THE PROCESS OF ADJUSTMENT OF EX-FORMANDI:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY.

A thesis presented to
The Faculty of the Counseling and Educational Psychology Department,
De La Salle University, Manila.

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education, major in Counseling
(MACLING)

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February 2008
De La Salle University

APPROVAL SHEET

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ABSTRACT

In line with the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) method, this study sought to explore the experiences in the process of adjustment of ex-formandi (young men and women who came out of formation programs, where they had been training to become priests, religious brothers and sisters), after they returned to the secular world. Twelve participants made up the sample for the study, comprising 8 women and 4 men. Out of these, 6 participants withdrew themselves, 4 were asked to leave, and a further 2 who were guided to see the need, and consequently, applied themselves to go out.

Using the CQR method, the domains abstracted from the analysis of the data produced the following: Entry Motivations, Reasons for Exit, Transition Experiences, Protective Factors against Maladjustment, and, Risk Factors for Adjustment. These formed the bases for the discussions. A panel of two readers/raters and also, an auditor, were used to discuss and arrive at consensus at various sections of the study, thereby also increasing the credibility of the study.

The study shows that ex-formandi go through a fairly similar path of adjustment: The Termination or Pre-Departure stage, The Exit, The stage of Transition Experiences, and the stage in which they find themselves now - whether maladjusted with emotional hang-ups, or having moved on finely. The study concludes that candidates asked to leave are more likely to face the most of adjustment problems. Given those findings, the researcher recommended that an exit counseling intervention be initiated for ex-formandi. It is postulated that this study will give useful insights to the helping professionals and the formation ministry in the church in aiding ex-formandi.
DEDICATION.

For all called to tread the path of formation,

Whether as a traveler or a travel guide,

Presently engaged or completed,

Or for whatever reason,

Had had to discontinue,

Know always,

In all situations,

God continues to journey with us!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the achievement of this study, I want to seize the opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to God and all who have directly or indirectly contributed to the realization of this product.

The foremost place goes to our Almighty God for the graces and gift of life granted me. To my family, the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) and confreres, and friends, at home in Ghana and also here in the Philippines, whose quality relationships, diverse support, encouragements and assistance have also contributed to this, Thank You!

Similarly, I cannot forget all whose hands and instruction have helped me on the path of education, formal and informal. This is especially so, with the faculty in the De La Salle University of Manila, Philippines: My supervisor, Dr. Nancy Rayos, and members of my academic panel – Dr. Leo Capeding, Dr. Carmelita Pabiton and Dr. Elena Morada; My readers/raters – Mrs. Fe Nenette Nenucca Canlas, Fr. Tony Menezes, SVD, and auditor, Dr. Flora Calleja. All those involved in the editing works, especially, Mrs A. Valeriana for English and Ms. Jose Cristena M. Pariña, for the editing to accord with the formats of the American Psychological Association (APA), are also not forgotten either.

May God almighty abundantly bless you all!
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CHAPTER I
THE PROBLEM AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is concerned with giving the introduction and background of this study. It also reviews related literature in the area of adjustment studies. The initial conceptual framework, statement of the problem and significance of this study are also given. Terms used in this work are also clarified or defined here for clarification.

Background of the Study

Every year, young men and women enter the priestly and religious formation institutes or houses in the Roman Catholic Church, to begin their preparation programs (formation) to become professed nuns, brothers and priests. Indeed, many final professions and priestly ordinations are held in institutes, parishes and communities to mark the successful completion of such formation or preparatory programs. Those moments are often joyful, not only for the person newly finally professed, or the new priest ordained, but a joy that extends to his or her extended family and friends, parishioners and community members, as well as other well-wishers.

The above scenario notwithstanding, the case is also true, that every year, the number of people in a particular group of formandi falls short of the total number expected to complete (compared to the intake numbers), when, either a formandee decides freely to call it quits and leave, or, when the candidate, against his or her own wishes, is asked by the congregation (or diocese), or by one’s family or other people to
withdraw (Schuth, 1999; Wedl & Navelevanko, 1998; Ugandan Ex-Seminarians Say Why They Didn’t Make it to the Priesthood, 2007). In a ten year study for example, of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) in the Philippines 1993 – 2003 (On Perseverance and Non-Perseverance of Our Candidates), it was found out that the overall perseverance rate for the candidates, meaning those who were still with the congregation as of March 2005, was 33%. Moffett (1983) also mentions that from experience, a similar figure of approximately one-third of the young men entering their Holy Cross Brothers’ novitiate in the US make it to final profession.

It has been the observation of the researcher, that while some candidates do cope or adjust well with the consequent associated stresses, others do find it particularly hard, especially, if they were asked to withdraw against their wishes. This has to do with accepting the fact that they were sent away, and that they may no longer be able to become what they had earlier dreamed of. This brings about some difficulties in adjusting to their situations.

It has been noted of ex-formandi, who after exiting from their formation programs, did not want to have anything to do with the religious congregations they had attempted joining. Others felt rejected. Some found it difficult to even go back to their families and friends. A few also became lukewarm to the Church, and some even stopped going to church altogether! (Rice, 1990). The story of the well known author, Karen Armstrong is a case in point. She quitted seven years after she had entered the convent at the age of seventeen. She afterwards professed that she had become an atheist (Armstrong, 2004; Quinn, 2006). In fact, the case was recounted to the researcher, of a seminarian from one of the Asian countries, who after being sacked from the seminary,
committed suicide. It was discovered of another, that he poisoned the water tank of the seminary before leaving the campus!

