

COMMITMENT IN
RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF WOMEN

by

Regina Marcum, O. S. F.

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CHAPTER I

WHY STUDY NUN S AGAIN?

INTRODUCTION

From the 1930's to the Vatican Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life in 1965, religious community life in America was basically homogeneous, not only within a community, but more often than not, even among the communities. Customs and ways of life primarily followed a monastic pattern. The purpose of community living was widely understood and its structures of authority and decision making were clear. Contemporary religious community life shows other patterns.

Religious community life for women, once isolated and often independent of outside factors, has experienced during the past 20 years buffeting from major sources within and without the community. Various theoretical, empirical and descriptive studies have contributed to our understanding of it.

Goffman (1961) applied the concept of total institutions to monasteries and convents. He saw these institutions as "establishments designed as retreats from the world even while often serving also as training stations for the

religious:..." (1961:7). Murphy and Liu (1966) suggest that Goffman's definition is inapplicable to religious communities. The nature and structure of the institution, as well as its goals, indicate that it needs and depends on outside support structures. Hillery (1969) stated that convents are not total institutions as there is no force applied from outside to obey but rather discipline by request, no staff-inmate split but rather persons are trained to positions of responsibility and leadership, and a voluntary reduction of alternatives. Fichter (1969) claims that there is nothing else like monasteries and convents in the social order. In order to study this particular social structure, the sociologist must set aside previous concepts which limit the perception of the structure. Hillery (1969) indicated that only monastic convents, such as the Trappists, could be identified as community. Apostolic convents were formal organizations with specific goals. These latter could be studied in the same light as any formal social organization.

Later, in his article, Hillery questions whether the religious values espoused by religious community could be realized in a formal or task-oriented organization. Some persons today agree that apostolic convents are simply one other form of social organization which indeed cannot achieve religious goals. Such persons have opted to leave the group or have formed intentional (selected membership) communities to express their religious values. It would be interesting

to see whether commitment to staying in religious life is higher in intentional communities than it is in task-oriented ones. Indeed, it would be important to compare individuals rather than communities as there are persons who select a particular community although the community in itself is task-oriented.

The Second Vatican Council opened the Church to this world. Difficulties arose with birth control, priesthood, laity, church structures and of course, these crises affected religious communities as well. The purpose of religious life once so widely understood and accepted became fuzzy and mistrusted in the midst of these crises.

Indeed, Vatican II had requested religious communities to adapt and renew. Lumen Gentium (Abbott, 1965) stated that "religious should carefully consider that through them, to believers and non-believers alike, the Church truly wishes to give an increasingly clearer revelation of Christ." (77) The Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life (Abbott, 1965, 468, 479) said:

The appropriate renewal of religious life involves two simultaneous processes: (1) a continuous return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original inspiration behind a given community and (2) an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the times.

Communities should faithfully maintain and fulfill their proper activities. Yet, they should make adjustments in them according to the needs of time and place and in favor of what will benefit the universal Church and individual dioceses. To this end they should resort to suitable techniques,

including modern ones, and abandon whatever activities are today less in keeping with the spirit of the community and its authentic character.

But no one knew what the implications of such statements might be. A variety of factors affect religious life despite its being deeply grounded in faith.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS OF CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

Various sources have affected the religious communities. From within, the Sister Formation Program beginning in 1965 strove to develop in sisters in formation programs a new awareness of the "signs of the times" (Mt. 16:1-4); of what theologians in the Church were saying; of what their own potential was for self-development. The process of formation in religious community sometimes became disorganized and lacking in purpose (Fitz and Cada, 1975). Often directoresses themselves were not as yet committed to what they were teaching (Neal, 1971b). Adding to the problem was the isolation of the young sister from the older sister with its consequent denial of reciprocal socialization and therefore causing additional strain. The young have been reluctant to commit themselves for life and there has been a waning of vitality in the commitment of some older members. However, young-old differences explain historical factors more than the sociological.

Religious communities are not exempt from the currents of change. Secularization has affected the minds and hearts of many religious (Sheets, 1972; Fitz and Cada, 1975; Rondet, 1975). Additional pressure comes from expectations

by the laity created by the religious' lack of communication about what is happening, as well as by the normal resistance that comes with change. Our post World War II society has been faced with critical problems of energy, food, pollution, economics, work, urban areas, international order, global justice, guidance, etc. The Church as a whole has indeed been profoundly affected by contemporary change. Change which indeed can no longer be solved by the conventional methods and approaches.

REASONS FOR THIS STUDY

The decrease in the number of sisters entering religious life and the increase in those leaving religious life has concerned many. Much has been written on why sisters leave religious life, while little has been said about why sisters are staying. This thesis seeks to investigate the relationships between solidarity, significance, and spiritual well being and staying in religious community life.

Some, however, are afraid of the sociologist's and/or psychologist's concern as though it would reduce all human experience to the norms and principles of one's particular behavioral science. If a different interpretation from that of the theologian is made, the sociological interpretation is seen as having been "perhaps approached too facilely and without much depth of insight as to the real subtleties of the problem" (Schleck, 1970: 540). Pope Paul VI referred to this problem in one of his weekly addresses, "To give in

religion preeminence of humanitarian tendencies brings on the danger of transforming theology into sociology, and forgetting the basic hierarchy of beings and values.... It should not be forgotten that to let sociological interest prevail over the properly theological interest can generate another dangerous difficulty, that of adapting the Church's doctrine to human criteria," (Schleck, 1970:542).

Obviously any study of commitment to religious community life must be multi-disciplinary. There should be sociological, psychological, philosophical, historical and theological study of this particular experience. As a sociological study, this research can only cover a portion of the relevant data and perspectives, but it does so with full awareness of the important contributions of other frames of reference. Recognizing that pitfalls are inherent in any approach that is limited to one discipline, let us proceed with our investigation.

A consequence of these changes has been the departure of many and a reduction of persons entering religious life. A study by Trageson, Keval, and Bartlett (1974), shows that in 1974 the population of Roman Catholic sisters in the United States had decreased seventeen per cent from 1960 and twenty-three per cent from 1966, the peak year in numbers, 181,421. In that year, 139,691 sisters took part in Neal's (1970, 1971a) study sponsored by the Conference of Major Superiors of Women. Sixty-six per cent of the yearly decrease between

the years 1965 to 1972 was due to dispensation and/or termination of vows.

As important as it is to look at those leaving, it seems at least equally important to concern ourselves with why seventy-five percent of the sisters are staying in religious life. Surely not all are staying because they are too old and/or are afraid to leave. Just as persons enter for different reasons, such as attraction to service, desiring a particular life style, or being called by God, so the reasons for staying also vary.

So in all we see three major factors affecting religious community living. Programs of formation and renewal from within the community made sisters more inner-directed, more aware of self-actualizing values, more spontaneous and gave them a higher regard for self. Some of this may be the result of personal experience and some is the consequence of increased flexibility and freedom of choice in religious communities (Melamed et al., 1975). Two other identifiable factors are socio-economic pressures from society as a whole and ecclesial encouragement to change as a result of Vatican II.

CHAPTER 2

PRIOR STUDIES OF COMMUNITY AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

Kanter (1968) indicates that a community cannot be successful without commitment which rises out of each member's desire to obey and which commitment is also controlled by other members. In other words, community is a reciprocal relationship. Twenty per cent of the persons answering this survey indicated that loyalty to the community was among their reasons for staying. It is easier to maintain commitment to a group, if the group's values are also one's own and if one sees the group as an extension of one's self. Additionally, an active sense of involvement will lead to a stronger commitment to community life.

Kanter sees three major aspects of the social system that require commitment. Her conceptualization might look like Figure 1. Instrumental commitment is labeled cognitive. It strongly relates to Homan's (1974) theoretical explanation of how and why persons interact. It is clearly a case of cost/benefit. A person's role is bound up in his position in the organization and his participation in the system. He has sacrificed much, e.g., money, reputation, etc., for membership, and he is not likely to regard giving it up

FIGURE I: MAJOR ASPECTS OF SOCIAL SYSTEM

ASPECT OF SOCIAL SYSTEM	retention of members	group cohesiveness	social control
TYPE OF COMMITMENT	instrumental or cognitive cost more to leave than to stay	affective or cathectic emotional solidarity	moral or evaluative support norms and beliefs of system
FUNCTION FOR GROUP	continuance hold members create willingness to stay	cohesion interpersonal satisfaction and ability to withstand threats from outside	control less deviance, less challenge to authority, less ideological controversy
FUNCTION FOR INDIVIDUAL	investment is rewarding	gains sense of belonging	gains purpose, direction and meaning

Adapted from Kanter, Rosabeth, Commitment and Social Organization (1968)

lightly. He has made an investment in the group, and continuance is necessary in order to profit.

Affective commitment is labeled cathectic. It involves emotional ties of friendship and emotional gratification. Solidarity is high, there is a sense of "we-ness", a sense of sharing strong relationships which replace family loyalties. This emotional gratification comes from participation in and identification with the whole group. It brings about a willingness to work out conflict and tensions. Affective commitment results in willingness to give up competing relationships and to develop meaningful contact with the whole group, a group which now is the source of primary relationships.

Moral commitment is evaluative. It involves a willingness to uphold the norms of the group. The group offers identity, personal meaning to life and opportunity to grow. The group not only supports a person's value system, but indeed, is seen as expressing the person's values. The member internalizes the community standards as those standards are seen as a higher system transcending personal values. The person is willing to submit even private states to social control and exchanges his former identity for an identity formulated and defined by the group.

