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WOMEN AND VOLUNTEERING: PERSPECTIVES ON
DEVELOPMENT, GENDER ROLES AND SOCIAL ISSUES

A Dissertation Presented

by

CONSTANCE LAFERRIERE

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

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May, 1989

School of Education

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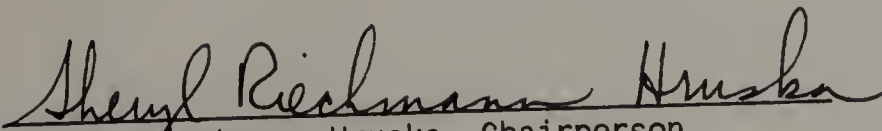
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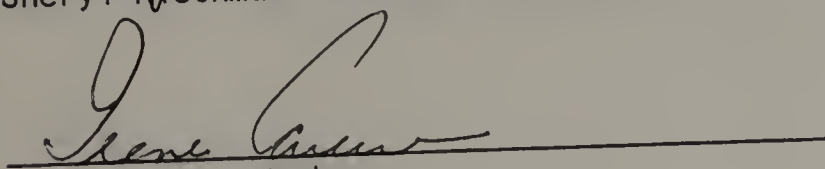
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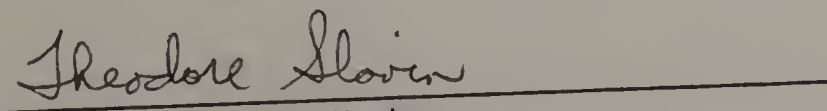
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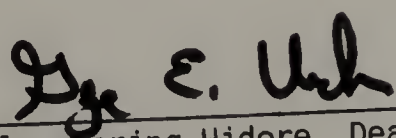
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ABSTRACT

WOMEN AND VOLUNTEERING: PERSPECTIVES ON
DEVELOPMENT, GENDER ROLES AND SOCIAL ISSUES

MAY, 1989

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The study was designed to extend the research and update the literature now available on the subject of women volunteering. Two-hour interviews were held with thirty-one women volunteer leaders in twelve Unitarian Universalist churches in ten states. The central problems of the study were (1) to discover the reasons why women in the 1980s, who have multiple roles, opportunities, and raised consciousness about their possible exploitation, would choose to volunteer and (2) to identify those aspects of their volunteer experience which impact on this choice.

Through a qualitative analysis of the interview material, the study provides a perspective on: a) women's growth and development, b) gender issues, c) women and social justice issues. The study also relates these themes to a historical perspective of women volunteering in the 1900s.

The study is significant because of the additional knowledge about women's development which it adds to the literature, the information gleaned for organizations which employ volunteers, an updated report on some women's roles in the promotion of social causes, and current reflections on the importance of volunteerism to these women. Implications and recommendations are drawn for organizations employing volunteers, for women choosing to volunteer, and for further research.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Women of the 1980s have different roles, abilities, attitudes and expectations from their volunteering foremothers, yet volunteering* is often an important part of their lives as well. The problem I addressed in this study was to discover why women of today, with unprecedented choices and opportunities as well as multiple demands on their time and energy, choose volunteer work as part of their lives. What is the experience of women who are volunteering in terms of personal growth and empowerment? How do these women experience their volunteer work as facilitating progress on social issues?

There is a need for women to understand the values of and/or problems inherent in volunteering, a need for organizations which use volunteers to better employ their skills and contributions, and a need for society to address social problems and to clarify volunteer roles in this endeavor. This study is an effort to more fully address those needs.

Much has been written on the history of women volunteering throughout this century. In recent years, however, women's literature has focused more on women in the work place, their multiple roles and increased opportunities in nontraditional careers (Rubin, 1979; Loden,

*I have defined "volunteering" as the realm of work done in organizations for which there is no monetary reimbursement and which presumably is freely chosen.

1985; Cardoze, 1986). Oppression by organizational structures as well as by men in general has been noted (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Kanter, 1977; Josefowitz, 1980). With all of these changes in societal attitudes and in the lives of women, it might be expected that volunteering would die out. Yet many middle-class women still volunteer. What is happening in the lives of women in the 1980s which would cause them to choose volunteering as a part of their lives?

Although much has been written about volunteering throughout the early part of the century, little has been written about women's volunteer efforts in recent decades. In particular, material based on a data base of women's self-expressed perspective has been missing. The little that has been written often reflects the experience of a single writer, often male. To understand women's recent experience, new data are needed and from the mouths of women volunteers.

A Brief History

The history of women volunteering in the 1900s informs us of a variety of issues which have affected and been affected by this volunteering. The historical context in which volunteering took place and changing attitudes toward women appear to have influenced this activity: volunteering was apparently encouraged by women's need for personal growth and achievement outside of their homes in settings and contexts which reflected their value systems (Mueller, 1954). It was also the most "socially acceptable" option for many (Kaminer, 1984).

In the late 1800s the Industrial Revolution changed America from a largely agrarian society where women participated in producing its

needed goods to an urban society. Here the new middle-class women, particularly white women, were encouraged to tend to household needs at home while the men were out dealing with what they saw as the more important world at large.

These "household needs" were gradually expanded to become the "special spheres" of women. Women utilized these spheres to establish their influence, in particular, in areas such as society's morals, including religion, temperance, civil rights and peace efforts, the care and education of children and of the poor; and, in addition, promotion of the arts through support of libraries, music and theater (Antler, 1987). These spheres of influence were to be the focus of women's volunteer efforts throughout the 1900s.

In the first two decades of the 1900s, the Suffrage Movement was aimed at "domesticating society rather than freeing women from domesticity," that is, bringing to the attention of society the importance of "women's issues" rather than widening occupational options for women (Kaminer, 1984). This approach reflected the limitations of women's influence at the time. Yet in the 1920s, women volunteers were influential in changing child labor laws and even in affecting political opinion around pacifism (Cummings & Schuck, 1979).

The period of the 1920s when women became less active outside the home affected the nature of volunteering; social clubs thrived, as did the P.T.A., which began at this time as a reflection of women's concerns for their own children. In the Depression middle-class women's efforts were focused on stretching their resources, and

volunteer work was centered around the church and religious support (Westin, 1976).

During World War II in the 1940s, many women went into the job market. When the war was over and women were being enticed to go back home, they found themselves with time on their hands due to technological improvements in household tasks. More women than ever began to feel "the urge for self-fulfillment in the outside world" (Mueller, 1954). By the 1950s volunteerism was again firmly entrenched in a variety of endeavors. The 1960s with the Civil Rights Movement and anti-Vietnam protest brought women volunteers back to working on major issues of the day. This participation paved the way for the modern Women's Movement.

As women more recently became increasingly aware of their "second-class status" in this society, volunteerism was identified and labeled in feminist* writings as one of the ways women had been exploited. Women were urged to work only for money. In the 1970s women, especially those who were married and had young children, struggled with these issues and became divided between "traditional" women and those who proclaimed themselves to be feminists. More recently, however, there has been some literature which questions the "either/or" dichotomy of these positions (Kaminer, 1984).

*The word "feminist" in this study is used to refer to women who call themselves feminists, and also as defined by Oakley: "A feminist perspective consists of keeping in the forefront of one's mind the life-styles, activities and interests of more than half of humanity--women. Many different arguments or blueprints for a sexually egalitarian society can be, and have been constructed on this basis" (Oakley, 1974, p.3). Oakley also points out that a "feminist" perspective appears to be polemical because it runs counter to the accepted male-oriented viewpoint" (Oakley, 1974, p.2).

Although women's volunteerism has worked to the detriment of women's development in many ways by draining off energy and talents which could have been used in more self-fulfilling and socially useful purposes, volunteerism, I believe, has been vastly underrated. Modern feminists who assume that feminist values were asleep for 40 years, from the 1920s to the 1960s, ignore the extraordinary participation of women in volunteer organizations resulting in legislation improving conditions for women and children, union organizing, peace and disarmament campaigns, and the fight against fascism during those years (Rosen, 1987).

We know from the literature that volunteering for middle-class women came about largely because married women were for the most part relegated to the home and to a particular segment of activities and concerns. Times have changed, yet we still see women volunteering.

Recent literature about women of today has not addressed women's own stories about their volunteer work, its significance to them and to the larger community. We do not know why, in the more complex context of the late 1980s, with many choices and multiple roles, women still choose volunteerism as a part of their lives.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe those characteristics and experiences of volunteer lay women leaders in a liberal religious organization which promote or inhibit their growth and empowerment as well as those which do or do not contribute to social justice and change. Included were the women's perception of

psychosocial conditions and of their values and purposes as well as their experiences of gender relationships and roles as related to the volunteer experience. Rewards and frustrations reported by the women volunteering in these settings were also examined in this light.

What is the experience of women who are now lay leaders in a Unitarian Universalist Society? What in their background encouraged or discouraged them to become active, committed members of these congregations? In what ways do the organizational structure and norms of the Society support or inhibit the women's achievement, power and growth? What meaning does this experience hold for these women? What role has the social justice commitment of the Unitarian Universalist Society played in their choice to volunteer in the church and to their growth in this role? What internal as well as external barriers get in the way of women taking on and being effective in nontraditional volunteer roles and behaviors? How do the multiple commitments of work, family and other interests affect volunteering? How might volunteering affect these multiple roles? How do women manage and balance these roles?

These larger research questions concerning the background, present experience (both personal and organizational), social justice and gender issues formed the basis for the specific interview questions in my study.

Rationale

I chose to explore the topic of women and volunteering for a number of reasons. In surveying the literature, I became aware of the

significant contributions women have made in terms of social justice and their own growth through volunteering when other avenues were not supported or readily available to them. The assumption was that women would not volunteer otherwise. Yet we know that many women of today, with multiple choices, do volunteer. The literature was clearly lacking.

My own experience has also contributed to my point of view in this research. Reflecting on and writing about my own 40 years of volunteering in Unitarian Universalist churches, human service organizations, the League of Women Voters, Parent-Teacher Associations and other organizations, have raised questions which I am addressing in this research.

My course work at the University of Massachusetts has also expanded my interest in organizational development, oppression, group work and women's leadership. As a trainer in organizational development in Unitarian Universalist lay leadership schools, I have become aware of the interest women leaders have in understanding their own and others' experiences, feelings, thoughts and knowledge.

Much of the research on women has been done by men and/or by using methods which provide little opportunity for women to provide detail about their own perspective. This study is designed to address this omission.

Significance of Study

The study adds to the literature more extensive knowledge about women's volunteering, an often overlooked aspect of many women's lives.

Women's development is most often studied in the context of family and paid work. By focusing on volunteering, we get a different view of women's commitments, perceptions and growth. Also, while we know that volunteerism has been an important part of the lives of middle-class women throughout the century, little has been written about its role in the 1980s. Volunteerism must be examined from the women's point of view of their experiences in this role today to determine whether, and in what ways, it fosters women's growth and development, and how it involves gender issues, as well as to determine its relationship to the promotion of social justice.

Though one must be cautious about generalizing from a small and single sample study, this study may be important for other reasons:

- a. In reading about positive and negative aspects of other women's stories and examining themes and implications of volunteerism which are identified, women volunteers could receive a new perspective from which to view their own efforts, as well as be encouraged to examine their own lives and experiences in volunteering.
- b. Organizations in which volunteers play a significant role can benefit from its findings by examining their own structures and processes in light of the women's perception of organizational support or inhibiting factors.
- c. Professionals in nonprofit organizations could be helped to improve their relationships with the

volunteers. Often disharmonies appear to volunteers in organizations which have paid and professional staff; understanding some perceptions of the causes of these disharmonies could possibly help facilitate more positive and productive relationships.

- d. The study might be helpful in promoting social causes. By understanding women's experience in terms of gender issues, psychosocial history and women's unique needs and values, a clearer focus on women's concerns might ensue. These concerns, including a variety of social issues, might be informatively addressed through understanding of the processes involved in working as a volunteer in a liberal religious organization.
- e. Women reportedly have gained valuable skills and opportunities for growth and development through their volunteer work. Volunteer work could perhaps be enhanced if more knowledge were gained about what skills (such as leadership, problem-solving, conflict-management, decision-making, group process) are being learned or need to be learned in training programs and volunteer settings.
- f. Volunteer work is often seen in western technological society as trivial. This view is related

to the high value our society places on factors such as money, power and technology and the devaluing of relationships and problems of social justice which women's volunteer work often involves. Yet recently there has been recognition that volunteering is an important part of the economy (Weisbrod, 1988).

- g. In reading about women's perceptions of their leadership experiences, men's consciousness might be raised around recognizing the value to them of sharing these roles as well as the less glamorous ones involved in volunteering.

In summary, the study is for the purpose of extending the research and updating the literature now available on the subject of women volunteering. The problem being addressed is to understand why women of the 1980s who have multiple roles, opportunities, and raised consciousness about their possible exploitation, would choose to volunteer. The study addresses in what way volunteerism fosters or inhibits women's growth and development, what gender issues are involved and how this volunteering relates to social justice issues. The study is significant because of the additional knowledge about women's development which it adds to the literature, the perspective it can provide regarding women's development, the information gleaned for organizations which employ volunteers, possible promotion of social causes, and recognition of the importance of volunteerism to women and society.

C H A P T E R I I
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: WOMEN OF THE 20TH CENTURY
VOLUNTEERING IN AMERICA

This review of the literature will address the subject of middle-class women in the United States of America who work in volunteer organizations. The review is divided into two major parts and will accomplish the following:

- a. I will discuss the interaction of social forces and values with women's volunteerism, and social changes which affected and were affected by women's volunteer efforts, from a historical perspective. This will be organized by decades.
- b. In analyzing this history, I will discuss the following issues: women's growth and development, gender issues and the relationship of volunteerism to social justice issues of the times.

To set the stage for an analysis of women's volunteering, the following section attempts a broad sweep of the period from the late 1800's to the present, touching on the background of some of the volunteer activities of this period.

A Brief History of Volunteerism in the United States

Though the roots of volunteerism surely go back hundreds of years, what is probably most applicable to my study of American volunteer women in a religious organization in the late 1980s are the immediate

forerunners of this group. This section will explore what was happening in the preceding century in American life that may have led up to the conditions and circumstances of an identifiable group of women volunteers in the 1980s.

Women have long provided the main force for volunteer organizations. In a study of volunteers, Rehm (1981, p.21) states:

Although it is difficult to find accurate and complete statistics, historically women have made up the majority of volunteers in the United States. (One recent census study showed that men and women were almost equally represented as volunteers, but directors of volunteers generally believe that most women work harder and longer as volunteers than most men, many of whom serve in less time-consuming capacities such as chairmen of the board.)

As Rehm suggests, women have been a strong force in maintaining the warp and woof of the fabric of organizations which depend on volunteers. What social forces, including gender issues, have historically influenced women to volunteer?

Volunteerism in the United States came into being as part of the historical changes in society at large in the twentieth century. In the eighteenth century women were "as involved as men in a world of meaningful work and community. Then as now, however, women were not accepted as equals, even though they enjoyed a sense of work and purpose" (Cummings & Schuck, 1979, p.ix).

In the late 1800s, a new class distinction based on the different roles of women and men began to emerge, fueled by the industrial revolution. Poor women worked on farms and in factories, but the middle class saw the ideal for women as the opportunity to be at home, tending to household affairs, while men dealt with work outside of the

home. Rationalization for such an arrangement is epitomized in a lecture of 1869: "It is on the inward community of human nature, not on the outward similarity of employment, that the right to an equal culture is really founded" (Hodgson, 1869, p.5). The focus was on inner development, apparently so as not to have to deal with the inequality of professional opportunity. The divided spheres of influence became more pronounced: those of money, business, law, as well as policy decisions about education, medicine, politics, were accorded to men, while the realms of child-rearing, household management, aesthetics, and culture, as well as moral and ethical values, were assigned to women. By "placing her on a pedestal," woman was beguiled into the notion that hers was a noble and enviable position: "[woman] perfects her womanhood in the position of the wife, the mother, the ruler of the household. In her the richest culture readily amalgamates with the domestic affections enabling, refining, deepening and directing them all for good" (Hodgson, 1869, p.36).

By the late 1800s the notion of domesticity as women's rightful sphere was deeply inculcated into white middle-class American life. Nevertheless, it was inevitable that some women with time, energy, and insight would begin to address social issues outside their own homes, which would impact on their own and others' family lives. Indeed, middle-aged and middle-class women were forming clubs in the early 1800s. Between 1810 and 1840 the number and size of New England female religious, charitable, and reform associations grew dramatically (Berkin & Norton, 1979). While primarily social and cultural, by the late 1800s many such groups were addressing philanthropic

issues and issues of social welfare. By 1910 the General Federation of Women's Clubs numbered 800,000 members nationwide (Kaminer, 1984).

Black women, too, at this time were also organizing to meet needs not well met by the states and general public. In 1892 two national organizations merged to become the National Association of Colored Women. Departments of this organization "reflected a concern for cultural enrichment as well as economic and social advancement and civil rights" (Kaminer, 1984, p.43). Black women's organizations were more apt to be service oriented than social, and unlike white women's, to include working-class as well as middle-class women.

Nevertheless, as white middle-class women ventured out into the community, they inevitably became more aware of social inequities, particularly in regard to poor and working poor women. Jane Addams and other settlement workers "translated maternal ideology into social practice, while influencing the national agenda in service and advocacy organizations which actively promoted suffrage and labor legislation" (Antler, 1987, p.70).

Antler (p.70) also identified how women used their special positions to their advantage:

The theory of separate spheres and of female uniqueness, which was built into socio-sexual thought in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was now used against the status quo to establish women's special influence in society at large. Here lay unprecedented opportunities for middle-class women at the start of the 20th century.

The coalition that formed between radical middle-class women (those in the women's suffrage movement) and working-class women culminated finally in winning the right to vote--a 70-year endeavor.

The decade that followed (the 1920s) brought a significant shift in the expectation of the role of women. The ideal woman was now the wife/companion: women were encouraged to be "loving and romantic sexual companions to their husbands--with the emotional focus on marriage shifting from maternal to romantic" (Kaminer, 1984, p.45). There was a significant increase in the marriage rate of women and a decline in the entrance of white women into the paid work force and the professions (Kaminer, 1984).

Women's volunteer work reflected the internal focus of the 1920s. Social organizations such as sororities flourished. The Parent-Teacher Association emerged, an outgrowth of women's interests in volunteering for their own children's needs. The League of Women Voters, which was formed in the early 1920s as a successor to the National American Women's Suffrage Association, lost membership during this period because it required serious, hard-working involvement. The League was also political in espousing unpopular causes. During this period the women who rose to leadership positions in the League were usually unmarried (Kaminer, 1984).

Kaminer (p.48) points out also that the Women's Suffrage Movement self-destructed because all the energy was directed toward getting the vote, which women assumed would result in "domesticating society rather than freeing women from domesticity." The suffrage movement did not address the basic issues of inequality and the separate spheres of men and women: paid work for men, unpaid work in the home and community for women. These conditions reinforced women's dependence.

There was enough participation in the League of Women Voters, however, to cause concern about women's influence in peace issues:

The Dearborn Independent sponsored by Henry Ford complained in 1924 that the League was infiltrating both major political parties at the highest level with social concern: "It gives us food for thought when the leading women in both the Democratic and Republican parties are members of the LWV which organization is admittedly working for pacifism and internationalism and is sworn to uphold the non-partisan movement among women" (Cummings & Schuck, 1979, p.124).

But by the end of the 1920s, "the Women's Suffrage Movement as a political force had dissipated. Women voted with their husbands or not at all. The League's effectiveness on Capitol Hill was becoming a shadow of its former self" (Cummings & Schuck, 1979, p.124).

For huge numbers of women, the Depression in the early 1930s meant developing survival techniques such as planting vegetables instead of flowers, quilting with neighbors, begging feed and flour sacks for dress material and learning to stretch a husband's salary that was cut 40 percent in 1932 (Westin, 1976). Many people in the nation were on WPA or other relief. Until their meager savings were used up, churches organized by women dispensed help to families of the unemployed. Eventually it appeared to be spiritual help in their troubled lives that was most helpful: church attendance rose significantly. For many women Bible groups and women's clubs provided intellectual and social companionship.

As the 1930s progressed, women's clubs gained popularity to the extent that at least one psychologist expressed concern that too much outside-the-home activities might cause nervous breakdowns among the middle-class women (Westin, 1976). There was also a prevailing opinion that if only married women would leave the job market, the problem of unemployment would be solved (Kelley, 1979).

While many organizations were strictly social, others were more concerned with women's traditional issues. Women were guardians of the nation's morals (resulting in the Legion of Decency to monitor movies), supporters of food and drug laws, and promoters of peace. In 1934 the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom held a convention in the Hague which American women attended. At least one author credited women in the 1930s with beginning a change in the climate of opinion in the United States from isolationism toward internationalism (Westin, 1976).

Educated women who were squeezed out of the job market and those who were kept from going to college or graduate school because of a lack of funds found the League of Women Voters to be "our university" (Westin, 1976). For one dollar per year membership, the League offered women the structure and opportunity to study and discuss issues seriously and to communicate their views intelligently to their Congressional representatives. In so doing, they were able to use their intellects on deeply felt issues and thus to affect legislation. Womens' organizations like the League also helped to fulfill the need of women to run things; where else could a confident woman exercise the executive ability so highly rated in our society (Westin, 1976)?

