solidarity between and among the various groupings of women?
11. From where do you see the greatest help coming for the advancement of interests of women in families?
12. For the advancement of the ordination question?
13. The ordination issue is a well-publicized one in the Catholic women's movement. However, there are differing views of what is meant by "ordination to priesthood".

What is your understanding of "priesthood"?

14. Some say that women's ordination is only "a nuns' issue." What is your opinion of this?
15. How do you see your role in your organization?

QUESTIONNAIRE

VERSION I - LAYWOMEN

BIODATA

1. What is your present age? _____
2. Father's occupation _____
3. Mother's occupation _____
4. Father's religion _____
5. Mother's religion _____
6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	<u>Parochial</u>	<u>Public</u>	<u>Other/Private</u>
elementary	_____	_____	_____
high school	_____	_____	_____
some college	_____	_____	_____
B.S./B.A.	_____	_____	_____
M.A. or higher	_____	_____	_____

What other degrees have you earned? _____

7. What is your status:

single _____ married _____ separated _____
widowed _____ divorced _____

8. Do you have children?
9. (IF YES) Number of children _____
10. Approximate ages of children _____
11. Have you ever been a member of a religious order? _____
12. (IF YES) Name of order _____
Length of service in order _____

13. In which of the income groups below was your total income for 1981? That would be before taxes. Indicate by circling the letter next to your income range. If you are married, indicate the family income figure.

a. below \$5,000	f. \$25,000 - \$29,999
b. \$5,000 - \$9,999	g. \$30,000 - \$34,999
c. \$10,000 - \$14,999	h. \$35,000 - \$39,999
d. \$15,000 - \$19,999	i. \$40,000 - +
e. \$20,000 - \$24,999	

14. To which religious denomination do you belong?

Roman Catholic _____	Jewish _____	Other _____
Protestant _____	None _____	

15. Do you have a job? _____

16. (IF YES) Indicate the area of work:

	<u>Church Related</u>	<u>Non- Church Related</u>
teaching	_____	_____
clerical	_____	_____
secretarial	_____	_____
government agency	_____	_____
legal	_____	_____
political	_____	_____
medical	_____	_____
parish	_____	_____
counseling	_____	_____
labor organization	_____	_____
student	_____	_____
philanthropic	_____	_____
social movement	_____	_____
organization	_____	_____
if housewife, what does		
husband do _____		
other _____	_____	_____

17. What is the highest rank you have achieved in your church-related work? _____

18. What is the highest rank you have achieved in your non-church related work? _____

19. I am:

salaried _____	unemployed _____
volunteer _____	self-employed _____

20. For which organizations do you do volunteer work?

Organization

Duties

21. Of which other organizations are you a member?
Have you ever been an officer of any of them?

Organization

Ever Been
Officer
Yes No

22. Have you ever served on special committees,
task forces, seminar panels or workshops?

23. (IF YES) What are the names of these?

As you know, I'm gathering information regarding post-Vatican II attitudes of Catholic women on their relationship to the church.

1. Could you tell me what are the main issues that concern you regarding women in the church?

2. Are you a member of any organization in the church?

LIST ORGANIZATION NAME(S):

3. (FOR EACH ORGANIZATION NAMED) Could you give me some background as to what brought you to join this group? How did you happen to get interested in it?

4. When did you first become interested?

5. Do you have other issues which you wish to mention in relation to this group?

6. (FOR EACH ISSUE CITED) Why is this an important concern for you?

7. What particular aspects of this problem remain to be resolved?

8. Which books have you read _____

theologies have you studied _____

persons have you known _____

that have helped shape your ideas on these subjects?