How do these people withdrawing from formation programs, face the stress of having to discontinue in the way of life earlier dreamt of, and reintegrate back into their regular or secular communities? What kind of coping strategies do they use to cope with the above situation? How does that situation affect the quality and process of adjustment that they are able to make? These are some of the questions that this study hopes to provide insights.

This study looked closely into the events and processes of exiting from formation programs, and the adjustments undertaken by ex-formandi. The exit may be comparable to any other stress provoking event or situation in life as a stressor (Park & Folkman, 1996). When a candidate is informed that he or she can no longer continue with a particular congregation/seminary and has to withdraw; or even after one has herself or himself freely decided to go away, the quitting and going home, the experience of having to reintegrate into the secular society, having to explain what happened to curious friends and family members, can all be stressful indeed!

It is true that a number of those quitting (and for that matter, those forced to withdraw), are usually far in a minority, compared to the number of those successfully making it to the end of the initial formation (Schuth, 1999). These fewer numbers nonetheless, warrant the attention of counselors and those in charge of priestly and religious formation; for as members of families and communities, and for that matter, one in a network of relationships, the effect of the success or failure, of the candidate leaving
the formation program, goes to affect a lot more people other than the sole candidate who quits the formation program, for whatever reason(s).

Many researches have been done on the adjustments of people to different situations and events, like when people lose an organ or part of the body, e.g. through vehicular accidents; pregnancy lost, divorce or separation; sexual abuse, the acquiring of HIV-AIDS or cancer; a sudden turn in fortune (for better or worse), among others. (Thompson et al., 1992; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Hurtig & Park, 1989; Terry & Hynes, 1998; Stanton et al., 1998; Silagan, 1999; Meyer, 2003). In spite of the number of these studies, not one has been found, applied to the situation as described in this study – of people in training to become priests, brothers or nuns who had to discontinue or be withdrawn, and the readjustment they have to make. Hence, the gap is hoped to be filled with the aid of this study. Understanding the situations, as well as the process of adjustment that the ex-formandi undergo, can put us all in a better position to prepare them before allowing or sending them out of the formation houses. This would be in order, so that they can be helped to cope better, and hopefully, be better psychologically adjusted afterwards. Furthermore, this study would help them be rid of emotional baggage which can be detrimental to any fully functioning person.

**Review of Related Literature**

In this section, the literature related to the present study is reviewed. Specifically, it looked into the nature of change and transition with the related stress that it causes, and, the coping strategies that were used, as well as some factors which influenced how the process of transition and adjustment took place. Factors relating to the entering as well as
also the exiting from the religious vocation; the grieving process and the emotions that can be connected to all these are also looked into.

*Change – Transition.*

This study of the withdrawal from a formation program has highly to do with the changes that occurred in the life of the formandi or individual concerned. As a result of this, insights from transition psychology would be beneficial in exploring the process of the adjustment that took place in the lives of the participants of this study. This is in view of the change from life in the formation house, back to their homes or the secular world.

Bridges (1980) distinguishes between the terms “change” and “transition.” He underlines that a *change* is a shift in the external world of an individual, while *transition* is an internal process that people go through in response to that shift. While change involves situational and interpersonal learning and un-learning, transitions involve at least two levels of adaptation – behavioral and cognitive restructuring which occurs at different levels of the transition cycle (Williams, 1999). Not all changes cause transitions. Most causes of transitions are said to be associated with significant life events which are changes to the individual’s role or environment that require a radical restructuring of the individual’s view of themselves and their world. Such is the case when there is termination of ones’ priestly or religious vocation and withdraws (or is withdrawn) from the formation program and goes back home. It would not be unfounded to imagine that these are very significant events in the lives of the young men and women so affected, and thus their experience of the termination would also set about within them, similar
cognitive restructuring. As Williams says, this is a process that “can be highly disruptive to the individual’s peace of mind, competence, performance and relationships.”

Williams notes that transitions often reach a crisis point at about six months after a change (plus or minus a month). The transition process however takes a longer time than most people expect. It is typically six to twelve (6-12) months, sometimes, much longer. An extended crisis can occur when an individual is unable to come to terms with a change or trauma, and this could last for several months or years. A case of multiple transitions can also occur if an individual is unable to recover from one or more transitions and is yet hit by having to meet more changes. These can produce a cumulative deterioration in the well-being of the affected persons. The effects of transitions on the lives of individuals goes beyond their own lives and roles, as those transitions can also trigger other transitions of significant people connected to the person in transition. Those people would include their families, friends, colleagues, helpers, and such similar people in their lives.

Stress.

Hopson (1976), Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman (1995), and others recognized transition as a primary cause of stress, thus the transition that took place when one quitted the formation program also engendered some related stress for which the affected person would need to make some adjustments. Stress is any circumstance that threatens or is perceived to threaten one’s well-being and thereby taxes one’s coping abilities. It may be temporary or of a long-term effect; mild or severe. The threat may be to one’s immediate physical safety, long-range security, self-esteem, reputation or peace of mind (Weiten &
Lloyd, 2003; Kaplan, 1996). When stress has a full impact on a person, it can lead to unfavorable strain on a person’s emotions, thought processes, behaviors and physical condition, i.e. its effect is noticeable on the physiological, psychological and behavioral levels of life, (Newstrom, 2007; Santrock, 2005).

People may deal with their stresses by trying to prevent them from occurring in the first place, or they may escape from the stress or stress inciting event (Newstrom). That, for example, could be the case of a formandee who may request to freely withdraw from a formation program if s/he finds that the life or experience therein, is too stressful. Finally, people may try to use various resources available to them, to cope with the stress that they have. It is also known, that the same stressor may have different impact on different people. Some may in fact perceive that same event as not stressful at all, while others can perceive the same event as a challenge or an opportunity (Butcher, Mineka & Hooley, 2004; Gil, 2003a).