World War II brought many changes to women's lives, particularly in encouraging them to go to work as a patriotic war effort. "Rosie the Riveter," wearing nail polish as she used her riveting gun, became a national heroine. Rigid role expectations for women were thus broken down, at least temporarily (Higonnet, 1987).

On the volunteer front, some women were working in politics. Dorothy Bush spoke of working as a Young Democrat to help elect Franklin Roosevelt whom she credited with creating the TVA: "Reasonably priced electric power relieved low-income women of the drudgery of standing over hot, wood stoves all day" (Westin, 1976, p.294).

In the late post-war 1940s, the surge of technological improvements, such as diaper service, canned and frozen foods, and inexpensive ready-made clothes, freed the housewife from many time-consuming tasks. With the children in school and "more than half of her total life-span before her [the woman] quite understandably still feels the urge for self-fulfillment in the outside world" (Mueller, 1954, p.70).

By the 1950s, volunteerism for middle-class women was firmly entrenched in a wide variety of endeavors. The Dean of the New York School of Social Work remarked in 1951 that "if the volunteers were to go on strike, within six months our country would degenerate into bureaucratic dictatorship" (Kaledin, 1984, p.32).

While on the one hand "more women began to see their volunteer activities as lobbying for institutional change," others "shattered into dilettantism; women's club meetings announced in the New York Times included a variety of subjects from 'Plastic in the Household' and 'Managing Money' to 'Our Responsibility for a Peaceful World'" (Kaledin, 1984, p.32). Yet many individual women were finding significant value in their lives through important work such as the peace movement and organizations such as "Women Strike for Peace" and "SANE."

In the early 1950s Dorothy Rogers Tilly, a leader in Methodist church work, stood out as an early civil rights reformer. Undeterred by bomb threats from the Ku Klux Klan, she worked with a network of volunteers numbering 4,000, which together with the National Association of Colored People and the League of Women Voters eventually brought integrated schools and general human rights to Alabama (Kaledin, 1984).

With a wide variety of volunteer work available, educated, middle-class women were able to participate at whatever level they chose and still not disrupt their households significantly. Men's roles, their power and comfort, were not being seriously threatened by this participation in most cases. Mary Bunting, president of Radcliffe College, spoke of her mother's work as a volunteer at the Brooklyn YWCA in the 1950s: "Volunteering undoubtedly gave my mother fully as much leverage and satisfaction over a longer period of years as any paid position or political career could have provided, and it did so on her own terms, terms that permitted her to schedule her time away from home flexibly according to her needs and those of her family" (Kaledin, 1984, p.93).

It is important to note that although volunteering provided women with the opportunity to function outside of their homes in meaningful work while still maintaining their households, the leadership in this work, both paid and volunteer, was male. Women played only a supportive role: "She is not normally expected, often not even permitted, to preach the sermons, produce the dramas or conduct the orchestras. She is a more unassuming handmaiden of culture, raising

the money for the minister's salary, marching her husband off to the concert" (Kaledin, 1984, p.28). Toward the end of the 1950s, a number of religious hierarchies began to include a few women at decision-making levels, and even in some cases as ministers (Kaledin, 1984, p.28).

In spite of notable individual and organizational exceptions, the 1950s were a time in which most women had bought the idea of returning to their homes for ultimate satisfactions.

Public policies designed to get women out of the work force and into the home were buttressed by some powerful new ideologies. One grew out of the grim politics of the thirties and forties and saw state-supported child-care as part of totalitarianism. Another was the Freudian theory, which saw women as inferior and childish, with no prospect at happiness unless they relinquished independent work and adjusted to being wives and mothers (Hewlett, 1986, p.244).

Mental health professionals, supported by Freudian theory, contributed to the determined effort to stifle women's outward-directed activities during the 1950s. It was widely believed that "motivations for [these] activities are necessarily pathological and that today's problems are due to the conflict between the congenitally determined feminine passivity and the alien goals thrust upon women by the feminist movement" (Komorowsky, 1953, p.46). The discontent that a woman experienced in her housewife role was attributed to her personal deficiency.

By the end of the 1950s, some large cracks had appeared in the vision of the "happy homemaker." As Betty Friedan was to say later in the Feminine Mystique (1963), "Eventually we decided not to remain that

rare civilized culture that educates its strongest and ablest women to make a career out of their children" (p.60). Yet Friedan also paid tribute to the "pioneer egos" of many women volunteers who developed strengths without the supporting structures society offered men.

The 1960s were the beginning of widespread changes in the role of women in American society. The Civil Rights Movement posed important challenges to the status quo about real equality in our society. Women's consciousness was raised on behalf of Blacks, but also in regard to how all women were treated as second-class citizens while working for civil rights organizations. White and Black women were generally not in leadership positions, but expected to play only supportive roles. Other social conditions such as the rise in the cost of living and the development of effective methods of birth control changed reality for the vast majority of women. Divorce rates began to soar, including divorces for those married 20 years and more. Women began to flood the marketplace.

In the late 1960s the "women's movement" was revived with new agendas. The world of the middle-class-dream-family -- two parents, one income, with the wife filling in her spare time with volunteer community work (whether trivial or significant) -- began to be seen by some women as anti-feminist. "For generations [volunteerism] was posited as the ideal alternative to paid work for married women, because they had husbands to support them and because volunteering was the only job in the world that need never conflict with marriage and motherhood." Equally important as far as not challenging the status

quo, "a volunteer wouldn't take a 'real' job away from anyone's husband" (Kaminer, 1984, p.2).

As women became more aware of and less willing to accept unequal pay and low status, the notion of volunteerism became a target for feminist thinking in the 1970s:

Volunteers might be proud of the capacity to work from the heart, but it made it impossible for them to fend for themselves in a world in which every relationship is commercialized and every act measured in dollars. Career volunteering denied women their capacity to be self-sufficient and also their right to run things (Kaminer, 1984, p.3).

Boulding (1977) saw the situation somewhat differently:

The post-1950s trend away from volunteer roles for women and toward their involvement in the paid labor force, including the paid helping professions, is being followed by an interesting counter-trend. The volunteer is reemerging as an important factor in community programs. The counter-trend is not entirely welcomed by the women's movement, since it threatens to place women once more in the position of being expected to render unlimited service without recompense or recognition, and could undercut the status gains won by the insistence that women be paid for the work they do. However, the new volunteerism wears a different face.

Because the new volunteer is likely also to be employed and is volunteering time after working hours, there is more respect for the constraints under which the volunteer works (p.234).

Nevertheless, feminists in the 1970s and 1980s have objected strongly to volunteerism. Sommers has listed three statements of opposition expressed by feminist women in the early 1970s:

- a. Volunteering gives the illusion of participation, but no real power.

- b. Volunteering keeps some of the most effective women out of the labor market.
- c. From time to time volunteering ameliorates glaring faults in society, preventing collapse, but deferring need for basic reform (Sommers, 1983, p.23).

In 1971 and 1974 the National Organization of Women denounced volunteering as exploitation without pay or recognition. But a quite different point of view was also expressed in the 1970s. Loeser (1974) spoke for many middle-class women, especially those with young children:

- a. Volunteering allows gainfully employed women to enrich their lives and those of others.
- b. Volunteering often facilitates the transition back to or into a career or job.
- c. Volunteering allows a weaving back and forth between various roles that can be an interesting and satisfying life style.
- d. It is a source of satisfaction for one whose life is principally that of wife and mother.

Loeser's arguments were reflected later by O'Donnell (1981, p.3), in her study of 74 women in 2 middle-class communities near Boston:

It is all too easy to view women merely as victims and captives of their domestic work and thus to discount women's commitments to what we think of as traditional roles--as mothers, homemakers and community volunteers--as expressions of naivete and oppression.

The years women spend in child-rearing can provide pleasures and rewards which are difficult to incorporate in any formal cost-benefit analysis of the tradeoffs between employment and family life (O'Donnell, 1981).

While this statement is reminiscent of earlier decades, it certainly expresses views still held by many women. It is also important to note that O'Donnell's subjects were all women who had at least one child under 12 years of age (as did O'Donnell herself). They came mostly from heavily Catholic communities, with some Jewish families, all of whom might be expected to have strongly pro-family and pro-child attitudes because of religious beliefs. The participants in the research also expressed these sentiments as a statement of their attitudes at this time in their lives--while their children were young. Most expected to enter the job market as their children became more self-sufficient; indeed, many were preparing for this next step by taking courses or doing part-time work.

Undoubtedly there are fewer women available for volunteering in the 1980s, due to their employment as well as their raised consciousness. Pifer (1984) says, "Another consequence of the increasing labor force participation of women is a decline in the number of women available for traditional community voluntary activities--in schools, health care facilities, churches, and welfare organizations" (p.137). Nevertheless, volunteerism has by no means died out. Weisbrod cites the increase of 14% in total hours volunteered by persons aged 14 and over, between 1980 and 1985, according to a Gallup poll (1988, p.131). The backlash to the Women's Movement--the Moral Majority, President Reagan's encouragement of volunteerism and President Bush's "thousand

points of light"--has supported women's choices to stay in traditional roles. Older women who are still supported and who do not want (or who believe they would not be able) to break into the job market after many years outside of it are still active volunteers. A growing number of older persons also contributes significant volunteer work (AARP, 1987). Johnson's research on religious organizations indicates that over half of all church members are willing to volunteer under certain conditions:

[Church members are] willing to serve as workers and leaders if they know they are needed, if they are challenged with a responsibility that matches their interests and abilities, if they are given meaningful assignments and if they know their efforts are appreciated (Johnson, 1978, p.2).

According to Sommers, "For many women, especially the after-45-50-year-olds, volunteer activity remains the primary focus of their extra-familial life" (Sommers, 1983, p.180).

This brief history of women's volunteering in the 1900s describes some of the changes which have occurred in the lives of women and the societal attitudes which have affected them. How have these experiences affected the women's growth and development? What gender issues are evident? In what ways have women affected social justice in their volunteer efforts? The next section will address these questions.

Issues in the History of Women Volunteering

Women's Growth and Development

Based on the literature, women appear often to have benefited from their volunteering experiences. Women have been able to expand their experience beyond their immediate families, resulting in a broader understanding of society. Personal growth and achievement in their volunteer work undoubtedly have added to women's self-esteem. In some cases women have gained leadership and organizational experience, especially in women's organizations. The training and experience that women have received in volunteer work have often been helpful in acquiring and performing paid work (Kaledin, 1984). In volunteering, women could choose their own hours and degree of involvement and thus continue to maintain family ties and responsibilities.

Volunteering as Preparation for/or Alternative to Employment

Since the 1950s, evidence has mounted that volunteering serves as meaningful apprenticeship for professional work. The President's Commission Report on the Status of Women in 1963 recommended that career counselors in schools and colleges advise students to do volunteer work in fields they may want to explore, not only for experience in the field but also for recorded work experience on their resumes (Mead and Kaplan, 1965). This advice has become standard practice today.

David Riesman, writing in the early 1950s, recognized that helping others was being professionalized. Women were no longer welcomed as "lady bountifuls." Nurses' aides replaced the amateurs who used to help the sick. Settlement work and recreational activities had

become professionalized as well. Some women were able to use the knowledge and experience gained as volunteers as a springboard to professional life. Mary Ingraham, Mary Bunting's mother, turned her volunteer experience into full-time work when she was made president of the National Board of the YWCA (Kaledin, 1984).

Other women also used their volunteer work as valuable experience in preparation for paid employment:

Millicent Fenwick worked as a volunteer for the NAACP...for a prison reform group and for the Legal Aid Society before winning her first election to the Board of Education in the 1950s. Going on to be elected as a Republican member of Congress in 1974 at the age of 64 and reelected three times, Fenwick's career remains an example not only of woman's capacity to go on living many lives, but also of the complexity of their moral commitment (Kaledin, 1984, p.89).

Eleanor Roosevelt also, while recognizing the basic unfairness to women of doing significant work for no pay, held many volunteer positions and highly praised the work done by organizations such as the League of Women Voters in effecting social change (Mueller, 1954). Eleanor Roosevelt's experience with the League and in other volunteer capacities certainly contributed to many women's choice to volunteer and to her own satisfaction.

Gender Issues

Changes Affecting Volunteerism. Significant societal changes have, as we have seen, affected women's lives, and therefore their volunteer efforts during the last hundred years. When one considers that a woman's life expectancy in 1900 was 48 compared to 73 today

(Kaminer, 1984), clearly a big difference exists in the years left to a woman of 1900 after her childbearing years (if she survived them) versus those of today. It is the more surprising that large numbers of women found time and energy for significant volunteer work in those earlier years.

Changes in technology (medical technology undoubtedly affected women's life expectancy) have also affected women's lives and the amount of time available to them for other than household tasks. At the same time, servants available to upper-middle-class women in the early part of the century played a large role in freeing their employers for volunteer work.

Society's attitudes toward women also changed considerably. Whereas almost all educated women in the early 1900s made choices for a career or marriage and a family (it was not acceptable to do both), by the 1980s most women had and have families and work outside the home for pay. Changes in participation by women in the labor force in the past 20 years are significant: 1960: 37.7% (23.2 million) versus 1981: 51.1% (46.2 million) (Sommers, 1983).

Psychosocial Effects on Women. Since unpaid work is devalued in our society, women doing it were also devalued by many people. Most volunteer work was of the supportive type, particularly in organizations where men held the paid positions. Doing only supportive work reinforced women's assigned societal role of working "for love"--not only for one's family, but for the community--and thus further denigrated women in society's and their own eyes, particularly when they felt that they did not have the choice of working outside the home

in any other capacity. What is there in the psychology of women which would help to explain the choice to do volunteer work? Komarowsky cites comments from the 1950s which could probably apply to middle-class, educated women throughout this century:

The plunge from the strictly intellectual college life to the twenty-four hour a day domestic one is a terrible shock, and it is no wonder that we stagger through the first years of childrearing wondering what our values are and struggling to find some compromise between our intellectual ambitions and the reality of everyday life. The psychological unpreparedness for homemaking was found frequently even among women who had always looked forward to it as their natural and much desired goal. (Komarowsky, 1953, p.106).

"Women's work" , or housework, has never been accorded the status of "real" work. Even attempts to assign dollar figures to this work have been brushed aside; one does this work "out of love"; it "cheapens" mother love to assign a value to it (Oakley, 1974). The fact that our society as a whole assigns prestige value to those who earn significant amounts of money and/or wield considerable influence in the world outside of the home, inevitably devalues the women who work "for love" and whose influence, if any, is only within the home.

Yet, as Mueller said in 1954 (p.90):

Self-fulfillment in itself is not an insubstantial and irrational dream. It is psychologically the necessary consummation of the life-giving energy and drives--the "conscience" that must be satisfied, that cannot suffer community disapproval, that cannot escape the values implanted by social training.

By doing volunteer work outside of the home, women were able to some degree to bridge this gap between their domestic world and the world at large in a way that did not violate their conscience or invite community disapproval. Whether it provided the self-fulfillment Mueller describes, is certainly debatable.

As the struggle for women's rights through the ages, and more clearly in the Women's Movement in the last 20 years attests to, changing women's roles to achieve more equality is a tremendous undertaking. Not the least of the difficulty lies in the women's own ambivalence about their appropriate roles and career aspirations. It would seem unsurprising that volunteer work would have appeared to be a wise choice given this ambivalence. The opportunity to feel some sense of accomplishment in fellowship with others and most importantly to fit this into those hours which do not conflict with demands of husband and children would seem to achieve the most with the least amount of conflict.

Jean Baker Miller (1976) speaks to this dilemma and the traditional role of women as supporting the development and enhancement of others (primarily their husbands and children) to the neglect of their own development:

Women have played a specific role in male-led society in ways no other suppressed groups have done. They have been entwined with men in intimate and intense relationships, creating the milieu--the family--in which the human mind as we know it has been formed. Thus women's situation is a crucial key to understanding the social order (Miller, 1976, p.1).

O'Donnell, on the other hand, found in her study of middle-class women that:

The lack of validation from others did not appear to affect what the majority of women did or how they valued their work as mothers, kin-keepers, neighbors or community volunteers. It did, however, affect their sense of how they were perceived by others. Women distinguished between an internal perception or feeling of worth and an individual's sense of validation from the outside world. Most had a strong sense of personal values and commitment, as well as a feeling of pride that they have been able to act on their perceptions of what truly matters in life whether for themselves or for their families. But they were still troubled and often frustrated that others did not seem to share the same validation of what they were doing (O'Donnell, 1981, p.162).

One might question whether the internal cognitive dissonance has been completely resolved given the last sentence above. The women still seem to be wrestling with the difference between their own assessment of their work versus the assessment of others.

Valerie Young (1985), in her dissertation on women's internal barriers, stresses the interaction of outer and inner pressures which create these barriers, pointing to the importance of addressing the problem from a psychosocial perspective. Young identifies three components of these barriers: socio-cultural expectations and realities, other-directedness (a "profound sense of connection and responsibility toward others"), and performance. Of the latter, she says of women:

Women are frequently stymied by a definition of competence which presumes that they must perform with perfection and that furthermore, this must be done without the aid of others. The expectation

too, is that in order to be competent they must demonstrate expertise in all endeavors and in multiple roles. As a consequence women often attach a certain mystique to those they deem to be competent and hence, dismiss themselves as inadequate by comparison. The yardsticks women use to measure their own failures and successes are similarly warped. Failures become internalized, achievements are externalized. Worse, women typically do not feel that they have the right to fail nor to succeed. Fearing the real and imagined cost of failure as well as the perceived price and responsibility of success, women are finally then left in a kind of achievement limbo.

Overidentifying with one [failure], underidentifying with the other [success], feeling entitled to neither, and fearing both, they are denied an accurate, internalized picture of their own abilities which ultimately renders them unable to learn from their failures, embrace their successes and exorcise the erroneous and crippling view of themselves as intellectual imposters (Young, 1985, p.233).

While Young does not maintain that all women experience these things, her study shows that they were frequent phenomena among her sample of women who do training of women around self-esteem. In my experience and work with "displaced homemakers" (LaFerriere, 1978), I have found in women this same lack of an accurate picture of themselves and their abilities as well as a sense of being "imposters" especially for women who are middle-aged and older.

The "profound sense of connection and responsibility toward others" (Young, 1985) mirrors the "ethic of care" in which human relationships and interdependence are valued above individual rights (Gilligan, 1982). By looking at volunteering from the perspective of

these values, which the authors maintain are dominant in women, one can understand why women would be willing to forego their own individual development.

Yet one might also wonder at what psychic cost women have repressed or diverted their own particular skills which might have earned them fame and fortune in the open marketplace, or at least been developed more completely. However, one must also recognize the psychic cost of going against the grain of society. Being without the support and affection of family, friends, husband and children can be an overwhelming price to pay for the opportunity to venture out into the world--often an unfriendly world, at that. It is a tribute to the strength of the human spirit that women in this century have ventured out at all.

One can see how women might resolve their cognitive dissonance by coming to the conclusion that they have had the best of both worlds when they have been supported in relative comfort and at the same time done significant work toward the betterment of society. Only recently, many more women have had to rethink their lives and make changes, as they have had to face the real possibility of the loss of this support through death, divorce, or desertion of the husband, or if still married, have found that one salary is not sufficient.

While economic necessity has been a strong motivating force toward employment, many women who stayed at home also experienced an internal desire to achieve and to influence the world outside of their homes. Mueller cited this tension experienced by women in the early 1950s:

Woman's concern about her place in the modern world is not dictated by mere perversity or caprice. She has a real problem, created by social changes for which she is in no way responsible. She is truly troubled by her need, as great as man's, to find a way of maintaining her inner psychic satisfactions, spiritually as well as materially (Mueller, 1954, p.60).

It would appear that only when significant changes have occurred in the lives of some women are they able/willing to identify the psychic costs they have endured. These psychic costs come from a society which assigns them the primary care of children and the home, whether or not they are employed, as well as from the pain suffered by the loss of emotional and sexual closeness of an adult significant-other in these circumstances.

Power. When women, as a group, gave evidence of political power, as in the Suffrage Movement and when the League of Women Voters seemed to display political power, a variety of forces came into play which undermined this power. Women were typically relegated to positions of supportive service rather than those of leadership both within and without the home. Furthermore, they colluded in their own powerlessness by accepting definitions of women which suggested little skill and intellect. This collusion came about because of real powerlessness as well as real emotional bonds with husbands and children which could well be cut off if the women rebelled against the constraining roles and limits.

By relegating the "scut work" of society to women (either women in poorly paid jobs or middle-class women in volunteer work or women of color), society was deprived of significant contributions which these

women might have made in a society which valued, paid for, and provided other support, such as day-care, for their real contributions. By relying on volunteers to provide many needed services, this society has not had to face up to its financial obligation to adequately support these efforts.

Power and leadership in the larger society have been assigned almost exclusively to men. This situation has not only deprived our society of a more balanced approach to living and assigning resources which would include women's traditional values; it has laid an unreasonable burden on men. Women's longer life expectancy of today suggests that men's life-styles, presumably including this imbalance of responsibility (or perception thereof), are not healthy for most men in our society (Kanowitz, 1981).