9. Let's turn now to other concerns which Catholics have expressed regarding their role in the church. What is your relationship to the church now?
10. Are you satisfied with the treatment accorded divorced Catholics in the church? (IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q. 9).
11. (IF NO) What specifically makes you dissatisfied?
12. Do you think the church should allow a divorced Catholic to receive communion?
13. What about a divorced Catholic who is re-married?
14. (IF NOT PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED) Overall, are you satisfied with the treatment given women by the church?
15. Why or why not?
16. (IF NO) Can you give me instances of your dissatisfaction?
17. (IF NOT MENTIONED) With how many of the following do you agree:

I believe all women should have the freedom to:

 - work in any profession or field they choose
 - receive equal pay with men doing the same work
 - choose any method of birth control, except abortion
 - choose any method of birth control, including abortion
- 17A. Which of the above issues are important to you?
- 17B. Which are unimportant?
18. Do you think it's o.k. for a woman and man to live together without a marriage ceremony?
19. (IF YES) Under what conditions?
20. Do you feel that women working in the household should be compensated financially for the service they give to other members of the family?
21. (IF YES) By whom?
22. Where there are both spouses in the home, who do you think should have the final say about money matters?
23. About moving to another location?

24. About the disciplining of children?
25. About the education of children?
26. Should a child's educational experience be a completely Catholic one?
27. How do you understand the distinction made by the church between nuns and laywomen?
28. Is there "a communications gap" between nuns and laywomen?
29. (IF YES) What is the gap about?
30. Who is responsible for it?
31. What should be done to overcome it?
32. Are there tasks in the church which should be done only by nuns?
33. (IF YES) What are they?
34. Can you give me an instance where nuns and lay women are equal in the church?
35. Unequal?
36. Have you thought about ways in which nuns and lay women can work together in the church?
37. I'd like to know a bit more about your personal experiences. Could you tell me which of the following experiences (if you have had them) gave you the sense of giving or receiving power?
 - participation in ritual celebrations
 - _____ led by men _____ religious setting
 - _____ led by women _____ non-religious setting
 - going about your work
 - private prayer/meditation
 - participation in activities of (NAME ORGANIZATION)
 - participation in consciousness-raising groups
 - experience of community: _____ women only
 - _____ women and men
38. Which of the groups to which you belong offer you the most support?
39. Which of the groups mentioned in Qs. 37 and 38 are, in your opinion, most effective in achieving their stated goals?

40. I am going to mention a number of possible reasons for doing the work you do. Could you tell me whether each of these was very important, moderately important, or not important in your choice of work:

	<u>Very Imp.</u>	<u>Moderat. Imp.</u>	<u>Not Imp.</u>
- personal fulfillment	_____	_____	_____
- promoting equality for women	_____	_____	_____
- economic reasons	_____	_____	_____
- feeling I'm part of a larger world	_____	_____	_____
- expression of my love for God	_____	_____	_____
- helping solve social problems as God's work	_____	_____	_____
- serving others	_____	_____	_____

41. From what do you derive the greatest source of personal satisfaction?

42. The term "feminist" is used in many ways today. From your understanding of the term, do you consider yourself a feminist?

_____ no (IF NO, SKIP TO Q.43) _____ mixed feelings/not sure
 _____ yes _____ term has no meaning

43. Over the past 10 years, Christian and Jewish women theologians have been developing a "religious feminism." Have you read any works of religious feminist writers?

44. (IF YES) What are they?

45. (IF WILLING TO DISCUSS) Can you tell me any difference there might be between religious and non-religious feminism?

46. Which of these ideas do you feel is most effective in forwarding women's interests in the church?

47. Within the church, do you see a distinction between "Catholic feminists" and a "women's movement"?

48. (IF YES) What is it?

49. Feminists like Carol Christ are developing a "women's spirituality" which revolves around aspects of divinity such as "the goddess" and "The Mother of All." Do you think this development is helpful to the goals of Catholic women?

