



**Magdalene Institutions:
Recording an Archival and Oral History
A project funded by the**



Topic Guide for Religious Sisters

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Please give your name

Consent to participate: Before starting the interview, I would like to ask you to confirm that you agree to participate in this interview voluntarily and that you are familiar with the information and consent form that I provided to you.

Background

1. Could you tell me something about yourself?
2. Can you tell me a bit about your background?
3. Do you have any thoughts on your upbringing?
4. Can you tell me about the part religion played in your life while you were growing up?

Entry into the Religious Order

1. When did you discover your vocation and what were your thoughts and feelings on your vocation?
2. How old were you when you joined?
3. Why did you decide to join the particular religious order you joined – what influenced you in your decision?
4. Can you tell me a bit about the Religious Order you belong to?
Was it an enclosed order? Did this change over time?
If it was an enclosed order, how did you feel about the possibility of never seeing your family again?
To whom was your order/convent answerable? To the bishop, the provincialate, to the head of the order, or to Rome?
5. Can you tell me how you came to become a member of this order?
Did your family have to pay a dowry for you?
6. What was the training system for religious life? How many years were you a novice? Who trained you and in what ways were you trained?
7. Did you have any doubts about your training or vocation – what were they and how did you deal with them?
8. Did you have any other siblings/relatives who were members of the religious orders/clergy? If so why did they join the order/clergy?
9. Did you ever discuss your experiences of religious with them?
10. Did you begin religious life in the convent that ran the laundry or were you transferred there from elsewhere?
(If transferred) how was this decision made?

11. How did you feel about this?

Life Inside

1. Can you tell me about your first day as a nun?
2. Can you tell me who made the rules?
3. Can you recount your daily routine?
4. What were your responsibilities in the laundry?
5. Did you notice any changes to the laundry regime during the time period you were there?
6. Was every day the same or did you have any special events or holidays?
7. Can you describe the conditions you lived in?
8. Did the Sisters and the women interact together (e.g. eat, sleep etc.) or was this done separately?
9. Can you tell me about how you were treated by your superiors?
How did a Sister become mother superior?
10. Did you experience physical or psychological abuse during your time as a nun?
11. Did you witness others either being physically or psychologically abusive? If so, what was your reaction to this? Why? What was the reaction from other nuns? And what about the reaction of the women?
12. How did you treat the women who worked in the laundry?
13. Can you tell me if you ever physically punished someone while you were a nun in the laundries?
14. If so, can you tell me why you did it?
15. Can you tell me how you showed kindness to the women who worked in the laundry? What was the reaction from other nuns? And what about the reaction of the women?
16. What happened if one of the women did not want to work?
17. Were you educated during your time as a nun and if so can you tell me what sort of education you received?
18. Can you talk a bit about religious worship to me, how does it inform your life?
19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Interacting with Others

1. Can you tell me about your relationship with other members of the religious order you belonged to?
2. What about your relationship with other orders of nuns?
Was there a hierarchy between the Orders?
3. How did you view members of the clergy?

4. How do you think that members of the clergy viewed your order?
5. Can you tell me about your interactions with the outside world?
6. How did you feel towards the women who were sent to the laundries?
At the time, why did you think they were there?
7. Did you have many visitations from the State in the way of inspectors etc.?
8. Can you describe the relationship between the religious orders and the State?
9. What kind of changes have you seen in your Order? Do you approve of these changes? Are there other changes you would like to see?
10. Do you feel the Catholic Church needs reform? If so how?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Personal Impact

1. How do you feel about your time as a nun?
2. Do you have any regrets about becoming a nun? Are there any alternative careers/ lifestyles you would have preferred to have taken?
3. How do you think your experiences in the laundry/ as a nun have affected who you are?
4. If you had not been institutionalised, what do you think you would be doing now?
5. What were the most memorable events in your life?
6. Of all of your accomplishments, what are you the most proud of?

Present Impact

1. How do you feel about the representation of the Magdalene laundries in the popular media?
2. Do you feel any regrets towards the way these women were treated in the institution and in society as a whole?
3. Have you been given an opportunity to speak about your version of events?
4. How is speaking out publically (amongst the religious) viewed?
5. How do you feel about the women who worked in the laundries speaking about their experiences?
6. Do you feel the women who were sent to the laundries should receive compensation and some sort of redress? If so how do you think this should take place?
7. Do you have any regrets about the way these women were treated in the Laundries? Why?
8. Do you have anything else you would like to add?