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**SEEKING AUTHENTICITY: WOMEN AND LEARNING
IN THE CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT**

A Thesis in

Adult Education

by

Marilyn McKinley Parrish

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The thesis of Marilyn McKinley Parrish was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Edward W. Taylor
Associate Professor of Adult Education
Thesis Adviser
Chair of Committee

Fred M. Schied
Associate Professor of Education

Kenneth B. Cunningham
Assistant Professor of Sociology

Charles D. Kupfer
Assistant Professor of American Studies/History

Ian E. Baptiste
Associate Professor of Education
In Charge of Graduate Programs in Adult Education

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

Women encountered a rich environment of learning as they carried out works of mercy and protest in the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s and 1940s. Because historical treatments of the movement have focused on the lives and work of co-founders Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, attending to women's experiences in the movement creates the opportunity to discover how the movement served as a site for learning, as well as to investigate issues of gender and spirituality.

Oral history interviews were conducted with twelve women, ten of whom were involved in the Catholic Worker during the 1930s and 1940s. Two of the women were interviewed about their mother's experiences in the movement. Findings demonstrate that learning within the Catholic Worker was a dynamic experience. Women were involved in close study of the gospels and papal encyclicals focused on social justice, as well as the works of Catholic writers who espoused personalism, distributism, and pacifism. The Catholic Worker was a place where ideas and learning came together with hard physical work in caring for the needs of those hurt by capitalism. This resulted in the creation of a framework for life or a new way of seeing the world.

Narrators were grounded in the context of the Catholic Church, were seeking adventure and authenticity, practiced compassionate and critical-systemic faith, developed significant relationships, and despite varying experiences of gender, trusted personal conscience as a guide as they learned to resist American cultural values of materialism, violence, and oppression.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of a research study focused on the learning experiences of women within an historic faith-based social movement. The project investigates the ways in which the women of the Catholic Worker movement became involved with the radical social movement during the 1930s and 1940s, how they experienced gender within the movement, and the role that spirituality played in their acts of mercy and protest. Chapter one includes an introduction, the purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, sources, oral history as a research methodology, definitions, assumptions and limitations of the study.

A New Voice

On the morning of May 1, 1933, a small group of people stepped out into Union Square in New York City, to sell copies of a newly published newspaper called *The Catholic Worker*. The crowd was especially large this May Day, as speaker after speaker charged workers to overthrow the chains of a capitalistic system faltering as a result of the economic turmoil brought on by the Great Depression. The first issue of Dorothy Day's newspaper focused on topics of interest to the workers from a Catholic perspective. Onlookers jeered at the prospect that a Catholic paper could contribute anything to the discussion. This hostility caused two of those selling the paper to give up and go home (Piehl, 1982). Others in the crowd were intrigued and purchased a copy for the price of a penny.

The subjects covered in the newspaper attracted interest. By June, Eileen Corrigan and Dorothy Weston joined the paper, bringing additional journalistic skills to the volunteer editorial staff (Piehl, 1982). An unlikely assortment of students, unemployed laborers, church people, and scholars soon began to gather on a regular basis to discuss the issues raised in the newspaper: unemployment, the desperate need for affordable housing, and strikes, along with church documents on social justice, and the Sermon on the Mount (Piehl, 1982).

Beginning as a journalist 17 years earlier, Dorothy Day had long focused on issues such as working conditions, poverty and wealth, and peace. Following an abortion and a failed marriage in the early 1920s, Day developed a relationship with anarchist Forster Batterham, a biologist who freely shared his enthusiasm for investigating the wonders of the natural world. Their common-law marriage resulted in the birth of a daughter, Tamar, in 1927 (Forest, 1986). This experience propelled Day toward faith in God. Day described a growing awareness of the presence of God through the overwhelming experience of love for her partner and their daughter, and through the beauty of the natural surroundings in their small cottage on Staten Island (Day, 1978). Day stated, “Forster had made the physical world come alive for me and had awakened in my heart a flood of gratitude. The final object of this love and gratitude was God” (Day, 1952, p. 139). How did a radical anarchist, pacifist woman come to be involved with a patriarchal and hierarchical institution such as the Catholic Church?

Day was first introduced to the Catholic Church by childhood friends. The ritual and beauty of the ancient faith attracted Day throughout her early life, but it was

difficult to make it fit with her radical lifestyle. Despite the patriarchy and hierarchy present within the Catholic Church, Day was drawn to it as a place to learn more about faith in God because it welcomed people of all backgrounds: “they were of all nationalities, of all classes, but most of all they were the poor” (Day, 1978, p. 15). Because of her strong identification with the poor and neglected in society, the very ones who were welcomed within this church, Day made the Catholic Church her home for worship. Day explained, “My very experience as a radical, my whole make-up, led me to want to associate with others, with the masses, in loving and praising God” (Day, 1952, p. 139). Day took concrete steps toward joining the Church after her daughter was born, knowing that taking these steps would eventually result in separation from the man she loved (Day, 1952).

When she began publishing *The Catholic Worker* newspaper in New York in 1933, Day brought a deepening spirituality to her anarchist, socialist and pacifist views. In response to the economic and social crisis of the Great Depression, Day, together with French immigrant and theorist Peter Maurin, challenged the status quo of the broader American society, as well as the Catholic Church, with the vision of creating an alternative Christian social order, based on radical teachings of Jesus. As a follower of this radical Jesus, Day drew upon New Testament and early church teachings that emphasized peace and social justice as the natural outgrowth of Christian faith. Day deliberately placed herself on the side of the marginalized, and as a result, was able to offer a compelling critique of American society that spanned much of the twentieth century.

Day's advocacy journalism created a social movement that grew up alongside the publication of the newspaper, and offered the opportunity for people of all backgrounds, races, and income levels to learn together about life and faith. The movement became home to a diverse group of women and men in cities across the country. Intrigued by the perspectives articulated in the newspaper, Nina Polcyn Moore traveled to New York from Milwaukee during the summer of 1935 to spend a month at the Catholic Worker. Moore described the rich environment of the movement:

It was 1935. New York was such a busy place and so full of ferment and ideas. You could sit on the front stoop...a wonderful place to sit because it was the center of ideas and inspiration, a center of the richness of Catholic social thought. And a new kind of Catholicism, a new kind of personal responsibility, and a new kind of outlook. (cited in Troester, 1993, p. 15)

Moore returned home to found Holy Family House, the first Catholic Worker house in Milwaukee.

While not officially sanctioned by the Catholic Church, those who were drawn to the movement initially came from Catholic backgrounds. Indeed, the relationship between the Catholic Worker and the Archdiocese of New York was strained at times as the movement articulated positions that challenged both American society and Catholic Church hierarchy. Learning took place within a dynamic and challenging relationship between the movement and the Church to which it was related.

Relationships with the Catholic Church hierarchy were not the only ones under strain. As the movement grew, workers in New York and in other cities

experienced both neglect and intervention by Day, as she sought to create a unified voice for the movement. Celebrating the anarchist nature of the movement by refusing to become involved in resolving issues in Catholic Worker houses across the country, at other times Day exercised a more authoritarian approach, particularly toward those who articulated a different perspective than she did on the issue of conscientious objection at the beginning of the United States' involvement in World War II. During this difficult period, Catholic Worker houses closed as members joined the military.

A more complete picture of Day includes her acts of mercy and protest, the skill with which she reached a wide audience through insightful writing and marketing of the newspaper, and her thoughtful faith-based critique of a capitalistic society, but also acknowledges that she at times acted as a powerful authoritarian figure within an anarchistic movement. Additionally, the theologically conservative nature of the movement contributed to a neglect of issues of importance to women as the century proceeded, alienating many of the women who came to the Catholic Worker to serve (Piehl, 1982, Troester, 1993).

While much has been written about Day's efforts, little is known about other women who made the choice to join this group of Catholic radicals. Histories of the Catholic Worker have not focused on the experiences of the women (other than Day) who contributed to the development of the movement in New York and other cities across the country. What prior faith experiences drew women such as Helen Adler, Katherine Moos, and Mary Alice Lautner to involvement in the Catholic Worker movement in New York? What did Catholic Workers such as Betty Finegan, Nina

Polcyn, Peg Beahon, and Kate Mehan learn as they worked on behalf of the poor, challenged societal norms of the day, and engaged in public protest? How did their sense of spirituality motivate their work for social justice? How were their experiences similar to, or different from, Dorothy Day's articulations of life within the Catholic Worker? How were their experiences shaped by the challenges that the Catholic Worker presented to a patriarchal and hierarchical church? How do the learning experiences of women within this particular faith-based social movement inform the history of adult education in the United States?

Social movements are rich and understudied locations for adult learning (Foley, 1999, 2001a; Welton, 1993a). Foley (1999, 2001a) demonstrates that social movements provide complex and contested locations for adult learning. By attending to context, ideology and discourse within social movements, researchers can highlight the stories and learning experiences of social movement participants (Foley, 1999). Scholars examining learning within social movements have generally neglected the role of spirituality as a motivating force. Additionally, there is much to learn about the experience of gender within historic social movements that did not have gender as a primary focus. By centering the stories of women and their everyday experiences within the Catholic Worker, we can hear new voices describing an alternative way to live in American society, based on deeply held spiritual beliefs.

As conceptualizations about the past tell much about the values of a society, so do historical perspectives related to the written histories of particular fields of study. The examination of women and learning in the Catholic Worker addresses several issues that have been neglected within adult education history: gender,

spirituality, and learning in social movements. This research project focuses on the ways in which women acted and learned in the face of patriarchy, while being grounded in their own beliefs and interpretations of a spiritual and social mission.

Adult education history has often been presented as a chronicle of the efforts of the dominant culture (largely white, male, and middle class) and focused on the institutionalization and professionalization of the field (Rose, 1989; Thompson, 1996, 1997; Welton, 1993b). Learning within certain groups and outside formal institutions has often been ignored (Schied, 1995a). For example, the issue of women's absence or disappearance from written accounts of adult education histories (Hugo, 1990; Thompson, 1997) has resulted in a call for more than a compensatory (or hagiographic) approach to the representation of women's roles in adult education efforts.

While the history of the United States, as well as the history of the field of adult education, has been portrayed without consideration for gender, issues of race and ethnicity have also often been ignored. Using a "color-blind" approach privileges a European American perspective, defining the experiences of non-European American groups as "other" (Johnson-Bailey, 2001, p. 91). A diversity of experiences and perspectives reflects the culture and history of the United States, but too often these voices are not heard (Anzaldúa, 1990, 1999; Peterson, 1996; Sheared & Sissel, 2001; Takaki, 1993).

Recent scholarship within the field of adult education brought to light the rich diversity of historical adult education efforts within the United States (Johnson-Bailey, 2001). A growing body of literature addresses learning in groups that

challenge the status quo. This research includes works that focus on women's efforts in adult education (Hugo, 1990, 2001); Highlander (Glen, 1996; Adams, 1992, 1998), labor colleges (Altenbaugh, 1990), the Harlem renaissance (Guy, 1996), the civil rights movement (Rachal, 1998), women workers (Heller, 1984; Kornbluh & Frederickson, 1984; O'Farrell & Kornbluh, 1996; Wolensky, 1996; Wolensky, Wolensky, & Wolensky, 2002), and the feminist movement (Hart, 1990; Thompson, 1988; Westwood, 1988).

Adult education scholars who study learning within social movements (such as Finger, 1989; Foley, 1999, 2001a; Hart, 1990; Kilgore, 1999; Rachal, 1998; Spencer, 1995; and Welton, 1993a) focus on learning that participants experience while working for social change. Learning within social movements takes place in a variety of ways, some of it more formally in related institutional settings, such as in the labor colleges (Altenbaugh, 1990), or at Highlander Folk School (Adams, 1992, 1998; Glen, 1996) and some of it more informally and incidentally, through the struggle against the dominant culture (Foley, 1999, 2001a, 2001b).

Feminist scholars within the field of sociology offer insights into the gendered nature of all social movements (Kuumba, 2001). Gender within social movements is demonstrated in a variety of ways—through the gender of the participants, movement goals, methods used to work for change, collective identity of movement members, and perceptions of broader society in relation to the movement (Einwohner, Hollander & Olson, 2000). Pushing the question of gender in social movements to a new level is the call to explore not only how gender is acted upon within social movements but also how social movements construct gender (Taylor, 1999). More

research is needed in the area of women and learning within historic social movements, particularly those that do not have gender as a primary focus.

Another area of research that informs this study is spirituality and how it motivates social movement participants to action (Tisdell, 2000). Emancipatory activist adult educators such as Freire and Horton noted the influence of spirituality upon their actions to create a more just world (Horton & Freire, 1990). Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Parks (1996) examine the relationship between commitment and community in the lives of activists working for social change. Bean (2000) notes the impact of spirituality in the development of the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia, in which Moses Coady challenged both “position [and] privilege,” as a result of his views of both faith and social justice (p. 69).

Milacci and Howell (2002) call for investigations of the “rich theological traditions” from which concepts of spirituality develop as a way to correct the decontextualization present in much literature about spirituality within the field of adult education (p. 295). Spirituality within the Catholic tradition was an integral part of the context in which the Catholic Worker movement developed. More research is needed into the impact of spirituality on the actions of social activists within specific faith-based historic social movements.

The Catholic Worker movement in the 1930s and 1940s was a movement of dynamic contrasts: intellectual growth alongside concrete acts of mercy, anarchy in the midst of a patriarchal and hierarchical church, conscientious objection in the face of war, contemplative faith and radical resistance. Through analysis of oral history interviews, together with additional Catholic Worker primary resources, it will be

possible to gain a better sense of how these women learned in the midst of struggle within a social movement (Foley, 1999, 2001a).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover the nature of women's learning experiences within the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s and 1940s. The examination of gender, spirituality, and learning within a radical faith-based social movement offers a more complete picture of adult education history and a broader view of women's experiences in U.S. history. Glimpses of those who critiqued dominant culture in other times can inspire, challenge, and offer opportunities to consider learning in broader, more complete ways (Welton, 1993b).

Research Questions

This investigation into the nature of learning for women within the early years of the Catholic Worker movement focuses on the following questions:

1. How did the women of the Catholic Worker movement come to involvement with the movement during the 1930s and 1940s?
2. How did they experience gender within the movement, particularly in relation to the patriarchy of the Catholic Church?
3. What role did spirituality play for women of the Catholic Worker and how did it interact with their learning, and their work for social justice?

Significance of the Study

This study of the learning experiences of women in the Catholic Worker movement is significant on several levels. It is of personal significance, it broadens

our understanding of women's contributions in the history of the United States, and it makes the history of adult education more complete.

Personally, as a pacifist Christian woman, exploring the learning experiences of women within this faith-based social movement offers encouragement as I seek to understand how to follow the radical Jesus I encounter in the New Testament. This Jesus counters traditional approaches to religion: He values the poor, the peacemaker, and the compassionate over the wealthy and powerful (Yoder, 1994). His approach to religious institutions of the day was to challenge and to describe a different way to live. The Catholic Worker movement is an example of a group that grappled with that different way to live, by seeking to address peace and social justice issues from the perspective of faith.

This study comes from the desire to bring to light everyday acts of learning and resistance by women whose voices have not been heard. As a result of their beliefs, the women of the Catholic Worker movement lived with others simply and nonviolently in the midst of a materialistic and often violent culture. What they learned within this context, focused on both works of mercy and works of protest, matters deeply to me as I try to live peacefully and creatively in twenty-first century American culture.

Secondly, the study of the women of the Catholic Worker broadens our knowledge of women's contributions in the history of the United States. Throughout our nation's history, women have played pivotal roles in working for social change. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women became leaders of reform movements of all types in the United States. Strengthened by revival experiences in

the Second Great Awakening in the 1820s, women moved into positions of leadership and worked for moral reform in their communities (Kleinberg, 1999). Voluntary associations emerged in communities across the country, channeling the efforts of women and men toward reform. Educators such as Emma Willard, Catharine Beecher, and Mary Lyon, created female academies as places for young women to learn, while abolitionists such as Sarah and Angelina Grimke challenged social conventions of the day by speaking out to large audiences against the institution of slavery (Evans, 1989).

Frustrated by exclusion at an abolitionist conference in London, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott agreed to convene a meeting to discuss equal rights for women (Banner, 1980). In 1848, women and men gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, to sign the Declaration of Sentiments, beginning the long fight for suffrage for women. Following the Civil War, the Women's Christian Temperance Union spearheaded efforts to protect families from the abuses of alcohol and created an organization in which women developed considerable organizational and political skills (Evans, 1989).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, women formed settlement houses, played instrumental roles in creating what became the field of social work, and contributed to the development of the progressive movement (Fitzpatrick, 1990, Muncy, 1991). Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, women within the labor movement challenged capitalists to improve working conditions (Kornbluh & Frederickson, 1984). While women have been integrally involved in working for change within American society, their efforts have historically been ignored.

Feminist historian Gerda Lerner (1997) acknowledges the experience of many women when she critiques traditional approaches to history as denying “our own experience of reality” (p. 132). Lerner continues:

We live in a world in which nothing happens without the active participation of men and women and yet are constantly being told of a past world in which men are presumed to act and women presumed to be acted upon... Women are and always have been active participants in the shaping of events. One of the basic errors of patriarchal thought has been to make claims of universality for descriptions of the activities of a small elite group of upper class white males. Traditional historians have described the activities of this group and called it the history of all humankind. They have subsumed all women under the term “men” and have ignored the actual differences that exist among people by asserting that the small group whose activities they describe can stand for the rest of us. It obviously cannot. (p. 132).

The importance of highlighting difference makes it essential to continue to carry out research about specific groups of women in the past. Ignoring the particularities of individual and group experiences in the past results in the assumption that everyone’s history is the same. Without highlighting difference, dominant cultural values and stories replace the true diversity of experiences of people who have resisted those dominant cultural narratives.

Thirdly, this study contributes to expanding the boundaries of the history of adult education by addressing issues of gender, spirituality, and learning in social movements. By focusing on the learning of radical women in a faith-based social

movement beginning in the 1930s, it is possible to learn more about women's involvements in historic social movements, and to explore how women in one movement learned to live out what they believed. The story of women's involvements in the Catholic Worker movement in the 1930s and 1940s can shed light on how women in radical social movements came to understand themselves in relation to the larger society that they often opposed.

Understanding the dynamics of learning with a historic social movement can also provide insights into the nature of the development of social movements that focus on addressing injustices within contemporary American society. Adult education can play a central role in conceptualization of alternative approaches to solving challenging issues of twenty-first century societies, approaches that develop out of a critique of dominant cultural values.

Attending to women's voices, while focusing on the social context of learning within a radical community of faith, offers the prospect of understanding both a group of women and a social movement overlooked in standard adult education histories. These women can serve as guides, offering insights into the relationship between learning, spirituality, and struggle. Primary sources reflecting voices of women in the Catholic Worker exist in several forms and will be essential background research for this project.

Sources

Source material for this study is comprised of the transcripts of twelve oral history interviews, conducted during the summer of 2003. Additional background research was carried out at the Catholic Worker Archives at Marquette University in

January and July of 2003. The Catholic Worker Archives at Marquette University contains more than 150 cubic feet of records, papers, audio and videotapes of interviews, and publications. Collections of papers include the records of the New York Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin, Nina Polcyn Moore, and Dorothy Gauchat.

The New York Catholic Worker records include the back files of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, correspondence, letters to the editor, financial and legal records, information about the efforts of the community's involvements with labor and peace movements, as well as records of the houses of hospitality and farming communes in New York.

The Dorothy Day papers include correspondence, calendars and notebooks, personal diaries and manuscripts. Papers of Peter Maurin include correspondence and manuscripts. In addition to the personal papers of movement founders Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker archive also holds personal papers of Nina Polcyn Moore and Dorothy Gauchat, both of whom were involved in the Catholic Worker in the 1930s. The Nina Polcyn Moore Papers contain correspondence, diaries, magazine and newspaper articles, and records of Moore's involvements in the Catholic Worker movement beginning in 1935. The Dorothy and William Gauchat Papers contain correspondence, manuscripts, legal and financial records, publications, and speaking engagements related to the Catholic Worker from 1938.

Existing oral history interviews tend to focus on Catholic Workers' reflections on the movement's founders. To gain a more complete understanding of the experiences of women who were active members of the Catholic Worker during the

1930s and 1940s, oral history interviews were conducted with Helen Adler, Betty Finegan Doyle, Mary Coisman Durnin, Mary Bigham Farren, Katherine Moos Mella, Nina Polcyn Moore, Belle Bates Mullin, Adele Butler Nash, Peg Beahon Winegarden, Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella, Mary Reser, and Monica Ribar Cornell. Mary Reser and Monica Ribar Cornell were interviewed about their mothers' experiences in the Catholic Worker (Kate Mehan Reser and Carlotta Durkin Ribar). As oral history will be used as a research methodology within this study, an exploration of its use in bringing forth new voices follows.

Oral History as a Research Methodology

Oral history methodology is used by researchers within many fields, including education, political science, anthropology, folklore, and history. Oral history has been chosen as a methodology because it makes important contributions to understanding the experiences of women of the Catholic Worker movement who were less well known than the movement's co-founder, Dorothy Day. Gaining insights about learning from women who were involved in the daily activities of the movement provides a different perspective than the traditional approach to writing history. Not only does this perspective offer new insights to the collection of works about the Catholic Worker movement, hearing from those who worked and lived on the margins of society changes the stories we know about the time period.

Oral history is a powerful tool in historical research. It allows the researcher to hear voices of those outside the mainstream of American culture, to consider more completely the purposes of memory, and to examine the relationship between the

interviewer and narrator and the nature of historical interpretation. An examination of these benefits of the use of oral history as a methodology follows.

New Voices

Oral histories bring forth new voices and new perspectives about the past. Just as each individual's viewpoint about a current event or experience is unique, so are individual perspectives about events in the past. These recollections or stories are powerful reminders that history is not just one story but many.

In addition to challenging accepted forms of documentation, oral histories (or life histories) can offer the chance for those who have been left outside traditional historical sources to be heard. The histories of most professions chronicle the most well-known, and powerful, rather than the voices of others within the field who might have a different perspective. Even within some oral histories, the focus has been on the capturing the voices of the powerful with specific professions. For example, within the field of journalism, oral histories have served to highlight institutional history, emphasizing "ownership and property rather than assessing production in terms of labor and news work" (Brennen, 1996). Within the field of adult education, videorecordings and interviews have tended to focus on well-known adult educators such as Malcolm Knowles and Myles Horton (Gulf Publishing, 1985; Moyers, 1981; see also "Conversations on Lifelong Learning" video series, University of Alaska).

Oral histories (life stories, narratives) offer particular perspectives relating to past events. Denzin (1989) compares life stories to *pentimento*—"something painted out of a picture which later becomes visible again" (p. 81). New voices continually come to the surface, replacing old understandings and certainties. Life stories are

“open-ended, inconclusive and ambiguous, subject to multiple interpretations” (p. 81). Life stories (or narratives) assist in the process of making meaning. By studying them it is possible to gain deeper understanding of how individuals view the world (Lara, 1998; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993). Similarly, life stories or narratives can offer clues to what is culturally important within a particular group or social movement (Davis, 2002).

Feminist scholars view the conversation that takes place within an oral history interview as a “feminist encounter” (Gluck, 1996, p. 217). As a validating, communicative act, oral history helps both the interviewer and the narrator to understand women’s shared histories and experiences that have been left out of historical writings. Different types of questions come to be of central importance—those relating to relationships, women’s health experiences, home and work experiences, child rearing, spirituality. Gluck asserts that the result of this collaborative conversation is not just the creation of historical documentation, but also “the creation of a new literature, a literature which can tap the language and experiences of those who do not ordinarily have access to such public expression except perhaps through the more anonymous form of folk culture” (p. 219).

Tierney (2000) acknowledges the importance of hearing the voices of those who have been excluded but states that a compensatory approach to history is not sufficient. By hearing the stories and life experiences of the power-less, the history of the powerful is forever changed and redefined. Through life histories known as “testimonios,” authors tell their stories with the goal that the reader will be called to action in a certain direction (Tierney, 2000, p. 540). Tierney asserts “there is an

urgency to the testimonio that is not always apparent in life histories or biographies, and is most often absent in autoethnographies...In the testimonio, the testifier's life is directly linked to social movements and change" (p. 540). In testimonios, the narrator/author is the one who tells the story (as opposed to the researcher) and "truth is created through the telling of an individual's events that have otherwise been occluded or ignored" (p. 541).

Memory

One of the challenges faced by oral historians has to do with the assumptions related to the nature of documentary evidence within the broader field of history. Traditional approaches to historical research have come from a positivistic perspective with relationship to evidence, necessitating a minimizing view of the individual recollections or memories of specific events. This predisposition to look for objective truth about an event, runs counter to the view that understanding the past is at best attained through gaining glimpses of particular experiences situated within particular contexts.

Thompson (2000) looks at the traditional sources of evidence for historical research including letters, newspapers, and diaries. Typically, historians make use of printed materials from other times to gain insight into past events. Traditional approaches to historical research assume that the documentary evidence found in court records, survey statistics, and newspaper accounts is superior to the "unreliability" of personal recollections. Thompson counters that "most basic social statistics are also derived from human exchanges and consequently rarely offer a simple record of mere facts" (p. 122).

Portelli (1991) asserts that memory serves three primary functions as it makes sense of history: symbolic, psychological, and formal (p. 26). Symbols provide meanings for significant cultural contexts. Memory serves a psychological function as it provides for a way to heal from past wounds. Chronological inaccuracies in recollections serve a formal function when the change in chronology serves a particular purpose. Uncovering the reasons behind how a story is recollected or retold offer glimpses into the meaning an individual or group makes of their experience of the past. Portelli views disparities between facts and memories as the reason why oral sources are so valuable, “the discrepancy between fact and memory...is not caused by faulty recollections...but actively and creatively generated by memory and imagination in an effort to make sense of crucial events and of history in general” (p. 26).

Oral histories are reflections upon an event or experience at a later time. Both interviewer and narrator shape the interaction that takes place based on current perspectives and concerns (Grele, 1991). Called “shuttlework” by Portelli (1991, p. 65), this interaction allows the story of past events to be told while framed by present concerns. Narrators and interviewers are situated by age, class, race, gender, and culture, which add other layers of complexity to the interchange between the present and memories of the past (Sangster, 1998).

This complex relationship between past and present questions and meanings adds richness to the oral history endeavor. Grele (1991) asserts:

[n]ot only does the present impinge upon the memory of the past, but the past also impinges upon the present. Just as we can sometimes distort the questions

the past asked of itself in order to answer today's questions, so also the questions the past asked of itself can live on and distort our current questions. Memories of past events, while often liberating in the sense that they point to alternative lessons and confront current ideologies, can at other times become a trap. In some cases they can freeze the present. (p. 251)

Portelli's (1991) conception of the "counter interview" focuses attention on both the relationship of present needs to past events, as well as to the issue of interpretation (who gets to decide what the stories really mean). Through the course of his interviews, Portelli noticed the ways in which another simultaneous dialogue was taking place. Narrators were interested in why he was pursuing the research project and used counter interviewing strategies to observe his reactions. Furthermore, Portelli became aware that narrators chose to create meanings that were essential to their current economic, political, and social context. Interviewing individual narrators at other times would have created different memories and meanings. In oral histories, narrators create their own interpretations of the past.

Interpretation

Traditional histories are presented from a unified subject (third person account) view of past events. Historians become interpreters of past events and often present a seamless unified approach to the telling of history. Oral history comes from multiple, necessarily partial points of view (Portelli, 1991). When the power to interpret the past shifts from the interviewer to the narrator, the authority or ownership of history also shifts.

The approach of placing the narrator in the center of the interpretation of their own stories presents a challenge to the broader field of historical inquiry. If narrators are also interpreters, they essentially replace historians as the interpreters who make sense of the past. Frisch (1990) addresses the question of power and “authority”/ownership (whose story is being told) and how interpretation changes the stories that are collected (p. xx). Frisch asserts that authority is shared between the interviewer and the narrator, and the work that results is a collaboration between the two.

According to Errante (2000), the nature of the relationship between the interviewer and the narrator is similar to other qualitative research approaches. However, one distinguishing difference is that within oral histories, the relationship is “primarily mediated by the nature and context of remembering” (p. 17). Additionally, the interviewer’s questions reveal the intended audience for the stories. The intended audience can restrict or increase the “flow” of the interview, as well as free or reinforce a power relationship between the interviewer and the narrator. Errante discusses the change in her interviewing style as she worked to de-center herself as the interviewer and to re-center the narrator and their family members as the primary audience for the stories she collected. This approach freed narrators to express stories and meaning that they wanted their grandchildren to understand about their life experiences.

In another example of the centering of the narrator’s voice, Terkel (1970) allows narrators to speak for themselves as they make sense of their experiences during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Terkel arranges the stories by broad subject

areas but allows the reader to experience the power of the stories by simply letting the narrators speak. Yet the stories Terkel's narrators chose to relate suggest the need for the past to be represented in a certain way (Grele, 1991). Making sense of the experiences of the Depression took place on a personal level:

Anyone who has wondered why the Depression crisis did not produce more focused critiques of American capitalism and culture, more sustained efforts to see fundamental structural change, will find more evidence in the interior of these testimonies than in any other source I know. By seeing people turn history into biographical memory, general into particular, we see how they tried to retain deeper validation of their life and society, and how they deferred the deeper cultural judgment implied by the Depression crisis.

(Frisch, 1990, p. 12)

Etter-Lewis (1993) views the collaboration that takes place between researcher and narrator, as a "process and product that mediates the boundaries between history, language, and literature" (p. xii). Oral narratives place the narrator at the center of the interpretation of their experiences. Similar to other qualitative research approaches, oral history offers the researcher the opportunity to engage in a subject-to-subject relationship with the narrator (Yow, 1994; Portelli, 1991). The conversations that take place within oral history interviews are shaped by the culture, gender, race, class, and age of both the narrator and the interviewer, and by whether interviewers are considered to be "insiders" or "outsiders" of a particular community (Foster, 1994). The collaboration that results creates new understandings of personal history, community history and literature. When voices that have previously been

excluded from history are heard, current and historical understandings are redefined (Tierney, 2000).

Oral history projects center the narrator and her/his interpretation of past events. Oral history allows new voices to be heard and creates challenges to traditional historical research. However, new voices will not be heard if the stories told within oral history projects are not widely disseminated. The power shift that takes place at the level of the story-telling needs to occur at the point of disseminating the stories as well. Oral historians can look to Bernice Robinson's work in emancipatory literacy education in South Carolina to see the impact of widely shared stories (Olendorf, 1990).

The historical narrative is forever changed when narrators' perspectives on their lives are heard. In order for those voices to be heard most effectively, it is important to create an interview framework for the oral history interviews. While not the exact questions that will be used in the interview, this framework articulates the subject areas of discussion and provides an informal structure to the interaction between interviewer and narrator.

Interview Framework

To be most effective, an oral history interview should closely resemble the flow of a conversation (Errante, 2000; Wolensky, 1996). A framework of questions was used to guide the oral history interviews. Additionally, photographs served as prompts for the interviews. Collier (1979, 2001) and Collier & Collier (1986) demonstrate the power of photographs in the interview process. Photographs are often used in oral history interviews to bring forth memories (Modell & Brodsky, 1994).

Photographs can serve as a stimulus for rich discussion, create a bridge between the interviewer and the narrator through the ability to overcome cultural differences, and draw forth details from the narrator that may have little to do with the photographs themselves (Taylor, 2002).

The interview framework covered the following areas:

1. Time, date, and location of interview, and biographical information on narrator.
2. Involvement with the Catholic Worker. How did narrator become involved with the Catholic Worker movement? What was the connection between involvement in the Catholic Church and the movement?
3. Location of involvement. Where did the narrator live and work as a member of the movement? What was the nature of community life at the houses of hospitality and farms? What was the nature of the narrators' involvement with the Catholic Worker—journalistic, artistic, works of mercy, public protest, and location—houses of hospitality, farms. How did women use their skills and expertise/occupations?
4. Movement context. What was the nature of diversity within the movement, in terms of faith perspectives and gender, as well as class, race, and ethnicity? What roles did women and men assume? How was the background of the narrators similar to, or different from, the people

they served? What types of relationships/family life were present within the movement?

5. Learning within the movement. What was the nature of the learning that took place for women in the Catholic Worker movement? What specific Catholic Worker initiatives were catalysts for learning? What did narrators learn about themselves, others, and God through their involvements with the Catholic Worker?
6. Relationship between faith and practice. What were some of their understandings of how they lived out what they believed? What role did spirituality play in works of mercy and works of protest?
7. Connections between experiences within the Catholic Worker movement and the feminist movement. Did they have heroines within the feminist movement? How did this relate to the patriarchy of the Catholic Church?
8. Concluding remarks/thoughts.

By using an informal framework which covered general topics of interest, along with prompts such as photographs, it was possible to encourage a conversation that drew out the learning experiences of the narrators, resulting in a deeper understanding of the learning that took place within the Catholic Worker movement.

The following definitions of terms, assumptions, and limitations, assist in clarifying the perspective used within the study.

Definitions of Terms

1. Anarchism A belief that large centralized political, religious, and economic structures should give way to individual freedom, where people can choose to interact in smaller, locally based systems of cooperation (see Bakunin in Lehning, 1974; Goldman, 1969; Kropotkin, 1970; Marsh, 1981). Varieties of anarchism include individualist, collectivist, communist and anarcho-syndicalist (Kropotkin, 1970). All hold in common the critique of capitalist, religious, and political authority. Catholic Worker co-founder Dorothy Day was influenced by anarchist writers and sought to create a non-violent Christian anarchist presence through the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality and publications.
2. Emancipatory education As articulated by Freire (1999), education is the practice of freedom from oppression by the dominant culture. Freire's approach to emancipatory learning situates the learner in opposition to the oppressive systems of society. By naming and addressing the structures of oppression that exist, the oppressed can attain freedom through radical education.
3. Gender A "social construction—the differentiation and institutionalization of the expected characteristics, norms and behaviors associated with being female or male in any specific social context" (Kuumba, 2001, p. 9). Gender can serve as a descriptive category and also a lens through which to understand learning in social movements.

4. Narrator The term used within the field of oral history to describe participants in an oral history project. Narrators create their own interpretations of personal and group experiences in the past. The stories of women narrators from the Catholic Worker form the central focus of this project.
5. Pacifism Active engagement in creating alternative non-violent resolutions to conflicts, at the personal, local, and national level. While many Catholic Workers were engaged in protests for peace during the Spanish Civil War and World War II and laid the groundwork for conscientious objector status for Catholics in the United States, others differed in their support of a pacifist stance, particularly during World War II.
6. Personalism A perspective that places the highest value on the development of individual human beings within society, through encouraging initiative, responsibility and spirituality (Mounier, 1962). Articulated by French philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, personalism offered a critique of both capitalism and communism from a Christian perspective. Catholic Worker co-founders Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin were profoundly influenced by the work and writings of Emmanuel Mounier. Anarchism, pacifism, and personalism were central components of Catholic Worker philosophy.
7. Radical From the Latin, radix, for root, foundation, basis, origin. Women and men of the Catholic Worker challenged the status quo of the United States in the 1930s and 1940s by calling for a return to what they believed to be the roots of Catholic faith: Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount.

8. Social movement A “formally organized group that acts consciously and with some continuity to promote or resist change through collective action” (Goldberg, 1991, p. 2). The alternative view of society found in most movements is framed by certain assumptions about a particular view of the possible future, including some conception about the groups who will bring about such a future (Garner, 1996).
9. Spirituality The “relational and personal (inclusive of the social and political) dimensions of the human person’s relationship to the divine” (Gibbons, 2001, p.168). The discipline of spirituality connects human beings more completely to a higher power and to each other. Spirituality within the Catholic tradition was an essential component of the context of the Catholic Worker movement.

Assumptions

1. Historic social movements are rich and under-examined locations for learning.
2. By studying oral and written narratives of women’s experiences in the past, it is possible to come to a greater understanding of women’s learning within a social movement.
3. In order to understand the learning of adults in other times, it is essential to understand the complex and embedded nature of that learning within particular cultures and contexts.
4. Women interviewed for this study will have unique perspectives that have not been heard in traditional histories.

5. Spirituality informs both learning and social activism within faith-based social movements.

Limitations

1. The study examines the learning experiences of a small group of women within one social movement during a specific time period.
2. The researcher does not come from the same faith tradition as the women within the study

The investigation of women and learning within the Catholic Worker movement contributes to greater understanding of the women's experiences during the 1930s and 1940s and to expanding the boundaries of adult education historiography. It is important to hear the voices of the many women who participated in the Catholic Worker, a radical social movement that began during a time of great uncertainty within the United States. Learning what drew women to the movement, how they experienced gender, what they learned within the movement and how their spirituality informed their work opens new understandings of those who have been willing to live out a challenge to the status quo within American society.

Chapter II outlines literature that assists in framing the study from the areas of history, sociology, and adult education. Historical research provides helpful context and background into women's involvement in social movements in U. S. history. Feminist critiques of social movement theory offer insight into the gendered nature of all social movements. Adult education literature suggests what is missing in both of the other areas: attention to learning, through studies related to historiography,

learning in social movements and emancipatory spirituality. Chapter III sets the historical context for the development of the Catholic Worker movement by examining the experiences of the Great Depression, and the context of the Lower East Side of Manhattan in which the Catholic Worker movement began. A summary of the development and initiatives of the Catholic Worker movement follows.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to discover the nature of women's learning experiences within the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s and 1940s. This chapter examines literature that informs the study of women in the Catholic Worker movement from the fields of history, sociology, and adult education. First, a review of literature focused on the history of women's involvements in social reform in the United States provides important context. This is followed by an examination of the critique of social movement theory by feminist sociologists who investigate the gendered nature of all social movements. Finally, a review of the literature from the field of adult education literature demonstrates what is missing in the other bodies of literature about social movements: attention to learning. The review of literature within adult education focuses on the areas of historiography, learning in social movements, and emancipatory spirituality.

Women and Reform in U.S. History

This review of the literature begins with a discussion of the basic questions that historians address in understanding the early development of the feminist movement, followed by works that highlight the history of women and reform in the United States, particularly those involved in reform leading up to the Great Depression.

Feminist historians seek to understand the roles that women have played historically because these contributions have traditionally been overlooked. Because compensatory, contributionist, and oppression-based approaches to history can be limited, historians are challenged to address the story of women's involvements in the past in ways that account both for the context and the functioning of women in a male world "on their own terms"(Lerner, 1996, p. 3).

Early Development of the Feminist Movement

In examining the growth of the feminist movement, historians have traditionally relied on an approach that highlights either equal rights or cultural difference. Investigating ways in which groups or individuals may adopt and simultaneously challenge hegemonic cultural norms can lead to a more multifaceted understanding of women's history. Boris (1996) calls for a more complex, nonbinary approach to the study of women in history that allows equal rights and cultural difference to co-exist. Learning from the histories of a diversity of groups (in terms of race, class, ethnicity, age, faith perspective) can help illuminate the question of whether gender represents "the single most important level at which men and women self-identify in a given historical period or at a particular phase in lives" (Kessler-Harris, 1996, p. 372).

Basic to the issues addressed by feminists during the early part of the twentieth century was the question of differences between the sexes. Should women emphasize similarities to men and claim equality based on basic human rights, or should the differences between men and women be emphasized, in order to gain important rights and protections for women in the workplace? Assumptions related to

these perceived differences or similarities directly relate to the direction women took to reform society.

Cott (1987) investigates the beginnings of the modern feminist movement, examining the time during which the word feminism was first used to describe the efforts of women for a more equal role in American society. Cott traces the influences of the suffrage movement of the 19th century on those women working for change in the subsequent years, leading up to the passage of the 19th amendment that granted women the right to vote. A common goal of those working for women's suffrage was equality of opportunity for all. According to Cott, after 1920 some activists placed feminism within a broader historical context of change created by industrialization and urbanization.

Rosenberg (1982) traces the development of research into the area of sex differences through an examination of the early work done at the University of Chicago and Columbia University. Social scientists at the beginning of the 20th century rejected Herbert Spencer's laissez faire attitude toward the evolution of society. The needs of an increasingly urban and industrialized society caused many professions to focus on ways that human intervention could protect men and women from the destructive result of the struggle in which all humans were engaged. The emergence of the social sciences as fields of study during this period, particularly sociology, anthropology, and psychology, show the influences of scientific research into new areas that focused on human individuals and societies.

Rosenberg (1982) notes contributions by early social scientists including Helen Thompson Woolley, Robert Park, and Jesse Taft. Woolley summarized current

beliefs about sex differences in 1898, and went on to examine differences and similarities in sensory and motor skills between men and women. Robert Park's work at the Tuskegee Institute focused on the abilities of people within marginalized groups to navigate between two worlds. This sense of marginality (or living between two worlds) is often experienced by those active within social movements as a result of the focus on challenging societal norms. Jesse Taft believed that this conflict between two worlds created the women's movement (Rosenberg, 1982).

Throughout the history of the United States, women have engaged in social movements intended to reform society. The motivations for this involvement have been many: seeking to extend the nurturing responsibility of women from the home to the community, the opportunity to challenge contemporary societal roles for women, revivalism and spirituality, or notions of moral superiority (often class-based). An overview of women and their participation in reform movements provides valuable historical context for the women of the Catholic Worker movement.

Women and Reform

The women of the Catholic Worker movement are part of a long heritage of women and movements that have worked for social change. Throughout the history of the United States, women have worked to create better living, learning, and working environments. In the Victorian age, women were often viewed as the embodiment of virtuous living (Chafetz & Dworkin, 1986; Evans, 1989). Along with this perspective came the expectation that European-American women's roles would be confined largely to the home. Despite these role expectations, women, along with

men, were drawn to societal reform through the influence of the revivals that swept through the country during the 1820s (Evans, 1989; McLoughlin, 1978).

Based in part on the post-millennial spirit of the second Great Awakening in the 1820s, women and men believed it was their responsibility to create a more perfect society (McLoughlin, 1978). This perspective matched a growing sense of national importance as Americans sought to differentiate themselves and their nation from what was perceived to be a decaying Europe.

The concept of voluntary reform societies fit...perfectly into the republican ideal of a virtuous citizenry sacrificing itself for the greater good of the community. After 1830, they became effective agencies of social revolution. In the anti-Masonic movement, the Know-Nothing movement, the Prohibition movement, the women's-rights movement, and above all, in the antislavery movement, these societies entered into major aspects of institutional restructuring. They stimulated third-party movements and ultimately generated the climate for civil war. Underlying this profound national transformation... was a reorientation in the ideological or religious world view of the American people...At the heart of the transformation lay the question of the freedom of the will. (McLoughlin, 1978, p. 113)

The prominent role of women in revival meetings, along with the development of organizational and leadership skills, led to increased participation in public efforts for societal reform (Alonso, 1993; Evans, 1989; Kleinberg, 1999).

Women became active leaders in the Abolitionist movement, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, moral reform societies, the Settlement House movement, anti-

lynching campaigns, African American and White women's clubs, peace movements, mental health care reform, and the suffrage movement, among others.

According to Alonso (1993), reform-minded feminists of the nineteenth century might look like this:

She would most likely have come from a middle-class, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant family located somewhere in Massachusetts...upper New York State...or in the New York or Philadelphia metropolitan areas. In most cases, although she herself might not have been a regular churchgoer, her parents would have brought her up in a Protestant church. There was a good chance that she would have been a Quaker, a Unitarian, a Universalist, or a member of some other reform-minded Protestant sect...In all probability, the two issues initially attracting her attention would have been abolitionism and temperance. Work in these areas would have eventually led her to the issue of women's rights and then, tentatively towards peace. (pp. 21-22)

African American women formed the National Association of Colored Women as a vehicle for elite Black women to "combat the growing racism of the late nineteenth century, to build a national female reform network, and to meet the changing needs of the black community" (Salem, 1990, p.7). Fund-raising and leadership skills learned in black churches and in literary societies were utilized for reform. Through organizations such as the Dorcas Society and the African Female Union, African American women sought solutions to crime and poverty, and helped to develop "social improvement" societies (p. 9). However, these efforts were often not supported by white women working for the same causes.

As increasing industrialization and immigration affected the social fabric of American life, many groups worked to address the dramatic problems faced by the urban poor at the end of the nineteenth century. The Settlement House movement offered social services to immigrants and other people of low income in England, and in cities across the United States. Samuel and Henrietta Barnett started the first settlement house in 1883 at Toynbee Hall in East London in order to meet the needs of city dwellers (Weiner, 1999).

Influenced by a visit to Toynbee Hall, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr opened Hull House in Chicago in 1889. Hull House was probably the most well known of the American settlement houses. Settlement houses offered the opportunity for educated women to move from the private to the public sphere to meet the needs of the poor and oppressed, and by doing so to learn and to live out their Christian beliefs (Addams, 1960). The Settlement house movement was initially motivated by expressly Christian beliefs but over time this perspective was no longer central (Stebner, 1997). Finding institutional Christianity lacking in its ability to address issues of the day, the women of Hull House came to depend upon a “spirituality based on the loving of God through the loving of one’s neighbor” (p. 185).

Education played a primary role in settlement house work. Hull House functioned as a community center with its “art museum, theater, boys club, music school, coffee house, meeting rooms for discussion clubs, gymnasium, employment bureau, lunchroom, library, apartments for working women and their children, [and] kindergarten” (Lundblad, 1995, p. 664). By 1910, there were over four hundred houses in cities across the U.S. (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). Settlement houses

brought together scholars and activists concerned with the growing problems of city life and offered a “testing ground of progressive education ideas for adults and children” (p. 172).

Ida Wells-Barnett became well known for her political activism and her work with the Negro Fellowship League (a settlement house in Chicago for African Americans) after using her journalistic skills to expose lynching campaigns against African Americans in the south (Schechter, 2001). Wells-Barnett reflected the perspective of other middle-class African American women of her time, who “sustained their intense religious and political commitments at the same time they, like educated white women, moved into teaching, journalism, social work, nursing and civil service” (p. 3).

American society changed dramatically in the period between 1890 and 1920. Women of all backgrounds were integrally involved in meeting the needs of their communities. Concerns and skills developed within family, church, and community settings propelled women to action. The era produced the first large group of college-educated women (Kleinberg, 1999). Progressive reform created an opening for many of these women to be involved in public arenas in new ways and shifted the focus of reform to public policy development within federal, state, and local governments.

Progressive Reform

Progressivism lay at the heart of the liberal political agenda in America from the early years of the twentieth century, and contributed to growing professionalization in American society. Pells (1998) describes Progressivism as “the first response of the twentieth century to those transformations in industry,

technology, labor, communications, and urban living which threatened to obliterate 19th century America”(p. 9).

Progressive reformers believed that it was possible to solve the problems of American society by applying “courageous human intelligence,” demonstrating their belief in technical rationality to solve social problems (Cremin, 1988, p.52). This perspective embodied the hopes of middle class America that order could be brought to the chaos of urban life: experts could be relied upon to solve human problems with scientific approaches. While many continued to be motivated by religious perspectives to work for a more just society, others saw the government as the entity which could most effectively address the needs of the poor. Progressive reform brought along with it a reliance upon expert professionals to solve societal problems (Hofstadter, 1974).

Like men, women applied their professional skills to advocacy for societal change. Traditional professions remained largely closed to women at the end of the nineteenth century. As a result, women worked to develop new professions which sustained a work culture separate from men. When women entered the world of work, they were most successful when not competing directly with men for employment. Women’s success “increased when they could justify their professional ambitions as fulfillments of the Victorian imperative for women to serve children and the poor” (Muncy, 1991, p. 20). Women became a bridge between professional knowledge and the public; they worked to make the knowledge of experts approachable for the public.

The combination of research and reform within Settlement houses allowed women to become involved in social issues in unique ways. Women moved into public life to address issues close to what had traditionally concerned them: nurturance. By turning private issues into public ones, women were able to convince the public that they were best able to address them. Hull House's founders, Jane Addams and Ellen Starr, and other well-known residents such as Florence Kelley, and Julia Lathrop, contributed to the social experiment of settlement house life.

When Julia Lathrop became the first head of the newly created federal Children's Bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor, she hired women who were similar in outlook and background to those at settlement houses—middle-class, well educated, professional. As women entered the government, they continued the culture developed in the largely female settlement houses. This culture valued service to the community alongside the development of public policy, sharing the results of research through the popular press, and the integration of public/career life with private/home life (Muncy, 1991).

With the implementation of the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act in the 1920s, a new federal program for social welfare provided prenatal and infant health care for thousands of American women and children. It created new professional opportunities for women when other professional fields remained closed to them and united women in reform work, offering the possibility for greater authority in public policy.

However, the work of the Bureau tended to reproduce domestic roles for most women, "indeed one of the cruel ironies of this history is that professional women

used their hard-won positions of public authority to advocate the limitation of opportunities for the majority of women, who were mothers. “(Muncy, 1991, p.122). Power was used not to free but to restrict other women. This resulted from limited cultural understandings and inflexibility about child-rearing practices and created a cultural prejudice on the part of the Bureau workers. Middle class women’s perspectives of hygiene, parenting skills, and proper family environments often conflicted with the needs and practices of immigrant, African-American, and Native-American women.

The decline of “female monopoly over child welfare policy” (Muncy, 1991, p.125) was complete by the mid 1930s. Women did not vote as a bloc in the 1924 elections. Therefore male politicians did not see the need to permit women’s views about public policy to prevail, and women could not threaten to use the votes of women to pressure politicians for continued financial support. Child welfare advocates had conflicts with male physicians of the AMA and the Public Health Service. Additionally, patriotic values during the twenties called into question the radical perspectives found within progressive reform minded plans.

As business values such as economy, efficiency, competition, and the profit motive increased their authority in the mid-1920s, they empowered a professional culture that shared those values. The female professionalism of women in the child welfare corps with its emphasis on service, selflessness, and cooperation lost authority. And that loss of authority had implications for public policy, including defeat of Sheppard-Towner. (Muncy, 1991, pp.149-150)

Female progressive reform efforts did lay the groundwork for the social programs of the New Deal (such as the Social Security Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act). Connections between government, education and social service agencies created a women's culture of reform, as well as a network for women concerned with public policy issues.

Limitations of this female reform network included little freedom to move within the network and the need for conformity. There was also a refusal of professional women to use their skills to the true benefit of other women, particularly those who were mothers. Instead, professionals viewed themselves as "experts," creating new expectations for women. They continued to advocate the Victorian ideal of the working father, and the stay at home mother. While some critics claimed that child welfare activists were radicals, these women were actually conservative in their views of family roles. Middle class, white and born in this country, professional women had difficulty understanding the perspectives of other cultures in relation to parenting (Muncy, 1991).

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, women continued their active participation in reform. The focus on the local level shifted to expectations of what the federal government could do for women and their families. Women working through "clubs, settlement houses, and women's organizations such as the Consumer's League and Women's Trade Union League forged a national political network and coherent legislative agenda" (Dye, 1991, in Frankel & Dye, p. 2).

No sweeping generalizations can account for the complexities of the ways that women faced the challenges presented to family, work, and society during early part

of the twentieth century. The following section explores the ways in which women within radical movements approached reform differently from those choosing to work within government channels.