Stress has generally been viewed as a set of neurological and physiological reactions that serves as an adaptive function. A vast number of stress literature points to the fact that stress is part of the experience of daily living and it is unavoidable. Complete freedom from stress is death (Selye, 1980). Therefore, when an ex-formandee finds his or her exit quite stressful, then he or she would engage in resources or means to deal with it. These means may or may not be healthy. It may help the person to be either well or maladjusted to the event of the exit.
Coping Strategies.

Coping strategies are those techniques that are used by individuals with the intention of reducing the effects of stress (Terry & Hynes, 1998). These can also be useful in the adjustment process of the ex-formandee. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinguished between coping strategies that are employed to confront and seek solutions to the situation. This type, they described as problem-focused strategies. On the other hand, when the strategies are concentrated on improving the associated level of emotional distress, they are referred to as emotion-focused strategies. Central to studies/researches into coping has been an examination of the links between the use of specific efforts and psychological adjustment to stress. In a large number of cross-sectional studies, problem-focused strategies have been found to be associated with better adjustment (Terry and Hynes, 1998; Vitaliano et al. 1987; Taylor 1983).

Many researchers have tried to identify and categorized the techniques that people use to deal with stress (e.g. Newstrom 2007, and Kaplan 1996). Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989) in their study of coping mechanism, sorted their subjects’ coping responses into 14 categories. These are: active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint coping, seeking social support for emotional reasons, seeking social support for instrumental reasons, positive reinterpretation and growth, acceptance, turning to religion, focus on and venting of emotions, denial, behavioral disengagement, mental disengagement, and alcohol-drug disengagement.

Weiten and Lloyd (2003) also mentioned of some relatively common coping patterns that tend to be less than optimal. These include giving up, aggression, self-indulgence, blaming yourself, and defense mechanisms. They mentioned that some of
these may be helpful at times and in certain situations, but more often than not, they are counter-productive.

_An Overview of the Religious Formation Program._

In order that candidates to the priestly and religious life would be well equipped to become full members of the various congregations that they join, and to achieve the aims and objectives enshrined in the visions and missions of those congregations, candidates aspiring to join the various congregations are given the necessary basic training or formation. These will equip them, building upon their own talents, to become successful members of the respective congregations in the future. The training or formation, covers areas including the academic, spiritual, pastoral, social and ministerial areas. The *Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life* of the administrative headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church at the Holy See (The Vatican), outlined in the document _Directives for Formation in Religious Institutes_, (1990) the following:

The primary end of formation is to permit candidates to the religious life and the young professed, first to discover and, later, to assimilate and deepen that in which religious identity consists. Only under these conditions will the person dedicated to God be inserted into the world as a significant, effective, and faithful witness. (paragraph 6).

Elsewhere, paragraph 42 of the same document also makes an important observation pertaining to the formation of candidates for the priestly and religious life:

… It certainly is not required that a candidate for the religious life be able to assume all of the obligations of the religious life immediately, but he or she should be found capable of doing so progressively. The possibility of making such a judgment justifies the time and means employed in reaching it. This is the purpose of the stage preparatory to the novitiate, no matter
what name may be given to it: postulancy, pre-novitiate, etc. It pertains exclusively to the proper law of institutes to determine the manner in which it is carried out, but whatever these may be, no one can be admitted without suitable preparation.

Aspirancy.

The process of formation begins with the contact by a prospective candidate with the Vocations Director of the designated congregation (or diocese). This is the person designated by the superior (and his/her council), to be in charge of recruitments. He or she is officially, the first point of contact, and as such, is in charge of giving all the necessary pieces of information about the society (or congregation) to prospective candidates. The vocations director at the same time is the one who, in a preliminary way can ascertain the suitability of a person making contact with his or her congregation, using much of the factors or criteria earlier mentioned.

The period after contact until one is admitted into the formation program is referred to as the aspirancy, and the person at this stage is usually referred to as an aspirant. During this time, the person aspiring to join a society may keep in touch with the vocations director, be invited to special programs like retreats organized for the group of aspirants. The aspirant may also be invited to visit some communities or formation houses of the particular society. Some congregations though, already formally begin their formation programs with this stage with a residential duration. It may last from about three months to a year. In the SVD congregation for example, it is customary in many of their provinces worldwide, that an aspirant maintains contact with the vocations director for a period of not less than one year before being admitted into the formal formation program.
The Postulancy.

Until one undergoes the novitiate program, the aspirant, after completing the aspirant program, follows into the period known as the postulancy, and he or she is now referred to as a postulant. The duration of this period depends again on the specific requirements of a congregation and what kind of things go into the content of that duration. In the case of candidates studying for the priesthood for example, this may also more or less coincide with about three or four years of philosophical studies in college or the major seminary. For sisters/nuns, it could be about two years. Basically, in the postulancy, the candidates are led through various programs to develop upon what had been begun in the aspirancy; to learn more of the life of the community that they would want to be committed to in the future. At the end of this stage of formation, the candidate proceeds to the next stage: the novitiate, whereupon he or she is then called a novice.

The Novitiate.

The nature and content of this stage is covered by the Code of the Canon Law (nos. 646-648). This is also reiterated in the Directives on Formation In Religious Institutes earlier mentioned. Paragraphs 45 & 46 state:

The novitiate, by which life in the institute begins, is ordered so that the novices better recognize their divine vocation and one of which is, moreover, proper to the institute; that they experience the institute's manner of living; that they be formed in mind and heart by its spirit; and that their intention and suitability be tested better so that he may make a mature and responsible decision about his vocation.