50. How do you see the future of women's roles in the church, in terms of positions which will be open to them?

51. (IF NOT PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED) To sum up, which of the following issues do you think should be given priority by change-oriented Catholic women?
- _____ legitimization of birth control for women in families
 - _____ option of marriage for men/women now living a celibate life
 - _____ women's ordination
 - _____ providing a wage for women working in church
 - _____ organizations comparable to that of men doing the same work
 - _____ legitimization of abortion in cases of incest or rape
 - _____ legitimization of abortion on demand
52. Why is this issue so important?
53. Why is it unimportant?
54. Are you acquainted with the notion of liberation theology? (IF NO, SKIP TO Q. 66).
55. (IF YES) What is meant by the term?
56. Where did you first hear about it?
57. When did you first hear about it?
58. Could you relate it to the women's issue?
59. To the distinction made by the Church between clergy and laypersons?
60. To the distinction made by the Church between nuns and laywomen?
61. To questions of housing for the poor in third nations?
62. To land reform programs in third world nations?
63. To the question of respecting human rights in any nation?
64. Who are the leading liberation theologians?
65. How have these theologians influenced your thinking?
66. Do you ever reflect on your own experience as a Christian woman? (IF NO, SKIP TO Q. 68)
67. (IF YES) By what means do you interpret this experience?
 _____ Scriptural _____ non-Scriptural _____ other
68. In your opinion, can language about God only in the masculine gender lead to an authentic experience of God?
69. (IF NO) What can be done about this?

70. Do you think that for some persons, loving God exclusively can be as fulfilling as loving another human being exclusively?
71. Do you think that the priestly office brings a person closer to God?
72. Do you think that the religious life brings a person closer to God?
73. Do you think laypersons have too much power in the church now? (IF YES, SKIP TO Q. 75)
74. Too little power?
75. Are there any changes you would like to see along these lines?
76. Should clergy and religious persons be treated differently by other members of the church due to their special state in life?
77. Why or why not?
78. The Catholic Church claims to possess the only true faith. Do you agree with this?
79. (IF NO) Why not?
80. Do you think that clergy should be allowed to publish theological ideas differing from those of the Vatican?
81. Why?
82. Why not?
83. What about lay theologians?
84. Do you believe that persons in non-ordained ministry (work formerly carried out by priests) should be given an official status in the church?
85. Earlier this year, Seattle Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen publicized his decision to hold back half of his federal income taxes in opposition to the nuclear arms race. What do you think of this?
86. Four Catholic nuns in New Hampshire are suing their bishop in state court for reinstatement of their parish school posts, from which they had been fired by the Catholic school superintendent. What do you think of their action?
87. Do you feel that there is discrimination based on sex in the church?
88. (IF YES) On what grounds should it be eliminated?

89. A bishop or priest is discharging his religious duties in conformity with his calling when:

- ☐ he preaches the Gospel and dispenses the sacraments
- ☐ he participates in demonstrations for social justice
- ☐ he runs for political office
- ☐ he counsels persons to break the law when it is against their religious principles

90. On which of the following do you place the most value:

- ☐ obeying my inner spirit
- ☐ obeying the 10 commandments
- ☐ obeying the laws of the Church
- ☐ obeying the law of the land

91. Why?

92. On which do you place the least value?

93. Why?

94. Are there any conflicts you can see in following these various rules?

95. (IF YES) What are they?

96. Women in some Protestant and Jewish denominations have been successful in obtaining priesthood or rabbinate. To what do you attribute the failure of Catholic women to obtain priesthood?

97. Who should be eligible for priesthood in the Catholic Church?

98. Would you support the idea of ordaining homosexuals to priesthood?

99. Do you think that the work done by a priest is more valuable than that done by a layperson?

100. Why is that?

101. Can you give me an idea of what you consider to be an authentic future priesthood?

102. From where do you obtain legitimation for the claim that women should be ordained?

103. Do you personally feel called to ordination?

104. Now look into your crystal ball and tell me what you see there concerning the future of the women's effort to obtain ordination.

105. In your opinion, which of the following developments affecting the church would most likely speed up the ordination of women?