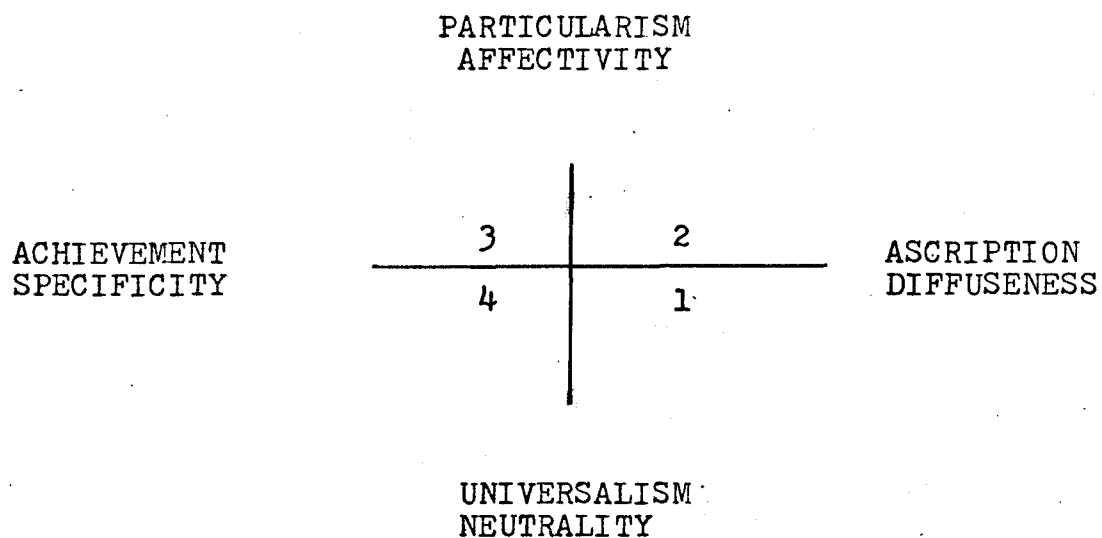
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There is a tremendous future for religious life (Weber and Reno, 1974) if persons are willing to work out conflict and repeatedly start over. Success is not accidental. If persons are not supported, community either disintegrates emotionally or disperses physically. As persons experience commitment, not just cerebrally make a commitment, they stay. If there is no visible differentiation between the group and the outside, they leave. However, if the number of commitment mechanisms become too many, they can become dysfunctional.

Dann (1976) sees that belonging is a form of social action or interaction. (See Figure 2) He suggests that Parsons' pattern variables can be a way of viewing the issue about the nature of belonging. Dann believes that pluriform belonging can best characterize membership in the Roman Catholic Church. The nature of pluriform belonging is marked by grades or degrees of belonging. This form of belonging more readily describes membership in a church marked now by decentralization of authority and emerging interest groups.

FIGURE 2

PARSON'S PATTERN VARIABLES AND BELONGING TO THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

SOURCE: Dann, Graham M.S., "Religious Belonging in a Changing Catholic Church"

Dann's numeration of the quadrants (quadrant 1) correspond to Parsons' action concepts of latency, integration (2), good orientation (3) and adaptability(4). Dann selects new terminology for each quadrant. One represents the total institution mentality of belonging; two, family belonging; three, closed community belonging; and four, open network belonging.

In the first quadrant, there is seen Goffman's (1961) analysis of the social system of the convent. Dann, however, emphasizes "mentality" as he does not believe that total institution is a viable concept of the Roman Catholic Church today, if indeed it ever was. However, it makes no difference if a total institution actually exists as one can have total institutional mentality without belonging to a total institution.

Quadrant two, marked by familial belonging, does share characteristics of quadrant one. However, human relations (affectivity) are now permitted and there are particular groups which band together in some type of in-group behavior.

Dann sees that achievement marks the difference between quadrants two and three. Most founders of religious orders, in a charismatic protest against the status quo, could be assigned to the closed community (quadrant three) belonging. Jesus people would be another member of this group.

Open network variety of belonging is characteristic of quadrant four. Though it shares the goal-orientation of

quadrant three, the goals tend to be connected with some broad or universal value.

Dann was speaking generally of belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. He created his diagram so that the left quadrants represented the left wing in the church and the right quadrants, the conservative wing. Depending on the definition and/or explanation made of religious community, it would be placed in different quadrants. If it is accepted that community is basically a dynamic process of either creating or destroying an atmosphere of relationships in Christ, and not a static reality achieved through some magic formula (Hogan, 1976), then, specifically, it seems that religious community would fit into the line of movement from quadrant three to quadrant four. This can be seen more clearly by looking at various approaches to the concept of community.

COMMUNITY: DISCUSSION AND DEFINITION

My hypothesis is that there is a positive correlation between commitment to staying in religious life and solidarity, significance and spiritual well being. It can be illustrated easily, that there are more older persons who have long been in the convent than there are younger persons. Without a dispensation, canon law once forbade entrance to religious life to women over 35. Surely not just the elderly are committed to staying in religious life. However, there is a high correlation ($r = .95$) between age and numbers

of years in the convent. Indeed, other factors besides age and number of years in the convent function in the commitment of persons to staying in religious life. Three of those variables are the subject of this paper.

Religious variables are very elusive concepts. Are they entities or constructs (Hunt and King, 1975)? Are they reifications? Discussion has been extensive (Allen and Spilka, 1967; Lenski, 1961; Nudelman, 1971; Payne and Elifson, 1976). Sociologists are seeing that the religious variable can also be an independent variable as well as dependent in line with the direction of the social indicators movement (Brewer, 1971, 1973). No definitive conclusions have been reached. Hopefully, research will always ask more questions and solutions and predictions will be at a premium.

Community Variables Used In This Study

Solidarity

One religious variable in this study is labeled solidarity, an experience of the sense of "we-ness", an identification with the norms of the group. Solidarity is seen as an important characteristic of community (Kanter, 1972; Nuij, 1973). Kanter's categories of cathectic and evaluative commitment describe the concept of solidarity. Her categories have been described in Chapter 1. Nuij's article shows that community of goods is the most material expression of solidarity. Sometimes this common ownership of goods causes difficulties by a decreasing lack of concern for the property,

and thus, solidarity can be decreased.

A sense of solidarity is the ability to identify self with others, resulting in a social unity or cohesion, a sense of belonging and/or togetherness. Community presupposes a certain amount of solidarity, consensus and common purpose (Park, 1952). In Jennings' (1962) study, solidarity, belonging, was created by living place and social class.

Particularly informative is Clark's (1973) description of this factor. He believes that community should be viewed as sentiment. Hillery's (1969) analysis found that there were some 219 definitions of community and that nearly all of them contained some concept of place as being important. Others have described community as social activity and social structure.

Merton (1946) has stated that in studying sociology it is as important to know what the subject experienced as it is to understand his objective condition. Homans (1974) has also seen that it is important to bring sociology and psychology as close together as possible. The general propositions used by Homans are psychological in two senses: they refer to actions of individuals and they have been primarily formulated and tested by psychologists. However, Homans remains sociological in his interests. It is social action that the propositions are called upon to explain. Therefore, one of the essential elements of community is a sense of solidarity.

Significance

The second variable is significance, a sense of being appreciated, having status in the community. Clark (1973) views a sense of significance as the second essential element in community. Persons view themselves as having a role to play, a function to fulfill in reciprocal exchanges; therefore, they experience a sense of achievement and fulfillment.

Important to the understanding of the nature of community is the sense that one counts or has a part to play in the group (Jennings, 1962). Park (1952) also saw that significance involves the struggle for status which was a struggle to preserve prestige, respect, and one's own point of view. Significance is communally important, positively, when a person recognizes that his work is necessary to the vitality of others; and negatively, when what he does needs the attention of others so that the community does not disintegrate.

Obviously, there is a close relation between solidarity and significance. If one feels a sense of belonging, automatically he experiences a sense of worth. On the opposite side, if one has a role to play, there is an attachment to the rest of the cast. However, solidarity and significance are not always present in the same degree. Therefore, they are analytically distinct phenomena (Clark, 1973).

If the above is accepted, then "the strength of community within a given group is determined by the degree to which its members experience both a sense of solidarity and a sense of significance within it" (Clark, 1973: 409). Therefore, community in the mind is important, and the external expressions of these sentiments are the key indicators of the strength of community present in the group.

Spiritual Well Being

The third variable is spiritual well being. Duncombe (1974) expresses the belief that the four expressions of a mature (spiritually well) Christian can be identified behaviorally. These characteristics are 1) freedom from self-deception, 2) honest expressions, 3) undistorted perception of the world and 4) demands are given an appropriate response, not a rigid one.

Duncombe's concept of the spiritually mature person was limited to the Christian. No attempt was made to investigate the non-Christian nor the non-believer. Also there were no categories among Christians. However, let us explain Duncombe's characteristics.

Freedom from self-deception indicated that the person had no illusions about himself. There was no false humility. Personal virtues were seen as grace. This led to honest expressions about one's own spiritual condition to oneself as well as others in the world about you. The world was seen as the work of God's hands and yet at the same time one experiences

a tension caused by the temptations of the world. Demands made on oneself by God and others, as well as oneself, are not responded to in a rigid manner, conforming to rules and regulations with no regard for the appropriateness of the response. In all, Duncombe's characteristics are limited by Christianity, but are broadened by seeing the spiritually mature persons in light of their personal response, rather than by specific virtues or attitudes defined from outside the person.

Kosicki (1976) suggests that ten characteristics mark the renewed religious life. These could well indicate the spiritually well person and/or community. They are a common commitment to Christ as Lord, agreement on rules, horizontal as well as vertical authority patterns, asking and receiving of forgiveness, Eucharist which celebrates and nourishes community, the gifting of time through celibate and mutual support, a sense of being dispossessed but rich in the Lord, a companionship in discipleship and apostolate, witnessing to what it means to be Christian, and, lastly, a faith-sharing in prayer.

Neal (1967) stated that in true community life, people are refreshed and reinforced to do their work. Motivation is received to experiment with richer forms of human encounter, and communal experiences offset frustrations and anxieties. Negative patterns of community life generate hostility, suspicion, and inefficiency, which could lead to absenteeism

(or leaving?) and anomie. Anomie could manifest itself in disaffection for rules, a sense of alienation from the organization (a lack of solidarity?), indifference to the goals, and a lack of respect for the means (a lack of significance?). This gives rise to the thought that if community is rightly understood, it will function to bring about a spiritually well and lasting community.

In a study on spiritual growth (Edwards et al., 1974), clergy were asked to identify persons in their congregations that they considered spiritually mature and to describe the characteristics that the clergy used to select those chosen. The sample was small, methodology weak, but despite those limitations there were some interesting findings.