The novices are to be led to cultivate human and Christian virtues; they are to be introduced to a fuller way of perfection by prayer and self-denial; they are to be instructed to contemplate the mystery of salvation, and to read and meditate on the Sacred Scriptures; they are to be prepared to cultivate the worship of God in the sacred liturgy; they are to be trained in a way of life consecrated by the evangelical counsels to God and humankind in Christ; they
are to be educated about the character and spirit, purpose and discipline, history and life of their institute, and they are to be imbued with a love for the Church and its sacred pastors."

The formation personnel in charge of the program here, which lasts for at least one year, and may be up to two years (or still even further possibly extended), is the novice master or mistress, with or without the assistance of other personnel. Novices who successfully go through the novitiate program, and like to continue to pursue with the religious life in the institute concerned, apply to profess their *First Vows* at the end of the novitiate. When the superiors of the institute evaluate reports on the candidate and deem him or her capable, he or she is then accepted and admitted for the profession of the first vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. It is noteworthy to mention here that for men training to become priests, some institutes situate the novitiate program at the beginning, before proceeding to the major seminary training, while others situate it after the first part of the seminary training in philosophical studies (in college), then continue with the theological studies after the one year or so in the novitiate. Furthermore, it must be noted here that for clerical candidates to the diocesan priesthood, the novitiate may be replaced by what may be described as the “Spiritual Year.” Secondly, diocesan candidates do not undertake the solemn profession of the religious vows.

*Temporary Vows.*

The First Vows, which is also referred to as the temporary vows, lasts for a year. This is renewed every year for between about three to six years or so, depending on such things as whether one is training for the priesthood, or the other states as a nun or a brother. As well, the program of studies being followed (e.g. theological studies), or
professional or apostolic activities involved may also influence the duration of the period of temporary vows for an individual. The Vatican document earlier stated says: “While the temporary profession of vows is probationary in character, the first vows and the renewals, allow the young religious to share in the consecration proper to the religious state,” (paragraph 56 of Directives).

Perpetual/Final Vows.

At the end of the specified period for temporary vows, (accordingly as laid down by an institute), candidates in temporary vows who have become convinced of their desire and capability to continue their lives perpetually as professed religious priests, sisters or brothers may apply and be admitted to make their final commitments through the Perpetual or Final vows. This is preceded by another period of preparation of about three months or more leading to this final profession. This period of preparation for the final vows is sometimes referred to as the tertiate or the juniorate, especially in the programs for the nuns or brothers. It is a period of deep reflection upon the final commitments that one is about to make. Up to the time of the final profession of vows, a candidate is free to withdraw easily from the formation program at any time. However, once a person makes the lifelong commitment (in the case of diocesan clerical candidates, this may be at the stage of diaconal ordination) through the public profession of religious vows, a lot of difficulties may be encountered if one decided to change his or her mind after the final profession or the diaconal or priestly ordination. Permission had to be sought from the Vatican for laicizing – being relieved from the vows and returned to the lay state. That can indeed be quite an arduous affair (Rice, 1990).
Other aspects of the formation program: Apostolic/Pastoral exposures.

Whether one is training to become a priest, brother or nun, various activities or programs are included in the formation programs so that the candidates are exposed to the practical experiences of the world around them in which they are to live and work. This also offers the candidates an insight into the full life of their finally professed members. Such programs may include activities like working with the street children (or families); in a slum area or in prisons; visiting the sick in the hospitals, teaching catechism to children or adults, working with the youth or other groups in the parish, barrios etc. These activities may usually be carried out during the weekends. They may also be the focus during holidays for seminarians (holiday apostolate).

In addition for the seminarians, a whole year (called the pastoral year in some cases, or regency in others) is part of the formation program in which the seminarian is guided in a full academic year outside the seminary compound and in a parish, an outstation or an institute. For those orders or congregations that are missionary and international (e.g. the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD), the Jesuits (SJ) or Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit (SSpS), some of their candidates may choose or be encouraged to have this program in other cultures other than their own, or overseas in another country (e.g. the Cross-Cultural Pastoral Year or Overseas Training Program of the SVD).

Contemplative, Diocesan and Religious Congregations.

These terms have been mentioned earlier but it is necessary to clarify them. They relate to the two main patterns of priestly and religious life in the Catholic Church. Diocesan priests or religious (including women congregations) belong to a particular
diocese and hence, usually live and work in that diocese under the bishop of that particular diocese. On the other hand, members of religious and/or missionary (international) orders work and live under the religious provincial superiors of their orders. Theoretically, their members may be able to work in any of the dioceses or countries in which their order works (e.g. the SVD works today in over 70 countries). While the religious congregations profess the solemn vows of chastity, obedience and poverty, that is not the case of the former, who however, have to pledge obedience to their bishops.

Furthermore, contemplative institutes or orders are those which, like the Discalced Order of Carmelites (OCD) for example, or the Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration (SSpSAP), or the Poor Clares, are considered as non-active orders because their life and activities (essentially of prayers and silence) almost entirely happens within the confines of the walls of their monasteries or nunneries (for this reason, they are also referred to as the cloistered nuns or monks). These are in the strict sense, the monks and nuns (for the men and women respectively). One of the participants in this study used to be with one such group before sent out.

**Entering and Quitting of Religious Vocations**

Little study and material is available on this issue of vocation. Rulla (2003), and Rulla, Ridick & Imoda (1995, 1988), have however, undertaken essential studies in this field and making good contribution to the insights on vocations.