Women on the Left

Women on the left of the political spectrum were active in anarchist, peace, labor, and communist and socialist groups. Women within these groups reflected a diversity of perspectives on the issues of gender and class. Some viewed class as the most important defining concept, while others viewed economic and sexual independence for women and for men to be most important.

Anarchist groups attracted many radical women during the period 1870-1920. Anarchist women of the period did not believe in innate intellectual and psychological differences between men and women (Marsh, 1981). These women wanted to participate actively in a male world. Anarchist feminists saw personal independence as the best way for women to become equal to men. This independence was economic, psychological, and sexual. Many saw the institution of marriage as a way for men to exercise rights of property over women. According to Marsh, anarchist women claimed a simpler “polemic” in basing their views on claims for justice in society—women are human beings and as a result deserve equal treatment (see Goldman, 1969). Feminists who drew on traditional roles to support the right for women to vote (as opposed to claiming equality with men) were ultimately more successful in gaining public support.

The increased heterogeneity among women’s involvements in the period following 1920 demonstrates the success of women’s efforts toward creating a more

equal society. Many professional women supported equality of opportunity but did not see themselves as “feminists.” Those who believed that they advanced through their own talents viewed feminism as “a term of opprobrium” (Cott, 1987, p. 276). The challenges of the 1920s found women on opposing sides (prohibition and peace, for example). Women working for peace in the 1920s were seen as unpatriotic by other women’s groups (such as the Daughters of the American Revolution). While many feminists considered women as “as a political class defined by the social construction of gender,” (p. 260), this perspective was largely viewed as un-American and dangerous. Feminists and radicals faced the challenge of articulating a critique of American society in ways that could be heard by mainstream culture.

Women involved in the suffrage movement extended their concern for women’s rights to include opposition to war. The Women’s Peace Party, developed in response to World War I served as “both the suffrage wing of the peace movement and the pacifist wing of the suffrage movement” (Alonso, 1993, p. 56). Women’s rights activists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Jane Addams and Carrie Chapman Catt noted “the connection between women’s oppression with the violence of war” (pp. 60-61). The International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, created by women suffragists from twelve countries, elected Jane Addams as its first president in 1915. Following World War I, international work was continued through the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Other groups such as the Women’s Peace Society, the Women’s Peace Union, and the National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War continued their work in the 1920s. The

Women's Peace Society called for complete disarmament and outlawry of war (Alonso, 1993).

During the Red Scare of the 1920s, most feminist peace activists experienced government opposition and surveillance. Women were labeled Communists because of their anti-war activism. The "spider web chart" created by Lucia Maxwell purported to show connections between peace, labor, and suffrage activists with socialism and communism (Alonso, 1993). Jane Addams was considered to be one of the most dangerous women in the United States because of her work on behalf of peace.

Women in the labor movement were also condemned by dominant American culture as dangerous radicals. This perception carried with it a class-based prejudice as many of the women involved in the labor movement did not come from the middle class. Studies of the labor movement in the United States have contributed new understandings of the importance of women's roles within labor colleges, workers clubs, and union activities during the 19th and 20th centuries (Kornbluh & Frederickson, 1984; O'Farrell & Kornbluh, 1996; Wolensky, 1996; Wolensky, et al, 2002). Murolo (1997) notes the importance of "working girls' clubs" from the end of the nineteenth century through the end of the 1920s. Labor activists and journalists such as Mary "Mother" Jones in the early part of the 20th century, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn in the 1920s focused their efforts toward exposing the abuses of capitalism and shedding light on the struggles of ordinary workers (Jones, 2000; Roberts, 1984). These labor activists, women and men, faced opposition from many

sides in the capitalist economic and political system within the United States in the early twentieth century.

Women on the left sought ways to address their concerns about American society, within radical movements and apart from them. Radical thought during the decade addressed economic considerations as those on the left anticipated the collapse of capitalist America. Liberal progressive reform had been the perspective developed by the previous generation to address the problems of industrialized America. By the end of the 1920s, the approach of technocrats, based on professionalized, scientific problem-solving expertise, did not seem able to address the deep problems experienced by many in urban American society.

Women who had been involved in communist, socialist, and anarchist groups during the 1920s continued their activism in the 1930s. Radical women of the time challenged the hegemonic structures of the capitalistic society in which they lived through writing, organizing, and through public protest. Many women involved in activist causes during the 1920s and 1930s used writing as a way to reach larger audiences with their perspectives. Radical women writers during the period used “fiction, reportage and documentary writing” as a way to address the need for social change (Ware, 1982, p. 155). Such writers include Martha Gelhorn, Agnes Smedley, Josephine Herbst, Mary Heaton Vorse, and Meridel Le Sueur. As did Dorothy Day, many women writers left the bohemian life of writers, poets, and artists in Greenwich Village during the 1920s for political activism in the 1930s.

During the 1930s, the Communist Party had possibly its greatest influence in American life. It was at the heart of most social action during the decade. Many of

those who were involved with the party, but not members, stressed that it was the times and not the party that caused their involvements in radical causes (Ware, 1982). Communist Party members saw some aspects of American life very clearly—black Americans were considered by communists to be a colonized nation within the South (Ware, 1982). The popular front phase of Communist Party activity (1935-1939) allied the party with other organizations, particularly against fascism.

Prominent women in the Communist party included Peggy Dennis, Anna Damon, Margaret Cowl, Anna Burlak, Grace Hutchins, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Ella Reeve (“Mother”) Bloor. While the idea of equality between men and women drew many to involvement with the Communist party, many women activists faced the challenges of being expected to fulfill traditional domestic roles within it (Ware, 1982). Mary Inman addressed this challenge in her book *In Woman's Defense* (1939-40), which analyzed the economics of women's position in society (drawing in part on Gilman's (1998) work). Communist party leaders did not approve of Inman's views (Ware, 1982). While women activists generally supported the social causes espoused by the party during the 1930s, cooperation between feminists in the U.S. and the Communist Party ended with the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939 (Ware, 1982).

Education was central to the work of activists on the left during the period. Lively discussions in places like New York City's Union Square drew large crowds of unemployed workers. Newspapers presented varying perspectives on economics, housing, the proper role for government and big business. Marches, strikes, and debates created an environment rich in opportunities for learning. The Catholic Worker movement developed within this milieu, offering opportunities to serve and

to learn from the perspective of faith. What is unique about the approach of the Catholic Worker movement is the connection between a radical anarchist, pacifist perspective and a vibrant Catholic expression of spirituality. Understanding more about women and learning within this movement adds to our knowledge of the diversity of women's experiences during the period.

Women exercised central roles in the development of reform movements within American society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a result of pivotal involvements in revivals in the early part of the nineteenth century, women developed organizational and leadership roles that served them well as they worked for societal reform. Reform movements such as Abolitionism, temperance, settlement house, anti-lynching, labor, suffrage, and peace were shaped by the energy and leadership of women of many backgrounds. As American society grew increasingly urbanized and industrialized, many women and men turned to progressive reform to meet the growing challenges of contemporary life. Seeking to address public policy at the local, state, and national level, women worked to create a better world. These efforts were largely shaped by a middle-class, professional white perspective which alienated many of those they sought to serve.

Women of the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s worked to ameliorate the injustices of a capitalist society. In addition to their works of mercy for the hungry and homeless, Catholic Workers challenged the government that an earlier generation of women had sought to use as a channel for reform. The radical social movement they joined was Catholic, anarchist, pacifist, and personalist in nature. How did gender play a role within this social movement? Feminist sociologists offer

insights into the role that gender plays within social movements. A review of the literature relating to social movement theory and its critique by feminist sociologists assists our understanding of the gender within the Catholic Worker movement.

Understanding Social Movement Theory

Literature from the field of sociology assists in understanding the gendered nature of all social movements, whether or not gender is a focus of the movement. Traditional approaches to the articulation of social movement theory have been challenged by feminist sociologists through an examination of the role of gender in social movements. Traditional approaches to understanding social movements have proceeded from a “gender-neutral” perspective (Taylor & Whittier, 1998, p. 623). This review will provide an introduction to social movement theory, followed by a summary of feminist critiques of social movement theory literature.

Social Movement Theory

Before examining the feminist critique of social movement theory, it is important to review conceptualizations of the nature of social movements. A social movement may be described as a “formally organized group that acts consciously and with some continuity to promote or resist change through collective action” (Goldberg, 1991, p.2). Garner (1996) focuses on the alternative view of society found in most social movements. This perspective is framed by certain assumptions about a particular view of the possible future, and the group of people who are most likely to bring about changes to make that possible. The discourse of social movements often creates a bridge between personal experiences of oppression and “structural explanations of inequality” (Brush, 1999, p. 123).

A review of the theories developed to understand social movements provides insight into the historical development of this area within sociology. Sociologists have developed a variety of theories for understanding social movements. One perspective is offered by Garner (1996), who divides the theories into several areas: macrohistorical and sociohistorical, collective behavior, midrange, cultural and discourse, and postmodern theories. Macrohistorical and sociohistorical theories include Marxist and mass/modern society theories, which focus on economic structures or the complexity of modern mass society. Collective behavior theories investigate what might be considered “fads” or “mob action” (Garner, 1996, pp. 54-55). Developed in the 1950s during the beginnings of the Cold War, sociologists using this perspective viewed the passion of activists involved in social movements as anomalous to societal norms for collective behavior. This perspective dismissed group action as a passing fad if it articulated a view that was perceived to be contrary to existing societal values. Rationality was a common evaluative tool for collective behavior theory as well as for the resource mobilization approach that followed (Ferree & Merrill, 2000).

Midrange theories, which may be most frequently utilized to analyze why movements occur at particular points in time, include structural strain, resource mobilization, political opportunity, and conjunctural theories (Garner, 1996). Structural strain theories focus on societal disruption during times in which challenges to the status quo take place, examining the structures that contribute to this change dynamic. A structural examination of the social disruption during the Great

Depression of the 1930s could investigate the political, economic and social structures that contributed to social movement development.

Resource mobilization (or collective action) theories developed within the context of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Zald, 1992), and are concerned with the ways in which groups of people make use of resources to achieve social change. This perspective gives primacy to the creation of social change through the existing political process, and the ability of a particular social movement to achieve its goals through legislation.

Conjunctural theories examine the historical moments within specific contexts that cause social movements to arise, such as the hunger marches that developed during the Great Depression (Garner, 1996). Both resource mobilization and political opportunity perspectives developed in the United States at about the same time new social movement theory developed in Europe (Ferree & Whittier, 2000).

In attempting to understand the Catholic Worker as a social movement, Aronica (1987) makes use of both conjunctural and collective action theories. Aronica notes that the Great Depression created an environment of social change in which challenge of the social order was possible through nonconformist action. When groups of individuals join together to address society's failure to provide for basic needs of its members, a common ideology assists in the development of a movement. Aronica describes the Catholic Worker as a "utopian service commune" (p. 8). The Catholic Worker continued as a viable movement throughout the twentieth century, according to Aronica, because of its commitment to anarchistic organization, ideals of agrarianism, service to the poor, and the charismatic leadership of its founders. Day

and Maurin provided a “unified leadership by creating parental roles for themselves which resolved the tensions between the social conventions of the 1930s and their ideological stance of anarchy” (p. 6).

Cultural and discourse theorizing laid the groundwork for what has become known as new social movement theory. Influenced in part by the earlier work of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971) and French postmodernist philosopher Michel Foucault (1971), this perspective examines social hegemony and power through societal structures and language. Drawing from postmodern and post-structural understandings of modern society, research has focused on social movements that are nonhierarchical, nonbureaucratic, de-centralized, and engaged in local action in such areas as peace, environmentalism, and animal rights (Finger, 1989; Kriesi, 1999).

Calhoun (1995, cited in Ferree & Merrill, 2000) challenges the idea that new social movements are in any sense really “new” (p. 458). Calhoun’s view is that the nonbureaucratic nature of these movements, together with the “stress on collective identity and group solidarity, is an ahistorical version of newness” (Ferree & Merrill, p. 458). Movements of the nineteenth century demonstrate some of the same types of features as those considered “new” social movements at the turn of the twenty-first century. When rational, class-based interpretations are placed on the movements of the nineteenth century, they contrast vividly with a gendered approach that may be applied to the development of new social movements. Calhoun argues that the differing interpretive lens may create a sense of “newness” when there are many

things in common with social movements of other centuries (Calhoun, 1995, cited in Ferree & Merrill, 2000).

Theorists of social movements exploring the role of beliefs and emotions within the culture of social movements make use of both “collective action frames” and “collective identities” (Taylor, 1999, p. 10). Believing that political opportunity structures and resource mobilization theories do not offer a complete accounting for actions taken within social movements, the articulation of framing processes allows for a more complex understanding, one in which beliefs and ideas can be considered (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1999). The authors continue:

Mediating between opportunity, organization, and action are the shared meanings and definitions that people bring to their situation. At a minimum, people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem. Lacking either one or both of these perceptions, it is highly unlikely that people will mobilize even when afforded the opportunity to do so. Conditioning the presence or absence of these perceptions is that complex of social psychological dynamics—collective attribution, social construction...referred to as framing processes. (p. 5)

In articulating this perspective, Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford (1986) identify four frame alignment processes common within social movement participation: “frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation” (p. 464). While framing theories allow for the role of emotion and belief in understanding participation in social movements, most theorists proceed

from what they presume to be a gender-neutral perspective. However, gender theorists have “suggested that language often carries masculinist assumptions and normative judgments that pass as neutral concepts” (Ferree & Merrill, 2000, p. 454). Because of these “masculinist assumptions,” even while attending to emotion and belief, scholars can miss concepts most important to women within a particular movement. Turning to the feminist critique of recent social movement theory provides a deeper understanding of the situated-ness of social movement participants.

Gender and Social Movements

While there is no single feminist perspective (Jaggar, 1983), traditional approaches to social movement theory have been challenged for assuming a gender-neutral stance in understanding participation in social movements. Kuumba (2001) articulates the importance of examining gender in relation to social movement participation. Kuumba refers to gender as a “social construction—the differentiation and institutionalization of the expected characteristics, norms, and behaviors associated with being female or male in any specific social context” (p. 9). The hierarchy of a particular social setting and the institutions of that setting are understood through gendered lenses. Kuumba considers the social category of gender as a “contested terrain... between essentialist and social constructionist conceptions” (p. 9).

Essentialist ideas of gender presume that women and men have natural and pre-determined essential qualities. Men and women are characterized by reified, dichotomous conceptions of masculinity and femininity (Kuumba, 2001). Characteristics of men in this view include strength, rationality, and autonomy while

women manifest characteristics of weakness, emotionality, and dependence.

Constructionist perspectives on gender presuppose that gender is a complex construct that differs from one culture to another, and that multiple levels of meanings of gender can operate simultaneously within the same culture. Socially constructed conceptions of gender assist in the process of understanding gender in social movements at a deeper level.

Some sociologists see gender as a process that deepens understanding of “patterns and relationships [that] are continually constructed and reconstructed through human interaction” (Kuumba, 2001, p. 11). Gender, in this view, is not only a descriptive social category, but also a lens through which to understand social structures. Theorists who work toward articulating the experiences of those who are considered to be “other” in terms of both gender and race, demonstrate the complex, layered experiences of those who suffer oppression from the dominant culture (Brush, 1999; Collins, 2000).

Feminist scholars carrying out research in social movements initially focused on a compensatory approach. Women needed to be written back into the accounts of social movements. Recent scholarship has moved beyond this approach to consider ways that all social movements are “gendered processes” (Kuumba, 2001, p. 13). The dichotomous approaches of social movement theorists ignore the complexities of the experiences of social movement participants. Feminist sociologists argue that this approach sets one component in opposition to another, “the distinction between expressive and instrumental politics, identity and strategic activism, cultural and structural change, and rational and emotional action” (Taylor & Whittier, 1999).

New social movement and collective identity theories have presented a welcome challenge to the rationally oriented resource mobilization and political process theories. Still, theorists coming from a feminist perspective call for the development of a “more nuanced set of constructs” that will provide a greater depth of understanding of the social movement experience (Taylor & Whittier, 1999, p. 5). This perspective explores how movements are influenced by cultural as well as political and economic considerations, informal as well as formal organizational structures, and emotional, intuitive approaches as well as rationally based action (Taylor, 1999). Pushing the question of gender in social movements to a new level is the call to explore not only how gender is acted upon within social movements but also how social movements construct gender (Taylor, 1999).

Ferree and Merrill (2000) address the challenge of applying framing theories to social movements because of the rational orientation of the typical framing analysis, and call for a change in the way that social movement theorists do research. The authors state that “emotions are intimately connected with both the values and ideas of movement actors...the separation of cognition and emotion is related to the separation of objectivity and values, itself part of ‘value-neutrality’ in science”(p. 457). Ferree and Merrill call researchers to a greater self-reflexivity in relation to their own values, stating that “such a consciously self-reflexive theory of social movements would connect motivation with values, emotions, and frames as well as acknowledge the ties between activists and academicians in all of these dimensions” (p. 459).

Einwohner, Hollander and Olson (2000) suggest “that gender plays a...fundamental role in movements, even when a movement does not primarily attract members of one sex or address gender issues explicitly” and consider ways that gender shapes “social movement tactics, identities of movement activists, and the attributions made by those outside the movement” (p. 6). For the authors, social movements manifest gendered meanings at all of the levels of participants’ experiences within them—personally, in relationships with others, and in movement structures. Because gender is a social construction, different meanings can be found within different cultures.

Gender within social movements is demonstrated in a variety of ways—through the gender of the participants, movement goals, methods used to work for change, collective identity of movement members, and perceptions of broader society in relation to the movement (Einwohner, Hollander & Olson, 2000). Social movement participants often frame protest around issues of gender in order to achieve certain goals. These specific gender associations become attached to movements by movement participants and by the broader culture. Movement participants can experience a gendered “double bind” through societal gender expectations that initially work in a movement’s favor, and later cause difficulty when participants try to work through the political process (Einwohner, Hollander & Olson, 2000).

In studies of activist women in an urban squatter settlement in Brazil, Neuhausser (1995, 1998) found that the areas in which women naturally worked became the basis for an informal network of social change. Neuhausser (1998) asserts that the role of gender in social movements “cannot be understood as either a

structural location defining interests and access to resources or cultural norms defining appropriate behavior for women and men” (p. 351). Instead, “gendered collective action” arises from the interaction between cultural context and structural location (p. 351). This interaction creates the environment in which certain gendered identities arise. In Neuhouser’s study, activist women in Caranguejo mobilized in order to protect their identities as mothers by building houses on public lands to provide for their families.

Attending to the every day choices to resist authority structures provides insights into understated but powerful aspects of social movement action (Kuumba, 2001). These resistance strategies include “work slow-downs and noncompliance...stealing and sabotage” (p. 107). Kummba continues:

Because of the gendered divisions in many societies and movements, some of the resistance strategies engaged in by women as an outgrowth of their productive and reproductive labor are the very ones that are submerged and hidden. The vital contribution of these less visible strategies to revolutionary and resistance movements is not always obvious, and consequently, [has] been often neglected and devalued. (Kuumba, 2001, p. 107)

Feminist critiques of social movement theory have moved from a focus on the exclusion of women’s experiences to demonstrations of the gendered nature of all social movements. Socially constructed meanings for gender are present for movement participants throughout their experience from personal to interpersonal to structural levels. Societal expectations of gender can assign particular meanings to certain social movements that may foster success or create challenges for

accomplishing movement goals. Women often become involved in resistance or social protest as a result of not being able to fulfill gender roles.

The feminist critique of social movement theory generally does not include aspects of spirituality as a motivating force for social movement participation, nor does it attend to issues of learning within social movements. Literature within the field of adult education supplies what is missing in other bodies of literature: attention to learning. The following section reviews literature within the field of adult education relating to historiography, learning in social movements, and emancipatory spirituality.

Adult Education

Three areas of literature within the field of adult education provide useful background for this study of women's learning in the Catholic Worker movement: historiography, learning in social movements, and emancipatory spirituality. An examination of this literature demonstrates the need for further investigations into the nature of learning for women within historic faith-based social movements.

Historiography

Before reviewing the historiography of the field of adult education, it is important to consider why the study of history matters. Welton's (1993b) basic assumption about the need for historical perspective is that "without historical understanding we will not be able to penetrate to the heart of our society's central problems and contradictions; indeed, there is every likelihood we will be swallowed up in the oppressive ideologies and spiritless technics of our time" (p. 143). A more

complete picture of the past allows for a deeper understanding of the present and a more informed perspective of the future.

This more complete picture of the past is not possible without examining the worlds within which women have lived and learned. It is not possible without attending to issues of power and oppression within capitalist societies (Cunningham, 2000; Welton, 1993b). Critical perspectives which challenge the traditional approaches to history consider the following questions: a) who decides what knowledge is (Cunningham, 2000)? b) whose stories are told (Welton, 1993b) and how does experience play a role in constructing the knowledge? c) does the history account for differences in gender, race, and class? Does the history challenge the status quo? d) does the history account for situatedness/context of the learning experiences (Schied, 1995a)? What types of contexts are valued and are learning environments outside institutional settings presented? These questions assist in understanding current weaknesses and strengths in the historiography of the field of adult education, beginning with works which provide overviews of adult education history and moving on to works that expand the boundaries of adult education historiography.

Works which provide historical overviews of adult education in the U.S. include Grattan's (1955) *In quest of knowledge*, Knowles' (1983) *A history of the adult education movement in the United States*, Cremin's (1988) *American education: The metropolitan experience*, Stubblefield's (1988) *Towards a history of adult education in America*, Stubblefield and Keane's (1994) *Adult Education in the American experience*, and Kett's (1994) *The pursuit of knowledge under difficulties*.

A comparative text for Great Britain is J. F. C. Harrison's (1961) *Learning and living 1790-1960*.

The historical overviews provided by Knowles (1983), Stubblefield and Keane (1994), and Kett (1994) do not effectively address gender, race, and class differences in adult learning experiences or adult education situated within a social context. Kett, Knowles, and Stubblefield and Keane center the experiences of dominant culture. Cremin (1988) and Grattan (1955) represent writers who attend more to those on the margins of society.

Following the pattern established with early handbooks of the field (for example, Rowden, 1934, 1936; Ely, 1948), Knowles (1983) recites the types of activities taking place in institutions and organizations charged with delivering adult education to their clientele. Similarly, Stubblefield and Keane (1994), chronicle well-known adult education efforts through lyceums, the Chatauqua movement, and university extension courses. Stubblefield and Keane devote separate chapters to education and labor, education for women, and education for minorities but these topics are covered superficially, with little space devoted to examination of cultural and social context, or class issues (Rose, 1995).

Kett's (1994) goal is to better understand self-education in antebellum America. Kett states that while the founders of the field of adult education were indebted to the belief in self-improvement throughout American history, by 1960, the field of adult education had only "attained a secure but marginal niche in American education" (xviii). While stating his desire to focus on the self-improvement tradition in American history, Kett (1994) merely chronicles adult education activities within

institutions and organizations. Writing from the perspective of the dominant culture, Kett neglects areas of adult education related to class struggle, immigrant communities, the Civil Rights movement, the women's movement, and gay rights (Schied, 1995b).

Compared to other standard adult education texts, Cremin (1988) and Grattan (1955) provide educational histories that are situated in specific contexts, paying attention to particular groups of people generally outside the margins of standard adult education texts. Cremin's (1988) multivolume work covers the American educational experience in much more detail than any of the other works. Welton (1993b) views Cremin's work as extending the boundaries of educational history in important ways. Cremin succeeds in moving the realm of education away from formal institutions of learning to include learning in the home, in church, at work, through organizations formed to share knowledge, and institutions such as prisons and mental asylums.

Attention to learning outside formal educational institutions is an important contribution made by Grattan (1955). Grattan articulates an underlying theme—adult education as a means for human beings to develop themselves more fully (p.11). Grattan begins his history with preliterate humans, briefly describes the perspective of the Greeks and Romans on the educated adult, touches on adult education in medieval and early modern times and then devotes the rest of the book to British and American adult education ventures. One of the significant contributions Grattan makes is a discussion of the education for working people in England. The Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (parodied at the time by the people it was established to

educate, Johnson, 1988), as well as early mechanics institutes were efforts to educate the working class based on needs perceived by those in the middle classes. Those educational initiatives pursued by working class people for themselves included trade-union and temperance organizations, and political clubs (Grattan, 1955, p. 90). Both Grattan and Cremin (1988) attended to the situated-ness of educational efforts within adult education history, but were not as successful in enhancing understanding of women's efforts within adult education.

In reflecting upon adult education histories, Welton (1993b) seeks to determine how the field decides what is included within its boundaries. In a critique of Knowles' (1983) history as well as Houle's 1992 work, *The literature of adult education: A bibliographic essay*, Welton describes the effects of looking at the past with a romantic view. Welton asserts that Knowles and Houle miss much of the richness of adult education's past by focusing primarily at the increasing professionalization of the field over time. Welton's (1993b) critique includes Stubblefield's 1988 work as continuing the focus on intellectual history, while neglecting the entire area of learning within social movements.

Schied (1995a, 1995b) charges that adult education histories typically remove education from its social and cultural contexts. Comparing histories done in the U. S. with those in Great Britain (Harrison, 1961), Schied stresses the need to include investigations into working-class culture. While many studies of workers' education have been written, most represent a narrow perspective and are focused on institutional and organizational efforts. In England, the rich history of workers' education has always been incorporated into understanding adult education history.

Comparatively, histories of adult education in the U.S. tend to focus on the creation of the AAAE and the professional organizations that came after it. This narrow focus has perpetuated a narrowly drawn boundary for the history of adult education and has neglected an integral part of adult education history in this country.

Addressing the need to examine the informal nature of learning within working-class education, Schied (1995a) draws on Johnson's (1988) understanding of radical education in the nineteenth century. Radical educators critiqued formal education offered at the time, developed alternative (utopian) content, teaching strategies, and goals for education, tied education to politics and social change, and created multiple approaches in educational practices that met their own needs for learning. Radical educational approaches were not separated from every day life. Instead of taking place within formal organizational structures, learning happened "within the framework of cultural activities, events and non-educational institutions....in the various types of workers' clubs, reading rooms, discussion and debate societies, and through the reading of radical newspapers available in saloons, and through attending lectures provided by the numerous associations and organizations of the community" (Schied, 1995a, pp. 179-180).

Schied (1995a) presents a powerful challenge to those who write histories of adult education to attend to context, and yet does not address the issue of gender. In order to understand the rich diversity of adult education history, it is important to attend to women who have steadily worked to expand the boundaries of what is considered adult education.

Welton (1993b) also calls for additional work that extends the boundaries of the history of adult education. This can be accomplished in part by the recognizing that social movements are locations for learning, and that drawing boundaries around the field of adult education to exclude those involved in emancipatory education “is in itself an ideological act, pointing to the arbitrary nature of constructing adult education history as the history of precursors to the current modern practice of adult education” (p. 141).

For Welton (1993b), historians need to enter “into a conversation with the past in order to illuminate the multiple meanings and possibilities of the present in dialogue with others who may be telling different stories” (p. 143). By examining learning within social movements, Welton wants to create a “critical liberatory approach” to adult education history (p. 143).

A growing body of literature addresses this critique of adult education history by expanding its boundaries. This research includes works on the Antigonish Movement (Alexander, 1997, Welton, 2001b), Highlander Folk School (Glen, 1996; Adams, 1992, 1998), labor colleges (Altenbaugh, 1990), nineteenth century German immigrant culture (Schied, 1995a), the Harlem renaissance (Guy, 1996), the civil rights movement (Rachal, 1998), women workers (Heller, 1984; Kornbluh & Frederickson, 1984; O’Farrell & Kornbluh, 1996; Wolensky, 1996; Wolensky, Wolensky, & Wolensky, 2002), and the feminist movement (Hart, 1990; Thompson, 1988; Westwood, 1988).

Welton’s (2001b) biography of Catholic priest Moses Michael Coady presents an extension of the boundaries of adult education history that has commonalities with

the development of the Catholic Worker movement during the same period. Coady was instrumental in the development of the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia. His radical perspective created an adult education movement focused on reorganizing the economic order, while developing a worldview that was neither fascist nor communist.

During the Depression, Coady encouraged the organization of adult schools and cooperatives to give the people of Nova Scotia power over their economic futures. A continuing challenge to the established economic order, Coady's approach to adult education offers an alternative view. Welton (2001b) states that "Coady never let his beloved Nova Scotians and Maritimers forget: the world as it is, is not the way it has to be" (p. 264). This perspective parallels the idea within the Catholic Worker movement to create an alternative social order in which it is easier for humans to be good.

Sheared and Sissel (2001) have drawn together research studies which "revisit and reclaim" the history of the field, including the development of African-American adult education in the rural south (Chapman, 2001), and the nature of learning for African-American women (Smith, 2001), White women (Hugo, 2001) and workers (Schied, 2001).

Additional research into adult education in African-American communities includes the work of Guy, (1996), McGee (1971, 1984, 1985), Neufeldt and McGee (1990) and Peterson (1996). Guy (1996) examines the work of Alain Locke with the American Association of Adult Education and its impact on adult education for African-Americans. In addition to an extensive bibliography chronicling the history

of African American adult education, McGee (1971, 1984, 1985) has explored adult education from the time of slavery through the efforts of Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. With Neufeldt, McGee (1990) offers an historical overview of adult education for African-Americans. Peterson's (1986) research into the efforts of African American women educators provides insights into the contributions of women in the United States in the 19th century.

What can we learn from the struggles against dominant cultural values, particularly from women located in other times and social contexts? Women who have challenged the dominant culture give us glimpses of alternative ways to live. Women of the Catholic Worker movement challenged roles for men and women in society, questioned capitalist assumptions about the pursuit of unlimited economic personal accumulation, and pursued new perspectives on the role of individuals, families, the church, and government in meeting the needs of those who are oppressed. Without more research into women's involvements in particular movements and contexts, students of adult education history will be limited in understanding the role that women activists have played in challenging dominant cultural values and pursuing alternative ways of living out what they believed.

Women in Adult Education History

Women's involvements in adult education history have long been overlooked. As in other fields, feminist historians have challenged the focus, techniques, and interpretations found in traditional approaches to historical research. Authors who have examined the exclusion of women from adult education histories include Hugo (1990) and Thompson, (1996, 1997). Studies focusing on the learning experiences of

women in specific historical contexts range from research into African American women before and after they were brought to America as slaves, to White women's clubs begun in the late 19th century, as well as the labor, civil rights and feminist movements. Following the historiographic critique by Hugo and Thompson, this review will examine studies by Smith (2001), Hugo (2001), Kornbluh and Frederickson (1984), Heller (1984), Easter (1996), Hart (1990) and Thompson (1995).

Hugo (1990) challenged the prevailing perspective of adult education history by calling for a more inclusive history of the field, one in which women were not marginalized. According to Hugo (2001), "published adult education histories were typically of little help in illuminating women's learning spaces or leadership" (p. 89). In her earlier work, Hugo (1990) examined the standard texts of adult education history up to 1990 and discovered that the "scope and depth of women's intellectual contributions and their loci of perceived activity became less visible as the histories became more modern" (p. 3). Women, who were once active participants in the creation of many adult education endeavors, became footnotes in historical works covering the period.

Hugo (1990) posits several causes for this marginalization. One cause was the drive for professionalization of adult education, particularly the desire to create a parallel institution for adults nationwide, an additional tier of education beyond that available for children. Additionally, men held the power within the profession and their "circles" of power did not include women. Finally, clues to the marginalization of women in written histories of the field can be found in the data sources used to

create these histories. Definitions of what could be considered adult education kept historians from investigating sources outside institutional records and past histories. Hugo calls for both compensatory and critical research that will address gender, in order to create a more complete picture of the history of adult education.

Thompson's (1996, 1997) research on the historical and linguistic analysis of women as represented in histories and the early literature of the field addresses three areas: "women's relationship to the field and the larger social context, the fields' relationship to the social context in which it developed, and the ways in which this relationship was both reflected in and structured by the literature of the field" (p. 6). Thompson's approach uses historical and critical linguistic analysis to come to a better understanding these issues.

According to Thompson (1996), both social and textual sources demonstrate the early inclusion of women as leaders within the field. This early recognition of women changed over time to reflect "attitudes toward women prevalent in American society" (p. iv). Thompson critiques current attempts to correct this marginal representation as "one-dimensional interpretations based on issues of power and control" (p. iv). She challenges historians to carry out careful and "respectful" research that allows for multiple interpretations of the past (p. 172).

Additional interpretations of the past are essential, precisely because the predominant story of the past for the field of adult education has reflected the dominant culture and its values. For a more complete understanding of the field, it is important to explore the stories of women who have offered a critique of the status

quo and have learned with others in their communities as they worked for social change.

Smith (2001) examines women as entrepreneurs in Africa as well as their experiences after being brought to the Americas as slaves. African women acted as independent and successful sales agents in the marketplace, creating “craft guilds and kinship-based mutual aid societies which served as the predecessors of both formal and informal support networks that have always existed in the Black community” (p. 77). Within early American society, African women continued to use their skills in areas such as “child care, midwifery, textiles, weaving, dyeing, quilt-making, basketry, pottery-making, and pharmacopeia” (p. 77), and to develop relationships of support.

Smith (2001) calls for an examination of language and experience within its historical context through the practice of Sankofa, the African principle of “the wisdom of learning from the past” (p. 85). Learning from those who were considered invisible and who lived on the margins offer the path to “greater self-knowledge, greater awareness of others, and a kind of comfort from life at the edge” (Daloz, 1996, p. 76, cited in Smith, p. 84).

Hugo’s (2001) study of the development of White women’s study groups over a one hundred year period (1885-1985) demonstrates the primacy of relationships and the ways in which knowledge was constructed to preserve those relationships. Desiring intellectual and social development, White middle-class women created the study group Coterie outside Syracuse, New York, in 1885. According to Hugo, the members socially constructed their own conceptualization of womanhood within this “nonformal learning space” (p. 104-5). As a way to counteract experiences of male-

dominated higher education in the period between the Civil War and the turn of the twentieth century, women within this group created a place to learn that nurtured the need for intimacy as well as the need for intellectual growth.

Kornbluh and Frederickson (1984) explode the myth that women became invisible after suffrage was won. Through a collection of studies that examine women's involvements in various aspects of the labor movement, the editors present stories of activist women from 1914 through 1984, focusing on the Women's Trade Union League School for Women Organizers, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, industrial programs of the UWCA, Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers, Southern Summer School for Women Workers, Affiliated Schools for Women Workers, Summer School for Office Workers, and New Deal camps for women.

After winning the right to vote, women continued to work for social change in a variety of ways. Within the labor movement, women worked together across class lines for better hours, pay, workplace conditions, and education for union organizing. Heller (1984) describes M. Carey Thomas' and Hilda Worthington Smith's efforts to create a unique opportunity at Bryn Mawr College for working women to learn. By establishing the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in 1921, these educators built a school based on the Jeffersonian ideal that a "vital democracy requires an educated electorate" (p. 115).

Thomas and Smith wanted to build a:

community of industrial women, representing a cross-section of occupations, regions, religions, and races, with a balance maintained between union and

non-unionized workers. The school welcomed as applicants women who had an elementary school education and two years of industrial experience...In selecting applicants, the school sought evidence of maturity, leadership, intellectual curiosity, and an awareness of economic problems. (Heller, 1984, p. 115)

Eight-week sessions at the summer school focused on courses in English and economics, as well as science and the arts. Women lived together at the college, learning with others from different regions, religions, races, and work experiences. Closed down in 1938 by controversy over faculty members' support of striking workers in New Jersey, the Bryn Mawr Summer School contributed significantly to the lives of the women involved, both workers and faculty.

Easter (1996) examines the life and work of African American educator Septima Clark. As director of education at Highlander Folk School, and for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Septima Clark was integrally involved in educating for social change. Clark was a public school teacher for forty years before becoming a workshop director at Highlander (Easter, pl 109). The citizenship schools begun by Clark became the model for educational efforts of the Civil Rights Movement. Clark encouraged literacy teacher Bernice Robinson in her development of student-centered curriculum for Johns Island, South Carolina. Adult learners at the citizenship schools wanted to learn to read so that they could register to vote. The process of registration for African Americans required in-depth knowledge of the South Carolina constitution.

Easter (1996) describes the methods Robinson used to teach people to read:

She provided reading material relevant to their needs. She developed vocabulary and spelling lists from words they needed to know from the South Carolina constitution and their everyday lives...She asked them to tell stories about their work in the field and their homes. Then she put their stories on paper and told the students 'This is your story. We're going to learn how to read your story.' (Oldendorf, cited in Easter, 1996, p. 118)

Clark and Robinson combined their efforts in publishing a workbook for students based on Robinson's methods. Clark's efforts to educate continued with her work for the SCLC, where she provided workshops throughout the south on the nature of the political process, and the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of color.

Hart (1990) articulates the emancipatory learning that took place for many women who participated in consciousness raising groups during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Hart (1990) describes five principles of consciousness raising groups:

1. acknowledgement of oppression
2. importance of personal experience
3. homogeneity of the learning group
4. equality
5. gaining and sustaining theoretical distance (pp. 59-65)

Hart's (1990) review of the development of consciousness-raising among women's groups during the 1960s and 1970s articulates what were essential elements for the development of the feminist movement. Groups of women meeting together acknowledged the oppression they experienced, drew from personal experience,

supported other women who were similar in terms of race and class, and practiced equality within groups. Hart states that while questions based in individual experience often initiate the development of the group, without understanding of the larger scope of the society, the group can become mired in personal experience and never develop the theoretical distance necessary to address the need for broader societal change.

Thompson (1995) is another author whose work examines the women's movement. Thompson summarizes the effects of the feminist movement on adult education in Great Britain. Thompson asserts that the contributions of women "to adult and continuing education has been of tremendous importance in the recognition and creation of what counts as 'really useful knowledge'" (p. 124). These contributions include the centering of women's personal experiences, working collaboratively for change, "the deconstruction of traditional forms of authority and wisdom," and the dynamic and evolving relationship between practice and theory (p. 127).

These examples of the rich history of women's learning experiences demonstrate differences in research focus, techniques, and interpretation in comparison to traditional historical approaches. Research centered on the everyday experiences of women, such as those involved in the development of businesses, the civil rights and feminist movements, and the creation of alternative locations for learning, takes the focus away from the wealthy and powerful individuals whose lives are most often chronicled. These studies demonstrate the informal networks and connections central to many women's lives and the primacy of relationships in the development of "really useful knowledge." Knowledge is often based on personal

experience, and develops as a result of resistance to traditional forms of learning. Similarly, learning within social movements is often based on resistance to the status quo. The following section reviews the adult education literature which focuses on learning in social movements.

Learning in Social Movements

Learning within social movements takes place in a variety of ways, some of it more formally in related institutional settings, such as in the labor colleges (Altenbaugh, 1990), or at Highlander Folk School (Adams, 1992, 1998; Glen, 1996) and some of it more informally and incidentally, through the struggle against the dominant culture (Foley, 1999, 2001a, 2001b). Adult education literature about informal and incidental learning has generally not focused on learning in social movements, but on informal learning in the context of the workplace (Marsick, 1987; Marsick & Watkins, 1990, 1997, 2001). This review of literature focused on learning in social movements includes the works of Finger (1989), Welton (1993a), Spencer (1995), Kilgore (1999), Rachal (1998), and Foley (1999, 2001a).

Finger (1989) contrasts the types of education carried out in old and new social movements (NSMs). According to Finger, old social movements focused on goals situated within a modernist paradigm, one in which society can be transformed through the political process. Finger asserts that NSMs come from the standpoint that society can only be transformed through the personal transformations of individuals. As a result, education efforts within NSMs focus on informal, local, community-based initiatives, rather than structured curricula. Finger encourages approaches that

focus on experiential learning, with care given to identity development, in order to encourage emancipatory or transformative learning.

Welton (1993a) takes an alternate view. His perspective is that new social movements are not essentially individualistic, but address the dominant culture selectively. Specific targets of protest (such as the School of the Americas) bring together radical activists from a diverse assortment of groups. Welton's critique of late capitalism calls for attention to the areas that NSMs claim to address: human relationship with the earth, responsibility to society, democracy at the grassroots level, and nonviolence (pp. 160-163). Welton calls for collaborative action in addition to personal transformation.

Spencer (1995) examines an NSM agenda (environmentalism) operating within an old social movement (organized labor). Spencer contends that informal learning takes place in a variety of ways within unions, but limits his discussion to non-formal educational examples (union sponsored classes on the environment). Spencer concludes that the informal learning that takes place within unions is not very different from that which goes on in NSMs, and offers a class-based critique. Because of the middle-class nature of NSMs, Spencer warns of the dangers of privileging NSMs over old social movements, and calls for joint efforts toward social change. If adult educators focus only on NSMs, Spencer contends that a middle-class bias will continue in the literature relating to learning in social movements.

Kilgore (1999) asserts the importance of developing a theory of collective learning (or group learning) within social movements. Kilgore conceptualizes the ways that groups learn while engaged in conflict. Individuals may experience a

change in consciousness, increased sense of personal agency, “sense of worthiness and sense of connectedness” (p. 191). Groups may experience the development of a group identity and consciousness, a new sense of “solidarity” and change in organizational meaning (p. 199). Kilgore contends that the development of group identity, separate from the individual participant’s construction of identity, is most important to understanding the learning that takes place within a social movement. For Kilgore, the most important aspects of learning within social movements can be found by focusing on a particular movement’s “vision for social justice” and articulation of “the means to achieve it” (p. 200).

Rachal (1998) describes the centrality of adult education within the Civil Rights movement. Rachal compares the adult education offered through the Mississippi Freedom Summer project of 1964 to Freire’s literacy work in Brazil. Both initiatives were perceived as threats to those in power because they placed the power to learn and the subject matter to be learned in the hands of the learner.

Rachal (1998) describes the educational program of the Council of Federated Organization (COFO) as intended to be “nothing less than the subversion of the political and social structure of Mississippi life. It aimed at making full citizenship meaningful through the political and educational enfranchisement of the state’s second class citizens” (p. 171). In addition to the formal curricula of citizenship schools and community center initiatives, Rachal notes the importance of a “de facto countercurriculum, a liberating or critical education to challenge the domesticating or banking education. Its purpose was to subvert the prevailing complacency and belief

structure—in this case, that African Americans did not belong in the political process” (p. 191).

Foley (1999) contributes a useful framework that can be used to understand the informal education that takes place within social movements. Foley looks at the forms that learning takes, the “political and economic context” and how these interact with the learning opportunities, the “micropolitics of the situation,” the “ideological and discursive practices and struggles of social movement actors and their opponents,” and the impact of all of this on adult education (p.10). Foley (1999) examines the learning processes in an environmental campaign in the Terania Creek basin in Australia, suburban Neighborhood Houses in Higby and Sage, Australia, Brazilian women’s organizations and political consciousness raising movement in Zimbabwe. Most helpful for this examination is the study of women’s learning in Neighborhood Houses.

Foley (1999) draws on Hart’s (1990) insights into women’s emancipatory learning in the feminist movement. Foley makes use of Hart’s theoretical framework to analyze women’s learning within neighborhood houses in Australia, focusing on her conceptualization of the “content (analysis of women’s oppression), process (based on equality and reciprocity), and epistemology (starting from women’s subjective experience)” and how these aspects “interweave and mutually determine one another” (Foley, p. 49).

While Hart’s (1990) work centers on women in a social movement that had gender as its central focus, Foley (1999) contends that Hart’s approach can be applied to community groups whose actions create an environment for critical and

emancipatory learning. Neighborhood houses were established in suburban Higby and Sage to offer playgroups and places for women to gather. The women who were involved in the houses expressed the dynamic that their identity was both affirmed and constrained within the houses. Struggles within the houses contributed to critical reflection on gender role assumptions. The houses became “sites of learning” as well as places to develop and nurture relationships (Foley, p. 63).

Foley (2001a) provides further insight into examining the learning environment within social movements, specifically through contexts of daily life and struggle. According to Foley, researchers need to examine: a) “the extent to which everyday experiential learning is implicit and embedded in other activities, and the extent to which is it, or can be, deliberately fostered;” [and] b) “the extent to which everyday experiential learning reproduces relations of exploitation and oppression, and to the extent to which it does, or can, resist or help transcend such relations” (p. 85).

Foley (2001b) also suggests “reading in” a learning focus to better understand learning in social movements. Using June Nash’s “historical ethnography” of Pittsfield, Massachusetts (Nash, 1989, cited in Foley, 2001b, p. 78), Foley seeks to understand the tacit and implicit learning that took place in everyday activities and chronicles the steady loss of worker control over the work environment from the 1930s until the present. He calls for adult educators to listen to the voices of the workers and to build curricula for learning around current experiences within the workplace.

Social movements are rich locations for research about adult learning. Adults' involvements within social movements demonstrate values and belief systems that challenge the status quo of the larger society of which they are a part. These dynamic, multifaceted and often conflicted locations for learning contrast with the formal, professionalized approach of much of contemporary adult education. Important aspects of the complexity of social movements as learning environments include issues of gender, race, class, and faith perspective. However, the literature about learning in social movements within the field of adult education has often ignored these issues when they are not the central focus of a particular movement.

While gender is not the primary lens through which learning in social movements has been viewed, contributions by Hart (1990) and Foley (1999, 2001a) demonstrate that considerations of gender offer greater insight into the learning experiences of social movement participants. Understanding the context is equally essential to any study of learning within a social movement, either historic or contemporary. By attending to the complexities of the context, particularly related to issues of gender and spirituality, it is possible to gain a sense of the rich environment in which the women of the Catholic Worker movement learned. A review of literature focused on emancipatory spirituality follows.

Emancipatory Spirituality

The Catholic Worker movement grew out of the deep faith perspectives of its founders, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. Like other emancipatory educators, Day and Maurin grounded their passion for social justice in a radical interpretation of the life and teaching of Jesus. Recent literature within adult education has focused on the

need for more research into the ways in which spirituality and emancipatory education are connected. Before reviewing relevant literature in this area, it is important to define spirituality and emancipatory education.

Zinn (1997) offers several definitions of spirituality: “(n) the state, quality, or fact of being spiritual; (adj) of, or concerned with, the spirit rather than material things; not tangible; of, concerned with, or affecting the soul; of, or belonging to a church or religion, sacred” (p. 27). English and Gillen (2000) suggest that spirituality is an “awareness of something greater than ourselves, a sense that we are connected to all human beings and to all creation...authentic spirituality moves one outward to others as an expression of one’s spiritual experiences” (p.1).

English (2000) further describes authentic spiritual development as being comprised of “ a strong sense of self; care, concern and outreach to others, and the continuous construction of meaning and knowledge” (p. 30). Tisdell (2000) offers a helpful distinction between spirituality and religion, defining spirituality as “one’s personal belief and experience of a higher power or higher purpose” (p. 309). Expanding the definition to include a social component, Gibbons (2001) defines the “discipline of spirituality” as focusing “precisely upon the relational and personal (inclusive of the social and political dimensions) of the human person’s relationship to the divine” (p168). This study adopts a definition of spirituality that contains both the relational and personal with the social and political dimensions of a connection to a higher power.

Emancipatory education, as articulated by Freire (1999), sees education as the practice of freedom from oppression by the dominant culture. Freire’s work as a

literacy educator and theorist in Brazil challenged prevailing ideas about the creation of knowledge and the role of the educator in adult learning. Freire's approach to emancipatory learning situates the learner in opposition to the oppressive systems of society. By naming and addressing the structures of oppression that exist, the oppressed can attain freedom through radical education. Horton and Freire (1990) share emancipatory perspectives toward learning. hooks (1994) bases her "engaged pedagogy" on Freirian approaches to liberatory education (pp.13-34).

Tisdell's (2000) work examines the connection between spirituality and the social justice activism of adult educators who teach across boundaries. Tisdell discovered five themes common to the social activists she interviewed: "a) a spiral process of moving beyond and 're-membering' spiritual values and symbols of the culture of origin; b) life force, interconnectedness and wholeness; c) pivotal experience of a perceived higher power that facilitates healing; d) the development of authentic identity; and e) a way of life requiring both inner reflection and outward social action" (Tisdell, 2000, p. 308).

Tisdell (2000) found that little was written in the field of adult education about spirituality as a motivation for involvement in social justice causes. Tisdell cites Walters and Manicom (1996), who acknowledge the importance of spirituality among emancipatory educators working with women within an international context. Additional works which provide assistance in understanding the spirituality behind an emancipatory perspective include Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Parks (1996), Horton and Freire (1990), Freire (1997), and Bean (2000).

Daloz, et al, (1996), investigate the motivations of activists working for social justice. Participant criteria used by the authors included “commitment to common good, perseverance and resilience, ethical congruence between life and work, and engagement with diversity and complexity” (pp. 5-6). The authors found a commitment to community, compassion, conviction, courage, and confession in the activists they interviewed. Two themes are of particular interest to this study: the experience of marginality and critical-systemic faith. Daloz, et al, found that the gift of marginality “is its power to promote both empathy with the other and a critical perspective on one’s own tribe” (p. 76). The authors further state “when one stands at the margins, astride the boundary between tribes, one stands also at the center of a larger and more adequate whole” (p. 77).

Daloz, et al, (1996) found that faith perspectives were related to the social activism of the participants in their study. Choosing to use “faith” over “religion,” the authors sought to determine how committed individuals “make meaning, how they construe life as a whole, how they imagine the relationship of self, world and cosmos, the seen and unseen” (p. 142). An enlarged vision of the world caused some of the participants to leave organized religion, while remaining true to their sense of morality and spirituality. Others have found ways to create “spiritual-religious communities” with whom they work to make sense of the complexities of life (p. 143). The authors describe participants as practicing a:

critical-systemic faith which helps them hold steady even as a spiritual sensibility of awe and participation deepens. A spiritual-religious sensibility is a part of what enables many of them to tolerate the complexity and ambiguity

with which a commitment to the commons [the common good] must contend.

(Daloz, et al, 1996, p.143)

The critique of the decontextualized nature of most literature related to spirituality in the field of adult education suggests that the idea of spirituality is too often removed from the rich faith traditions in which it began (Milacci & Howell, 2002). As a result of this neglect of context, the idea of spirituality can become meaningless, particularly when detached from its religious source. Attention to this source and context changes the understanding of the nature of spirituality within the work of social activists, such as Day, Horton, and Freire.

Day's commitment to social activism grew out of an "engaged spirituality," according to Parachin (2000, p. 250). This definition of spirituality includes attention to spiritual nurture as well as work for social justice in society. Parachin describes the sources of nurture upon which Day relied in her actions for social justice: "daily Eucharist, prayer, use of the rosary and the prayer book, the study of scripture, the discipline of living in community, personal reflection and journal writing, and participation in retreat" (p. 253). While Day regularly addressed the issue of the need for penance, both personal and corporal, and was open about her own personal failures, she never discussed challenging personal issues in her life, such as her early divorce, abortion, and common law marriage (p. 254). Influenced by writers such as Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky, Day also drew inspiration from the lives of saints such as "Francis of Assisi, Juliana of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, and Therese of Lisieux" (p. 257). Day's life was committed to hospitality, both spiritual and political (Forest, 1993).