The values of those selected were diverse and complex. However, seeking God and His presence was subordinate to sharing and caring for one's neighbor. On the whole the religious experiences of the group were not extraordinary. Indeed, it was assumed that they were probably no different than a cross-section of their particular congregation.

The views on spiritual maturity of those interviewed and the clergy who selected them also differed. However, there was some overlapping in broad areas of definition. Spiritual maturity was seen as a matching of one's beliefs and behaviors. Spiritual growth involves, most especially, an attitude of openness to the Spirit and to oneself and one's own experiences.

The enormous variety of responses about the area of spiritual well being provides an interesting sociological "dig". However, the term "spiritual well being" itself provides more questions than light. Does our culture give us any clues to the combination? Is there to be more emphasis on "spiritual" or "well being"? Is there any such thing as spiritual well being? Once the indicators are listed is there anything left? Is spiritual well being a sociological construct or a reality? This study assumes its existence and proceeds to discover its characteristics.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

INTRODUCTION

Various methodologies might have been used to determine why sisters stay in religious community life. It was impractical and impossible to use a focused interview of the type that was used for the pre-test. In that interview, all responses were open-ended. In its final form, the questionnaire included 86 items, all of which were closed items. However, all the items were not used for this particular study.

At one time in the history of women religious' communities, any sample of sisters might well have been representative of sisters in general. Perhaps the best that can be said today is that diversity is the characteristic that all sisters hold in common. Though there is no available statistic on the median age of sisters, this sample seems to be somewhat younger than the generally accepted norm. This is because of the nature of the National Sisters Vocation Conference which is heavily composed of women in the period of formation, such as, affiliates, candidates, novices, as well as, persons concerned with their formation.

SAMPLE SELECTION

The population sampled in this survey is composed of four groups: (1) the Sisters of St. Francis, Stella Niagara, N.Y. province, to which 366 questionnaires were sent, and 219 returned before the deadline (3 arrived too late), a 59.8% return rate; (2) the Wisconsin Region of the National Sisters Vocation Conference, 229 sent, 159 returned (1 late), 69.4%; (3) women who had left the first community, 64 sent, 13 returned by the Post Office as undeliverable, 26 returned, 40.6%; and (4) women who had left a variety of communities, 22 sent, 16 returned, 72.7%.

It was the plan of this study to investigate the extent of sociological factors on sisters staying in religious life. Four categories of sisters were selected and asked to respond to a self-administered survey. The first category of women was selected, as the author of this study is a member of that community. It was believed that that would help to increase the percentage of returns. Actually it worked in reverse, as the two lowest returns were in categories in which the author was identified. That second category was the women who had left the community of the Sisters from Stella Niagara. A mailing list was available of persons who had left through 1973.

The National Sisters Vocation Conference was a listing of persons who were affiliated with the Wisconsin region of this group. This group was selected as it was a heterogeneous

group of many religious communities rather than just one. Also, despite the fact that they were affiliated with the Wisconsin region, the members resided in many states from Montana to Texas, and Massachusetts to Florida and in between. It was believed that this broader representation of views would balance out any geographic provincialism of the first category.

The last category of women were those who had left a variety of religious communities. Most were personally known and some were friends of those known. Personal contact is probably primarily responsible for the high rate of return of the questionnaires.

At an early date, an item by item breakdown of the responses of the two categories of women who had left religious community indicated that on only 8 out of 91 variables did the two groups differ significantly ($P = .001$). This strict level of significance was selected due to the smallness of the groups. Therefore, they were identified as one group, (LEFT). Separate analysis was done on each category, but in the final analysis, all responses were grouped together so as to give the broadest possible picture and to use the LEFT category as a control. In all three categories, there is a broad geographic representation, despite the limited titles of each category. Overall, the mailed questionnaire had a return rate of 61.7%.

A general description of the women in this study

shows that the median age is 44.6, mean 46.5. They are well educated, (median, 14.1 years, mean 13.7; mode, 15) compared with 12.2 years of education for women over 25 years of age (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971). They have been in the community over a quarter century (median 25.6 years, mean 27.6). Seventy-three per cent of them live in convent-type residences, with 24 per cent in apartments, and 3 per cent in other types of living situations. Fifty-three per cent are in teaching or educational administration occupations; seventeen per cent in community administration, formation and maintenance, and the remaining thirty per cent in a broad variety of fields.

Most of the women have held all community offices (only 8% have not) in the local situation, but few have held provincial/general responsibilities and/or offices. They identify themselves as having spiritual well being which consists of awareness of God, openness to the giftedness of others, and possessing a strong sense of reality grounded in prayer. They believe that the Eucharist should be central to religious community life, and they feel that they have the initiative in determining their own lives. They have not considered leaving religious life in the past two years and would definitely or probably re-enter the convent if they were able to choose to enter again.

PRE-TESTING

The results come from a mailed, 86-item, self-administered questionnaire survey. The survey format rose out of a pre-test which was used to establish item validity of the questions.

The sixteen religious women who participated in the pre-test were selected on the basis of their availability. They represented nine different religious communities and a variety of occupations. Fifteen had at least a basic college education, and one was a college student at that level. Their ages ranged from 25 to 57 (mean = 36.3, SD = 4.6). The number of years in community ranged from 1.5 to 30, (mean = 15.5, SD = 4.6).

The research design for the pre-test was the focused interview (Merton, 1946). All persons had been exposed to religious community life. The interview guide was composed of eight demographic questions and seven basic, open-ended content questions (many with several parts). The seven basic questions were arrived at through a search of the literature on religious community life. Approximately forty concepts concerning the nature of religious community living were identified, and eventually these were coded down to the seven questions.

The problem was then one of how to code the open-ended responses. It was determined that most of the questions used in the open-ended interview had been covered previously

in the Sisters' Survey (Neal, 1970, 1971a). The procedure then used was to transform the open-ended questions into the form of Neal's survey.

The spiritual well being questions are partially a result of assisting in a sociology practicum engaged in exploratory research on spiritual well being during the spring of 1976 at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

A description of all the variables of substantive importance for this study appears in Figure 3. Operational definitions for the other variables in this study are as follows.

Solidarity means upholding the group norms. It is indicated by two questions:

Sharing the Eucharistic celebration is essential to community. (agree)

I feel any initiative on my part is stifled. (disagree)

The solidarity variable indicates the degree to which a person upholds the norms of the group. The frequencies indicate that 96% of the respondents agreed with the "sharing Eucharist" question, and only 3% disagreed. The opposite pattern applies to the statement about initiative being stifled. Anomie is the opposite of solidarity. Nearly 80% disagreed, while only 12% agreed. Ten failed to answer the question, and 32 had no opinion.

The group that agrees with the Eucharist question and disagrees with the initiative question is defined for the

FIGURE 3

MAJOR VARIABLES USED IN THIS STUDY

VARIABLE	DIMENSION	INDICATOR
Primary Background	age	current age in years
Secondary Background	education	highest level of schooling completed
	residence	place of residence (traditional convent or apartment)
	years in community	no. of years in the community since entrance
Community	significance	involvement and appreciation determined by number of positions held in the local and/or provincial/general government
	solidarity	agreement with the expressed norms of the population of the survey
Spiritual Well Being	possession	respondent professes to have it
	characteristics	how many characteristics does she have
Commitment	staying	thought of leaving in past two years, would re-enter if possible, have left convent

purpose of the study as having high solidarity. They most closely conform to the norms of the sample under consideration. All other possibilities do not as purely represent the expressed norms and are identified as having low solidarity. (see Table 1.)

TABLE 1

SOLIDARITY = Agreement with the group's norms

Categories	Percentages	(Frequencies)
HIGH	76.6	(314)
LOW	23.4	(96)
Missing data		(10)

Significance means appreciation and status through involvement. This variable is based on two items:

Number of positions of responsibility held on local community level.

Number of positions of responsibility and/or government held on the provincial/general level

Significance therefore is an objective behavioral measure indicating the amount of appreciation by one's group as reflected by the number of positions held by appointment and/or election on both the local and general levels of government. (See Table 2)

TABLE 2

SIGNIFICANCE - INVOLVEMENT in convent GOVERNMENT

CATEGORIES	NO. OF LOCAL POSITIONS HELD	NO. OF PROVINCIAL/ GENERAL POSITIONS	PERCENTAGES (FREQUENCIES)
HIGH	0 - 6	3 - 12	51.7 (217)
LOW	0 - 6	0 - 3	48.3 (203)

Low significance indicates that despite the number of positions held on a local level, one has either never been appointed and/or elected to positions at the provincial/general level, or only once or twice. Actually only about 8% of the population had held less than three positions on the local level with a range of zero to six. High solidarity indicates that no matter what number of positions one has held on the local level, she has been appointed and/or elected to at least three positions on the provincial/general level of government. Fifty percent of the population have held at least three positions.

Spiritual well being is a new concept in the religiosity dimensions. For the purpose of this study, it is a summary of answers to questions:

Do you personally have spiritual well being?

Which is the most important characteristic of your own spiritual well being?

Persons who indicated that yes, they had spiritual well being and also had all three characteristics, awareness of God,

openness to the giftedness of others, and a strong sense of reality grounded in prayer, as described in the survey (Table 3) were ranked as high. Also included were persons who were not sure they had spiritual well being, but did identify their own spiritual life as having all three characteristics. All other combinations of responses were ranked as low. As previously stated, the characteristics arose out of a search of the literature and findings from the pre-test interviews.

The spiritual well being variable is so newly under investigation that it is important to examine it in greater detail. Such work is already being done by David O. Moberg, sociology and anthropology department chairman, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin and currently president of the Association for the Sociology of Religion. Problems of a spiritual well being variable will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis (Table 4) on the responses to attitudinal questions on the questionnaire in this study show several items which load significantly to create factors that could be labeled spiritual well being variables (Table 4). An examination of the six factors given indicates these results.

Factor one loads high (.30 and higher) on eleven questions. Those questions (numbers 19, 25, 30, 34, 40, 41,

TABLE 3

SPIRITUAL WELL BEING

CATEGORIES	HAS SPIRITUAL WELL BEING	CHARACTERISTICS*	PERCENTAGES (FREQUENCIES)
HIGH	YES NOT SURE	ALL THREE ALL THREE	48.5 (193)
LOW	NO NOT SURE	ANY RESPONSE ANY RESPONSE EXCEPT #4	51.5 (205)

MISSING

*Spiritual well being characteristics have a nine-fold response.