People do have divergent motivations for wanting to become a priest or religious (Hoge, 2002; Kane, 1955; Wedl & Nalevanko, 1998). Sometimes, this motivation is not
very clear at the time of admission into the formation program, but is clarified and solidified as one progresses on the initial formation program. It is common, to find among the reasons given by seminarians, novices, and others, that they have also come to join this life because they were genuinely inspired and influenced at their young age by a nun or priest (Rice, 1990); that they had followed a brother or sister, or a friend into this vocation; or that it was perhaps their own family members who urged them into it (Jones, 2000; Hoge, 2002). There are certainly also, those too, who embraced this vocation as a result of their own personal response to the “call” to the priestly and religious life.

Whatever the initial motivation may have been, prospective candidates or aspirants to the priestly and religious life are usually required to meet certain requirements set by the religious institutes or seminaries, often governed by the codes of the Canon Law of the church. They may include a sign of sincere desire to be a nun, brother or priest; an appropriate academic qualification; sound physical and mental health; a good moral life; ability to live a community life or relate well with other people; not being bonded into marriage (i.e. being single); a good Catholic faith; and so forth, (e.g., Canon 597 of The Code of Canon Law; and The Constitutions of the Society of the Divine Word, #511.4).

Furthermore, it is the case that even after one had been accepted into the initial formation program, his/her progress in these different areas may be monitored. An unsatisfactory exhibition of elements in one or more of them may indeed be a contributing factor to withdrawing a candidate. Similarly, certain questions which Kelly (1958) says are asked in selecting a candidate for admission into a religious life, and emphasizes the qualities desired in such a person, may also continue to be gauged in a
person. They include: “is the candidate emotionally mature?”; “can the candidate observe the obligation of celibacy without extra-ordinary difficulty”; and “has the candidate the solid piety required for leading a life in which regular performance of spiritual exercises plays a prominent part?” (p. 230 ff.).

From the studies of Rulla et. al., among the findings and hypotheses made, it was seen that the vocation to the priestly and religious life can be comparable with other secular vocation studies such as entries into new colleges or work settings. They mention the fact that entrants into religious vocations may have conscious as well as subconscious reasons or ideals for embracing this vocation. Secondly, new entrants almost always seem to have high ideals about the group they seek to join. Upon entering, they may find out that life may not be as exactly as their own stereotyped expectations. These may lead to some inconsistencies between the ideal self and actual self, and affecting some personal values and attitudes (Cruz, 2003). It is only to be expected that this confusion or conflict may lead some to eventually drop from the formation program themselves (Armstrong, 2004). Others may continue, but may not function well because of the inconsistencies. These inconsistencies surely affect their lives in the formation house.

The above factors then, can also be contributing factors to being asked to eventually withdraw. It is so especially, if the formation personnel or superiors have justifiable reasons to warrant their suspicion that with those indications of traits observed, a formandee might not be able to function well and be happy in the future with his or her priestly or religious life. Such was the true story of Maria Augusta Kutschera (later becoming Mrs. Maria von Trapp) as the Sister Maria in the all time popular musical classic and hit, *The Sound of Music* (Wise, 1965). It should be considered however, that
normally, one is not just sent away outright from the formation program, but is given the chance to work on and improve whatever weakness or lacking may be the issue or concern.

Rulla et. al (1988, p.166) say that one could roughly say that the process of leaving a religious vocation is at least, as a result of the interaction among the following five elements: (1) supernatural factors and the person’s cooperation with them (2) personality characteristics of the individual (3) pressures coming from the group or the kind of community in which the person lives (4) factors related to the norms, constitutions and structures of the vocational institutions, and (5) pressures emerging from the historical socio-cultural milieu in general, and more specifically, from the structural functioning of the church.

**Emotional Processing**

Emotional processing refers to a gradual reduction of emotional responding over time. The concept was first introduced by Rachman in 1980 to refer to the way an individual processes stressful life events. He defined it as “a process whereby emotional disturbances are absorbed, and decline to the extent that other experiences and behavior can proceed without disruption.” He elaborates further that, successful processing can be gauged from a person’s ability to talk about, see, listen to or be reminded about the significant events without experiencing distress or disruptions (Rachman, 2001). An elaboration of the word “process” may help us to further capture the above concept.

The word “process” derives from the old French 'procés', and from the Latin 'processus' as meaning 'advancing.' It is defined by the Collins English Dictionary as: (1)
A series of actions directed to achieving a result or condition (2) A method of doing or producing something (3) A forward movement (4) A course of time. Focussing therefore on the key element of how an emotional experience changes would capture a core meaning of 'processing'. The article *What is Emotional Processing* points out that in a vast array of the use of the word “processing” in psychological literature, it has a shared meaning arising and centres around psychological processes or mechanisms which are used to convert a stimulus (auditory, information, memory, face) to a mental state, usually a more settled state. That could be for example, understanding the meaning of a word, recognizing a face, absorbing or storing a memory, often converting stimuli into psychological meaning.

Thus, emotional processing would refer to the psychological, psychophysiological and psycho-neurological mechanisms by which distressed reactions in individuals are converted or changed into non distressed reactions. Applying this to the topic of our concern here, then, we can say that the emotional processing of an ex-formandee would involve the mechanisms by which he or she advances from the initial disruption or disturbances because of the withdrawal, to a point whereby no observable behaviour or disruption is noticed in the person.