Horton and Freire (1990) are well-known within the field of adult education for their work in emancipatory approaches to education. Tisdell (2000) notes that both educators were “clear about the influence of spirituality in their own work” (p. 311). In Horton and Freire’s (1990) *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*, the authors talk about the influences which shaped their lives and work. The influences of poverty, learning, family, community and faith were important to both men, as they worked within “popular struggles for participation and freedom” (p. xxiii).

Horton (Horton & Freire, 1990) stated that the Bible, works by the poet Shelley, and works by Karl Marx were the most influential books in developing his approach to radical education:

First was the Bible because it gave me an ethical background. It gave me a sense of the great religious truths and insights and I was shaped a lot by that in terms of my values...I became discouraged with the people who were “religious” and I was turned off by their hypocrisy...I read *Prometheus Unbound*, where Shelley defies the people’s threats and punishment and bribery...This young poet was standing for social justice and saying that’s the important thing...When I learned something about Marxism and started reading some of Marx’s writings, I realized that here’s a way to analyze. This is a way to look at society. (Horton & Freire, 1990, pp. 34-35)

Horton’s development of Highlander was grounded in a Christian ethic that was influenced by his study at Union Theological Seminary in New York. His radical approach encouraged blacks and whites to work together to overcome oppression

through learning and had a significant impact on the development of the Civil Rights movement in the south (Horton & Freire, 1990). Septima Clark, hired by Horton to develop educational programs to prepare people for voter registration, noted that the radical approach of the younger generation of activists (of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) made them “true disciples of Christ. They do not ask for salaries nor a place to lie down” (Clark, cited in Rachal, 1998, p.167).

Freire was influenced by “ a growing Catholic Action movement, which was to lay the ground for what would later become known as the liberation theology movement” (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. xx). He saw the inter-relationship between the spiritual and the social, stating “salvation first demands liberation. Liberation and salvation are social events, not individual ones” (p. 111). In a series of eighteen letters written to his niece, Freire (1997) further articulates perspectives on his life, his work, and his faith. Growing up in a Christian home provided the underpinnings of Freire’s “political and pedagogical beliefs” (Freire, 1997, p. 86). Freire questioned those who called themselves Christians but participated in the exploitation of other people or discriminated against others who were not like them. Freire states:

during the 1970s, in an interview in Australia, I told some greatly surprised reporters that it was the woods in Recife, refuge of slaves, and the ravines where the oppressed of Brazil live, coupled with my love for Christ and my hope that He is the light, that led me to Marx. The tragic reality of the ravines, woods, and marshes, led me to Marx. My relationship with Marx never suggested that I abandon Christ. (Freire, 1997, p. 87)

Bean (2000) examines the spiritual basis for the work of Catholic priest Moses Coady and the development of the Antigonish movement in the eastern part of Nova Scotia. Bean notes that “spirituality, for Coady, was inseparable from life in the material world” (Gillen, 1998, cited in Bean, 2000, p. 69). Coady understood that “Jesus explained the meaning of true spirituality through the material actions of stopping for the wounded traveler, binding up his wounds, and giving cash to the innkeeper for his care. In other words, it was only through the visible that the invisible could be seen” (p. 69). Bean suggests that Coady’s ideas about the relationship between spirituality and social justice caused him to adopt a questioning stance in relationship to his own church, as well the powerful at the local, regional and international level.

Drawing from literature outside the field of adult education, theologians provide additional insights into the connection between spirituality and social justice by acknowledging articulating the nature of resistance, storytelling, and pacifism. Soelle (2001) discusses the relationship between mysticism and resistance, particularly the connection between longing for God and the creation of a more just world. Welch (1990) draws from the rich history of storytelling within the African American tradition to bring forth healing in relation to social injustices. Finally, Gibbons (2001) articulates the spirituality of a Catholic pacifist, drawing conclusions about the nature of spirituality and activism for peace within a Catholic faith perspective.

Soelle (2001) includes abolitionist Quakers, and Dorothy Day, as examples of people who were not “at home in this world of business and violence” (p. 197).

Soelle notes that the tension between love of truth and work for social change is not easy to balance. She continues:

The broadest notion of resistance assumed here arises from the distance established from what is regarded as the normal world, a world founded on power, possession, and violence. Consequently, in different situations the notion varies between evasion, dissent, abstinence, refusal, boycott or strike, reform or counterproposal, dialogue, or meditation. Yet, however radically mystical consciousness practices and strives for changes in conditions based on possessions and violence, the connection to those who think otherwise is steadfastly maintained. No one is excluded or eliminated. Such consciousness is deeply marked by ‘revolutionary patience’ that sets out from the experience of what has always been good. (Soelle, 2001, p. 198)

This desire to resist dominant cultural values (related to violence, materialism, and oppression) while maintaining connection with those whose perspective differs is an essential component of a peace-oriented world-view.

Theologian Sharon Welch (1990) considers the power of stories to transcend the challenges faced in working for social justice. Through examining narratives of healing written by African American women authors, Welch weaves a “theology of resistance and hope” (pp. 153-180) that challenges racism and encourages the building of communities of resistance. Community support for acts of mercy and resistance was an important hallmark of the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s and 1940s. Likewise, telling stories of resistance provides hope and healing for others, both inside and outside the community (Troester, 1993).

Scholar and writer Patrick Gibbons (2001) describes the spirituality of Catholic pacifism in ways that connects emancipatory spirituality to learning within the pacifist Catholic Worker movement. Gibbons finds that the spirituality of Catholic pacifism

1. is countercultural and, if necessary, 'counter-tradition' in its rejection of violence as a possible response to the evil of war
2. [is marked by] nonviolent resistance to the evil of war [as] the only means for a lasting peace
3. is centered on the story of the non-violent Jesus found in the gospels, a study that is an alternative to the story of violence in our culture
4. is dedicated to a life of contemplation and action
5. helps the baptized follower of Jesus Christ become more aware of his/her vocation to be a peacemaker
6. is expressed by and authenticated in praxis...[challenging] the individual to refer to the authority of conscience versus national or even Church leaders in fashioning a response to the evil of war

(Gibbons, 2001, pp. 170-171)

In this description, Gibbons (2001) expresses succinctly the characteristics of many of those who came to be involved with the Catholic Worker movement at its beginning and those who are involved with the Worker today. At the center of the life of a Catholic pacifist spirituality is a focus on the nonviolent Jesus found in the New Testament. Particularly important for those coming from within the Catholic faith is

the high value placed on the authority of the individual conscience (as opposed to church or national authority). This “counter-traditional” call to action for peace encourages people to question and challenge structures that oppress others.

Emancipatory spirituality connects a concern for personal faith with the development of a critical perspective that challenges and acts against oppression. This perspective is most effectively carried out within communities of learning. Palmer (1998) describes the use of resistance within social movements to bring forth change. Palmer suggests that participants in resistance movements go through four stages: a) “isolated individuals make an inward decision to live ‘divided no more’ finding a center for their lives outside of institutions,” b) “these individuals begin to discover one another and form communities of congruence that offer mutual support and opportunities to develop a shared vision,” c) “these communities start going public, learning to convert their private concerns into the public issues they are and receiving vital critiques in the process,” d) “a system of alternative rewards emerges to sustain the movement’s vision and to put pressure for change on the standard institutional reward system” (p. 166).

This series of what Palmer (1998) calls “transitional stages” can move forward because it takes place within the development of a community of like-minded resisters. The Catholic Worker movement developed out of a critique of American society. The movement grew because others were drawn to the life of simplicity, mercy, and protest that was articulated in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. With its focus on a radical interpretation of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, and an anarchist, pacifist, personalist perspective, the Catholic Worker movement provides an excellent

example of emancipatory spirituality in action. This spirituality is not separated from action in the world but is the motivating force behind attempting to create a more just and peaceful society. Living and working on the margins provides a way of seeing that those who promote dominant cultural values cannot.

Conclusions

Literature from the fields of history, sociology, and adult education lays the groundwork for this study of women in the Catholic Worker movement. Studies related to women's involvements in reform in U.S. history provide essential context for the study. Feminist critiques of social movement theory demonstrate the gendered nature of all social movements. Literature within the field of adult education focused on historiography, learning in social movements, and emancipatory spirituality provide attention to the adult learning component that is missing in the other bodies of literature.

Just as it is impossible to separate learning from its historical, social, and cultural context, it is equally impossible to separate the spirituality of emancipatory educators from their work. This review of literature demonstrates the need for further research in the learning experiences of women and learning within historic faith-based social movements.

Learning within the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s and 1940s took place outside formal educational institutions, was based in a community that challenged the status quo and emerged through a struggle for social justice. Central to the Catholic Worker was a radical interpretation of Christianity, one that featured

pacifism and an anarchist approach to movement development. How did women within this movement experience gender? How was spirituality related to their acts of mercy and protest? How did a position on the margins of society influence their beliefs and actions? How did they shape and were they shaped by the Catholic Worker community? What struggles did they experience within the patriarchal institution of the Catholic Church as they articulated perspectives that critiqued both the Church and the larger American society? To understand more about women's learning within the Catholic Worker movement it will be important to listen to stories of women who participated in the movement during the 1930s and 1940s. The following chapter explores the historical and cultural context within which the Catholic Worker movement developed in the 1930s.

CHAPTER III

THE CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT

This chapter explores the context within which women in the Catholic Worker movement lived and learned beginning in the 1930s. Through an exploration of the rich context of the Great Depression both nationally and in New York City, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of women within this social movement.

Introduction

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women were leaders of reform movements of all types in the United States. Strengthened by revival experiences in the Second Great Awakening in the 1820s, women moved into positions of leadership and worked for reform in their communities and through public policy at local, state, and national levels. Fighting issues such as prostitution, alcohol abuse (temperance movement), and slavery, women also addressed the need for prison reform, proper care for the mentally ill, improved working conditions in factories and mills, peace, and suffrage for women (Evans, 1989).

By the time of the Great Depression in 1929, ongoing debates about the nature of the economic system of the United States were common, particularly in places such as New York City's Union Square. Here communists, anarchists, socialists, and pacifists met daily to argue and debate. As workers faced the hardships of the depression of the 1930s, a new voice emerged which spoke directly to the

challenges they were facing, but from a perspective of the Catholic faith. This was the voice of Dorothy Day, and *The Catholic Worker* newspaper.

The Catholic Worker movement began in New York City in response to the economic devastation brought on by the Great Depression in the United States during the decade of the 1930s. The desire to address the needs of workers from a Catholic perspective created the opportunity for an unusual point of view to be articulated in response to the events of the time. Beginning with the publication of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, and then through the development of houses of hospitality, roundtable discussions, and farming communes, the lay members of the movement sought to balance works of mercy with acts of public protest, while articulating their perspective about an alternative social order.

The forms of adult education that took place within the Catholic Worker movement were created within a particular historical, social, and cultural context. In order to understand the development of the Catholic Worker movement and the learning that took place within it, it is essential to understand the context within which it developed. Therefore, this investigation of the context of the Catholic Worker movement will begin with an overview of the experience of the Great Depression. This will be followed by an examination of the development of the Catholic Worker movement in response to the events of the 1930s, highlighting the personal experiences of founders Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, as well as the philosophical and intellectual perspectives from which they came. Finally, the specific adult education efforts developed within the Catholic Worker movement in

response to the tremendous economic dislocation of the Great Depression will be explored.

The Great Depression

The Great Depression of the 1930s in the United States was a pivotal experience within 20th century American society. Lives were abruptly changed, dreams shattered, and hopes lost, placing in heightened relief conceptions of personal and corporate responsibilities within society. The diversity of American society of the time was revealed in contemporary responses of individuals and groups of people to the events of the Great Depression. This included the mainstream cultural conclusion that individuals were to blame for their own misfortune, the government policies of Presidents Hoover and Roosevelt, the increasing public protests on the part of the poor and unemployed, and the efforts of radical activists for social change. Varying historical interpretations demonstrate the continuing diversity of opinion about the Depression, its causes and its effects in American society (Bernstein, 2001; Foner 1997). By examining the Great Depression as it was experienced across the United States, as well as in New York City, it will be possible to gain a deeper level of understanding of the context within which the Catholic Worker movement developed and grew.

While periodization in American history may be considered arbitrary at best, the time period known as the Great Depression, extending from the stock market crash in October of 1929 to the beginning of the United States' involvement in World War II in 1941, works well for historical interpretation (Ware, 1982). These two events frame the beginning and ending of a unique period considered one of the most

serious economic crises in American history (Bernstein, 2001). While historians debate the myriad causes of the stock market crash of October 1929, its effects on the lives of individuals, families, and communities were devastating.

The prolonged economic hardship experienced in the United States during the 1930s affected people at every level of society and in relation to every aspect of daily life including jobs, housing, and food. Rural areas were hard hit by shrinking markets for rising surpluses of agricultural products. Workers in urban areas were laid off as businesses struggled to keep doors open. Unemployment reached a high of 25% of the population at certain points during the decade (Ware, 1982). With the highest rate of unemployment reaching 12-15 million in 1933, about 8 million people continued to remain jobless until the U.S. entry into World War II (Ware, 1982, p. xiii).

Bird (1966) comments that “everyone knew of someone engaged in a desperate struggle” (p. 23) to survive. In addition to the personal economic devastation of the loss of work, people across the country experienced the corporate sense of “vast economic dislocation: want in the midst of plenty. While crops rotted in the fields because farmers did not have enough money to harvest them, people starved in the cities” (Ware, 1982, p. xiii).

Those at the lower end of the economic ladder, who had struggled to make ends meet even during the prosperous 1920s, suffered more during the Depression as sexism and racism presented additional challenges to finding work (Allen, 1940; Wright, 1988). The effects of the Great Depression resulted not only in loss of jobs, but the struggle for even the most basic of human needs—food and shelter. During the fall of 1932, the Health Department of New York City reported that over 20% of

students in New York City schools suffered from malnutrition. In coal mining communities across the country this percentage was much higher, reaching 90% in some places (Manchester, 1974, p. 41).

Meridel LeSueur's article in the *New Masses* in January 1932 "Women on the breadlines" describes the challenges facing women who were trying to survive in urban areas:

It's one of the great mysteries of the city where women go when they are out of work and hungry. There are not many women in the bread line. There are no flophouses for women as there are for men, where a bed can be had for a quarter or less...They obviously don't sleep in the jungle or under newspapers in the park...Yet there must be as many women out of jobs in the cities and suffering extreme poverty as there are men. What happens to them? Where do they go? (Le Sueur, in Ware, 1982, p. 33)

Contemporary novelist Richard Wright (1988) describes life in a kitchenette, the substandard housing available to urban African Americans during the period:

The kitchenette is our prison, our death sentence without a trial, the new form of mob violence that assaults not only the lone individual, but all of us in its ceaseless attacks. The kitchenette, with its filth and foul air, with its one toilet for thirty or more tenants, kills our black babies so fast that in many cities twice as many of them die as white babies. (pp. 105-106)

While questions about the stability of the American capitalist system of the time might seem to be a natural result of the events following October 1929, Terkel (1970) notes that Americans largely blamed themselves for the problems they faced;

“millions experienced a private kind of shame when the pink slip came. No matter that others suffered the same fate, the inner voice whispered, ‘I’m a failure’”(p. 19). Independence and self-reliance, long held virtues in American society, initially caused individuals and their government to see the effects of the Great Depression as the result of largely personal, rather than societal or systemic failure (Piven & Cloward, 1977; Terkel, 1970; Ware, 1982).

The perceptions of residents of one Midwestern city (named “Middletown” by sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd, 1929) offered a perspective shared by some Americans. Residents of Middletown viewed America as a “free country of boundless opportunity which guarantees an equal chance to everybody” (Lynd & Lynd, 1937, p. 103). People who were unable to succeed essentially “violated the gospel of hard work and thrift” and therefore providing assistance “weakens the character” of those receiving it (p. 103). Business owners were perceived to be knowledgeable about how to run their affairs without government intervention. In fact, the “government should keep its hands off business” (p. 409). Residents of Middletown held that “Negroes [were] inferior” and “foreigners and long-haired troublemakers” were considered to be radicals whose ideas were “utopian” and “un-American” (pp. 408, 413-414).

However, the perspectives of those interviewed in Middletown were not representative of the society as a whole. Contrary to common perceptions about traditional family life, greater numbers of women continued to work during the Depression than had in previous decades. Ware (1982) concludes that women continued to provide for their families through their own unpaid labor within the home during the 1930s, but that many women were forced to find paid work to help

their families survive. Greater numbers of married women worked despite societal pressure to remain in the home, creating the trend within the work place away from “young, single women to older, married workers” (Ware, p. 199).

Poor living conditions experienced by people across the country created the impetus to explore new ways to address social needs. The desperate straits faced by those who were economically dislocated, or further disenfranchised, by the Depression created an opportunity to challenge prevailing American societal conceptions about the role of the individual vs. the role of government. After several years of worsening economic conditions, groups of people began to find commonalities in their experiences and to express their discontent about the systemic nature of the problems they faced (Piven & Cloward, 1977). Two such groups were the bonus marchers and the unemployed workers who marched toward Washington, D. C., in the summer and fall of 1932.

During the summer of 1932, after three years of economic hardship, 25,000 bonus marchers (World War veterans) camped in Washington, D. C., demonstrating for early release of the promised bonus to veterans in legislation enacted in 1924 to be paid in 1945 (Manchester, 1974, p. 3). Hoover refused to receive a delegation from the veterans, literally barricading himself in the White House. This determination not to take action demonstrated the philosophical perspective from which Hoover’s administration faced the growing economic crisis. Hoover’s Republican policies focused on providing U.S. government grants to businesses, but not direct payments to millions of unemployed workers (Ware, 1982).

When the bonus marchers were forced to leave Washington in 1932, many joined the ranks of those traveling the rails in search of work. Of the two million traveling Americans looking for work that year, “over a quarter-million of them [were] between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one” (Manchester, 1974, p. 19). Others made their way to New York City and became residents of a “Hooverville” in Central Park (Watkins, 1999, pp. 140-141). With such dramatic need facing so many unemployed workers, how did radical groups respond to the events following the stock market crash?

The decade of the 1920s was a difficult one for the International Workers of the World (IWW), the Socialist Party, and the Communist Party. The IWW faced interminable challenges with its leaders imprisoned or exiled as a result of government repression (Pells, 1998). By the end of the 1920s, the IWW was considerably weakened and the Socialist party was depleted by inroads made by the Communist party, itself weakened by internal divisions (Shachtman, 1967). The labor movement at the time had become “conservative, narrow, smug, and small” (Shachtman, p. 10), compared to the progressive outlook of trade unionists at the beginning of the 1920s (Muste, 1967). However, the economic failure of the capitalist system served to refocus efforts of radical organizers. Unemployed Councils (sponsored by the Communist party) organized hunger and unemployment marches in cities across the country during 1931-1932 including several in Washington, D. C. (Watkins, 1999).

In November of 1932, unemployed workers joined together in New York City’s Union Square to begin a hunger march to Washington, D. C., to bring the

plight of the unemployed into the nation's capital again. Despite being harassed by the police along the way and kept outside the city for three days with no provisions for food, water or facilities, the marchers eventually were allowed to proceed into the city to hold their parade, closely watched by police and government officials (Miller, 1982).

While radicals viewed the differences between Republican and Democratic political perspectives to be slight, the election of Franklin Roosevelt as president in November of 1932 demonstrated the country's desire for a different approach to the economic crisis. Once in office, Roosevelt's administration set to work creating what became known as the New Deal, sponsoring legislation focused on addressing the challenges of a faltering economic system. However, many groups of people continued to seek alternative approaches to solving the problems of unemployment and poverty in the United States. Discussions, debates, strikes and riots by unemployed workers continued in cities across the country (Piven & Cloward, 1977). New York City's Union Square was a regular meeting place for socialist and communist organizers, unemployed workers, and intellectuals, where debates about economics and politics took place daily (Forest, 1986).

New York City experienced the Depression in similar ways to communities across the country. In the years immediately following the stock market crash, thousands sought food in breadlines. By December of 1931, 85,000 people were eating meals at New York City's two breadlines (Walker, 1999, p. 59). Evictions from tenement apartments increased rapidly. In the spring of 1931, 15,000 New Yorkers were homeless (Walker, 1999, p. 60). During the month of April 1933 alone,

12,000 evictions were carried out in New York City (Day, 1933, p.2). By 1934, 75,000 single women were homeless (Evans, 1989, p. 203).

The seat of economic power for the country, New York City was also home to a diverse population of people. The Lower East Side of New York, with its largely Eastern European Jewish immigrant population, was a center of activity for radical activists (Glenn, 1990). Many of the women and men who came to America during previous two decades (though this was sharply curtailed as a result of changes in immigration laws during the 1920s) had experienced radical socialism in their home countries through a movement known as “The Bund.” The Bund was a revolutionary movement that attracted many young working people in Russia, Lithuania, and Poland. The Bund encouraged its members to challenge current political and economic structures. Bund led uprisings were followed by pogroms designed to force activists to leave their home communities (Glenn, 1990). Activists who were forced to emigrate brought their radical perspectives to their new home in America.

New York City tenement houses on the Lower East Side offered cramped substandard accommodations to families trying to make ends meet as men, women, and children sought work. The poor job prospects, close quarters and otherwise inadequate living conditions, together with radical socialist ideological perspectives, created an atmosphere charged with political debate. It was within this milieu that a journalist named Dorothy Day initiated a newspaper that sought to address the issues facing workers from a Catholic perspective. Before exploring the development of the Catholic Worker movement, it is important to note the rapid growth of and

remarkable diversity within the Catholic Church in the United States by the time of the Great Depression.

The Catholic Church was the largest church in the United States by 1880, with membership of over six million members. By 1920 that number had risen to nineteen million (Cremin, 1988, p. 126). The growing Catholic population faced hostility and prejudice from Protestants. In response, Catholics developed their own definition of “Americanization” and created a separate culture with a variety of educational institutions including newspapers, magazines, social clubs, cultural societies and parochial schools (p. 128).

Cremin (1988) describes the Catholic Church as the church of the immigrant and Chicago as the city of the immigrant (p. 133). Chicago neighborhoods (where Day’s family lived) created Catholic “ethno-religious communities” beginning in the mid-nineteenth century (p. 133). With French, German, Irish, Polish, and Lithuanian congregations, the Catholic Church in the United States faced a variety of challenges including pluralism, Americanism, and modernism. Local congregations called for ethnic parishes, designed to meet the needs of particular ethnic groups, in their own languages. How could these interests be met while addressing the need for a uniquely American Catholic polity? How should educational institutions shape future American Catholics? This challenge was particularly felt in relation to the challenges of modernism—the role of women, biblical authority and the content of the training for clergy (p. 132). The conservatism present in the bureaucracy of the Church made these issues difficult to address, particularly with a church hierarchy that was not particularly sensitive to the needs of the American Church.

By the decades of the 1930s and 1940s, the Catholic Church in the United States experienced a renewal focused on the liturgy. Beginning in Europe, this liturgical renewal initiated a dramatic shift within Catholic religious practice. Dolan (1992) notes:

It was a more biblical, less institutional, type of theology, which emphasized the spiritual nature of Catholicism. Its focus was Jesus Christ, not the saints; its chief prayer was the Mass, not the novena; it encouraged a social spirit, rather than individualism; it sought to foster community, rather than isolation; it stressed the public quality of religion, not the private. (p. 389)

Not initially encouraged by many American bishops and priests, who were more traditional in their outlook, the liturgical renewal movement gained strength through Pope Pius XII's 1943 encyclical which articulated the view of the church as the "mystical body of Christ" (Dolan, 1992, p. 389).

The co-founders of the Catholic Worker movement, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, were both influenced by and helped to foster this increasing devotion alongside social action within the Catholic Church in the United States. The opening of the publishing house Sheed & Ward in New York in 1933 contributed to a Catholic revival, providing "the intellectual stimulus and spiritual motivation [that] Catholic activists needed" (Dolan, 1992, p. 409). Sheed & Ward published works by European Catholic authors, such as G. K. Chesterton and Jacques Maritain, which fueled the imaginations of activists eager for social change. Young Catholic activists found a place to live out radical social perspectives within the Catholic Worker movement. Ed Marciniak joined the Chicago Catholic Worker, noting:

All of a sudden there was this new world for me, a world of great intellectual vitality. There were many of us, and we read avidly, every learned Catholic magazine we could locate. We raised every question, we challenged every conceivable position, we subjected the Church to so much scrutiny because we loved her so much. Sometimes our sessions would go from Sunday afternoon right through to early Monday morning—one week Maritain; the next, perhaps, the steel strike. (Piehl, 1982, p. 150).

How did this radical, pacifist, anarchist, personalist Catholic Worker movement begin? What were the forces which caused the movement to grow and how were its members involved in radical adult education efforts? How did an anarchist movement co-founded by a woman interact with the hierarchical, bureaucratic, and patriarchal institution of the Catholic Church? The following review of the Catholic Worker movement summarizes its growth and development, focusing on particular efforts such as *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, hospitality houses, communal farms, and public protest efforts.

The Catholic Worker Movement

On May 1, 1933, 50,000 people met in New York City's Union Square to celebrate May Day, the international day set aside to honor workers (Forest, 1986). Speakers warned of the dangers of fascism and called for "worker ownership and control of industry" (Forest, p. 1). Dorothy Day was among those present in Union Square, selling the first issue of the newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*. The publication of this newspaper was met with incredulity from all sides. How could a newspaper

address labor issues from the perspective of the Catholic faith? At the time, only communists and socialists were focusing on the needs of workers (Roberts, 1984).

Dorothy Day was a journalist who wrote for communist and socialist newspapers during the 1920s (including the *New York Call*, *The Masses*, and *The Liberator*). Day practiced advocacy journalism, proselytizing from a specific point of view (Roberts, 1984). Like other journalists of the time, Day's approach was to become engaged in the lives of the ordinary people and through her writing tell their stories about eviction, homelessness, and joblessness.

Born into a middle class family in New York in 1897, Day moved many times as her father tried to make ends meet in a succession of jobs as a writer and journalist. The family endured many financial challenges during Day's childhood and adolescence. At the age of 18, after two years at the University of Illinois, Day left university life to work as a journalist, chronicling the lives of workers in the city of New York. She covered strikes and meetings for peace: "Many groups were working for peace, trying to prevent our entry into the war—the Emergency Peace Federation, the I.W.W., the socialists, the anarchists"(Day, 1997, p. 57). She described members of the labor movement at this time as "socialist, I.W.W., anarchist, and liberal" (Day, 1997, p. 67). Her early twenties were spent writing, listening and debating with well-known socialists and communists of the city. Sharing their radical perspective of the world, friends at this time included playwright Eugene O'Neill, communist writer Mike Gold, activist Peggy Baird and essayist Malcolm Cowley (Roberts, 1984).

It was the birth of Day's daughter Tamar that compelled her to act on a growing faith in God. By 1927, Day chose to be baptized in the Catholic Church, the

church that welcomed the poor: “they were of all nationalities, of all classes, but most of all they were poor” (Day, 1978, p. 15). While Day was covering the hunger march in November of 1932, she witnessed the brutal treatment of marchers in several cities. Her recognition that it was Communists rather than Christians who were acting on behalf of the workers, led her to pray for a way to use her talents to help the poor. Peter Maurin, a French immigrant to the United States whose ideas were strikingly similar to Day’s, was waiting at her door when she returned from Washington, D. C.

Peter Maurin was born in southern France in 1877 into a large family who had been farming the same land for generations. Educated at an agricultural school as a child, Maurin learned mathematics along with farming techniques. Influenced by his experiences as a Christian Brother novitiate, and through his experiences both as a soldier and then as a member of a French Catholic progressive movement called *Le Sillon* (The Furrow), Maurin developed an perspective that was strongly intellectual, with roots in anti-bourgeois, decentralist, anarchist and pacifist ideology (Roberts, 1984).

Peter Maurin brought his understanding of European socialist and personalist philosophy to Day’s journalistic abilities and her understanding of the dominant American culture (Piehl, 1982). Peter Maurin served as Day’s mentor and teacher. According to Day, “he gave me a way of life and instruction” (Day, 1997, p. 9). Both Day and Maurin were influenced by Russian anarchist writer Peter Kropotkin, and French Catholic philosophers Leon Bloy, Charles Peguy, Emmanuel Mounier, and Jacques Maritain (Roberts, 1984). English agrarian decentralist writers such as Harold Robbins, Eric Gill, Hailaire Belloc, G. K. Chesterton, and the Rev. Vincent McNabb

assisted in the conceptualization of a particularly European Catholic perspective (Piehl, 1982; Roberts, 1984).

Day and Maurin created an agenda for radical social change based on the Catholic faith, peace/nonviolence, voluntary poverty, communal living, acts of mercy, acts of resistance (or public protest), and the use of education and consciousness-raising to create an alternative to prevailing American values (Aronica, 1987; Miller, 1973; Roberts, 1984). According to Day, Maurin's philosophical perspectives provided the underlying goals of the movement:

1. the establishment of an Augustinian 'city of God' on earth, that is, the achievement of social justice for all in need, as members of a single moral community
2. the education of all people to the truth that charity is a fundamental responsibility
3. to make scholars of workers and workers of scholars. On a sacred rather than secular rendition of Marxist philosophy, workers would become scholars in the teachings of the Church, while scholars (the Christian intelligentsia) would rediscover the spiritual significance of activism, work for and with the poor. (Day, cited in Aronica, p. 56).

From this collaboration between Day and Maurin grew a newspaper and a movement that created a place for learning and challenged the values of American society at the time. Maurin's European philosophical understandings and his radical approach to Catholicism, together with Day's background in journalism and her

Christian, anarchist, socialist, pacifist beliefs, created a perspective that broke across barriers and brought together those from the political left and right.

Adult Education within the Catholic Worker Movement

The education, or “propagandizing,” of adults was at the center of Catholic Worker efforts. Through the publication of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, the development of roundtable discussions, hospitality houses, farming communes, and through acts of public protest, members of the Catholic Worker movement created an environment for adult learning.

The Catholic Worker Newspaper

The focus of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper was to bring scholars and workers together to consider a variety of issues relating to work and life. While its publication was initially met with incredulity, *The Catholic Worker* experienced dramatic growth in circulation, from 2500 with its first issue in 1933, to 185,000 in 1940 (Piehl, 1982). Part of its continuing success was the price, set at one cent by Day, the newspaper’s editor and publisher. Day’s skillful ability as a journalist to evoke the pathos of the daily experiences of the poor created a following of loyal readers who supported the newspaper and the initiatives which grew out of it.

During its first years of publication, the paper investigated such areas as “tenant evictions...seamen’s strikes, the 1936 Vermont marble workers’ strike...the 1937 Republic Steel massacre...[and] Arkansas sharecroppers” (Roberts, 1984, p.72). In addition to interviews with labor leaders, research pieces on topics such as Russian or Vietnamese history, and Day’s regular column, articles on the lives of the saints

and writings of church authorities which focused on issues of social justice were regular features (Roberts, 1984).

The issues Day chose to write about, together with the increasing numbers of people experiencing the hardships of joblessness and homelessness, drew many individuals to involvement with *The Catholic Worker*. The masthead itself served as a symbol of the alternative social order that Day and Catholic Workers sought to create: two workers, one black and one white, held hands in front of the figure of Jesus on the cross (Piehl, 1982).

As the focal point for dissemination of and discussion of ideas, *The Catholic Worker* became the intellectual center from which a variety of social service and educational opportunities grew. Shortly after the newspaper was first published, round table discussions with scholars, activists, church people, and the unemployed began meeting once a week in order to hear speakers and discuss the issues raised in the paper. At the first meeting, the rooms were packed with people, “unemployed men and women, plumbers, mechanics, steam fitters, sign painters, students from New York colleges, and Catholic Workers” (*The Catholic Worker* cited in Piehl, 1982, p.74).

For many Catholic students and intellectuals, the Catholic Worker was an ideal place to learn because of its emphasis on the integration of ideas with experience and the opportunity to learn from people coming from a wide variety of perspectives (Piehl, 1982). Day considered the close connection that the writers and editors of *The Catholic Worker* shared with their readers unusual compared to most newspapers. An ongoing stream of readers of *The Catholic Worker* lived in the

hospitality houses and had a great impact on the content and ideas expressed in the paper (Day, 1997). Homeless people responded to the content of the articles and helped with the publication and distribution of the paper.

Hospitality Houses

Hospitality houses developed in response to the needs that the newspaper staff saw around them everyday during the Depression (Day, 1997). At first, simple food was provided (coffee, bread and soup) while publishing the newspaper. As more people joined the movement, needs for housing and feeding workers and growing numbers of the poor and homeless became apparent. The houses of hospitality served as “newspaper offices, volunteer centers, soup kitchens, boarding houses, schools, places of worship, and the centers of a far-flung social movement” described as “revolutionary headquarters” (Piehl, 1982, p. 96). These centers of learning and revolutionary strategy sprang up in cities all across the United States. By 1941, there were 32 houses in 27 cities (Piehl).

Pressing needs faced city dwellers every day and the members of the Catholic Worker movement worked hard to help them. St. Joseph’s house in New York City is only one of the many houses that developed. This hospitality house regularly fed 1200 people twice a day in 1938 (Piehl, 1982). This devotion to caring for the needy continued through and after World War II. In 1951 alone, Day recorded that St. Joseph’s House of Hospitality provided “460,000 meals” and “18,250 night’s lodgings” (Ellsberg, 1983, p. 104).

As Catholic Worker communities developed in cities around the country, they were self-governed and loosely affiliated with the Catholic Worker community in

New York City. While Day often traveled to visit communities in other cities, her role was that of an encourager, rather than an administrator. As “Head Anarch” Day was viewed as a benevolent authority (Roberts, 1984, p.84). Living with and serving the poor gave Day credibility inside the Catholic Worker community and in the larger Catholic world.

Communal Farms

In April 1936, the Catholic Worker community purchased a farm in Easton, Pennsylvania, in order to establish a farm-based community of families. A succession of 12 other independent farms associated with the Catholic Worker community developed over the next few years. Peter Maurin viewed these farms as agronomic universities or farming communes that could “make scholars out of workers and workers out of scholars” creating “a new society within the shell of the old” (Maurin, cited in Aronica, 1987, p. 63). Day saw them as communities of need, as workers lived side by side with recovering alcoholics, victims of abuse, and the homeless (Roberts, 1984).

The attempt to create places where workers could learn together through working the land did not ultimately succeed (Piehl, 1982). The decentralized approach used in the houses of hospitality did not transfer to the Catholic Worker farms. At houses of hospitality, there were no requirements for work but an expectation that everyone would contribute as they felt led to do so. Farming required a more concentrated and sustained commitment than was required at the houses of hospitality. Disputes between community members were common at both the houses of hospitality and farming communes. Rather than impose rules for community life,

Day believed in the anarchist philosophy that the houses and the farms should be “an experiment in...freedom and what it implied” (Day, cited in Piehl, 1982, p.130). As a result, there was ongoing conflict and a continuous stream of people in and out of the Catholic Worker farms, making agricultural production difficult.

An important contribution of the Catholic Worker farms was to serve as sites for learning for Catholic Workers and their children and as spiritual retreat centers. Beginning in the late 1930s, Day regularly made use of spiritual retreats for strength and learning. The insights Day gained from this spiritual refreshment provided continuous themes for her writing. The retreats organized by Father Pacifique Roy at the Easton farm provided opportunities for Day and Catholic Workers to gather in silence and prayer (Miller, 1987). Conferences were held during the retreat on “Confession, examination of conscience, contrition, Faith, Hope and the Mass. All are keeping silence...All our prayers are for peace” (Day, cited in Miller, 1987, p. 57). These retreats served as an antidote to the critical needs that Catholic Workers faced in their communities everyday.

Public Protest

Day’s life typified a commitment to praxis (O’Gorman & Coy, 1988). From the beginning of the newspaper in the 1930s, Day encouraged others to use “powerful nonviolent tools, such as prayer, fasting, picketing, and noncooperation with evil...She believed that nonviolence, voluntarily embraced and rooted in Christian spirituality, would lead to a new order” (Klemenjt, 1988). Day’s concern for the marginalized, the poor, and the oppressed, caused her to travel across the country examining and writing about workplace conditions and joining public protest efforts.

Day and other Catholic Workers learned ways to carry out public protests for peace, through opposition to the Ethiopian and Spanish Civil Wars, continued through World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the nuclear arms race. *The Catholic Worker* newspaper was a place to reflect upon and critique American 20th century society.

Conclusions

Adult educators who come from an emancipatory, feminist, or oppositional perspective view education as an important component of challenging the oppressive structures of capitalist society. Educators such as Cunningham (2000), Friere (1999), Foley (1999, 2001a, 2001b), Hart (1990), Welton (1993a), and Newman (1994, 1999) challenge the professionalized, institutional nature of the field of adult education. More research is needed into adult learning that takes place within social movements. An examination of women's learning within the Catholic Worker movement provides the opportunity to explore these issues at a deeper level.

At the center of the Catholic Worker movement was the desire to articulate another way to live in society, a way to create "a new society within the shell of the old" (Maurin, cited in Aronica, 1987, p. 63). Through the publication of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, the continuing use of roundtable discussions, the development of hospitality houses and farming communes, and the acts of public protest, members of the Catholic Worker movement worked to meet the pressing needs of the communities of which they were a part. Relying on a philosophical position shaped by the New Testament, anarchism, personalism, decentralism, and pacifism, Catholic workers sought to address the economic devastation wrought by the Great Depression

both intellectually and practically by providing a place where food for the body, mind, and soul could be found.

What was the learning environment for women in the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s and 1940s? Through centering the stories of women and their everyday experiences within the Catholic Worker, it is possible to hear new voices describing an alternative way to live in American society. Women such as Mary Coisman Durnin, Nina Polcyn Moore, and Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella joined the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s. As “experimenters with truth,” their stories of daily life demonstrate a commitment to nonviolence and resistance (Brandon-Falcone, 1988, p. 314), work alongside the poor, and critique of capitalism.

More research is needed on the learning experiences of women in the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s and 1940s. How was gender constructed within the movement? How were women involved in the production of the newspaper, the houses of hospitality, roundtable discussions, and farming communes? What was the relationship between spirituality and public protest for women in living out their hopes for an alternative social order? What was the nature of the relationship between the Catholic Worker and the Catholic Church? By investigating this learning environment and hearing the stories of women who joined the Catholic Worker movement during its early years, it is possible to come to a deeper understanding of the rich history of women’s involvements in radical social movements.

CHAPTER IV

NARRATORS

Women were involved in all of the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality and farming communes/retreat centers during the 1930s and 1940s. However, in the histories of the movement, the experiences of these women are not explored in much detail. The purpose of this study is to come to a new understanding of the nature of learning for women within Catholic Worker movement. Examining what drew these women to the movement, how they experienced gender within it, and their perspectives on the role of spirituality and its interaction with learning and work for social justice, enlarges our understanding of learning for women in this social movement during the 1930s and 1940s. The women interviewed for this study worked with a variety of Catholic Worker houses and farms and nearly all lived at or visited the house in New York where the movement began. They come from a variety of backgrounds: all Catholic, all European-American and white, many from working class or poor homes, several from middle class or upper-middle class families.

This chapter will examine the development of St. Joseph's House in New York, the farming communes--Maryfarm at Easton, PA, and Maryfarm at Newburgh, NY, Holy Family House in Milwaukee, St. Joseph's House in Rochester, House of Christ the Worker in Buffalo, St. Joseph's House in Chicago, and the Blessed Martin de Porres House and Our Lady of the Wayside Farm in Cleveland. Narrators, whose stories form the basis of this project, will also be introduced. Due to the age of most of the women interviewed, and the distance from the events, specific memories vary.

Narrators include Mary Helen Adler, Monica Ribar Cornell, Elizabeth Finegan Doyle, Mary Coisman Durnin, Mary Bigham Farren, Katherine Moos Mella, Nina Polcyn Moore, Isabelle Bates Mullin, Adele Butler Nash, Mary Reser, Margaret Beahon Winegarden, and Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella. Monica Ribar Cornell and Mary Reser were interviewed about their mothers: Carlotta Durkin Ribar, and Catherine Mehan Reser.

St. Joseph's House, New York, NY

St. Joseph's House in New York was the first house of hospitality in the Catholic Worker movement. The house developed around the publication of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, and became a place where food and clothing was distributed to people in need. It served as a home base for both Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day, as well as many other Catholic Workers. Visitors from across the country and around the world came to participate in many of the activities at the house: the roundtable discussions, the distribution of food and clothing, the production of the newspaper, the protests.

St. Joseph's House of Hospitality in New York has had several locations since it opened in 1933. The first location was in an apartment, and the storefront below it, on E. 15th St., followed by a building at 144 Charles Street (Day, 1997). In 1936, St. Joseph's moved to a tenement building at 115 Mott Street, donated by a reader of the newspaper (Day, 1939). This house on the Lower East side of New York had enough room to publish the newspaper, serve the hungry and homeless, and provide living quarters for workers and those in need of shelter. St. Joseph's house remained here until 1950, when the Catholic Worker moved to Chrystie Street (Day, 1997).

Day (1939) described the house on Mott Street as a “good solid house, the banisters like iron, the walls of brick and built to stay....We are overwhelmed with the space of our new home and so far as we ourselves are concerned, the rats do not bother us at all” (p. 140). Two houses had been built on the lot: the original house in the back and a more recently constructed building on the former front yard (Day, 1952). Day noted that “the rear house had two rooms on either side with one toilet between them, open fireplaces, a sink and a washtub in each kitchen. In these primitive, unheated, bathless flats, made up of a kitchen and bedroom, the Irish first came to live and then the Italians” (p. 189).

A visitor to the St. Joseph house on Mott Street in 1938 described the regular line of 1500 men, “queu[ing] up for bread” (Walsh, 1938). A reporter noted the impact of the daily breadline on the neighborhood:

In the line, women come first and the soup is distributed as long as it will last. Then they revert to coffee and bread. Sometimes for two and a half hours the breadline strings along Mott Street, impeding traffic in that strange neighborhood of little bake shops, frequent tap rooms and Italian tenement houses. On rainy days the men huddle along the side of the houses in a vain attempt to escape the elements. (Wendell, 1941, p. 5)

The reporter also noted that the first floor office space dedicated to putting out the newspaper contained a few desks and chairs, as well as “several outmoded and tired looking typewriters” (p. 5). Separated by a stone courtyard, the back tenement building contained a printing press, and a kitchen where the soup and coffee were

made. In addition the building contained a room that was used as a “library, dining room, and lecture hall,” and three floors of sleeping space for men (p. 5).

Narrators who spent much of their time at the house in New York include Katherine Moos Mella, Mary Coisman Durnin, and Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella. An introduction to their lives provides insight into the diversity of women who became involved with the Catholic Worker.

Katherine Moos Mella

Having informed her parents that she was leaving her teaching position in the music department at Mississippi State College for Women, Katherine Moos moved to an apartment down the street from the Catholic Worker house in New York during the summer of 1937. Katherine was eager to move to New York to become involved with the Catholic Worker, despite her mother’s wish that she continue training to further her singing career.



Figure 1: Katherine Moos, mid 1930s
(Courtesy of Katherine Moos Mella)

Katherine Moos was born on November 17, 1912, in St. Cloud, Minnesota, into a German Catholic middle class family. Katherine's father, William Henry Moos, was a dentist with his own practice. Her mother, Mary Olive Stangl Moos, was a teacher in Montana and Minnesota before she married William in 1911. Katherine had one sister and two brothers.

Katherine attended both Catholic and public schools. She remembers being introduced to the ideals of social justice when she visited nearby St. John's University in high school, stating "there was a lot of talk among the monks" about the Catholic Worker. Father Godfrey Diekmann at St. John's University was particularly influential for Katherine. Through this introduction, Katherine's mother subscribed to *The Catholic Worker* newspaper.

Katherine attended Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, to study music after high school. When she graduated in 1935, Katherine became one of the only members of her class to get a job. While teaching voice at Mississippi State College for Women, she sang in dozens of concert tours throughout the state. When she decided to move to New York two years later, Katherine's mother wanted her to audition at The Julliard School in New York for further voice training. However, Katherine states, "I wasn't interested in voice training at all, but I went to New York [to be] with the Catholic Worker."

Katherine remarked that she was attracted to the movement because the Catholic Workers "gave up everything and lived in poverty, just like the people... And of course, this was a very 'noble' way of living and really I don't think that I fit into it very well, but I was game for everything they asked me to do." With

financial support from her parents, Katherine rented an apartment on the fifth floor of a building down the street from St. Joseph's house. Katherine describes the small two bedroom apartment she shared with another young woman from the Catholic Worker:

As you walked in, there was a table...and you took the top off and that was the tub. And then you took a bath and got out of it and then put the top back on and put the cloth over the top, so it wouldn't show....Then there was the toilet, a little tiny square. Actually it worked...but it was very, very small.

You just could get in and close the door and that was all.

Katherine hunted for apartments for those who needed places to stay, sold the newspaper, and distributed food and clothing. She also met her future husband, John Mella, at the Catholic Worker. Katherine remembers the two of them having dinner with her mother:

I distinctly remember our having dinner with my mother, who came from out there [St. Cloud] and we took her to a restaurant. It wasn't a Catholic Worker thing and John was scrubbed clean...he was clean as a whistle, but he had big holes at his elbows, so he was very much a Catholic Worker...

Katherine Moos and John Mella were married in 1938 at the Church of the Transfiguration on Mott Street.



**Figure 2: Katherine and John's wedding, 1938, New York
(Courtesy of Katherine Moos Mella)**

After they got married, the Mellas lived for a time at Maryfarm in Easton, PA. Katherine says, “I was way up at the hill and he was at the farm. I took care of the babies we had and he would take care of...whatever needed to be done. And he didn't know beans about it at all...he had never set food on a farm, but they taught him a lot.” The Mellas eventually moved to Minnesota because, according to Katherine, they decided the farm was not a good place for their growing family (they went on to have eight children).

During World War II, John was a conscientious objector. He later got his law degree and practiced law and accounting in both Minnesota and Illinois. In 1949, the family moved to the house where Katherine lives today. As with other Catholic Worker families, the Mella home became a stopping place for many Catholic Workers passing through on their trips through the Midwest (including Dorothy Day).

Katherine's son, John Mella, comments that his mother's involvement created "a strong ethical sense...and a strong sense of social justice: not merely to correct ills in society but to actively search them out, and do what was necessary to change them....Through her involvement in the Catholic Worker, we grew to view religion as something to be lived and acted on, not just for the times of church attendance."

Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella

Mary Alice Lautner came to Mott Street during the summer of 1939, leaving behind her position as a secretary and bookkeeper with a furniture factory in her hometown. Mary Alice was born on July 16, 1914, in Tell City, Indiana, to Augusta Fischer Lautner and William Lautner. Mary Alice says, "My mother was of Polish and Bavarian descent and her mother, my Polish grandmother, lived with us and was a great influence in my life. My father was a Lutheran and he was also Bavarian...they had a mixed marriage." Both parents had a grade school education and Mary Alice's father was a woodcrafter and superintendent at a furniture factory in town.

Mary Alice attended Catholic elementary school and then the public high school in Tell City, the first person on her mother's side of the family to go to a public school. While enrolled at a business college in Evansville, Mary Alice lived with her Lutheran cousins. With few jobs available in 1932, she left school early to apply for an open position with Knott Manufacturing Co. in Tell City. She was hired and worked as a secretary and bookkeeper.

Mary Alice describes how she first heard about the Catholic Worker:

My brother was a student at St. Meinrad, studying for the priesthood, and he knew about it...He knew I was unhappy in my business career and he sent me a copy of *The Catholic Worker* and said, 'this is what you are looking for.'

And it was.

Mary Alice wrote to the Catholic Worker in New York and Dorothy Day responded, "Julia Porcelli will be your correspondent." As Julia and Mary Alice wrote to each other, the two women became friends. Mary Alice sent regular contributions in her letters and with her sister "sent [Julia] some money and she came out and visited us." Julia favorably impressed the Lautners and Mary Alice took a leave of absence from work to go to New York for a visit.

After her visit to New York, Mary Alice returned home to straighten out the books at Knott Manufacturing and to train a replacement. When she didn't go back to New York right away, she received a letter from Dorothy Day, asking her to return. Even though Day was often reluctant to encourage young women to come to work at the Catholic Worker, Mary Alice says, at that time she was "supposed to be the only woman [Dorothy Day] ever asked to come."

Mary Alice moved back to the house on Mott Street that same summer (1939). She remembers using her skills as a typist, creating labels for the newspaper's large circulation, as well as greeting guests, and teaching CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) classes to neighborhood children in a release time program. She also served as secretary of the ACCO (Association of Catholic Conscientious Objectors).

After Julia Porcelli left to study with Ade Bethune in Newport, R.I., Mary Alice became concerned when "one of the men put a lock on my door. He said, 'you

should not be on this floor.’ And when that happened, it kind of scared me. So I moved out...” Mary Alice moved to a separate apartment and worked part-time for a direct sales company as a bookkeeper. She married Joseph Zarrella in 1942. Joe was one of the business managers of St. Joseph’s Catholic Worker house in New York from 1935-1942. The day before their wedding (June 24, 1942), Mary Alice and Joe became Benedictine oblates at St. Meinrad’s monastery. The rite of oblation follows a time of preparation and celebrates the oblate’s intention to live his or her life (either single or married, lay or clerical) in accord with the Rule of St. Benedict, and through prayer and work to “manifest Christ’s presence in society” (*Oblates: An Introduction*, 1995-2000).

Joe was a conscientious objector during the war, and served as an ambulance driver with the British through the American Field Service. Mary Alice moved to Vincennes, Indiana, and worked with 10-year-old girls in a Catholic orphanage run by her brother. Mary Alice also spent time in Ohio, helping her sister with the birth of her child. When Joe’s term of service was completed, the couple decided to try to start a Catholic Worker house in Indiana. This was not successful and Joe found employment in his father-in-law’s furniture factory.

Mary Alice remembers Joe’s excitement when he told her that he had established the first union in his father-in-law’s factory. Mary Alice was in the hospital at the time with the birth of their first of four daughters. Mary Alice later worked as assistant editor of two publications at St. Meinrad’s monastery: *Child and Family*, and *Marriage*. She then served as Associate Director for Religious Education for the local diocese, retiring when her first grandchild was born.

Mary Alice and Joe went on to become what Dorothy Day considered a “Catholic Worker cell,” often serving as a house of hospitality to those traveling further west. Mary Alice described the time a man stopped by their house and one of their daughters asked, “Are you going to stay all night? They usually do.” He responded that he wasn’t sure, that he left his bags at the train station. She told him that her parents “loved having people stay.” Mary Alice and Joe have remained involved in social justice issues in their community through Habitat for Humanity and the local food bank, and Joe has been involved in numerous marches and protests over the past 60 years.