- persuade local bishops to ordain those who desire it
- coalition efforts with women in non-Catholic denominations which have offered ordination to women
- wait until the Pope proclaims women's eligibility for priesthood
- large numbers of women celebrating Mass and carrying out work now done by priests
- dialogue between bishops and organizations like the Women's Ordination Conference

106. Are you satisfied with Catholic liturgical ceremonies as they are now composed?
107. (IF NO) What aspects of liturgy are you uncomfortable with?
108. How does this affect your attendance?
109. What about the sacrament of reconciliation (confession)?
110. (IF SUBJECT HAS OBJECTIONS) What aspects of confession make you uneasy?
111. Do you agree that seminary education should be opened to all who qualify regardless of:

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
gender	___	___
marital status	___	___
sexual orientation	___	___

VERSION II - NUNS

BIODATA

1. What is your present age? _____
2. Father's occupation _____
3. Mother's occupation _____
4. Father's religion _____
5. Mother's religion _____
6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	<u>Parochial</u>	<u>Public</u>	<u>Other/Private</u>
elementary	___	___	___
high school	___	___	___
some college	___	___	___
B.S./B.A.	___	___	___
M.A. or higher	___	___	___

What other degrees have you earned? _____

7. What is the name of the religious order or congregation to which you belong? _____

8. In what year did you make your final vows? _____

9. Have you ever entered another religious order? _____

10. (IF YES) What is its name? _____

11. How long have you been in that order? _____

12. What is your current living arrangements? alone _____
 religious _____
 community _____
 mixed group _____
 family _____

13. Have you ever been married? _____

14. (IF YES) Do you have children? _____

15. Number of children _____

16. Approximate age of children _____

17. What is your area of ministry?

	<u>Church Related</u>	<u>Non- Church Related</u>
teaching	_____	_____
counseling	_____	_____
parish	_____	_____
labor organization	_____	_____
government agency	_____	_____
legal	_____	_____
political	_____	_____
clerical	_____	_____
secretarial	_____	_____
student	_____	_____
philanthropic	_____	_____
social movement	_____	_____
organization	_____	_____
medical	_____	_____
other	_____	_____

18. What is the highest rank you have achieved in your church-related work? _____

19. What is the highest rank you have achieved in your non-church related work? _____

20. I am:

salaried _____ unemployed _____
volunteer _____ self-employed _____

21. In which of the income groups below was your total income for 1981? That would be before taxes (if applicable to you.) Indicate by circling the letter next to your income range.

a. below \$5,000	f. \$25,000 - \$29,999
b. \$5,000 - \$9,999	g. \$30,000 - \$34,999
c. \$10,000 - \$14,999	h. \$35,000 - \$39,999
d. \$15,000 - \$19,999	i. \$40,000 - +
e. \$20,000 - \$24,999	

22. Of which other organizations are you a member?
Have you ever been an officer of any of them?

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Ever Been Officer</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

23. Have you ever served on special committees, task forces, seminar panels or workshops?

24. (IF YES) What are the names of these?

25. For which organizations do you do volunteer work?

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Duties</u>

As you know, I'm gathering information regarding post-Vatican II attitudes of Catholic women on their relationship to the church.

1. Could you tell me what are the main issues that concern you regarding women in the church?
2. Are you a member of any organization in the church?

LIST ORGANIZATION NAME(S):

3. (FOR EACH ORGANIZATION NAMED) Could you give me some background as to what brought you to join this group? How did you happen to get interested in it?
4. When did you first become interested?
5. Do you have other issues which you wish to mention in relation to this group?
6. (FOR EACH ISSUE CITED) Why is this an important concern for you?
7. What particular aspects of this problem remain to be resolved?
8. Which books have you read _____
theologies have you studied _____
persons have you known _____
that have helped shape your ideas on these subjects?
9. The term "feminist" is used in many ways today. From your understanding of the term, do you consider yourself a feminist?