*The Transition and Grieving Process about Leaving the Formation Program*

Whether an ex-formandee had freely left or was made to quit, the withdrawal of a candidate from the formation program can be taken as a loss of one’s treasured vocation, even if only for an initial period. Indeed, for some people, it may be not only a loss, but
would mean the death for the vocation once desired. It may also cause the loss of one’s Catholic or even, the Christian faith (e.g. as earlier cited of Karen Armstrong)! What is the process that the withdrawn candidates (also the quitters) go through to “mourn” for this loss? The loss of one’s vocation can also in many ways be comparable to the loss of a job. Common emotions may be identifiable. The *National Endowment for Financial Education®* (NEFE®) says for example, that “losing your job can trigger a range of emotions…Many times, people do not realize that the feelings of anger, disappointment, fear, and frustration are common responses to being laid off or terminated.” They also add that job loss (and for that matter, the loss of a vocation) often triggers a loss of self-esteem, and normal feelings may range from mild distress to devastation. The *American Association of Retired Persons* (AARP) provides a list of descriptive words of people under these circumstances:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overwhelmed</th>
<th>Disgusted</th>
<th>Resentful</th>
<th>Embarrassed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>Demoralized</td>
<td>Vindictive</td>
<td>Humiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Irritable</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Obsessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dull</td>
<td>Disbelieving</td>
<td>Depressed</td>
<td>Panicky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>Shaky</td>
<td>Trapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilty</td>
<td>Distracted</td>
<td>Powerless</td>
<td>Stupid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moody</td>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>Immobilized</td>
<td>Pessimistic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not all the descriptions of feelings above are felt by everyone at the same time. However, what one goes through after termination from his or her vocation, is similar to job loss, death of loved ones, and anticipation of one’s own death.

The *Stages of Death and Dying* postulated by Kübler-Ross (1969), can prove helpful in giving an insight to this. Her experiences and studies state that one goes
through a dying/grieving process of five stages: *Denial* – there is the initial reaction of shock when a sick or dying person first becomes aware of his or her impending death. People may refuse to believe or to deny it; *Anger* – people become angry, irritable and frustrated. They may commonly ask questions such as “Why me,” and as Kübler-Ross says, “they may become angry at God, their fate, or a family member.” Their anger may be displaced onto other people around them. The third stage is *Bargaining*. In the case of a terminally ill patient, they may attempt to negotiate with the physicians, friends and family, or even with God, that in exchange for a cure, he or she would fulfill a promise or a project. The fourth stage is *Depression*. There may be clinical signs of this stage such as sleep disturbances, hopelessness and possible suicidal ideation. The depression may be as a result of one’s reaction to his or her life, or it may be in anticipation to the approaching death. The last stage is *Acceptance*, wherein one realizes that death is inevitable and thus accepts the universality of that experience.

The AARP has an additional stage of “Shock” preceding the “Denial,” stage of Kübler-Ross, thus having six stages. Her five stages have received the criticism that they may not contain all the processes of death, or that people facing death may not necessarily go through those stages in the above order. For others, they may not exhibit all the above stages since a lot of personal factors relating to individuals come into play in dealing with the experience of dying (Santrock, 1999; Wortman & Silver, 1987). Furthermore, some phases of this cycle may be repeated (Williams, 1999). Nonetheless, the above model is useful for us in seeing to the processes of grieving and adjustment that a candidate may undergo after leaving the formation program. This may be especially so,
if it is the case that the formandee was asked to, or led to withdraw against his or her own will when least expected.

It may be observed further, that candidates may deny the fact that they had had to quit or be withdrawn, or that it was happening to them also; they may have become angry with the formation personnel, classmates or other people around them; they may attempt to plead or bargain that if allowed one more chance to stay on, they may measure up to expectations; these whole experiences may lead them to among other things, hopelessness and sleepless nights etc. Some may become depressed. If they move on, the candidates may then come to accept the reality of their situation. While these feelings may not be pronounced at all, especially, in the case of those withdrawing by themselves, it would not be far fetched, to say that they may nonetheless, also experience some of the above reactions.

Although the pattern of inquiry of the process of adjustment in this study follows closely Kübler-Ross’ emotional phases of grief and adjustment, it is worthwhile to also take a look at other insights of approaches to transition and adaptation. Williams (1999) adapted earlier works of Hopson, Adams and Scally (1976, 1981) to have a phases and features of the transition cycle (or process). This is in five phases also and across it, the person in transition may fluctuate somewhere between an emotional low of distress or despair and a high of well-being. This depends upon the triggering event, whether being seen as positive or negative (traumatic). The five phases are: (i) First shock – a range of excitement and numbness, disbelief (ii) Provisional adjustment – between honeymoon and denial (or minimizing the reality of the event) (iii) Inner contradictions comprising feelings of uncertainty, lose of confidence, confusion and depression (iv) Inner crisis in
which one really hits a low point with no positive good feeling whatsoever roughly about six months from the event; and (v) Re-construction & recovery: at this stage from about seven or eight months onwards, the person begins to let go and accepts the situation. Exploration and testing of alternative things or life choices may be undertaken which may lead to a transformed person with a new confidence level. On the other hand, when one has not been able to let go of the pains of the event and remain in crisis, one may end up being in an extended crisis or at best, make only a partial recovery.

In a related study of considering the adjustment of people in the event of disability, Livneh (1984) proposed a unified approach to existing models of adaptation to disability which also has a bearing for any study of adjustments such as in this present one. After analyzing over forty (40) explicit and implicit stage models of adjustment (to disability), Livneh proposed a five stages process, labeling the first stage as the initial impact, which includes two sub-stages: (a) shock, and (b) anxiety. The second stage is defense mobilization, which includes two somewhat similar components: (a) bargaining, and (b) denial. The third stage is initial realization or recognition, which is also divided into two parts: (a) mourning and/or depression, and (b) internalizing anger.