Mary Coisman Durnin

Mary Coisman arrived at St. Joseph’s house in October of 1939, quitting school at Marquette University in Milwaukee to come to the Catholic Worker. She was born in 1918 in Door County, Wisconsin, into a Belgian Catholic farm family. Following a long illness, Mary’s father died of tuberculosis when she was five years old. Her family attended the Catholic Church as she was growing up and Mary remembers many people coming to their house for food and lodging.

Mary went to public school in Door County, and then to St. Mary Springs Academy in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, “which was kind of a posh school and I had to work for my room and board there. But I loved it.” Mary took a one year course in teacher training at Outagamie County Teachers College (a normal school) in Kaukauna, Wisconsin, graduating in 1937.

Mary attended Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI, after her teacher training, again working for her room and board. She recalls her experience at Marquette:

When I went to Marquette, I was very poor. I had to work...but I was becoming kind of bourgeois and wanted to be asked to join a sorority. I never was, but I remember one college reporter asking me what I was going to wear at some dinner...I had nothing to wear...[I] never did...those things because I didn't have the clothes, had to darn my socks, and I'd go without lunch in order to go to school.

Mary learned about the Catholic Worker in a religion class at Marquette University. She describes what she did next: "that afternoon I went down to 5th & State St. [to] the Holy Family House...I met Larry Heaney, and Nina, and Betty Cuda and John Van Ells..and so I couldn't rest till I got to New York." Mary recalls that her family lived a Catholic Worker theology, so when she saw "the newspaper and there were pictures of a farm and other pictures and theology...it was just..what I needed and wanted." Mary wrote to Dorothy Day, asking if she could come to New York. In October of 1939, "with my last money, I took a Greyhound" to New York.

Mary remained in New York during the 1940s, working at the Catholic Worker house on Mott Street. Mary remembers her first day: "right away I met Julia Porcelli and I roomed with her in the tenement where we lived and went to Chinatown that very first night." Mary sold the newspaper, typed labels for the mailing list, distributed food and clothing, picketed, did laundry and cleaning at the

house, and attended retreats at the Easton farm. She later shared an apartment on Mulberry Street with an African American nurse.

By the end of the decade, Mary had met and married Charles Durnin at the Catholic Worker. They left New York and became a Catholic Worker cell in Appleton, WI. Mary and Charles had seven children, the oldest of whom died of leukemia. After her husband died, Mary moved to Milwaukee and worked with a church agency, which assisted the elderly. She differentiates what she did from “social work,” which she considers to be aligned with the government. Throughout Mary’s life, she has been involved with social justice causes. She traveled to England and lived there for several years, working with the Roman Catholic Chaplaincy of the University of London. Back in the United States, Mary participated in civil rights marches, protested the Vietnam War, and opened her home to people who needed a place to stay.

During the Reagan administration, Mary picketed the U.S. consulate in Nicaragua for their support of the contras. In both Nicaragua and Bogata, Colombia, Mary worked with others to ease conditions for children in orphanages. For the celebration of Dorothy Day’s 90th birthday, she was one of 224 people arrested for demonstrating at a nuclear test site in Nevada. Mary is currently involved with a group which holds walking prayer vigils in parts of the city where violence has taken place. She is also learning Russian from refugees who live in her apartment complex.

The Farms: Easton, PA and Newburgh, NY

In conceptualizing the vision of building a new society within the shell of the old, Catholic Worker co-founders Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin drew on personalist, distributist, and anarchist writers and philosophers. Farm communes, or “agronomic universities,” were a central component, in part influenced by anarchist writer Kropotkin’s challenges to create a society “composed of men and women, each of whom is able to work with his or her hands as well as with his or her brain” (Kropotkin, in Collinge, 2001 p. 392). Equally influential was the monastic system in Ireland (500-600 C. E.) which Maurin credited “with the system of cult, culture, and cultivation he promoted” (Collinge, p. 393).

As with other aspects of the growing Catholic Worker movement, farming communes benefited from the high unemployment rates during the Depression. Men and women found a place to use their skills. Motivated by the personalist perspective of making theory inseparable from practice, and encouraged by preliminary experiences in growing vegetables on a small plot of land on Staten Island, Catholic Workers in New York began looking for a suitable property to begin a farming commune (Piehl, 1982).

A reader of the newspaper assisted in the acquisition of a farm in Easton, PA, in 1936. Maryfarm, “the first Catholic Worker farming commune, was soon joined by Worker farms in Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Massachusetts. By 1939 farms also existed in eight other states” (Marlett, 2001, p. 408). Day (1939) describes Maryfarm at Easton:

Level fields stretched out for twenty-eight acres and overlooked a magnificent scene on all sides. There are peach trees, some apple and cherry trees, raspberry bushes, half an acre of asparagus. The house has three bedrooms, each roomy enough for three beds and an attic big enough for eight. There is a large dining-room and a good sized kitchen. The outbuildings are falling apart. The road to the place will always need mending. There are eight acres of woodland. The price of the farm is twelve hundred dollars, and we are able through the generosity of a friend to pay the thousand in cash and we can make up the rest immediately. In return for the use of this money, we are to build her a house and give her an acre of land. We have a good builder and the debt will be repaid or begin to be repaid at once. (pp. 137-138).

Catholic Workers Joseph Zarrella, Paul Toner, and James Montague began the work of refurbishing farm buildings, plowing, and caring for the animals (Piehl, 1982). The Catholic Worker bought the neighboring farm the following year, adding 40 acres and a spring which offered a much needed supply of water (Day, 1963).

A variety of housing options were planned, to accommodate both married and single Catholic Workers and guests. Never operational as a true working farm, the Easton farm became an important location for retreats, home for the destitute, and for the supply of food to the New York houses. The farming initiative also allowed the option for the growing number of families in the Worker to remain in the movement in a significant way.

Reflecting on the importance of the name selected for the farm at Easton, and subsequently at Newburgh, NY, Marlett (2001) states:

Maryfarm's name was not mere coincidence. Since the Nativity took place in a stable, the insistence of Mary's mediation of the Incarnation was extended to farming itself. Mary's mediatory role came, of course, through her motherhood, and a noticeable feature of all Catholic farm communes were large families. Maurin and the Catholic agrarians, along with Popes and other Catholic intellectuals, had always insisted that the family was the basic societal unit. (p.409).

Disputes between workers and scholars developed over time and lack of farming experience hampered the success of the venture (Piehl, 1982). Maryfarm at Easton remained in operation until 1946, when the Catholic Worker gave the land to some of the original families as the result of a dispute over property ownership. The Catholic Worker continued to maintain farms as "Houses of Hospitality on the Land" including those at Newburgh, Staten Island, and Tivoli, NY (Piehl, p.131).

Maryfarm at Newburgh, NY, was established as a Catholic Worker farm, retreat house, and hospice by 1947. This 96 acre farm was 60 miles north of New York City and provided the space to raise a variety of vegetables, as well as animals such as pigs, chickens and a cow (Day, 1999). Day (1954) describes the facilities available for retreats at the Newburgh farm:

Maryfarm has its program of retreats and its nightly hospitality for wayfarers. There is gardening and farming going on and year round days of recollection and private retreats. The retreat house atmosphere is there, and since the chapel is in the house, and there is a beautiful library and conference room, there is a great atmosphere of space and peace in the air. The men's quarters

are in the barn and carriage house and converted chicken coops, and we hope eventually to have more hermitages in this lay Carthusian atmosphere. The women have the house with its dormitories and two attic rooms. (pp. 2,8)

Day later noted the “long barn which housed all the children and the mothers of the young babies” at a retreat over Labor Day weekend in 1948 (Day, 1999, p. 229).

Retreats were held that focused on the dignity of each person, “the little way to God, the correlation of the spiritual and the material, making one’s work coincide with one’s faith as a Christian. All summer we will have these retreats at Newburgh, and after the retreats there will be discussions and work on the land, to raise the food for the breadline at Mott St.” (Day, 1947, p. 1).

As Maryfarm developed, many hands were required to keep the farm operating. Workers assisted with regular chores, such as tending to crops and animals, as well as repairing and adding to existing structures. Others served as cooks, bread bakers, canners, and printers, in addition to running the retreat house. Of the women interviewed for this study, Mary Helen Adler spent a significant amount of time living and working at the Newburgh farm.

Mary Helen Adler

Mary Helen Adler’s (Helen) involvement with the Catholic Worker began just after World War II. After a visit to Maryfarm in Easton, PA, Helen was invited to go to Philadelphia to help re-open the Catholic Worker house (which had closed during the war) in early 1947. After a short time in Philadelphia, Helen returned to Easton, and then was invited by Dorothy Day to move to Mott Street.

Mary Helen Adler (Helen) was born in Fort Worth, Texas, on July 7, 1919, the oldest daughter (followed by three younger brothers) of Waldo Adler and May Agnes Wootton Adler. Waldo was stationed in Fort Worth during World War I, training soldiers to fly using early ground flight simulators. Mary describes her family as a combination of “Jewish aristocracy and Irish Catholic tough.”

Helen’s father, Waldo, represented the American Jewish aristocracy. Waldo graduated from Harvard in the class of 1904 and was a friend of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Waldo’s father, Felix Adler, had founded the Ethical Culture Movement in New York in 1876. Waldo’s grandfather, Samuel Adler, was a Jewish intellectual leader in Germany who became rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in New York. Waldo’s mother was Helen Goldmark, whose father was a doctor and leader of the revolution to oust the monarchy in Austria-Hungary in 1848. Samuel Goldmark’s exile from Austria-Hungary caused him to flee to the United States. Helen Adler’s great-uncle was Louis Brandeis, Supreme Court Justice.

Helen’s mother, May Agnes Wootton, came from an Irish Catholic working class background. May’s parents emigrated to the U.S. from Ireland. May quit school after 8th grade to help support her family. She taught herself to be a milliner and decorated hats at Lit Brothers Department store in Philadelphia. May and Waldo met as scout leaders at a recreation center in Philadelphia and were married in Fort Worth, Texas. Helen asserts that neither of their families was very happy with the marriage.

After World War I, Waldo worked for a publishing company and pursued various real estate ventures. The family moved east to Philadelphia when Helen was 10. During the depression, the family became impoverished as Waldo’s commercial

real estate business crumbled; they received regular financial assistance from Waldo's mother. Helen remembers helping her mother serve soup and coffee to neighbors who had been evicted from their homes.

Helen attended Catholic and public schools as she was growing up. After graduating from Germantown High School, Helen received a scholarship to attend Chestnut Hill College, a Catholic college for women. Helen majored in English literature and remembers: "I hated the religion classes and used to cut everyone one of them because it was all memorization."

After college, Helen took the civil service exam. She states, "first, I ran a rationing board down in the midst of north Philly, which is the poor part of town...and you gave out ration tickets...sugar and gasoline tickets... Then I went up to Valley Forge General Hospital where all the worst cases from Anzio and Normandy Beach...all of the faces shot off...that's when I became a pacifist."

Helen remembers that she followed her father's advice to spend some time recuperating at a communal farm for artists, dancers, and writers in Massachusetts. A friend that she met at the farm invited Helen to join her at a Quaker ashram (commune) in Chester, PA. The Quakers lived in a small house near the tenements that the Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company rented to African-American laborers recruited from the south. The small Quaker community regularly went to the docks to pray for those who were preparing for war, as a witness against war activity. While at the ashram, Helen was invited by a friend, Margaret Peterson, to visit the Easton farm.

Helen talks about her introduction to the Catholic Worker: "...one day, my friend [Margaret Peterson] said to me...let's hitchhike up to the Easton farm where Dorothy Day lives in Pennsylvania. And I had never heard of Dorothy Day, but I was always game for an adventure." During Helen's stay, "Father Hessler preached the retreat that Dorothy was so fond of...we called it the Hugo retreat...that she insisted be the retreat for all retreatants. And it was based on the spirituality of St. John of the Cross and St. Theresa Avila and was [a] very ascetic life style...and I took it to complete heart."

When Dorothy Day invited Helen to help re-open the Catholic Worker house on Front Street in Philadelphia in early 1947, Helen agreed. As a result of the Hugo retreat, Helen remembers that she believed she had to carry out "hard physical labor to offer penance for my past sins...scrubbing and cleaning the Philadelphia house was the best way to do this." Helen moved to the Philadelphia house where she remained for about six months: "I was scared of the whole thing down there. It was a very rough neighborhood, Front Street, in those days. Now it's gentrified, but then it was a real rough neighborhood and I was scared and I didn't have the slightest idea what a house of hospitality was supposed to do. In other words, nobody came..."

Catholic Worker friends, Jack Thornton and Jane O'Donnell, encouraged Helen to return to the Easton farm. Following a retreat at Easton, Helen agreed to go to Mott Street. Helen remained with the Catholic Worker until 1952, at St. Joseph's house on Mott Street, and at Maryfarm in Newburgh, NY.

Like many other women in the Catholic Worker, Helen received training through the Grail. The Grail is a lay movement for unmarried Catholic women

founded by Jesuit scholar Jacques van Ginnekan, in Holland in 1921 (Kalven, 1999). In 1940, as a result of increasing pressure against the Grail in wartime Europe, Lydwine van Kersbergen and Joan Overboss became the first women of the Grail to travel to America. By 1944, the women founded Grailville, on a “183-acre farm in Loveland, Ohio, twenty miles northeast of Cincinnati” (Kalven, p. 44), which became a center for leadership training of American Catholic lay women.

After a year at Grailville, Helen received a request from Dorothy Day to help out at Maryfarm at Newburgh. Helen moved to Newburgh and assisted Jane O’Donnell with the running of the retreat house, in addition to doing laundry, making beds and cooking. Helen also lived at St. Joseph’s house in New York, where she remembers: “Irene Naughton and I ran the women’s house at Mott Street...[for] a few women on the 5th floor tenement.”

In addition to planning for the women’s house, Helen assisted in distributing clothing, and looked for apartments for homeless women and children. Helen remembers protesting with other Catholic Workers at the cemetery strike in New York, when Cardinal Spellman brought in seminarians to break the strike of grave diggers. Helen brought Joe Monroe, an African American friend from Philadelphia, to the Catholic Worker house in New York.

Helen left the Catholic Worker in 1952, when Dorothy Day began the process of selling Maryfarm in Newburgh. Helen did not move to the new Catholic Worker farm on Staten Island, Peter Maurin farm. She went back to Grailville for a time and eventually returned to school, where she pursued a nursing degree, and did some home nursing. Following this, Helen was hired by a Catholic priest to work as a

community organizer with African-American women and children. Helen lived in a house with several other Grail members during this time (16 years). Helen remains involved with issues affecting the poor and has continued to work with homeless women and children.

Holy Family House, Milwaukee, WI

Houses of hospitality developed in cities across the country during the 1930s. After visits to St. Joseph's house in New York, young Catholics returned home to form study groups which often led to the development of houses of hospitality. Planning for Holy Family House in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, began after Nina Polcyn visited the Catholic Worker on Charles Street in the summer of 1935.

By 1937, the Catholic Worker group was meeting "at 1019 N. Fifth Street, right next door to the Rescue Mission. It's one room with a store front and with a Negro family living upstairs" (Nina Polcyn, 1937, p. 3). Nina Polcyn Moore notes "Leonard Doyle was our leader in the early days." A publication from 1937 describes the activities at Holy Family House:

The Catholic Worker

HOLY FAMILY HOUSE

1019 N. Fifth Street

Milwaukee, Wis.

The Catholic Worker movement, headed by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, seeks to reconstruct the social order according to the plan of Pope Pius XI. These "radicals of the right" appeal to all, by the practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, to renew the Christian spirit; and in particular to Catholic workingmen to realize their supernatural solidarity in the Mystical Body of Christ, and through their unions to work for the establishment of a truly Christian civilization, based on that concept.

Meetings, consisting of a short lecture and a long discussion, are held at Holy Family House. The weekly schedule follows:

Sundays, 2:30 p.m.—General meeting; Catholic social doctrine, particularly on labor and economics.

Mondays, 7:30 p.m.—Liturgy; the social significance of the Mass and the Divine Office. Compline will be recited.

Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.—College students.

Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m.—Pax, Catholic conscientious objectors to modern war; ethics of war, causes, propaganda, remedies. Attendance does not imply membership in Pax.

Thursdays, 7:30 p.m.—Labor; the wage system, organization, Catholic idea of unions; Association of Catholic Trade Unionists.

Fridays, 7:30 p.m.—Readings in Christian thought.

PRIVATELY PRINTED - L. D.

Figure 3: The Catholic Worker, Holy Family House, 1937

(Courtesy of Marquette University Archives)

The December, 1937, issue of *The Catholic Worker* reports on the Milwaukee house, mentioning that: "tables, chairs, kitchen equipment, new stoves, chest of drawers, beds, magazines have been received during the past month. Blankets, cots, and other housing facilities, as well as food, are still urgently needed however." (p. 3). The same article also describes the regular activities of the Workers—selling the newspaper at many local churches each Sunday, the distribution of flyers and other literature, including *The Catholic Worker* newspaper at "labor rallies, forums, study clubs and similar groups." The reporter goes on to note adjustments to the meeting schedule:

Although the complete weekly meeting schedule was abandoned in favor of nightly Christian readings for the ‘Ambassadors,’ the Wednesday night peace forum has been widely publicized and is attracting men and women from diversified groups throughout the city. Anarchists, communists, atheists, agnostics, laboring men, relief workers, students, college professors are attending regularly. Muriel Lester, widely known London peace worker, visited Holy Family House recently when passing through Milwaukee on her way to the Orient. (*The Catholic Worker*, December 1937, p.3)

Nina Polcyn Moore remarks that “the schedule was unworkable as the staff was too weary to do all the planning. The Catholic Worker group all had jobs and lived at home...We were really over-committed.” She remembers: “I taught in the Cass Street School nearby and could be [at the house] late afternoons.” Describing one of the things she did in the early days, Nina recalls “I was the one who read from the gospel to those eating soup. Later I felt that was effrontery.”



Figure 4: Holy Family House, Milwaukee
(Courtesy of Nina Polcyn Moore)

By 1941, the Catholic Worker house in Milwaukee had moved to larger quarters on West Seeboth Street, where they sheltered “40 men and maintained a breadline for...60-100 additional people” (Staff letter, April 16, 1941). Catholic Workers in Milwaukee also published a newsletter called the *Lay Apostle*, and sponsored Chicago Catholic Worker John Cogley’s comedy play *I Wouldn’t Want To Live There*, put on by the cast of the Chicago Labor Theatre.

In February of 1942, Nina Polcyn, Florence Weinfurter, and Margaret Blaser sent a telegram to Dorothy Day explaining that they decided to close Holy Family House for a number of reasons: the onset of the war, the many changes in house management, and the difficulty of three women running the house from a distance. Nina Polcyn Moore, Mary Coisman Durnin (introduced earlier), and Isabelle Bates Mullin (Belle) were all involved with the Milwaukee Catholic Worker.

Nina Polcyn Moore

Nina Polcyn learned about the Catholic Worker movement through an active Sunday School program at her local parish in Milwaukee. After graduating from high school, Nina became a journalism major at Marquette University. When Nina noticed in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper that Dorothy Day was planning to travel to Chicago, she convinced Jeremiah O'Sullivan, Dean of the Marquette University School of Journalism, to invite Day to come to Milwaukee to speak at the university. After Day's visit to Marquette, Nina began to consider how she could become involved with the movement. During the summer of 1935, following her graduation, Nina traveled to St. Joseph's house on Charles Street in New York.

Nina was born August 21, 1914, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the oldest of three children of Helen Tomkiewicz Polcyn and Max Polcyn. Nina's parents both came from Polish Catholic backgrounds (the Poznan area in Poland). Helen's parents came to Wisconsin from Poland and she was born in Milwaukee in 1890. It is unclear which generation in Max's family came to the United States from Poland. Nina had two younger siblings. Her younger brother Ralph died at the age of 2 from croup and diphtheria in 1919. Nina's younger sister Helen was born in 1920.

Nina's parents had little formal education, and she describes her family as "very poor." Her mother attended school through sixth grade and her father attended school for 3 months each of three years. At the age of 12, Nina's mother Helen "went to work in ribbons and laces...in a department store [the Lion Store on Mitchell Street] owned by a wonderful Jewish man. At the end of the day, he put all the odds

and ends in a garbage can and the women took them all out and sewed the ribbons on their slips and underwear.”

Nina describes her father’s job with the railroad:

He was a switchman, a very dangerous job. It meant standing on top of box cars and signaling with a lantern, that this car goes to Detroit, that one goes to Mississippi, etc...a very dangerous job. Those switchmen were very loyal to one another, and he belonged to the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen for 50 years.

Nina remembers that her mother Helen helped members of her father Max’s family by filling out paperwork for the Railroad with her “wonderful handwriting.” She also demonstrated railroad lantern signals in the kitchen of the Polcyn home.

A socialist, Max Polcyn was a follower of Eugene V. Debs and a supporter of Mayor Dan Hoan (the socialist mayor of Milwaukee from 1925-1940). Nina notes that her father “had a strong sense of unions... [and] believed that change has to come from the bottom, not the top.” Nina’s father Max joined the Masons when Nina was six years old. Nina remembers that this “led to a lot of tears and arguments in our kitchen because my mother said she could not face Jesus having a husband who was a Mason. But what the Masons gave to my father was a social conscience.”

Nina’s family lived next door St. Matthew’s Catholic Church in Milwaukee. Their home was frequented by those in need, and the family regularly fed men who came to their door. Nina attended public schools, due to her father’s ongoing critique of the local Catholic Church. She remembers her father looking “at the three priests at the church, and say[ing that] they never worked a day in their lives, that they had no

idea of poverty, that they were taken care of, never had to bring water in, always had somebody else to cook their meals. He just had a great sense of vision of what life ought to be like for the poor.” As a child, Nina’s father had been a water boy in a lumber camp. She recalls that he “got 50 cents a week which he brought home to his mother on Sundays.”

At age six, Nina’s mother sent her to Sunday School for religious instruction at St. Matthew’s. Nina recalls that she stayed with the School until she was 28, and ended up “being in charge.” As a young person, Nina participated in the popular class taught by Nellie Welch. Nellie also organized “a summer school and she had the latest people from the Jesuits in St. Louis....people that came and told us about baptism...about the Eucharist...we had songs...and dances...you see, we had an education that kids in the public schools didn’t have...we were just absorbed by all this.”

Nina was introduced to *The Catholic Worker* newspaper through Franklyn Kennedy, a priest who was a graduate student in journalism at Marquette, and was editor of the diocesan paper. Kennedy was an early subscriber to *The Catholic Worker* and brought copies to be distributed at the Catholic Instruction League at St. Matthew’s in 1934.

After Nina graduated from high school, her mother’s sister paid the \$100 tuition per semester for Nina to attend Marquette University, where she was a journalism major. Nina graduated from Marquette in 1935. She states, “I could hardly wait to go to New York...so I persuaded my parents. My father had a railroad pass in 1935...I went in July and stayed with some friends in Washington for 3 days [with

Helen Doyle, sister of Leonard Doyle of our Milwaukee group]...And then I went to New York and stayed at the Catholic Worker for a month. And that was just absolutely incredible.”

Nina shared a room with Evangeline Mercier on the top floor of the Catholic Worker house, along with “all the other bag ladies.” The two women helped with chores at the house, began work on a maternity guild for expectant mothers living in nearby tenements, and distributed the newspaper at the National Biscuit Company. Nina also remembers weekly protests at the German consulate that summer and accompanying Dorothy Day to protest the presence of the German ship, The Bremen, in New York Harbor. The two women were in the midst of thousands protesting the Bremen and witnessed the Nazi flag being torn off the ship and thrown into the harbor.

When Nina returned to Milwaukee, she met with a group in the basement of the Marquette Journalism building called the “Monday Worry Club” (the group held their meetings on Thursdays). This group looked for a suitable place for a house of hospitality in the city, and found the storefront on North Fifth Street. Holy Family moved to several other locations before it closed in 1942.

Nina, along with two other women, Margaret Blaser, and Florence Weinfurter, formed a core of supporters for the new house. All three worked during the day (Nina was a teacher) and came to the house after work, for lectures, discussions, planning sessions, and food distribution. Holy Family House remained open for four years until issues related to changes in the management of the house of hospitality, as well as factors related to the war, caused it to close. Nina remembers: “We found that the

men in the house were selling beds and that it was not prudent for three women to run a house of hospitality for men with no [live-in] supervision.”



Figure 5: Betty Cuda, Margaret Blaser, Florence Weinfurter, and Nina Polcyn, 1940
(Courtesy of Marquette University Archives)

In 1943, Nina Polcyn, Margaret Blaser and Florence Weinfurter were invited to become part of the Sheil School of Social Studies in Chicago by Catherine de Hueck, founder of Friendship House. Catherine de Hueck was an immigrant from Russia who began a lay inter-racial ministry in Harlem called Friendship House. The movement grew to include houses in cities across the United States and Canada, as well as farming communities. Catherine went on to found Madonna House in

Combermere, Ontario, which has served as a retreat house and community for 50 years (Duquin, 1995).

Catherine de Hueck convinced Bishop Bernard Sheil, of Chicago, of the need for an adult education school that could serve as an alternative to the “Abraham Lincoln School, where Chicago Communists trained laborers” (Duquin, 1995, p. 204). This school for adults is described by Nina as “a labor school...with languages, [and] social action,” and a book store. Registration was held in January of 1943, with classes “scheduled to start on February 1” (Duquin, p. 204).

Nina, Margaret, and Florence lived in an apartment at 404 Evergreen in Chicago, and “ran a kind of house of hospitality from there.” Nina introduced the speakers at the Friday night Sheil School Forums: “we had Maisie Ward [of Sheed and Ward publishing company]...we had to hold it in the boxing ring... [because] so many people came to hear her.”

Nina worked as manager of St. Benet’s bookstore in Chicago for 30 years, continuing on after the Sheil School closed in 1955. Nina married Thomas Eugene Moore, a widower with 5 children, in 1973, and moved to Sauk Center, Minnesota. Moore died in 1995. Nina maintained a close relationship with Dorothy Day throughout her life, providing bail money for Day when she was jailed during the air raid protests in the 1950s, and traveling with her on a three week trip to Poland, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, and Rumania during the 1970s.

Isabelle Bates Mullin

Isabelle Bates (Belle) became involved in the Catholic Worker in Milwaukee after visiting Holy Family House with her brother Francis. She states, “my brother was always alert to things going on in town and in Milwaukee they opened a Catholic Worker house...he went down to see what was going on and that’s how I got connected with the Catholic Worker.”

Belle Bates was born in Eaglesville, Iowa, on August 10, 1916, to an Irish Catholic working class family. Belle’s mother was a school teacher and after marrying her father, had four children. She died with the birth of the fourth baby when Belle was a small child. The baby was raised by an aunt. Her father remarried a year and a half later and Belle was raised by her stepmother, “a wonderful woman [who] took very good care of us.”

Belle’s father worked on the development of new roads throughout the Midwestern U.S. Belle states: “my father was a civil engineer and moved around a great deal. So I also lived in Austin, Minnesota where he worked, and in Savoy, Illinois, which is near Champagne, and Oakland, Illinois, and Terre Haute, Indiana, and Peru, Illinois, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.”

Belle attended Catholic schools when they were available in the towns where her family lived. She graduated from Messmer High School in Milwaukee, a Catholic co-educational high school. Belle comments: “...that was the extent of my education..my formal education. I had other education.” The church was an important part of her life—“we went to church every week, every Sunday. I went to ...Catholic schools whenever I could and participated in Catholic groups. So my education was

strongly Catholic.” Belle also participated in the Sodality at her church, which was a group for young women organized for the purpose of prayer and service.

After Belle graduated from high school, she moved to Washington, D.C., to work in a restaurant started by the dietitian from Belle’s high school. She spent a year working in the restaurant, which was located in the northeast section of Washington, near Catholic University. Belle recalls why she left after a year: “my father died, so I had to go home.”

Belle’s father and stepmother both had strokes and were taken to the hospital at the same time. Her father died within a week (March of 1936), and her stepmother lived until the following October. Belle then took an office job in Milwaukee, “which was not much of a challenge, but it was work.” During this time, she began to attend the Wednesday night meetings at the Catholic Worker house. Belle enjoyed the atmosphere: “it was a very educational evening.” She describes the “diverse group of people...[who] were articulate...and you learned a lot being with them. They talked about what was happening today and how things could be changed...you know, they were thinking people. I found them very stimulating.”

In 1941, Belle heard Catherine de Hueck speak at the Catholic Worker house. Nina Polcyn encouraged Belle to answer Catherine de Hueck’s call for volunteers for Friendship House in New York, and Belle agreed. “I didn’t think I could take the life of a Catholic Worker,” Belle recalls, “I needed a little more order.” In March of 1942, Belle moved to Harlem, and stayed with Friendship House for six years. Belle worked in the library and as assistant director of the New York house.

While at Friendship House, Belle became acquainted with James Mullin. They were married in January of 1948 and have lived in the same home for over 50 years, quite a change from Belle's childhood of frequent moves. Belle's husband James was a telephone company repairman before retiring. They have 5 children. Belle states that her involvement with the other people at the Milwaukee Catholic Worker was an education for her:

[I] learned a lot with being with them. They talked about what was happening today and how things could be changed and what needed to be changed...they were thinking people. I found them very stimulating...I didn't have any [formal] advanced education...It was very enlightening and stimulating and it was always...people, articulate people who could express themselves well and you could understand what they meant. It was like an education for me, going to the Catholic Worker.

Rochester Catholic Worker—St. Joseph's House

Dorothy Day responded to an invitation to speak from the Rochester Catholic Women's Club soon after the Catholic Worker began in 1933 (Murray, 1990). A study group started shortly after her visit. Day was also invited by Sister Teresa Marie, Dean of Nazareth College, to speak at the college in 1936. By the following year, three groups were meeting to study the possibility of opening a Catholic Worker house, "two associated with colleges and one meeting at a downtown library" (Murray, p. 127).

One of the study groups was at Nazareth College, a Catholic college for women founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph. Nazareth College student Elizabeth Finegan (Betty) was an early visitor from Rochester to the Catholic Worker house on Mott Street. Betty traveled with her sister Mary Katherine to New York for Easter in 1937. She wrote about their experiences for the Nazareth College quarterly publication, *Verity Fair*. The sisters became involved in the study group at Nazareth College, along with Mary Bigham and Margaret Beahon.

By 1937, the group was granted the use of a settlement house owned by the St. Peter Claver Society in a African American neighborhood, and “held weekly meetings, conducted Sunday school classes for black children, and distributed clothing and food baskets to people in the neighborhood” (Murray, 1990, p. 127). After two additional moves, the group bought their own house on South Avenue in 1941. Still in use as St. Joseph’s house today, the large brick building dates from 1875. Mary Katherine Finegan’s painting of the Holy Spirit from the 1940s is still visible on the wall of the dining room, as a result of a restoration by her daughter Margaret.



**Figure 6: Holy Spirit painting by Mary Katherine Finegan
St. Joseph's house, Rochester (Courtesy of Tom Multhaner)**

With the assistance of an attorney, the group incorporated and formed a board of directors, an unusual step for Catholic Worker houses, as “incorporation was viewed as a dangerous compromise with the capitalist system by other Worker houses” (Murray, p. 128).

In addition to the lay members of the Rochester Catholic Worker, Father Benedict Ehmann and Father George Vogt were actively involved. A Catholic Worker farm developed at Milt Fess’ farm outside Rochester. Here Catholic Workers grew and canned vegetables (especially tomatoes), which supplied St. Joseph’s house in Rochester. As with other houses, local Workers created their own “labor sheet” or newspaper to distribute with the New York *Catholic Worker* newspaper. During World War II, St. Joseph’s house remained open, unlike many Catholic Worker houses across the country. However, there was disagreement among the Workers over pacifism. Some advocated the just war theory and went to war. Others were pacifists and faced different consequences. Joseph Czarniecki went to jail when his

conscientious objector status was denied and Clair Howland spent two years in a conscientious objector camp in Colorado (Murray, 1984, Doyle interview, 2003).

Elizabeth Finegan Doyle, Mary Bigham Farren, and Margaret Beahon Winegarden were actively involved in the Rochester Catholic Worker.

Elizabeth Finegan Doyle

Elizabeth Finegan (Betty) first heard about the Catholic Worker movement while she was a student at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY. Sister Teresa Marie, the Dean of the Catholic women's college, invited Dorothy Day to the College to speak shortly after the movement began. Betty recalls, "And that was the spark really, that started us all off." Betty describes her subsequent visit to Mott Street with her sister as opening "our eyes to poverty and injustice and all sorts of things."

Elizabeth Finegan (Betty) was born in Rochester, New York, in 1918, the youngest of three children of George William Finegan and Katherine Hyland Finegan. Betty describes her family as "fairly well-to-do." Her mother's family was Irish Catholic and her father's family Irish and German Catholic. Katherine had a high school education and following her graduation, worked as a secretary. George completed grade school at a German Catholic school where some classes were held in German, helping him to converse with his German grandmother. George added to his education by reading and taking courses.

George and Katherine were married in 1913. Their first child, a son, died at the age of six months from what was then called "summer complaint" (diarrhea). Betty's older sister Mary Katherine was born in 1916 and she was born two years

later. When Betty was three months old, her mother Katherine died from influenza. Betty's father, George William Finegan, was 27 at the time of Betty's mother's death. Betty went to live with her aunt, Julia Hastings (Molly) during the flu epidemic. The two girls eventually moved with their father to the home of her grandparents (her mother's parents, Johanna Hickey and Michael Hyland).

Betty's father George first worked as an electrician but became interested in the growing applications of X-ray technologies, and bought into a German company (Kelley-Koet) that sold X-ray equipment. Betty remembers that her father "used to take us with him quite often when he'd go. He had to teach the doctors how to use these things." When Betty was 11, her father married Helen Fitzpatrick. The girls remained with their grandparents, while their father and his new wife moved to the suburbs of Rochester. George and Helen later had a son, George, Jr.

Betty's Catholic education was provided by "Sisters of St. Joseph, all the way through," including Nazareth Academy and Nazareth College (both institutions for women). She describes Nazareth College as a small school run by "very brilliant women." Betty majored in English and enjoyed courses in theology, Latin, and the history of English literature. While at Nazareth, Betty wrote for a campus publication, *Verity Fair*.

When Dorothy Day came to speak at the college and invited students to visit the house on Mott Street, Betty remembers that "my sister Mary Katherine and I were the only ones that volunteered to go." The sisters traveled to New York during Easter vacation in 1937 and stayed in a small apartment near the Catholic Worker. Betty notes that the apartment was "two rooms [one kitchen , one bedroom], with just a

toilet off the kitchen [which had] no sink. The sink was a big metal tub...you took out the inner portion to take a bath. Then there was no refrigerator...you just put your food out on a ledge, you know...a little box on the ledge. And if it was summer, it was just too bad...you couldn't keep it. So it was just one little cot there and my sister and I slept on this little cot...but we just loved being there.”



**Figure 7: John Cort, Mary Katherine Finegan, Betty Finegan,
Julia Porcelli, Stanley Vishnewski, 1937**

(Courtesy of Marquette University Archives)

While in New York, the sisters “helped with the newspaper...in the offices and helped serve the breadline.” They also took time to attend plays and went to the Metropolitan Opera to see La Traviata with Stanley Vishnewski. Betty describes what was happening the day the photo was taken (Fig. 5): “we had been helping in the house...that day and Stanley was going to take us out...he was a great one for

being...a tour advisor...And he was going to take us out to sell some *Catholic Workers*.”

After visiting St. Joseph’s house on Mott Street, Betty and Mary Katherine became involved in the effort to start a Catholic Worker house in Rochester. Betty remembers an early meeting taking place in 1938 in the Catholic Evidence Guild Library at the Knights of Columbus Building in Rochester. The Catholic Evidence Guild Library had many books by and about Cardinal Newman and other well-known Catholic writers. Betty recalls, “The reason we left there and found some place else was that on one night when we met, there was a black man, called ‘colored’ at that time, you know, who came in...very nice person, who...wanted to be in the group. And the people in charge [of the building] turned him away and they asked us not to meet there any more if we were going to have colored people in it...We were just shocked, of course...I think he was allowed to stay that evening, but they came to us and told us afterwards that they didn’t want ‘them.’ This was a Catholic place, you know...we were furious about that. So we just left and did not go back.”

Betty remembers the group wanting to become involved in some direct action after many months of study and discussion. With the advent of the first Catholic Worker house (named for Martin de Porres), the group began to cook soup and stew to serve homeless and hungry people, who arrived almost immediately. She describes the group as mostly “between 18 and 25” years of age; “it was a wonderful group of people.”



Figure 8: Betty Finegan, 1940
 (Courtesy of Betty Finegan Doyle)

Betty graduated from Nazareth College in 1940 and went to Newport, R.I. to join her sister Mary Katherine, and to live and work with artist Ade Bethune. Artistic young women associated with the Catholic Worker often spent time as apprentices with Ade Bethune in Newport. Betty describes the surroundings:

It was like a fairy tale to us...She had this loft...an upper floor up above the John Stevens Shop, which was a woodworking shop. And we just went up the little stairs on the side...it was just this big room, that's all. There was just a tiny little room partitioned off for cots...Ade and whoever was her apprentice at the moment slept in this little room on cots. And the rest of us had...eventually she had probably 3 or 4 apprentices. So we just put out cots at night and slept in this big room. We had an old wood stove...we did all our own cooking and for us, it was just wonderful, it was like heaven.

In 1941, Betty and her sister returned to Rochester following their stepmother's sudden death from leukemia. Their father died of a heart attack just two years later and the sisters remained in Rochester to care for their young stepbrother.

George eventually went to live with their father's attorney after a few years and then left home. Betty and Mary Katherine later sold their father's house and lived for several years above Catholic Workers Art and Mary Farren's home in Rochester. Betty worked in a nursery school and then as a hospital receptionist.

Betty was involved with the Catholic Worker from 1937 until 1948. She states that her father was supportive of the Catholic Worker financially, and drove Betty and her sister to the meetings on Tuesday nights. In addition to attending the meetings, Betty remembers gathering and mending clothing, working at the farm, assisting with cooking, canning, and cleaning. She states that the house on South Avenue was "gradually fixed...up so we could have people living upstairs...and we had...a very nice chapel. And kind of recreation room for the men..." She remembers writing letters to newspapers, protesting at the Chancery office, as well as social service offices, over issues such as housing and labor.

In 1947, Betty traveled to Minneapolis to visit Mary Katherine, her husband Carlos Cotton, and their first child. Betty met her future husband, Leonard Doyle, at Thanksgiving dinner there, and 10 days later they were engaged. They married a few months later, in 1948. Leonard had been involved in the Catholic Worker in Milwaukee and the two shared much in common. Leonard was a translator (from Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French) at the Liturgical Press at St. John's University. Betty notes that her husband had made a "very important translation of the Rule of St. Benedict." Betty and Leonard built a house on Achmann Lake and lived there throughout their married life.

The Doyles had 9 children, one of whom died at six weeks. Betty notes that she and her husband had 5 boys and 3 girls, as did her sister Mary Katherine and her husband Carlos, who lived close by. They became part of a close group of 8-10 people associated with St. John's, all of whom were having large families. One of their close friends was James F. Powers, the award-winning Minnesota-based author.

When Betty's husband died in 1970, there were still seven children at home. She first got a job in a nursing home but soon went back to school at St. Benedict's (40 years after completing her first degree) and pursued a two year program in Mental Health and Human Services. Following this, Betty worked with Social Services in St. Cloud in the Senior Companion Program. Betty also worked closely with Vietnamese and Hmong families, as well as serving as an ESL teacher.

In thinking about her experiences with the Catholic Worker, Betty states: "I often wish my children and my grandchildren could have had a time like that, where...everybody really had the same intent. They all loved God and they all loved others in different ways, but they wanted to do good, they really cared about people and cared...a great deal about politics, too..."

Mary Bigham Farren

Mary Bigham was a student at Nazareth College in Rochester when Dorothy Day came to campus to speak in 1936. Following this visit, Mary became involved with the group which met to plan a Catholic Worker house for Rochester, because she was impressed by both the words and the lives of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. She remembers "we borrowed a room in a settlement house and we went to the local

parish and said if there are any people who are hungry, would you send them over and we'll have a cup of soup for them. And so I guess that's how we began...while I was in college.”

Mary was born on November 3, 1916, in Canandaigua, New York. Mary's father was a farmer and her mother was in the real estate business. Mary was the middle child of three, with an older sister and a younger brother. She describes both of her parents as being “very involved in the community.” Her mother was active in the Vincent de Paul Society at their local church, helping local families who were poor.

Mary attended St. Mary's parochial school: “at that time, in the early...grades, we couldn't ride the bus if we were going to the parochial school. So my father, who was not a Catholic, would get up extra early and do the chores so he could drive us down to St. Mary's.” Mary then attended Canandaigua Academy, the public high school in town, before entering Nazareth College in Rochester. She was an English and sociology major at Nazareth, and graduated in 1938. Mary also received training with the Grail in Ohio, and spent a year at the National Catholic School of Social Services in Washington, D.C. (now part of Catholic University).

Mary's sister Margaret became involved with the Catholic Worker while a student at Vassar College. Both remained active supporters of the Worker throughout their lives. Mary remembers that her parents were supportive of their involvement in the Worker “to a degree. When my sister became involved with a sailor she knew through the Worker, my family wasn't too happy about that. But yes, indeed, they did

support us and they had people come here and stay.” Dorothy Day was a regular overnight guest when she came to Rochester.

Mary remembers the weekly meetings and the celebration of Mass in the chapel of St. Joseph’s house. She states, “In later years, a small group of married couples used the meeting and the spiritual gathering at the house as their weekly fulfillment.” Mary recalls that their “loves were focused on and were surrounded by the Worker.”

Mary and the other women at the Rochester Worker helped with and served the meals, sorted and gave out clothing, and distributed *The Catholic Worker* newspaper in front of churches. During World War II, St. Joseph’s house remained open and Mary recalls “we rented the 3rd floor for Jamaicans who were brought up to work at Strong Memorial Hospital because of the shortage.” The Rochester Catholic Worker also sponsored a labor school, organized by Father George Vogt, which “had weekly meetings and drew people who wanted to learn more about justice and the Worker.”

Mary married Arthur Farren in 1943. With her husband, Mary spent most of her life involved with St. Joseph’s house in Rochester. St. Joseph’s is one of the few Catholic Worker houses which has remained open continuously since the 1930s. Mary worked as a social worker and Art was an editor for *The Catholic Courier*, and the couple had four children. Mary notes that two have been most involved in the Catholic Worker way of life. Pat, who died recently of brain cancer, was active at St. Joseph’s house and was jailed as a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. A judge required that Pat move out of the area after his CO status was confirmed. Mary

describes her daughter Margie as one who truly lives “voluntary poverty.” Mary continues to support the Rochester Catholic Worker.

Margaret Beahon Winegarden

Following Dorothy Day’s visit to Nazareth College, Margaret Beahon (Peg) joined a group of women from the college who traveled to Mott Street in New York during Thanksgiving vacation. Peg recalls that her family “thought she was crazy” but supported her involvement. Peg became close friends with Mary Bigham, as well as with Betty and Mary Katherine Finegan.

Peg Beahon was born on June 26th, 1916, in Rochester, New York, in the house her grandfather built. She was the first of four children of Mary Dolores Caring and William James Beahon. William’s parents were immigrants from Ireland. Peg’s mother Dolores’ parents were German and Alsatian, and it was her grandparents who had come to the United States from Germany. William went to Normal School in Rochester to become a teacher and taught math in a public high school. Dolores attended Nazareth Academy, a five year Catholic high school. She came from a musical family and Peg remembers learning much about music from her mother. Her mother was a gardener and an enthusiastic volunteer at polling places during elections in Rochester. Peg’s parents were involved in caring for hungry and homeless people in Rochester during the Depression.

Peg describes her education as a child: “we were not highly religious, but it was sort of a given that we would be going to parochial schools. And my father was a reasonably responsible, devout, Catholic...not extremely so, but...I think because he

taught in public school [he was]...open to a lot of different things.” During the Depression, she remembers that her “street was hit very hard and my father, who was a school teacher was considered ‘well-off.’ There was not extra money in our house...believe me, but still he had a secure job.” Peg recalls that her father would shop for meat and would get “something for a family across the street...he’d say to us after dinner on Saturday night... ‘I think I’ll go and see so-and-so’ ...he’d go with a package under his arm.”

The family frequently fed people at their house. Peg recalls her father providing food for the men who came to their door. In cold weather, men would come into the kitchen to eat, sharing stories with the family. Peg states:

I remember the men at the kitchen table talking...one of them [talked] about his ship “The City of Buffalo,” which he said (it was a horror story to a kid)...broke in half. He told us he was on the ship, but he was still alive and I don’t know whether he was making it up or not to this day.

Peg attended Catholic schools run by the Sisters of St. Joseph, including Nazareth Academy, the high school associated with Nazareth College. She studied English and history at Nazareth College, and graduated in 1938. While at Nazareth College, Peg heard Dorothy Day speak and became involved with the group that was working toward starting a Catholic Worker house in Rochester. Peg remembers her response after hearing Day speak at the college: “almost immediately a few of us, this was a women’s college at that point...got our heads together and decided we had to do something about that.”

Peg remembers a trip to visit the Catholic Worker in New York, during Thanksgiving vacation of her second year of college:

[We] stopped at the Catholic Worker and I think [we] spent a night there..It was a very exciting time...We drove in an old car, a very old car. We drove in a snowstorm all night...we got off the road into a ditch...these five dumb girls. So we saw a farmhouse in the distance and...knocked on the door...They let us sleep some place for the rest of the night. We'd been driving in this blinding snowstorm...it was 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. We slept a couple of hours, got back on the road, went to New York City. We had a wonderful time.

Later, several students began a study group with the help of a priest, George Vogt, "to learn about labor and [to] learn about the problems that were going on, over and above whatever we had in school."

Following her graduation from Nazareth College, Peg worked in a hospital as a recording secretary. Peg recalls the local labor paper at the Rochester Catholic Worker. She served as assistant editor: "Art Farren...was doing a small paper, which I typed for him, and ...this was all the beginning of the local Catholic Worker in a way." She also remembers canning tomatoes grown at Milt Fess' farm and protesting unfair labor practices at a local bakery.

In 1940, Peg took a federal exam and received a call to go to Washington, D.C. for a job tabulating 1940 census results at the Census Bureau. She met her husband Calman Winegarden there and they married in 1941. He was Jewish and converted to Catholicism. Peg and Cal had two daughters, and lived in Greenbelt and

later Garrett Park, Maryland. During this time, Peg worked part-time on a Masters degree in English at Catholic University, completing everything (including the thesis) except one final course.

During the 1950s, Peg's husband lost his job and Peg went to work as a typist with the Biosciences Exchange in Washington. She later went back to school to get her Masters degree in social work from Catholic University, which she completed in 1957. Peg then worked as a social worker and supervisor at Family and Child Services, a private agency in Washington, and after her husband left, she raised her daughters alone. Peg describes herself as a radical. Peg was involved with Washington, D.C.'s Zaccheus Kitchen for years and encouraged a large group of people in the community of Garrett Park, Maryland, to become involved in assisting the Kitchen and lending support to American Friends' Service Committee.

House of Christ the Worker, Buffalo, New York

The Catholic Worker in Buffalo developed out of a study group which met at the home of Michael and Julia Hastings (Molly), the uncle and aunt of Mary Katherine and Betty Finegan of the Rochester Catholic Worker. Harriet Kennedy, an early supporter of the Catholic Worker in Buffalo describes the group in a letter written in the spring of 1939 to Dorothy Day:

We have had one meeting in which we went over the aims of the Catholic Worker as stated in the May issue of the paper. The plan ahead of us is to study and imbue ourselves with the philosophy of the Catholic Worker. But everyone seems to be in a fog as to what to study, myself included. The

continued interest of the group in our plan for a Catholic Worker branch in Buffalo depends on the distribution and discussion of the ideas and philosophy of the Worker. Perhaps thirty copies of the paper and two copies each of your pamphlets will tide us over awhile on our reading. Could you also send us a list of books for suggested reading? (Kennedy, 1939).

The House of Christ the Worker opened in August, 1939, in a storefront on Tupper Street in Buffalo. A newspaper account from the *Buffalo Union and Echo* describes the opening of the house: “at 108 Tupper Street, Monday night, the Catholic Worker group of Buffalo served its first meal to hungry guests, who number more than 30” (“House of Hospitality,” 1939).

The following year, a group of young people, with the assistance of a Spanish priest named Father Bosch, started Casa de Frange Pane (House of the Breaking of Bread) in the Terrace, a poor section of Buffalo. This house operated at 110 Church Street (Condren, 1997). In a letter to Dorothy Day, Adele Butler (n.d.) describes the first meal at Casa Frange Pane:

It was very thrilling to welcome the poor in our broken down but cheerful House. I find it hard to believe that we really have another House and that we have so much work before us: its seems best to go day by day doing the best we can because to look into the future is terrifying. But everyone is working very hard and Father [Bosch] is giving us a wonderful spirit which means so much.

Buffalo Health Department requirements eventually forced the group to rethink their plans. The Church Street group joined with the original group on Tupper Street to

open a house on Seneca and Swan Streets in 1941. The group was active through the beginning of World War II, and closed as participants joined the armed forces or worked for the war effort.

Adele Butler Nash was involved in the Catholic Worker in Buffalo during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Adele Butler Nash

Adele Butler was introduced to the Catholic Worker through a friend, Harriet Kennedy. Harriet's brother and sister lived in New York and knew Dorothy Day. Harriet invited Adele to the home of Michael and Molly Hastings in Buffalo to hear Dorothy Day speak during one of her visits to the area. Adele describes what happened at the meeting: "There was a small group present. But I was really impressed. It struck me right away...this is what I've been looking for. People have asked me, why? I think if there was one word that would describe Dorothy to me at that time...it was authentic." The meeting took place in the spring of 1939 and the group continued to meet and study throughout the summer at the Hastings home.

Adele Butler was born on June 26, 1918, in Buffalo, New York, to Irish Catholic parents Mary Adele McHenry and Andrew Stephen Butler. Mary's grandparents came from Ireland. Being one generation removed from emigration, Mary was better educated and more affluent than Andrew. Andrew's father came from Ireland to work on the railroad. Their family was very poor, and Andrew left high school to work in a paint business in Cleveland. After moving to Buffalo for another position, he became very successful, eventually owning his own paint

company. Adele noted that her mother had a high school as well as a “Victorian” education: singing, playing the piano, painting china. Adele was the youngest in the family, with one older sister, and two older brothers.

Adele attended Catholic schools as she was growing up, in addition to one year at Buffalo State College campus school for 9th grade. Adele went away for high school to the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Albany, New York. Adele remembers: “I went there for three years. I loved it...It was a spectacular education.” The focus of the school was “academic studies of religion and daily practice of it.” After graduating from high school in 1936, Adele returned home to help the family. Her mother had become ill (with what today might be considered Alzheimer’s) and was no longer able to manage the household.