1. Awareness of God
2. Openness to the giftedness of others.
3. Strong sense of reality grounded in prayer.
4. ALL THREE #1 and #2 and #3.
5. #1 and #2
6. #1 and #3
7. #2 and #3
8. none of these
9. do not have spiritual well being

TABLE 4

RESULTS OF A FACTOR-ANALYTIC APPROACH TO ESTABLISHING SPIRITUAL
WELL BEING VARIABLE

QUESTIONS	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3	FACTOR 4	FACTOR 5	FACTOR 6
17	-20	08	39*	-01	02	-14
18	24	03	-34*	-12	03	-03
19	44*	02	03	04	07	10
20	20	16	-03	14	11	13
21	-03	05	37*	-01	29*	-02
22	16	03	62	03	06	-09
23	-10	05	51	17	-03	13
24	14	15	35	17	17	07
25	31*	02	08	08	04	18
26	20	-11	-10	-10	06	04
27	-01	16	13	18	23	-13
28	08	13	07	16	15	15
29	01	09	18	17	01	06

See Appendix B for questions

*Load significantly to define the factor

(con't on next page)

TABLE (con't)

FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR SPIRITUAL WELL BEING PATTERNS

QUESTIONS	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3	FACTOR 4	FACTOR 5	FACTOR 6
30	32*	-01	-01	-5	30*	13
31	06	18	06	17	36*	04
32	-09	47*	19	-01	34*	-05
33	03	87*	01	01	21	03
34	43*	19	-09	18	33*	26
35	01	60*	04	05	10	07
36	-02	12	06	-00	-01	-01
37	10	16	05	-35*	-11	05
38	16	06	17	-05	60*	03
39	-04	09	16	-08	-08	09
40	38*	00	-04	-20	04	01
41	38*	-03	01	-04	17	-01
42	-10	-09	-3	-4	-5	-04
43	55*	05	11	01	03	12
44	44*	-14	-01	06	15	-10
45	51*	06	-00	-01	12	27

(con't on next page)

TABLE 4 (con't)

FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR SPIRITUAL WELL BEING PATTERNS

QUESTIONS	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3	FACTOR 4	FACTOR 5	FACTOR 6
55	04	08	-01	16	55*	-01
56	-06	02	31	01	-16	02
57	83	-00	02	01	06	02
58	-08	10	00	-00	35	61*
59	32*	-02	-07	02	14	67*
60	16	02	07	01	63*	32*
61	17	20	03	-03	68*	12
62	-11	10	-08	09	42*	15
63	-11	13	29*	-01	06	-01
64	24	06	-20	-13	17	26*
65	07	08	23	07	40*	26*
66	43*	-02	-03	02	01	-08
67	11	01	04	11	09	08
68	-01	00	00	53*	14	03
69	-03	24	11	-06	07	-02
70	-11	09	12	44*	-06	05
71	25	-02	10	54*	-01	-07
73	08	18	03	18	10	04

43, 44, 45, 59 and 63) can be read in the appendix. The central focus of these questions seems to lie in the area of openness to change, ability to be flexible and adaptable. This factor may be seen as primarily psychological.

Factor two includes questions 32, 33, and 35. The questions clearly identify the factor as being focused on the responsibility to work together. That this variable contributes to commitment is seen by both Kanter (1968, 1972) and Homans (1974). Laboring within a group definitely leads to social control. The demands of the group are seen as right in terms of one's self identity and obeying the authority who makes these job demands is seen as necessary (Kanter, 1968). The group does have the power to make persons conform to its norms and compel cooperation. If behavior is changed, attitudes will fall in line (Homans, 1974).

Factor three focuses on attitudes about chastity and poverty (questions 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24). These two concepts are traditionally, and according to Canon Law, an essential part of religious community life. It is well understood that there are discrepancies between attitudes and behavior. Therefore, this factor may be difficult to use to create a spiritual well being variable.

The components of factor four are a personal identification of possessing spiritual well being (question 68), and personal attitudes about meditation and scripture inspiration in meditation and thinking (questions 70 and 71). A

significant negative loading on a question directed to identifying anomie adds an interesting dimension. This clarifies the factor as focusing on personal responsibility for action to developing a good quality of spiritual life.

The quality of spiritual life is the focus of the fifth factor. This factor identifies many of the components associated with the ordinary spiritual life of persons in religious community. Questions concerning Eucharist, prayer, focus on the religious life and community and personal responsibility for spiritual well being are only some of the components of the variable.

The characteristics of spiritual well being which were identified by the pre-test interviews are the components of factor six. These consist of awareness of God, openness to the giftedness of others, and a strong sense of reality which is grounded in prayer (questions 58, 59, 60).

Therefore, the last three factors contributed to the decision to use these two questions:

Do you personally have spiritual well being?

Which is the most important characteristic of your own spiritual well being?

to identify spiritual well being in the categories of women. Other selections could have been used. Perhaps they would have had greater explanatory power. Further study will have to determine that possibility.

COMMITMENT

Only one aspect of commitment, that of staying in religious community, is considered for this study. For those still in community the variable is indicated by these questions:

Within the last two years have you ever thought seriously about leaving your order for secular life?

Looking back on things, if you had it to do over, how certain are you that you would enter the convent?

Commitment to staying was divided into four categories (Table 5 and Figure 4), high, medium, low, and left. Persons considered to have high commitment have not seriously considered leaving during the past two years.

FIGURE 4

RESPONSES WHICH CREATED COMMITMENT CATEGORIES

LEVEL	THOUGHT OF LEAVING IN PAST TWO YEARS	UPON REFLECTION I WOULD DO IT OVER AGAIN
HIGH	No	Definitely Yes
MEDIUM	No	Probably Yes
	Yes	Definitely Yes
	Yes	Probably Yes
LOW	Yes	Not Sure
	Yes	Probably Not
	Yes	Definitely Not
	No	Not Sure
	No	Probably Not
	No	Definitely Not
LEFT	Either Response	Any Response

TABLE 5

COMMITMENT TO STAYING IN RELIGIOUS LIFE		
LEVEL OF COMMITMENT	PERCENTAGES	FREQUENCIES
HIGH	39.3	(163)
MEDIUM	32.5	(135)
LOW	18.1	(75)
LEFT	10.1	(42)
no answer		(5)

In retrospect they see that they would definitely enter the convent again if they had it to do over. Persons in the medium commitment category fall into three groups. They may or may not have questioned leaving, but they definitely or probably would re-enter. Persons in the low commitment category may or may not have considered leaving, but they are either uncertain, or probably or definitely would not re-enter. Persons in the left category have already left religious community; therefore, it was unimportant whether they would re-enter or not. The frequencies for the re-entering question appear in Table 6.

It is interesting to note the differences and similarities that occur in the response to the question, "If you had it to do over, how certain are you that you would enter the convent?". There is no important difference between the

TABLE 6
I WOULD RE-ENTER THE CONVENT IF IT WERE POSSIBLE

COMPARISON OF PERCENTAGES AND FREQUENCIES OF VARIOUS GROUPS
SURVEYED

DO IT OVER	OSF*	NSVC**	LEFT***
Definitely yes	48.1 (104)	47.5 (75)	13.2 (5)
Probably yes	28.7 (62)	37.3 (59)	31.6 (12)
Not sure	18.1 (39)	11.4 (18)	18.4 (7)
Probably not	3.7 (8)	3.8 (6)	23.7 (9)
Definitely not	1.4 (3)	0.0 (0)	13.2 (5)
No answer	(3)	(1)	(4)

*OSF - Sisters of St. Francis, Stella Niagara Province

**NSVC - Wisconsin Region of the National Sisters
Vocation Conference

***LEFT - Women who have left religious community life

Sisters of St. Francis and the National Sisters Vocation Conference. In the category of women who have left religious community life there are significant differences between that group and the other two. Almost 38% of the group who have left would probably not or definitely not enter again. This contrasts with the OSF and NSVC group where only 4 to 5% of the members would probably not or definitely not enter again, as they look back. How do sociological variables explain these differences?

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

My hypothesis states that the sociological variables of solidarity and significance can be used to explain variation in the commitment to staying in religious communities of women. The research findings reveal there are substantial correlations between commitment and the background variables of age, years in convent and residence. There are positive correlations of solidarity and significance with commitment.

TABLE 7

ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS AMONG THE BACKGROUND VARIABLES			
VARIABLES	YEARS IN CONVENT	PLACE OF RESIDENCE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION
AGE	.95	-.16	-.09
YEARS IN CONVENT		-.16	-.07
PLACE OF RESIDENCE			.10

TABLE 8

Selected Background Variables and Commitment

QUESTION	RELATIONSHIP** with COMMITMENT (Frequencies)	
1. your age now	+.29*	(415)***
7. own highest level of education achieved	-.01	(399)
10. number of years in community since entrance	+.33*	(420)
11. place of residence	-.20*	(401)
9. number of sisters living in local community	-.37*	(420)
4. social class when young	-.03	(420)
71. scripture inspired prayer	-.27*	(411)
72. importance of yearly retreat for a week or more	-.33*	(401)

* Pearson's r

** Significant at P = .001

*** N varies due to pairwise deletion of missing cases

Among the background variables, age and years in the convent are the strongest predictors. Generally, older persons have higher commitment, although there seems to be some evidence of curvilinearity. The peak age for commitment is 31 to 50 years of age. Highly correlated ($r = .95$) (Tables 7 and 8), the number of years spent in community tends to create slightly higher commitment.

Education has no discernible association with commitment. However, education highly predicts solidarity. It seems that there is some association between positions held in the community and the level of education. Of all persons holding college degrees, 87.9% have high solidarity compared with 72.9% not holding a college degree (Table 9).

TABLE 9

 SOLIDARITY BY EDUCATION PERCENTAGES (FREQUENCIES)

CATEGORIES	LESS THAN A COLLEGE DEGREE	COLLEGE DEGREE AND HIGHER
HIGH	12.1 (38)	87.9 (276)
LOW	27.1 (26)	72.9 (70)

There is no significant association with commitment with another factor of socio-economic status, social class (Table 10).