Stage four is called retaliation or rebellion and is composed of one major category that includes both direct and indirect methods of externalizing anger and aggressiveness. The fifth and final stage is labeled reintegration or reorganization. It is composed of three separate sub-stages: (a) a cognitive sub-stage (acknowledgment or reconciliation), (b) an affective sub-stage (acceptance or assimilation), and (c) a behavioral sub-stage comprising a final adjustment, adaptation, or reconstruction, (Thomas & Siller, 1999).
In concluding the above section, we see in the overview that the stage theories that exist in studies to explain the processes of adjustments cover more or less the same concepts and may be said to span three stages (Bridges, 1980) to up to six, but commonly, five stages.

**Factors Influencing the Transition-Adjustment Process**

It is not uncommon to find situations in which many people may experience a common event or phenomenon, yet, the effect on the various people result in different consequences (Gill, 2003). Such situations raise the issue that a number of different factors may be at the bases of all these. That for example, has led to the basis of the Rational Emotive Therapy (as well as other cognitive approaches) in counseling, whereby the founder, Albert Ellis (1989) and followers, would stress that it is not an event, but the interpretation and beliefs about it that leads to the different reactions that we witness in different people. In the same vein, it is to be expected that diverse reactions are going to emerge from the accounts of the young men and women who have encountered the same situation of being withdrawn from a formation program; or having made the same decision to freely withdraw from it. This section takes a look at some of those factors that may be responsible for the different reactions and the adjustments that follow.

In following much of the framework of Taylor and Aspinwall (1996) in their examination of mediating and moderating processes in psychosocial stress, we may make an adapted classification of the factors of our concern in this study into the following areas: personality (also seen as an internal factor), socio-cultural, economic and external factors.
Personality factors may comprise individual traits that contribute to how the event of withdrawal is appraised, the type of coping strategies used, and the process of adjustment that takes place. The following are considered:

**Optimism** – this is defined as a general tendency to expect good outcomes (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003). Research suggests that optimists cope with stressful situations or events in a more adaptive ways as opposed to pessimists. Pessimists are more likely to deal with those situations by avoiding, giving up, or engaging in denial. Optimists would emphasize the positive derived from their experiences and seek out social support and action-oriented problem focused solutions (Chang, 1998).

**Hardiness** – this is a personality factor composed of several characteristics such as control (the belief that one causes the events of one’s life and can influence one’s environment); challenge (a willingness to undertake change and confront new activities, providing new opportunities for growth), Taylor and Aspinwall, 1996; commitment (the tendency to involve one’s self in what one encounters). Hardy individuals may appraise potentially negative and stressful events more favorably than those less in hardiness.

**Psychological control** – this is defined as the belief that one can determine one’s own internal states and behavior, influencing the person’s environment to bring about desired outcomes. Investigations have shown across different events that the belief in this control is linked to emotional well-being, successful coping with an undesirable (stressful) event (Thompson & Spacapan, 1991).

**Other personality factors** – in different studies and upon different areas, the following have also been found to contribute to a person’s handling of events: self-
confidence, ego-strength; high self-esteem and a sense of humor, among other things (Antonovsky, 1979; Holahan & Moos, 1987; Cousins, 1979).

Another area affecting the impact and adjustability to an event, has to do with the social ties that one has. Social support can be defined as information from others that one is loved and cared for, esteemed (or respected) and valued as part of a network of communication and mutual obligations (Cobb, 1976). Different types of support may be discerned: **appraisal support** which involves helping individuals to understand their stressful situations better and what resources may be needed to deal with the event. There is also **tangible assistance** which involves the provision of material support like services, financial assistance, or goods. Thus economic concerns can be addressed under this umbrella. **Information support** involves the provision of specific information about an event and the resources for coping with it. On the other hand, **emotional support** reassures an individual that he or she is a valuable person cared for by others (Taylor & Aspinwall, 1996). An ex-formandee who benefits considerably from these social support can be expected to cope and adjust better in contradistinction to the one who is poorly provided with these supports.

Weiten and Lloyd (2003) have summarized numerous studies and indicated that, social support is clearly associated with better mental and physical health. Williams (1999) talks in similar terms as the support network, but mentions them as enabling factors that facilitate a smooth transition to take place. He names them as economic security, emotional security, supportive environment, health, prior transition support and
skill. The lack of these factors, he acknowledges, can inhibit the transition and hence, the adjustment process.

A further set of influencing factors are what may be classified as the external factors or resources. These may be diverse set of environmental conditions, ranging from the physical environment to social roles and other aspects of the individual’s place in a society (Taylor & Aspinwall, 1996). Understood this way, we might as well add the cultural elements in the particular society or environment from which the formandee comes from and where the formation had occurred. Furthermore, we add also, the culture into which one returns upon withdrawing from the formation program. The beliefs and expectations, the worldviews etc. at the basis of the particular culture of a group may enable or inhibit the adjustment process. In an interdependent or collectivist culture for example, more people of the extended family and community would become interested and involved in the affairs and happenings to the ex-formandee than may be found in an independent or individualistic culture (Gardener & Kosmitzki, 2002; Matsumoto, 2000), where more or less, each one minds his or her “own business.” Some of these cultural elements come out further in the next section.

**Society’s Reactions to the Exiter**

There are moderating factors that may influence the way a person perceives and reacts to the stresses of everyday life. As mentioned earlier, these factors may include personal efficacy, the hardiness, past experiences, optimism, and even the genetic and earlier familial influences of the individual (Kaplan, 1996; Weiten & Lloyd, 2003). Another is also the social support system. Of course, sometimes, elements in these social
bonds can also be stressors themselves. Research evidences suggest however, that the overall effect is more beneficial than detrimental (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003).