This discussion of gender issues demonstrates the high degree of connection between volunteering and the role of women in our society in this century. Society's ambivalent attitudes toward women and women's internalization of these attitudes have had a profound effect on their choices of roles including volunteering as a means to resolve these ambivalences. "Women's issues" including those of social justice have been an arena for some of this volunteer work.

Social Justice Issues

In spite of all the difficulties and lack of outside support, many women, particularly in organizations such as the League of Women Voters and other women's groups, made significant contributions to social and political change in the last hundred years. They also managed to

combine their ascribed (and often chosen) roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers with meaningful outside work which contributed to their self-esteem and to their community in important ways.

Addressing the plight of the poor, particularly that of women and children in the early 1900s, women promoted protective legislation such as child labor laws. Women's education was also furthered by women during this time. Alcoholism and family abuse were addressed by temperance advocates. The Women's Suffrage Movement, a coalition of middle- and lower-class women, produced voting rights for women. Libraries and organizations for the arts were established and supported largely by women, adding to the knowledge and culture of society.

During the 1930s women helped to alleviate the physical and emotional suffering of families of the unemployed through collective action and diligent church work. A variety of causes were addressed by women's organizations during the 1930s--notable among them were peace and a focus on internationalism versus isolationism.

Women made enormous contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, which resulted in improvement of social conditions and opportunities for Blacks. The more recent Women's Movement has had a significant impact on widening the range of women's career options as well as changing attitudes about stereotypical gender roles and patriarchy in all its forms.

On another level, there is the benefit to families and local communities which women supply in their roles as social agents--providing connecting links as Cub Scout and Girl Scout leaders, presidents of Parent Teacher Associations, etc. (O'Donnell, 1981).

Kaminer (1984, p.217) summarizes volunteerism succinctly:

It is a tradition rich in contradictions; for a hundred and fifty years it has organized and politicized women and given them work to do outside the home, while it protected the family system that put them there, under the care of their husbands. We have so many contradictory images of volunteering as a force for the liberation or exploitation of women, for know-nothing do-goodism or progressive community service. Volunteering has, indeed, been all of these.

My study explores women's perceptions of their volunteer experiences in order to attempt to understand the ways in which women grow and develop in their volunteer work, the gender issues they encounter in this work, and the ways in which their volunteer work impacts on social justice issues.

C H A P T E R I I I

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

Qualitative methods rather than quantitative were chosen as most appropriate for this study because of the particular type of knowledge being sought (i.e. an understanding of women's perceptions, feelings and experiences). Rubin (1979, p.224) speaks to this issue:

For too long now, concern with the method of research has obscured attention to its substance....Our quarrels about the value of hard versus soft data are irrelevant to the world and its problems and unnecessary and distracting for us. Different research methods need not compete with each other; we need only understand that they tell us different kinds of things. Large scale studies based on statistical representative samples have a place in social sciences; but it is not the only place. They add to our knowledge; but they cannot tap all the knowledge that is potentially available. Such probability studies tell us something about social trends; but they leave us guessing about their effects on the people who must live them. For that, nothing replaces the smaller sample qualitative research based on face-to-face interaction with other humans--research that can capture the fullness and richness of life as it is experienced by those who live it, that can teach us something about the way people interpret the world and give meaning to their lives....

It is true that such research is more difficult to carry out, less easy to control than studies done with what we call the hard methods. Like human life itself, qualitative research often defies neat categories and clear concepts. But such difficulties should not be permitted to blind us to its necessity. Nor should they force us to shrink from one of the great challenges in the field--to describe and analyze human social life in all its stubborn complexity and diversity.

"Qualitative analysis is addressed to the task of delineating forms, kinds and types of social phenomena; of documenting in loving detail things that exist" (Lofland, 1971, p.13). I saw my task as identifying in a caring manner the phenomena existing in the experiences of a sample of women related to their volunteer roles. My experience as a counselor assisted me in attempting to understand the women from their own perspective and in setting aside my own experience and assumptions (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). At the same time, my interest, shared gender and commitment precluded complete objectivity. Yet I agree with Oakley (1974) that "...personal involvement is more than dangerous bias--it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives" (Oakley, p.58). Thus, the development of trust was a crucial condition of meaningful interviewing.

Taylor and Bogdan address the issue of validity:

Qualitative researchers emphasize validity in their research; qualitative methods allow us to stay close to the empirical world... by listening to [people] talk about what is on their minds..., the qualitative researcher obtains first-hand knowledge of social life unfiltered through concepts, operational definitions and rating scales (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p.7).

Taylor and Bogdan also describe qualitative research as inductive: "Researchers develop concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in the data, rather than collecting data to assess preconceived models, hypotheses or theories" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p.5). Although I had certain areas of interest to explore, my purpose was to examine the data for patterns and insights, a process which fits the qualitative model.

As Denzin says concerning the choice of methodology: "The issue resolves largely into personal preferences of the [researcher], the intent of the investigation, the available resources, and the [researcher's] decision concerning what type of interaction he (sic) desires" (Denzin, 1970, p.201). Face-to-face interviewing was my preferred method of gathering data; the purpose of the study was to find out directly from the women their perceptions of the issues being addressed. Unitarian Universalist women were most easily available to me because of my connection to and involvement in this denomination. Therefore, my choice of methodology clearly reflected my preferences, purposes and resources.

Interview Methodology

I chose the open-ended interview as my data-collecting method. Patton (1980, p.205) says that the "fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms." Qualitative methodology therefore meets my purpose of exploring these women's experiences from their points of view.

"Qualitative methodologies allow us to know people personally and to see them as they are developing their own definition of the world" (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p.41). The interviews provided an opportunity to know the women as they articulated the meaning they made from their experiences.

Patton describes open-ended questions as useful to "determine in what dimensions, themes and images/words people associate with the

...use among themselves to describe their feelings, thoughts and experiences" (Patton, 1980, p.212). This technique provided a context in which respondents would be able to reflect on their volunteer experiences in a supportive environment. At the same time, by using a general interview guide approach, in which the same questions were used to guide each interview, there was some assurance that information around the same topics would be received from the participants. Patton sees this method as "helpful in increasing comparability of responses, reducing interview effects and bias, and facilitating organization and analysis of the data" (p.206).

The weakness of the interview guide approach, according to Patton, is "little flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances; standardized wording of questions may constrain and limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers" (p.206). Because of these weaknesses, I occasionally changed the order and reworded the questions slightly in order to make them more relevant to the situation. In doing this, I recognize that I risked what Patton describes as possible "substantially different responses, thus reducing the comparability of responses" (Patton, 1980, p.206). However, since I was looking for patterns rather than comparing responses, the changes seemed appropriate.

Limitations of the Study

No claim is made that the data are "objective;" "Although qualitative researchers cannot eliminate their effects on the people they study, they attempt to minimize or control those effects or at least understand them when they interpret the data" (Taylor & Bogdan,

1984, p.6). In this way, I tried to minimize, control and understand my effect on the women I interviewed and on how I chose to sift and organize the data.

While the choice of respondents was limited to leaders among women volunteers, the issue of leadership was not addressed except as the respondents identified it as an issue. The subject of leadership involves a wide range of topics which were not the primary areas of interest for this study. In the same context, age, ethnic, class or sexual preference differences were not the focus of this study, except insofar as respondents included them in their story. In addition, clearly religious aspects of the women's experience were generally omitted. However, these elements may have affected the participants' responses as they inevitably have affected their experiences.

No claim is made that the data collected are generalizable to women as a whole or to women volunteering in any religious setting. Qualitative analysis does not set out to provide these kinds of generalizable data, but to describe the individual experience in a particular context which may resonate with others in terms of universal experiences, thoughts and feelings.

This was not a random selection of participants but rather a convenience sample consisting of women lay leaders in churches I was able to visit. While I was seeking a mix of ages, church roles and life-styles among the participants, the people referred to me probably were those most willing and available.

Having been an active woman leader in the Unitarian Universalist Association, in several Societies and on two Districts' Boards, I have

become aware of my own issues around this experience. These issues have fueled my interest in this study and undoubtedly influenced to some extent my interpretation of the data. Nevertheless, I believe that my deep interest in learning about the women's experiences and my interactive skills, gained from my years as a college counselor, kept the report relatively "clean."

Selection of Organizational Setting

I chose a church setting which includes broad social purposes and community involvement. In terms of structure, the church reflects in many ways the organization of the larger society with its governing board, variety of activities and diverse population, yet it is perceived as a comfortable and familiar environment for many women. In "The Care and Feeding of Volunteers," Douglas Johnson describes the church in general as:

a unique institution which has its own values and procedures. It is a voluntary society. It is governed not by professionals but by the laity. It does not operate to make a monetary profit. It is not an organization that remains silent and aloof in controversial issues. It is concerned with all age groups. It educates, socializes and theologizes. It is unique (1978, p.111).

Unitarian Universalist Societies (churches and fellowships) fit this description. They are liberal religious organizations which have been on the cutting edge of social change and justice since the days of the Civil War when Universalist women spoke at gatherings about the evils of slavery. Susan B. Anthony and Clara Barton were Universalist women. Unitarians, in their theological approach, stressed reason and

science as important parts of the religious teachings. In 1961 after a series of studies and decisions, arrived at by a democratic process, the two denominations consolidated into one movement, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) (Booth, 1981).

In this century, Unitarian Universalists have been active in preaching about, educating, modeling and promoting the causes of the Civil Rights Movement, The Women's and Gay Rights Movements, peace issues, as well as sanctuary for Central American refugees, AIDS education and support for its victims, plus food and shelter for the needy.

The national Unitarian Universalist Association has passed public resolutions for these causes at their annual General Assembly meetings. Individuals as well as Societies have been supported in their work on these issues. Church buildings have been available for meetings of groups unable to find other space for political reasons. Members of congregations who are active in these liberal causes both within and outside of their churches have been supported by their Societies as individuals and through the publicizing of their causes. This background concerning the importance of social issues to the Unitarian Universalist churches is relevant to my study in that these churches provide an organizational structure within which women can volunteer to do work contributing to social justice.

With many women in positions of leadership both in the ministry and as Board members and presidents, traditional organizational structure and leadership style are coming into question. Unitarian Universalist leadership schools across the country with curriculum

drawn from current Organizational Development literature and compiled by Dr. Susan Holton, a professor in the field of communications, are training lay leaders in alternative processes which better reflect Unitarian Universalist principles such as equity and the interdependent web of all beings (Church, 1987).

Yet even this liberal organization often functions according to traditional hierarchical structures and attitudes which reflect the dominant culture. As Reverend Edward Frost comments in the film series on "What Unitarian Universalists Believe," men accustomed to power are not willing to give it up easily. He states in an accompanying article that "women tend to value relationships--and the whole 'web of connectedness'--more highly than men" and sees this as an area of learning to be explored in our churches (Church, 1987).

"More women than men volunteer in nurturing and supportive roles in our churches," according to Reverend Barbara Whittaker-Johns, a Unitarian Universalist minister. The minister and Board president (most often male, according to the UUA Association Directory of 1987) are often seen as the ultimate authority, making decisions and chairing meetings in a traditional, authoritarian style which may not support or fit in with women's styles and desires.

Since Unitarian Universalist Societies are autonomous and only loosely connected to the Association, they vary considerably not only in size, design, philosophical and religious focus, but also in reflecting the culture of the area in which they are located. Thus, New England Societies tend to have a longer and more conservative history than those in California; those in the Midwest and the South

are also affected by the particular norms of these regions. A mixture of large urban and suburban churches as well as smaller churches were chosen. They ranged in size from 130 members to 1,300 members. Each had at least one full-time minister. Five of the senior ministers were women and seven were men.

The study examined responses of the women volunteers in relation to these structures, conditions and attitudes to determine to what extent they related to the women's perception of their growth, power, sense of accomplishment and contribution to social issues.

Selection of Respondents

The women were interviewed between April and November, 1988, and were found through friends or by calling the minister or Board President listed in the UUA Directory. I had no previous acquaintance with any of the respondents before contacting them for the interviews. Women who were interviewed met the following criteria:

- a. Held a current leadership position in the church so that the data would be related to present activities.
- b. Had at least two years of volunteering experience to assure a depth of response not likely in a new volunteer.
- c. Were willing to give approximately two hours to the interviewing process involved in this study.

I chose volunteer leaders for my study because: a) they were more likely to have more years of experience in their volunteer roles than

committee members or other volunteers, and b) they were in a position where they would be more likely to think through their position and commitments around volunteerism and social justice.

The selection reflects the diversity of women leaders in Unitarian Universalist Societies. The desire was realized of looking at as wide a range of experience and broad perspective among participants as possible (Schatzkamer, 1986). Those leaders chosen were presidents, vice-presidents and members of Boards of Directors and/or chairs of committees, including social action, religious education, adult programs, worship, membership, buildings and grounds, women's alliance, canvass, dinners, coffee hour, office staff, denominational affairs, caring, summer program, nominating and ministerial search committees.

The 31 women interviewed were between the ages of 31 and 81 years old. The following shows the breakdown in terms of ages in each decade:

Age decade	Number of respondents
30's	6
40's	11
50's	2
60's	5
70's	6
80's	1

A demographic study was not systematically completed; however, some data which did become available through the interviews revealed the following: almost all (29) had children; one-third had graduate degrees, 30 had college degrees or the equivalent; two-thirds were or

had been employed outside the home at the time of the study or earlier; all but one were at some time married. Twenty-nine were Caucasian, two were Black; two were lesbian.

The 31 respondents were selected from 12 churches in a range of geographical locations: Maine, Massachusetts, California, Michigan, Florida, Virginia, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York and Connecticut. There were at least two respondents from each church.

Interview Guide

Taylor and Bogdan present the descriptive questioning technique I employed: "Probably the best way to start off interviewing informants is to ask them to describe, list, or outline key events, experiences. Descriptive questions...will enable people to talk about what they see as important without structuring their responses" (1984, p.89).

The questions (Appendix 1) were designed to elicit responses which would address the issues identified in Chapter I. Question 1 was a general opener to identify possible reasons for these women to volunteer their time. Questions 2, 3, and 4 were designed to learn about the history of the volunteer experience in general and with the Unitarian Universalist church in particular, as a means to discover reasons for this volunteering.

Question 5 was designed to identify possible connections between these women's volunteering and social justice issues, such as those which surfaced in the literature in other decades. Questions 6, 7, and 10 were for the purpose of exploring the positive and negative aspects, both personal and organizational, of the present volunteer experience.

Questions 8, 9, and 11 were designed to identify gender issues around the volunteer experience. Question 12 was designed to identify growth potential from the experiences. Question 13 was for the purpose of eliciting further understanding of the meaning implicit in the volunteer experience. Questions 14 and 15 were for the purpose of identifying helpful information for organizations which use volunteers.

Pilot Study

A pilot interview process was carried out with four of the respondents in a Maine Unitarian Universalist church. Results of these interviews indicated that the questions were, indeed, eliciting responses of the kind intended. No changes were made as a result of the pilot. Consequently, these four women were included in the sample for the dissertation.

Procedure of Interviews

After arranging by phone for the place and time of the interview, (most often in the women's churches, some in their homes), the respondents were met at the designated site. Following a brief period of get-acquainted talk, each respondent was given a copy of the "Written Consent Form" to read (see Appendix 2), required for university-based research, but also essential for clarity and prevention of misunderstandings. Questions and comments about the form were discussed and signed copies of the consent form were given to the respondent and interviewer.

The one-and-one-half to two-hour semi-structured interview was then conducted and tape recorded with each woman, using the questions in the general interview guide (Appendix A).

Following the interview there was time for the respondent to give the interviewer her reactions and comments about the process. I believe that this was important, not only for the purpose of providing helpful feedback and closure, but also to further include the respondents in the process of the study. These reactions were also used as part of the data analyzed for the study. Each woman also received a copy of the tape and had the opportunity to request parts to be omitted. Only one respondent asked that something be omitted, which she felt was a misstatement; one wrote to add some information, and several wrote to thank me for the tape and wish me well.

Analysis of Data

Typed transcripts were made of each of the interviews. The transcripts were then read for their recurring themes in relation to each question. I extrapolated quotes from the transcripts, being careful to keep the context intact (words which were inserted for clarity were put in brackets). Names were changed to protect anonymity. The themes and issues were compared to those found in the literature cited on middle-class women in the 1900's.

The material was organized in the following sections:

- I. Growth and Development, which included the women's values identified in the interviews relating to their volunteer experiences, their background and

experience that impacted on this relationship, needs that were or were not met in the relationship, skills and abilities related to volunteer roles, and learnings that come out of the experience (the data generally came from responses to the interview questions 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, and 15).

- II. Gender Issues, which impacted on the volunteer experience and included sex-role stereotyping, institutional sexism, women's internalized sexism and counteracting sexism (the data generally came from responses to questions 1, 8, 9, 11, and 14).
- III. Women Volunteers and Social Justice, including the relationship of social justice issues to the women's volunteer roles in the religious organization (the data generally came from responses to questions 2, 3, 5, and 13).

While many of the responses fell into the categories identified, there was also considerable overlap in the answers and comments.

The data were interpreted in terms of how the experience of these women volunteering in a liberal religious organization related to their growth and development as well as to social change. Since women volunteers are now more apt to be better educated, more assertive and more sophisticated about organizational procedures than in the past (Sommers, 1983), conflict situations around these and other gender issues were examined in analyzing the data from the interviews.

Implications for women and organizations were drawn from all of these interpretations of the data, as well as from the specific question in which women were asked to give advice to organizations.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction and Overview

The major question posed in the statement of the problem of this study is: Why do women of today, with unprecedented choices and opportunities as well as multiple demands on their time and energy, choose volunteer work as part of their lives?

The responses of the women in my interview study, volunteer women leaders in a liberal religious organization, suggested that these women shared some of the reasons for volunteering and evidence of growth and development with their foremothers, as far as values, histories and needs met. Yet other aspects of their volunteering, such as their opportunities for leadership in the church, having and using organizational skills, and paid work outside of the home appeared to be quite different from those of former generations for whom these opportunities were not available or sanctioned.

The women interviewed appeared to have more knowledge and understanding of working in organizations than most women of previous generations, often due to their professional work experience and extensive volunteer work in leadership roles in the community. Yet often they expressed a lack of confidence that they would be accepted as bona fide leaders.

Gender issues also seemed different in many ways. These women often were encouraged to take on positions of leadership, yet the more mundane tasks they had done in the past were not usually picked up by

men. This left a double burden for the women, such as they have experienced in their homes when they have gone out to work and still are responsible for most of the household chores. As in the past, stereotypical roles often prevailed in the churches, and women in this study appeared to be colluding in some cases in perpetuating these roles. Yet, some women were counteracting this sexism by naming it and challenging it. Unlike earlier generations, some women in this study were defining their own style of leadership which embraced traditional feminine values and were being supported and commended for these efforts.

As in other generations, women in this study were addressing issues of social justice. For many, this effort was reminiscent of women of earlier times who fed the hungry, addressed problems of the homeless, the mentally and physically ill and the aged as well as that of drugs and alcoholism. Unique to this generation, and seen in this study, were those women addressing the problems of AIDS and oppression in foreign countries, and continuing to challenge sexism and other issues of oppression which are now seen to have similar roots.

The results of a thorough analysis of the interview data were grouped into the three content areas used in the literature review:

- I. Women's growth and development as volunteers in an organization;
- II. Gender issues which impact on the volunteer experience;
- III. Women volunteers and social justice: how women relate to the social concerns issues of their religious organization

and to the social justice implications of their volunteer roles.

A summary section completes the chapter.

Women's Growth and Development*

Women psychologists and sociologists writing in recent times such as Miller (1976), Bardwick (1971), Bernard (1981), Gilligan (1982), and Belenky et al. (1986), see women's growth and development in different terms from those of traditional male models. These traditional models include Kohlberg's moral development (1976) and Perry's intellectual and ethical development models (1968) which were based on research by and about males. Instead, these women theorists speak of women's search for identity and self-fulfillment predicated upon psychosocial conditions, particularly including the importance of relationships as a necessary ingredient in this search. In this period of changing roles and attitudes toward women, the women's own reported experiences serve as keys to this information.

The discussion in this study of women's growth and development includes the following five sections: (a) the women's values relating to their volunteer experience in the church, (b) background and experience (individual histories) which impact on this relationship, (c) needs which are, or are not, met in the relationship, (d) skills and

*I have used the terms "growth and development" to describe the women's maturation process in which they have new experiences which add to their knowledge, broaden their perspectives and improve their self-understanding and self-esteem. "A woman's discovery of personal authority and truth is, of course, a blend of her own unique life circumstances and attributes" (Belenky et al, 1986, p.76).

abilities as related to volunteer roles, women's traditional skills, and (e) learnings which come out of the experience.

Women's growth and development in their volunteer roles seemed clearly related to their values, histories and needs. What was of intrinsic worth to them--their deeply held beliefs--appeared to be an important motivator to their behavior, including volunteering. The women's histories also indicated the direction in which they were heading. The needs which were indicated as being important in their volunteer experience seemed clearly connected to the women's ability to grow and achieve as well as to develop a broadened sense of self-worth. Skills and abilities as well as learnings in the volunteer roles of these women indicated their real and potential growth and development.