Adele was involved with the Buffalo Catholic Worker until the house closed during World War II. While her family was not overly enthusiastic about her involvement with the Catholic Worker, Peter Maurin was a guest at their home when he was in Buffalo. Adele describes her life at the time as living in two worlds: one with affluent friends, and one with the Catholic Worker. She remembers friends who:

Used to tease me because on Sunday morning I’d be out in front of the church selling the paper, this Catholic Worker paper, and then a couple of hours later I’d be over at this ritzy place called the Park Lane, having brunch or a couple of drinks or something. My friends thought there’s inconsistency here. I kind of had to agree with them, but I thought...well, I want to do this...I have to be home but I want to do this...I lived in the two worlds. And I liked both worlds.

The Buffalo Worker offered breakfast and lunch to the people who came through the line. Breakfast was coffee and doughnuts. For lunch, they served soup, bread and coffee. About a year after the first house opened, Adele joined a group of younger people within the Buffalo Catholic Worker who split off to form another house of hospitality, Casa de Frange Pane. Adele recalls:

The younger people in our group began to feel that the older people were keeping it very traditional, very rule oriented, and we wanted a more radical approach....there were two priests who were like chaplains for us. One of them was a Spanish priest. He had come from Spain and his name was Reverend Raymond Bosch and he taught at Canisius College.



Figure 9: George McCabe, Adele Butler, and Father Bosch gather clothing for the Catholic Worker house in Buffalo (Courtesy of Adele Butler Nash)

Adele also served as editor of the local Catholic Worker newspaper, which was distributed with *The Catholic Worker* from New York. The group also held weekly meetings, often with a speaker and discussion. Adele remembers that the

group participated in a strike at Bell Aircraft in Buffalo. With the move to the new location on Swan and Seneca Streets, Adele recalls:

We had plenty of room and an eager group of workers and supporters, including Jackie Noble, now Mother Prioress of the Dominican Monastery on Doat Street, George McCabe, a Professor of Economics at Canisius College, John Smith, a writer for the Courier Express, which helped us get out the paper, Father McGee and, of course, Father Bosch. Many more dedicated persons joined in this effort to serve the poor in an unconventional way.

As a result of the growing wartime economy, the focus of members of the community changed. Adele remembers that it was difficult to maintain the house with so many young people going off to war or going to work in war-related industries in the area: “we couldn’t maintain it, we didn’t have the people who were willing to do the work, we didn’t have the financial support...everybody said everyone should be at work, or they ought to go in the army. It was just a...pro-military attitude and we just closed.”

After the house closed, Adele moved to Washington, D.C., with a friend, Jackie Noble. Adele worked in a store owned by her father and lived with Jackie in a house with a community of Jewish and Catholic people studying St. Thomas Aquinas near Catholic University. Following this experience in Washington, Adele entered a Dominican convent of contemplative nuns in Buffalo, followed shortly afterward by her friend Jackie. After 5 years, Adele became sick, was hospitalized, and left the convent to recover. When her father died, Adele used some money from her inheritance to go to Hunter College in New York, where she studied art and

education. Adele states that Hunter required that students “promise to teach school for a certain amount of time after graduation.” Adele focused on Early Childhood education (nursery through grade 3) and taught briefly in Manhattan.



Figure 10: Adele Butler, 1945
(Courtesy of Adele Butler Nash)

Adele then became reacquainted with Simon Nash, whom she had known from her Catholic Worker days, and they returned to Buffalo to get married in 1956. Adele and Simon had four children. Simon died 10 years ago after a long career as an attorney and administrative law judge. Adele later received a Master’s degree in Art Therapy Studies from Buffalo State College. Adele continues to support the Catholic Worker through Hope Hospitality House, which offers hospitality to families whose loved ones are in Attica, Wyoming, and Wende prisons.

Chicago Catholic Worker

After a visit by Peter Maurin to Chicago in 1936, *The Catholic Worker* newspaper in New York ran an invitation from Dr. Arthur Falls to any one in Chicago interested in the formation of a Catholic Worker house in the city. Soon afterwards, the first Catholic Worker house in Chicago was formed. Falls was an African American physician and civil rights activist in Chicago who became part of the Catholic Worker movement because it was addressing the problems of racial injustice.

The first Catholic Worker house opened in “an abandoned storefront at 1841 Taylor Street” (Sicius, 1990, p. 29). Instead of setting up a breadline to feed the hungry, the Catholic Worker house focused on a self-help approach for the community. A library with literature about economics and race relations was complemented by Sunday forums which drew a wide range of speakers from the area, including Jacques Maritain from the University of Chicago, Walter Reuther (an auto worker who had just returned from Russia and would later head the United Auto Workers), sociologist Paul Hanley Furfey, and a leader in liturgical reform, Virgil Michel. Professors and students from University of Chicago, Loyola, and Northwestern, “as well as people from Bughouse Square, Chicago’s version of New York’s Union Square” participated (Sicius, pp. 30-31).

Dorothy Day and Arthur Falls did not agree about the nature of a house of hospitality. Under Falls’ direction, the Taylor St. house had adopted a number of bureaucratic approaches to solving problems, including the use of committees to organize the work of the house. When Dorothy Day visited Chicago, she encouraged

John Cogley to open a second house in Chicago (on Wabash Ave.). This lasted for a short time and the Wabash house closed in 1937. In 1938, Cogley joined Al Reser and Ed Marciniak at the St. Joseph House of Hospitality on Blue Island Ave.

The St. Joseph's house in Chicago:

Attracted to the movement a talented and highly articulate group of young Workers, which included, besides Marciniak and Reser, Martin Paul, James O'Gara, Tom Sullivan, Catherine Reser, and Marie Antoinette de Roulet. But the most noteworthy recruit was John Cogley, a young unemployed Irishman whose organizational and literary abilities soon made him the leading figure in the Chicago movement. (Piehl, 1982, pp. 150-151)

This house focused on the works of mercy, through running a breadline and a shelter.

Martin Paul describes the impact of the philosophy of Personalism on the house:

At the Catholic Worker House of Hospitality in Chicago I have witnessed Personalism in action...by refusing to inaugurate a system of rules and regulations, the Catholic Worker has been enabled to develop a large degree of personal responsibility....Personalism...is nothing more than practicing Christian ideals and truths in every day human relationships. The work of maintaining the Catholic Worker House is done, for the most part, by the men who come to them for food and shelter...the morning, noon and evening lines are taken care of by the men. They keep the House in order, take care of the food that is needed for the meals and cook the food. They make their own decisions as to what is done and what should be done. Sometimes difference of opinion arises, as is bound to happen when so many individuals live

together, but these are solved by mutual agreement and compromise. (Paul, 1940).

The house also published a Catholic Worker newspaper, beginning in June of 1938. John Cogley's play, *I Wouldn't Want to Live There*, was staged by the Chicago Labor Theatre for the Summer School of Catholic Action in August 1941, and repeated at the Loyola Community Theatre in Chicago, and in Milwaukee, to benefit Catholic Worker houses in both cities.

With the advent of World War II, The Chicago Catholic Worker House, along with a number of other houses throughout the country, began to disagree with the New York house over the pacifist stance of the New York *Catholic Worker* newspaper. In August of 1940, Dorothy Day sent a letter to all of the Catholic Worker houses indicating that those that disagreed with the pacifist stance still needed to distribute the paper, or discontinue calling themselves Catholic Workers (Piehl, 1982). At a retreat at Maryfarm in Easton, PA, Workers from all over the country came together for a week of prayer and conversation. The outcome of the retreat was that the pacifist stance of the Catholic Worker prevailed.

St. Joseph's House in Chicago closed due to disagreements between those who advocated a pacifist perspective and those who went to war. The newspaper stopped publication with the June, 1941, issue and "the House of Hospitality kept going until early 1942. But by that time Cogley, O'Gara, and most of the other nonpacifist Catholic Workers had gone into the army, while the pacifists had been scattered among conscientious objector camps and prisons" (Piehl, 1982, p. 158).

Catherine Mehan Reser (Kate) was active in the Catholic Worker house in Chicago. Her daughter, Mary Reser, was interviewed about her mother's experiences.

Catherine Mehan Reser

According to her daughter Mary, Kate Mehan was introduced to the Chicago Catholic Worker through her involvement with CISCA (Chicago Inter Student Catholic Action). Through her participation in the Chicago Catholic Worker, Kate met Al and Catherine Reser. Kate formed a long lasting friendship with the Resers. She met Al's brother Peter (who within two months became her husband), and Kate and Catherine corresponded with each other for nearly fifty years. Mary states, "I think for my mom, Dorothy Day was the single most potent...formative influence she came up against."

Kate Mehan was born on April 27, 1920, in Chicago, IL. Kate's mother, Helen Lillis Mehan, and her father, Joseph P. Mehan, came from poor Irish Catholic families. Helen Lillis' family came from County Clare, Ireland. Less is known about Joseph's family, as both of his parents died when he was a child and he was placed in an orphanage/boarding school. Joseph became a tool and dye maker and an inventor in Chicago. Joseph died of pneumonia when Helen was pregnant with her sixth child. Kate, the second child and oldest daughter, was five years old at the time.

Kate's daughter Mary Reser reports that family life was hard:

I know they had a difficult...life before [Joseph] died. I know that several times they pawned everything they owned...bed linens, everything, because they didn't have enough money. And then my grandmother was quite impoverished after he died. And I know that they were on welfare and what

they called Mother's Pension. My grandmother went back to school to get a degree. She went back to normal school.

During this time, a local grocer brought meat to the family once a week, and because they accepted money from the government, the family was subjected to unannounced and often disruptive visits from social workers. As Kate was growing up, her mother commuted every day from the north side to the south side of Chicago to work as a librarian in an African American school. Mary comments: "the family in general had very racist attitudes...I think it helped my grandmother to teach in black schools... because it opened her eyes."

Kate attended Catholic schools as a child. She was accepted at Immaculata, an "upscale" Catholic school for girls in Chicago run by the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She worked at the school to pay part of the tuition, and received scholarship money. Kate, the first of the three girls in the family to go to Immaculata, did quite well with the rigorous curriculum. Mary states that her mother "was head of the Sodality when she was in high school" and that "she was pretty much [of] a leader...she was always very outspoken. She had great writing skill. And she was very smart."

Kate attended CISCA (Catholic Inter-Student Catholic Action) meetings while in high school, and it was through this organization's publications that Kate started to read about injustices in society. Mary indicates that her mother was introduced to the Catholic Worker through CISCA, and that her grandmother was not happy about Kate's growing interest with the movement.

Mary describes what happened after her mother sold *The Catholic Worker* newspaper in Chicago, with two friends, Louise and Marcella:

Word got back to my mother's mother that Louise's family is so poor now that...the rumor that was going around... [was] that she has to sell newspapers to get along...I don't think [my grandmother] was overly concerned with social standing for its own value, but she was concerned with it for how it would affect the welfare of her family. So if they [were] considered down and out or poor, that it would affect how people would treat the family. And she'd been through all this stuff with welfare...in those days they would come and investigate...have these unannounced visits.

Mary describes the tension between her mother and her grandmother over the Catholic Worker:

[Kate's] mother had...heard from somebody else that my mother and her friend, Marcella Heintz, were going down to the Catholic Worker and were selling these...newspapers...down on Maxwell Street...really a rough part of town...And my grandmother had absolutely forbidden my mother to ever again get to the Catholic Worker. So [Kate] went there one day with Marcella and Marcella went in and my mother didn't go in because she was kind of trying to find this line between obeying her mother and not obeying her mother. And so John Cogley, who was the person who ran the Catholic Worker in Chicago, he came out to talk to my mother and he said to her... "Well, if Mohammed won't come to the mountain, the mountain will come to Mohammed," and then he talked to her.

Despite her mother's disapproval, Kate continued to distribute the *Catholic Worker* newspaper with friends in Chicago. When Kate graduated from high school in 1938, she wanted to go to college, but the family could not afford it. Her mother's expectation was that Kate would find a job and help support the family as soon as she graduated from high school.

Mary relates that during the time that Kate was involved with CISCA and the Catholic Worker, her mother, with six children, continued to commute

To this job, her life was extremely difficult, and she would wash on Saturdays, iron on Sundays, and that was their only time home really to catch up, get ready for the next week, and she needed the kids' help. Well, my mother was going off to CISCA meetings and off to Catholic Worker stuff and leaving her mother without help. And I think she always felt justified in her own mind, until the very end of her life...one of the recurring issues that caused her tremendous grief and that she was wrestling with before she died, was having left her mother to go do this activism.

After graduation, Kate worked in a variety of jobs, lived at home, and remained involved with the Catholic Worker. Mary remarks that her mother was "pretty cavalier about jobs. She would let them go if they didn't agree with her standards."

After an interview and typing test with the *Chicago American* newspaper, Kate joined a picket line outside. Kate's mother was very upset by this as a relative, John Doherty, worked at the paper. Kate also worked at a drugstore lunch counter and was fired for putting too much food on the plates.

Another place that Kate worked during the Depression was at a government sponsored project in Chicago at the Merchandise Mart. Kate typed Chicago vital statistics from handwritten original records. She also worked for Warner Brothers (the film studio) in Chicago, as a secretary, drafting letters to Warner Brothers employees who had tuberculosis. These employees quit their jobs, and were hospitalized in a sanitarium in Chicago. Kate visited the Catholic Worker house on Mott Street in New York in early 1940s.

Kate met her future husband Peter at the home of Catholic Worker friends Al and Catherine Reser. Peter was Al's brother, and had been in a TB sanitarium with a severe case of tuberculosis. Peter and Kate were married in November of 1942, at St. Mary of the Lake Catholic Church, despite their uncertainty about how long Peter would live. Mary states that her grandmother "was appalled that a black man was coming to the wedding," referring to Dr. Arthur Falls, the African American physician who founded one of the Catholic Worker houses in Chicago.

After Peter and Kate got married, Peter worked at a succession of jobs. He was employed by a religious goods store, and worked on the docks as a record keeper for a shipping company. At one point he bought a truck with his brother and started a trucking venture. A number of times he was out of work completely in the early days of their marriage. Peter later found work with Yates Manufacturing, a company in downtown Chicago that made industrial wax molds.



Figure 11: Kate Mehan Reser, mid 1940s
(Courtesy of Mary Reser)

When Kate became pregnant with her first child, she did not feel well and quit her job. The focus of Kate's life shifted to her growing family (6 boys, and 4 girls), having a child every 16 to 18 months. In 1949, Kate traveled to Maryfarm in Newburgh for a retreat. She took four of her children along on the train trip, Peter, Mary, Joe, and Ann. Catherine Reser offered to care for the baby (Ellen). Mary remembers that they left "precipitously," half way through the two week long retreat, as her mother became uncomfortable with some of the "pretty rough guys who were alcoholics or drunks who had come out to Maryfarm." With the children out of Kate's supervision, Mary thinks that "she must have had some kind of undercurrent of feeling that it wasn't quite safe there."

The Resers moved to Libertyville, IL, in 1955. Although Kate did not drive and missed her friends in Chicago, she became involved in the new community, in addition to caring for her children. Mary remembers that:

Civil rights was a big deal in Libertyville and [Kate] spoke up. ..One time...a friend of my Mom's was over and I said something somewhat demeaning about my Mom, and this friend of my Mom's turned [to] me and she said

something about... 'you don't even know who your mom is. Do you know that she stood up in the ...city council meeting and made a speech that would blow your socks off about segregation and discrimination' ...and I know that when we first moved to Libertyville, there was a sign in the city park that said, 'No Niggers or Dogs Allowed.' And that was in northern Illinois.

Kate was involved in protesting housing segregation in Libertyville, as well as serving as a leader in the Legion of Mary in the parish. Mary describes her mother as a "prime mover for focus on social justice in the parish."

After Al and Catherine moved from Chicago to Albuquerque in 1954, Kate and Catherine began a correspondence that lasted until Kate's death in 2000. Catherine Reser in Albuquerque had 14 children, of whom only five survived infancy. Peter and Kate purchased a farm near Stevens Point, Wisconsin, in 1970. Peter lived there until his death in 1996. Kate lived until 2000, and died in the care of two of her daughters.

Mary Reser remarks that her mother:

Wanted to live like Dorothy Day...She dressed like that...[Day] was her model for how to live...kind of her measure of how to live. So I think that the time she had spent actually working with Dorothy Day and...my mom's interpretation of that...that's what guided her...it was almost as integrated into my mom's personality as intuition or something like that...I think Dorothy Day just ignited something in my mom that then...took off on its own.

Blessed Martin de Porres House of Hospitality and Our Lady of the Wayside Farm
Cleveland, Ohio

The Catholic Worker presence in Cleveland was in large part due to the involvement over many years of Bill and Dorothy Gauchat. The first House of Hospitality began in 1936 through the efforts of a local priest and teacher, Father Lauer, along with lay people and students from St. Ignatius High School. The Blessed Martin de Porres House of Hospitality on Franklin Street was in a converted storefront “with a stove and a couple of tables...and they cooked soup” (Gauchat, 1976, p.1). Bill Gauchat soon joined the effort after closing a gasoline station his parents had helped him start when he graduated from college.

Dorothy Schmitt discovered the Catholic Worker movement in 1938, when her mother gave her a copy of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper which her brother brought home from school. Schmitt was involved in her school Sodality, and always looking for service projects for the group. She began to collect food and clothing for the Catholic Worker house in Cleveland. Her mother’s opposition to her involvement with her future husband Bill Gauchat at the Catholic Worker house led Dorothy to spend a year as an apprentice to Ade Bethune in Newport, Rhode Island.

Dorothy chose Bill and the life of a Catholic Worker over her mother’s objections. Following the Gauchat’s wedding in 1941, which took place in Rhode Island, the couple lived together at Our Lady of the Wayside Farm in Avon, Ohio. The farm began in 1940 as a communal farm for individuals and families. Retreats were held at the farm and a folk school in 1941 drew many participants:

[Peter] Maurin is at the farm for the 'folk school' which closes August 10 after a two week period of lectures on 'Christian Philosophy,' 'Symbolism' and handicraft. Also at the farm for 'school' is his co-worker, Miss Ade de Bethune of Rhode Island. Of Belgian nobility, she is now 'tops' in the United States in modern religious art and is well-known for her capital letters and wood-block prints used in Father Stedman's Sunday Missal. ("Catholic 'Community Farm,'" 1941, p. 1)

Plans were made for plots of land to be available for families who wanted to join the "worker-scholar" community in Avon, OH. The Gauchats learned "very early that unless you have really like minded people, you can't have a farming commune" (Gauchat, 1976, p. 15). The growing family went on to create a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality for severely handicapped children.

One of the women who became involved with the Catholic Worker in Cleveland was Carlotta Durkin Ribar. Her daughter, Monica Ribar Cornell, was interviewed about her mother's experiences.

Carlotta Durkin Ribar

As with Catholic Worker groups in other cities, the visits of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin proved instrumental in attracting new people to the movement. Monica Ribar Cornell suggests that Day's stay at the Durkin home in Cleveland, was instrumental in leading her mother Carlotta and Carlotta's sister Monica to become involved with the House of Hospitality on Franklin Street.

Carlotta Durkin was born in 1905 in Cleveland, Ohio, the youngest of four children in an Irish and British Canadian Catholic family. Carlotta's father worked for the Nickel Plate Railroad and had his own small insurance company. Monica describes Carlotta's mother, Helen Sweatman Durkin, as a woman who "ruled the house from bed" as she struggled with tuberculosis. Carlotta's mother died when she was 12 year old. The family was devoutly Catholic. Carlotta, her sisters Monica and Helen, and her brother Jack, attended Catholic schools as they were growing up.

Carlotta and her sister Monica each spent time at Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa, (a Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary school) but neither completed a degree. Carlotta contracted typhoid and returned home after her first year as a home economics major. Monica states that her mother "apparently was considered too frail to go back to school." Carlotta's sister Monica went on to become involved in Friendship House in Chicago and was head of the Friendship House Farm in Marathon, Wisconsin, during the late 1940s. Their brother Jack entered Maryknoll to become a missionary but as a result of contracting tuberculosis, changed his plans, eventually serving as a priest in California.

Carlotta remained at home, and after her recovery, managed the family household while her sister Monica worked with Friendship House. Monica remembers that it was her mother's sister had invited Dorothy Day to stay at the family home if she was ever in Cleveland. Dorothy took Monica up on the offer and arrived at their home late one night. It was through this introduction that Carlotta first was introduced to the Catholic Worker. The devout faith practiced by the Durkin

family connected Carlotta and her sister to the works of mercy practiced at the Catholic Worker.

Carlotta and her sister became involved with the Catholic Worker in Cleveland, along with Carlotta's future husband George Ribar. Monica recalls a conversation she had with Dorothy Day about her mother: "When Dorothy met me, she said, 'oh, yes, I remember your mother...when they were setting up...she mentioned the name of the house...she chased rats out with her broom.'" Monica also describes one of Bill Gauchat's memos about the Cleveland house in which he writes " 'Monica and Carlotta brought some beds.' They obviously collected some mattresses somewhere and probably some clothing."



Figure 12: Carlotta Durkin, 1937
(Courtesy of Monica Ribar Cornell)

In 1937, at the age of 32, Carlotta drove across the country by herself to visit her brother Jack, who was a priest in the Monterey-Fresno Diocese in California. Photographs of her trip show her standing in front of the car she drove, having fun

with Jack and his dog, and visiting historic California Missions. Carlotta's father died in 1938.



Figure 13: Carlotta Durkin, Mission at Carmel, 1937
(Courtesy of Monica Ribar Cornell)

Carlotta continued her involvement with the Cleveland Catholic Worker until she married George Ribar in 1940. Carlotta was 35 at the time they married. Monica remarks that once Carlotta and George married in 1940, they moved to Wellington, a town south of Cleveland, “where the foundry was where my father worked.” Their active involvement in the Catholic Worker changed to a focus on building a family together, while continuing Catholic Worker friendships. Monica states that “I think when my parents left Cleveland...I don’t know if Dorothy said this...certainly Catherine de Hueck said...when the couple marries, that becomes their community.”

Monica relates that her mother was most attracted to the works of mercy carried out through the Catholic Worker (as opposed to the works of protest). Carlotta, and her husband George, grew to feel that Dorothy Day was “too soft on Communism.” In many Communist countries, Catholics were persecuted. Like other “devout, loyal, and obedient Catholics,” the Ribars continued to read the Catholic Worker newspaper. Monica suggests, however, they might have felt like other “people who would write notes saying...this donation is for your soup line, don’t use it for your communist stuff.”

Carlotta and George had two daughters. When Carlotta was 52 years old, the Ribars took in four children of a relative (Carlotta’s niece) who was no longer able to care for them. The children were 1 ½, 3 ½, 5 ½, and 7 ½. They stayed with the Ribars for 10 years. During this time the Ribars became involved with Cursillo, a renewal movement within the Catholic Church. Cursillo sponsors retreats, small group studies, and service projects to encourage participants to grow in faith. They eventually became less involved in Cursillo as a result of the demands of their enlarged family.

Carlotta enjoyed collecting recipes and reading devotional literature throughout her life. She was a “good Midwestern cook” and an avid reader of fiction, Catholic periodicals, and lives of the saints. She often read the New Testament to her children and exposed them to “good children’s literature.” George Ribar died of cancer in 1971. Carlotta died in 1993, at the age of 88. Carlotta’s daughter Monica has been an active Catholic Worker since the 1950s. Her husband, son, and daughter are also involved with the Catholic Worker.

Twelve Women of the Catholic Worker

The women of this study share a variety of common experiences in terms of early family life, Catholic Church experience, education, as well as the paths they chose following their Catholic Worker involvement during the 1930s and 1940s. Born between 1905 and 1920, all of the women came from strongly Catholic homes. Three came from families where their fathers were not Catholic and yet they were raised in the Catholic faith.

About half of the women grew up in poor or working class homes, the others considered their families middle class. All of the women are white and European-American. Ethnic backgrounds include Alsatian, Irish, British Canadian, German, Belgian, Polish, and Bavarian. Five women experienced the loss of a parent in their childhood.

Eleven of the women were educated in Catholic schools, or a combination of Catholic and public schools. Only one woman received her K-12 education completely through public schools, however, this education was supplemented by additional education at the local parish, and she went on to study at a Catholic University. Eleven of the women had some formal education following high school. Half of the women studied literature or journalism and wrote for college or local Catholic Worker papers. All but one of those who went on to higher education studied at Catholic colleges or universities.

Work during and or after their involvement with the Catholic Worker included a variety of occupations. Social service agencies benefited from the work of many of the women. Others did clerical work. One managed a book store, one served as an

editor and religious educator, one worked in a restaurant, and another entered a convent for a time. Five of the women were called home at some point in their early adulthood to care for ill or dying parents, to manage the household or contribute financially to the family.

In terms of Catholic Worker involvement, the level of participation varied for these women—some lived at Catholic Worker houses or farms, others lived in apartments close by, and another group volunteered at the houses while living at home. Some were involved for a few years, others for much longer, one has been involved with her local Catholic Worker her entire life, and another is now again involved with the Worker in her area. Early and active participation in the Catholic Worker tended to end when they got married and began families, although this was not true for all.

Motherhood was a significant occupation for eleven of the women interviewed for the study. One of the women chose to remain single, yet was integrally involved in advocacy for women and children throughout her work life. One woman married later in life, becoming the stepmother to five adult children. Of the remaining women, eight married men they met through the Catholic Worker, and one married a man she met at Friendship House. Another married a man who was also involved in radical causes during the 1930s. Several of the women in the study had large families: one had ten children, and three had eight children; one added four relatives' children to her own two.

The following chapter will examine significant components of learning within the Catholic Worker movement as expressed by the women of this study.

CHAPTER V

LEARNING IN THE CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT

In order to understand the nature of learning for women within a particular social movement, it is essential to explore the paths that led to involvement in the movement, the context within which learning takes place, and the longer term impact of this involvement. This chapter examines the lives of women before they came to the Catholic Worker, the common daily experiences of life in the Worker, and how the movement affected the rest of their lives. Focusing on the experiences such as those encountered daily within the Catholic Worker movement offers new perspectives of the ways in which learning is both “implicit and embedded in other activities” and how daily experiences either “reproduce relations of exploitation and oppression” or “resist or help transcend such relations” (Foley, 2001, p. 85).

Early Life

What led to the eagerness to embrace the Catholic Worker movement? A variety of factors contributed to the enthusiasm with which these women became involved in the movement. Family life played a significant role, particularly because more than half of the women grew up in families that had a tradition of direct caring for the poor or fostered a social justice orientation at home. Others experienced the loss of a parent early in life. Women interviewed for this study shared in common an independence in their choices as young adults, traveling across the country for work, education, or to visit family members. Several chose the Catholic Worker over family

objections. A sense of responsibility caused some to change plans in early adulthood, returning home to care for family members.

All of the women had strong connections to a wide-ranging Catholic educational and social network, and all articulated a sense of seeking more in their experience with the church. An awareness of looking for ways to live out what they believed was central. Narrators were often introduced to the Catholic Worker through an event or individual within the Catholic Church who encouraged them to pursue a radical approach to the Christian faith. Finally, certain beliefs and values, as expressed in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, attracted these women to the movement.

Family

In the life stories shared by narrators, a number of common themes emerged about early family life. Nine of the twelve women described their first-hand experiences with the needs of the poor in their neighborhoods. This was often because they were poor themselves, but also because their families were involved in direct care for those in need. In some homes, social justice was a common focus of family discussions and actions in their neighborhoods. Additionally, narrators described losing a parent in childhood, a common experience for many during this time period in American history.

Tradition of Caring for the Poor. While most families supported church efforts to help people in need, narrators described the actions their own families took to give direct aid to the hungry in their community. Peg Beahon Winegarden remembers her family tradition of feeding hungry people:

Growing up, I remember people coming to our side door for food. It's an old house and that porch is kind of large, a side porch. And if my father was home, he would set up for them if it [was] good weather..to eat comfortably out on the porch, the side porch...he'd bring people into the kitchen if it [was] cold, of course, and then feed them, too, himself.

Helen Adler recalls the people from their street who came for food when she was about 11 years old:

My mother had a big pot of soup and coffee and those who had been evicted from their homes (all up and down the block) would come to the house. She ran a soup kitchen on the back step. My job was to feed the people who came.

Mary Coisman Durnin remembers her family caring for people traveling through Wisconsin when she was a child. She describes her parents as:

Unlettered...They were rather peasants in Door County, Wisconsin, but they had deep faith and they did the works of mercy. We had people sleeping over and eating over who were passing by. We lived on a farm of course and...their theology was much like the Catholic Worker theology.

Reflecting on the preparation her family gave her for the Catholic Worker, Mary also relates: "I thought that was a way of life because my people had done it. But I didn't really realize the worldwide implications of that kind of life."

Nina Polcyn Moore recalls her mother feeding people at their home:

My parents' home must have had some mark on it because then they came to my house and...my mother had a sense also of feeding the poor, even though we were very poor ourselves. My mother...would tell these fellows that there

was a toilet in the basement and on the table in the basement she had safety pins in case they needed to fix their pants and she had soap and a towel and then they came and sat on our back porch, out of the weather, and she fed them a sandwich on a plate. So I was ready for the Catholic Worker.

As a child, Betty Finegan Doyle lived with her grandparents and remembers that her grandmother fed hungry people who came to the house, from the mid 1920s through the Depression:

Grandmother fed everyone who came to the door...She would fix sandwiches and soup. The men usually sat on the back porch. She would give them extra sandwiches to take along and sometimes gave some of my grandfather's clothes away, like underwear, socks, undershirts. He was not too happy about this. She did this without any words..it came from her heart, it came from her faith.

Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella remembers that caring for the poor "was not far from me. My mother had people coming to the house all the time...People would be on the train and Momma's house was marked, you know, during the Depression...we had this going on in our house all the time."

In addition to providing direct assistance at their back doors, narrators witnessed other types of examples in their families of caring for people. Mary Bigham Farren's mother was involved with a group at the Church that took care of people in the area:

My mother belonged to St. Vincent de Paul Society, which was the charitable arm of the parish at that time. She did quite a bit of visiting and helping individual families and that kind of thing. So we grew up with that example.

Monica Ribar Cornell states that her mother Carlotta Durkin Ribar grew up in family that assisted those they knew who needed help. She shares what her mother experienced as a child:

[Carlotta] used to go with [her father] when he would go collecting insurance...he would go in the evening especially, after people were home from work..they would pay whatever, their \$5 or \$10, in small installments. She would go with him. And she...recall[ed] that often times people simply couldn't pay. He would cover for them himself. So I would say that there was a strong family inclination to helping people and probably because of their strong Catholic faith.

For those who eventually became part of the Catholic Worker movement, a common experience was the tradition of caring for the poor within their own families. Whether through direct hands-on care through feeding or clothing people who came to their homes, or through Church programs or personal financial assistance, some women grew up in an environment that prepared them for the values expressed and actions carried out in the Catholic Worker.

Loss in Childhood. The loss of a parent was a more common experience for both men and women during this time period in American history. This was true for five of the narrators, who lost a parent in childhood or early adolescence. Betty Doyle

describes her own mother's death during the influenza epidemic of 1918, shortly after she was born:

My mother died when I was 3 months old of the flu. [We] lived with my grandmother and grandfather and when my mother died, my grandmother said she would take us in and bring us up. My father was just a young man [27]...so he lived with us too...All of our childhood with lived with my grandfather and grandmother, Johanna Hickey and her husband, Michael Hyland.

Belle Bates Mullin's mother died when she was a child: "My mother was a school teacher. But she died when...the fourth [child] was born. So I never knew my mother. My father remarried a year and a half later and so I had a stepmother who was a wonderful woman and took very good care of us."

Monica Ribar Cornell shares about her grandmother's death when her mother Carlotta was 12 years old:

Helen Sweatman Durkin...had TB when the kids were little and all during my mother's [childhood]...My mom was the youngest and she was 12 when her mother died. [Her] mother ruled the house from bed.

Mary Coisman Durnin's father died when she was five years old: "my father...had TB, so he was an invalid for a long time. I still remember his dying."

Just before Kate Mehan Reser died, she shared with her daughter Mary about her own father's death. Mary states:

Her dad had been very sick, he had pneumonia, and the doctor came to the house. And my mother was saying to me... "Here is where the bedroom door

was...there was a desk next to the bedroom door” and my mother was sitting at the desk. And the doctor came out of the room and he said... “Helen, Joe is gone.” And my grandmother jumped up and screamed, “You liar, you liar”...and wouldn’t believe it. And my mother felt, in the midst of the commotion and everybody crying then, what she kept saying to me was, “I don’t know what to do, I don’t know what to do.” So that was her mindset at five...and it was very, very powerful...I think she may have been in a number of situations where she didn’t know what to do and yet felt a tremendous sense of responsibility even as a child.

The experience of loss of a parent transcends class lines, affecting those who were who were very poor as well as those from middle class backgrounds. During the time period when these women were young children, death due to complications in childbirth was much more prevalent, as were protracted illnesses and/or deaths from diseases such as influenza, tuberculosis, and pneumonia. It was a common experience to benefit from the love and care of extended family members who stepped in to help following such a loss.

Independence and Responsibility

Narrators demonstrated both independence and responsibility as young adults, before, during, and after their involvement in the Catholic Worker. While almost all of the narrators traveled to New York to visit the Catholic Worker as young women, other examples of independence include moving far from home at a young age, living and studying with Ade Bethune in Newport, R.I., traveling across the country alone, and making the decision to join the Catholic Worker against the wishes of family

members. Along with independent choices, narrators demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility for their families. The tradition of caring, often learned at home, was evident for five of the women who changed plans in early adulthood to return home as caretakers for family members and/or the household.

Traveling across the country. After she graduated from high school in 1934, Belle Bates Mullin moved from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Washington D.C., to take a job in a restaurant. She recalls:

I had worked in the high school cafeteria and the dietitian there decided that she would open up a restaurant in Washington, D.C., because she had a good friend going to Catholic University....She asked me to go with her because I had worked with her...So I spent a year in Washington, D. C., near Catholic University, working in this restaurant.

Peg Beahon Winegarden moved to Washington, D.C., in 1940, to take a job with the government. She recalls that her move to Washington came from a desire to “to look at the larger world.” She remembers:

I took a federal exam ‘for fun.’...Something was posted and I thought it was a challenge. I took the exam and within less than two weeks...I had a call to go to Washington to take a job there. So that was how life changed....It was a job in the Census Bureau...the 1940 census was still being...tabulated...And I didn’t plan to stay, but I did. I stayed...because Washington was pretty fascinating.

Betty Finegan left Rochester, NY, to join her sister in Newport, RI, right after graduating from college in 1940. Mary Katherine was studying and working as an

apprentice to Ade Bethune (artist and leader in liturgical reform). Betty states, “the next morning after my graduation I went to visit her.” She had visited her sister in Newport over Christmas, while still in college, but “then I went back and stayed probably..it must have been a year, a year and a half...It was quite a long time.”

Adele Butler Nash remembers moving to Washington, D.C., and working in a store that her father owned after the Buffalo Catholic Worker house closed. She lived with her friend, Jackie Noble, in a house with a community of Jewish and Catholic people studying St. Thomas Aquinas near Catholic University. Adele describes the group:

We ended up living in that house with Hebert Schwartz and his wife Char. We had classes, and it was like a little community. Herbert was our professor and head of the community of young men and women...we lived there and we went over to the Immaculate Conception Church...and we'd go back and study, we'd go to the Dominican House and study some more. We attended Compline every evening.

In 1937, Carlotta Durkin Ribar traveled across the country by herself to visit her brother. Jack had been studying for the priesthood at Maryknoll in New York, but because of his tuberculosis he was considered too weak to become a missionary. Carlotta's daughter, Monica Ribar Cornell, relates: “So instead, [Jack] studied and was ordained for the Diocese at Monterey-Fresno and spent all his priestly life out there in California. So before [Carlotta] married...she took a trip out.” Monica continues:

[Carlotta] drove out to California...she apparently drove alone...adventuresome in those days, it seems to me...she was very fond of [Jack] and I think she was thrilled to be able to take this trip out there to see him...He was quite gregarious and had some interesting friends whom he introduced her to when she visited him.

Demonstrating independence in choices in early adulthood was common.

Narrators made choices took them far away from home for work, education, or travel.

The desire to gain valuable work experience, to learn in new places, or to connect with friends or family members in other locations, drew women to new settings.

Another example of independence was making the decision to join the Catholic Worker despite objections of family members.

Decision-making. Family members had mixed reactions to the Catholic Worker, ranging from support, to tolerance, to lack of understanding, to outright opposition. Despite objections from their families, several women made decisions to become active participants. Helen Adler remembers her parents' reaction to the Catholic Worker:

[They were] very opposed. Extremely. Told me not to come home again if I joined the Catholic Worker....So I didn't come home. I went down to Philly not knowing a darn thing about what a House of Hospitality was all about.

Mary Reser noted that her mother (Kate Mehan Reser) continued to be involved with the Chicago Catholic Worker even though her mother objected. The activism that led to a rift between Kate and her mother caused Kate anxiety at the end of her life, according to Kate's daughter Mary. Kate's mother Helen worked across

town, and as a single mother with six children, she expected all of the children to help with the work that needed to be done in the house. Mary relates:

Well, my mother was going off to CISCA meetings and off to Catholic Worker stuff and leaving her mother without help. And I think she always felt that was justified in her own mind, until the very end of her life. And one of the recurring issues that caused her tremendous grief and that she was wrestling with before she died, was having left her mother to go do this activism...I think the determination and her sense of her soul's purpose carried her through the whole life till the end, until she was in dire straits physically and she reflected so much more on how difficult it had been for her own mother and how she hadn't been there for her mother. So that was the first time I think she really had a conflict about her choices in life and her devotion to the cause...Of course, with all these kids she always was making those decisions. But the thing [that] even the grandchildren in the family are so clear about is that my mother was absolutely steadfast and clear about her priorities and her commitment. I mean they were rock solid. So it was very interesting for me to see her wrestle so with things at the end. And I think a part of it was that she had two of her daughters with her to help her through that whole last stage. And it was wonderful...wonderful for her, wonderful for us.

Katherine Moos Mella recounts that her mother was not supportive of her involvement in the Catholic Worker. When asked if her mother understood her

decision to choose the Catholic Worker over a singing career, Katherine responded:

“Never. Never. She didn’t understand it at all.”

Adele Butler Nash remembers her family’s reaction:

Well, they just tolerated it. Peter Maurin came and stayed at our home a couple of times... when he came in and my brother was home and I introduced him. And my brother said..well, where’s his suitcase? And I said..he doesn’t have a suitcase. And my brother said...well...how does he shave? I said..it’s all in his pockets. So that was kind of the way..they were curious about all this...they used to tease me.

Nina Polcyn Moore’s parents were supportive of the Catholic Worker, but other relatives did not understand: “my father’s brother was Chief of Police and he was not happy with my connections there and he told my father to tell Nina to stop hanging around with these damn Communists.”

Eight narrators described their families as supportive of their involvement in the Catholic Worker, but others made decisions to join the movement despite family members who objected or did not understand or approve of the choice they made. In some instances, the resulting tension caused a separation from loved ones, or grief in later life over the affects of choices made.

Caretaking. While narrators pursued work and educational plans independently in early adulthood, for some, these plans were abruptly changed by the need to take care of family members. A sense of family responsibility called them home. This meant not attending or continuing in college, returning home to care for family members or households, and having to defer hopes or plans for the future.

Nina Polcyn Moore asserts that in some cases, women returned home as caretakers because families could not afford alternative care.

As young adults, while Betty Finegan and her sister Mary Katherine were living and working with Ade Bethune in Newport, R.I., their stepmother died of leukemia. Betty remembers her stepmother's death:

[She] was only in her 40s. She died and left my brother George who was 10 at the time. She was very ill. She was ill for only 6 weeks, had ...acute leukemia. And so she died at the end of 6 weeks. So we went home right away to be with my father and help him...So we lived there then until my father died, which was only a couple of years after that.

The sisters remained there for a few years, trying to raise their stepbrother, who eventually went to live with the family lawyer, before leaving home completely at age 16.

In 1936, Belle Bates Mullin's father and her stepmother both suffered from strokes. Belle returned from her job in Washington, D.C., to care for them and both died by the end of the year. Belle was 20 at the time. She remembers:

My stepmother and father had gone to the hospital in the same ambulance. She had...a stroke. She had been taking care of him because he had a stroke. And then she had a stroke, so they took the two of them to the hospital in the same ambulance and he died within a week.

After Carlotta Durkin Ribar's first year in college, she went home to recuperate from typhoid. Considered too ill to return to school, Carlotta remained at home. Her daughter Monica shares what happened next: "she was the daughter who

stayed with Papa...so [her sister] Monica went off to do her Friendship House thing...but Carlotta stayed home with her father...running the household.”

Instead of going on to college after graduation from high school, Adele Butler Nash returned home to care for her ailing mother. She remembers: “My mother wasn’t very well and my father wanted me to stay home and care for the house. One of my brothers lived at home, but my older brother and sister were both married.” After both of her parents died, a family friend encouraged Adele to fulfill her earlier hope to go to college. In 1950, fourteen years after her high school graduation, Adele used money from her inheritance to go to Hunter College.

Adele Butler Nash reflects how this family responsibility affected her: “an event in your family can bring you face to face with reality, rather than a more frivolous preoccupation with dating and boys...the need to take care of your family rather than what you might have wanted to do. My father thought, ‘you’re a girl,’ you can stay home and do this.” Adele remarked that while she didn’t think of this at the time, most of her classmates went to college after high school. Her family could have afforded to pay for a college education, but she was needed at home.

In addition to illness, in at least one case, family financial need caused the need to abandon plans for higher education. Kate Mehan Reser was expected to go to work right after high school to help support the family. Kate’s mother was a single parent, working across town as a school librarian, and needed her daughter’s help in caring for the six children of the family. Kate wanted to attend college after high school but there was not enough money. According to her daughter Mary, it was

expected that Kate would go right to work. Mary states, “When my mom left school, it was clear that her role was to get a good job and help support the family.”

Narrators demonstrated an adventurous and independent spirit as young adults, through choices they made for work, education, and travel. Additionally, some experienced further loss in their early adulthood as parents or step-parents died and they were needed at home. They were called home to care for family members, the household, or to contribute financially to the family. The fact that all of the women who experienced this call to return home (or to stay at home) were single, highlights the expectations placed on single women during this time. When they returned home, however, it was in a slightly different role than before—as caretakers of parents or the household, demonstrating responsibility and the tradition of caring in which they had been raised.

Connecting with the Catholic Worker

Women became connected to the Catholic Worker in their early adulthood. All of the women grew up in the Catholic Church and were part of an extensive network of Catholic educational and social institutions. All were seeking something more: an authentic expression of living the Christian faith. All of the women inspired by an event or a connection with an individual who encouraged a radical expression of faith, including Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. Finally, certain values and beliefs articulated in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper attracted narrators to the movement.

Catholic context. The great majority of women who joined the Catholic Worker movement grew up within a strong American Catholic community. The Catholic Church endeavored to create a sense of belonging for the largely immigrant

church-going population which had arrived in great numbers to the United States in the second half the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries (Morris, 1997). The all-encompassing culture of the Catholic Church, particularly among local ethnically homogeneous parishes, was an antidote to the outsider status frequently conferred on Catholic immigrant families. Children growing up in this culture were connected to the church at all stages of their lives, from their local parishes to Catholic elementary and secondary schools, Catholic colleges and universities, Catholic social groups, as well as nearby convents, and monasteries.

Narrators were immersed in American Catholic culture, through churches and schools (often a combination of elementary, secondary, and higher education in Catholic settings). Narrators described their families as devout, church-going people, who enrolled their children in Catholic schools where they were available. All of the women were introduced to Catholic beliefs in school or through their churches. Some considered entering a convent after high school. This connection with Catholic educational institutions offered a rich and supportive environment for growth and learning. However, Nina Polcyn Moore reflects that it could sometimes lead to a more narrow experience:

People who went to Catholic schools hardly ever met somebody who wasn't Catholic... you were part of a truncated culture where you only spoke to each other...I went to public schools, so I had a Jewish boy, Sam Stern, sitting behind me...But a lot of Catholics had no other experience. You only associated with Catholics...if an Italian married a German, that was a mixed marriage.

She remembers that her father's family had a close friendship with a German Lutheran family when they lived in rural Wisconsin (Sobieski):

The Boldts were German Lutherans and my parents were Polish Catholics from around Poznan, Poland. Together, they formed a wonderful community. There were Polish Franciscans nearby in Pulask, Wisconsin, and a priest from that group would come and tell my relatives not to associate with the Boldts because they'd lose their faith. But my father just thought that was just too phony.

American Catholic culture shaped the lives of adherents during the early to mid-twentieth century. The Catholic Church successfully created a rich educational and social environment in which all of the narrators participated, some more happily than others.

Seeking more. A common experience was the disconnection between teaching and practice within the Catholic Church. Narrators were seeking something that brought the two together. The fact that the Catholic Worker movement was actively trying to do this proved to be very attractive.

Peg Beahon Winegarden states that she went to a "perfectly good church with nice priests, who were open, especially in those days. I didn't feel negative about the church but it wasn't a reach way out kind of thing, not beyond the parish."

Nina Polcyn Moore's parents encouraged a questioning attitude about the church at home. Her father's critique of the church led him to refuse to send his children to parochial schools: "even though we lived next door to the Catholic school,

he just put his foot down. That was his form of rebellion. He just said that this church has got to be all different.” Nina recalls how her home life prepared her to question:

[My mother] always had an aggrieved sense as to why we never had a Polish bishop. We had Bishop Messmer from Switzerland and why was all this money going to Messmer? Messmer went to St. Gallen, Switzerland, every year for his vacation. Nobody else’s parents then talked like this, but my parents did. They were really...ahead of their times in their vision about justice for the ordinary person...My parents sent me to a Sunday School run by a wonderful teacher, Nellie Welch, who had a rich sense of catechetics, and she would say that just because a man is ordained doesn’t mean that he knows how to teach children. Sunday School came after Mass, which I went to by myself, and at Mass I would hear this priest saying that if you don’t send your children to Catholic school, you’re going to hell. I was 8 years old then but I knew that he was theologically incorrect....I knew he was in total error. And I just couldn’t take anything like that.

Helen Adler, in thinking about her attraction to the Catholic Worker, remembers: “I stopped going to Catholic Church because I thought it was lot of talk and no action.” She recalls the pull between what she hoped for within the Church and what she knew that her father’s family had accomplished (they founded the Institute for Ethical Culture, after breaking away from Reformed Judaism):

Well, I was seeking something. I wasn’t going to Mass...I said I was no longer Catholic and yet I felt very empty. My family on my father’s side was great on social justice. All their work had been in the movement for working

people and my great-uncle was on the Supreme Court...Justice Lewis Brandeis. He was the one that stood up for all the underdogs.

She reflects on the number of young people who were attracted to the Catholic Worker and what they found there:

[We] were looking for something in life, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we were all very special people or intelligent. I think most people...young people that joined the Worker were dissatisfied with the institutional Catholic Church, had left it, and then they saw something [at the Catholic Worker] where people were living the Gospel.

Helen continues:

I saw the Gospel lived fully there. Because I used to read the Gospel every day about how we're to serve each other and trust each other and love each other and I saw it lived. And that is the charm for most young people that come through the Worker.

Adele Butler Nash describes what she was looking for after high school:

I had a wonderful convent school education which stressed every single individual's duty or obligation to contribute to society by building up the church and spreading the Good News. I was full of zeal but I didn't know where to go with it. Nothing in the church I went to seemed to be particularly attractive to me. At that time, most of the charity works, you'd say...were being done by priests or nuns. Lay people were not really very involved in social services. That's my understanding of what the situation was. So just by a great grace I met Dorothy Day.

She remembers:

Dorothy [Day asked]...what's the church doing about social justice issues? I wondered too...Many of us were anxious to be in some way involved, engaged in the problems of the time and we didn't find much going on in the church. There were Sodalities and Altar societies and things like that, but there weren't people out there on the scene....[A sodality] was a spiritual enrichment group. They would maybe study a little, but pray...devotion was the goal...The Altar and Rosary Society...is an old Catholic tradition. There were women who had gathered to take care of the altar and wash the linens and do things like that. So that was...not so appealing to me.

Mary Reser states that her mother, Kate Mehan Reser, came from a family that was:

Totally imbedded in the Catholic church...and I don't think my grandmother questioned so much..she didn't criticize the church as much as my mother did...in terms of social justice. My mother's line about what was good or bad about the Catholic Church turned on social justice. And her family didn't share that....they were just involved with their parishes.

All of the women were seeking more than they experienced in their local parishes. As active lay groups began to emerge in the 1930s and 1940s (such as Friendship House, the Catholic Worker, and the Grail), they were viewed as a welcome change to the Sodalities and Altar societies which formed the outlet for women's involvements in previous times. This was particularly true for those who were seeking more of a social justice engagement as Catholic women.

Inspired by others. Eleven of the twelve women were introduced to the Catholic Worker through individuals they knew within Catholic institutions who cared about the issues that the Catholic Worker addressed. These individuals shared their own perspectives on a more radical expression of Catholic faith, focused on Jesus' teachings about wealth and poverty in the Gospels. As a result, they often brought Dorothy Day or Peter Maurin to the area to speak about the Catholic Worker.

Katherine Moos Mella first learned about the Catholic Worker "through St. John's University," near her home. She states, "There was a lot of talk among the monks....Several monks there [had] either been [to] or known something about [the Catholic Worker] and they talked about them a good deal and were interested in what they were doing." Father Godfrey Diekmann of St. John's University influenced Katherine to consider a more radical approach to Catholic faith. Katherine remembers him speaking "as if he were on fire." As a result of this introduction at St. John's, the family started to receive *The Catholic Worker* newspaper at home.

Mary Bigham Farren remembers a local priest, Father Benedict Ehmman, who brought Dorothy Day to Rochester:

Father Benedict Ehmman went to a convention of some sort in New York, heard Dorothy speak and was very impressed. And he brought Dorothy to Rochester and that was how we came to know her.

Peg Beahon Winegarden noted the influence of the Dean of Nazareth College in bringing Day to campus. Mary Bigham Farren concurs, citing the influence of the Dean in helping her to become interested in the Catholic Worker:

When I was at Nazareth College, the presence of Sister Teresa Marie, who was way ahead of her time, bringing Peter and Dorothy, and allowing us to have a little Catholic Worker group within the college...I think those were the influences.

Nina Polcyn Moore was introduced to the Catholic Worker within the setting of the active educational program of her parish. The parish Sunday school was the result of the efforts of Nellie Welch, a popular teacher and organizer. Nina states, “We had more people in this Sunday School than we had in the regular school...Nellie Welch was just a magnet.” The popularity of the program attracted Franklyn Kennedy, a priest and editor of the Diocesan paper, who brought copies of *The Catholic Worker* to the Sunday School to distribute.

Adele Butler Nash states that the sisters at her Catholic boarding school prepared her for the Catholic Worker through the approach they took with her high school education:

The Convent of the Sacred Heart, Kenwood [now Doane Stuart Academy in Albany...a combined Episcopal and Catholic School] was the first time I received an “in depth” understanding of my Catholic faith. The education included academic studies of religion and a daily practice of it. It was impressed on us that we were part of society and had an obligation to share the Good News by our lives and our good works. When I came home, I found the Catholic Worker the perfect way for me to realize the ideals I had been taught.

Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin had enormous personal influence in drawing people into the Catholic Worker. All of the narrators noted the excitement which attended meetings where either Day or Maurin spoke, and indicated the influence that one or the other had on their involvement.

Carlotta Durkin Ribar first met Dorothy Day when Day arrived at the family house in Cleveland one night at midnight by taxi. Monica Ribar Cornell describes Day's influence in attracting her mother to the Catholic Worker:

Whatever my mother's first hesitation may have been about someone arriving at that hour, she certainly must have been taken with Dorothy. And Dorothy had a very nice way with people...Dorothy was not an extroverted person. She was an introverted woman with a sense of vocation, with a sense of mission. So she..but she was also very much a people person...Dorothy was always interested in the day-to-day ordinary lives of ordinary people. And she noticed the geranium on the window sill or the things that..especially the women did to bring beauty into life, especially poor and working class people who were the people Dorothy was most interested in....probably Dorothy, in a way that Dorothy could do...must have recruited both of the Durkin girls as well as George Ribar to help with the work, as she would have put it.

In describing what it was like to hear Dorothy Day speak, Peg Beahon Winegarden responds:

[It was] magic. She was the answer to everything. Her quiet manner. I just loved it. She was quiet. She'd say these devastating things in this quiet tone of voice and it was really amazing....A wonderful speaker..because you just

listened intently. You respected her. Because everything she said, she was living. You know, simple as that.

Adele Butler Nash remembers her first impressions of Dorothy Day in 1939:

Dorothy came and Harriet Kennedy and I went out to the meeting. There was a small group present. But I was really impressed. It struck me right away...this is what I've been looking for. People have asked me, why? I think if there was one word that would describe Dorothy to me at that time...it was authentic. One thing struck me...she was dressed very plainly, she was a large woman...just strong, a very hearty looking woman, but very simple, very straightforward. And as I remember, she was dressed in black, kind of drab, whatever. And someone asked her...perhaps she volunteered, that part of her voluntary poverty meant that she would just wear the clothes that came in, that were given to the poor. That really struck me, as a teenager, and I thought...how can she do that, how can she wear those clothes somebody else has been wearing? I had a very bourgeois attitude. Of course, now we have many secondhand shops and lots of people go to them; I do. But at that time, I thought...this is somebody very special. Just little things like that were so convincing I knew that this woman had a message. She was doing something that was really sincere, religious and spiritual. Everyone at that meeting was moved to do something about the Catholic Worker.

Mary Bigham Farren states that she was “tremendously attracted by Dorothy’s marvelous commitment and personality. Peter Maurin was a pretty impressive man, too.” Betty Finegan Doyle reflects on the influence of Dorothy Day: “I think hearing

Dorothy Day at the beginning of it...I think that was a big event. And she was so intense and earnest and just a wonderful, wonderful person.” Betty also remembers Peter Maurin’s impact on the growing movement in Rochester:

Peter Maurin was wonderful... He had this very French accent and spoke with his little...Easy Essays...He used to come quite often. When he came, he usually had one or two suitcases, and people were kind of wondering, he lives in such poverty. He just had one old suit that he wore, and he opened up his suitcases...they were all full of books. That’s what he had to share with people. Or books that he just couldn’t be away from...he had to have with him. Quite often things would happen...maybe someone in the clergy or something would go to pick him up a bus station. He always traveled by bus. And they would come back and say...he wasn’t there. He was supposed to come in on that bus. Well, there was just an old tramp sitting there...that was Peter. That happened quite often.

Mary Bigam Farren remembers that Peter would come to the college and “Sister Teresa Marie would treat him...you know, he’d be there with some food on his coat and rather bedraggled and Sister would treat him like the prince that he was...because she knew what a wonderful person he was and what he had brought to the church.” Katherine Moos Mella recounts that Peter Maurin “was one of the loveliest men I’ve ever known in my whole, whole life...he was such a...wonderful, lovable [man].”

Connections to individuals within the Catholic Church context often provided the first introduction to the Catholic Worker, through hearing Dorothy Day or Peter

Maurin speak locally, or through those who actively distributed the newspaper. Relationships with these individuals were formative in that they exposed narrators to radical approaches to the Catholic faith and specifically to an embrace of the Catholic Worker as a location for such beliefs in action.

Newspaper. *The Catholic Worker* newspaper served as powerful way to draw people into involvement with the movement. In addition to contact with Day and Maurin, narrators were introduced to the values and beliefs of the Catholic Worker movement through the newspaper. Copies of the paper were distributed in colleges, seminaries, and churches across the country, exposing many people to Catholic Worker perspectives.

Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella remarks on the powerful draw of the newspaper: I remember I was visiting in New York...and there was a guy...they [said] these crazy things, ‘read all about it’...or something wild, and they’d say ‘Catholic Worker’...I said ‘Oh, Catholic Worker, I have to buy one.’ Of course, I gave him a dollar because I was so eager to get that paper. And I was working then so...It was after I got the letter from my brother that said this is what you’re looking for...then I knew it was.

Nina Polcyn Moore remembers the efforts Franklyn Kennedy who spread the word about the Catholic Worker in Milwaukee: “[he] was taking a Master’s at Marquette in journalism....he was an early reader of *The Catholic Worker*.” Nina describes how he helped to distribute “400 copies in the Sunday School because [he] wanted the people to know about the Catholic Worker and that the Church cared about the poor.” Nina describes how she was affected by the newspaper: “when I

read *The Catholic Worker*, I just had to go...it just spoke to me. It was luminous. You know, St. Theresa, the little flower, said she saw the T in heaven and I saw the CW in heaven.”

Katherine Moos Mella reflects that through the newspaper, a wide circle of people were affected, as copies of the paper were shared from one person to the next. She states “when I...think back on it...[that] gave the paper great, great wide exposure.”

How did the newspaper affect so many people? Values and beliefs expressed within the pages of *The Catholic Worker*, together with descriptions of daily life at the Worker, were highly attractive to those who were seeking something more in their lives as faithful Catholics. While those who had the opportunity to hear Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in person were deeply affected by the encounters, the newspaper also drew people to the movement. Women and men traveled to New York to visit St. Joseph’s house to see for themselves the beliefs and values expressed in the newspaper.

The emphasis within the Catholic Worker on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy was important to several of the women, as were the values of voluntary poverty, personal responsibility, and pacifism. The works of mercy, drawn from the Jesus’ words in the Gospels, have been an integral part of what it means to be a faithful Christian for centuries. In Matthew 25: 31-46, Jesus tells a parable about a King who rewards the righteous and punishes the unjust because of their regard for the weak. The King notes that the righteous will be rewarded because they gave him food, drink, clothing, and comfort when he was in need. The righteous reply:

‘Lord, when was it when we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you a sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ (*The Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, 1989, p. 807)

During the 1930s and 1940s, *The Catholic Worker* was unique in that it encouraged lay people to actively follow Christ in this way. To carry out corporal acts (or works) of mercy is to: “feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick, visit the prisoner, and bury the dead...The Spiritual Acts of Mercy [are] to teach the ignorant, to counsel the needy, to chastise the sinful, to comfort the sorrowful, to forgive enemies, to suffer tribulation, and to pray for all fervently” (*Seven Corporal Works of Mercy*, 2001, p.1).

Monica Ribar Cornell reflects that her mother Carlotta Durkin Ribar was attracted to the Catholic Worker because she “had come from a devout Catholic family...they would have been familiar with the idea of works and mercy and trying to live a Christ-centered life.” Adele Butler Nash also appreciated the focus on the works of mercy:

Well, I think the commitment to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy is absolutely basic. And these were people who were doing it. They weren't talking about it, they were doing it. And that's very compelling.

Mary Bigham Farren says she was attracted by the “simplicity of life...voluntary poverty and service” of those who lived and worked at the Catholic Worker. Peg Beahon Winegarden was attracted by the “whole basic idea of responsibility for each other..you know at this time there was a Depression.” Helen Adler states that it was pacifism that drew her to the movement: “of course the Worker was pacifist...Dorothy was pacifist, extreme[ly]...So that attracted me to the Worker...the teaching.” Peg Beahon Winegarden states that the pacifism of the Catholic Worker was important to her. She recalls:

When I was still in high school I loved history. I started reading history at the age of 5 or 6, which was kind of unusual. I was very concerned about World War I and the events leading up to World War II. [Pacifism] was another big link to me [in the Catholic Worker].”

The Catholic Worker newspaper was an effective vehicle for both Catholic Worker beliefs and actions. Narrators recall that the paper articulated beliefs and values that mattered to them. Finding a movement that brought together faith and action in significant ways was intriguing and drew many to New York to see first hand the radical expression of faith they read about in the newspaper.

Connecting to the Catholic Worker for narrators generally came through an initial introduction within a Catholic context. Narrators expressed the desire for something more than their local parish was providing and were often inspired by specific individuals to explore more radical ideas. Influential relationships with educators, priests, or nuns prepared narrators to embrace the Catholic Worker. Additionally, personal contacts with Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, as well as *The*

Catholic Worker newspaper drew them to consider how they could become involved in the movement.

Learning to be a Catholic Worker

The *Catholic Worker* was a site for learning for the women involved during the 1930s and 1940s. Narrators described a variety of learning experiences that served to shape their identity and life choices. A brief examination of three accounts of daily life in the *Worker* will be followed by an exploration of the ways in which the *Catholic Worker* served as a place for learning.

Examining three descriptions of a day at the *Catholic Worker* sheds light on ways that women and men worked together to meet needs of those around them. Betty Finegan Doyle and Mary Coisman Durnin share descriptions of a day in New York, and Helen Adler recalls a typical day at Maryfarm, Newburgh.

Betty Finegan Doyle recounted the six day visit with her sister Mary Katherine to the house on Mott Street while both were students at Nazareth College. Describing a day during Easter week of 1938, Betty writes:

Good Friday morning! We awaken in an apartment whose owner we have never seen, in New York City, on Mott Street! Shaking the wonder of it from our sleepy heads, we hurry to attend the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified, poking our heads in the door of the *Catholic Worker* in passing by, to find out the hour of Mass. Our church is the ornate Italian Church of the Transfiguration. Old women with black shawls and glowing candles, shiny-eyed little girls in white with angel-wings and golden crowns, proceed in solemn procession through the church, chanting to Christ who dies on the cross today.

We're back in Peter's office, Mary Katherine is typing *Pax* envelopes, I am reading John LeFarge's *Interracial Justice*. As I pull my chair up closer to the grate, I think how different everything in this room and in the house seems now that I know its inhabitants and have grown to love it. Sitting here, I feel the warmth of love and of Christianity that pervades the place. Here is peace, here love, here Christ. Poverty is here also, it is true, and work, but accepted in Christ's way, poverty and work make peace. Of work there is plenty, envelopes to type, papers to mail, lists to make out, letters to type, articles to write, the paper to edit, 'ambassadors' to feed, needy to clothe, sick to visit, visitors to indoctrinate, books to read, dishes to wash, floors to mop, ad infinitum. (Finegan, p. 10)

Betty Finegan Doyle remembers the end of a day during her visit to New York:

After supper, someone banged on a pan and we all went down to Peter's room for Compline. Gathered in that poor, littered place, so close that our shoulders touched, we all, learned and unlearned, wise and ignorant, united our hearts and souls in the evening prayer of the church, to God. 'He will over-shadow thee with His shoulders and under His wings thou shalt trust...A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh to thee. For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.' Thus magnificently begins an evening at the Catholic Worker, evening that may bring discussion, indoctrination, studying, working, anything. (Finegan, pp. 9-10).

Mary Coisman Durnin recalls a typical day in New York:

There was Mass in the morning and after that, breakfast..coffee and bread.

The Jewish bakeries gave us real bread..in contrast to Wonder Bread... It was day old bread, but it was good. We hardly ever had butter. We just ate bread and coffee. And we hardly ever had fresh milk for our coffee. We had [it] from the can. Sometimes we would see somebody going from restaurant to restaurant, asking for handouts, so we would take them to the Catholic Worker and give them a handout. Sometimes Peter would be doing that too. And so we would all chip in and get some butter so the stranger could have butter for his bread. And we used to go sometimes to a noon Mass with Peter...Peter slept late, because he was up all night. He would go to church at St. Andrew's by City Hall in New York and then he would go to the horse markets afterward and we would want to follow him in, but he wouldn't let us. He said it's no place for a lady. But there was a restaurant on the Bowery called Roy's and there were a couple of Communists who ran it and Peter used to take visiting Jesuits there and we would go with him.

Following lunch, Mary remembers that they might:

Give out clothes, and there would be scrubbing to do and washing windows and housekeeping needs, laundry. And we would type the addresses of people who subscribed and then we put the addresses on the papers when it was time.

Preparations for the retreats at Newburgh farm offered many opportunities for work and prayer. Helen Adler describes a typical day at Maryfarm:

We had to have laundry, beds made, cooking...all the ordinary womanly things, you know..so called. We worked very hard. Manual labor. I liked manual labor and it was very good. We lived a Benedictine life. Dorothy was a Benedictine oblate and we at Grailville lived a Benedictine life. So we said the divine office three times a day, the Psalms and Mass every morning, and an hour of prayer. And that's what saved us really from complete boredom.

The schedule for each day began with Lauds (morning prayer), followed by:

Mass at 8:00...and then we'd have breakfast at 9:00. And different people would do their work...two people wanted to bake bread and take it out and sell it around the community of Newburgh...[others would] do the laundry or the farmer would go out and do his farm work. Joe Cotter would go over to the canning kitchen and start canning. This was all in spring, summer and fall.

Helen recalls the schedule for the rest of the day:

Lunch was at noon...then Jane and I would say None [prayer at noon], that was the None psalm. And then we'd take a nap or rest. Jane and I had an upstairs room...[there were] four beds in it like a dorm, but there were just the two of us. The she'd make me get up promptly at 2:00. I'd be reading a book or writing a poem...then we'd do more work... [and] we'd say Vespers at 5:00, then we'd have dinner, and then you could do whatever you wanted after dinner. And then we'd say Compline at 9:00 and go [to bed]. Very simple life. I don't know how I stood it. Just like being a nun.

These three descriptions of everyday life at the Catholic Worker include attendance at Mass, regular times of prayer, manual labor, caring for others, and opportunities to read and discuss. Much of the daily experience was shared with others—praying, cooking, scrubbing, distributing food, clothing, or the newspaper, hearing lectures, discussing strikes or books they were reading. The Catholic Worker as a site for learning, can be understood by exploring narrator's experiences in the following areas: the Catholic Worker as a place of belonging, work as labor and love, intellectual discovery, nonviolent resistance, significant relationships, and issues of gender.

Place of Belonging

Narrators described the Catholic Worker as a place where they belonged or fit, a home. They described it as both a place of love and care, as well as a place to grow. Women expressed the excitement of the realization that they found what they had been looking for in the Catholic Worker. Finding what might be called “a home” is often the result of being in a place where specific values and ideals take physical form. When particular groups stand for ideas or values that are counter-cultural, those who have been seeking such articulation of beliefs find a place of belonging and a place to grow.

Helen Adler recounts:

I think it was an unconscious drive to have something meaningful in my life because I had been a social worker for two years and it wasn't satisfying enough. And I think also...like most of the young people that joined it...we were looking for a home with love in it an there were a lot of warm, loving

people and I think that was it. As a 24 year old, I just thought...oh, I've got a home now.

Adele Butler Nash agrees that the Catholic Worker was a place where she felt at home: "My friends used to tease me—what are you doing with *The Catholic Worker* paper? I felt at home with it. I loved it. [My] high school experience prepared me for this."

Betty Finegan Doyle describes the atmosphere of love and caring she experienced at Maryfarm:

[There was] a lot of love and lot of caring, a lot of people working hard. We had Mass in a little barn there that had been fixed up into a chapel. People pretty much did what they wanted. I mean they did a lot of manual labor. There wasn't a lot of order to it really...you know, that wouldn't be the Catholic Worker...I really enjoyed it very much...The farm and houses were pretty crude and rustic, but [there was] a lot of care and love going on.

Peg Beahon Winegarden relates that the Catholic Worker served as a place to grow. She states, "That was the attraction—regular meetings, talking about issues...all good memories, a good growing up [place]."

Nina Polcyn Moore mentions that Don Gallagher (of the St. Louis Catholic Worker) described the Catholic Worker as an incubator. She reflects: "No one was going to tell you what to do, you figured it out. It was a place that helped people define themselves, their roles, their sense of personhood, and then they left, taking that with them."

The Catholic Worker seemed to create a sense of belonging, the realization of what these women had been looking for. Narrators noted that they found a home, a sense of caring and love, as well as an opportunity for growth and self-definition.

Work as Labor and Love

Narrators described the work that they did at St. Joseph's House in New York, the retreat center at Maryfarm, and at other houses of hospitality. In some houses, women were involved in planning Catholic Worker meetings and arranging for speakers to come. However, work at the houses of hospitality for both women and men was frequently characterized by manual labor and reaching out in love to care for those in need. The anarchistic approach of the Catholic Worker caused people to find many ways to contribute, at times based on their own skills and interests, but primarily based on pressing needs.

For this group of women, work included clerical tasks, such as typing correspondence, managing the large mailing lists for the newspaper, as well as selling the newspaper, preparing and distributing food and clothing, searching for suitable housing for families who had been evicted from their apartments, and other tasks focused on the needs of families and their children.

Manual labor. Along with the excitement of finding like-minded individuals concerned with important issues, women who became involved in the Catholic Worker engaged in carrying out the works of mercy. This work was often hard physical labor--scrubbing, cleaning, washing, mending, cooking, canning, etc., and demonstrated Peter Maurin's hope for the development of "worker-scholars." Helen Adler states, "The idea was that if you did manual labor and did your own work, you

wouldn't have to become part of the artificial system where everything is specialized and everything is mechanized and technologically taken-over.”

In addition to working on the breadline and in the clothing room in New York, there were many jobs associated with getting the newspaper. The newspaper was a focal point for activity at the Catholic Worker. In addition to Dorothy Day, a few other women served as editors (Dorothy Weston, for example), writers and artists (Ade Bethune and Julia Porcelli). At other houses of hospitality, women were involved in writing and editing local Catholic Worker papers. For example, Peg Beahon Winegarden and Adele Butler Nash served in this way at the Rochester and Buffalo houses.

Assisting with the physical preparation of the paper and its distribution was a large task, shared by women and men, ambassadors and Workers. Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella recalls typing labels for the large mailing list of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper in New York:

A guy named Charlie...he was great, had a cigarette [hanging] out of his mouth. He'd come and ...have these stacks of people who had moved to new addresses. And we'd have to change all this. And he was very good at keeping his files up. So that was the kind of work...you kind of fell into the things you were familiar with. Since I'd been a bookkeeper and an office worker, and had been trained to do that, it came easy for me.

Women and men distributed the newspaper, both in New York and in other locations across the country, the homeless alongside Workers. While the newspaper was advertised at a penny a copy, often the papers were simply given away. Mary

Alice remarks: “A lot of those people actually sold them and that was the only income they had. A penny a copy. People would give a quarter or...change.”

Mary Coisman Durnin recalls distributing the newspaper in New York:

Well, mostly we sold it or sometimes...there were big meetings in New York, like at Madison Square Garden, and we would take the paper and give them out to people... Like when the politicians came to town. I remember Franklin D. Roosevelt and Wendell Wilkie came...they were both running for President. And so we gave out the papers.

She also remembers the excitement of selling the newspaper in Union Square:

Well, there would be a lot of soapboxes around and people would be orating on their favorite subject. Peter [Maurin] would be there speaking. And then there would be clusters of people around each soapbox...Some would be fundamentalists, speaking on Scripture, and socialists...[And] we used to go to *The Daily Worker* office...we'd bring them *The Catholic Worker*... It was a block or so away from Union Square and we were received. We had some things in common, you know. Some Communists that we met...they came politicking at our homes, too, and I'd invite them in for coffee and give them *The Catholic Worker*. Well, they were sincere. Some of them really cared about humankind, you know, and so we had that in common with them.

Betty Finegan Doyle's remembrances about selling the newspaper also include Union Square:

We would go out on the street and sell *The Catholic Worker*. Stanley Vishnewski, especially was one of the people in the *Catholic Worker*, a young

man..., I think he was only 17 or 18...he was around our age. He was the one that did a lot of the selling of the paper...we would go out to Union Square and different places like that. It was very thrilling for us....[At Union Square] anybody who wanted to could get up and talk, give speeches of all kinds. There was a lot of radicalism around, that was kind of new to us. But it was all very thrilling for young people.

Katherine Moos Mella helped to distribute the newspaper and remembers about Union Square that people would “stand up on a soapbox or something and orate about what they felt was right. It was a time of great excitement.” She also recalls driving a horse and wagon back from Union Square through the streets of New York:

We finished distributing papers...and here was this horse and nobody to drive him...none of [the] fellows could drive a horse...so I drove the horse...I knew when to say...Get up or Whoa....it took me so long to get across the...intersection because the horse was..he was the poorest old nag you ever saw in your life... The horse belonged to somebody else...but we [had] borrowed the horse and wagon and [had] filled it full of *Catholic Workers*...Because all of the other crazy people distributed papers too.

The work of houses of hospitality and farming communes required much manual labor on the part of both women and men. Narrators recall taking on tasks that made it possible for the houses and farms to function, particularly in areas that helped others, such as cooking, cleaning, and mending. The many tasks associated with publishing and distributing the newspaper provided additional opportunities to serve.

Meeting needs. The works of mercy carried out at each of the houses of hospitality were driven by the immediate needs of those that sought out the Catholic Worker for help, and yet were strongly differentiated from the field of social work, according to two of the women. The values promulgated by professional social workers at the time were very different from those upheld by Catholic Workers. For Catholic Workers, the underlying motivation for the way in which the works of mercy should be carried out was the belief in the Mystical Body of Christ. This belief necessitates that all humans be treated with love and respect. It follows Jesus' call to care for everyone, particularly the least or the weakest in society. Helen Adler offers this explanation of the Mystical Body of Christ:

What it means is we're all joined as one human race and Dorothy believed that Christ dwelled in every person. If you were just patient enough and loving enough to bring it out in people. And I must say that most Catholic Workers did try to live by not looking at all the things that drove them crazy about people, but you get the grace somehow to seek God in them. And it's a faith experience. You can't explain it. You have to live it.

Helen recalls that Dorothy used to tell her:

'Helen, you're no different from Mrs. Lavin.' And Mrs. Lavin was the one that cursed me all night. She did. And the walls were thin...she stole all my clothes the first day I came and sold them for wine. She was desperate for alcohol...my only criticism was that we were not prepared by Dorothy at all. Dorothy never thought about it because she lived a bohemian life... I mean she just had this idea of this vision...the Mystical Body of Christ, we're all one,

no one is better than anyone else. And she really believed that and lived it. But it's extremely hard for young people to accept that.

People who came to the Catholic Worker for food or clothing were not considered clients but members of the Mystical Body of Christ and ambassadors of Christ. A common interpretation of the passage in 2 Corinthians 5:16-20 about serving as ambassadors of Christ would be to consider true ambassadors as the clergy or devout church-goers. Day thought of this concept differently. The passage reads:

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (*The Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, 1989, p. 940).

Day saw the presence of Christ in the most destitute and needy, who called those around them to God. Day's understanding that "we know Christ in each other in the breaking of bread" (Piehl, 1982, p. ii) was a powerful motivation for feeding those in need.

Mary Coisman Durnin reflects that "Peter [Maurin] wouldn't call us social workers." Many social workers came to represent the interests of the state over the

needs of the individual. The Catholic Worker's underlying philosophy was that individuals and small groups should work to meet the needs of the poor, and not leave this responsibility to what Day referred to as "Holy Mother the State."

Helen Adler describes the differences in approach between the Catholic Worker and a social work mentality, referring to herself in carrying out her life's work with women and children:

As a Gospel person. [A] Catholic Worker doesn't act like a social worker does. It doesn't..it can't..I mean it wouldn't be true to itself....Well, first of all, as a social worker, you feel superior..whether you admit it or not..I know there are a lot of dedicated social workers. And it's very hard to explain the difference...But it's the sitting with the person...and listening to the person and believing in that person, no matter whether they're poor, rich, well dressed, shabby, ugly, pretty, and our society doesn't act that way. When you go for a job, you have to be attractive, peppy, please the people. In most...in business or sales...You're judged by your appearance immediately. And we just can't help it. That's how we're brought up, you know. But Dorothy never did that and she tried to help us see that the important thing is that you're a person first of all and you're born into this world, but your destiny is another world. And you're only in this world to serve. And if you don't serve, then you become proud..you know. And God despises the proud. He helps the humble. It's in the Psalms all the time.

Instead of separating themselves from those they came to serve, Catholic Workers invited ambassadors to live and work alongside them in addressing society's

ills. Mary Bigham Farren remembers the work at the Rochester Catholic Worker house: “we started feeding people...there were volunteers but there was always what I would call an ambassador, a man from the line, who would stick around and cook or take care of things. I remember this one man who was a host to bedbugs and he’d sit in the kitchen but he was the cook.”

Catholic Worker women reached out to those in need and this often pressed them beyond areas of experience or comfort. Narrators worked on the breadlines and in the clothing rooms at all of the houses, distributing food and clothing. They also described looking for apartments for families that had been evicted in New York as well as other tasks that focused on the needs of families and children.

Betty Finegan Doyle remembers the breadline in New York in 1938:

They were almost all...somewhat older men or people who were out of work and that kind of thing. It was really sad. It was quite shocking to us, Mary Katherine and me, when we left there to go past them to go to Mass in the morning...it was always hard to pass them...way past...down the street. You always felt people like ourselves who had always been well fed and well cared for, you know...it was just shocking to see that. We’d never really seen such poverty before.

Katherine Moos Mella describes helping with the breadline:

There was such poverty. People were hungry all the time. And there was nothing to eat, absolutely nothing. We would go up, way up to 248th St...and get great big sacks full of bread...day old bread...they didn’t want...[We’d] bring the bread back and hand the men...[a] few slices...thick

slices...One...two...three, so they had something to fill their stomachs. Because they were so darn hungry...You don't know, and I don't know, for that matter, what it means to be that hungry...Even now at this...my advanced age, I wonder how they lived, how they could bear...but there's something about human beings, they stick it out till they die of hunger...There were a thousand men who would come down the breadline.

Working on the breadline was a frequent occupation for narrators while at the Catholic Worker. Daily interaction with hungry people provided direct and tangible evidence of the collapse of the economic system during the 1930s.

During the 1930s, landlords regularly evicted families that could not pay rent. By 1935, new tenement housing law required that landlords fireproof buildings and provide a toilet for each family ("Moratorium," 1935). If landlords chose not to renovate, buildings were condemned and people were evicted from their apartments. *The Catholic Worker* ran articles about the housing crisis and often helped people find new quarters by sending out Workers to look for apartments.

Katherine Moos Mella states that a regular task was looking for apartments for those who had been evicted. She remarks that people lived in deplorable conditions; the apartments "had bugs and roaches...and things were all over." She continues:

You have no idea how poor, how terribly, terribly poor the people were at that time. Particularly those who stayed at the Catholic Worker, they were just destitute. I remember going up this stairway..a long stairway, it was very, very rickety and very..lots of steps were missing so you had to climb over...you can imagine....my God, how anybody would have...why I didn't get

killed was a mystery..I don't know. But that was the condition of that apartment.

Another way that the Worker assisted neighbors was through a maternity guild. With her friend Evangeline Mercier, Nina Polcyn Moore collected money for expectant mothers in the neighborhood, so that there would be money to pay the hospital when babies were born:

Dorothy had us go to work in a maternity guild and we went into steaming tenements with the steam just coming down...gruesome green walls...we got a list...from the pastor of St. Joseph Church in Greenwich Village, of pregnant women and they paid us 25 cents a month...for their lying in. But you know...we were scared stiff to go in these tenements.

Nina states that the purpose of the guild was to save money for hospital bills because "birthing was a different event at that time...and more risky, I suppose, because of disease, malnutrition, and lack of doctors."

Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella recalls waiting to escort children to a neighborhood release program for Catholic education (CCD) classes. She remembers:

There was a program at area churches around the Catholic Worker and they had release time for children and they'd come across the street and we used the building that Mother Seton had started...We were teaching them. It got out that I was from Indiana, the kids there thought there were Indians in Indiana...I guess I was the first volunteer teacher to teach there. And we'd have to meet each class and wait to cross the street.

Narrators were engaged in manual labor in houses of hospitality, in addition to clerical tasks, distributing food and clothing, and assisting with the distribution of the newspaper. Additional tasks focused on the needs of families and children in the neighborhood: searching for houses for families that had been evicted, assisting expectant mothers, and teaching children.

Intellectual Discovery

All of the narrators present in Catholic Worker houses during the 1930s and 1940s described the impact of lively discussions that took place at Catholic Worker houses. The atmosphere of intellectual discovery permeated the Worker. Often the content of the newspaper from the New York house drove the discussions and regular meetings for “clarification of thought.” In addition, a list of selected books formed a central core of recommended reading within the Catholic Worker. These works also served as the basis of many discussions at the houses.

Nina Polcyn Moore found the environment of the Catholic Worker to be a rich and vibrant place to learn. Many individuals contributed to the atmosphere as people stopped by St. Joseph’s house in New York on their way to other destinations. She recalls:

At the Catholic Worker at that time, there was such wonderful adult education. And of course being with Dorothy, she larded every conversation with references to Dostoevsky. She had come with her own sense of the Russian Revolution...But at the Catholic Worker when I was there, we had retreats by Gerald Ellard who was a Jesuit who had just come back from Maria Laach, a center for liturgy...We had Paul Hanley Furfey...and we had

Sister Peter Claver. I met her and we sat on the front step..it was on Charles Street. That's where I met Joe Zarrella. And you see..we gave out the paper at the water front. We were educated in social justice ideas long before a lot of other people heard these things. But it was such a rich time to be there....And you see..we got exposed to so much in New York, it was just a ferment of ideas and so many visitors came to the Catholic Worker...and Dorothy was just also learning so much from Peter. She was learning about the..theory of revolution really and..she was somebody who discovered the Father Hugo retreats and was also influenced by a Canadian named Lacouture. So there were all these rich influences, rich ideas floating around. It was just a wonderful time.

When Nina returned to Milwaukee, she worked with other interested people to start Holy Family House. Meeting in the basement of the Marquette University School of Journalism, the small group studied and discussed how to move forward. Nina recalls:

We had our own form of adult education. We were reading the Catholic Worker, we were trying to understand the works of mercy and we were trying to understand the gospels and Dorothy and Peter's commitment. So that was a rich time in itself.

Betty Finegan Doyle recalls the types of people who were drawn to the meetings at the Catholic Worker:

There were quite a few seminarians or ex-seminarians who were very interested in it. And then people just kind of drifted in. A lot of college students...It was kind of a religious movement in a way, you know, there

were people who had interest in social justice and also in theology and philosophy, and things like that.

Helen Adler notes that “there were a lot of literary types around the Worker and they fascinated me...we had visitors...all kinds of literary people.” Helen goes on to describe the regular meetings at the house in New York: “[On] Friday nights at the houses in the city...[there would be a] roundtable discussion with a good speaker and then a big discussion...always on current social...or literary [issues].”

Mary Bigham Farren describes discussions at the Rochester Catholic Worker house: “We had Tuesday night regular meetings at the house and we would have a speaker or a discussion and then we also in those days had a Mass on Saturday mornings in the chapel. Sometimes...people from the line would come to Mass.” She notes that sometimes the group “would take issues of interest and concern and sort them over and toss them around.” Discussions would often take place while work was being done: “around the table in the kitchen” or when “can[ning] tomatoes..or whatever they were doing.” These discussions focused on “pacifism...and labor relations. At one point we had a labor school. Father George Vogt was running it and it had weekly meetings and drew people who wanted to learn more about justice and the Worker.”

Peg Beahon Winegarden remembers discussing conditions in Rochester at Catholic Worker meetings. She recalls that the meetings:

Had a special topic or somebody was in town who was kind of interesting, especially [with] a personal [connection]...We asked questions. We’d talk about the house itself and how it was doing and what we should do and

[hadn't] done. I'd say we concentrated a lot on the state of the city, which was difficult...There were a lot of people who were hungry.

Nina Polcyn Moore remembers that at the Catholic Worker in Milwaukee, "We had meetings every night for a while. Nobody could keep this up...we were so busy clarifying thought." The Milwaukee house sponsored speakers and often had to rent large meeting halls to accommodate all who were interested in hearing lecturers who came to town. Nina recalls:

We had people like Catherine de Hueck and we had Paul Hanley Furfey, who told us about fire on the earth...We had...Lydwine van Kersbergen from the Grail...we had all kinds of people come and give us lectures on the papal encyclicals and letters...we had Rev. Gerard Smith, S.J., from Marquette who came on Sundays once a month and helped us understand the gospels.

Nina describes the preparation for speakers:

We would rent the Milwaukee Turner Hall for a few dollars and have a meeting there if we were expecting a big crowd...we would send out notices to all the papers and we tried to get the students at Marquette and a few other schools. We had maybe one person at each school that would spread the word, so we tried to...enlarge our horizons. It was kind of haphazard, but...all the women were working and we didn't live there, so that was another situation. Hardly anybody had a car...so we were always going on streetcars and it was hard.

Belle Bates Mullin remembers the Wednesday night meetings at the Milwaukee Catholic Worker:

They had lecturers every Wednesday and they were all current people who ...talked about what was going on in the government and what was going on in the economics and in business. And every week you would have...people on lecture tours and they were probably going through Chicago...they [kept] in touch with people who would know who was coming through and they would invite them up to talk.

Adele Butler Nash remembers the topics of discussion shared by active Catholic Workers in Buffalo:

One of the active members was George McCabe, he was an economist. He graduated from Cornell. He had taught at Yale. I think he fell upon hard times. He came to Buffalo and taught at Canisius College. He would bring...this whole matter of economics which was a field that I would never have been interested in even, except just to know if people were poor or not. We also had Charles Brady, who was a professor at Canisius College and an author of very popular book reviews in the Buffalo news. Because of Father Bosch's connections with Canisius College, we were always closely connected with the Jesuits. Brady was an English teacher, and he would come and talk. His field...was English literature. We had a person who was the editor of the local Catholic paper which at that time was called *Union and Echo*... We did have intellectuals and we had Father Bosch himself and Father McGee who gave talks on religious topics. Then we would have great excitement when Dorothy or Peter, or other Catholic Workers, itinerant Catholic Workers would come and talk.

Adele remarks that the tone of the discussions at the Buffalo house was different from that in New York, “with us it was a kind of folksy, a little more of a hometown, whoever was willing to come and give us a little talk on whatever was their field of interest.”

Narrators noted a variety of authors that were being read and discussed within the Catholic Worker during this time. Betty Finegan Doyle remembers reading “the encyclicals, and the works of Belloc, and Chesterton, and Cardinal Newman and almost anything that had to do with the church. A lot of French authors were writing at the time.” She also read Eric Gill and Paul Claudell. Nina Polcyn Moore remembers reading:

Leon Bloy and people like Mauriac, Sigred Undset (Kristin Lavransdotter)...Claudell..all those wonderful Frenchmen. I think that it was sort of de rigeur in the Catholic Worker that you were all part of this Chesterton and Eric Gill...trying to just get this whole sense of...the greatest thing was to be a saint...that was your aim in life.

Helen Adler notes that there was a good library at Maryfarm, Newburgh. She remembers reading:

Dostoyevsky..I read all his books about not judging people and how murder can happen, man’s inhumanity to man, how the church preach[ed] one thing and didn’t forgive...preach[ed] forgiveness, but didn’t usually forgive... *The Rich and the Poor in Christian Tradition* had a great influence on me. It was quoting all the early church fathers from the beginning and their constant teaching was that God lives especially in poor people and whatever you do for

a poor person, you do directly for Christ. And I really believe that. And Nicolai Berdyaev, he wrote about the church and tradition and so on, and how to be discriminating. He was a Russian writer. [Dorothy] made us read Vincent McNabb and Eric Gill. Those were the standards...And a lot of the writers, like [Ignazio] Silone...he wrote a lot about the peasants in Sicily...they were novels, but they taught you about how people lived, how poor they were and how rich the church was. I read some books about the Spanish Civil War. [Dorothy] was the only Catholic..only church person that came out against Franco.

Through attentive reading of the Gospels, papal encyclicals, and a wide array of European Catholic writers, women and men in the Catholic Worker received an education in all types of issues relating to labor, wealth and poverty, and how to live as a faithful Christian. Lectures and wide-ranging discussions brought out new understandings of biblical beliefs about social justice.

Nonviolent Resistance

All of the women were involved in nonviolent resistance to American cultural values of materialism and violence through living in voluntary poverty, studying alternatives to American capitalism while meeting the needs of those hurt by it, and standing up against war and unfair treatment of workers. Some women chose to participate in picket lines, others registered their discontent through letter writing or activism within pacifist associations. Dorothy Day believed that protesting unfair practices was a work of mercy. She states: “to go on picket lines to protest discrimination in housing, to protest the draft, is one of the works of mercy, which

include ‘rebuking the sinner, enlightening the ignorant, counseling the doubtful.’”

However, she continues, “I confess I always do these things with fear and trembling. I loathe the use of force” (Day, 1999, p. 207).

Most of the picketing that took place focused on labor issues, particularly the unfair treatment of workers. Other issues included protesting embassies or consulates of countries where either Catholics or others were mistreated. Later picket lines included protests against the draft and against preparation for nuclear war.

Betty Finegan Doyle’s account of her visit to New York for the Nazareth College *Verity Fair* demonstrates the strong feelings engendered over labor issues at the Catholic Worker in 1938:

A treat is in store for us on this Good Friday afternoon. As we are drying the dishes, Miss Day interrupts Stanley [Vishnewski]’s warbling of the Internationale, to tell us to come to her room and meet Father Rheinhold, a political exile from Germany, and a charming and earnest man, as we discover. Gathered in the room are Miss Day, Peter Maurin, John Cort, Professor McNeil from Fordham, Stanley, Mary Katherine and I. Soon Peter’s making points at the top of his voice, as everyone ‘gangs up’ against one of the group who does not accept entirely the official Catholic Worker attitude on the Sit-Down strike. (Finegan, p. 10).

Nina Polcyn Moore remembers handing out *The Catholic Worker* newspaper with a Catholic Worker friend, Evangeline Mercier, in front of the National Biscuit Company in New York. In the spring of 1935, members of the Inside Bakery Workers Union filed a complaint with the Regional Labor Board because union members at

the National Biscuit Company were subject to discriminatory practices in rehiring after a strike (“Bakers,” 1935).

During the summer of 1935, Nina was present for the riot at the New York harbor over the Bremen, a ship from Germany which was flying the Nazi flag. She also participated in the picketing of the German embassy. She recalls:

[When] I was at the Bremen riot with Dorothy...we saw police brutality and then Dorothy went the next day to the police station to complain...Somebody tore down the flag...from the ship. And then Dorothy had this idea to picket the German consulate which we did because she felt war was coming. Ade Bethune made the picket signs and I carried something that said...‘Bismarck tried and failed.’ Somebody else carried... ‘Spiritually we’re all Semites.’ ...That was pretty reckless because nobody was doing that in 1935. That was really... a risky thing. We did that every week.

Peg Beahon Winegarden remembers protesting stores in Rochester: “it seems to me that there was a bakery that we protested. It was because of...labor...they did do some...on the labor front...protesting treatment of people.” Mary Coisman Durnin recalls supporting a variety of striking workers in New York:

I remember on one of my wanderings around Manhattan, I came across the people striking by Florsheim shoes..so I brought them over to the Catholic Worker and they wrote an article about it, about their strike. I remember picketing in Brooklyn..a Catholic candle manufacturers...I suppose it was for a living wage. Dorothy was very insistent that anyone who came to ask her to provide some..help, employment...they have to pay a living wage. She

wouldn't..people came there to ask for..what we called gandy dancers.

People..they wanted some of the [men] to work for them, but at a pitiful wage... Dorothy would refuse to give them names of people for this. They wouldn't pay them enough.

Helen Adler participated with other Catholic Workers in supporting striking gravediggers in the cemetery strike in March of 1949. Cardinal Spellman of New York led a group of seminarians to cross the picket lines at Calvary Cemetery, a large Catholic cemetery in Queens, NY ("Cardinal," 1949).

Well, I was there when they had the cemetery strike and the seminarians were brought in by Cardinal Spellman to break the strike and we went out to protest that. So there was a very bad feeling then because we thought it was horrible that [Spellman] sent people to break the strike. The diggers of the graves wanted higher pay. So instead of letting the strikers get their way, he sent the seminarians and they never got their way. So we sympathized with them and I remember riding back to Mott Street, Irene and I in a black hearse...one of the undertaker's hearses, after we went out to Long Island where the strike was...Dorothy managed always to not antagonize...she was extremely different [from] most people. She was very traditional. She didn't want to antagonize. She believed in being peaceful and they sort of felt her strength.

Nina Polcyn Moore reflects on the connection between faith and protest:

All had a strong basis in being a witness. They all had a strong underpinning, undergirding of...you're doing this for the love of the Lord and the planet... But I think you couldn't do it without it...it's so risky. For example, I was in

New York...with Dorothy..when there were the air raid drills. And the air raid drills, Dorothy felt was a...preparation for war and a creating of an atmosphere. And so the paddy wagon rolled up and the whole world was supposed to...get in a subway and Dorothy and Ammon and a few others wouldn't go, so they...you've probably seen pictures..they got in the paddy wagon. So then I went to a strategy meeting that Bayard Rustin ran in somebody's loft, and he said...we need so much money to bail these people out. We're going to bail Dorothy Day out last...she's been in jail before, she's an old warhorse and we'll get more money...if she's still in there. So I went and bailed her out in the court at the last minute. Oh, wasn't that wild? But it was wonderful to hear him, who ran the march on Washington...just say..well, she's an old warhorse..she's been in jail before. We'll get more money, so we bailed these other guys out. So you see...that was...the tactics are interesting, aren't they?

Other women did not participate on picket lines, primarily because their beliefs and interests lay elsewhere. While Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella states that she “was against these things...it just didn't interest me,” she carried out active peacemaking in other ways. Mary Alice served as secretary for the Association of Catholic Conscientious Objectors, and attended a meeting of the War Resisters League at Dorothy Day's request. She recalls:

I remember once [Dorothy] couldn't go and she sent me to the War Resisters League. Now that had to be before 1942. And the man that I talked to, I can't think of his name, but he was a very prominent person, and he said, 'don't you

find it strange that we are the Jews and we're against the war, and the Christians, who are for peace, are fighting the war.' The War Resisters League didn't have a lot of Catholics, they were mostly Jewish. And here the Jews were being persecuted...rather than Catholics. Just like today.... Its not the weapons of mass destruction, it's the weapons of mass deception. ...And that was going wrong in the Second War World. People didn't know what was going on.

Betty Finegan Doyle remembers writing letters of protest:

A lot about housing...We all wrote letters to newspapers and...I don't think we had so many marches as I remember, but a lot of protests going to the Chancery office and then to social service offices and things like that...protests about race and racial injustice and about wages...labor and wages..and about the unfairness quite often of the church in working with its employees. We made quite an unpleasant fuss sometimes for the bishops and so on...Because it was really notable that they really were not fair with their employees very often. And people who, for instance, dug graves or did kind of menial work or something like that were not paid properly. It was supposed to be some kind of an honor to work for the church I guess.

Women expressed different opinions about pacifism, ranging from it being an important factor in their initial attraction to the Worker, to change over time to a different perspective about absolute pacifism. Pacifism caused division within the movement as World War II approached, with many houses of hospitality closing.

Betty Finegan Doyle states that she “was really completely a pacifist” during World War II, and as a result was at home with the Catholic Worker stance during the war. A man she loved very much, Clair Howland, was sent to a conscientious objector camp in Colorado during the war. In recent years she has come to think a bit differently about pacifism, wondering about the result if Hitler had won the war. While she affirms active peacemaking, she no longer considers herself an “absolute pacifist.”

Adele Butler Nash discusses the pacifism of the Catholic Worker during World War II:

One aspect of the Catholic Worker that was controversial at this time was our position on the war. We were pacifists...at this time Dorothy and the Catholic Workers were absolutely pacifists. Conscientious objector status was the only option open for active Catholic Workers. And of course that was a very prominent aspect of the whole movement at the time.

Carlotta Durkin Ribar was more comfortable with the acts of mercy than acts of protest, according to her daughter, Monica Ribar Cornell. Carlotta and her husband George expressed some concern over the nature of protests led by Catholic Workers after they were no longer directly involved, and wanted the money they donated to the Worker to be used for direct aid to the poor, rather than to support picketing, or other actions which might ally them with Communists.

Not all of the women interviewed for this study participated in active protests over labor, international issues, or war. Additionally, some differences existed over the pacifist perspective, particularly in the light of the issues surrounding World War

II. Still, others held firmly to pacifist beliefs and pursued peacemaking efforts actively, either through picket lines or more behind the scenes contributions. These perspectives encouraged a nonviolent resistance to American cultural values of materialism and violence.

Significant Relationships

All of the narrators noted the many significant relationships which grew from involvement with the Catholic Worker. As women and men worked together to help create houses of hospitality, relationships grew, both in terms of friendships and marriages. A network of relationships resulted which contributed to educational and work opportunities, as well as lifelong friendships.

Friendships. Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella remarks that “friendship went through the whole thing...friendship included respect for individual differences, and perspectives.” Belle Bates Mullin reflects on the friendships she made at the Milwaukee house:

The thing was..they were very good company...I was very glad to meet them and to get to know them because I just went to work and I didn't have much to do with my neighborhood because...I knew everybody, and we didn't have common interests at all. So the Catholic Worker was a stimulating place to go to and you'd meet young people. And especially Nina, Margaret, and Betty...I learned a lot from them... I met a very fine group of young women that I would not have met otherwise. I learned so much from them, you know...It was really like a college education for me.

Nina Polcyn Moore describes the bond of friendship that developed between the Milwaukee and Chicago Catholic Worker houses. As members of the two houses spent time together, Nina and other Milwaukee Catholic Workers became friends with those from the Chicago house. She states, “We connected up with the Chicago house. We got to know Jim O’Gara and John Cogley and the Resers, so we had this sort of bond.” The friendship extended to housing members of the Chicago house when they were in town at Nina’s family home. Nina recalls:

My parents were wonderful about...letting me bring people to our house...we had John Cogley and Jim O’Gara come one night and they missed the train back [to Chicago], so I left a little note on mother’s pillow saying...there are two fellows in the front room. Crazy, isn’t it?

Over time, as women worked and studied together with the Catholic Worker, friendships grew stronger. Nina remembers the friendships that deepened between three of the women at the Milwaukee house:

We had a group within [the Holy Family House] of myself, Florence Weinfurter, and Margaret Blaser...we three...had a spiritual director, Rev. J. Hafford, and we had regular meetings to try to understand the papal letters. So we had our own form of adult education. But I think you know it’s kind of like an interlocking network...Our own group then had days of recollection and we really..tried to renew the face of the earth...It was a crazy time. And we tried to sustain each other and help each other grow. And Florence Weinfurter who was a very brilliant, brilliant thinker..she was busy reading von Nell Breuning...on the state of the social situation in Germany. And

Margaret was a librarian who took 10 years to get her degree, but she had this rich background of a broad outlook on many things. So we were blessed in many ways.

Nina describes the women she met through the Catholic Worker as very committed. She believes that sometimes marriage possibilities were pushed to the side, particularly if the men didn't share the same values and ideas. Nina's relationships with Margaret and Florence were so strong, that she believes her mother "resented the fact that I was so close to these other women." The women took holidays together and would spend days off together sharing food and conversation. Nina states that "no one was interested in going to a convent—that was too oppressive," but there "was a need for this type of friendship, these strong bonds." These relationships of choice had to do with common values and contributed to their transition to adulthood, at times "alienating us from our natural blood ties." Nina notes that this transition involved addressing the issue of how to emerge as an adult with one's own distinct values. This led to a conflict of values between generations in Nina's own family.

Friendships grew as a result of shared adventures, often the basis of funny stories that are recalled fondly. Mary Bigham Farren remembers what happened during a discussion at the Rochester Catholic Worker house:

We had a funny incident. One time one of the people in the group...was reviewing a book and she said something about the devil. The old light fixture above her fell. That was quite..unusual timing.

Mary also remembers her husband Art's experience with a hearse that he used to collect donations for the Rochester Catholic Worker house:

My husband had an old hearse in which he went around and collected bread and any donations and then if he had extra, he'd go to another area and pass out some of the bread if we didn't need it all at the house. He parked it..he worked downtown, so he parked this old hearse on a side street. He finally came out one day and found a note - please do not park here any more, my husband is sick and this is very depressing to him.

Mary shared the text of a skit from the Rochester house called "Henrietta, Hoe! or Back to the Soil...in Easy Stages" The skit was performed at a dinner in 1946, given for Father Vogt to honor him as he began a new pastorate. Members of the Rochester Catholic Worker poked fun at themselves, and shared inside jokes, as they carried out a "typical" Catholic Worker meeting. The opening announcement states:

This is a very special evening for us...What follows tonight will be an expose of a possible (though very probably improbable) Catholic Worker meeting. The few individuals here will speak for all the group—35 persons who have participated in the last few years in CW meetings here. Look SHARP—feel SHARP—LISTEN SHARPLY—you may hear yourself! The authors of this drama declare it is supposed to be funny. They expect, therefore, that there will be laughter, in fact, they insist on it!...And Father Vogt, we beg your indulgence...(no pun intended). A-hem...One of the motivating themes of the Catholic Worker movement is the return to agrarianism. Such will be the

motive in tonight's opus. Thus without further ado (as the saying goes), we offer, as the stellar attraction on our entertainment program, a TYPICAL Catholic Worker meeting, entitled...(HERE RAISE EYEBROWS AND ASK IN EVER-RISING QUIZZICAL TONE):

BACK TO THE LAND???????? (“Henrietta Hoe,” 1946)

Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella recalls the fun she had with her friend Marge at the Catholic Worker in New York:

There was a clothing bank which you had to take care of, and people came for clothing. One day Margie ..., who became Margie Hughes, she and I worked together...she knew a lot of poetry and she would recite a lot and we would talk about it during the day. One day, Dorothy said (out of the blue) ‘You’re cooking tonight’ ...the cook evidently, someone had treated him and he was ...soused....and neither one of us knew much about cooking, for the breadline. In the morning they just served coffee and stale rolls and at noon, they served soup...somebody heard that Margie and I were cooking and they came and took our pictures, I’ve got a hat on.... It was terrible...But we made it. We made...lamb, lamb stew I think it was. Somebody showed up and told us how to put in ...the potatoes, and carrots, we got it made anyway. And stale bread.