TABLE 10
SELECTED
BASIC STATISTICS OF \bar{X} VARIABLES DESCRIBING POPULATION

VARIABLES	\bar{X}	SD	GAMMA	R
Age	46.47	14.80	.29	.29
Years in Convent	27.60	14.76	.32	.33
Education Level	6.96	1.93	.02	-.01
Place of residence	1.43	.89	-.33	-.20
No. of positions held in local community	4.65	1.52	.11	.08
No. of positions held in provincial government	3.09	2.81	.19	.17
Have spiritual well being	1.32	.72	-.16	-.19
Characteristics of own spiritual well being	4.33	1.97	.13	.15
Eucharist essential to community life	1.43	.70	-.22	-.19
Initiative stifled	3.31	.90	-.02	-.02
REASONS FOR STAYING				
1. Traditional response	3.02	1.37	-.51	-.44
2. Call from God	1.93	1.31	-.52	-.61
3. Service to Others	2.30	1.27	-.44	-.55
4. Fear of Leaving	3.70	.95	-.33	-.22
5. Not possible to Leave	3.98	.64	-.42	-.21
SOCIAL CLASS WHEN YOUNG				
Father's occupation	2.21	1.45	-.05	-.03
Type of living community	2.44	1.77	-.44	-.37

Pearson's r - coefficients of .15 or higher are significant at p*.001

Individual items have moderate to strong associations with commitment (Table 10). It will be noted in several places that years in the convent have a slightly higher association with commitment than does age. It is not merely that as one gets older she tends to remain in community, but also she lives in community, prays, is exposed to the spiritual life through reading, lectures, workshops and lived experience, her commitment to staying increases. Aging does not automatically make her more committed (Table 11).

TABLE 11

COMMITMENT BY AGE GROUP (PERCENTAGES)						
CATEGORIES	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
HIGH	21	25	37	53	62	39
MEDIUM	40	38	40	29	13	32
LOW	16	18	17	14	23	18
LEFT	23	18	6	3	1	10
FREQUENCIES	(62)	(108)	(95)	(70)	(85)	(420)
TOTAL	15	26	22	17	20	100

Category #1 = 21-30 years of age

#2 = 31-40 years of age

#3 = 41-50 years of age

#4 = 51-60 years of age

#5 = 61 plus

Twenty-three per cent of the persons in the oldest age group evidence low commitment. Twenty-one per cent of the persons from age 21 - 30 are in low commitment. The largest percentages for the first three age groups are in medium commitment, though the age group 41 - 50 are distributed fairly equally between high and low commitment. Over half of the persons from 51 - 93 are in the high commitment group. Percentages of persons in each commitment group increases as commitment decreases: high commitment constitutes 39% of the sample; medium, 32%; low, 18% and 10% have already left religious life.

Older persons tend to have higher commitment as do those with higher education and those living in houses that are especially designated for prayer or renewal. Additionally older persons tend to choose a more traditional reason for staying in religious life (Table 12).

TABLE 12

ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS OF REASONS FOR STAYING WITH
COMMITMENT AND BACKGROUND VARIABLES

REASONS FOR STAYING	COMMITMENT	AGE	YEARS	RESIDENCE
TRADITIONAL	-.44*	-.58*	-.43*	.26*
CALL BY GOD	-.61*	-.18*	-.05	.24*
SERVICE TO OTHERS	-.55*	-.15*	.02	.23*
FEAR OF LEAVING	-.22*	-.22*	-.14	.21*
IMPOSSIBLE TO LEAVE	-.21*	-.09	.04	.14

Pearson's r .15 significant at $p = .001$

There is a stronger association between expressed reasons for staying and commitment to staying than there is between background variables and commitment to staying. However, the reasons for staying seem to be basically attitudinal, whereas background variables are objective indicators. The question is which is the better indicator? Is the observer more knowledgeable than the participant? Which better explains the variance in the degrees of commitment to staying?

There is a high incidence of high commitment in convent style residences (Table 13). However the question arises as to which is really the "causal" variable. Do women with high

TABLE 13

COMMITMENT BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE BY PERCENTAGES			
CATEGORIES	CONVENT	APARTMENT	OTHER
HIGH	47	20	45
MEDIUM	31	43	36
LOW	17	22	9
LEFT	3	15	9

commitment choose to live in the convent structures, or does living in a convent-type residence improve commitment? There is also a positive association (Table 10) between being in a contemplative house and commitment. The same question arises. Do those with high commitment choose that place, or do persons go there and thereby improve their commitment?

COMMITMENT AND SOLIDARITY AND SIGNIFICANCE

An examination of the association between the variables of solidarity and significance with commitment to staying provides an opportunity to investigate the relationship of sociological variables to staying in religious community.

Studies on community and commitment (Kanter, 1972) show that various mechanisms work to create commitment. Commitment is indeed on many levels and of many types. In this study the concern is with the one aspect of remaining in the organization, i.e. staying in religious community life.

More persons of high and medium commitment have high solidarity scores than those who have low commitment or have left religious community life (Table 14).

TABLE 14

COMMITMENT BY SOLIDARITY IN PERCENTAGES AND (FREQUENCIES)			
CATEGORIES	HIGH	LOW	MISSING
HIGH	44 (134)	28 (27)	(2)
MEDIUM	36 (111)	23 (22)	(2)
LOW	17 (51)	20 (19)	(3)
LEFT	3 (12)	28 (27)	(3)

Indeed, the highest percentage of the persons who have left religious community life have low solidarity. This relationship indicates that if a person agrees with the norms of the group, she is more likely to stay. The more the norms of the

group express one's own values, the more she is willing to commit herself to the group.

Significance in a community is aided by being appreciated and therefore appointed and/or elected to a position of community responsibility (Table 15).

TABLE 15

COMMITMENT BY SIGNIFICANCE IN PERCENTAGES AND (FREQUENCIES)		
CATEGORIES	HIGH	LOW
HIGH	43 (91)	36 (72)
MEDIUM	38 (82)	27 (53)
LOW	13 (28)	23 (45)
LEFT	6 (13)	29 (29)

There is a low association between commitment and significance which is statistically significant. This study indicates that persons with high and medium commitment have high significance scores, whereas, persons of low commitment or who have left religious community life have low solidarity scores. In other words, persons who have held more than three positions either elected or appointed on the provincial/general government level tend to have higher commitment. The higher percentage of persons who left religious community life were those with low significance levels in contrast to the opposite picture of persons with high commitment.

TABLE 16

COMMITMENT BY SPIRITUAL WELL BEING PERCENTAGES (FREQUENCIES)					
CATEGORIES	HIGH SWB		LOW SWB		MISSING
HIGH	40	(76)	42	(83)	(4)
MEDIUM	37	(70)	29	(59)	(6)
LOW	15	(29)	20	(40)	(4)
LEFT	8	(16)	9	(18)	(8)

There is a negligible association between commitment and spiritual well being (Table 16) when commitment is dependent, and indeed, no really important change occurs when spiritual well being is viewed as a dependent variable. In other words, spiritual well being does not cause commitment, nor does having a commitment to religious community life guarantee a growth in spiritual well being.

The expected pattern of higher commitment with high spiritual well being and lower commitment with low spiritual well being does exist in the second, third and fourth levels of commitment. However, the reverse pattern is true for those of high commitment. One possible explanation for this pattern is perhaps due to the age of the persons in the high commitment group. They were trained differently concerning identifying oneself as having spiritual well being. This was seen as a lack of humility.

TABLE 17

SPIRITUAL WELL BEING BY AGE IN PERCENTAGES AND (FREQUENCIES)					
CATEGORIES	1	2	3	4	5
HIGH	66 (38)	55 (53)	52 (47)	39 (25)	28 (22)
LOW	34 (20)	45 (43)	48 (43)	61 (39)	72 (56)
MISSING	(4)	(5)	(5)	(6)	(2)

Category #1 = 21-30 years of age

#2 = 31-40 years of age

#3 = 41-50 years of age

#4 = 51-60 years of age

#5 = 61 plus

There is a moderate negative correlation between spiritual well being and age (Table 17). The younger one is, the more likely she is to have spiritual well being. The same is true concerning number of years in community. The fewer the years spent in community, the higher the level of commitment a person has. The younger sisters tend more than their elders to identify themselves as having spiritual well being. The question is whether this is a product of a new approach to spiritual well being, a different type of training, or new theologies? (See Table 18A).

TABLE 18A

 SPIRITUAL WELL BEING BY YEARS IN CONVENT IN PERCENTAGES AND
 (FREQUENCIES)

CATEGORIES	1	2	3	4	5
HIGH	63 (27)	62 (53)	57 (59)	35 (24)	28 (22)
LOW	37 (16)	38 (33)	43 (45)	65 (44)	72 (56)

Category #1 = 1 - 10 years in convent since entrance

#2 = 11 - 20 years in convent since entrance

#3 = 21 - 30 years in convent since entrance

#4 = 31 - 40 years in convent since entrance

#5 = 40 plus

There is a high correlation between selected variables of spiritual well being and commitment and the spiritual well being index (Table 18B). Attitudes toward meditation, scripture-inspired prayer, annual retreat, and periods of recollection are more strongly associated with commitment. Attitudes toward meditation explain three percent of the variance in commitment to staying, scripture-inspired prayer, seven percent, attitudes about annual retreat, eleven percent, and periods of recollection, three percent. The spiritual well being index explains less than one percent. This could indicate curvilinearity. Perhaps this indicates that a spiritual well being indicator for religious sisters should consist of variables relating to prayer rather than possessing spiritual well being and its characteristics.