_____ no (IF NO, SKIP TO Q.10)	_____ mixed feelings/not sure
_____ yes	_____ term has no meaning
10. Over the past 10 years, Christian and Jewish women theologians have been developing a "religious feminism." Have you read any works of religious feminist writers?
11. (IF YES) What are they?
12. (IF WILLING TO DISCUSS) Can you tell me any difference there might be between religious and non-religious feminism?
13. Which of these ideas do you feel is most effective in forwarding women's interests in the church?
14. Within the church, do you see a distinction between "Catholic feminists" and a "women's movement"?
15. (IF YES) What is it?
16. Feminists like Carol Christ are developing a "women's spirituality" which revolves around aspects of divinity such as "the goddess" and "The Mother of All." Do you think this development is helpful to the goals of Catholic women?
17. How do you see the future of women's roles in the church, in terms of positions which will be open to them?

18. (IF NOT PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED) To sum up, which of the following issues do you think should be given priority by change-oriented Catholic women?
- _____ legitimization of birth control for women in families
 - _____ option of marriage for men/women now living a celibate life
 - _____ women's ordination
 - _____ providing a wage for women working in church
 - _____ organizations comparable to that of men doing the same work
 - _____ legitimization of abortion in cases of incest or rape
 - _____ legitimization of abortion on demand
19. Why is this issue so important?
20. Why is it unimportant?
21. Are you acquainted with the notion of liberation theology? (IF NO, SKIP TO Q. 33).
22. (IF YES) What is meant by the term?
23. Where did you first hear about it?
24. When did you first hear about it?
25. Could you relate it to the women's issue?
26. To the distinction made by the Church between clergy and laypersons?
27. To the distinction made by the Church between nuns and laywomen?
28. To questions of housing for the poor in third nations?
29. To land reform programs in third world nations?
30. To the question of respecting human rights in any nation?
31. Who are the leading liberation theologians?
32. How have these theologians influenced your thinking?
33. Do you ever reflect on your own experience as a Christian woman? (IF NO, SKIP TO Q. 35)
34. (IF YES) By what means do you interpret this experience?
 _____ Scriptural _____ non-Scriptural _____ other
35. In your opinion, can language about God only in the masculine gender lead to an authentic experience of God?
36. (IF NO) What can be done about this?

37. Women in some Protestant and Jewish denominations have been successful in obtaining priesthood or rabbinate. To what do you attribute the failure of Catholic women to obtain priesthood?
38. Who should be eligible for priesthood in the Catholic Church?
39. Would you support the idea of ordaining homosexuals to priesthood?
40. Do you think that the work done by a priest is more valuable than that done by a layperson?
41. Why is that?
42. Can you give me an idea of what you consider to be an authentic future priesthood?
43. From where do you obtain legitimation for the claim that women should be ordained?
44. Do you personally feel called to ordination?
45. Now look into your crystal ball and tell me what you see there concerning the future of the women's effort to obtain ordination.
46. In your opinion, which of the following developments affecting the church would most likely speed up the ordination of women?
 - persuade local bishops to ordain those who desire it
 - coalition efforts with women in non-Catholic denominations which have offered ordination to women
 - wait until the Pope proclaims women's eligibility for priesthood
 - large numbers of women celebrating Mass and carrying out work now done by priests
 - dialogue between bishops and organizations like the Women's Ordination Conference
47. Are you satisfied with Catholic liturgical ceremonies as they are now composed?
48. (IF NO) What aspects of liturgy are you uncomfortable with?
49. How does this affect your attendance?
50. What about the sacrament of reconciliation (confession)?
51. (IF SUBJECT HAS OBJECTIONS) What aspects of confession make you uneasy?
52. Do you agree that seminary education should be opened to all who qualify regardless of:

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
gender	—	—
marital status	—	—
sexual orientation	—	—