Mary Alice remembers other funny stories that grew out of the challenges of living with some of the residents at St. Joseph’s house in New York:

I came down one morning and Mrs. Clements said, “They bombed your town last night” and I said, “what do you mean they bombed my town?” “They

bombed that place you come from.” I said “Tell City?... She said... “It was in all the papers; in was on the radio.” I said, “What is this about bombing Tell City?” “No, not Tell City, Helsinki!”...Another time I was up in the office and they said, “come down, there’s two nuns from Texas that want to see you.” And I said, “from Texas!” “ Yeah.” “I can’t imagine.” I went down and I saw those nuns and I knew none of them.... I said, “Well, the only nuns I know are Benedictines from Tell City.”.... That’s when they said, “No, we’re from Tulsa!” These people at Mott St. knew nothing about geography. Friendships grew through shared adventures and struggles within the Catholic Worker. Funny stories, inside jokes, and self-deprecating humor demonstrate the warmth of relationships within the Worker.

Narrators continue to keep in regular contact with each other and other former Catholic Workers. Kate Mehan Reser maintained a life long friendship with her sister-in-law, Catherine Reser, whom she met through the Catholic Worker in Chicago. The relationship between the two women continued over many years through an extensive correspondence, which included their thoughts about what they were reading, as well as current political issues.

Betty Finegan Doyle notes the continuing similarities she has with those from her Catholic Worker days:

I [keep] in touch with a lot of those people still and find that they’re still giving to the groups that I give...to, and reading the same magazines...[for example] the Southern Poverty Law Center...And it’s very interesting to see

over the years...if we haven't been in touch and if I see them and I realize that they're listening to Public Radio and to the same things [I] do.

Friendships that began within the Catholic Worker have continued over a lifetime. Shared values, beliefs, and continued involvement in social justice causes continue to foster these important relationships.

Marriage. Many people who came to the Catholic Worker ended up marrying someone in the Worker. Narrators who married someone they met at the Catholic Worker include Adele Butler Nash, Betty Finegan Doyle, Mary Coisman Durnin, Mary Bigham Farren, Katherine Moos Mella, Kate Mehan Reser, Carlotta Durkin Ribar, and Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella. Peg Beahon Winegarden married a man who was involved in other radical movements during the time. Belle Bates Mullin married someone she met at Friendship House in Harlem.

Betty Finegan Doyle remembers marriages at the Rochester Catholic Worker: It was almost like marrying outside the church if you married outside the Worker...Mary Farren and her husband [Art] met at the Catholic Worker...Betty Czarniecki and her husband...He had come in off the line actually. We called it 'off the line' at that time. I think he had been a sailor and they met and we were all kind of askance at that, we weren't really quite sure because they were very different people...But it turned out that it worked very well...And the Scahills, Tom and Bea Scahill met there. Bea was a convert and someone had brought her to the Catholic Worker...I was going to count up sometime how many marriages. There must have been 5 or 6 or 7

marriages that came from the Catholic Workers there. It was a wonderful, wonderful time.

Betty Finegan Doyle met her husband at her sister's house. While they had not worked at the same Catholic Worker house of hospitality, Betty and Leonard had so much in common that they were engaged ten days after meeting for the first time.

Betty added that she wished she had never told her children this. She notes:

We'd been doing the same thing for years, you know. We both had gone to Catholic grade school, high school, and college. He was involved in the Catholic Worker in Milwaukee... he was involved there for quite a few years. We thought very much the same, had the same ideas, had read the same books, and talked to the same people, and...so we were very like-minded... kindred spirits. We didn't get married until a couple months later.

Helen Adler remembers that Dorothy Day was reluctant for young women to come to the house in New York. She asserts:

[Dorothy] really didn't trust women too much because she said they all came to get a man and get married...And she was always afraid that they'd make a bad marriage, which...some did [with]...men [on] the line. And she felt responsible...She was always afraid that we were flirting with the men. One time I came down to lunch and I had a sleeveless dress on. She said, 'Helen, go up and put on a dress with sleeves on. You're a temptation to the men.' ...We didn't know from Adam what the men from the line were like. We all ate together...the men that came in to live. And there were some very bad marriages...Heartbreaking...because the men were alcoholic and abused

them. She was always afraid of that because she had no way of knowing what the men would turn out to be.

When marriages did take place, Dorothy Day encouraged couples to leave New York to become their own Catholic Worker cell, or house of hospitality. Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella recalls:

Dorothy did not encourage you, once you married to be a Worker. It was because she wanted us to become cells, to do this work where you were...And there were a lot of marriages going on at that time...When we moved back to Tell City, people going west would stop here for a few days...So we're an extension.

Mary Coisman Durnin agrees: "I got married and had children...Dorothy advised me to get out of New York City and go to the country, so I came back home here to Wisconsin."

The challenges of daily life in a house of hospitality made family life difficult. Nina Polcyn Moore reflects, "It was a whole difficulty about the inserting of a family in the Catholic Worker. And I think to this day this prevails." Katherine Moos Mella and her husband John moved their young family from Maryfarm because the environment was not conducive to family life.

Narrators noted the many marriages that took place between Catholic Workers as women and men who lived and worked together developed strong bonds. Family life within the Catholic Worker was difficult. As a result, those who married generally moved to other locations for work and to raise families, often serving as Catholic Worker cells.

Network. The strong relationships that developed among women in the Catholic Worker created a network that led to further educational and work opportunities, as well as life long friendships. Betty Finegan Doyle followed her sister Mary Katherine to study art with Ade Bethune in Newport, Rhode Island. Ade Bethune took on apprentices who lived and worked with her in her small workshop in Rhode Island. Ade traveled across the country giving lectures and leading workshops on art and liturgy, often with her apprentices. It was common for women who were artists to either spend time as apprentices with Ade, or visit others who were studying with her.

The Grail provided training for many women of the Catholic Worker. The goal of the Grail was to help women to develop their gifts and to become independent, if they remained single. Helen Adler states “it was way ahead of its time as far as training women to be independent in a way, but on the marriage side it wasn’t.” Women went for training sessions that lasted for a week or stayed for much longer, staying at the farm at Grailville (Ohio) which was completely managed and operated by lay women.

Friendship House, founded by Catherine de Hueck, also maintained close ties with the Catholic Worker. Belle Bates Mullin went to work at Friendship House in Harlem after hearing Catherine de Hueck speak at the Catholic Worker house in Milwaukee. She chose Friendship House over the Catholic Worker because the approach for lay ministry was much more orderly. Belle recalls that she was attracted by the focus on inter-racial justice and enjoyed the “peaceful” and “organized” approach of Friendship House.

Catherine de Hueck was instrumental in bringing Nina Polcyn Moore, Margaret Blaser and Florence Weinfurter from Milwaukee to work at the Shiel School in Chicago. The three women ran their own “house of hospitality” in their apartment in Chicago and used what they learned at the Milwaukee Catholic Worker to continue to plan adult education programs focused on social justice. Connections with the Catholic publishing company, Sheed & Ward, drew Maisie Ward to Chicago and other cities to lecture about the publishing business. Nina was involved in bringing Maisie Ward to Chicago and had to rent a boxing ring because so many people wanted to hear Ward speak.

Relationships between women in the Catholic Worker developed into life long friendships. Women who came to the Catholic Worker also often found another life long relationship—marriage. Through the relationships formed in the Catholic Worker, women had additional opportunities for work, learning, and connections to related social justice oriented ministries within the Catholic Church.

Issues of Gender

Narrators expressed differing perceptions related to the experience of gender within the Catholic Worker movement. For some of the narrators in this study, being a woman within the Catholic Worker was an experience of “refreshing” equality, and for others, it was an experience of narrowed opportunities because of their gender. Some of the women expressed a sense of freedom in their involvement within the Catholic Worker. They noted that their ideas and perspectives were valued and that they were integral participants in planning and carrying out works of mercy in Catholic Worker locations. These women experienced a marked difference in the

treatment of women within the Catholic Worker when compared to other settings within the Catholic Church.

Others experienced a sense of narrowed opportunities because they were women in the Catholic Worker. Despite being in a movement that was co-founded by a woman, these participants experienced limitations in their roles because of their gender. This was in part a result of expectations for tasks to be fulfilled in houses (often along traditional gender lines), but also a result of the challenging nature of the population present in the houses of hospitality, and specific relationships with men of the Catholic Worker in particular settings. In addition to examining specific experiences of equality and oppression within the Worker, narrators' perspectives on women's roles within the Catholic Church, particularly related to expectations for family size will be explored.

"Refreshing" equality. Adele Butler Nash suggests that women and men were equally involved in the Buffalo Catholic Worker. People who joined the movement were motivated to become involved because of what the Catholic Worker was doing. She states:

That was a very refreshing part about it. I think because whoever came to it came because of the message, the leadership, the inspiration of Dorothy and Peter and the other Catholic Workers, the sex difference was not important. I don't know think feminist issues arose at all among us. It was a group that seemed to me..they were drawn from all over, homogeneous just because of what it was. I find that so today. Unlike so many organizations in the church, the Catholic Worker appeals to men and women.

Adele relates that women and men shared tasks such as selling the newspaper, working in the kitchen, collecting food for the breadline. She remembers that:

One of the things about the early house was that Mrs. [Molly] Hastings, because she was trained as a...nurse...[was] really the boss. The men were followers...And Mrs. Hastings' husband permitted himself to be directed by her too. We used to laugh a little about that. Because poor Mike Hastings...we used to say was led a merry chase by Mrs. Hastings.

In recounting Carlotta Durkin Ribar's experience with the Catholic Worker (as well as her own), Monica Ribar Cornell notes the lack of rigid roles for men and women, particularly because of the unstructured approach of the movement. She states:

My experience at the New York Worker was that it was fluid. Now Dorothy preferred the men lead the Rosary. It was customary for the Rosary to be recited at the New York Worker when I went in '63 and she preferred that a male lead it. That was the custom. But...if my aunt and my mother...were arranging for beds...they may have been hauling the beds themselves...some people would have...[thought that was] men's work...I suspect there was always a good bit of fluidity. That's one of the things about the Catholic Worker is that people's individual gifts are...since work generally isn't assigned the way it would be say in the religious community, where whether your talents in the kitchen or not...if your assignment is the kitchen, you go and cook. Or garden or whatever it might be. At the Worker, it was talents or inclinations that get a chance to develop or move to the front...talents or

inclinations...don't always coincide. There was one guy who was cooking at the New York Worker when I went in '63...it wasn't necessarily that he was a good cook, it's just that he thought he wanted to cook, so he was cooking and a cook was needed certain nights of the week, so he got to cook.

Peg Beahon Winegarden recalls feeling accepted alongside the men in the Rochester Catholic Worker. She relates:

We all knew each other, we were all friends together, so we did things together. But I think men did...obviously what men do. If they're at all handy with a hammer or whatever. It was very...fundamental...It was a place to meet and talk.

She believes that women's input into house discussions was equally valued, however the speakers were "primarily men...priests." She remarks that she:

Didn't feel unequal...just a little bit different. Probably more different than it would be now. I didn't offer to pound nails...I probably would have hit my finger, you know. So I would think there was a difference maybe in what we did, but not in what we said. I think women were better talkers than men...With one exception. That was Art Farren.

Peg also notes the positive influence of Dorothy Day on the experience of women in the Catholic Worker. She feels that women had equal footing in the Rochester house because it was so strongly influenced by the New York house, and because of the influence of Day's leadership. Peg explains: "Dorothy herself was the brain and heart of the whole movement."

Betty Finegan Doyle was also at the Rochester house and notes that men and women shared leadership roles in the Worker, “more so than it was out in the other world.” She states: “We worked together and planned together and made rules and regulations. Not very many.”

Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella remembers the independence of the women who came to the Catholic Worker. She states: “I don’t think the question of women’s rights or anything was discussed in my hearing. I mean, the women who were there were on their own,...[and] accepted as people.”

Nina Polcyn Moore believes that the atmosphere for women within the Catholic Worker was “radical” in comparison with the broader Catholic Church and its perspective on women. She recalls:

The American Catholic perspective [for women] was to stay home with no sense of partnership, equality or growth. The Catholic Church wanted people to pay, pray, and obey. In the early days there was no movement that encouraged women to grow and develop.

Mary Coisman Durnin notes that even today women may have more freedom to carry out important work that needs to be done. She reflects:

Somebody just commented on that to me—Father Jerry Zwada, OFM, is a Franciscan and he’s involved in protests and he goes to prison all the time. He’ll be serving three months pretty soon. He says on his travels, it’s women, he said especially nuns, who are stirring things up in the church...more than men.

For some women, the Catholic Worker was a setting that offered remarkable freedom to make use of their gifts, alongside men, in meeting the needs of the poor. Unusual during this time within the Catholic Church, the Catholic Worker created an opportunity for women to work as full partners in planning and carrying out the work.

Narrowed opportunities. For other women in the Catholic Worker, involvement in the movement was marked by an narrowing of opportunities because of their gender. Contributing factors included safety issues surrounding the needs of the homeless population and Dorothy Day's own concerns about young women in the movement, as well as a sense of superiority reflected in the beliefs of the men at some of the houses of hospitality.

The homeless population served by Catholic Worker houses of hospitality during the Depression was predominantly male. With the location of St. Joseph's House near the Bowery on the Lower East Side, Workers regularly cared for alcoholics, as well as those suffering from a variety of mental illnesses. Issues of safety for both women and men at the Catholic Worker house in New York, and in houses across the country, provided regular challenges from the inception of the movement.

Adele Butler Nash notes the prevalence of men in the breadline at the Buffalo house:

That was an interesting aspect of the Catholic Worker then...We always talk about the men because...whether women were not poor or whether they were afraid or because it was so socially frowned on for them to go to a soup kitchen, we very seldom saw a woman. It was always the men. And I know

now soup kitchens have lots of women and children...the whole story is different.

Many women were attracted to the Catholic Worker because of Dorothy Day's life and writing. However, the presence of young women in the New York Catholic Worker house was a worry for Dorothy Day. Remembering the bohemian life of her young adulthood, Day may have feared what might happen if young women became involved with men "from the line." Marriages that began in this way frequently resulted in abusive relationships. Although Day was a strong and independent woman, her fears for the young women who came to live and work in the movement caused a certain narrowing of possibilities for them (Riegle, 2003).

Issues of safety were present at other houses, often causing women to work in more supportive roles, behind-the-scenes. Betty Doyle recalls at the Rochester House:

We didn't have so much contact with the men who came in...because at that time it was mostly men. Later on, there were more women and children that would come too. But when we were there, it was mostly men and they were mostly alcoholics or people with mental infirmities. And there were always some young men...who just didn't work...that's all. And were ill in some way or another. So...we set the table for them. But we didn't have a lot of actual contact with them.

Belle Bates Mullin notes one way that women contributed at the Milwaukee house:

I often had the feeling that the men [ambassadors] who lived there at the house...it gave them a sense of someone caring about them if you came. And

it was hard to say because they weren't very vocal. They would just be around. But I had the feeling and a sense that they were a little more human, a little more natural to have us come...it gave the men in the house a sense that somebody cared about them or [that] they weren't just...there alone.

Aside from issues of safety, some women experienced difficulty in relationships with men who were actively involved in various Catholic Worker houses of hospitality. Within the Catholic Church at the time, a common expectation for women was to get married, and in many cases, to have a large family. Women were taught that the appropriate relationship between a man and a woman was one of submission; women were expected to be submissive to men within marriage.

Helen Adler remembers making a choice to remain single as a result of the perspective promoted through training at the Grail, and through Catholic theology, that women were to be submissive to men. Helen recalls:

The Grail training was, in those days, [and] the Catholic training was...women are submissive to men, men are the head and women are the heart. If you can believe it. And that was dinned into us...And I never believed it...I decided...well, I'm not going to get married then because I could never be submissive to a man. It has to be talked out. I was a feminist without knowing it when I was at the Grail. And this was 1947.

Nina Polcyn Moore remembers the challenges of working with some of the men at the Milwaukee Catholic Worker house. She indicates that some men probably viewed themselves as being superior to the women, at Milwaukee, and at other houses. This resulted in patterns of decision-making and exclusion that made life

difficult. She recalls that they “had no notion...which [we] feminists now have. They had no notion of sharing...They knew everything. They were the last word, they were in charge.” Sometimes “arbitrary decisions” were made without input from others. She emphasizes that sometimes these decisions had to be made by the live-in managers of the house, who were men. The women involved in leadership had other jobs during the day. However, this exclusion from decision-making caused strained relationships and according to Nina, “called for negotiations.”

Helen Adler remembers the difficulties she experienced at the Catholic Worker with the men who lived in St. Joseph’s house. At the time, she was assisting with the women’s house in New York. She states:

They looked upon us as a threat because...we knew what we wanted to do and we celebrated all the feast days with the women and we had parties and we painted apartments and moved them in. We just went about our own work. But they always made fun of us...the minute we’d walk by in the downstairs, they’d make remarks. It was horrible. Very sexist..that’s the word. And they didn’t even realize it. They didn’t..the men didn’t realize it. They were that old style...They thought we were ridiculous to try to do so much.

Helen continues:

The men wanted to be in charge. So we had to make our own programs. The men, like Tom [Sullivan] had charge of the men’s house. He had charge of seeing the paper got out, got enough people to mail it out.

Katherine Moos Mella underscores the idea that men ran the newspaper while she was at the New York Catholic Worker:

The women would do things like I did...go out and hunt for apartments and we didn't have anything to do with the writing of the paper. That was all done by a staff of men. [Tom] Sullivan was the editor of the paper. He would write the editorial.

Tensions existed within the Catholic Worker as the result of women participating at differing levels of involvement with the house. Some women came to help at the New York Worker in the evenings. Helen Adler remembers that they were treated quite differently by the men of the Catholic Worker. Helen recalls that she and the other women who lived and worked at the house full time had different perspectives: “[As in] the feminist movement...we were dedicated, we had a single-mindedness, we were not there to meet men and get married.”

In thinking about her experience in the Worker, Helen reflects:

[With] Catholic girls...the main idea was to get married in those days. You got married and had children...That's what you did. You graduated from college or you went to work only till you found somebody who'd marry you... Just like women suffered when they started the women's movement to try to get equal work and be accepted as equals. That's how it was then at the Worker. They just wanted to pat us on the head. You can see it's all coming back to me again. Oh God...I thought I was over it. But just like women or black women that tried to be equal to white women in the [workplace]..it was sex discrimination. Sex harassment I could even say...the way they talked to us. Just walk by and make remarks.

Within Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, there were many possibilities for women to be involved as lay leaders. This caused both an atmosphere of greater freedom for women than what was experienced in the broader church, but in certain locations, a challenge from the men present, who were also Catholic Workers. One of the reasons that women were drawn to the movement was because of the person of Dorothy Day.

Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella notes the impact of having Dorothy Day as the co-founder of the movement:

Dorothy was a woman and an obvious leader. Peter had the idea and she did it. He taught her. The Catholic Worker being a woman-led thing attracted many women. [They thought] 'Here's something a woman has done.' It was attractive to see what another woman had done. Day was unusual in that she was a leader during a time when there weren't as many examples of women in authoritative positions (other than nuns). Dorothy took Peter's ideas and did practical things. She did the ordinary things that women do, like being a nurse. She had to make a living for herself and Tamar. She had a goal and worked toward it.

Although some people found Dorothy to be domineering, Mary Alice didn't. She notes:

[Dorothy] was authoritative, a strong person. Some men found her bossy, because they hadn't met a woman like that before. Women didn't have a position of authority at that time. Usually they were in a role as a secretary, with a man as the boss, not the other way around. Even though secretaries

often came up with the ideas and did a lot of the work. There weren't even any vice presidents of companies at that time that were women.

Mary Alice thinks Day's personal strength was more important than her gender. She suggests that "[Dorothy] would have been the same strong person as a man. She was convinced about her ideas. She was not just about talk, she did it."

Even within a movement that was co-founded and strongly shaped by a woman, some narrators experienced a narrowing of opportunity because of their gender. The narrowing seemed to be caused by church teaching on the proper role of women, safety issues associated with the population being cared for, and some men within the Worker who did not appreciate a changing role for women within the Worker.

Family size expectations. How accepting were women of the prevailing expectations for women within the Catholic Church? Marriage and large families were the norm during the time period. The use of birth control was considered out of the question for most Catholic families, a mortal sin in the eyes of the church (McClory, 1995). Women in the Catholic Worker often had large families. Kate Mehan Reser and her husband Peter had ten children. Betty Finegan Doyle and her husband Leonard had nine children, one of whom died as an infant. Katherine Moos Mella and her husband John had eight children. Mary Coisman Durnin and her husband Charles had seven children.

Betty Finegan Doyle describes her family life:

We married rather late. I was 29 when I was married. My husband was 33. So we weren't youngsters..And we had nine children, one little boy that died in

infancy. We had five boys and three girls. It was kind of interesting since my sister [Mary Katherine] who lived just a couple of miles away from us had five boys and three girls, too. There were just the two of us growing up and we each had eight children.

Betty notes the group of friends that lived nearby, all associated with St.

John's University:

There was quite a group of us...maybe eight or ten people...we were all having big families. And most of them seemed to be Irish...John Dwyer, he was the head of the Liturgical Press, and they had about the same number of children. It was a great group of people and we used to meet each other quite often. It was a lonely life at all. It was very wonderful.

Katherine Moos Mella remarks "we had eight children and we had no business having eight children. That's all I'm going to say." Her son John reflects on her comment, stating that his parents "didn't have any money and like many young couples, didn't understand the implications of rearing a large family. She didn't mean that she regretted it." With regard to contraception John notes, "My understanding is that this was not an issue then. It was not so much a 'wrong' choice, as not being an alternative at all."

Mary Reser comments on her mother Kate Mehan Reser's views on women's roles:

I think my mother was kind of torn because I think she thought things should be better for women and yet she thought I was way, way too far into the Women's Movement and thought that I didn't have enough respect for

traditional roles...how deep the experience of those roles really was, and that those things were incredibly important. And even though my mom really approved of me going to college, I would say her goal for me was to get married and have twelve kids.

Mary Reser notes that her mother Kate “really embraced” having a large family, stating that “she surrendered to it with a grace I don’t possess.” When she was in high school, Mary recalls her mother reacting to the stresses of large family life. Mary remembers:

There were times where she was just flipping out...It was too much. And yet I don’t think she ever really internally recognized that. I think I got really good at realizing when she was stressed out and taking over or giving her a break... it’s like she was such a strong presence and I think I just kind of came into her slipstream...I learned how to just work around her, work with her to support her. But there was a point at which I’d had enough. And then we got into quite a bit of conflict.

Mary wonders at the life choices that her parents made, indicating that she could “not understand why somebody would have that many kids that they couldn’t really provide for...it just seemed like an insane decision to me. And it seemed like an irrational decision.”

Other women chose to have fewer children. One articulated different perceptions about family size expectations within the Catholic Church. Peg Beahon Winegarden notes that in her experience, being a mother with lots of children was

“not the first thing thrown at you. My mother felt that four children [were] more than enough.” Peg and her husband Calman had two daughters.

Family life and children were important to all of the narrators. All but two of the narrators had children of their own. Carlotta Durkin Ribar raised four of her niece’s children in addition to her own two. Nina Polcyn Moore married a widower and became a mother to his five adult children. Helen Adler, while single, worked closely with homeless mothers and children throughout her work life.

While working to ameliorate the results of discrimination against the poorest members of American society, women experienced both freedom and oppression within the Catholic Worker. In comparison to prevailing notions of women’s roles, the Catholic Worker offered more opportunities for women than they might have found in other Catholic settings. However, at the same time, these changing roles, influenced largely by Dorothy Day’s own example, became a challenge for some of the men who were involved in leadership at the houses of hospitality. Some of the women went on to have many children, fulfilling their own and Catholic Church hopes for large families within the flock.

The Catholic Worker was a place of belonging, offering a sense of a home of choice, or a place where women felt that they fit. Women in the Catholic Worker developed as “worker-scholars,” as works of mercy frequently combined manual labor with meeting needs of those around them, often beyond areas of comfort. Intellectual discovery was another hallmark of life in the Catholic Worker, through

vigorous discussion of politics and economics, in addition to intensive study of the Gospel, papal encyclicals, and personalist, anarchist, and distributist writers.

Narrators engaged in acts of nonviolent resistance to American cultural values of capitalism, most often expressed through materialism and violence. While carrying out works of mercy for those hurt by capitalism's excesses, some of the women also embraced voluntary poverty (for a time), and displayed disaffection with American society, and at times the Catholic Church, through picket lines, letter writing, and active participation in pacifist initiatives.

Narrators learned through significant relationships which were built within the Catholic Worker—friendships, marriage, and the development of a network of women that offered important and lifelong connections. Finally, narrators expressed differing views on the experience of gender within the movement. Some noted the freedom they had to be involved in all of the aspects of the houses of hospitality where they were involved. Others noted the difficulty they experienced as women, with a narrowing of opportunities, dismissive remarks and superior attitudes on the part of men with whom they worked.

Purposeful Life

How did the Catholic Worker affect the rest of life? Narrators described the Catholic Worker as giving them a new way of seeing the world, a framework by which to evaluate how they lived, a sense of a more purposeful life. Connected deeply with this changing perspective was the shaping of personal identity and the articulation of beliefs and values that women maintained throughout the rest of their

lives. Three examples of how the Catholic Worker provided a sense of identity to women will be followed by an exploration of the nature of spirituality within the Catholic Worker movement.

Betty Finegan Doyle credits the Catholic Worker with helping her become who she is as a person:

I think I would be a very different person if it hadn't been for the Catholic Worker... I had always kind of had these ideas and I was a good practicing Catholic. But somehow they never quite came to life until I got to the Catholic Worker. And I really knew what it meant really to be a Christian. Also all of the various friends that I made...almost everything in my life has really sprung from the Catholic Worker, I would say. It's kind of hard to think what I would have been like without the Catholic Worker...And it [was] ...a wonderful, wonderful time in my life. I met so many wonderful people and had so many new ideas, you know. And still carry on with all of them. Almost anything that I do or belong to or anything has in some way..has been inspired by the Catholic Worker, I would say..the various works that I've done all my life...meeting my husband...It's meant a great deal to me.

Mary Bigham Farren notes that the Catholic Worker has made a difference in the way she lives:

I think it's been the influence in my life which has helped me to have a concern for the world, as we say, my son's paper said...think globally, act locally. I think that's what we tried to do over the years.

Mary Reser states that for her mother, Kate Mehan Reser, the Catholic Worker became “a frame of reference.” She asserts that the “ties were strong and they were lifelong...And they felt so deeply connected to those people and to that movement.” For Kate:

It was a place to focus all of her concerns and her desire to do something about social justice. And I think that partly because her own family had such a rough time and struggled so hard, she really know what it was not to be able to make it to the end of the month with enough money for food and all that stuff...I think it was a vehicle for turning that concern and...all that energy into something practical.

Mary describes the framework that the Catholic Worker created for both of her parents. She states that the Catholic Worker “had an enormous influence because...[her parents’] notion of what’s important in life came directly out of that experience and it was that...the most important thing is fairness to all people and this strong sense of spirituality.” She notes that “what got passed along was a strong sense of spirituality because their whole lives and their relationship were embedded in that.”

Narrators described spirituality within the Catholic Worker as marked by several characteristics: emerging from a deep grounding within the Catholic Church, a sense of seeing the world in a new way, articulated through direction action or “doing,” trusting personal conscience as a guide, and facing the struggles of a faithful life.

Context for Spirituality—The Catholic Church

Monica Ribar Cornell notes that many people have misconceptions about spirituality as expressed in the Catholic Worker:

When people ask about the spirituality of the Catholic Worker, sometimes they think that it's a separate kind of spirituality which it really isn't and really wasn't. It was...everything..the strands that Peter Maurin put together when he developed his Catholic Worker vision, his idea...nothing was weird or far out or strange. It was all pretty much really mainstream Catholicism, but a new emphasis. Again, that old phrase of Peter's... 'so old, it looks new.' An emphasis on how to live your life that a lot of people had lost track of or maybe hadn't thought of...So my parents' decision to take the kids was partly just basic Catholicism and, you know, Catholic Christianity, if you want to put it that way..plus probably a little reinforcement from their exposure to the Catholic Worker. If they hadn't been to the Catholic Worker, would they have taken the kids in? Probably, but again back to that extended family and responsibility....but yeah, I suspect the Worker...Catholic Worker ideas inspired them.

Narrators noted that daily worship and prayer within the Catholic tradition were encouraged in the Catholic Worker. Retreats were encouraged at locations across the country. These opportunities took place at neighborhood Catholic Churches, at Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, farming communes/retreat centers, and also at nearby monasteries.

Adele Butler Nash notes that there were many opportunities for spiritual development within the Catholic Worker. She recalls the importance of the Mass and Catholic rituals in Dorothy Day's life:

Well, I would say there were many because of Dorothy Day's leadership...because she was a thoroughly religious person and she considered all of her work to be possible because of the grace of God. And there was no question about where she got her strength and it was from the Mass..daily Mass, it was from extra prayer, it was from faith, it was from the sacraments and it was from the service. And they all went together...it was just all of a piece..and you knew that. And you knew that without the spiritual base, you might as well be the Salvation Army, they have their own spiritual base, but it's not quite as enriched as ours in my opinion. I think that Dorothy was so explicit about the enjoyment of the riches of the Catholic Church, the art and the music and..she couldn't restrain herself from the joy she found in the Catholic rituals and faith.

Narrators described the Benedictine nature of much of Catholic Worker life. The combination of work and prayer, the basis of Benedictine life, was present in most Catholic Worker houses of hospitality and farming communes. Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella also notes that Peter Maurin "was a great believer in students not just being brains but the incorporation of work and prayer. He was a real Benedictine...[and] a lot of people didn't realize that." Helen Adler concurs that the daily schedule at Maryfarm was essentially a Benedictine schedule with set times for work and prayer, "with the divine office three times a day."

Katherine Moos Mella notes the importance of the Mass in her daily life at the Catholic Worker:

All of us went to Mass every morning...It didn't matter what we did, how we did it, but Mass was a very important part of our day and we would go.....to Mass. Not necessarily that we would sit together, but I remember my girlfriends and I would go to Mass at 9:00.

Mary Coisman Durnin describes the growing awareness of the importance of prayer over her lifetime, particularly in relation to Dorothy Day's example:

In fact, as I said before, the full impact hasn't come to me yet. Even though I've been involved in the spirituality movements here that have sprung up since...they're old but they're also new...a lot of things I did at that time were because of adventure. I knew it was the right thing to do but I didn't really have that relationship with the Lord that I have now. And that I still need to go down to the deeps to discover in me. And that's hard to talk about. But I appreciate Dorothy's prayer life more and more because it's only through having a deep prayer life that your work will be blessed in the world. And there will be fruit from it and you may not ever see the fruit, but somebody will..your descendants will...all your descendants..all the whole world.

While not everyone participated, opportunities for spiritual development in the Catholic Worker were many. The context of daily prayer and worship within the Catholic tradition was a base from which works of mercy and protest were carried out. Houses of hospitality sponsored days of recollection, and members attended retreats at Maryfarm and at other locations.

Seeing

Women described their experience in the Catholic Worker as one that gave them a new way to see the world, or created an awakening, or new awareness of faith and society. Belle Bates Mullin describes her experience in the Milwaukee Catholic Worker as one of awareness:

Before we decided to go to the Catholic Worker, we were...a sleepy people. ...You go to the movies, you read a book, you go out to a party or something like that. But you know, there was no real...depth or meat to what you were doing. Once you went there, it got you thinking...I suppose if I had gone to university or something like that, that would have made a difference. But I hadn't. And going to the Catholic Worker was a real eye opener. It puts you in touch with people who made you think and look at life with a little more...awareness. So I really feel that that was what happened to a lot of young people who came there...their life was fuller and more purposeful.

Katherine Moos Mella states that the Catholic Worker “made me see things very very different[ly].” Mary Coisman Durnin shares how the Catholic Worker helped her to develop a different way of seeing:

Well, it's deepened my..the sense of the theology of my people and also that...first things first, as they say in AA. God first. And seeing things...asking for the grace to see things as God sees. I remember Dorothy always saying all is grace. And Peter would tell us to ask for big graces because there's a world to be transformed and there are people, lots of people...yourself included..to be transformed. And it's very hard in this

culture right now to put first things first. Love is the answer, it's the measure. And you can't do it alone. You need God to do it.

Helen Adler states that the Catholic Worker helped her to see the world more clearly:

I was always very radical ever since I belonged to the Worker. It really showed me [that] the roots of truth [are] denied all the time in our society. Everything is to get money and get ahead and be competitive and the Worker was not competitive. Of course, the world is..It's two different visions of life.

This "seeing" was sometimes an introduction of the nature of class within American society. Helen notes the education she received at the Worker about the inequality of the class system in the United States:

The education I got about the system of our country and the inequality of class was invaluable. Well, it was right in front of your eyes. All you had to do was think about it...you know. The people had nowhere to go and nobody gave a damn. They died on the street or not. It was extremely un-Christian or uncaring world around us. And I think Dorothy, after listening to Peter, tried to create a utopian community in the midst of the world and the worldly secular community didn't live at all the way the Catholic Worker community tried to live.

Narrators described their experience in the Catholic Worker as giving them a new way to see the world, an awakening to social justice issues at a much deeper level. A particularly important component of this "seeing" for one narrator was the injustice of the class system within American society, along with the call to do something about it.

Doing

Women expressed a spirituality that was as deeply connected to a way to live, as it was to Catholicism. This sense of spirituality as direction action, or “doing,” makes a separation between belief and action incomprehensible. Peg Beahon

Winegarden states:

I really get deathly bored when people talk about spirituality...I think...you do what you can for any particular thing that you think is important...And I think protesting these wars...is important...I think I'm a born protestor...And all this garbage about.....religion and spirituality and church...it's for the birds if you don't do the decent thing for fellow men in other countries. I really feel..I'm radical way back...That's why the Worker really appealed to me.

That's really what it comes to.

Peg continues:

I don't know for sure, but I think it's awfully easy to get terribly spiritual and do nothing. I think [the Catholic Worker] was good for me because I feel that it was a broad outlet, a valid way of expressing your responsibility to your fellow man and to God, whoever he is or she is...I think it's sort of a natural way of expression because it has to involve all kinds of people.

Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella states that “faith is love in action.” She continues, “The Catholic Worker is love in action...If you love the poor, you have to do something. [And] you share what they've got, which is poverty.”

Helen Adler considers involvement in caring for others as opportunities to become closer to God. She describes her work in establishing a program to help move people into transitional housing, from which she is now retired. She states:

I don't feel close to God right now at all because I'm not doing anything. But I know lots of times I fought against it and fought against it and fought against it...but something always pushed me to it. It was like the Spirit just pushed me. So...but now I'm not doing it. I resigned two years ago because it's too much anxiety. We had to be ready to take people at a minute's notice or they would come into the program at a minute's notice and there wouldn't be enough volunteers. But it's going good. We got other people to take over. I got another woman to coordinate...there's four people doing it now and it's going good...thank God. I mean it's meant to go on. Dorothy always said..if a thing is meant to go on, it will. God will keep it going. And that takes a lot of trust...I never knew anyone who had such complete trust..how many years was she with the Catholic Worker...and she...never doubted that God would pay the bills. Now, you know, it's a very utopian idea and you approximated it as best you can...each person.

This sense of “doing” as inseparable from belief was so strong that questions to this affect were met with confusion. There could be no faith without action; as Betty Finegan Doyle reminds, “faith without works is dead.” The idea that closeness to God comes through caring for others often led to an emphasis on personal conscience as a prompt to activism.

Trusting Personal Conscience

Narrators described the importance of following personal conscience, or trusting their own sense of the way to follow God, at times over family, Church, or societal expectations. Sometimes following personal conscience engaged women in challenging long held beliefs about the laity within the Catholic Church. At the Buffalo Catholic Worker house, Adele Butler Nash notes the revolutionary nature of what they were trying to do as lay people: “A soup kitchen in the 30's was revolutionary. Sisters ran places where people could come and receive charity. But lay people opening soup kitchens was radical.”

Helen Adler notes that the Catholic Worker taught her much about the importance of following the dictates of personal conscience:

The education I got from [the Catholic Worker] was the system is wrong and the state cannot make you do things your conscience is against...that God's law is higher than the state's law and that's it.

The concept of following personal conscience provided impetus for narrators who became involved in educating priests in local parishes after their experience with the Worker. Up until this time, lay people were not generally in leadership roles within the Church, particularly women. Adele Butler Nash states that Dorothy Day was an example of someone who followed her conscience and moved forward to act: “Dorothy set the pace. If she could do it, so could we. It was an attitude.”

Nina Polcyn Moore suggests that reading Newman's *Development of Doctrine* helped the group of women who were “educating each other” in Milwaukee to see that there is “movement and growth in [church] doctrine...that was a revolutionary

concept.” She states that as the laity, “we were so pushed down...[we] didn’t have a chance to emerge and grow and know how important each person is and have some sense of growth in charity and sensitivity to each other and so on.” As a result, leadership by lay women was a new perspective.

Helen Adler also notes Day’s influence regarding how to live as an active Catholic lay woman. While Day was a devoted Catholic and a faithful member of the Church, she challenged contemporary Church as well as societal perspectives about what it meant to be a follower of Jesus:

[Day] influenced me tremendously as a woman, as a Catholic lay woman, to do my own thing and not worry whether the church approved or not. And that was her whole lesson to me. And that’s what I’ve done ever since. I mean starting that up here...the priest didn’t approve of it or didn’t suggest it. I did and I convinced him. I’ve done that with many priests. I was with missionary Jesuits down in north Philly for 16 years as a community organizer and the priest didn’t know anything about the state or the rules of the state as opposed to taking care of people or thinking for yourself. They weren’t used to lay people thinking for themselves. They were used to nice, middle class ladies going to bridge parties and cocktail parties for St. Joe’s Prep and that’s all they knew. And they had a complete education about poverty, housing conditions, the lack of services that all moved out when it became an Afro-American community. The priests...the Jesuits had no idea that it was only 10 years later when Father Rupe told them they all had to make an option for the poor. So there was a tremendous amount of education [that] had to be

done among Catholic priests, about lay people and lay people thinking truly and clearly about what Christ taught. And they resented it horribly.

The Catholic Worker was one of several lay movements that developed during the 1930s and 1940s, giving lay women and men opportunities to critique and shape the Church's efforts in society. This challenge to the power structures within the Church was not always welcome. Dorothy Day's example encouraged Helen and other women in the Catholic Worker to use the new perspectives they learned within the Catholic Worker to personally address problems in mid-twentieth century America.

Helen Adler describes the emergence of the Catholic laity in the 1940s as more than reform of the church:

It was looking at the world from the eyes of the Gospel. Trying to understand the world. It was the first time lay Catholics got interested in doing something about changing the world as a whole movement, not as individual people through the generations. This was young people getting excited about their faith. And it was hopping. There was the Friendship House, there was the Catholic Worker and they all had houses growing up in different states. And there [were] the young Christian Workers [who] had a house in New York City...coming over from France. They called them the Jocists...And priests were getting to be spiritual directors for these lay people and we never had known about spiritual direction in our lives. So we had everything coming together...the priests were backing us up...the ones that understood the lay revolt. Really, it was a revolt. But Dorothy always said...don't wait for the

church, do something yourself. That was her motto. And that's what has inspired me always...don't wait for the priest to think of something to do...you think of it, go to them and tell them you're going to do it.

Mary Reser acknowledges that her mother, Kate Mehan Reser, was the leader on social justice issues in their parish in Libertyville, IL, after her involvement with the Catholic Worker. Kate was active in civil rights issues (particularly about housing) in the town, and also belonged to the Legion of Mary in the local parish. While active in social justice issues, Kate also acted as the “go-between between the group” and the “very...aloof and formal monsignor” of the parish, handling both roles well.

Within the Catholic Worker movement, women and men helped each other to grow and learn. Individuals did not seek to learn from those in authority—each person brought ideas and perspectives that helped to shape others involved in the movement. In reflecting on how she was shaped by the Catholic Worker, Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella states: “I don't know if I shaped it or it shaped me. I think we were both shaped.”

Nina Polcyn Moore's experiences with her close friends in the Milwaukee Catholic Worker assisted in the development of the perspective of pacifism within the movement. Nina relates that the three women read everything they could and learned together:

We wrote to Father Hugo and we went there for spiritual direction, the three of us...we went to Pittsburgh where he was. And he gave us time individually

and together to talk about prayer and talk about the gospels and how we could work with the house...And that must have [driven] our mothers crazy.

The women were all working and would travel by train to Pittsburgh for the weekend, returning by Sunday night. Nina continues:

We rode all night on this crazy train and slept in the coach. And none of us had any money...Hugo says that our questions...prompted him to work more closely [on]...peace...that that spurred him on to do this...to influence Dorothy in peace and nonviolence.

Narrators expressed the strong conviction that personal conscience was the guide that propelled them to involvement in social justice causes within and beyond the Catholic Worker. This sense of trusting personal conscience allowed them to move into leadership roles within their parishes on social justice issues and at times, placed them in the position to educate priests based on their own experiences and convictions. In one case, engagement with a priest over the issue of peace influenced the direction of the Catholic Worker's pacifist stance.

Struggle

Trying to faithfully follow Jesus was not easy, particularly as Catholic Workers embraced a spiritually-based nonviolent resistance to American cultural values. As spirituality is not separated from action within the Worker, the struggles of day to day life were also struggles of the spirit. Narrators acknowledged struggles in a variety of ways: personally, in meeting the needs within Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, and as the result of taking unpopular stands based on Catholic Worker beliefs. Many narrators valued the life example they received from Dorothy Day.

Mary Coisman Durnin notes: “I appreciate now the struggle Dorothy had because I think that that’s what makes you holy...weathering the strife, the struggles inside of you. There are so many now with our culture.”

Helen Adler notes that: “Day was saintly because she endured. She believed God dwelled in everyone, even repulsive people. It’s hard to practice this kind of faith. It doesn’t happen over night. It’s not sentimental.” Nina Polcyn Moore talks about the voluntary poverty embraced by Dorothy Day: “This to me is Dorothy’s greatness, that she was able truly to be poor with the poor...she had the sense of precarity...Dorothy was able to cope with this precarity.”

Narrators described the challenges of living in houses of hospitality and the difficulty of living in voluntary poverty. Helen Adler’s mother came to visit her on Mott Street and Helen recalls that she was horrified by what she saw: “Mott Street was a disgusting place, cockroaches and rats, etc.” Every woman who came to visit Helen from the Grail said, “How can you live here?” But Helen adds that she loved it. This does not mean that the experience was an easy one. Describing the difficulties of life in a house of hospitality, Helen notes that young people often become discouraged:

They...find it hard because there are all kinds of people there. There are very disturbed people. My first job at Mott Street was to paint an apartment, an empty apartment, and get others to help me for a woman...a friend of Dorothy’s, Eileen McCarthy, just being released from a mental hospital. And we lived on the same floor with the people who were released from mental hospitals, alcoholics who would swear and scream all night...so it wasn’t as

though you left at 5:00. And you ate your meals with them. So for me, it was really a whole different lifestyle. And it is for all the young people that come even today.

Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella states: “One day, I moved from the Worker because I couldn’t stand it any longer. The poverty gets to you after a while... You could [only] stay so long.” Helen Adler remembers she would often visit a well-to-do friend up on the West side “to get away for a day.” Nina Polcyn Moore recalls that during her stay in New York:

Sometimes people...friends of the Catholic Worker would invite us to their house for a night and it was such a joy to be some place. You know...we had bed bugs and we had lice and all that and that’s just not easy.

In addition to the struggles that women faced living in Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, others were challenged because they were associated with the Worker, either by non-supportive clergy or community members.

Mary Bigham Farren remembers one consequence of her involvement in the Rochester Catholic Worker: “I suppose some people didn’t accept it...because you know, the Spanish War was [on], and...one priest was going to refuse me communion...because I was holding the paper.”

Nina Polcyn Moore recalls the challenges that resulted from picketing in New York in 1935:

Carrying a picket sign is a hard task and of course you’re subject to all kinds of derision, so that was a powerful act..a witness...[The police] let us be there, but we were obviously peaceful and we weren’t all that many. But I think

maybe only...*The Catholic Worker* and *Commonweal*...protested or...took another peace stand at that particular time. But that was very revolutionary. Betty Finegan Doyle remembers the challenge of taking the unpopular stand of pacifism during World War II.

Of course, during the war there was a lot of fuss and a lot of unpleasantness...about people thinking that we were all cowards. The same kind of thing goes on now really. We're at war in Iraq and if you're not all gung ho about it, you're a traitor or you're not a true American...That always hurt when people said that about us. Nevertheless, we just went on and did our own thing.

Nina Polcyn Moore finds Dorothy Day's example to be inspiring as well as very challenging to follow:

You see...every day you think of Dorothy and the tremendous mission of being poor with the poor. I can't buy a thing but that it doesn't stress me. It has to. You have to see her sense of responsibility, her sense of living the Gospel, her consistency, her deep sense of everybody being important, and her own feeling [that] this is dependent on Providence...It wears me out. That cost a lot. But then, if that's the price you pay...but once you've met somebody like Dorothy and once you read the paper, you're ruined. In the best sense of the word.

Narrators described struggles in their life of faith and action within the *Catholic Worker*. These were struggles of daily life in voluntary poverty, as well as

consequences of unpopular stances in times of war. Challenges continue as participants reflect on the Day's example of how to live as a faithful Christian.

The concept of spirituality within the context of the Catholic Worker movement cannot be divorced from devout Catholic faith or from direct action. The roots of a deep and devoted expression of Catholic faith formed the grounding upon which narrators built lives of service to others, within the context of community. Central to the understanding of spirituality within the Catholic Worker is the two-sided nature of a Christian faith based on Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. The Catholic Worker became the place where devout belief met the exciting and uncomfortable edge of social justice, with personal and societal ramifications. Referring to Peter Maurin's assertion about the Catholic Worker, Monica Ribar Cornell reminds: "[it's] so old, it looks like new." The approach taken by the Catholic Worker necessitates a challenge to the status quo. The result was development of a framework of spiritually-based nonviolent resistance to American cultural values, lived out by a community of women and men.

Women of the Catholic Worker demonstrate common experiences in several areas, all within the environment of a community. First, the common context of the Catholic faith offered opportunities for daily prayer and worship out of which works of mercy and protest developed. Second, women described their experience within the Catholic Worker as giving them a new way to see the world; it was a process of awakening for many. Third, women saw a spirituality as direct action; "doing" was the way in which spirituality was manifested, during their involvement with the

Catholic Worker, and continuing throughout their lives as they remained involved with social justice causes. Faith was inseparable from works of mercy and protest.

Fourth, listening to personal conscience was highly valued. This is significant within American Catholic culture as narrators often chose to follow personal conscience over the dictates of family, the Church, or society. Women participated in teaching and leading within the Church, often moving ahead of clergy in local parishes, teaching them about ways that followers of Jesus should be involved in the addressing injustice in society. Finally, for some of the women of the Catholic Worker, the experience of exercising a spirituality-based nonviolent resistance meant challenge struggle, both personally and within society.

Conclusions

This chapter focuses on learning in the Catholic Worker movement by examining commonalities in narrators' lives before, during, and since their involvement with the Catholic Worker. Narrators were involved in a rich and complex environment of learning within this social movement. The foundation of this complex environment is the American Catholic Church during the 1930s and 1940s, with its success in building a parallel culture for faithful adherents. This culture was strongly enforced by local parishes and parochial schools. The Church defined the context for the development of the Catholic Worker movement, and to some extent, the development of individual women who were involved within it.

The anarchist nature of the movement shaped the processes by which participants learned, as work, intellectual discovery, and meeting the needs of others took place within a loving and disorderly environment. The counter-cultural nature of the Catholic Worker created a sense of belonging for those who were seeking a more radical expression of Christian faith and practice. The Worker became a place to grow and offered a spiritually-grounded social justice framework for the rest of life. Further reflections on the nature of learning for women in the Catholic Worker movement will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

An examination women's learning in social movements informs our understanding of social movements as rich and complex sites for adult learning, particularly as we discover how learning is both "implicit and embedded in other activities" and how daily experiences either "reproduce relations of exploitation and oppression" or "resist or help transcend such relations" (Foley, 2001a, p. 85). In order to better understand the nature of learning for women in the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s and 1940s, three areas were explored: how women came to be involved with the Catholic Worker, how they experienced gender within it, and the ways in which spirituality interacted with learning and work for social justice.

Significant findings emerged that broaden our understanding of learning in social movements. First, the Catholic Church was a crucial learning context for these women and created the grounding for their involvement within this particular social movement. Second, women were both adventurous and seeking an authentic expression of faith as young adults. Third, close interaction with poverty in a specific place developed both a compassionate and critical-systemic response, and a new way of seeing the world. Fourth, significant relationships created new opportunities for learning from the time of their introduction to the Catholic Worker, to their involvement within the Catholic Worker, to life following the Catholic Worker. Fifth, despite varying experiences of gender within the movement, women learned to trust

personal conscience as guide, which led them into positions of leadership on social justice issues in their local parishes.

Findings will be compared to relevant literature and the chapter will conclude with a discussion of tensions within the study, implications for the field of adult education, and recommendations for future research.

Findings

Learning within the Catholic Worker movement was a dynamic experience. Women were exposed to a “ferment of ideas” relating to social justice and Catholic thought. As young adults, these women encountered an exciting world of people committed to a revolutionary perspective in American culture. The Catholic Worker was a place where ideas and learning came together with hard work and where relationships were built that lasted a lifetime. The anarchistic flavor of the movement encouraged people to see where they could contribute and how they could learn. As Nina Polcyn Moore states, “It was a place that helped people define themselves, their roles, their sense of personhood, and then they left, taking that with them.”

The following areas demonstrate the nature of learning for women in the Catholic Worker: grounding in the context of the Catholic Church, seeking adventure and authenticity, practicing compassionate and critical-systemic faith, developing significant relationships, and trusting personal conscience as a guide.

Grounding in the Catholic Church

Schied (1995a, 1995b) charges that much adult education history removes adult learning from its social and cultural contexts, resulting in histories that list formal programs for adults, but do not investigate the multifaceted nature of informal learning by attending to the cultures in which they arise. The call to examine the complex nature of informal learning necessitates the examination of the culture of American Catholicism and how it may have contributed to the learning women experienced in the Catholic Worker movement.

Narrators demonstrate a lifelong commitment to the Catholic Church. As a result, their involvement in the Catholic Worker was embedded within the distinctly American Catholic culture in which they lived. It might be considered an aberration that a radical movement like the Catholic Worker emerged from within a monolithic, hierarchical, and patriarchal institution such as American Catholic Church. This study demonstrates that a radical social movement emerged, at least in part, because of uniquely distinctive features of the Catholic Church. What aspects of the Catholic Church prepared the women of this study for involvement with the Catholic Worker movement? What did these women learn within the Catholic Church that moved them toward and was affirmed within the Worker?

The success with which the American Catholic Church created its own culture within American society resulted in tangible benefits to the emergence of a radical movement such as the Catholic Worker. These benefits included the diversity of perspectives which arose through ethnic background, socio-economic status, and in belief and practice; the development of a “separate” identity; and the communication

possible through layers of bureaucracy and interconnected institutions within such a large Church. Issues of structural location which limited the role lay women could play within the Church (Neuhouser, 1995, 1998) also played a role in moving some Catholic women toward the Worker.