Values*

Women volunteers in this study expressed their values in a variety of statements. Values which were expressed often were: a) the need to serve others and to fill a need, b) providing for their own and other children's education, and c) carrying on the tradition of the church and nurturing others.

Serve others and fill a need. "I think of my role as someone they can call if they need to."

"The service to others is important, part of your character and your life."

"As things come up, you just do them."

*I have used the term "values" to describe those principles which are highly regarded, esteemed and prized by the women in this study.

"It's [volunteering] the things people do as they are going through life."

"I always wanted to do things to help...anyone needs something, they call me."

"They just needed music and I realized that and I said I'd try. I felt it was very necessary."

"The need was there; they always need help in Sunday School."

"There's a lot to do around here and I felt I had the time and interest to do it."

"There were jobs that needed to be done."

"The funny thing is that I've never not volunteered. So I don't know what it's like to not volunteer. There's no comparison; it just seems natural."

These statements indicate to me that women's belief in doing for others is something they value in themselves which would motivate them to volunteer. This value is reflective of the larger society:

"Tradition and custom encourage women to give themselves away"

(Blakely, 1988, p.20). By holding on to this value, the women appeared to risk being unaware of their own needs and of protecting their important interests.

Some of the women, particularly those who worked (or had worked) outside their homes for pay, appeared to recognize this issue and to balance these realities in their lives.

There was also the recognition of a quid pro quo:

"I can't sit back and expect others to do the things that I want."

"To get a group to do some of the things I'm interested in, you have to do some of the work."

"Volunteering is a way to pay back what it did for me."

Children's education. Another strong value expressed was providing for their own and other children's education:

"I had young children then who were in the Sunday School program and that seemed like a sort of logical place to get involved."

"I'm interested in my children having religious roots...the only way to keep them involved is for me to be involved."

Children's education was a continuous theme found in the review of the literature. This theme of choosing volunteerism which fit in with children's needs (O'Donnell, 1981) was cited earlier in regard to the work of Jane Addams in the early 1900s (Antler, 1987) and women's involvement in the P.T.A.'s in the 1920s.

Carrying on the tradition. In answer to question #4 (Appendix 1), "Why would you volunteer in this church versus another organization?" respondents indicated a belief in carrying on the tradition of their church. For some, it had been a lifelong association:

"It's an organization that is dear to my heart; I have so many fond memories of that church; my parents were there every Sunday and when I was old enough I went with them, and because it was dear to them...it made me happy to do anything I could that was helpful."

"My parents were members of this church and I've been a member for almost 60 years."

For others, the denomination or the particular church had become meaningful:

"Making our church here strong and viable, it contributes to making the whole Movement strong and viable. That's what I want to see."

"I grew up as a Unitarian and have never been tempted to look at anything else."

"I just believe in this Movement and like to work for it."

"This is my church and I can't imagine not volunteering in your own church."

"I'm a born Unitarian and I guess it's the only church I would go to."

"We're told that if people don't pitch in and work, the church would probably diminish...I like it; I want to see it survive."

These women were all indicating a strong loyalty to the religious institution.

Nurturing others. Another value that was expressed indirectly was that of nurturing all members of the congregation:

It's been a place where single women come and feel like they can be at home and grow and all that stuff. That's terribly important. And what is it doing to the men? How do they feel--as they see the denomination becoming a place where strong women are really flourishing...I think we need to pay attention to the men. It needs to be a way that's empowering and not smothering. Here we are, all these wonderful, articulate women--they've got to do it themselves, they have to find their own power, but we have to find a way that we can do it together.

This woman appeared to be expressing some of the concern about her own and other women's growth and development which could impact on the men whom women have traditionally nourished.

These values being expressed -- to serve others and to fill a need, to provide for their own and other children's education, to carry on the tradition of their own churches or of the Unitarian Universalist

movement, and to nurture others -- are all traditional women's values which could help to explain why these women chose to volunteer in this liberal religious organization.

Background and Experience

Where did these values come from? The answers seem to come, at least partly, from family role models, childhood volunteer experience and their continued volunteering as they became adults.

Parent Role Models. Many of the women spoke of role models, often their mothers, but also their fathers, as having had significant influence on their valuing of volunteering:

"I'm somewhat made this way. My mother was always helping people and doing things for families."

"I guess I was always involved. Maybe one reason is because my mother is particularly involved. I think one wants to find out what's going on in the world--certainly an acceptable social thing is to volunteer."

A Black woman who was in college during the Civil Rights Movement, told of her parents' involvement in this issue and other community work:

Well, my mother did volunteer work...I've been gradually going through some old papers and things. Both my parents were very active in volunteer work; my Dad was president of the P.T.A., my mother was very active in the NAACP.... And with the Civil Rights Movement and the picketing, you know, and all that we did.

The women interviewed seemed very proud of their parents' volunteer roles:

"I had a fabulous role model because my mother was very involved in volunteer work..so I grew up sort of thinking, this is what one does and really never questioned getting involved in volunteer work."

"I think my family has always had this feeling that you're given a lot in life and therefore you should consider giving back, not only your money, but your time. I think my family had a real sense, give as much to others as you possibly can."

Clearly, these comments reflected the importance the women placed on their parent role models. Another respondent traces her interest and involvement in political work to the family climate and her early excitement about politics:

I was a child of the Depression. My father was very much interested in politics...So that my interest in politics started very early when I was a young teenager... seventh or eighth grade. The trade-unions were organizing, and I don't remember who initiated it, but I remember going with my best friend, going to trade-union organizational meetings instead of going to a movie. Well, that was exciting and it still is. She's still the same; I'm still the same. Doing something about the world around us is still extremely important.

While modern women often seem to pride themselves on their ability to slough off their parents' influence, clearly these women's volunteering was affected by the models their parents provided. The power of this kind of influence may well have been underrated.

Childhood Volunteering. Most of the women spoke of volunteering as they were growing up and saw it as a way to explore their interests, do something they enjoyed, be with their friends and be appreciated in the process. One woman remembered her volunteer work in the context of an important historical event:

I don't know as you'd call it volunteering; it's the things people do as they're going through life. I was trying to think of the first volunteer work that I did; I can vaguely remember (I was born in 1912) getting together with the little girls and cutting little pieces of cloth, during the first World War. We assumed it was for the soldiers.

Other women saw their volunteer experience as a way to explore grown-up roles:

"My earliest recollection of volunteering is with the candy-stripers in the hospital. At the time I thought I would like to be a nurse, and I thought this would be a way of getting into the nursing field, and see whether I'd like it or not."

"Starting when I was a little girl, I loved taking care of babies. I could baby-sit; my mother was in the neighborhood in case anything happened. I volunteered, but they always came up with something."

"I'm a classical pianist and I was relatively proficient as a child and I used to give performances for non-profit organizations, either for a charity kind of event or as entertainment; I learned early on that it was a very satisfying thing to do."

A woman who grew up in France told of her experience there which opened her eyes to people who were very different and perhaps near death:

We used to go to an old people's home and just talk to them. We used to do that on Saturdays for three hours. And some people needed more attention like putting curlers on women's hair or walking an old man--it was really something for me because it was called in French "Heaven's Door." It was something for me to see at such a young age, very old people...we did all kinds of things, mow the lawn, run errands or stuff like that.

These responses suggested to me that volunteering by the participants in my study was motivated by deeply held values as well as by simple altruism. The value of volunteering, which appeared to have been present in their families and communities, was further reinforced for these women by positive early experiences.

Continued Volunteering. Many of the women picked up this activity again when their own children arrived:

"I didn't do any volunteering until I had my two children. Then I did extensive volunteering with my son's nursery school."

"A lot of my work in the Unitarian Society has been with my children's involvement, mostly with religious education. I was co-chair of the PTO, helped organize the bazaar."

"I started the first volunteer crossing guards at the school the kids were going to."

"I was the director of religious education when my children were quite small."

These comments are reminiscent of Loeser's description of women in the early 1970's in which she described the experience of women volunteers, especially those with young children, as satisfying and interesting (Loeser, 1974). Clearly these women wanted to be involved with their children, then as well as now, and found volunteering a way to do this both for their own children and for others.

While most of the women who were mothers had chosen activities which were connected with their children, one of the mothers, at least, was also involved with women's organizations:

When the children were small, I just needed an outlet. I was home all the time; we lived on a farm. We had seven children. I joined Extension and was active in Eastern Star and at church and also with a Junior Women's club.

Most of the women continued to value volunteering as a way to get to know people, to contribute to the community and to use their skills:

We moved into the community not knowing a soul in a strange town. I'd never been involved [with the League of Women Voters] before, but I knew enough about it to figure that this is a place I'll meet people and learn about the community...and I can do something useful...I became very involved in the League and quickly got on the Board and took on positions of responsibility.

I also got involved in my daughter's nursery school--she went to a co-op nursery school, so mothers were involved in helping with the school, but I also got on the Board of the nursery school fairly quickly. It carried a lot of responsibility and a lot of interaction with the community. Well, of course, the church came in there about the same time.

I've been involved with our credit union at work; I tell people I'm interested in music and money, was president of our Board. I'm interested in community activities...I've been delving a bit in the political kinds of things. More recently I've been part of the finance committee of the town... we do work with department heads on the budget; we make recommendations to the town as to how to spend money; with Proposition 2 1/2, that has been quite interesting. And I've been involved with our national YMCA with part of the Junior Achievement Board.

Both of these women, who now hold supervisory professional positions, clearly had leadership ability which they used in a variety of roles, both paid and voluntary.

Another woman found volunteer work which suited her schedule to be an opportunity for new friendships in a pleasant and interesting environment:

I was in the League of Women Voters...we had study groups where you researched a topic...I moved to _____ in 1967 and didn't know people so I needed a way to get acquainted and I ...met a woman from this church who was active in the Art Gallery. I was employed at that time. I could be a representative there on Sunday afternoons and so it was a way to have something to do on Sunday afternoons that was different from my weekly job and make some new friends.

Women with young children who were employed outside the home, not surprisingly, had not ordinarily been as involved in a variety of volunteer activities but kept up their ties with the church:

"I didn't do much volunteer work or thought much about it, because I never had time, with a family; I taught full time. Anything I would have done is either church related or job related."

"So while I worked, that was my major...I didn't have much time for anything else...I didn't have much time for the church, except we had a social concerns [program] ...I've always been involved in that."

These women, now retired, are leaders in their churches.

The women interviewed demonstrated the valuing of the church by the many church activities with which they'd been involved:

"I was on the Board of the _____ Church, then I started working for the UU District and was the treasurer for them for five years and on the Extension Committee for the District. I retired and moved here six years ago...then you have time to do all the things you like to do and so I've tackled a lot of different jobs here in the church--membership chairman and I ran the pledge drive. Right now I'm head of Denominational Affairs. Two years ago we tried to start a program for college students which is limping along. I've done that now for three years. I was the chairperson of the rummage sales, I was on the Board, on the ministerial relations committee, and--we don't call it the president of the women's

group, they don't like that term--I was the coordinator. About four years ago I started in with the Adult Day Care helping elderly people who had infirmities come to this day care center--we had programs for them.

A Black woman, who was unsure of the reception her family would get when they were looking for a church in 1967, became quickly involved:

"The church was quite open, the people were warm, there were things that we could do and they seemed to be open to our being involved in doing them and we became active. I've been clerk, a Board member and chairman of the Board."

These histories (or "herstories" as feminists have reconsidered the word) of the women interviewed about their volunteer experiences which culminated in their varied volunteer leadership roles in their churches, seem to me to explain further their reasons for choosing these endeavors. The women's stories also reinforce Bernard's statement: "Whatever may have been the agitation for promulgating a new self-oriented definition of duty to one's self, the ethos of female culture has remained essentially altruistic: still philos- and agape-oriented" (1981, p.509).

Women's Needs*

The fulfillment of one's needs is directly related to the motivation required for growth and development, according to sociologist W. I. Thomas. Thomas cited "four wishes [or needs]: the desire for new

*I have used the term "needs" to describe those feelings expressed by the women in this study of the lack of something necessary or desirable in their lives.

experience, for security, for response and for recognition." He went on to say, "The significant point about the wishes as related to the study of behavior is that they are the motor element, the starting point of activity. Any influences which may be brought to bear must be exercised on the wishes" (Thomas, 1966, p.139).

While women's needs are not exclusive to their gender--men may well have many of the same needs--it seemed evident that for the women interviewed, at least, these needs were not adequately met in the larger society. At the same time, the responses suggested that perhaps women are more able to verbalize these needs and to seek avenues to possible satisfactions.

The needs expressed in the interviews reflect Thomas's categories: the need to be challenged, to achieve, to have influence, speak to his category of the desire for new experience; the need to be appreciated and acknowledged, to the desire for response and recognition; the need to be accepted, supported, to find friendships and a sense of family-like relationships and community, to the desire for security.

Bardwick speaks of the relationship of these needs to woman's development:

When adolescent and college-age girls withdraw from competitive achievement because of fears of failure and because of fears of success, they ensure that their self-esteem will continue to depend upon reflected appraisals and this makes them perceptually attuned to others, empathic, but vulnerable. On the other hand, a good, strong affiliative commitment is also their route to feelings of esteem, a sense of self, achieved femininity.

The women in the study spoke of both of these phenomena: their vulnerability to other's approval of them which may have made them

over-susceptible to this approval, as well as the positive component of approval which appeared to add to their self-esteem.

Challenge. Many of the women reported the satisfaction and stimulation of feeling challenged:

I was asked to help with the canvass, so I directed the canvass drive. I hadn't done that before. I think I took on the canvass work as a challenge to myself, because I'd always been a little afraid of money, of budgets and finances. That was something I did as a learning experience.

"I like the challenge of 'getting my boat rocked.'"

"The challenge of getting the group to work together."

"It's a challenge for us to figure out the curriculum for RE."

"I really like fund-raising a lot and I think it's because it's such a challenge."

"One of the big things I have is a chance to stretch and grow -- this is a challenge for me."

A woman who had been relatively new to the church when tapped for a leadership position saw an opportunity to use her skills:

"I wasn't dazzled by the leadership I saw going on in the church. So when I was approached and asked if I wanted to serve on the Board, I jumped at the opportunity because I wanted to whip it into shape!"

These women demonstrated the value of taking on new tasks, an avenue of growth for individuals and their organizations which may sometimes be overlooked.

Achievement. The sense of achievement was also important, whether it was a product or the process involved. An 81-year-old woman found satisfaction in bringing her years of experience in teaching into a new setting:

"I like to get people working together...They learn to trust me and have confidence in me, so if they want to say something in a meeting, they could say it. Before, no one talked because it didn't do any good. No one listened."

Other women also valued their achievements:

"This adult program that I've been on this past year, I've enjoyed the sense of accomplishment in a very good program."

"Being creative, teaching a class, flower arranging, photography."

"Satisfaction in getting things done when they are done."

A woman who had twice been president of the Board in her church spoke of her opportunity to use skills which were revealed in the process:

I think being in a position like that, especially for women, is a wonderful training; it's great experience being the person that's leading the Board, can be innovative, because when you're in that position, you're in a position to effect changes, do some progressive things, to motivate people, to problem solve. Being in this position taught me that I had skills I didn't know I had.

A religious education chairperson who had made significant changes in the program, spoke of her satisfaction with her achievements:

I tried to shape the RE committee...I tried to make it a committee which functioned. We started a newsletter, and made the committee more representative, not just parents; we went from having paid teachers to volunteers, and from having 12 kids to having 40 kids.

We had to become more organized, more committed, instead of just sitting around chatting. We wanted to go from being the planners and the doers to saying we were going to have an event and finding people to do it.

A woman who had been involved with a variety of church activities spoke from her experiences:

"There's always the satisfaction of pulling something off... whether it's a table at the street fair, or a fund-raising event, or a worship service or whatever. There's always a sense of completion -- yeah, we did it!"

A woman who had been asked to help with the canvass told of her experience:

There just didn't seem to be any way we could raise the pledges in the canvass to meet the budget. I was asked at the last minute to help... I went to the budget and finance committee.... I came up with an idea of a way to do it... and it worked. That was a gratifying experience.

Making leadership more accessible for women was an achievement that was still satisfying for one woman to recall even after 20 years:

Well, one of the things that happened...when we first arrived, most of the people who were the officers in the church were men. And I knew that in the denomination a little more than half of the members were women, and I was a little concerned about that, and I questioned...that things were not consistent. And I asked someone why there weren't women who were assessors and moderator and everything except clerk...this was 20 years ago and I think there was one woman in the past who had been chairman of the Board but she was no longer; I think she had died. And I got this usual answer about finding people...their abilities and all that kind of thing and that seemed a bit strange.

The nominating committee had a hearing and I took it upon myself to talk to numbers of women in the church about their background. Then when they had the hearing, I could present a whole slate to them... They were a little floored because they could no longer say they could not find any women who are qualified. They didn't put them all in, but at least there was an awareness that the women who were a part of the church were as capable as the men. They nominated some women, and they did very well, and they've had more and more and now we've had women in just about all the slots in our church.

This experience demonstrated that the expectation and the norm for men to be exclusively chosen as the leaders in the church were not only ancient history, but is a recent phenomenon as well. It often takes significant effort on the part of someone (usually a woman) to make changes in this situation. When one considers that many of the present church members were part of that thinking 20 years ago, and in many cases even more recently, one can understand how difficult it continues to be to make changes of this kind.

Influence. The need for influence in the church was also important to these women. For some, this was indicated by the kind of leadership they preferred:

We have a woman's group I'm very involved in and the way it works, is that there is no chair. Each woman has to take the responsibility for some portion of the program contributing to the group. ...I like that because I came from areas where it was real authoritarian; I like the shared responsibilities.

Other women seemed to want to exert their own personal power in the business of the church:

"I believe that the way one spends money reflects their values... and the church needs to be conservative...but it also needs to be brave

about what it does with its money. I wanted to have a voice in some of those decisions."

Another woman who had raised substantial funds for the church as canvass chair had also thought a lot about what knowledge of money matters meant to her in terms of power and influence:

Finances are controlled because -- now I don't know who knows what, but I know that I don't know very much, and I think that the more you know, the more power you have. Not power over people necessarily, but power to decide, power to make choices. So money interests me because it was something that used to have a lot of power over me. The reason it had a lot of power over me was because I didn't know anything about it. I didn't know how much there was -- female thing, that's all it is, the old female stuff. I was raised in the '50s; I was a good little child of the '50s. I could play that role!

This woman was able to see the problems around the traditional roles of women in churches where they raised the money and the men decided how to spend it and how women played into that role.

A woman who felt she had influence in the church, in speaking about her relationship to the minister, said:

"If I had anything I was displeased about, rather than talk to anybody else, I would go to her and tell her."

A buildings and grounds chair was pleased about the clear boundaries:

"There are no territorial issues here. If something happens that I need to know about, they will call me. They don't take care of it themselves."

A Board chair spoke with pride of the positive role model she projected for her teenage daughter:

"I have an influence in the church; I have a very big influence in the church; I have a big influence in the town."

A religious education chair gave evidence of committee influence:

"They respond to our requests. They take us seriously. We have a proportionally big budget."

In sharp contrast were the responses from some women who expressed fear of not having enough influence:

"I've become aware the more I've become involved, it's a political organization, and that frustrates me and saddens me. I don't like it and it makes me afraid to get really involved."

"The Board is something that is so far sometimes. That means not reachable."

A woman who had seen her church grow, seemed to express her feeling of a lack of influence:

Now we've grown from a one-cell to a multi-celled church, and that process has just continued on... and the organizational structures, the communication system has not kept pace. So that you find them working these little empires. I miss the feeling of everybody knowing, working toward another goal.

Another Religious Education chair expressed her feeling of a lack of influence in being able to include children in church services and which perhaps also reflected some sexist attitudes toward the world of children in the church:

We have more trouble breaking into the service. When we start into adult territory, we get a little more flak. We have this ongoing controversy--the upstairs-downstairs syndrome...There's a certain amount of resistance to really including the children: 'It's okay, we'll support you in

any way you need, as long as you're downstairs having our parties.' We've had trouble with inter-generational...they interfere in the enjoyment of adult things.

This woman's remarks were typical of some comments which seemed to indicate resentment of being used and devalued as "keepers of the children" or babysitters, rather than educators.

Appreciation and Acknowledgment. The women indicated that being appreciated and acknowledged for their achievements was also a reward of their volunteering. The responses corresponded to Thomas's statement that response and recognition are the starting point of activity (Thomas, 1966). The women seemed to highlight the importance of this acknowledgment and appreciation in the church, and perhaps the lack of it in other areas of their lives. It seemed important to hear appreciation from other members of the congregation:

"People say you're doing a good job."

"The class was so responsive, I felt all the more like knocking myself out."

"You get a lot of wonderful feedback from the kids when you teach Sunday School."

"We have real high visibility. Everybody knows who I am. I get lots of approval and that sort of thing."

"I found it very rewarding to work here. It does things for me to feel so appreciated."