TABLE 18B

 SELECTED SPIRITUAL WELL BEING ASSOCIATIONS AND CORRELATIONS
 WITH COMMITMENT

VARIABLES	GAMMA	PEARSON'S R
SELF-RATING OF SPIRITUAL WELL BEING	.10	.05
SPIRITUAL WELL BEING IS A PROCESS	-.20	-.15*
ATTITUDE TOWARD MEDITATION	-.24	-.17*
SCRIPTURE-INSPIRED PRAYER	-.34	-.27*
ATTITUDE TOWARD ANNUAL RETREAT	-.51	-.33*
FREQUENCY OF TIMES OF EXTENDED RECOLLECTION	-.20	-.19*
POSSESSION OF SPIRITUAL WELL BEING	-.37	-.19*
CHARACTERISTICS OF OWN SPIRITUAL WELL BEING	.18	.15*

*Significant at .001

P =

A study of the contingency coefficients and gamma produced by crosstabulation indicates the associations to be found among the pertinent variables (Table 19). The contingency coefficients indicate the degree of association, while gamma not only indicates the direction of association, but has an intuitive proportionate-reduction-in-error interpretation. This analysis indicates that there are strong associations between commitment and age, years in the convent, residence, and solidarity. Age and years are also strongly associated with spiritual well being, solidarity and significance. Moderate association appears among the other combinations of variables.

Negative gammas indicate a preponderance of discordant pairs. Younger persons have higher ratings of solidarity, spiritual well being and significance. However, the older persons have higher commitment. This could indicate an important and hope-filled trend. Since solidarity and significance are positively correlated with commitment, and the younger members have higher solidarity and significance, this could indicate an increase in the level of commitment to staying in religious community life. History will have to answer this question.

Background variables are much better predictors of commitment than are solidarity, significance, and spiritual well being (Table 20). Background variables are less ephemeral. Combined with the other three variables, they

TABLE 19

PROPORTIONATE REDUCTION IN ERROR ** IN PREDICTING COMMITMENT, SOLIDARITY, SIGNIFICANCE AND SPIRITUAL WELL BEING BY BACKGROUND AND OTHER VARIABLES

VARIABLES	AGE	YEARS IN CONVENT	PLACE OF RESIDENCE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	SPIRITUAL WELL BEING	SOLIDARITY	SIGNIFICANCE
COMMITMENT	.29*(.65)	.32*(.67)	-.33*(.53)	.02(.36)	-.10(.28)	.31 (.43)	.21(.27)
SPIRITUAL WELL BEING	-.25*(.49)	-.27*(.54)	.15 (.22)	.03(.23)			
SOLIDARITY	-.10 (.27)	-.08 (.28)	-.17 (.27)	.06(.36)			
SIGNIFICANCE	-.08 (.39)	-.08 (.41)	.08 (24)	.33*(.31)			

** PRE - Gamma (C corrected)

* significant at less than .001

TABLE 20

EFFECTS OF BACKGROUND VARIABLES AND SIGNIFICANCE, SOLIDARITY AND SPIRITUAL WELL BEING AS PREDICTORS OF COMMITMENT TO STAYING IN COMMUNITY:

RESULTS OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS (Standardized Partial Regression Coefficient - Beta)

VARIABLES	AGE	YEARS IN CONVENT	PLACE OF RESIDENCE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	SOLIDARITY	SIGNIFICANCE	SPIRITUAL WELL BEING	\bar{X}
COMMITMENT	.22*	.27*	-.15*	.04	.19	.14	-.07	3.02
SOLIDARITY	-.12*	-.08*	-.07	.08*	--	.18*	.12*	1.77
SIGNIFICANCE	-.13*	-.09*	NC	.20*	.18*	--	.10*	1.53
SPIRITUAL WELL BEING	-.20*	-.20*	.06	NC	.12*	.10*	--	1.51

* Coefficient is at least twice its standard error.

NC - tolerance is too low to compute

help to increase the explanation of the variance in commitment.

Commitment should increase as solidarity, significance, and spiritual well being increase. The data partially support this proposition. Zero-order correlations of solidarity and significance are positive. The correlation of commitment with spiritual well being is negligible. Solidarity and significance are also moderate predictors in the multiple regression analysis. Controlling for the variance explained by the background variables, adding significance and solidarity increases the explanation of commitment by 5.5% (Table 21).

TABLE 21

EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE ON COMMITMENT BY BACKGROUND VARIABLES AND SOLIDARITY, SIGNIFICANCE AND SPIRITUAL WELL BEING RESULTS OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS PERCENTAGES				
	COMMITMENT	SOLIDARITY	SIGNIFICANCE	SPIRITUAL WELL BEING
VARIANCE EXPLAINED BY BACKGROUND VARIABLES	16.4	4.5	6.9	9.3
VARIANCE ADDED BY SOLIDARITY	3.6	--	1.1	.2
SIGNIFICANCE	1.9	4.5	--	.1
SPIRITUAL WELL BEING	.2	1.5	4.0	--
TOTAL VARIANCE R^2	22.1	10.5	12.0	9.6

The multiple regression analysis also shows that the variables solidarity, significance and spiritual well being explain 22.1%

of the variance in scores on a four point scale which measures commitment to staying in religious community. In general, background variables explain 16.4 of the variance while solidarity (3.6) and significance (1.9) add 5.5%; spiritual well being basically adds nothing to the explanation. The more a person experiences solidarity with the group and the greater the group's appreciation of her, the higher her commitment to staying will be.

However, neither variable contributes substantially to the explanation of commitment. Age and number of years in the convent contribute the most extensively to the explanation of the variance in commitment. This suggests that solidarity, significance and spiritual well being are intervening variables influencing the effect of the background variables on commitment.

Significance explains more than 40% of the variance in solidarity. This is an equal percentage to that explained by the background variables. Other studies (Clark, 1973) have pointed out that there is a definite relationship between significance and solidarity. The data of this study also indicates that a positive relationship occurs.

Solidarity does not explain as much of the variance in significance as the opposite, though both are positive. As indicated before, education is the strongest predictor among the background variables on the variance in significance.

COMMITMENT AND SPIRITUAL WELL BEING

An interesting phenomenon is the explanation of the

variance in significance added by spiritual well being. Spiritual well being is little explained by the variables of solidarity and significance, as well as by the background variables. Although there is a positive correlation between spiritual well being and solidarity, the low correlation suggests that it is not necessarily those who best conform to the norms of the group who have the highest spiritual well being. Interestingly enough, 29 to 56% of the variance in spiritual well being can be explained by age when controlling for commitment. Perhaps spiritual well being is not amenable to measurement of this type. Perhaps the questionnaire itself is faulty. Several explanations might be plausible.

There is a positive correlation between significance and spiritual well being. Perhaps a large portion of experiencing appreciation, and thereby being elected, comes from having spiritual well being. It would be interesting to know the motivation of those who elected and/or appointed persons to areas of provincial/general responsibility. It is possible that some may see education and training as the most important factors to be considered for leadership. This seems to indicate that they see maintenance of the organization as a priority. Others could view spiritual well being as the most important factor in leadership in a religious community. Given the signs of the times, this might indicate that sacralizing change was a priority, change which would discard the trappings of secularization and by a religious renewal move the community on to a new stage of development.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Roof (1972) states that we must have better explanations of religious commitment. He says we need conceptual approaches that are freed from limiting assumptions about institutional forms. Are such approaches possible? He holds that religious beliefs and rituals are symbolic expressions of deeper values that are held as ultimately significant.

Clark (1973) says that any study of community should first begin with sentiment, (i.e., beliefs, values, attitudes). He says it is widely noted that persons who join community on the basis of common religious beliefs experience a strong sense of solidarity with only short acquaintance. Communities of interest gather first and foremost on the basis of shared beliefs and concerns, not proximity of residence or established patterns of relationships. However, the data in this study just undertaken indicates that type of residence does have importance for solidarity.

Homans (1974) sees that ranking within a community becomes less definite the longer the group lasts. This makes it difficult for members to know where they stand in the group.

A sense of significance can thereby be lost.

All these problems plague the study of commitment to staying in religious community life and the effects of solidarity and significance. Indeed, the very concept of community is problematic. There is a plethora of definitions. The problem is semantic. All use the same word and expect that others will have the same meaning as they do.

Schleck (1970) says the theologian would define community as a group gathered together by a faith-vision. For the canonist, community is a group of persons living under certain rules made by proper authorities. Many psychologists would look at interpersonal relationships and see individual persons as the end of community. Demographers tend to define community in terms of geographic residence. Sociologists might interpret community to mean an associational, Gesellschaft, societal grouping rather than an emotional one, Gemeinschaft, fellowship-based and, therefore, look to group formation and operation rather than value-laden, supportive social relations. Indeed, numbers of the respondents in this study expressed a concern for what meaning of community was operational in a particular question, as well as the meaning of words used in other questions.

Some respondents expressed concern that the questions did not reach to the theological depth of religious community life. They felt that much that was essential in light of the spiritual was missing. Berger (1974) has some interesting

second thoughts on the substantive vs. the functional definitions of religion. In the past, his attitude toward different definitions of religion was one of

"relaxed ecumenical tolerance. It is an attitude that I would like to revise now: I have become more militant in my opposition to functional definitions. The functional approach to religion ... serves to provide quasiscientific legitimations of a secularized world view. It achieves this purpose by an essentially simple cognitive procedure: the specificity of the religious phenomenon is avoided by equating it with other phenomena. The religious phenomenon is 'flattened out.' Finally, it is no longer perceived. Religion is absorbed into a night in which all cats are grey. The greyness is the secularized world view of reality in which any manifestations of transcendence are, strictly speaking, meaningless, and therefore can only be dealt with in terms of social or psychological functions that can be understood without reference to transcendence." (127,128,129)

Although, this study naturally is limited by the sociological discipline as well as the methodology, it is not its intention to avoid the transcendent. Indeed, the variable spiritual well being, like others, is introduced to explain more of the variance in commitment to staying in religious community life.

The whole issue of spiritual well being is problematic. Some respondents wondered how they could say whether they had spiritual well being, and no one could say with either absolute certainty or how she could tell what characteristics of it were her own. Others saw that it was one thing to have awareness of God, and another to implement that awareness in their lives; one thing to have scripture as the

basis of prayer and another to base one's life on scriptural values.

Also problematic is whether it is even possible to measure spiritual well being sociologically, let alone develop a survey to uncover its dimensions. Is it simply a reification? After indicators of spiritual well being have been developed, is there anything left to spiritual well being? Is there a "magic" number of indicators that one possesses and thereby has spiritual well being? Does it have degrees, rank? Is spiritual well being constantly in process, so the very best that can be done is to identify its particular incidence at a given moment? The variable is elusive indeed.