53. Let's turn now to other concerns which Catholics have expressed regarding their role in the Church. What is your relationship to the church now?
54. How do you understand the distinction made by the church between nuns and laywomen?
55. Is there "a communications gap" between nuns and laywomen?
56. (IF YES) What is the gap about?
57. Who is responsible for it?
58. What should be done to overcome it?
59. Are there tasks in the church which should be done only by nuns?
60. (IF YES) What are they?
61. Can you give me an instance where nuns and lay women are equal in the church?
62. Unequal?
63. Have you thought about ways in which nuns and lay women can work together in the church?
64. (IF NOT PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED) Overall, are you satisfied with the treatment given women by the church?
65. Why or why not?
66. (IF NOT) Can you give me instances of your dissatisfaction?
67. (IF NOT MENTIONED) With how many of the following do you agree:

I believe all women should have the freedom to:

 - work in any profession or field they choose
 - receive equal pay with men doing the same work
 - choose any method of birth control, except abortion
 - choose any method of birth control, including abortion
68. Which of the above issues are important to you?
69. Which are unimportant?

70. Do you think it's o.k. for a woman and man to live together without a marriage ceremony?
71. (IF YES) Under what conditions?
72. Do you feel that women working in the household should be compensated financially for the service they give to other members of the family?
73. (IF YES) By whom?
74. Where there are both spouses in the home, who do you think should have the final say about money matters?
75. About moving to another location?
76. About the disciplining of children?
77. About the education of children?
78. Should a child's educational experience be a completely Catholic one?
79. (IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q. 53) Are you satisfied with the treatment accorded divorced Catholics in the church?
80. (IF NO) What specifically makes you dissatisfied?
81. Do you think the church should allow a divorced Catholic to receive communion?
82. What about a divorced Catholic who is re-married?
83. I'd like to know a bit more about your personal experiences. Could you tell me which of the following experiences (if you have had them) gave you the sense of giving or receiving power?
 - participation in ritual celebrations
 - _____ led by men _____ religious setting
 - _____ led by women _____ non-religious setting
 - going about your work
 - private prayer/meditation
 - participation in activities of (NAME ORGANIZATION)
 - participation in consciousness-raising groups
 - experience of community: _____ women only
 _____ women and men
84. Which of the groups to which you belong offer you the most support?
85. Which of the groups mentioned in Qs. 83 and 84 are, in your opinion, most effective in achieving their stated goals?

86. I am going to mention a number of possible reasons for doing the work you do. Could you tell me whether each of these was very important, moderately important, or not important in your choice of work:

	<u>Very</u> <u>Imp.</u>	<u>Moderat.</u> <u>Imp.</u>	<u>Not</u> <u>Imp.</u>
- personal fulfillment	_____	_____	_____
- promoting equality for women	_____	_____	_____
- economic reasons	_____	_____	_____
- feeling I'm part of a larger world	_____	_____	_____
- expression of my love for God	_____	_____	_____
- helping solve social problems as God's work	_____	_____	_____
- serving others	_____	_____	_____

87. From what do you derive the greatest source of personal satisfaction?
88. Do you think that for some persons, loving God exclusively can be as fulfilling as loving another human being exclusively?
89. Do you think that the priestly office brings a person closer to God?
90. Do you think that the religious life brings a person closer to God?
91. Do you think laypersons have too much power in the church now? (IF YES, SKIP TO Q. 93).
92. Too little power?
93. Are there any changes you would like to see along these lines?
94. Should clergy and religious persons be treated differently by other members of the church due to their special state in life?
95. Why or why not?
96. The Catholic Church claims to possess the only true faith. Do you agree with this?
97. (IF NO) Why not?
98. Do you think that clergy should be allowed to publish theological ideas differing from those of the Vatican?
99. Why?
100. Why not?
101. What about lay theologians?