A woman in her seventies told of an unexpected positive response to an undertaking:

I became a celebrity this past Spring. The chairman of celebrations wanted to put on a Sunday morning program devoted to aging and asked me to be a participant in this and I said yes. I wrote this sketch, "When Your Face Collapses." I thought it might be mildly amusing, but it turned out to be hysterical. They were wiping their eyes with their handkerchiefs, they thought it was so funny. So lots of places I go now, people see me and they know who I am. I really was very, very surprised. That sort of thing can happen. It will never happen again.

Expressions of appreciation from others in leadership positions were also important:

"The outgoing president wrote me a note of appreciation."

"In my particular context as chair of the worship committee, I work very closely with [the minister]...She is wonderful about saying 'thank you,' notes saying, 'I really appreciated what you did, you're so valuable to my work,' all that kind of thing. I get a lot of positive feedback from her."

The women also noted the importance of appreciation expressed to the whole group:

"The staff liaison has been very positive in their response to the efforts of the groups that I've been involved in. It's very supportive."

"Seeing this kind of growth--I'm an organizer--and seeing the organization fall into place...a lot of people commented on that; it was a positive thing."

The chair of a women's group related a story in which the group realized that the church was getting cheated by someone who was replacing their stained-glass window:

"We kept digging...finally came up with someone we thought was reliable...we went back to the Council and told our story and they said we'd saved the day. So we don't let things get by us."

This need for appreciation appeared to speak to the dilemma O'Donnell cited, of feeling pride in doing what they believe is important, yet not getting validation for these endeavors from the outside world (O'Donnell, 1981). In this kind of situation, even small expressions of appreciation seemed important.

Acceptance. Many of the women talked about the importance of being accepted:

"I was looking for an accepting environment, I didn't need anything judgmental."

"I don't worry about being an oddball here. You're more likely to be accepted as an individual with your particular quirks...there's not so much pressure to conform to a certain acceptance of ideas."

Being accepted seemed to imply for some the concept of refuge from a hostile society:

"More than anywhere else, you can be affirmed here. It's a haven, in a way."

"For me, the nice thing about the Unitarian Society...it's a very safe place to be, that whatever you are, whatever you think is accepted."

"Sometimes in a community organization, you have a hard time relating to other people as far as philosophy goes...here they're more open-minded, more liberal. They will listen to your side of the story, they don't always have to be right."

The women who expressed feeling different indicated that the acceptance of the church was particularly important:

When I was growing up in a small town in Alabama most of my relatives were preachers--Baptist and Methodist...I was always the 'different one.' I didn't fit in because I questioned, I wanted to understand more than they were willing to say...I feel better about myself, my self-esteem has been higher since I came to the Unitarian church.

From a woman in her thirties:

"The older women are very accepting."

From a lesbian woman:

"I'm a little more committed here because it's a Gay church.

Typically we've been ousted from society, we've been people without any rights and without any morals. We do have morals and we do have rights."

A canvass chair who wanted to approach her role in a nontraditional way spoke of the importance to her of being accepted in this approach:

There's plenty of room for creativity. I'd never raised money for the church before. If I could find a better way to raise the money, it was fine with them. Nobody told me, 'You can't do that.' Well, sometimes... 'You shouldn't do that in front of the whole congregation'. But they let me do things they'd never done before.

The many statements of the women about the importance to them of being accepted indicates to me that they have not felt accepted in many parts of their lives. One is led to question the standards which society imposes on women in order to "be acceptable."

Connection and support. The women also expressed the need for support, support for taking risks, support for doing their volunteer work and support in regard to family problems. This needed support which the church could and often did provide was seen by these women in terms of an extended family or close community:

"That's what the church should be - to support people in their questing."

"I feel free to try things...if it doesn't work out perfect or something, it's okay."

"Well, I think this is a marvelous place to experiment with other kinds of things you'd like to do; if you fall on your face...[people in the church] will pick you up and pat you on the back and dust you off and try again."

A woman who was taking on the job of canvass chair recognized some of her fears and concerns:

I'm not a financial type per se and I believe I don't want to appear foolish...I'm taking a risk of exposing myself, of not being taken seriously. ...I'd just as soon not be in front of the audience; I'd just as soon be doing all the work and getting all these things done, but standing up in front of the crowd is not my craving. And yet that's certainly part of the job--public speaking--I don't mind in small groups...I don't have a great fear of losing face, I know enough people that if I had any problems...I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to do these kinds of tasks, responsibilities.

Other women also indicated an appreciation of support in their volunteer roles. A chair of adult programs cited support from the staff:

We've had wonderful staff support, with supportive services, typing of letters, minutes,

all that type of thing. We have various ministers be our liaison. Usually it's the minister of Religious Education. One year I think we had the senior minister because the other was on sabbatical...And each one brings something with them.

A Board chair spoke of her acceptance and support by the men on the Board:

The men have been wonderful, super-supportive, often tell me what a great job I'm doing, although I'm not sure they know that, but it's nice to hear, nonetheless and I know they're there for me. I know that if I asked any of them to do something, they would do it, if they had the time, and so forth, without questioning why it needed to be done. If I thought it needed to be done, they would do it.

Several of the women also mentioned the support they received from the church in terms of family situations. A woman who felt over-extended responded to my question about organization support:

"I could say with a smile that I vowed not to teach RE [Religious Education] next year, because she [the minister] understood. So I think the organization is supportive."

Another woman who was carrying a double load of volunteer jobs echoed this sentiment:

Both [Doris, the treasurer] and [Sally, the minister] have been very supportive of me. We've had some serious family problems recently and I found it necessary to resign as assistant treasurer. Their reaction was as I had hoped it would be. They did not ask me to reconsider, but rather supported me in my decision and for that I am very grateful.

Other women expressed the importance of the support in their church during times of difficult family situations:

"My husband left when my daughter was five months old and my son five and a half. Needless to say, that was kind of scary; I needed some additional support [which I got from the church]."

For one woman a support group in the church which she initiated was very helpful:

I think that the strong community that we have in the church is very supportive in many ways. At the point where all four of my children were teenagers, I really felt that I needed other parents' support, so I talked to [the minister] and asked if I could start a group of parents of teenaged children--it was no problem at all to get support for such a group. It was active for about a year.

Many of the women recognized that support from home or from other close relationships was an important aspect of their church involvement:

"I have a really helpful husband who...is great about helping with the kids. Not a chauvinist, so I get to take care of my needs and do what I want to do."

"I'm not fighting for women's rights, because I have it all."

"My husband and I met in this church, got married in this church. He certainly doesn't have any objection to my volunteering in the church. The kids are extremely supportive of anything that I ever want to do."

"I have a personal life and a work life very close together. If the person I'm with doesn't understand the kind of work I'm doing, and the person doesn't support me, and I see that in other couples, how difficult it is."

"I'm glad that...I have all the support I need."

"When I was on the ministerial search committee we met every week. I just really turned over the mothering mostly to my husband."

On the other hand, a very different reaction came from other women who spoke of the burdens they experienced when they did not experience the support but only provided it for others. One spoke of the difficulty of moving from the traditional housewife role without a husband's real support:

I think that women as they mature into this role of working mother realize that they really carry the whole weight of a family. Based on my own experience and those of my friends, I think the mother is responsible for the nurturing of the whole family...the father is just struggling to make that move, to moving up, moving, up, and although I think women's place in society has changed--my husband is 10 years younger than I am, he was brought up with women's rights, I don't see my husband different from my father or other husbands in their 40s and 50s--women's work is still women's work. Women's work is still nurturing the family, that's women's work; it's one of the reasons I'm working part-time, to give my husband a chance to really be a father. I come home from work and my husband has not done the dishes, or the laundry or put it away, all those tedious chores that make a family run. Men don't pick up the slack, we all know that; it's a very rare household where the man picks up the slack, so it makes it doubly hard to volunteer. If we ask a woman on the Board to do something, it's really asking a great deal--we don't even ask the men--the men just--they have their jobs and that's it...

A woman who was struggling to carve out time for her need to participate in the life of the church, while taking care of her young children's needs, was without much support from her physician husband:

My life is not my own. My children are ages two and four and because I don't work outside the home, our child care is therefore very limited, so everything I do has to be done in consideration of that and my husband, as well. With his job he works long hours and so I can't count on him to be there in the evening. The external, outside the church, obstacles to what I've done here have been there. Making it to Board meetings was a difficult thing to do every single month, and I did it for two years. So as a result, that's something I contend with in my personal life all the time. I jokingly tell my friends, 'I used to be a feminist,' because I really consider myself to be a feminist. But it's so hard to hold on to values and to your autonomy.

When I was on the Board, I would always have to make sure my husband, who's a doctor, that his call schedule was appropriate, he couldn't be on call. That would have to be arranged, and I would always have to be the one on top of that. Then his work schedule, it's very difficult for him to always be at home at a certain time. When this was coming up, I'd hope that he would be at home for the Board meetings. I'd have his dinner ready and rush out the door to go to the Board meeting and when he was on call, there were a couple of times when it didn't work out; I had to leave the Board meeting because he got called to the hospital. It's really a drag. It was always very stressful for me to do that, to make these arrangements.

My husband doesn't--he's not a member of the church, and that makes it even, adds another element to it because he doesn't come to services...

These two women appeared to be facing not only a lack of support from their husbands, but also the demands imposed by their husbands' professions which precluded left-over energy for shared family responsibilities. Their stories were examples of the entwinement of women with men in our society which Jean Baker Miller described as a "crucial key to understanding the social order" of this oppressed group (Miller, 1976, p.1).

Possibly as a way to balance this "entwinement," women spoke of the importance of the friendships they made in their volunteer work:

"The church is closer to me [than other organizations] in terms of friendships."

"You know a lot of the people. It's a good feeling to work with them."

"These people are my friends."

"There's a depth of interaction at a deeper level through the church than I would have through other kinds of volunteer work...a feeling of connection with the other women that I was volunteering with, and that's where my friendships developed."

"I'm a very social being...it's friendships; you get to know people on a very different level that you don't get at the coffee hour."

"The value of the relationships...they are all different personalities."

"There are things in an environment of friends, ways to contribute without taking on a leadership role."

"There are ways of giving and receiving...through my church involvement that is evident and goes more deeply than other kinds of volunteer work."

These friendships appeared to help to motivate as well as add richness to the women's volunteer experiences and to their lives. Their statements also reflected the importance sociologist Jessie Bernard places on women's friendships: "The part they play not only in

the lives of women but also in the structure of the female world is incalculable" (1981, p.293).

An important element of connection and support for the women in my study appeared to be the need for a semblance of family or those aspects of an extended family or community which contributed to the good feelings and safety which they could provide. Many of the women used the term "family" in their responses to my questions:

"I found a family here."

"It feels like family."

"I just feel that it's my family."

"This is my family...my children are involved, my husband is involved...it's a more intimate association."

"I settled in here and felt right at home and I saw things that I could do...and I just feel that it's my family."

For some, the church was a welcome contrast to the family or church they had formerly experienced:

"It's very family-oriented here...it's something I never had growing up...we're all in here for each other."

"It directly benefited my children, they felt connected to the Society. So different from my experience in the church...it's like a second home to them."

A woman who recognized that part of her pleasure in being chair of the buildings and grounds committee was connected to her missing having a large home and garden:

"I live in a condominium and my garden consists of half a whiskey barrel and some pots and here I can come and sit in the dirt and treat it almost as part of my home."

Others spoke of the sense of an extension to their families:

"It's important to me to have...a positive outlet where I can give and receive love outside of my immediate family, to extend that."

"There are people here that I wouldn't have ordinarily sought out for a relationship. It's a sort of extended family."

One woman spoke of the church as a haven from the outside world:

I feel like in the world there is so much strife and so much headache and so much hassle, and to come up here to the church is kind of an island... I mean, we're not devoid of that stuff, but it's different...resolving issues together...a positive outlet where I can give and receive love outside of my immediate family, to extend that.

For another woman, home and a sense of community were closely connected:

"I think you feel a part of a sense of community more when you're active. I think I found my home where there was a Unitarian church that I belonged to. It was my home and my community."

Other women felt that working for the church was like carrying out one's responsibilities to family members:

It goes back to the family. It's like working for your family. I do volunteer for a lot of other things: the peace campaign, abortion, but they tend to be spot things, and often you can just contribute money; this is more integrated with the life of the church, that makes it more meaningful.

There are certain skills that I have and certain things that I know I can do and I feel...that they have a right to ask me...like in a family...you belong in a family and there are certain things that you do.

These comments seem to support Shere Hite's statement: "Many women like the church because it supports them in their struggle to continue the home-family value system" (1987, p.211).

It seemed clear from these responses that the women were finding that many of their needs were being met in their volunteer experience: the need to be challenged, to achieve, to have influence, be appreciated and acknowledged, accepted, supported and connected through friendships and a sense of family-like relationships and community. This combination seemed to account for a great deal of the satisfaction these women were experiencing in their volunteer roles. In cases where the women perceived these needs were not being met, the responses may have indicated a pulling back or some alienation from the religious organization.

Skills and Abilities

Question #1 (see Appendix 1), "Why are you willing to give me your time for this interview?" and question #12, "What skills have you learned or do you need to learn in this volunteer role?" elicited responses about the skills and abilities of the women. These responses were mixed. There were those who seemed to devalue the learning they had gained in their volunteer roles, or found it hard to identify their

skills. Others were able to identify skills they needed and went on to speak of those they already had.

When asked why they agreed to be interviewed, some women did not think they had much of value to give to the interview process:

"I don't think you're going to get much information from me."

"I was surprised that June gave you my name, but if she thinks I have anything to add to your study, I'll be very happy to do it."

"Nancy asked me and I said, 'I don't have anything to tell her,' and she said, 'Well, will you do it anyway...,' and I said, 'Sure.'"

"It's just so flattering to be asked."

These responses were surprising, given the responsible jobs these women carry out both within and outside of their churches and the stories they told of their contributions to their churches.

Needed skills. Many women spoke of the more traditional women's skills as those they need, to do their job better:

"I could be more patient."

"I would like to feel more comfortable when I have to go and call on sick people."

"It would be helpful to know some psychology...I don't like to have anything to do with these conflicts that arise."

"I wish I sometimes knew the right thing to say."

"I like to keep on working on being more patient, more understanding."

"If I'm going to be more effective as a church leader, I really have to be able to learn to listen better."

Developing better listening skills was also cited as a way to address problems of conflict that some women identified in their churches:

One on one is no problem. You could take any two people, just about, and they could sit down together...but because we do so many things as a group, because we're so participatory and so forth, these opportunities for conflict...arise more openly than they would in an environment where--because we have this enormous interaction all this opportunity for misunderstanding, a lot of problems there...I think we need some skills in that whole area...I pick out listening as one thing; there probably are some other things for me to develop to work better, so I think that is a good start.

Another woman also spoke of dealing with conflict as an area in which she needed more skills:

Yeah, there's conflict on the committee and there's conflict on the Board. When I was secretary on the Board...I wasn't so involved in the discussion, because I was writing it down, but in the membership committee...it's a skill I definitely need...conflict resolution, reaching decisions, facilitating these decisions is a real challenge.

Some women felt that they needed skills which moved them out of their traditional roles:

"I have a real handicap about standing up and giving a speech."

"I could use more training or maybe more experience working in groups."

"I think I ought to learn how to run a computer."

"I'd like to be more assertive--sometimes people feel they can say things to me that are really unacceptable."

Existing skills. When asked what skills they brought to their volunteer role, some women had trouble identifying them:

"My personal opinion is that I don't bring any, but I keep being told by other people that I do."

"It's difficult for me to analyze them."

On the other hand, many of the women could identify their skills, many of them traditional women's strengths:

"being a good listener,"

"being patient,"

"people skills, conversational skill,"

"I know how to involve people and make them feel comfortable about being involved."

Bardwick speaks of the fulfillment some women feel when "they transfer their highly developed, active, interpersonal skills of relating, empathy and nurturance to people outside of their nuclear family relationships." She says that "As with work, those typically voluntary activities are likely to be a source of self-esteem proportionate to one's investment in the task" (1981, p.217).

The most common skill identified by the women was organizational skills. A number of the women brought these skills from their professional experiences:

"I knew I had management skills, because I'd managed businesses. With a social work background, I could manage a crisis."

"I come from 15 years' experience of administration, so what I do here as far as administration is very, very easy."

"My group work in graduate school...both here and in my professional life."

"I think my professional life education and experience well suited me for the volunteer work I do here, whether it's teaching or in an administrative situation."

Other women felt they had these skills from other experiences or as a part of their personality:

"When you run a home, you learn how to handle emergencies. Nothing quite throws me too much when they call and say something has gone wrong at the [church] office. I can usually take that in stride."

"I think I can see the big picture and how things fit into it."

"I've learned how to give a short meeting."

"I marshal my wits and find out what's to be done, then I try to figure out how to do it and roll into action."

A woman who had been trained as an engineer before having had a large family said:

I know that I am just the type of person who can organize things simply because my mind works that way, like I can take a meal and break it down into little bits and pieces and know how it should go together and I can take a kitchen crew and decide how many people need to do what.

These organizational skills and abilities to set priorities were evidenced in the ways many of the women reported handling the multiple roles in their lives. One woman acknowledged that housework was not a priority for her:

Every year I say I'm going to do less and less because I have days that are unbelievable. I wouldn't be able to do all these things if I did

things the way some people do. I never let myself be a slave to housework.

Another woman spoke of her family as being her top priority:

Well, I can only do so much. And I refuse to do more than I can. I guess my first priority has been the family. And I have chosen to work hours that I think are suitable to family life.

For some, doing the volunteer work helped the women to organize their time:

"I worked eight to ten hours a day, then came here to the Board meeting...I had to be aware that I left enough time to see my friends."

"Well, largely it's a question of time and energy. I still have difficulty realizing these are finite. I have so many interests. I want to do everything."

"Well, I have to calendar all this with regard to the other activities that are going on. If I didn't have a calendar with boxes, I couldn't function."

A newly widowed, seventy-six-year-old woman spoke of how her volunteer experiences were helping her in her new life:

"My many years of volunteering have helped to prepare me for this life. I'm playing the electric organ at the Masonic Hall tonight, the rummage sale tomorrow at the church and your interview today and my son's birthday on Sunday, it's a lot!"

Other women recognized that their volunteer roles in the church were not necessarily or always primary in their lives:

"It means my limited time and energy...sometimes other volunteer work is more important than what we're doing in the church."

"When you're trying to do so many things, you find that you give less to each particular thing, no one thing is your whole life."

"Wife, mother, work in the yarn shop, partner in the business, work in the barn on the farm...my many roles are intertwined with my volunteer work."

"I think I may have overreached my energy level...in the pledge drive...my blood pressure went up...I was putting hours and hours into it. Sometimes I have to watch that I don't overdo it."

A woman who had a supervisory position in a research company, was a Board member and did other volunteer work in her church, described her mode of operating:

I've always been involved with lots of things. I do little housework. I always had the point of view that electrical appliances really do not care about the gender of the person who is pushing the button...I don't have any more time than anybody else. I do it differently. I don't play very much.

The women quoted seemed to be striving to balance their many roles, while getting their own and others' needs met in the process. They used their organizational skills to set priorities and to use their time effectively according to these needs. Yet clearly this process was not easy and could take its toll emotionally and physically.

Learning

The responses from the women around their learning were also mixed. For some, new learning did not seem to be taking place and that did not seem to be a concern for them. Others reported new or relearned abilities or strengths.

A number of women echoed these words:

"I don't do anything in this position that I didn't already know how to do."

Yet two women who had been away from the professional world and were home with their children, spoke of relearning skills which were rusty. One said:

"I think I had the skills--organizational skills--but a lot of them were buried, but you get into it and find out it's fun and rewarding."

The other woman echoed this sentiment:

That's another thing I like about doing this is that I stretch myself. I used to teach classes and just get up in front of the group with relative ease, and now it's real hard for me and I have to get up in front of the congregation a lot. And I volunteered to do...editorials and various things to stretch myself. I volunteered to do a workshop at the woman's retreat. And I used to do workshops; I was a counselor. I did it in my work and I haven't done it in five years. And so it was real, real risky and hard to do this. But I did it. So this is my opportunity to put myself into the variety of roles that maybe I used to be in - leadership experience, public speaking....

Some women felt that they had learned new knowledge or skills in their volunteer experience. A woman who organized a large conference on AIDS spoke of the importance of her learning:

"What I learned is probably medical skills that I didn't have - about food supplements, vitamins, how to take care of yourself, good nutrition; I sort of changed that in my personal life....I learned also about a holistic approach."

Another woman spoke of how the development of her social skills impacted the church:

Social skills is one of my abilities. I'm able to ask people, 'Will you do this?.' I know how to involve people and make them feel comfortable about being involved; I guess I've developed that from being here, out of necessity; a lot of people have joined because of my husband and me. We're able to verbalize what Unitarianism means to us and our children.

Some women spoke of their development in terms of feeling better about themselves:

"To stretch myself is a goal for myself. Being on the Ministerial Search Committee was a stretch for me. I did grow a lot through that, feeling more secure about myself, and taking on things that in the past I never dreamed of."

For the most part I don't have the same fear of people as a group I used to have. And I think that has been a tremendous benefit. Because I carry that from this Unitarian church into other organizations. It makes life so much easier...cut away some of those deadly fears. I've had a chance to deepen my understanding of floral design and maybe even turn it into a job.