As previously mentioned (Table 10) reasons for staying in a religious community have a stronger association with commitment than do any of the others factors. Fear of leaving and finding it impossible to leave had low associations, $r = .22$ and $.21$ respectively. The other three reasons had strong to very strong associations with commitment. Experiencing a personal call to religious life is the greatest predictor of level of commitment, as it has the strongest association, $r = .61$. A breakdown (Table 22) of the responses to these questions about reasons for staying, controlling for commitment, shows an interesting pattern. An analysis of variance indicates that there is a significant (less than .001) difference in the responses.

TABLE 22

REASONS FOR STAYING CONTROLLING FOR COMMITMENT

COMMITMENT	REASONS*	Traditional	Call	Service	Fear	Impossible
HIGH	Primary	28.2	65.6	33.3	.6	.6
	accept some	31.4	29.2	48.7	14.7	--
	wish	2.5	2.5	12.8	2.5	.6
	reject	37.2	2.5	5.1	80.1	98.7
MEDIUM	primary	21.6	58.2	32.8	.7	--
	accept	24.6	33.5	50.0	21.9	12.9
	wish	2.2	3.7	9.7	2.2	1.4
	reject	60.4	4.4	7.4	75.0	85.6
LOW	primary	17.6	45.0	20.8	5.8	3.1
	accept	29.4	32.3	47.7	26.4	20.0
	wish	1.4	11.2	19.4	2.9	3.1
	reject	51.4	11.2	11.9	64.7	73.8

*Reasons

These are my primary reasons for staying.

Some of these reasons I would accept, others I would reject

I wish these were my reasons, but I'm not sure.

None of these are my reasons.

In general the pattern shows that more persons in medium (60.4) and low (51.4) reject the traditional reasons as their own. Sixty per cent of those with high commitment either select it as their primary or partial reasons for staying. There is a decrease in the percentage of persons who feel a personal call by God as their primary reason for staying; high (66), medium (58), low (45). Twenty-two per cent of the persons in low commitment don't see this as a reason for their staying. All three groups fairly equally accept at least some of the reasons concerning service as their own reasons for staying. There is also a decrease in the percentage of rejection of the reason of fear and age as reasons for staying; high, (80), medium, (75), low (65). At least 74 per cent of the persons reject the reason which says it is impossible to leave. However, it is an interesting fact that some of the reasons are accepted by 13 per cent of the medium level and by 20 per cent of the low level group. Only 2 persons (0.6%) in the high commitment group failed to reject this set.

All this analysis points to the conclusion that perhaps theological and/or psychological reasons have greater power of explanation for commitment to staying in religious community life than do the sociological variables of solidarity and significance. Does the low proportionate reduction in error indicate that a better instrument is needed or that commitment can not be measured by conventional means?

PROBLEMS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Many respondents were dissatisfied with the instrument, wanting to give more opinion and explanation. Many others gave qualified answers. A unique problem of those who left was either their unfamiliarity with contemporary religious community life or not knowing whether they should project themselves back to the time when they were still in community or give their current opinions. The directions asked for current opinions, but many indicated that they projected themselves into the past. A number of those who had left felt there should have been a separate questionnaire for them, or at least a different set of instructions. Persons in and out of religious community life felt that people still in community could not say why persons left. However, an analysis of variance shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the responses of those two categories about reasons why sisters leave.

One person wrote in a postscript that this questionnaire doesn't accomplish the goal. However, it is not certain if she herself realized the goal. Indeed, it does give evidence that the variables of solidarity and significance as defined in this study are related to commitment to staying in religious life.

However, nearly 80 per cent of the variance in commitment is unexplained by the selected variables. Some respondents said that religious community life had become

too loose, lacking in the older values, or too filled with red tape, and they were sorry they had entered it. Others saw that the changes had strengthened their commitment, and one sixty-four year old person felt that she had the best of both worlds -- traditional as well as renewed religious community life. Others said that they were staying due to a firmness of belief in the possibility of giving God undivided love while serving others and wanting to give this witness to a secularized world. Gratitude to God for his gift and trust in providence in providing a community that is tops marked another's reasons for staying.

Persons vary in the intensity of their commitment to staying in religious community life. It was hypothesized that solidarity, significance and spiritual well being are positively correlated with commitment to staying. For the purpose of the study, solidarity is defined as identifying with the norms of the group; significance as status from involvement from being appointed and/or elected to positions of community responsibility; and spiritual well being, as possessing various religiously identified characteristics. Data was gathered from three groups; one, a single community; second, a regional conference of various communities; third, a group of women who have left various communities. Age and number of years are moderately associated with commitment. Solidarity and significance have a low association, but are significantly different among the commitment levels.

The association of spiritual well being with commitment is negligible. The strongest associations are among self-expressed reasons for staying and the commitment index. Further research into the commitment mechanism in religious community life would prove fruitful as well as interesting.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

All that are the results of this questionnaire is past. What should be the assessment for the future? A popular priest-sociologist wrote that the renewal of religious communities has failed, that religious life is dead. If indeed, the old order has passed away, what can this survey tell us about the future? Basic sociology indicates that institutions have life-cycles and that they must either renew or die.

Some of the problems for religious life are "What is going to be the quality of life?", "How is religious life going to continue?" All persons in religious life must be concerned for these questions, especially persons in formation and other religious leaders. What insights can sociology bring to these questions?

Similar types of problems face religious orders in their development of community as face those who develop communes of any type. Though Kanter (1972) does not include religious orders in her discussion of community, nonetheless, there are similar problems, size, residence, recruitment, ideology, defections, sanctions, cohesion, continuance, etc.

If persons are to remain in religious community life, it is essential that the proper and sufficient number of commitment mechanisms are put into effect.

If solidarity is important to commitment, it will be necessary to properly train the persons entering the group into the past history as well as present ideology of the community. Whether this training is formal or informal will not be as important as if it is clear what the norms of the group are, so that the person entering the group will be able to clearly identify herself with the group.

Positions of responsibility can not be only given to the older members of the community if significance is important to commitment. Appreciation will have to be forthcoming from the leadership level and not only from peers. There are positions of responsibility and accountability which do not need to be tied into the number of years one is in the community.

Spiritual well being as characterized in this study showed no explanatory power for the variation in commitment. However, the strongest associations with commitment resulted from staying in religious because one felt called by God or one wished to serve others. Therefore, programs designed to foster solidarity and significance will have to either discover or assume a religious orientation in the members.

No one set of programs, no matter what their central focus, sociological, theological, psychological, etc., will

be able to assure commitment to staying in religious community life. However, any such programs can contribute to that commitment. To set aside an approach to the question of commitment because it is not capable of handling the whole question, would be to set aside all human approaches. Therefore, despite the limitations of the type of measurement used, the faultiness of questions and responses, this study can contribute to a better understanding of why sisters stay in religious community life. Renewed religious life need not be a dream for the distant future. As present understandings of one's multi-faceted life are explored, persons can better aid each other in the process of commitment.

So why do sisters stay? Religious experience is both a complex and fascinating area of study. This study provides more questions than it does answers. Perhaps that is what any good study should do.

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RELIGIOUS' SURVEY 1976

Dear Sister and Friend,

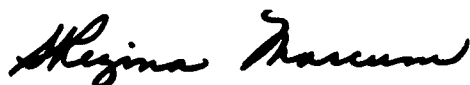
There has been a lack of organized study on why sisters choose to remain in religious life. The purpose of this survey is to help fill in the gap.

Whether you have chosen to remain in religious life or are making or have made a decision to change your life style, your anonymous responses are important to this survey as long as they represent what you personally think at the moment.

Your concern in completing this questionnaire at a time when so many are involved in completing other kinds of forms, is deeply appreciated. Your answer sheet is due back one week after receiving them. If for some reason you miss that deadline, please return it as soon as possible.

Anyone interested in the results--which if the mails and the computer do not fail us will be available by early September--may feel free to write and ask.

Thank you for your cooperation,



S. Regina Marcum, O.S.F.
Graduate Student

Department of Sociology &
Anthropology
Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233

PLEASE RECORD ALL ANSWERS ON ANSWER SHEET

PART I. CENSUS DATA

1. Your age now.
2. To what religion did your father belong when you were growing up?
1) Catholic 2) Protestant 3) Jew 4) Other 5) None
3. To what religion did your mother belong when you were growing up?
1) Catholic 2) Protestant 3) Jew 4) Other 5) None
4. To which of the following groups do you consider your family to have belonged while you were growing up? 1) working class 2) upper class 3) lower class 4) middle class
5. Did your mother do work other than for your immediate family before you entered religious life? 1) yes 2) no
6. What is the highest educational level your mother attained before you entered religious life?
1) eighth grade or less
2) part high school
3) high school graduate
4) technical or professional schooling but no degree
5) advanced training in performing arts
6) some college but no degree
7) college graduate
8) master's degree or equivalent
9) doctoral degree or equivalent
0) professional degree e.g., law, medicine
7. What is the highest educational level you have attained? (Use same categories as #6.)
8. Is your local community chiefly 1) contemplative (house of prayer, renewal center, etc.) or 2) apostolic?
9. How many sisters live in your community?
10. How many years are you in your congregation since entrance?
11. Place of residence (Choose one.)
1) convent-type residence (motherhouse, parish house, associated with an institution)
2) apartment/home with other sisters
3) apartment/home alone
4) apartment/home with relative(s)
5) other (please specify)
12. Which of the following categories comes nearest to describing your PRINCIPAL occupation?
1) teaching/administration in educational institution
2) catechetical/Newman
3) counseling/social work
4) student/research/librarian/parish census
5) health services
6) community work (formation, administration, food and house services)
7) full-time performing artist
8) business/sales/clerical
9) other (please specify)
13. Did you participate in the 1967 Sisters' Survey?
1) yes 2) no 3) was not in a community that year

14. Within the last two years have you ever thought seriously about leaving your order for secular life? 1) yes 2) no
15. Within the last two years have you ever thought seriously about founding or helping to found a new religious order? 1) yes 2) no
16. Looking back on things, if you had it to do over, how certain are you that you would enter the convent? 1) definitely would 2) probably would 3) not sure 4) probably would not 5) definitely would not.