102. Do you believe that persons in non-ordained ministry (work formerly carried out by priests) should be given an official status in the church?
103. Earlier this year, Seattle Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen publicized his decision to hold back half of his federal income taxes in opposition to the nuclear arms race. What do you think of this?
104. Four Catholic nuns in New Hampshire are suing their bishop in state court for reinstatement of their parish school posts, from which they had been fired by the Catholic school superintendent. What do you think of their action?
105. Do you feel that there is discrimination based on sex in the church?
106. (IF YES) On what grounds should it be eliminated?
107. A bishop or priest is discharging his religious duties in conformity with his calling when:
- ☐ he preaches the Gospel and dispenses the sacraments
 - ☐ he participates in demonstrations for social justice
 - ☐ he runs for political office
 - ☐ he counsels persons to break the law when it is against their religious principles
108. On which of the following do you place the most value:
- ☐ obeying my inner spirit
 - ☐ obeying the 10 commandments
 - ☐ obeying the laws of the Church
 - ☐ obeying the law of the land
109. Why?
110. On which do you place the least value?
111. Why?
112. Are there any conflicts you can see in following these various rules?
113. (IF YES) What are they?

APPENDIX III

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE

	<u>Movement Women</u>	<u>NCCW Women</u>
Status Group Membership:		
Laywomen	25	8
Nuns	23	-
Total No. in Sample	(48)	(8)
Age:		
Under 30	3	-
30-39	12	-
40-49	15	1
50-59	8	2
60-69	6	3
70-79	1	2
Total	(45)	(8)
Median Age:	44	62
Religious Tradition:		
<u>Respondents</u>		
Roman Catholic	(48)	(8)
<u>Parents of Respondents</u>		
Roman Catholic	43	7
Methodist/Jewish	1	-
Methodist/Baptist	-	1
Dutch Reform/Episcopal	1	-
N.A.	3	
Total	(48)	(8)

Marital Status:

	Movement Women		NCCW Women
	<u>Nun</u>	<u>Lay</u>	
Single	23	14	-
Married	-	6	7
Widowed	-	3	1
Divorced	-	2	-
Total	(23)	(25)	(8)

Number of Children-
Total

- (29) (22)

Education:

Highest Level Attained	NUNS				LAY				NCCW
	<u>Cath.</u>	<u>Non- Cath.</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Cath.</u>	<u>Non- Cath.</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Total</u>	
Some High Schl.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1)
High School	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(2)
Some College	-	-	1	(1)	-	1	1	(2)	(4)
B.A./B.S.	2	-	-	(2)	1	3	1	(5)	-
M.A.*	6	3	4	(13)	8	4	1	(13)	-
Ph.D.	2	3	1	(6)	-	2	2	(4)	-
Total				(22)				(24)	(7)

*Divinity Degrees
Included in M.A.
Category:

	<u>Nun</u>	<u>Lay</u>
M. Div.	1	1
M. Theol.	1	-
M.T.S.	-	1
	(2)	(2)

Occupations of Movement Women Studied:

<u>N U N S</u>			<u>L A Y</u>		
<u>Occupational Category</u>	<u>No. in Category</u>		<u>Occupational Category</u>	<u>No. in Category</u>	
	<u>Church</u>	<u>Non-Church</u>		<u>Church</u>	<u>Non-Church</u>
Justice advocacy	2	4	Teaching	5	2
Teaching	3	2	Entrepreneurial:		
Catholic women's movement	5	-	travel agency		1
			media consultant		1
			free-lance writer		1
Parish work	2	-	Student	1	2
Counseling	1	1	Catholic women's movement	1	-
Hospital	1	-	Social worker	-	1
Gov't. agency	-	1	Sales	-	1
Entrepreneurial: literacy center	1	-	Gov't. agency	-	1
Total	(15)	(8)	Hospital	-	1
			Educ. Administrat.	-	1
			Computer programmer	-	1
			State legislator	-	1
			Clerical	-	1
			Justice advocacy	-	1
			Retired	1	1
			Total	(8)	(17)
<u>NCCW Women</u>					
			Teacher	-	1
			Interviewer	-	1
			Domestic	1	-
			Bus. administrator	-	1
			Churchwomen's organization	1	-
			Clerical	1	-
			Retired	1	1
			Total	(4)	(4)

Type of Employment Compensation:

	Movement		<u>NCCW</u>
	<u>Nun</u>	<u>Lay</u>	
Salaried	19	15	4
Self-employed	2	4	-
Commissions	-	1	-
Grant	1	-	-
Student	-	2	-
Volunteer	-	1	3
Retired	-	2	1
N.A.	1	-	-
Total	(23)	(25)	(8)

Income:

	<u>Individual Income</u>	<u>Family Income</u>	<u>NCCW</u>
	<u>Nun</u>	<u>Movement Lay</u>	
\$ 5,000 - \$9,999	9	1	1
10,000 - 14,999	4	5	-
15,000 - 19,999	2	2	-
20,000 - 24,999	4	5	2
25,000 - 29,999	2	2	1
30,000 - 39,999	2	3	1
40,000+	-	4	1
Total	(23)	(22)	(6)

Median Income by Status Group:

<u>Nun</u>	<u>Lay</u>	<u>NCCW</u>
\$10,000- 15,000	\$20,000- 25,000	\$25,000- 30,000

Highest Ranking Title Held--
Church-Related Work:

<u>N U N</u>		<u>L A Y</u>	
Religious Order	(6)	Parish related:	(8)
Executive Officer, nuns' organization	5	parish council, pastoral associate	6
Formation team	1	CCD teacher	1
		volunteer	1
Teaching	(5)	Teaching:	(3)
Administration	3	Faculty--College	1
Faculty--Div. Schl.	1	Master catechist-diocese	1
Teacher	1	Dir. of Educ., alterna- tive school	1
Pastoral associate, parish council	3	Women's Movement	(2)
Justice advocacy:	(3)	WOC - National Comm.	1
Project director, justice center	2	- Local Chairperson	1
Secretary	1	Justice advocacy:	(2)
Head nurse	1	Migrant health care team	1
		Justice ctr., proj. head	1
Co-Director, Center for ministry to homosexuals	1	President--Int'l. Family Association	1
District Coordinator, NETWORK	1	Diocesan Council member	1
None	2	Administrative assistant	1
N.A.	1	Secretary	1
		None	5
		N.A.	1
Total	(23)	Total	(25)

NCCW

Officer - NCCW	(5)
National Organization	3
Local Organization	2
Parish council; Pres., Rosary Society	1
Secretary	1
None	1
Total	(8)

Highest Ranking Title Held--
Non-Church-Related Work:

<u>N U N</u>		<u>L A Y</u>	
Teaching:	(9)	Business:	(5)
Administration		Corporate mgmnt.	3
Chairperson,		Ass't. to manager	1
College Dept.	3	Computer programmer	1
Dir. Literacy Center	1	Teaching:	(4)
Asst. Princ.,		College Administrator	2
High Schl.	1	Adjunct Lecturer	1
Faculty		Teacher	1
College Department	3	Social work:	(3)
Other	1	Supervision	1
Justice Advocacy	(3)	Case worker	2
Exec. Dir., Human		Religious:	(2)
Rights Agency	1	Exec. Dir., Relig.	
Exec. Dir.,		Organization	1
Employment Agency		Co-Director, Campus	
for Ex-Offenders	1	Ministry	1
Women's Drop-In		Physician's ass't.	1
Center (Homeless)	1	Librarian	1
None	11	U.S. Gov't. Economist	1
Total	(23)	Historian	1
		Travel agent	1
		Representative, State	
		Assembly	1
		Chairperson, Citizens	
		Alert	1
		Executive, Nursing Assoc.	1
		None	2
		N.A.	1
		Total	(25)
		<u>NCCW</u>	
		Corporate Comptroller	1
		Nurse	1
		None	6
		Total	(8)

Geographical Distribution of Subjects in the Study:

<u>Location</u>	<u>No. of Movement Respondents</u>
Illinois	16
Maryland	4
Massachusetts	6
New Jersey	2
New York	9
Rhode Island	4
Washington, D.C.	6
Wisconsin	1
Total Movement Respondents	(48)

	<u>No. of Non- Movement Respondents</u>
Illinois	2
New Jersey	3
New York	3
Total Non-Movement Respondents	(8)

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