Finding helpful resources was recommended by one woman who had wanted some direction in her leadership role:

I think there are fairly good resources available throughout the denomination....I feel like one of the reasons I feel they're available is that I've gone out...after them. The things that come across my lap...having to do with "How to run a committee," "How to be a good committee chair"--that sort of thing.

For these women their recognition of new learning as well as some relearning seemed a source of satisfaction and strength.

Summary

In summary, women's growth and development, as reported by the women in my interview study, included knowledge of their values, life experiences, needs, skills, abilities and learnings. These components help to explain why and how these women experienced their own development in their church-related volunteering leadership roles.

The responses indicated to me that these women generally were motivated to volunteer by strong values of helping, nurturing and doing good works through the church. These values had been reinforced by their own activities, generally in relationship to their children. The women appeared to be identifying themselves in their volunteer roles through the attachment mode, as they indicated the importance of friendships, support and a family-like environment. This mode was typical of the voice of care as described by Gilligan (1982). This attachment, as Bardwick (1971) points out, appeared to provide the safety net for some women to overcome fears and risk taking on new behaviors.

These results relate to Kanter's "structural determinants of behavior in organizations." She describes those in an organization who are "low in opportunity" as having "lower self-esteem,...resigned to staying put..., and less likely to protest directly or to seek change" (1977, p.245). These behaviors were evident in my study. Although these women were all church leaders, a number of them apparently saw themselves in this light, as "low in opportunity." On the other hand, those who are "high in opportunity," Kanter says, are "more committed

to the organization...when dissatisfied engage in active, change-oriented forms of protest." Some of the women fit this description. Yet other characteristics of Kanter's "high in opportunity" persons appeared not to be true of the women in the study, such as "be competitive, oriented toward rivalry...have high aspirations...become impatient if they don't keep moving" (1977, p.247). The apparent absence of these characteristics may be an indication that the women did not see themselves as "high in opportunity." It could also be because these women eschewed these qualities in themselves and church norms discouraged them.

The picture which emerged was that of women with very strong family ties and parent models of altruism who, recognizing their need to grow, were finding some opportunities in their church communities. Often with jobs outside the home as well, many of the women were juggling a variety of demands on their time and energy, whereas in earlier decades most middle-class volunteering women were assumed to have the financial support of their husbands. Overall, the women expressed that their needs to be challenged, to achieve, to have influence, as well as to be appreciated and acknowledged, accepted and supported were often met in the church setting. This setting also provided them with friends and a family-like community.

Gender Issues

Gender issues as they emerged in my interviews are organized into four categories: (a) sex-role stereotyping, in which women and men take roles which have traditionally been assigned to them in our

society; (b) women's internalized sexism or "collusion," which Jackson and Hardiman describe as taking many forms, including "staying in one's role as an oppressed person" (1986, p.9); (c) institutional or unintentional sexism*, in which the institution, in this case the church, "maintains and operationalizes [sexism]..., unconsciously holds oppressive beliefs and behaves in an oppressive manner" (Jackson and Hardiman, 1986, p.11); and (d) counteracting sexism, in which the women indicated their recognition of and resistance to the sexism they experienced.

Sex-role Stereotyping

Most of the women recognized sex-role stereotyping in their congregations and expressed some resentment:

"It's hard sometimes to get people--I think that some of the chores we think of as traditional as women's work, they're not glamorous things to do and I think it's hard getting people to do them, for that reason as much as anything else."

"I think that if I were a man doing these things, the church would feel more gratitude to a man than to a woman, because they would feel it was out of his field; they would give him more credit."

Some women, while recognizing the differences, seemed to accept them as a given:

*Sexism, for the purpose of this study, refers to "attitudes, language, behavior and organizational practices which assume men are superior to women. This results in women being viewed in stereotypical roles, belittled, ignored, overlooked, undervalued or exploited." (U.U.A. Sexism Audit, 1988)

It seems part of a woman's nature to have done this work to pick up the loose ends, to do the little things, to be of help to others. Somehow I don't think of men as being bothered with doing these small duties. They are doing "men's work," not the trivia. If they were to do these things I don't think they would feel they were being rewarded such as a woman does. I think the man would be doing out of duty, rather than getting the tremendous amount of satisfaction a woman gets.

You usually think of the men as moderator of the church, and we do have a man as moderator now and a man who is treasurer, although we've had women treasurers. But ours has never been a church that has put labeled roles masculine and feminine; it just depends on who's there to do it really. But men have had the moderator role far more so than women and it's just been that we're happy to... we've got enough things to do. We've got our women's groups.

Both of these women appeared to be satisfied with this division, while recognizing the reality of the situation. Yet this acceptance of the way things are, which corresponds to Jackson and Hardiman's description of the "acceptance stage" or oppression, "rationalizes varying degrees of cognitive dissonance" and "represents the internalization, conscious or unconscious, of the oppressor's logic system" (1986, p.18).

One woman, however, was questioning some of this division of roles and feeling out of step in questioning:

For the Sunday School program all the volunteers were women. It seemed more normal. I realize that the reason I don't want to polish brass is that the men are never asked to do it. I have trouble with this; what is my personal feeling? Why would I not want to do this? It's a problem for me. When people are asked to do the coffee, you know that the men don't do it. When our turn comes up to do the coffee, my husband's as involved in it as much as I am.

Bernard speaks of this questioning as a way women are defining themselves from their own perspective, in terms of their own experience, and as resenting the "unmitigated selflessness demanded of them" (1981, p.509).

Other women in the study also questioned this role stereotyping:

"One thing came up recently. We're going to have our big rummage sale, and they're always looking for women to run the rummage sale. Someone said, 'I don't know why they're always looking for women to run the rummage sale, a man could do it just as well.'"

A woman lawyer who had volunteered in many roles in the church and was now in charge of Sunday morning coffee, said:

I suppose I could do anything I wanted to do. I don't think anybody is keeping me out of things. But I do think that the things I get asked to do, like helping with the Sunday School, I think they tend--I think they want to have men, but I think it is so much easier to get women, that we tend to have mothers recruited.

Another woman seemed to agree with this statement and took some responsibility for the situation:

"I feel like I could do whatever I wanted to here, but probably my interests are somewhat traditional: role-related to some extent."

A woman who was used to working in the kitchen of her church was skeptical of the possibility that men would take over this role but more hopeful about role changes in religious education:

I think that the things I have done--I doubt if any man would be chairman of a supper; it would just be foreign to them to plan a supper and get the supplies and decide how it was going to be cooked. But as far as Superintendent of the Sunday School, it just takes the desire to do it

or the interest in kids, really; it isn't that it's a woman's thing yet it has fallen more to women to do.

Some women placed the responsibility directly on the men:

"I don't think they have learned that the church is really their responsibility."

"He can't see himself doing that kind of work.... It's been about three times men have helped to fold the newsletter, and it's like I verbally twisted his arm. Another one came with his wife one time."

The kind of thing I do, you wouldn't find a man doing. I mean standing in the foyer on Sunday morning, making name tags on construction paper--I don't think you're going to find any men in this group doing that. Only once have we ever had a man come and help us fold the newsletters....

The men who are active behind the scenes tend to work on finance or on the Board. Back when I was on the nominating committee, I'd call people to run as candidates for the Board--some of the men were very non-risk-taking. "I'll run if you think I'll win." And they were serious.

Men have been known to make the coffee--there's no men on the membership committee; what they do best, that's what they volunteer for. They have to be asked; they don't volunteer.

Some women remarked that while women were able to try different roles, the slack in their traditional jobs is not being picked up:

It's not hard for the women to be president, treasurer, whatever the women can do; if they want to go out and mow the lawn, nobody's standing in their way. But if you ask a man to do the dishes or teach Sunday School, there you will find it extremely difficult, but it is not because of anything in the structure of the church. I think it's an attitudinal thing. A lot of men in the church...are just not comfortable doing some of these things. Some of them will, and they'll make a little comment about, well, how liberated I am, I'm doing the dishes, or something. Big deal!

One woman felt that the male minister was responsible for a lack of attention to women's issues:

In the pulpit we have had women speakers, but there has not been a lot of involvement of women in the pulpit, or a conscious effort, I should say, on a weekly basis. It's happening, but I think the minister--I know for a fact that there are a lot of women who are dissatisfied with women's roles in the Society. There isn't enough attention paid to women's issues, in particular, and Gay and Lesbian issues--there's a Lesbian community. I think there's plenty of room for growth.

These comments indicate that even in a denomination which prides itself on recognizing sexism, there still exists a great deal of sex-role stereotyping which is causing resentment among some women. Education and raised consciousness seem to be indicated in order to free both men and women from the inequities it produces.

Internalized Sexism

Jackson and Hardiman speak of "internalized sexism" as that in which "a person...has accepted the messages that have been given to them about the nature of their social condition" (1986, p.18).

Internalized sexism seemed to be present in the responses of some of the women in terms of lack of concern about their choices of roles, their apparent denial of differences in carrying out these roles, in labeling women's experience a "problem," denying any feelings of inferiority, and in some of their attitudes toward women ministers.

Some of the women in my study stressed that they were not concerned about stereotypical roles in their churches. One woman

seemed to believe that most of the women were satisfied with the choices available to them:

I've never aspired to be moderator. I probably could have been, but I've got enough to do. You know, I don't need that and as I say, the role has most often been filled by a man and very capably. I don't need it; I've been president of the women's club, superintendent of the Sunday School; I've done different leadership roles and I have no desire to be moderator. Whereas some women would have that desire, although I don't know as there are too many. We all are doing the things we want to do, I think, and have time to do. And especially with the younger people they feel...if they do Sunday School that's about all they can handle.

Other women seemed resigned to their role, yet also seemed to feel that there were positive character traits involved:

"Well, I guess women have been socialized to be volunteers. And it's something that sort of comes as automatic to do. And I suppose we grow up to be sort of nurturers of people. You need to be able to be willing to give of yourself to be a volunteer."

"Women volunteer more, you know. It's just part of our heritage and our role. And there are more women in this church--there are more women who volunteer for things. There are some great men volunteers. But if you look around, women are committed."

These comments reflect Jean Baker Miller's recognition of women's nurturing roles, yet do not seem to embrace her premise that men, as well, should have been participating in the nurturing process (Miller, 1976).

In answer to question #8 (see Appendix 1), "In what ways do you think that being a woman affects your experience?" several participants responded in terms of its being "a problem":

"I don't think in the church you get much flak, because most Unitarians are pretty liberal in the way they handle women, so I don't have any problems with...I can't think of any problems I've had just because I'm a woman."

"It just seems perfectly normal to me. I don't have a problem with women's issues."

"I have to say that it is in no way a problem, if that's what you mean."

"I don't feel that at [our church] that it's a problem at all. It's not an issue there."

By equating "women's experience" with "problems," the women seemed to be reflecting their own and others' perceptions of these roles. Instead of thinking of being a woman as affecting the experience in positive ways, the initial reaction was to think of it as a problem--a difficult circumstance--something that was necessary to resolve.

The question evoked in others a response in terms of inferiority, or of not having experienced this feeling:

I don't feel it makes any difference, whatsoever.
I don't know what you mean. I'm not a great woman's libber because I've never been in a position where I felt that I was made to feel inferior about anything. My husband tells me that that's because it's just my luck that I have never been put in that type of position.

When I was a child my father said that one day there would be a woman president, you know, and I think he expected me to be it! My mother and father always assumed there was nothing a woman couldn't do. I always believed this and I haven't really found in my life that it's ever hampered me professionally.

By framing women's experience in terms of its being a problem or of inferiority, I believe these women were colluding in this sexist interpretation. This would appear to be an example of Jackson and Hardiman's concepts of the oppressor who names the oppressed's experience and the oppressed's collusion with the oppressor's logic system (1986).

One woman laughingly acknowledged the difficulty in overcoming her own self-deprecation:

So it's very hard for me to be satisfied, or to say to myself, "You've done a good job." And when people say that, I think to myself, "You don't know about when I was five years old. I bit my sister." But sometimes women are like that...I have a hard time when people say you should be happy with what you've done, and I think how much there is still to do...I think [men] would maybe not put it on a resume, but feel more proud than I do.

Other respondents indicated that they believed that being a woman did not make a difference in volunteer roles in their churches:

"I think people look at our president and see a very sound person and able, and they look more at that than the fact that she's a woman."

"I don't feel that the functions that I perform in this church are sex-role-determined or that sex roles play a big part in it."

"I think of people as people and not whether they're a man or a woman."

"I don't think if the position were held by a man it would be that much different. The person who was in my position in membership before was a man. He didn't do it differently."

While it is important to recognize that reality bases differ, perhaps partly because of the stages of development described by Jackson and Hardiman, one might wonder whether these responses indicate that the real differences between rights and privileges for men and women were being denied.

The women's attitudes toward women ministers seemed to reflect how they saw attitudes (including their own) toward women leadership in the church. These attitudes appeared to reflect internalized sexist beliefs.

"We have a woman minister, and I think that makes a difference--that's already a nontraditional thing, but it's already becoming traditional."

Of course you have some people who just don't want a woman minister. I get along very well with Mary. I like her fine, but if I had to choose two people of equal ability I would probably choose a man. I think men are becoming an endangered species in the ministry; we are inundated.... Mary does bring personal things in a lot--sometimes it seems like what a man wouldn't do. It's just since Mary was here that there has been so much activity. Before she was here, things were very low-key. People work very well for Mary and maybe they work better--the women do more of the church work than the men, anyway. As far as the work of the church is concerned, the fact that she's a woman doesn't do any harm. It may well be a plus.

There are a lot of people in the congregation who do not want a woman minister. They are mostly the elders of the church. There are a lot of people who still feel they want their minister to be a man. Part of it, I think, is that a man's speaking voice tends to be easier to listen to than a woman's. I think it's true. I've heard many women ministers and men and, in general, it's true. Leaving aside what they have to say, I've heard maybe two women I was comfortable with.

That's one place where I think you'd get people feeling, well, I'd really prefer to have a man in the pulpit. And it's true, we've always had a man in the pulpit. We now have a woman intern, but that's different from a senior minister. It's hard to know whether that goes back to the man being the primary leader in society. But I know it's still there.

It was the older women on the search committee that thought we should have a woman minister. It was the middle-aged who thought we should have a man. I think there are things that are asked of [our minister] because she's a woman that would never have been asked if she were a man minister.

We've had several women from this church go into the ministry and had several women interns, but not a woman minister. At the time we were last looking, five to six years ago, I somehow can't imagine we would have called a woman minister. It would have been more difficult for our committee to have found someone with the maturity they would have looked for, at that point. I suspect that they would not have called one.

One woman acknowledged that her congregation had changed its perspective about having a woman minister after their experience with an interim woman minister:

"We had an interim woman minister. Everybody loved her, missed her a lot. She's a great lady. She opened our eyes about a lot of things, especially, some of the men were not aware of--like caring--that a woman could be a minister and do a good job and be a good leader and a good organizer."

Women ministers are generally acceptable to this liberal religious organization, and according to the UUA Sexism Audit of 1988 more and more are going into the ministry. Yet these responses indicate that for the women in this study, there is some ambivalence in their acceptance of women in this leadership role. One might speculate

whether this ambivalence may also be connected to their own and other women's leadership roles and to their development in terms of gender identity. If there are women who volunteer as a means of avoiding a more strenuous and risky professional role where they are confronted with women ministers who have ventured into traditional male territory, there may be some jealousy or difficulty in having to look at and evaluate their own lives and choices.

Institutional Sexism

In some cases, it appeared that assignment of traditional stereotypical roles had not been examined, and was perhaps institutionalized. Jackson and Hardiman describe institutional oppression as follows: "The application of institutional policies and procedures... produces oppressive consequences, e.g....unequal access to quality educational experiences" (1986, p.12).

"It's just who happened to be there at the time and who we thought would make a good one. I don't think there was any ulterior motive that we had a man for moderator and a woman for secretary or clerk, but that's just the way it happened to be, the way it worked out, is all."

A woman saw tradition and perhaps women themselves as contributing to this institutional stereotyping:

There do seem to be certain positions within the church which are traditionally held by men. We did have a woman chair of buildings and grounds once, so that's not an absolute cut-and-dried thing. But I do think that being a woman has meant that I could expect most likely to do certain things and most likely not to be asked to do certain other things. And some of that may come from me, too.

A Religious Education chair also discussed this phenomenon of sex-role stereotyping:

Even though UU's pride ourselves on trying to break down roles, I think we fall into them. On the RE committee, we've had one man over the years. We've never made a conscious effort to involve men, and we need to. It's interesting that my husband is on the finance committee and a trustee. I end up on the RE committee.

The situations described in these responses, often accompanied by angry feelings, suggest that the women's recognition of the differences in male and female willingness to do certain tasks might increase alienation between the sexes. It could also lead to increased anger from the women around their volunteer roles. These conditions might very well inhibit their growth and development in the religious organizational setting.

Another aspect of institutional sexism seemed to be evident in the emphasis that some of the churches put on equal representation of the sexes, in spite of a larger female membership. According to some of the responses:

"There's as many men as women on the Board all the time."

I know that at one point last year, there was some concern about our having a woman minister and that more than half of the Board were women. At that point...people were thinking that things were unbalanced. I don't think they were, but I had that feeling that people wanted more men to be on the Board and more men as chairmen of committees.

These women seemed to be unwilling to address these issues because of the possibility of alienating the men and/or women who

supported these policies. As Jackson and Hardiman describe this phenomenon:

This person is able to successfully ward off or rationalize any efforts on the part of others to raise or change their consciousness. Even the oppressed person who experiences an urge to question their current status may find themselves seduced into remaining where they are by the rewards offered by their oppressor. By remaining in this stage, the oppressed person is more likely to be treated as an 'almost equal,' a privileged position for a subordinate (1986, p.18).

Responses to pointed questions by the interviewer made the view of one respondent very clear:

- C.L. "Why do more women 'do the work of the church?'"
- T.F. "Because more women go to church. I think that on a Sunday morning there would be two-thirds women."
- C.L. "Why is the Board more equal in numbers, while the congregation is two-thirds women?"
- T.F. "The group that's leading the church should be equally representative: men, women, old, new; the Board makes a very conscious effort to have equal representatives."

This conscious attention to having the sexes equally represented in positions of power when the congregation is predominantly women, may perhaps reflect a fear of women becoming too powerful in these churches or of driving men out of the church if they are not able to maintain at least half of the power positions.

A similar phenomenon can be seen in other settings, such as educational institutions and human service agencies where most of the clients and low-level professional staff are female and the highest

positions are often assigned primarily to men. Dale Spender refers to this phenomenon: "Men have bowed to the pressure of women and have opened up many institutions...to women, but men remain decidedly in control of the institutions" (1982, p.23).

On the other hand, several of the respondents who spoke on the positive side of their institutions told of different experiences as women in their churches which they attributed to the philosophy of the denomination, their own abilities and their particular church:

"I think because of the way the philosophy is with the Unitarians, this is probably the easiest place to be a woman."

"Among Unitarians, I don't think there would have been any difference. If I had not been as capable as I was, and as knowledgeable, I might have had more static, but I think they respected whereof I spoke."

"I think our church is very accepting of women in positions of administration and positions of power, if you want to call it that. I've had no difficulty at all with any men in the congregation trying to tell me how to run the Board. None at all--just the opposite."

"Well, in this church there is opportunity to transcend that stuff. The president and vice-president and minister have all been women."

Some of the responses to the question concerning barriers to non-traditional roles also echoed this positive note. The following response was typical of others:

In our particular church, I don't see any barriers of any kind. When it comes to a way of life, we're a very liberal church, so a woman or man doing any other role, I don't think it would bother them. The minister was gay; didn't bother anyone. We have a family in our church where the man stays home and the woman goes off on a ship for a couple of years with the children, which is really unusual! But after that, what can you say? Roles don't matter that much to the church.

I think there aren't so many barriers. I mean I think a woman could do just about anything here in the church that she wanted to do. Men are welcomed as Sunday School teachers, which is traditionally a woman's role. There still are probably more women teaching than men, but there are a fair number of them.

Clearly, institutional sexism exists in some of the churches yet many are able to find ways to overcome old traditions and society's example.

Counteracting Sexism

Sexism and sex-role stereotyping would appear to be counteracted in many of the churches in a number of ways, through women's own initiative and abilities and institutional support and norms. A number of the women, while recognizing the stereotyping of behavior and sexism in their churches, expressed satisfaction about counteracting this trend:

"We're real feisty women--there is a woman on the computer committee--women can do anything they want to. We've had three women ministers in a row."

Another woman saw being chair of a committee as a sign of "changing of the guard":

I'm glad to be chairman of a committee as a woman. I think it's definitely important to be a model for others, especially because we always end up in the kitchen, too. We're a pretty open church, but there's enough of the old guard. The Board of Trustees is mainly men. I think it's important for women to serve.