PART II. ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

Choose the response that best fits your thinking and put an 'X' in the correct space on the answer sheet.

SA strongly agree
 A agree
 D disagree
 SD strongly disagree
 N no opinion

17. The life of virginity is an angelic life on earth.
18. The traditional way of presenting chastity in religious life has allowed for the development of isolation and false mysticism among sisters.
19. The sister must be willing to take the risk involved in forming deeply personal and truly human friendships.
20. This generation of religious is being asked to rediscover evangelical poverty. This means a realistic search for ways to be meaningfully poor and with the poor here and now.
21. As long as a sister is personally poor, I think that it is good for the community to be financially secure.
22. Unless a community was founded for that special purpose, I do not feel religious have any particular obligation to work with the poor.
23. Vowed poverty means dependence on superiors such that the use of all things falls under the authority and control of those who are set over the common life.
24. I feel that the essence of religious poverty is dependence on the community for what ever a sister needs and uses.
25. One of the main characteristics of the new poverty will be openness and liberality of mind and heart and goods, and the dwelling of a group of religious will be a place where persons will feel welcome, accepted, and put at ease.
26. I feel that one of the dangers of the traditional way obedience has been presented in religious communities is that sisters have not been formed to accept personal responsibility.
27. By establishing oneself in the religious state, one gives up one's independence and sets aside one's liberty.
28. I think that contemporary religious communities must drastically revamp their decision-making processes to include all members of the community.
29. By the grace of office, superiors express the will of God for me.

30. The vow of obedience is a promise to listen to the community as it speaks through many voices.

Some consider the following elements as essential to community. What is your opinion of the items. Continue marking as above.

- 31. Sharing the Eucharistic celebration.
- 32. Praying the Office together, at least some hours.
- 33. Sharing the housekeeping and cooking and buying chores.
- 34. Talking seriously and candidly about spiritual matters as they are personally experienced by the individual members including the anguish of doubt, suspicions, aspirations and longings.
- 35. Sharing the responsibility of financing the residence.

What is your standing on these general opinions? Answer as above.

- 36. The essential nature of religious life is to be of service.
- 37. It seems to me that other people find it easier to decide what is right than I do.
- 38. The central focus of our renewal effort should be on the interior life.
- 39. I feel that the way obedience is practiced in our community has been an excuse for me to dodge real responsibility.
- 40. The trouble with the world today is that people really don't believe in anything.
- 41. Adaptation to contemporary life calls for a new structure of religious life.
- 42. I feel any initiative on my part is stifled.
- 43. All authentic law is by its very nature flexible and can be changed by the community in which it is operative.
- 44. The only purpose for a religious rule is to allow for the channeling of human energy into the fulfillment of the gospel in a radically Christian way.
- 45. The community in which the sisters live must strive to develop that openness to the other that should characterize every Christian living-together group, if it is to be a form of Christian witness needed in the world today.

PART III. COMMUNITY DATA

46. All of you have held and/or are holding positions of responsibility and accountability in your community. Circle all that apply to you at the present time and in the past. If your community does not have provincial government, substitute general government.
- 1) develop liturgical and paraliturgical services
 - 2) coordinate celebrations
 - 3) handle financial affairs for the community
 - 4) assume cooking for the group
 - 5) plan/participate in communal recreation
 - 6) share housekeeping chores

7. elected provincial superior
 8. appointed/elected superior/administrator of a community institution
 9. elected coordinator and/or liaison person
 10. appointed to provincial committee(s)
 11. elected provincial committee(s)
 12. elected/appointed delegate/alternate to the provincial chapter
 13. elected/appointed to a provincial assembly (advisory)
 14. elected/appointed to provincial council
 15. elected/appointed to vocation/novitiate/formation directress
 16. initiated community program
 17. resource and/or consultant to community
 18. represent community in outside association
47. Have you ever attended any Chapter sessions? 1) yes 2) no
 48. Have you ever attended the Chapter of Mats? 1) both of them
2) one of them 3) none of them 4) doesn't apply
 49. Did you work on any aspect of the Chapter of Mats? 1) yes
2) no 3) doesn't apply
 50. How many area meetings have you attended in the past two years?
1) few 2) some 3) most 4) all 5) none
 51. Do you think there is an optimal size group beyond which it is impossible for members living together to become a community?
1) yes 2) no
 52. What is that optimal size? 1) 5 2) 10 3) 20 4) 30
5) above 30 6) doesn't apply
 53. If you had a practical choice of style of residence, which of the following would you select?
1) an ordinary family-type residence
2) a typical convent-type residence
3) a high-rise apartment in a public housing project
4) an apartment in any convenient section of the city
5) whatever is functional for the work I am doing
6) the form of the house makes little difference to me
 54. Would you say that the morale of your house is lower or higher than the house in which you were living in 1967?
1) higher 2) lower 3) doesn't apply

PART IV. SPIRITUAL WELL BEING (HEALTH)

Choose the response that best fits your thinking and put an 'X' in the correct space on the answer sheet.

- SA strongly agree
A agree
D disagree
SD strongly disagree
N no opinion

55. Spiritual well being is a process--you can have more or less of it. You have to work at developing it.

56. Spiritual well being is a condition--you either have it or you don't. You are not responsible for getting it.
57. Spiritual well being is both process and condition.

The following items have been labeled characteristics of spiritual well being. What is your opinion of them? Answer as above.

58. Spiritual well being is a strong awareness of God.
59. It is a strong openness to the giftedness of others.
60. It is a good sense of reality which is grounded in prayer.
61. The community is responsible for maintaining an atmosphere conducive to spiritual well being.
62. Each sister is responsible for her own spiritual well being, thereby giving spiritual well being to the community.
63. Spiritual well being is a gift of God not dependent on others or outside conditions.

The following items are some ways persons handle the tension between stability and change. What do you think? Continue as above.

64. Through the support of my friends.
65. Through the support of prayer.
66. You welcome the tension, learn to live with it and laugh at the mistakes.
67. I am secure in my own ability to make decisions, therefore, change does not produce tension.
68. Do you personally have spiritual well being?
1) yes 2) no 3) not sure
69. Which is the most important characteristic of your own spiritual well being?
1) a strong awareness of God 2) a strong openness to others
3) a good sense of reality grounded in prayer 4) all of these
5) none of these 6) #1 and 2 7) #1 and 3 8) #2 and 3
9) don't have spiritual well being
70. How do you feel about meditation?
1) I really enjoy it, looking forward to it every day.
2) I value it deeply but have to work hard at it.
3) It's a burden to me, though one I accept willingly as a necessary part of my spiritual life.
4) My response is uneven. Sometimes it's fine; sometimes a burden
71. How much of your thinking and meditating derives its inspiration directly from scripture?
1) a great deal 2) a moderate amount 3) directly, very little
72. How important is it to you as an active religious to have periods of retreat in which you go apart completely from your service work for a lengthy period of time to spend a period in contemplation, e.g., a week or more. (Choose one only.)
1) Important 2) Because of kind of person I am, not really important 3) Because of the nature of my work, not really important at all 4) None of these

73. How frequently do you go apart for short periods of recollection, e.g., a day or a weekend.
- 1) at least once a month
 - 2) about every two to three months
 - 3) about every four to six months
 - 4) none of these

PART V. STAYING AND LEAVING

The following items explain some reasons why sisters leave religious orders today. What is your evaluation of the statements. Put an 'X' in the correct space on the answer sheet.

SA strongly agree
A agree
D disagree
SD strongly disagree
N no opinion

74. Current unrest and focus on change has weakened the inner control of those who need a stricter discipline to remain constant; the impatient, the irresponsible, the immature, the psychologically too tense to leave.
75. Some, in the new focus on self-development are discovering themselves for the first time, so they are leaving in awareness of not having a vocation to this life. This includes those seeking self-fulfillment elsewhere, those interested in marriage, those who feel their personalities have changed, those who feel that they entered too young, those who find it impossible to find self-fulfillment in a religious order and those who feel that a lifetime commitment is impossible.
76. Loss of faith and/or loss of the spirit of prayer.
77. In this period of change some have concluded that for their religious order there is little hope of making the necessary adaptations. This group includes many different views but among them are those who see no hope for change, who see the system as evil, feel their assignments are frustrating, feel overworked, feel that they lack freedom for professional growth, and feel a lack of warm interpersonal relations in the community.
78. Because of the changing conditions of the world, some feel Christ can be better served outside religious orders.
79. Community is moving too fast and the individual doubts the worth of the movement.
80. It is more acceptable to leave now. This includes those who wanted to leave earlier but lacked courage; those who either with or without awareness chose religious life for its professional opportunities and now feel completely educated to make their way elsewhere.
81. Which of the above reasons are true for yourself?
- 1) I choose not to respond
 - 2) does not apply as I am staying
 - 3) #74
 - 4) #75
 - 5) #76
 - 6) #77
 - 7) #78
 - 8) #79
 - 9) #80
 - 0) none

Which of the following sets of reasons included those which you think come closest to explaining why you remain a sister today?

Use these responses for each set.

- 1) These are my primary reasons for being a sister today.
- 2) Some of my reasons for being a sister today are here but others I would reject.
- 3) I would like to think some of these are my reasons, but I am not sure.
- 4) None of these are my reasons.
- 5) I am no longer in religious community.

82. Set I
Choice of a higher life.

To save my soul.

Sure way of knowing I am doing God's will.

83. Set II

My way of finding God.

Convinced this is my personal vocation.

My way of being a Christian.

Self-fulfillment.

I feel called to this life.

84. Set III

Aware of possibility for structured renewal now.

To add a necessary dimension to the making of a Christian community.

Dedication and commitment to the poor.

To give public witness to Christ in the modern world.

To try to live the gospel in a totally Christian way.

To render service in a unique way to suffering man.

85. Set IV

Fear of the unknown.

I feel comfortable here.

Too old to leave.

Loyalty to the community.

86. Set V

Sometimes I think I would like to leave, but I couldn't adjust easily to life outside.

I would like to leave, but I would be afraid of going against God's will.

I'd like to leave, but don't think I'd be happy if I did.

I'd like to leave, but don't think vows can really be dispensed.