With large numbers of immigrants coming to the United States during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the American Catholic Church was remarkably diverse. Newcomers preferred to worship in their own languages and with their own customs, supported by priests from their own countries. While this was not always possible, borders of neighborhoods were commonly determined by country of origin. Local churches met the needs of various immigrant groups with mixed success (Morris, 1997), and members were not always pleased with the results. Learning within this context was often the result of conflict between differing perspectives in the local parish. Different perspectives on cultural adaptations of Catholic practice were as numerous as the varied ethnic groups that the local churches served. The Catholic Church focused its efforts on continuing the Americanization of immigrants, according to Morris, using “the rigorist streak in Irish-American Catholicism...[as] a supremely effective technique for converting peasants into aspiring bourgeois” (p. 131).

All of the narrators in this study grew up within the Catholic Church. They came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and their neighborhoods and local parishes reflected Alsatian, Bavarian, Belgian, British Canadian, German, Irish, and Polish roots. All of the women, with one possible exception, were one or two generations removed from immigrant status (narrators described grandparents or

great-grandparents as immigrants). One narrator notes that it is unclear whether her father was born in Poland or the United States.

While the Catholic Church experienced incredible growth in numbers and wealth during the period, it had commonly been considered to be the church of the poor. However, over time, diversity of ethnic background was increasingly matched by diversity of family income. This diversity was true for the narrators of this study. Not every family represented here is easily categorized by socio-economic class, but there are connections between ethnic background, the number of generations since immigration, and socio-economic status. As with many American families by the time of the Great Depression, economic hardship was experienced across traditional conceptualizations of class.

Three narrators grew up in families with low income, describing their families as “peasants” or “very poor.” One family was forced to pawn everything several times and after the death of the father, received financial assistance through “Mother’s Pension.” Another narrator described her family background as a combination of “Jewish aristocracy and Irish Catholic tough.” While her family might not be considered to be poor, they suffered significant economic difficulties despite her father’s Harvard education.

One narrator described her family as working class, although her father was a civil engineer, and others mentioned their fathers’ occupations in farming, education, and manufacturing. Three came from more affluent backgrounds, in which their fathers owned businesses—one in dentistry, one in medical equipment, and one a

paint company. One described her family as “fairly well-to-do” and another noted that her father was someone who came from a poor Irish family who “made it.”

The challenges of the diversity of ethnic parishes and socio-economic status of members caused the Church to attempt to reinforce distinctly “Catholic” belief and practice, with some adaptation to the needs of the local community. Despite this successful creation of American Catholic culture, a diversity of beliefs and practices were present within this very large Church.

Throughout history of the Catholic Church, there has been a wide diversity of belief and practice within it, due in part to its sheer size and scope. Some of those who explored radical approaches or who dared to dissent from Church authority over the centuries were excommunicated or killed. The Church’s response to what were considered “dangerous” beliefs has caused significant regret even for the Church with the passage of time (McClory, 2000). Regardless of the Church’s response, there have always been individuals and groups within it who test the boundaries of the faith, and frequently, call the Church to account.

Individuals and groups within the American Catholic Church have focused on the same perspectives, looking for ways in which the Church could be called back to its biblical foundations, particularly in areas of social justice. These groups were buoyed by Pope Leo XIII’s teaching on social justice in 1891 (*Rerum Novarum*) which warned of the dangers of the exploitation of the poor masses by the wealthy few and suggested that the Church change its continuing alliance with the powerful (Alexander, 1997).

In 1931, Pope Pius XI issued *Quadragesimo Anno*, articulating the differences between charity and social justice, and stating that workers should not be given charity when justice is required (Alexander, 1997). Those concerned with social justice issues studied the encyclicals, which were often neglected at the local parish level. As a result, a “dissenter” in the early to mid-twentieth century could be considered dangerous by local priests while seeking to practice a theologically approved tenet of the Church.

The Catholic Church in America was diverse in the ethnic background of its adherents, the growing socio-economic diversity within its membership, and in belief and practice, including those who sought to apply Church teachings on social justice issues in new ways. If this is true, how did the American Catholic Church succeed in creating a “separate” culture? In response to the nature of the relationship between church and state within the United States, as compared with European countries, the Church created a different approach that resonated with both its beliefs and hopes for the future.

The “Catholic Thesis,” which had first been promulgated by Rome in the mid-nineteenth century, insisted that all governments recognize the power and supremacy of the Catholic Church, and did not fit easily in the political and cultural climate of the United States (McClory, 2000). Separation of church and state in the United States caused a shift in direction, as the Church worked to create a culture that would keep faithful Catholics safe from the growing secularism of American society, and their children safe from the inequalities of the American educational system (Morris, 1997). Morris concludes that during the 1920s and 1930s, the Catholic Church

successfully created “a completely enveloping state-within-a-state for its own Catholic community” (p. 164) inclusive of diverse ethnic groups and income levels.

Growing up in the Catholic Church surrounded women with opportunities for learning what it meant to be a faithful Catholic, and to be part of a “separate” culture. Narrators’ lives were strongly influenced by a Catholic religious, educational, and social network, in childhood, as young adults and throughout their lives. In addition to regular church attendance, Catholic school attendance was expected for the children of faithful members. Eleven of the twelve women in this study had a parochial school education, or attended a combination of parochial and public schools. Ten of the twelve women had some type of formal education beyond high school. Seven received bachelor’s degrees, five of which were from Catholic institutions.

Connections to the Catholic Church continued throughout life, for the larger Catholic population, and for women interviewed for this study. While the context and nature of this connection was different while involved with the Catholic Worker, the content of the rituals was often the same. Narrators described the importance of daily worship and prayer while involved in the Catholic Worker. These activities took place within the traditional Catholic context of neighborhood parishes, as well as at Catholic Worker houses of hospitality. Practice of daily offices of prayer gave the movement an underpinning of a thoroughly Catholic theology and practice. Movement participants also attended retreats and sought out spiritual direction from local priests.

Within the Catholic Worker, serious study of the gospels and papal encyclicals on social justice issues (such as *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*), was joined by discussions with contemporary Catholic writers. Sheed & Ward publishing house's success in bringing Catholic writers to an American audience coincides with the development of the Catholic Worker in New York. These Catholic intellectuals found eager audiences who were ready to discuss their ideas in Catholic Worker houses of hospitality across the country.

Following involvement with the Catholic Worker, narrators described a continuing connection with the Catholic Church, some to a greater extent than others. Narrators worked with other Catholic initiatives such as the Sheil School in Chicago, a Dominican convent, the Grail, and Friendship House. Work continues in local churches and with Catholic and radical Christian organizations that seek to challenge the status quo. Two narrators continue their work with the Catholic Worker. One narrator has been involved with the Catholic Worker throughout her life. Another is involved again with a new Catholic Worker house where she lives.

Importantly, the church that created "cradle to grave" insulation from the larger world also conferred an "outsider" status, to some extent, on Catholics within American society. Obviously, not all Catholics were attracted by the critique of American culture that the Catholic Worker offered. However, for those who became involved in the Catholic Worker, the separatist nature of the Catholic Church in the early 20th century may have served as a preparation. Having spent formative years within the cocoon of a Church that provided an alternative structure to mainstream American society, these women learned a different way to understand the values and

perspectives of the broader world. When conflicts arose due to this clash of worldviews, women learned to evaluate what was important to them in relation to the broader society. This perspective may have offered tools with which they could stand to the side and critique American society, and the Church itself.

The successfully built “parallel” culture offered a conduit for communication about ideas of all kinds. Additionally, the Church provided a common language and life experience that connected people across economic lines. While those coming from a radical perspective were clearly in the minority, layers of bureaucracy and interconnected institutions within the Church provided opportunities for them to build relationships with and keep in regular contact with others who shared their views nationwide. At seminaries, monasteries, in schools and local parishes, individuals in leadership roles shared alternative perspectives about theology and lifestyle.

The Catholic Worker newspaper was distributed by nuns and priests in parishes, monasteries, and convents across the country, particularly those who were engaged in work with the poor. All of the women in this study learned about the Catholic Worker within a Catholic institutional context, and most were introduced to it by influential individuals who cared about the same issues.

Supportive priests assisted in planning and in teaching at the houses of hospitality. Bishops paid rent for local groups beginning to establish houses of hospitality, and sisters of convents that focused on education regularly provided food and other supplies to the houses. Administrators at Catholic colleges brought Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin to their campuses to speak to students, who, in small but

significant numbers, visited St. Joseph's House in New York and joined in the work there or in other houses of hospitality closer to home.

This interconnected network served the Catholic Worker well, as leaders within the movement were connected with Catholics in institutions across the country that could get out the word about the efforts for social justice taking place in the movement. There were ready audiences for the message at parochial schools, colleges, seminaries, and monasteries. Lecture tours during the 1930s and 1940s brought Catholic Workers to cities and towns in nearly every area of the country. As houses of hospitality developed, and later Catholic Worker "cells," they became stopping off points for speakers on their way east or west.

Finally, women also learned from the dislocation they experienced within the Catholic Church as a result of their gender and structural location. Neuhouser (1995, 1998), in his sociological study of women involved in social change in Brazil, found that the intersection between cultural context and structural location within society prompts collective action. The concerns of mothers wanting to provide for their families provided the motivation for women in Brazilian squatter settlements to act. Unique attributes of the mother's cultural context and location in societal structure propelled them to act.

Narrators within this study are a different population than the women Neuhouser (1995, 1998) studied. However, Catholic cultural context shaped the choices women in this study made. Narrators came from strongly Catholic backgrounds (across socio-economic lines), seriously attended to Church teaching, and looked for ways to live the faith concretely and radically, particularly related to

issues that mattered to them as women. Additionally, narrators experienced a structural location with little power because of their gender and because they were part of the laity.

In the decades leading up to the 1930s, the Catholic Church offered few opportunities for lay women for leadership or growth, except within traditional family structures. Girls were expected to grow up to be wives and mothers, and to support the Catholic culture in which they had been raised. Opportunities for involvement in the Church, outside of convents, included benevolent associations, and altar societies or Sodalities.

Catholic culture provided opportunities for women to learn both formally and informally. At Catholic colleges, teaching nuns were often successful in creating a supportive environment for women, which offered both intellectual growth and the opportunity to observe women in leadership roles. With the rise in lay Catholic groups during the 1930s and 1940s, women began to see opportunities for engaged Church involvement outside the convent.

Feminist historian Lerner's (1996) call to address the history of women's involvements in the past in ways that account both for the context and functioning of women in a male world "on their own terms" can be seen in stories of these narrators. Narrators for this study had their first introduction to a radical perspective on Christian faith within a Catholic context. In spite of the patriarchy of the Catholic Church, and, influenced by teachers, priests, and nuns to consider how to live as faithful Catholics, these women sought to engage with social needs of the time.

As the Catholic Worker developed its distinctive social justice and pacifist approach to the problems of twentieth century American society, it emerged from a Church that had a higher degree of diversity and offered a greater measure of support than might be expected. This Church issued teaching about social justice issues from the highest levels and was both ethnically and economically diverse.

The creation of a separate culture formed a type of “outsider” status within mainstream American culture, which gave women opportunities to learn a different set of values which they could weigh against those of the larger society. This experience may have contributed to the ability to stand to the side to critique the larger society, as well as the Church itself. Additionally, the Church provided structural opportunities for communication that benefited the Catholic Worker, along with common language and life experiences.

Finally, the Catholic Church, with all its power, hierarchical, and patriarchal structure, provided both teaching which shaped hopes and practice which too often fed disillusionments. This connection between hopes for what could be and the experience of limitations inherent within the Church provided the grounding from which women were moved to act.

Seeking Adventure and Authenticity

Thompson (1995) claims that women’s contributions to adult and continuing education have been essential in understanding what counts as “really useful knowledge” (p. 124). Her study found that within the women’s movement in Great Britain, women’s personal experiences were central, women worked collaboratively for social change, and engaged in “the deconstruction of traditional forms of authority

and wisdom,” in addition to recognizing the dynamic relationship between practice and theory. Narrators in the Catholic Worker movement gained “really useful knowledge” through seeking opportunities of adventure (providing life experience) and through seeking opportunities to learn how to live what they believed with authenticity (bringing theory and practice together).

Women were adventurous as young adults, demonstrating independence as they moved across the country for work, education and travel. In addition, the desire to learn how to live an authentic life as a Christian and a Catholic pushed them to look outside the sometimes narrow confines of the local parish for a place to become involved. What contributed to this desire for adventure and authenticity? The following factors will be explored: the impact of the Depression in providing alternative options for women, the development of a questioning attitude in relation to authority, the meaning of authenticity, and the influence of independent and faithful women.

In examining the Catholic Worker as a social movement, Aronica (1987) makes use of conjunctural social movement theory which examines the historical context out of which social movements arise. Aronica asserts that the economic and social dislocation caused by the Great Depression created an atmosphere in which it was possible to challenge societal structures through nonconformist action. Aronica further notes that the economic situation resulting from the Great Depression caused groups of people to take collective action by banding together to address society’s failure to provide for the basic needs of its members. The success of the movement

relied upon a clearly articulated ideology (in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper) to spur movement members into action.

Did the disjuncture in American life during the 1930s create alternative opportunities for women? As Ware (1982) notes, the economic stress of the Depression brought about the need for greater numbers of women to supplement or provide sole support for their families. For some families, the challenges of the Depression accentuated an already impoverished income.

Narrators were in different stages of life when the Depression hit. The oldest was 24 years old and the youngest was nine. Caring for those who were homeless and or hungry was a common occurrence. Families were involved in direct, hands-on care for the poor and those in need. Women learned what their families' valued when hungry men were fed on their porches or in their kitchens.

Some of the women in the study were in school during the 1930s, and following their graduation from high school or college, worked in a variety of occupations. Some moved across the country for jobs or further education. Whether this was the result of so few jobs open close by is not clear. However, women were willing to take risks by trying new venues for learning and work. Possibly lacking other options, they struck out on their own to experience life in the larger world, although still closely tied to the Catholic context and family life within which they were raised. Connections to family members and others in distant places formed the basis of some of the adventures that women pursued.

In addition to seeking adventure, women in this study desired to live an authentically faithful life. Questioning authority proved to be a central component of this desire for authenticity. The approach to life and faith presented in some local parishes caused women to question. Additionally, several women grew up in homes where questioning authority was both modeled and valued. Many had the opportunity to learn from clergy or teachers who encouraged a life of engagement with the world, fostering the desire to understand how they could contribute within their communities.

Bean's (2000) examination of the work of Moses Coady in the development of the Antigonish movement in the eastern part of Nova Scotia, discusses Coady's ability to adopt a questioning relationship with the Church, as well as with those in positions of political power. Coady's developing understanding of the relationship between spirituality and social justice was similar to what was sought by those who became involved in the Catholic Worker movement.

What is the meaning of authenticity for women in this study? Within the context of the Catholic Worker movement, an authentic Christian life is one that demonstrates Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Carrying out the works of mercy for others is really serving Christ. All of the narrators were seeking a more authentic expression of Catholic faith than they saw in their local parishes. Facing dramatic societal change brought on by the Depression, narrators looked for ways that the Church was caring for the poor and found few.

English and Gillen (2000) note that authentic spirituality "moves one outward to others as an expression of one's spiritual experiences" (p.1). This movement

outward was definitely present for narrators, as a common description for spirituality was direct action, “doing,” or caring for others. Spirituality was inseparable from action.

It is possible that the Catholic Worker movement was perceived as a safe place to seek both adventure and authenticity. The Catholic Worker grew out of the church in which these women were raised, maintained connections with their own educational experiences, and emphasized a radical and authentic approach to Catholic faith. In addition, influential individuals introduced women to the Worker. As a result, for most women in this study, the pull to become involved in the Catholic Worker was strong. Several of the narrators chose to join the movement over the objections of family members.

An encounter with Dorothy Day or another influential figure in young adulthood, assisted women in defining an authentic life as one in which a person’s life displays their beliefs, particularly in relation to caring for those in need. Women who were most influential to the narrators, including Dorothy Day and Catherine de Hueck, shared in common the ability to see a need in the world and to do something about it.

When narrators encountered Dorothy Day’s “engaged spirituality” (Parachin, 2000, p. 250), they found someone who was living a life that attended to spiritual nurture in a Catholic setting, as well as working for social justice. Forest (1993) asserts that Day offered hospitality that was both spiritual and political. This commitment to a life of hospitality for those in need was compelling for those seeking ways to address injustice from a Catholic perspective.

Adele Butler Nash's comments about her first impressions of Dorothy Day focus on Day's authenticity, and provide a powerful example of the nature of embedded or implicit learning (Foley, 2001a) within her experience with the Catholic Worker. Describing her manner of dress and her physical bearing, Adele states that she knew right away that the Catholic Worker was what she was looking for, because of the authenticity of Day's life. Day's actions and attitudes, as evidenced through "little things" such as wearing clothing donated for the poor, made Adele's aware of her own "bourgeois attitude." She concludes that those present knew that they had to do something about the Catholic Worker.

In addition to connecting with influential individuals, *The Catholic Worker* newspaper was an important point of contact for those who were seeking a radical engagement with the needs of the poor. Narrators described being drawn into the movement through the beliefs and values articulated in its pages. The newspaper, and the movement it described, provided the authentic expression of Catholic faith that these women sought.

Narrators for this study looked outside the local parish to find "really useful knowledge," and sought an authentic articulation of belief (or theory) and practice that their churches did not provide. While they often learned about the Catholic Worker within the Catholic Church, more traditional forms of learning within Church and society did not provide what narrators needed to articulate an authentic set of beliefs and lifestyle.

The introduction to a movement that was returning to the roots of what it meant to be an authentic Catholic set up a dynamic contrast with the local parish or

Catholic educational institution that was, at times, difficult to reconcile. As a result, it seemed probable that in order to be an authentic Catholic, as taught by the Church, a person would come into conflict with that same Church. Not surprisingly, by following this more radical approach to faith, Catholic Workers mirrored Jesus' own relationships to those in power.

Spurred by personal experience with the economic dislocation of the Depression, either by their own life of poverty or by the example of families who cared for homeless or hungry people in their homes, and encouraged by influential individuals, independent and adventurous women sought a place where they could pursue an authentic faith and life with others. The Catholic Worker was a compelling place where women seeking both adventure and authenticity could learn and grow.

Practicing Compassionate and Critical-Systemic Faith

Daloz, et al, (1996) define critical-systemic faith as a critical perspective that enables activists to work for social change and “to tolerate the complexity and ambiguity with which commitment to the commons [the common good] must contend” (p. 143). Women in the Catholic Worker learned a compassionate and critical-systemic faith within the Catholic Worker movement, which focused on both meeting needs of those hurt by capitalism and articulating a critique of the structural systems within American society.

The combination of living in voluntary poverty and/or direct contact with those impoverished by capitalism, while developing a Catholic critique of church and society, heightened awareness and created a new way of seeing the world. An exploration of the development of worker-scholars, the experience of marginality, the

nature of resistance to American cultural values, and a comparison with nineteenth century radical education provides insight into the Catholic Worker as a dynamic site for learning.

Catholic Worker co-founder Peter Maurin called for the development of “worker-scholars” in the creation of a new social order. Physical labor and intellectual development were joined together, making each more meaningful. A compelling aspect of the movement was that both work and study happened in a physical place—in a house of hospitality, which came to symbolize the movement. Houses of hospitality emerged within the movement to care for the needs of those hurt by the economic change brought on by the Depression. The needs of those who came to the houses of hospitality formed the basis of the works of mercy that narrators carried out there.

Much of the work of was manual labor, geared toward helping others, such as cooking, cleaning, and distributing food and clothing. Because of the anarchist nature of the movement, tasks were not assigned. Women and men found where they could contribute. As the work of houses of hospitality required all of the tasks of running a home, both women and men contributed to meeting the needs of ambassadors and Workers. Tasks tended to fall along traditional gender-specific lines. However, narrators mentioned that they worked alongside men in carrying out these tasks. Men were not interviewed for this study, but it should be noted that those who worked in houses of hospitality or retreat centers/farming communes were involved in direct care for those in need, often in tasks typically carried out by women.

Caring for those with pressing needs at times moved narrators beyond levels of comfort, as they encountered a more desperate poverty than they had previously known. Stepping into crumbling tenement buildings to assist families who had been evicted, collecting money from expectant mothers for a maternity guild, and living on the same floor as women who suffered from alcohol and mental illness were challenging experiences. Additionally, distributing the newspaper offered narrators an opportunity to stand up for what they believed in various locations throughout New York and in other cities across the country. These stretching learning opportunities gave women new insights into the experiences of those with little power within American society.

In addition to physical labor, the Catholic Worker offered many opportunities for study. It was an invigorating environment with individual and group opportunities for intellectual discovery and growth. Narrators read Catholic writers, such as Jacques Maritain, Paul Claudell, Eric Gill, and G.K. Chesterton, who espoused personalist and distributist philosophies. Russian, Italian, and Norwegian novelists such as Fidor Dostoevsky, Ignazio Silone, and Sigred Undset provided challenging alternative perspectives. Narrators who had been journalism or English majors in college were invigorated by the literary as well as political debate present in the Catholic Worker. Women enjoyed the opportunities to discuss and learn together about disparate issues ranging from labor, peace, literature, liturgical reform, housing, economics, politics, to the Gospels and papal encyclicals.

The result of this combination of work and study was the development of a new way of seeing the world. Narrators described an awakening, a new way of

seeing, and the development of a framework for the rest of life, based on values of personal responsibility, pacifism, and voluntary poverty. One narrator described what she learned at the Worker as a powerful introduction to the inequities of the class system in American society. Future involvements were shaped by the experience of learning to meet needs and to critique societal structures within the Worker.

One of the contributing factors to a new way of seeing was that Catholic Workers stood between two worlds. Scholars examining the impact on the experience of marginality have insights to offer. Rosenberg (1982) notes that Robert Parks' research about the Tuskegee Institute focused on the ability of marginalized people to navigate between two worlds. Rosenberg also cites Jesse Taft's early findings that the conflict that exists between two worlds creates social movements, in particular, the women's movement. In addition to serving as a motivation for action, a sense of marginality is also often a consequence of social activism for those involved in social movements, as they resist or challenge societal norms.

Daloz, et al, (1996) note the importance of the experience of marginality and critical-systemic faith to motivations of activists working for social change. The authors state, "when one stands at the margins, astride the boundary between tribes, one stands also at the center of a larger and more adequate whole" (p. 77). Living and working on the margins of society created an opportunity for Catholic Workers to learn to see what those who embrace dominant cultural values could not.

Catholic Worker houses of hospitality served as centers for resistance to American cultural values. Catholic Workers welcomed those who questioned the cultural values inherent within American capitalism: materialism, violence, and

oppression. Women were involved in nonviolent resistance to these values in many ways, including public protest. As the movement developed over time, a clear perspective of pacifism emerged which was not supported by all Catholic Workers. However, many of those who did not engage in picket lines against unfair labor or housing practices, or against preparation for war, actively pursued peacemaking through other efforts such as letter writing and involvement in peace organizations.

Living in voluntary poverty may be perhaps the greatest form of nonviolent resistance to American cultural values. By refusing to participate in an economy that was fueled by preparation for war, and the business perspectives which championed the value of the powerful over the powerless, women learned to live out their beliefs, as one narrator noted, by sharing what the poor had, which was poverty.

Soelle (2001) notes that those who resist dominant cultural values (related to violence, materialism, and oppression) operate out of a “radically mystical consciousness...marked by ‘revolutionary patience’...that sets out from the experience of what has always been good” (p. 198). Maintaining connections with those whose perspectives differ is an essential component of this peace-oriented world view.

How does learning within the Catholic Worker compare to efforts to educate from a radical perspective during the nineteenth century? According to Johnson (1988), the approach taken by radical educators in the nineteenth century was to critique formal education available at the time, create utopian content, strategies and goals for education, tie education to politics and social change, and create a multi-faceted approach that met their own needs for learning.

Catholic Worker efforts mirror this approach with certain exceptions. *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, along with roundtable discussions at houses of hospitality, contributed to an ongoing critique of societal and Church perspectives. Studying and living out the ideas found in the gospels and in papal encyclicals, along with European Catholic writers, created the utopian content, strategies and goals for education. Additionally, at houses of hospitality and farming communes, Catholic Workers sought out literature, regular discussions, and experiences that could meet their own needs for learning.

The Catholic Worker operated as an alternative to a governmental approach, both in terms of philosophically differentiating themselves from social services, and in trying to create an alternative social order where small groups of people could meet the needs of their neighbors. Supporting governmental initiatives was not within the philosophical worldview of the Catholic Worker. However, this did not mean that engagement with government agencies was not encouraged. This engagement might take the form of protesting unfair policies rather than running for office.

Narrators described their experiences as a lively combination of physical labor to meet the needs of homeless and hungry people, along with opportunities for spiritual growth, nonviolent resistance, and the development of a new way of understanding societal structures and values. The framework which developed out of the practice of this compassionate and critical-systemic faith provided a new way to see the world and has remained an integral part of life. Women who became involved with the Catholic Worker during the 1930s and 1940s encountered a radical Catholic lay movement that fostered learning while challenging societal and church structures.

Developing Significant Relationships

Hugo (2001) examines the development of white women's study groups over a hundred year period. Her study explores the continuing experiences of middle class women who learned together in a small group called Coterie near Syracuse, New York. Women constructed their own conceptualization of womanhood and created a place to learn that offered both intimacy and intellectual growth. For some women in the Catholic Worker, relationships with other women fulfilled just such needs—for intimacy and intellectual development. For women who desired these types of close relationships and did not want to join a convent, the Catholic Worker offered an atmosphere in which both friendships and individual intellectual growth could occur.

Similar to the experience of women who joined the efforts of Hull House, or other settlement houses, women in the Catholic Worker developed significant relationships as they worked to serve the people who were hurt by the injustices of American society. Relationships formed a significant base for later involvements in education and occupations for women in settlement houses, just as for women of the Catholic Worker (Muncy, 1991).

Before an examination of those relationships, it should be noted that there are significant differences between settlement houses and the Catholic Worker. The women of settlement houses were primarily from the middle class and sought to bring progressive reform to cities in the United States. The field of social work emerged from the work of settlement houses. The Catholic Worker had a different perspective than settlement houses did. While located in poor neighborhoods in urban areas with Workers living in houses of hospitality, the Catholic Worker was anarchistic in

approach, and saw each homeless person as an ambassador of Christ. Ambassadors were considered guests, not clients, and efforts to assist them were focused on direct aid in terms of food and clothing. While those who came to be involved with the Catholic Worker were from a cross section of income levels, in the early days, most were working class, and, by joining the Catholic Worker, embraced the poverty of those they served.

Narrators in this study described many significant relationships in their experience with the Catholic Worker movement, beginning with those who introduced them to the movement, including those they befriended while in the movement, and the lifelong friendships and/or marriages that resulted. These relationships offered significant opportunities for learning.

At critical points as young adults, narrators came in contact with individuals who inspired a more radical perspective of the Catholic faith, particularly relating to the Church's responsibility for the poor. Connections with influential teachers, nuns, priests, or friends created opportunities to become acquainted with the Catholic Worker. All of the women were strongly influenced by contact with Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, who welcomed them to greater involvement with the Worker.

As women and men worked together in houses of hospitality, relationships grew, resulting in strong friendships and in marriages. Narrators described the important relationships with other women which developed for them within the Catholic Worker. Working and learning together created very strong bonds.

At the Milwaukee Catholic Worker, a core group of women developed a close knit community that struggled and learned together. They traveled to other cities to

learn together with the same spiritual director and spent days off together.

Continually seeking new materials to read and understand, the women regularly spent time together discussing what they had read and teaching each other, while assisting in the running of the house of hospitality.

One narrator remembers how decisions were made at the Rochester Catholic Worker, through friends reading, thinking, discussing, and deciding to move forward together. Narrators from the Rochester Catholic Worker, and other houses, shared funny stories about their time in the Catholic Worker. Shared decision-making, the challenges of running houses of hospitality, and opportunities to poke fun at themselves and others they worked with, developed strong bonds of friendship.

Two women who met through the Catholic Worker (and became sisters-in-law) began a correspondence when their families moved apart that continued throughout their lives. Letters chronicled the women's hopes and dreams for their families, as well as political and social concerns, comments on books they were reading, daily experiences with large families, and what they were learning. Their close relationship helped to shape their development as women.

As evidenced in the literature, women working for social change develop strong informal networks of support (Hart, 1990; Thompson, 1995). Knowledge is often based on personal experience and develops through resistance to traditional forms of learning. Learning emerges within everyday experiences as women work together to resist the status quo.

The friendships that grew within the Catholic Worker created an “interlocking” network of women with connections to other opportunities, such as Friendship House, the Grail, and apprenticeships with artist Ade Bethune. Many of these friendships have continued throughout narrators’ lives. These connections shaped next steps for women, including educational and work opportunities and provided lifelong friendships.

Trusting Personal Conscience as a Guide

Gibbons (2001) describes the nature of the uniquely Catholic pacifist approach that emerged within the Catholic Worker. A significant component of this perspective is the value placed on individual conscience, rather than church or national authority. Gibbons notes that a “counter-traditional” call to peace activism causes individuals to question and challenge structures that oppress others. According to Gibbons, following the nonviolent approach advocated by Jesus in the gospels becomes “authenticated in praxis...[challenging] the individual to refer to the authority of conscience versus national or even Church leaders in fashioning a response to the evil of war” (pp. 170-171).

A crucial question regarding the reliance on personal conscience in matters of faith and life is this: who has the authority to create knowledge? Or who decides what knowledge is (Cunningham, 2000)? In the Catholic Worker, a unique perspective on Catholic theology was developing, a “theory of revolution,” as one narrator called it. This evolving nature of what counts as knowledge had been introduced to a reluctant Church audience in the mid-nineteenth century by John Henry Newman.

Women in the Milwaukee Catholic Worker educated each other about the evolution of church doctrine as they read John Henry Newman's work. Newman's *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* was a revolutionary concept when it was written in 1845. Newman called for the laity to be involved in the development of church doctrine, to the horror of Church authorities (McClory, 2000). Ninety years after Newman developed this perspective, the laity was beginning to become involved in certain areas of leadership within the Catholic Church, if not in the development of official Church doctrine.

Learning to trust personal conscience caused women to move into new areas of leadership as lay people within the Church, particularly related to issues of social justice. Narrators described learning to trust personal conscience over family, church, or society, as a result of the new way of seeing that they learned in the Catholic Worker. Day was viewed as a model for this approach, as women were empowered by her life and actions. One narrator mentioned her mother's central role in social justice issues within a fairly conservative parish in Illinois. Others remember Day encouraging them to look for ways to work for change within their communities and local parishes.

In an example of the freedom present within Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, narrators mentioned that when decisions needed to be made, no one had to wait for a priest. Decisions were made jointly by those present. This perspective continued after Catholic Worker involvement for some women who were engaged in social justice work.

In several instances, narrators described the educating of priests that took place. The group of women from the Catholic Worker in Milwaukee who traveled to Pittsburgh to meet with Father Hugo for spiritual direction all worked during the week and traveled by train overnight to spend their few days off together learning about the gospels and about peace. Nina Polcyn Moore recalls that the questions they asked about peace prompted Father Hugo to explore pacifism at a deeper level. His articulation of a peace stance eventually emerged as a central component of Catholic Worker beliefs.

Educating priests in Philadelphia was a priority for one narrator after her Catholic Worker experience. Priests in one parish had no direct involvement in meeting the needs of those who lived in the neighborhoods surrounding the church. This narrator worked to educate priests in the parish about God's concern for the poor and the role that the Church should play in the neighborhood around issues such as housing and education and providing relief to those in need. The general lack of awareness of the needs of the poor by the clergy created the need to teach or nudge priests in new directions that offered opportunities for women to continue to be involved in an authentic practice of the Catholic faith.

A longer view reveals the impact that Dorothy Day and *The Catholic Worker's* relentless expression of pacifism had on Church doctrine in the twentieth century. Day actively opposed the Ethiopian and Spanish Civil Wars, World War II, Korean and Vietnam Wars, and the nuclear arms race. After decades of writing about and protesting the issue, after Vatican II it finally became possible for Catholics to register their conscientious objector status during wartime (Musto, 1986). Previously,

the Church maintained a just war theory and would not support adherents who chose to object to war on grounds of personal conscience.

Women learned to trust personal conscience as a result of their experience within the Catholic Worker. Understanding what was morally right and wrong, both personally and in society, was shaped by a radical critique of American society. This critique looked for ways to address oppression, or unfair treatment, both in society and in the Church. At times, the oppressive structures that Catholic Workers were trying to address within American society were replicated within the Worker. Despite being in a movement co-founded by a woman, some women experienced a narrowing of opportunity within the Worker as a result of their gender.

Kuumba (2001) asserts that multiple levels of gender meanings can operate simultaneously in the same culture. This is evidenced within the Catholic Worker in that the movement's co-founder Dorothy Day acted as an independent woman in directing efforts of the newspaper and New York house of hospitality, while raising her daughter Tamar. Women at other houses described a feeling of "refreshing equality" as they were full participants in planning and carrying out works of mercy and protest at their houses of hospitality.

At the same time, other women experienced dismissive, intolerant, or oppressive behavior on the part of the men who lived and worked in houses of hospitality. Some men may have had difficulty accepting Dorothy Day's role as "head Anarch" but were willing to work under her direction. Men in the Catholic Worker may have had as much difficulty in accepting women as peers as did men outside the Worker during the 1930s and 1940s.

Combining a radical perspective in relation to socio-economic issues with a conservative perspective on women's roles may demonstrate clear-sightedness in one direction and blocked vision in another. Attention to the importance of context for this particular social movement lends insight to this challenging juxtaposition. It is impossible to detach the women of this study from the Catholic Church context in which they lived and out of which the movement developed. The Catholic Worker movement was thoroughly Catholic in theology and practice, and affirmed the Church's view of family life. For example, birth control was not embraced as an option for faithful Catholics during the period. Narrators in this study worked this out in different ways, including both the embrace of a large family and the choice to remain single.

In spite of the patriarchy of the Catholic Church and the oppressive behavior experienced within some houses of hospitality within the Catholic Worker, women used what they had learned in the Catholic Worker—to trust personal conscience on matters of social justice over family, Church and society's expectations. The consequences of this perspective helped narrators to move into positions of leadership as lay women within their local parishes around social justice issues. For example, narrators became identified with social justice initiatives at the local level, in areas such as housing integration in Libertyville, IL, transitional housing for women and children in Philadelphia, PA, hunger relief in Tell City, IN, and peace activism in Milwaukee, WI.

Learning in the Catholic Worker movement took place within a contested and complex setting (Foley, 2001a). The struggles of daily life formed the background

upon which Catholic Workers built a community. Narrators articulated areas of struggle which point to larger areas of tension within the study.

Areas of Tension

The findings revealed areas of tension or struggle within the Catholic Worker, such as the challenging consequences of living in voluntary poverty or of public protest. Narrators also clearly articulated the daily challenges of living and working in houses of hospitality, particularly around issues of household management and decision-making. Other areas of tension include the contested nature of beliefs about pacifism within the movement and some issues related to gender.

Household management and decision-making was an area of challenge. Catholic Worker houses were not Settlement houses and were not run by social workers. How was authority to be exercised in the process of caring for those in need? What was the role of movement leader Dorothy Day in resolving continuous areas of conflict within local houses, due to the lack of official “house rules?” Narrators noted the difficulty of life within houses of hospitality, partly due to the philosophical approach adopted for managing them. The chaotic environment propelled some women to seek regular respite outside the houses of hospitality. One narrator remarked that she became involved in Friendship House in Harlem because it offered a more “orderly” approach than the Catholic Worker.

Catholic Worker houses of hospitality were encouraged to function autonomously from the New York house. Yet when local groups or individuals began to disagree with the perspective articulated in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, particularly over issues of pacifism at the beginning of World War II, freedom to

express differing opinions was not encouraged. Was there freedom within the movement to articulate a different perspective with regard to either issues related to labor or war? What was the role of individual conscience within the movement with regard to pacifism?

With pacifism there was no room for compromise, according to Piehl (1982), who contrasts it with the area of labor, over which local houses of hospitality could differ, particularly in relation to the “decentralist and anarchist” aspects of the movement (p. 154). Piehl continues, “a common Catholic idealism, faith in Day’s leadership, and the work among the poor held the national movement together” (p. 154).

As demonstrated above, the experience of gender within the Catholic Worker was complex, growing out of the context of the contemporary Catholic Church. Some narrators experienced a narrowing of opportunity (e.g., gender typical roles) caused by the perspectives of individuals uncomfortable with women in roles of leadership, despite their involvement in a movement co-founded by a woman. However, this study demonstrates that narrators embraced a variety of responses to the roles they faced as women within the movement, the Church, and the larger society. Additionally, narrators in this study became leaders within local parish settings after their involvement with the Catholic Worker.

Reflections on oral history methodology, particularly related to two areas which did not emerge within the interviews, will be followed by a discussion of implications for the field of adult education, and recommendations for future research.

Reflections on Oral History Methodology

Oral history methodology is based on the assumption that individuals' perceptions of their own life experiences make the historical record more complete. Narrators become interpreters of their own life story, in effect encouraging a shift in power from the historian to the narrator to "tell" their own story. Oral history transcriptions are necessarily partial, and limited (or enhanced) by the memories of the participants. Different times in a person's life prompt different interpretations of past events.

Narrators' ability to tell their story may be limited in several ways—the extent of what they remember, the nature of the questions asked of them, the relationship that develops between the interviewer and the narrator, and how much time can be spent in the interview process. The goal of this study was to give women the opportunity to reflect on their involvement in the Catholic Worker movement within the framework of their life history. Women were asked to describe what they learned through their involvement in the Catholic Worker.

Despite significant personal sharing by narrators, two issues (of importance during the 1930s and beyond) did not emerge with clarity in the interviews: personal perspectives on the Spanish Civil War, and beliefs about birth control. A second interview with each narrator could certainly pursue these two topics, the first of importance to the articulation of pacifism within the Catholic Worker, and the second of importance to expectations for women within the family and the Church. Limitations of time and distance did not allow for face-to-face follow-up interviews.

Most narrators did not articulate specific views about the Spanish Civil War and its effects on their growing understanding of pacifism during the 1930s. Their reflections related to pacifism tended to focus on the coming of World War II, rather than the conflict which took place in Spain, as many of the narrators became involved with the Catholic Worker at the end of the 1930s or later.

In 1936, the Spanish Civil War offered the newly formed Catholic Worker movement the opportunity to articulate its growing pacifist perspective within the pages of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. Aside from the periodical *Commonweal*, *The Catholic Worker* was the only Catholic publication to maintain a neutral stance during the Spanish Civil War (Guttmann, 1962).

The Catholic Church hierarchy within the United States wholeheartedly supported Franco in his movement to wrest control from the “communist” Loyalist government. Both lay publications stood apart from the Church’s stance. Piehl (1982) notes that *Commonweal* lost “one-quarter of its circulation and Shuster was denounced as a traitor to the faith” when it publicly offered support for the republic (p. 123). The Catholic Worker movement’s approach of calling for peace and reconciliation in place of war was not popular among many Catholics. In addition to the articles printed within the newspaper, Catholic Workers often stood side by side with Communists in picket lines and public meetings. Piehl asserts that the Catholic Worker “deplored the apparent effort by some Catholics to line up anti-Communism, patriotism, and Christianity in opposition to social reform” (p.122). Calling for neutrality in the Spanish Civil War caused many Catholics to believe that the Catholic Worker was supporting Communist causes.

While the Catholic Worker in New York sharpened its pacifist stance through engagement in the pages of its newspaper during the Spanish Civil War, houses of hospitality in other cities focused more intently on urgent local needs. Piehl (1982) states that:

the Chicago group paid little attention to the Spanish Civil War, and issue that received banner-headline treatment in the New York *Catholic Worker*. Even when war broke out in Europe in 1939, the *Chicago Catholic Worker* still saw foreign policy taking a back seat to social change at home. (p. 155).

While the Spanish Civil War provided an important context for the development of the central belief of pacifism with the Catholic Worker movement, narrators in this study did not articulate its importance to them personally. Two narrators noted the importance of pacifism as a factor in their becoming involved with the Catholic Worker. One woman described her attraction to the Catholic Worker after reading the history of warfare, and another noted that she sought out information on the Catholic Worker's neutral stance in the Spanish Civil War more than a decade after it occurred. Another narrator shared that a priest planned to deny her communion as a result of her involvement in the Catholic Worker movement during the Spanish Civil War.

Women interviewed for this study did not mention a personal connection to any war before World War II, either because of their age, or the time when they joined the Catholic Worker movement. Issues relating to pacifism were discussed in relation to decisions made by loved ones during the months leading up to the United States' entry into World War II.

Additionally, most of the women in this study did not engage in discussion about their views of birth control. The benefits of birth control to women in the 20th century cannot be underestimated. The pioneering efforts of Margaret Sanger to make available safe methods of contraception saved countless lives (Douglas, 1970). However, the Catholic Church's perspective on birth control during the 1930s held that only the rhythm method could be used. Sulloway (1959) notes:

In the Catholic literature on birth control after 1932, the morality of the Rhythm is contrasted with the immorality of contraception. The Rhythm is said to be natural; contraception, unnatural. The Rhythm is considered lawful and may even under some circumstances be required by God; contraceptives are unlawful and forbidden under all circumstances. (p. 125)

As has been noted earlier, narrators pursued a variety of avenues in relation to marriage, and family size. Some chose to have large families, others had fewer children, and two did not have children of their own. The short time period spent with each narrator made it difficult to delve into some areas of a more personal nature, such as reasons for larger or smaller family size. No oral history narrator should feel compelled to answer questions that feel uncomfortable to them. A longer time spent with these narrators might have yielded more insight into some life choices. It is clear, however, that the women of this study were immersed in Catholic culture and Church teachings on issues such as birth control would have been taken seriously. Many Catholics believed it to be a mortal sin to use birth control. This provided a compelling dilemma for women who were seeking authenticity in their beliefs and practices as Catholic women.

This inquiry was focused on the nature of learning for women in the Catholic Worker movement. Interviews deliberately centered on the individual learning experiences of women in the movement during the 1930s and 1940s and reflect what mattered to them during this time. As a result, it may appear that the approach is focused on individuals rather than on the community of which they were a part. It should be noted that the nature of oral history methodology is to gain understanding of individuals' perspectives on the past. Too often our understanding of the past is shaped by the recollections of wealthy and powerful men in society. This study provides the opportunity to hear the perspectives of women who are not well-known reflect on their own lives and the impact of a particular social movement in shaping them as women.

Additionally, narrators noted the importance of the articulation of personalism within the Catholic Worker movement. The "personalist" perspective of the Catholic Worker encouraged personal responsibility in meeting the challenges of contemporary society. Personalism was a philosophy articulated by the French Catholic writer Emmanuel Mounier (1962), which critiqued both capitalism and communism from a Christian point of view. In this philosophy, each individual human being is of utmost importance, as is the cultivation of values such as initiative, responsibility and spirituality. The context of the Catholic Worker must be understood in terms of both the individual and the community experience, with specific attention to the beliefs and values which formed the basis for the actions that women and men in the movement carried out.

The nature of learning for women in the Catholic Worker during the 1930s and 1940s was multifaceted. To what extent did the movement reproduce or transcend oppressive structures (Foley, 2001a)? Education about class issues in the United States allowed narrators to see society in a different way. Ambassadors (the homeless) and Catholic Workers lived and worked side by side, offering both values and actions which transcended oppressive structures in society. On issues of gender, however, some narrators experienced oppression within the movement, at the same time that they sought to address oppressive structures within society. Despite this limitation, narrators described women they looked up to as independent authentic role models who saw needs and acted in concrete ways to meet them.

Women grew up within the context of the Catholic Church, sought adventure and authenticity as young adults, and practiced compassionate and critical-systemic faith within the Catholic Worker which resulted in a new framework or way of seeing. Narrators developed significant relationships which fostered learning in new ways, and despite a certain narrowing of opportunity for some because of their gender, learned to trust personal conscience as it guided them into positions of leadership within local parishes.

Implications for Adult Education

Attending to gender, learning, and spirituality in social movements offers a different view of social movement participation. Chronicling everyday acts of learning and resistance by women who work for social change is essential for greater understanding of those who choose to work on the margins of society, calling into

question dominant cultural values and perspectives. This study offers new insights into women and learning in social movements through attention to how participants are situated within personal, as well as historical, social, and cultural contexts; the value of physical place; awareness of the role of connections to influential individuals at critical points; attention to the development of compassion; and the nature of personal conscience and its role in moving women toward authenticity.

The interaction between personal history of movement participants and their connections to larger historical, social, and cultural contexts creates a dynamic interchange between unique individual or family perspective and the larger world. Oral history methodology often results in this pairing of individual experience with a societal framework, creating a much more complex understanding of motivations for women's involvement in social movements, and insights into the learning that takes place there. As more historians of the field of adult education make use of oral history methodology, a more dynamic and complete history of the field will emerge which will allow greater understanding of the myriad locations for adult learning.

Understanding the value of physical place on social movement participants' willingness to act is an extension of context. For the women of the Catholic Worker, a social movement that was meeting physical needs and encouraged intellectual discovery in a physical location was compelling. It was an exciting first step in creating an alternative social order. When a social movement is identified with a physical location, it is possible for others to see the extent to which theory and practice are joined. Focusing attention on physical place within adult education

history enables greater understanding of the specific contexts within which adult learning occurs.

For the women of this study, interaction with influential individuals, such as Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, along with local church and college leaders, provided important impetus for movement involvement. The context within which the women were situated prepared them to seek a more complete or authentic expression of belief. Connecting with individuals who were living what they believed began a process of experiential learning that was life-changing. By attending to these rich and critical relationships, it is possible to attain a more complete understanding of learning within historic faith-based social movements. Oral histories provide the opportunity to explore how individuals affect each other within certain faith contexts, and to learn more about the differences that specific relationships can make in bringing about social change. Insights gained through this approach complement research which is focused at a community or societal level.

Catholic Workers carried out acts of mercy and protest that were grounded in a compassionate spirituality. The literature relating to learning within specific social movements tends to be rational in focus, not attending to the more emotive side of social movement participation and learning. The examination of the development of compassion, in relation to spirituality of social movement participants helps deepen understandings of why people join social movements, and how participants develop and carry out social movement goals. Additionally, the women of this study were grounded in a specific faith tradition, which provides important insights into the context out of which their spirituality emerged. Attending to the particular faith

tradition is essential to gain a better understanding of spirituality and its relation to direct action.

A significant finding from this study was that women learned to trust personal conscience to guide them, sometimes into positions of leadership within local parishes, at a time when women often did not serve in these roles. Women emerged as agents of change within their communities. How is personal conscience shaped? What role does spirituality, within specific faith traditions, play in its development? These questions are important to consider for future research.

Investigating conceptions of knowledge and the process of knowledge creation offers new insight into how women challenge family and societal structures. Attending to the factors which contribute to the development of a questioning perspective is essential. What informal or experiential learning experiences play a role? It is important to study the conflicts which arise when individuals seek to be authentic in beliefs learned within specific organizations or institutions. Attention to this conflict is crucial, as it plays a role in creating the motivation for social movement involvement, and, offers challenges within the social movement experience itself.

This study provides insight into women's learning within one social movement during the 1930s and 1940s. The complex environment of learning present for women in the Catholic Worker was shaped by a variety of factors. Each was influenced by family, church, school, and larger societal context as they moved toward involvement with the Catholic Worker. The Catholic Worker offered a

physical location to carry out works of mercy and protest, as well as a center for intellectual discovery and growth. Women learned through their grounding in the Catholic Church, through risk-taking (adventure) and a search for authenticity, through practicing a compassionate and critical-systemic faith, through significant relationships, and through trusting personal conscience as a guide.

There are significant parallels between the decade when the Catholic Worker began and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Attending to voices of dissent within a capitalist society is just as important today as it was in the 1930s. These voices offer an alternative view of what are commonly accepted as American cultural values.

Recommendations for Future Research

Women played significant roles within the Catholic Worker movement during the 1930s and 1940s. This study of women and learning in the Catholic Worker movement points to the need for additional research into women and learning in historic social movements, particularly those that come from a faith perspective. Women have been involved in social movements of all kinds throughout the history of the United States. More research is needed into the roles that women have played in creating environments for learning within social movements which advocate radical change. Attending to context is essential in order to understand the impact of the movement on participants' lives, as well as their impact on the movement.

A drawback within this study is that only women were interviewed. A more complete understanding of the construction of gender within the Catholic Worker

movement would be possible if men were interviewed as well, and responses compared. What differences exist, if any, between men's and women's experiences in terms of how they came to the movement, how they experienced gender within it, and how spirituality interacted with learning and social justice? How do men and women in other social movements experience the construction of gender, particularly in movements that do not have gender as their primary focus? Additionally, how does marital status for either women or men affect the experience of gender within a social movement?

In terms of preparation for involvement in social movements, more research is needed into the variety of experiences that motivate people to become involved in social activism. How does the view of authority in the home make a difference? What common childhood experiences exist for movement participants, both women and men? Do differences in levels of income contribute? In what ways do women and men come to awareness of inequality in society? How do levels of involvement within a social movement affect participants' experiences?

An additional area of research of interest would be to study the affects of movement participation on the children of women who participated in a social movement. Interviews with two narrators within this study, daughters whose mothers were involved in the Catholic Worker, as well as conversations with the son of another narrator, provided helpful insights from another point of view. How was family life affected by movement participation? How were values transmitted to the next generation?

Narrators for this study shared life stories and experiences of learning within the Catholic Worker movement. Involvement with the Catholic Worker was a life changing experience. Women came to see the world in a different way and created a framework which helped them to build lives of authenticity in belief and practice.

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VITA

Marilyn McKinley Parrish

Education

Doctor of Education. Adult Education, Pennsylvania State University, 2004.
Dissertation title: *Seeking Authenticity: Women and Learning in the Catholic Worker Movement*.

Master of Arts in History, Pennsylvania State University, 1983.
Masters paper: *Newspaper Coverage of Dwight L. Moody's Revival in Philadelphia, November 1875 - January 1876*

Master of Arts in Library Science, University of Michigan, 1980.

Bachelor of Arts in History, Pennsylvania State University, 1978.

Work Experience

Marilyn McKinley Parrish is an adjunct faculty member in Archives & Special Collections, Ganser Library, Millersville University, where she assists students, faculty, administrators, and community members with historical research. She is working with other faculty members and students on the 150th Anniversary Women's Oral History Project at Millersville University. Marilyn has done considerable consulting on library issues including state-wide train-the-trainer workshops for Pennsylvania Office of Commonwealth Libraries. In addition to working for the Lancaster County Library as District Consultant and Branch Manager, she also served as an adjunct faculty member at Alvernia College, Reading, PA, where she taught women's history (*Women and Reform*) and freshman study skills. From 1985-1990 Marilyn was Reference Librarian/Assistant Professor at the Jerome Library, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH. Prior to that she was a Reference Librarian at Pasadena Public Library, Pasadena, CA.