A canvass chair of a large church spoke of bringing a new feminine perspective to her role and some trepidation over the prospect:

My first reaction when I accepted this job--it's a pretty large job--I thought, why me? Am I really up to this? Will people really take me seriously? You know, I'm not a financial wizard. All the things you've done in the past...you've gotten people together, and that's what to me it's about, getting people together, getting them to reach consensus and enabling them to grow, really, not necessarily forward...and I think that's a very feminine perspective...Some people don't look at it that way, they're going to look at it much more in terms of the "bottom line"--talk about money, money, money all the time. I say, let's get people's spirits involved, emotions involved in this whole process and then the other follows as a natural consequence. Once you have created this very harmonious kind of environment, then the other things all flow along....I hope women can stick to their guns and not...try to imitate male styles.

She went on to tell how she saw her style as very different from the way a man might approach the job:

There was one thing I did - I stepped out from the podium and I really appealed to the people in the congregation from an emotional standpoint to get more money from the church and I used myself. I used all my own feelings about the church. I used some of the things about me that they knew. I think a man could have done these things, but it might have been easier for me because I was really emotional in my appeal and I wonder if a man could have done that--I wonder if a man would have looked weak. It really worked, you could tell.

This experience typifies Mueller's statement about the importance of self-fulfillment, the "consummation of life-giving energy and drives" which needs community approval and must reflect socially implanted values (Mueller, 1954, p.90).

A former hospital administrator who was now buildings and grounds chair also spoke of her confidence in using her feminine skills such as listening and asking questions, yet having some concern about how she might be received in this role:

I was fearful that they might think, "Who does this woman think she is, coming in to run this?" I knew I did not have the skills to know what was wrong with that blower, but I knew, having worked with the engineers in the hospital long enough, that I could ask the questions from a woman's vocabulary and I was good enough at asking the right questions that I could get the answer and people could translate my words back into the technical...so I knew I could do that. But I still was fearful because of the way that they would talk about all these important things.

A worship committee chair described her philosophy about how groups should be begun as probably different from most men's groups:

I think most men's organizations are probably a little more set...they're not really as loose as we are. I don't think they'd do it as free as our women about not having any structure...

When we started a meeting we had a little sort of ritual that we did at the beginning of the meeting. It was really my way of being sure that people...kind of shed whatever it was they left behind, racing away from the dinner table or coming straight from work, whatever it was, get ride of that and be present in the room to get the work done. I think a woman would probably be a little more likely to appropriate a ritual like that than a man would be. I'm always looking for ways to enrich people's experience, even if the experience is a business meeting. I want it to be something that's rewarding for them, where they

come out of it feeling nourished, that they've learned something and that they've grown in some ways.

A Board chair spoke of her leadership style as different from that of the men who had preceded her in this office:

As I look back on the chairmen we've had in the past, and most of them have been men, I think the emphasis has been on getting the business of the church done, and that was that. Let the little committees do their thing with help for the church; I think the Board is much too important for that. We have a leadership role to play that needs to say to the congregation, "Look, you're what's important to this church."

Yes, the business has to be done, of course. We can't run an organization without that. But that's not the heart of the church and never will be, as far as I'm concerned...

So far, the response has been very positive. People have said to me, "Thank heavens we finally have someone who will listen, who is concerned." It's unfortunate, because I don't think the former chairman was not concerned--he was very concerned. It's just that that was not his focus and that wasn't what he thought his focus should be and that's not what he did. And everyone liked him very well. They didn't feel that he or the other people who went before him really wanted to hear their concerns about the parish....

I said it up front. I said it in the newsletter; "This may not be the most efficient Board you ever saw, although I try and make it that way. But I hope it will be one of the most sensitive and most responsive Boards." They seemed to really appreciate that.

These women, by defining and acting on their own unique leadership styles, were clearly counteracting the sexism which occurs when women allow men to define them and to define what is an "appropriate" style and their appropriate roles in relationship to the conduct of the religious organization's business.

Another example of counteracting sexism in the church was demonstrated by a mother who was prompted in one instance by her son's question to challenge the status quo and used support from the woman minister to effect some change:

Men have always taken up the collection. I didn't have any desire to do it, but I thought that there should be a man and woman doing it or even two women. There is a message in our church that things don't have to be this way. Quite often now two men do it, but occasionally they don't, and that's good enough for me. My son said, "I didn't know a woman or girl could do that." That's when I knew I had to do something. I had to be prepared for trouble as you do when you want to initiate change.

A soft-spoken woman who was chair of the caring committee told about a painful experience when she had stood up for women's and children's rights in her church:

I've always been the type that rather than confront something, I would just go away and figure it would be better if I didn't, or let it resolve on its own.

When we became involved here because of our children, we had a man here who was very involved in abortion and he was putting up pictures of fetuses; I thought it was very detrimental to children. My first thought was to take the children and go someplace else. But there wasn't another Unitarian church around. So I decided to do some research on the topic and to talk to some people on both sides...and to go to the Board and try to make a presentation based on facts rather than emotion. The Board was very responsive and decided to keep the photographs out.

[The man] left; I wasn't as affected by that as the fact that two other men who had been very active in the church...resigned...and I felt very responsible for those two men; I felt I'd hurt them but I also felt that they did not know or understand where I was coming from.

This person had been abusing women in the church for eight years before I got here--very intolerant--[he felt] that his view was the only one.

For the men, it was a question of abortion and men's rights, for me it's a question of toleration: Can one person abuse a community? Was it allowed here just because we're women? I still don't know if I have any answer to that.

The women in the church started standing up during the sharing of sorrows and joys and talked about how they had been hurt by this man. We developed a conflict management team that tried to talk to this person. We're all responsible for what we say. You can't just do anything you want to and not take responsibility and not accept the fact that you can hurt someone else. And they have rights. Toleration is not just one way. This man was so good about turning it around about toleration and intolerance of him, so at first everyone was trying to tolerate him and accept him and put up with what he did, then they just got to a point to where they didn't talk to him....

This woman's story demonstrates the struggle women, particularly, seem to have when they value being caring and supportive yet need to recognize when they are being abused. The difficulty of confronting this situation when it has been tolerated for a long time entails a serious risk of rupturing relationships as well as the risk of collusion.

In summary, the gender issues discussed--sex-role stereotyping, internalized sexism, institutional sexism and counteracting sexism--which emerged in the interviews, indicated that these societal problems exist even in churches which consciously attempt to address and eliminate them. Acceptance of sex-role stereotyping and internalizing sexism allows women to ignore or rationalize their cognitive dissonance and reinforces sexism; institutional sexism incorporates sexist practices into the fiber of organizations. By identifying and counteracting these practices, equal access to all experiences is more possible (Jackson and Hardiman, 1986). Sexism is clearly one of the many social justice issues women are addressing, either as

individuals or as a group. For those women who are successfully challenging sexist practices, the rewards of greater and more satisfying participation appear to contribute to their reasons for volunteering. Some others appear to be willing to settle for what they perceive as a small amount of sexism in the church versus that encountered elsewhere.

Social Justice

Social justice issues, such as civil rights, care of the poor, women's rights and peace issues among others, according to the literature, have traditionally been the sphere of women and an important part of their value system. Dorothy Rogers Tilly, a Methodist working with the National Association of Colored People (Kaledin, 1984), Jane Addams in settlement houses (Antler, 1987), and the League of Women Voters (Kaminer, 1984) are all examples of women volunteering in these areas. As an oppressed group, women have also identified social justice for themselves as a real need. Social justice has generally been, in addition, an important vehicle for women's growth and development, such as the executive ability developed in leadership roles in the League of Women Voters and other women's organizations working on peace issues (Westin, 1976).

For the women in my study, social justice issues also appeared to be important. However, there was a full range of responses given by the participants as to the relationship of social justice issues to their volunteer experience. Responses ranged from those who were very involved to not at all. Those who were involved seemed most interested

in those issues close to home and to which they felt at least some emotional connection, yet some applauded the issues addressed on a national level.

For about twenty-five percent of the women in the study, social justice issues were a major part of their original reasons for coming to the church. In addition, a few respondents told of significant contributions they are making to social causes. Still others supported the work of those in their congregations who were involved in these issues. For some their interest was in the educational aspect of social justice problems. Almost all of the respondents said that they believed in the importance of working on social issues as a part of what the church stands for. Others indicated ambivalence about the social concerns work of the church. Their interest and energy were in other areas of the church.

Some of the women spoke of their concern for social justice issues as their original reason for coming to the church:

I think it was a large part of our original attraction, our original reason for willing to be involved in the Unitarian Church. Our being there today does not hinge on that. But I think that back when we joined, that that was very much on our minds--a liberal church not only liberal theologically, but also liberal socially. And actually that played a big part.

Well, it was the feminist movement was very much active--it's still active, but that was the new movement--it was in the early '70s, that's what was happening then. Things come and go in the news. I like what the social concerns people are doing. I'm not actually the one who is behind the social concerns in the church today.

We got involved, actually we came into the Unitarian church here in a sort of funny way. My husband and I were working on a political campaign which had to do with the safeguards for nuclear power plants in this state in '76, and the way we were getting the word out was going around giving talks, so I called the minister of the Unitarian church and said, "We have this presentation we'd like to do." And he said, "Terrific, I didn't know what I was going to do for a Sunday service on Mother's Day, so why don't you do it as a Sunday service?" Wonderful. I had had no contact with the church...So we came and did the Sunday service and as far as I was concerned, we had just come home.

Another woman, who came to the church because of the social concerns committee and is now chair of another committee, spoke of her continued interest:

The social concerns committee--that's what really got me to the church. I've been on that... committee in one way or another ever since. Not terribly active; I come to all the events and if they need an extra voice to get a particular group here or something like that, then I'm on deck for that. Our Family-to-Family program is one that I was very strong for and the woman who really brought up the idea to the church didn't speak up very much--a very shy person. So I did a lot of leg work and talking to start that program. That's where we're feeding a hundred here in [our city] and I think it's the greatest thing to work on. And we put our energy not just on money toward this, but primarily it's a people-to-people thing.

Some of the women were very involved in social justice programs and making significant contributions. One woman who, working with the minister, arranged for a large conference on AIDS held in her church which has a large Gay population and members who have AIDS. This woman told of subsequently spearheading the drive to obtain a house where AIDS patients could live in their community:

We had a big, huge problem with AIDS and I could see that they needed to network on that, having people come here to tell us what they were doing--to share that information. So many things came out of this conference, you have no idea. First, we had 12 to 13 speakers. We had doctors, the panel of five gay men, religion, lawyers, everything we needed to learn from. Then I realized after the conference, it gave me a very clear understanding of what were the needs of the town, seeing what was happening in other places. So then I started to build a group and we put together a house for people with AIDS. It took us a couple of months just to get started, but now the official opening will be in a week or two, but there are people already living in it. We saw that housing was very expensive and people with AIDS are often on welfare, so they were leaving, which is not what we wanted. We wanted people to come here because they are comfortable here, especially with the spirit of this church.

I don't mind working on that all the hours that I have free. I don't mind at all. These people need support and need also some people that are positive around them. And we found out after the work that we've been doing that we are mainly the experts and we can help; more and more we find that out.

Now others are asking me to help with other conferences on AIDS.

Another woman, a buildings and grounds chair, was also very involved in social concerns:

I'm also committed to the homeless situation. (The minister) and I worked many hours trying to convince the town that there was a need for shelter here in town. I had several meetings with the police chief, the superintendent of schools. We had 12 children in town that had no place to sleep, that either couldn't stay in their homes; we also had 5 male adults in town who were without homes. It's very difficult...we didn't get a shelter open...we had the Red Cross involved, we had money coming in, all we needed was a building. We had volunteer staff set up. It took most of the winter to get to the point where they said no.

But we did find homes for many of the people with a lot of our parishioners and the children were taken care of naturally through the school system.

A membership chair also found being involved in social concerns an important part of her church volunteering:

That's where all my volunteering started, from doing that kind of work and besides my own personal spiritual growth, the thing I like about this church is our involvement in social concerns. And so that was the first committee that I joined. So it plays a real big role in what I do here.

A respondent who has been heavily involved in a wide range of social justice issues regularly attempts to educate her congregation about her concerns:

It distresses me that when we're gone, the younger people won't be interested in anything except themselves and their own social activities...I'm constantly trying to put before them issues that might interest them, and some do.... Sometimes I'm rather directive, to collect signatures after church...something that's taking place...locally or not locally. We have a table in the church...the young people, the high school and college students and ask them if they don't want to sign. They usually say they don't know anything about it. I say, 'That's fine...here's some material you can read in a few minutes; sometimes we request signatures or write letters and I'll help you with it.' Usually they're not terribly enthusiastic! I take them by the hand and sit them down....For quite a few of the youngsters, this is the first time they've ever done anything like this.

I'm always overwhelmed at the involvement of the Unitarians in the area. I always feel that I'm not doing enough. I like seeing people that I know that are so different from each other, yet they can find a common niche to work on certain things like...for instance, we picketed the Chilean ship. I looked around and I saw people from the church...we don't see the same people in the church on the same projects; I realize that...

we don't fit in a certain category or have a specific concern all the time.

Some women expressed support for social issues being addressed in their churches, but their volunteer efforts were not directly related:

"If they weren't being talked about and discussed, I'd still be doing what I'm doing; I don't think this has any effect. I approve of what they talk about."

"As far as the social responsibility committee here in the church, that did not play a part in my personally volunteering. I am certainly behind it one hundred percent. I think their goals are superb."

We got into the Sanctuary thing. I was very much in favor...I could see the need for something like that...I didn't think we had the facilities or the commitment to do that. There were a few people that were very interested in that, but I thought there needed to be a bigger group. What we ended up doing was supporting another church. We contributed money. The Sanctuary issues wouldn't have affected my volunteering. The women's issues are very important to me.

For some of the women, their relationship to social action was through education:

I'm very proud of the social stands we take. We don't hurt people. We don't run from difficult issues....Women's issues and any kind of underdog are things that are talked about in the sermons and I think are good for me...

I certainly am concerned that our church is interested in social concerns. And in some instances, I think our church is a little bit too interested in itself and not in doing more, but I personally...well, it depends on what it is, but right now, in this part of my life I haven't...over the last few years we have had programs that dealt with Latin America, South Africa...well, this program on Islam...was concerned with understanding another culture.

For many women, social justice issues that were most relevant are those which were close to home or personally important:

"I don't look at national things; I look at things close to me."

One woman stated emphatically that she could not get excited about problems in Central America when there were serious homelessness and hunger problems in her own community:

I've had difficulty with some of the social justice issues that are away from the local area. I always have trouble with people who are very involved with other parts of the world when there are people who are hungry and having difficulties in [our city]. I felt very much that I wanted to be a part of that particular group and was willing to help fix some of the dinners.

We have a lot of conversations about we don't do enough for the larger society. Well, I think you have to nourish yourself and make yourself strong, then you can go out and accomplish other kinds... and I think this church offers a lot of opportunities for that.

One woman whose interests in social justice issues had changed was going to workshops on drug problems, because her son was involved in drugs:

The programs I went to [at the General Assembly of Unitarian Universalist churches] this time didn't have anything to do with Nicaragua, South Africa, and that's a change for me....My prime interest right now because my son is a drug addict...I went to all the things on addiction and drug abuse. Yet some of the women felt that they related to social concerns more productively on the national level.

Other women were very pleased with the larger perspective the national association provided:

My admiration for what they're doing at the national level, going to the meetings...their priorities are marvelous. The resolutions that we have, we try to bring back here and get some interest in...I'm so pleased at what we're doing at the national level; at the local level it's frustrating.

The bottom line is that it's the UUA. It does stand for something in my mind. I'm a real social activist, in a way. I feel like it's important to be able to speak and say what you think and just feel comfortable in doing that and to disagree, and to speak up when it's important to speak up.

In contrast to the enthusiasm of these women, some of the women expressed ambivalence about the social action in their churches:

Some things you believe in, but you don't want to have too much to do with them. That's sort of the way I am. I think the church should be concerned with them...basically. Like the Community Kitchen. I know this is important, and I know you can't say, we won't let our kitchen be used--you can't do that. But it doesn't make me any happier about that. In other words, I'm not a whole-hearted supporter. I can't get excited about Nicaragua or places like that. I know you should be. But I'm not sure how much good is done by someone in the church who goes down and works--I'm neither one nor the other. I feel it's important, but I don't get too much involved in it.

This church, particularly, has a policy in its by-laws...making it difficult for the church, as a church, to take a public stand on a social issue and I see it as a relatively good policy...because you can split a church down the middle. I know it can also be used in a different way, but too often it splits the church...when you're forced to vote on an issue. I see the church as a place to come where we are renewed and then go out and do our social action commitment in all of the groups that are specifically designed to do that, particularly if it's an issue that means money. That does not force everybody to contribute to somebody else's favorite cause.

For nearly all these women, social action and social justice appeared to be an important part of their consciousness in relationship to their volunteer work in their churches.

As Gilligan says:

The reinterpretation of women's experiences in terms of their own imagery of relationships... provides a non-hierarchical vision of human connection....The experience of inequality and interconnection...give rise to the ethics of justice and care, the ideals of human relationships--the vision that self and other will be treated as of equal worth, that despite differences in power, things will be fair; the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no one will be left alone or hurt (1982, p.63).

The recurring theme through nearly all the responses was the importance of helping those within the individual communities or in responding to those issues which the women found to be personally relevant. This theme reflects Gilligan's image of the times when self and other are being treated as of equal worth (1982).

The women's present involvement varied considerably from one woman to another, yet even those not presently involved typically reported a great deal of concern about various social justice issues, especially those which were physically or emotionally close to home. The close tie of social justice issues with women's development as expressed by Gilligan (1982) and the women's reactions indicates to me that social action is an area where women's growth and achievement has taken place and might continue to do so.

Discussion and Review of Major Findings

The results and discussion of this study may be summarized by some of the responses from the participants to the interview question, "If you could sum up in a few words the meaning and contribution of volunteering in the Unitarian-Universalist church for you, what would you say?" The following responses touch on many of the issues in the study:

It means love to me; I really love this church; it's a privilege to be here. And I've had lots of love from this church that I haven't received in other organizations and other instances in my life. It's not a one-way street--if you receive, you have to give or share. This is a very special place. I think if you came here on a Sunday--a lot of people just walk in from the outside and there's a special atmosphere here that they haven't found in other places. You'd have to experience it to know what I mean. There's a lot of warmth....

For this woman, as for others, the emotional aspect, feeling of connectedness, reciprocity and uniqueness were of major importance in their willingness to volunteer. Clearly this goes beyond altruism as a reason for volunteering and indicates the personal gratification resulting from the experience:

The value of contributing and volunteering in this church is that it fills a personal need for self-esteem and self-improvement. But in a wider sense, if nobody volunteered, nothing would get done and it's a necessary thing for our church. Even if you learn no new skills, you learn little important things like how to deal with people; there's new knowledge that comes from having to put together programs and all the little various things that have to be done. You just feel that you've done a good job and that you can do it and that you've done something that matters.

This woman also cited her own needs as a reason for volunteering. Her remarks were typical of those in the study who experienced new learnings which were integrated with real needs of the church. Clearly these women did not want to do merely "busy work" to fill their time.

Another woman who had reordered her priorities expressed the views of some other women in her belief in volunteerism and its value to the volunteers and others. This view may be typical of those who want to swing the pendulum back from feminist groups who decry volunteering as exploitation of women:

...When you do something on a volunteer basis, you get much more satisfaction than having a shop and selling things and making money; it's about being satisfied and what you can bring to other people. Volunteer work is very, very important on that basis. There should be an easier way to bring people to do volunteer work, in how you approach them, what you ask them to do, in the perspective of learning a new skill.

Yet another woman spoke for those who questioned whether they had freely chosen volunteering or responded to it as part of their societal conditioning in which it is expected of women. Like other women in the study, this woman expressed some resentment over not having her volunteering adequately valued. Clearly these women of 1988 were not willing to be taken for granted.

I wonder if I would volunteer if it wasn't expected of me as it isn't of men. I see other women giving of themselves and I think it is wonderful...and I don't think it is given the respect it deserves in the mind of others. I get a certain amount of personal satisfaction from the things I volunteer for....

An older woman was typical of some of the respondents who seemed to focus primarily on the positive aspects of their volunteer experiences. Her views perhaps indicated some of the differences in age perspective of the respondents--the importance of feeling that she was part of the stream of history which would be carried on when she was gone.

It has given me satisfaction, peace of mind.
It's meant carrying on work that my parents and those of my friends...it gives me satisfaction to carry this on. It's social; I've had the privilege to be associated with these new young people; it's fun to hear their views and see how energetic and forceful they can be. It's good to see that when something needs to be done, it will be done.

Another woman was also looking toward the legacy she might leave:

I realize now that I am not going to be able to cause any big social change...what I leave will be what individual impact I make or have been able to make on certain people's lives...if I have helped to preserve the life of this building, it is important to people who come here....

One woman articulated the more holistic approach a number of women mentioned. This woman had apparently stepped back and evaluated her volunteering from a rational as well as emotional level: it made sense and it felt good.

Integrated is the word that comes to mind. It's an integral part of my life. I just don't feel like I'm volunteering--it makes sense to do it. It's rewarding, it does have a greater purpose, it serves long-term goals and short-term goals; it fills a need for community, for intellectual growth for my children and myself, stimulating, shared values that I have, it just makes a lot of sense. It doesn't feel like work; I'm working with people that I know,...and feel comfortable with...so there's a social part of it that ameliorates the feeling of work....

Many women expressed the importance of volunteering as part of a healing process in their lives. They seemed to express the sense of connectedness they felt to people and an organization which had helped them through difficult times:

I've been fortunate, I've gotten a lot of good feedback. When other directions of my life were not going well, this was calm waters. One year I couldn't rally myself; usually I can overlook such things and get on with...make contributions to the group. Usually I can. That year I couldn't do it. Apart from that, I've made friends....

A few of the women who were very active in social justice issues spoke of its importance to them in the church. One woman's remarks seem to summarize this feeling:

Looking at the role of Unitarians in all the big issues of the past hundred years in this country,...looking at what I and the committee are doing, is far more important than anything else the church is doing. And since it is important to the population at large, it's worth my effort.

These comments capture the essence of the results of the study, in terms of values women have which have affected their choice to volunteer, their histories which guided them in this direction, their needs which have been met, the learning they have experienced. Gender issues are touched on in these comments, as are the recognition of social justice and the church's role in this endeavor.

Clearly the women interviewed demonstrated their part of the stream of history in which many of their parents' values of volunteering have been passed down and reinforced by their own experience and those of their associates in the church and other organizations.

The reported values of serving, fostering children's development and carrying on the work of the church are similar to the values of earlier generations of women.

The women's needs which surfaced in the interviews--to be challenged, to achieve, to have influence, appreciation, acceptance, support, friendship, family and community--appear to be more clearly identified than those in the literature of the past. The women in this study identified their significant organizational skills, yet did not generally report experiencing a great deal of learning in their volunteer experiences.

In spite of opportunities for women in leadership positions, stereotypical gender roles in the churches are unfortunately still pervasive, according to many of the interviews. Yet some churches appear to be breaking through these stereotypes and moving toward more equitable distributions of leadership roles versus carrying out the more tedious and less glamorous chores. The women leaders reported a variety of leadership styles which included feminist values in unusual approaches. These styles reflected the opportunities for these women to try different approaches, to take risks and to be supported in these ventures. The church appeared for many to be a haven for such risk-taking and a place where it was all right to be different.

Social justice issues did not seem to be a major interest of many of those interviewed, yet for those who were deeply involved, their contributions appeared to be significant.

The responses of the women interviewed carry implications for other women and for the greater society beyond their churches, for organizations and for the development of organizations, particularly those which include volunteers. These are topics which I will take up in the next chapter.

C H A P T E R V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe those characteristics and experiences of volunteer lay women leaders in a liberal religious organization which promote or inhibit their growth and empowerment as well as those which do or do not contribute to social justice and change. Included were the women's perceptions of psychosocial conditions and of their values and purposes as well as their experiences of gender relationships and roles as related to the volunteer experience.

Interviews with 31 participants provided a rich data base from which to glean information about these perceptions and experiences. Conclusions and implications based on this study's findings will be addressed in six sections: women's growth and development, gender issues, social justice issues, implications for organizations, implications for women and questions for further research.

Women's Growth and Development

A major part of the interview results was related to women's growth and development. The literature stressed the history of societal expectations of volunteering as an appropriate role for women; the data in my study indicated that the volunteer experience grew out of each woman's own history which undoubtedly was influenced by earlier history. Yet volunteering also appeared to fill needs experienced by women for connectedness in positive ways, as a mode for learning (Belenky et al, 1986).

While volunteering was historically a way for women to get out of the house and their narrow environment, the responses of the women in my study implied that in the 1980s women often used it to add other dimensions to their lives. The findings support an earlier observation by Kaminer (1984, p.214), "[A woman's] return to volunteering reflects, in part, a desire to remain connected to her community, as well as a need for the kind of personal contact she does not always find in her job." From this sample, volunteering appeared strong and well for women. Many interviewees had learned the value of volunteering from their parents and from their childhood experiences. Rewards were also seen in their adult volunteer experiences. The interviews suggested that the women continued to volunteer because it seemed to fill needs which were less well met in other parts of their lives.

Women reported that they found in this volunteering experience a safe climate where they could risk taking on challenges and could have influence in a community where they and their families were known. The women reported that these experiences provided meaning for their lives in the context of their deeply held values. The importance of this many-faceted aspect of their volunteering seemed to reflect Belenky's description of women who have "integrated the voices":

These women want to embrace all the pieces of the self in some ultimate sense of the whole-- daughter, friend, mother, lover, nurturer, thinker, artist, advocate. They want to avoid what they perceive to be a shortcoming in many men--the tendency to compartmentalize thought and feeling, home and work, self and other (1987).

The fact that most of the women, including those who have jobs or careers, indicated that their volunteer work was a very important part of their lives suggested to me that they did not see it as a trivial or lesser activity. In the past, there appeared to be a distinction between volunteer work and a "real job" (Kaminer, 1984) and volunteering is still described as such by others, e.g.: "a mother who had risen from volunteer to career status" (Cott, 1987, p.170).

The literature suggested that women in the past have used their volunteer experience as preparation for employment. While undoubtedly women of today use their volunteer work to make contacts and to gain skills which may lead to employment or career advancement, the women in this study did not indicate that preparation for employment was a purpose of their volunteering. Yet this work could very well prepare women for a career in such fields as politics, as was suggested by the report of the Commission on the Status of Women (1965) in which there were many similar situations for women to those in my study:

Women, often free from any pressure to achieve monetary success or fame, tend to seek work that expresses their concern for others and offers them an opportunity to make a personal contribution to human welfare. Such activities generally do not make women "visible" in a way that suggests to the general public their qualification for public office. Nevertheless, leadership in volunteer activities, in which many women engage, may well develop the same kinds of abilities that public leaders need. A woman who has held a responsible position in one of the many large volunteer organizations will have directed many unpaid workers in their jobs. In so doing, she would have had to exert her power in a democratic fashion. She will have had to harmonize conflicting personalities and compromise diverse views

without sacrificing principles. Since these skills are also of primary importance to political executives, it might be well to reevaluate the ways in which needed political and administrative skill is thought to be developed (p.158).

Many of the women in my study appeared to have developed these skills of supervising volunteers and helping these volunteers to resolve their differences, while maintaining their integrity. This process undoubtedly contributed to the development of skills which could be translated into other arenas.

Gender Issues

Women's growth and development are inevitably related to gender issues. In response to questions about their experience as women in their volunteer roles and how their multiple roles impacted on their volunteering, the women in my study discussed concerns as well as positive experiences in relationship to both the organization and their home environments. In so doing, their own feelings of ambivalence about their roles surfaced. The women's experiences and motivations around gender issues were in some ways similar to women in the past, but quite different in other ways.

In most of the churches, women could and did hold leadership positions, attention was apparently paid to gender-inclusive language, and some men volunteered in teaching religious education and in working in the kitchen. However, the women's comments suggest that women and men may not have been paying attention to more subtle forms of discrimination: that women were more apt to be asked to do traditional jobs, that women had to initiate filling more nontraditional

roles, such as Board president and working in finance, that women thought of the fact of being women in these roles as being a "problem." Even though women comprised two-thirds of the church membership, a conscious decision in some churches was to have men in half of the Board positions. Men were not as often asked or expected to do menial tasks, or if so, they were thanked more profusely. As Ellen Goodman said in a speech in 1986, "Change is lopsided. Women have been more successful at getting into the male world than changing the male world."

Women ministers typically were liked, admired and appreciated, but not altogether accepted. There was still significant ambivalence among some of these respondents about women's roles and behaviors. This ambivalence was reflected in the women's own reported perceptions of themselves as they spoke of their significant organizational skills yet were fearful of appearing "pushy." Even among those who appeared to be successful in their professional work, there were some who seemed to have doubts about their abilities in leadership volunteer roles. These doubts were especially evident where women were in nontraditional roles, including those pertaining to money, finance, buildings and grounds, as well as Board president.

The home environment also appeared to greatly affect women's feelings about their church roles: those whose husbands, partners and children supported their volunteerism found this support an important part of the experience; those who experienced conflict in these areas found that this conflict frustrated their ability to carry out their volunteer work.

Yet with energy released by a supportive, encouraging, appreciative climate in the organizational setting as well as in their personal lives, women in this study, like their foremothers, indicated that they wanted to do work which they felt had a larger meaning than just self-satisfaction. As did many women of earlier generations, women in this sample said they wanted to contribute to a movement in which they believed. They made this work a commitment, central in their lives--not before family needs, but often alongside of them. The women appeared to want to work with others to make a contribution which others valued and which was congruent with their values.

However, unlike women earlier in the century, many also held or had held paid jobs. Yet money for work did not appear to be their primary motivation for spending time, energy and commitment. Most of these women seemed to want influence, power to do things they thought were important for the community, but did not seem to want power over others. They appeared to seek to empower themselves and others. They indicated that they wanted to have choices in the kind of volunteer work that they did. Most women wanted men to share in the menial tasks as well as the leadership roles, and to volunteer to do so.

Like earlier women, some were apt to feel powerless and to have to go through a process to gain self-confidence. They typically seemed able to listen to others, to be sensitive to others' needs, to motivate people through their own enthusiasm (and, indeed, were sometimes uncomfortable with their emotional outpourings).

Social Justice

The range of social problems addressed by the women in the study suggested how great is the need for work on social justice issues in this society and how responsible and frustrated the women felt in not doing enough. Yet some women in my study who felt strongly about such issues as AIDS, the homeless, hunger, and drug and alcohol problems were expending great effort to learn about and alleviate the problems. They volunteered their time, often at great personal cost, for these efforts. Unfortunately, their willingness to do this and evidences of success could give government officials an excuse for not funding these efforts.

Even though many of the women were not actively engaged in social justice efforts, most were supportive of the efforts of others. A case could be made for their indirect help in providing the structure of the organization, so that others could have both individual and organizational support for their efforts.

Conclusions

Responses in the interviews indicated to me that volunteering was a satisfactory and significant activity for the women in the study. They volunteered, as have women in the past, in order to serve others, to provide for their own and other children's education, to carry on the tradition of the church, and to nurture others. Like women of earlier generations, the women in the study volunteered in order to find friends and to work together on issues which were meaningful to them.

Other reasons for volunteering which emerged in the study appeared to be different from or at least more clearly articulated than those of earlier generations: to be challenged, to achieve, to be appreciated, acknowledged, and accepted, to gain influence and to have a sense of family-like relationships and community. The women appeared to be successful in carrying out these purposes.

Unlike women in the past who typically had little or no access to leadership roles in churches, the women in my study held a full range of leadership roles. Yet, like their mothers and grandmothers, they still were the majority of volunteers in traditional women's roles: teaching religious education, working in the kitchen, and conducting rummage sales.

Questions relating to gender brought out most of the expressions of dissatisfaction and frustration which were made in the interviews. Churches, as well as roles and responses in their home environment, were cited as areas of discrimination. However, women also noted the church as generally a supportive place for women where attitudes were often more enlightened than in the larger society.

With the history of and present stance on social justice issues of the Unitarian Universalist Association and many individual churches, one might expect that women volunteers would be very involved in these issues. For a few women this was true. These women were working for and making major contributions to social justice. However, the majority of the women interviewed, while supporting the concept of the church working to improve social conditions, did not have a major commitment to it as one of their volunteer roles.

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Implications for Organizations

The data from the study provide a great deal of information about these women's volunteer experiences which could be valuable for organizations to ponder. The following are some implications for possible improvements:

1. Ministers and Directors of organizations must be able and willing to adapt to the fact that women volunteers, perhaps particularly those in leadership positions, appear to thrive best in a relationship with paid staff which is more collaborative than that of the past--one in which there is shared leadership, responsibility and mutual support. Organizations which want and expect volunteers to provide fund-raising and other support for their staff might find these needs met in return for volunteers being supported in taking risks, being appreciated and working in an atmosphere which promotes friendships.
2. Organization and management literature are increasingly moving in the direction of participatory, democratic processes and alternative leadership styles (Henry and Blanchard, 1982; Kanter, 1977; Oswald and Leas, 1987; Josefowitz, 1980). Women who have practiced these styles in volunteer or other receptive organizations may be best equipped to model and teach some of these practices.

3. Churches and other human service organizations may want to question their assumptions that because they set out to "do good" that their structure and practices are necessarily good for their women volunteer workers in meeting their perceived needs, particularly those of achievement, having influence, being acknowledged and accepted. Often the clients or needy persons in these organizations are targeted for attention to their need for empowerment, support and self-esteem, yet these same needs may be ignored for women volunteers.
4. Another assumption which human service organizations may wish to examine is that women volunteers are very willing to work on issues of social justice. While my study showed that some women are willing, and do outstanding work in these areas, many do not, although they often profess support for such efforts.
5. Organizations which pride themselves on having eliminated blatant sexist practices may need to delve further to discover more subtle discrimination which inhibits full participation and commitment by women. Included in this discrimination is not only the lack of opportunity to take on nontraditional roles, but also the expectation that even if they do, the women are still responsible for the menial tasks--a double duty.

6. Women leaders and workers who appear to have significant ability and knowledge may still need considerable reassurance and experience to develop confidence in leadership roles.

Implications for Women

1. The reflections of the women in the interviews indicate that women can learn to identify those conditions which contribute to their growth and development, which speak to their values and meet their needs as well as those conditions which frustrate or hinder their development. Women can look for these qualities in organizations for which they volunteer, and they can help to create these conditions. By evaluating their volunteer work in terms of these values and needs, women can feel better about themselves, avoid burn-out and become more effective in their volunteer contributions.
2. Women can take inventory of the skills learned or reinforced in their volunteer experiences and consider expanding their areas of contribution and effectiveness both within and outside of their present organizations.
3. Many women still need to learn about and recognize their own collusion in sexist practices. Confronting and counteracting sexism may be most

effective through collaboration with other women and men of like persuasion. The data suggest that women need not forfeit their right and responsibility to name the discrimination and sexism which exist in the organizations in which they volunteer, whether intended or not. "Women's equality must be dealt with in public arenas as well as personal" (Goodman, 1986). The data indicate that women's strengths in valuing and nurturing relationships are not necessarily lost in this process. Women may want to further explore feminist theory--nature vs. nurture (Gilligan, 1982; Cott, 1987)--in light of their own beliefs about women's roles as being biologically or socially determined.

4. The data also suggest that some women who might seek psychotherapy for their feelings of alienation, fragmentation or self-doubt, believing that these feelings come entirely from within themselves, might find some resolutions to these negative feelings in a community of support, equality and opportunity as they use their skills and find approval for their values. A volunteer organization might provide these opportunities which the larger society often does not.

Further Research

Further research needs to be done to explore many issues raised by this study. A few suggestions follow:

The emphasis in this study was on the historical and sociological aspects of women's volunteer experiences. Further research could continue to explore the relationship of theoretical models of women's psychological development (e.g., Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976) to the data in this study or in a future expanded study.

A similar interview study might be done with men volunteers, using the same questions and areas of interest, in order to compare the findings. Another issue might be the men's perception of the impact on their roles when women move in greater numbers into leadership roles in volunteer organizations.

The process of my study was to look for patterns among the respondents. No special attempt was made to address differences among the women. Another study could be made of the different histories, needs, perceptions of gender issues and attitudes toward social justice issues for women of different age groups, ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientation.

Since this study was done with women of a particular church, comparative studies of women from very different kinds of church settings and other volunteer organizations would be valuable in getting a broader picture of women volunteers.

A study could also be done where attitude information is gathered from congregations regarding volunteering and gender-stereotyping of roles and duties.

Final Conclusions

I have taken a marker in time of women volunteering in the 1980s and looked at it through the lens of women leaders in a liberal religious organization. The image which emerges is that of women carrying on the tradition of volunteering which many women adopted from their parents and which was reinforced as they grew up. These women, for the most part, have woven this volunteering through their other roles of wife, partner, parent, worker outside the home, with different emphasis at different times of their lives.

Volunteering appears to fill a variety of needs not adequately met in other parts of women's lives. Some women have rejected the idea that paid employment is the only or even the best way to achieve self-respect. While the women appear to be pragmatic about their need for adequate income, the study suggests that paid work often does not meet the needs which surface, does not respond to the values identified, or allow for risk-taking which supports and comes from growth.

Responses of the women in my study indicate that some women have rejected societal values of competition, hierarchical organization, and aggression most often seen in for-profit (but evident also in some nonprofit) organizations. Yet women often seem not totally secure in their assessment of their abilities even though they report bringing innovative and participative styles to their leadership activities which were well received. The study suggests that traditional women's values of cooperation, shared decision-making, and individual growth through assertiveness in choice, perhaps can be important in volunteer organizations which are flexible and responsive to women's needs.

While there has been improvement in the last 20 years of women's opportunities for leadership in volunteer roles in the Unitarian Universalist church as there has been in other parts of society, equal distribution of all roles does not appear to have been achieved. Women have not been freed of the menial tasks in order to spend more time in leadership roles.

In conclusion, my study leads me to believe that volunteerism can and does address the needs, values and interests of some women and of society. However, women and the organizations in which they volunteer must be vigilant in identifying and counteracting sexism which reinforces unequal and destructive situations. In social justice arenas it appears that many women in the 1980s are not as willing to commit their volunteering time and energy in this domain. Perhaps they show less interest than in earlier times of social unrest. Solutions to social problems may increasingly require the wider resources of government-supported social agencies as well as the many skills and abilities of women volunteers. Volunteerism in the future will undoubtedly be influenced by evolving psychosocial conditions for women, including increasing opportunities for equitable access to roles in organizations they choose.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Why are you willing to give me your time for this interview?
2. What has been the history of your volunteer work? (When did you start; what did you do, etc.)
3. What led up to and contributed to your decision to volunteer in this church?
4. Why did you choose to volunteer in the Unitarian Universalist Society (vs. other volunteer sites)?
5. What part has the social justice commitment of the Society and the Unitarian Universalist Association played in your volunteer experience?
6. What has this experience been like for you?
(If not answered in #6):
 - a) What rewards do you get from your volunteer experience?
 - b) What difficulties, if any, do you encounter in the experience?
7. What does the organization do to make it:
 - a) appealing and valuable?
 - b) frustrating and difficult?
8. In what ways do you believe that being a woman affects your experience?
9. What internal or external barriers get in the way of your taking on and being effective in roles and behaviors which are non-traditional for women?
10. How would you describe your relationship with the paid professional staff in the Society?

11. How are the multiple roles in your life affected by, and how do they affect, your volunteerism?
12. What skills have you learned or do you need to learn in this volunteer role?
13. If you could sum up in a few words the meaning and contribution of volunteering in the Unitarian Universalist church for you, what would you say?
14. What would be your advice to other women who might be thinking of volunteering in the Unitarian Universalist church as a means toward personal growth and promotion of social justice?
15. What would be your advice to the church on the care and nurturing of volunteers to promote their development as well as to promote social justice?

Appendix B

Written Consent Form

Written Consent Form

Volunteering: An Interview Study of Women Leaders in a Liberal Religious Organization

To participants in this study:

I am Constance LaFerriere, a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts, in Amherst. The subject of my doctoral dissertation is "Volunteering: An Interview Study of Women Leaders in a Liberal Religious Organization." I am interviewing women leaders in Unitarian Universalist Societies in ten states. You are one of approximately forty women to be interviewed.

As a part of this study, you are being asked to participate in a two-hour interview based on a series of questions about your volunteer experience: your history of volunteering, the rewards and/or difficulties engendered and your further reflections on this part of your life.

My goal is to analyze the materials from the interviews in order to better understand your and others' experiences. I wish to add to present knowledge about women volunteers information about how this experience might contribute to, or detract from, their growth and development and to social change. I will also attempt to identify ways in which organizations can respond to volunteers in order to better meet both of their needs.

Each interview will be audiotaped and will be transcribed by me or by a typist who will be committed, as I am, to confidentiality. I will mail you a copy of the tape with the understanding that if you should

decide, and so notify me within one week, that any particular part of the interview should be omitted, I will honor that request. In all written and oral presentations in which I might use materials from your interview, I will use neither your name, names of people mentioned by you nor the name of your Society or city. Transcripts will be typed with initials for names and in the final form the interview material will use pseudonyms.

In signing this form, you are also assuring me that you will make no financial claims for the use of the material in your interview; you are also stating that no medical treatment will be required by you from the University of Massachusetts should any physical injury result from participating in this interview.

I will be glad to answer any questions concerning the research procedures. You are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without prejudice.

I, _____, have read the above statement and agree to participate as an interviewee under the conditions stated above.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Interviewer

Date

Appendix C

Letter to Participants

5 Hadley Street

South Hadley, MA 01075

(Date)

(Jane Doe)

Address

Dear Jane:

I want to thank you so very much for participating in my interview study of Women Volunteer Leaders in Unitarian Universalist churches. I have transcribed the tapes of your interview and am finding the material extremely interesting and useful.

As we agreed at the interview, I am enclosing the tape of your interview for you to keep. Please let me know by (date) if there is anything in the tape you do not want me to use in my final paper. Of course I will not be using real names and places.

Thank you again for your time and courtesy in helping me with my work. I hope it will be a contribution to the Denomination's understanding of our women lay leaders.

Sincerely,

Conny LaFerriere

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