In addition to these benefit is the highly social regard for the priests and religious. In most Catholic communities like in the Philippines, the priests and religious are highly regarded and respected because of the nature of their vocation. They are considered for high social status (Rice, 1990; Cruz, 2003; Fernandez, 2001; Hoge, 2005). This factor greatly influences the candidates pursuing studies to become nuns and priests or religious. With such a high placement, a person quitting from this category of vocation may often fall within what Ebaugh (1988) says society may see, under her terms, as a socially undesirable role change, when one relinquishes a lifestyle that is appraised or sanctioned by the society (this is against the socially desirable one, when e.g. one changes to become an ex-drug addict or ex-prostitute). Rice (1990, p.53) reports that it used to be said in rural Ireland, that a family gets respect from having “a pump in the yard, a bull in the field, and a son in the priesthood.” He adds that “to lose that son means an acute humiliation, friends’ looking away, neighbors sniggering and wagging their heads.”

Ebaugh says that a kind of social stigma comes with the socially undesirable role change, with the implication that the individual has somehow failed at the previous “good” role. Under those circumstances people may feel that such role changes as divorce for example, “connotes failure, irresponsibility, and a threat to the basic social system” (p. 335). She acknowledges that:
The combination of an exiter’s presentation of self after a role exit and society’s reaction to that exit makes the adaptation process either more difficult or easier for the individual…

The kinds of feelings and coping mechanisms that exiters experience in the weeks and months after making the exit are highly dependent of how significant others react to the exit (pp. 335-336).

In the movie *The Nun’s Story*, (Blanke, 1958), Dr. Vanderman tells his daughter (Sr. Luke) as she leaves for the convent, that once she feels she could not stand the kind of life in the convent, she could leave and she would always be welcomed back home. Such an exhortation in real life, is helpful to the formandee who may have to withdraw from a formation program. He or she would always have the feeling that she or he may be welcomed back home, should something go awry. On the other hand, it is not uncommon, that at times, significant others, especially, the family members or relatives may consider the quitting as a failure and/or dishonor to them. This makes it difficult for the ex-formandee to go home and to cope. No wonder then that there are instances of ex-formandi abandoning home or even committing suicide!

*Synthesis*

The preceding pages have allowed us to ascertain from the literature review, of some things known and unknown about the topic. They include the fact that being sacked can indeed be a big stressor in the life experience of an ex-formandee.

Furthermore, we have seen that a multiplicity of factors come into play to lead to anyone quitting or being dropped from a formation program. Similarly, a number of factors are also involved in a person’s process of adjustment to a given situation, in this case, of the exiting from a formation program. In the same way also, a person may thus
be similarly affected in the manner with which he or she is able to bear the sadness or pains of the withdrawal (grieving) through an individual’s emotional processing.

With the foregoing therefore, this study can be seen to be able to extend knowledge on adjustment studies. This will have a bearing on the formation programs of the religious and priestly vocation life.

**Initial Conceptual Framework**

The withdrawal from the formation program may block one’s goal of becoming a priest or a religious. This may lead to stress due to the change in a preplanned life state or career. This will then necessitate the use of coping mechanisms to adapt to the new phase of a life of transition. How well one is able to do this may lead to one’s placement on the maladjusted – adjusted (well-being) continuum. A further look is taken at this.

*The adjustment continuum:* Adjustment in this work is seen as a process. Namely, it is not fixed but that, as a person makes the transition from having come out of the formation house, whether voluntarily or sent out. The affected person may find himself or herself fluctuating between different phases and emotions of coming to terms with this particular life experience over time. It is expected that when one has fully come to terms with the situation, such a person may well be around the rightmost end of the adjustment continuum. This enhances one’s well-being. Well-being is said to be subjective (Santrock, 2005), but it is proposed to be made up of three components: *Competence* – the sense of mastery and the motivation to do whatever one attempts well. It also involves using effectively, one’s intelligence and skills; *Autonomy* – doing things independently.
This also involves intrinsic motivation, self initiation and self-determination; *Affiliation* – the need to have quality connectedness with other people (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

From the initial conceptual framework, the rightmost corner or the well adjusted end of the continuum may be marked by such characteristics as emotional detachment, whereby one is able to recall events relating to the withdrawal, no matter how painful or traumatic they are. The person at this time may not exhibit (or have only to a limited degree) the initial pains being faced. At this stage, there is full acceptance of the reality that the termination had occurred, and coming to terms with all the experiences and associated emotions, like letting go, and moving on with one’s life (Williams, 1999; Thomas & Siller, 1999; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). In other words, a good emotional processing is been able to take place in the life of the affected person (Rachman, 1990).

On the other hand, if a person is considered to be at the left end of the adjustment continuum i.e. maladaptive, then he or she is seen as unable to function normally as expected, or, that this person’s reaction to an event is perceived by others to be excessive (Butcher, Mineka & Hooley, 2004). This can also happen in the life of an ex-formandee. Such a person may be in a high state of distress or despair, bogged down and devastated by the pains of the termination. There may also be the denial of reality of the termination or withdrawal (Williams, 1999). In cases whereby the maladjustment to an event becomes clinically significant, an *adjustment disorder* can occur. In the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-R) of the American Psychiatric Association, this disorder is seen as the development of emotional or behavioral symptoms in response to an identifiable stressor (in our case of which would be the termination of the priestly or religious vocation by the withdrawal), occurring within
three months of the onset of the stressor(s). The clinical symptoms may be evidenced by “(1) marked distress that is in excess of what would be expected in exposure to the stressor, and (2) significant impairment in social or occupational (or academic) functioning,” (#309). It is also acknowledged here in this manual, that a person’s maladjustment lessens, when the individual learns to adapt to the situation or event.

Having established the two end points of the adjustment continuum above, we must also acknowledge that the factors that influence the placement of a person on this adjustment level may be affected by the type and nature of the withdrawal, and the resultant stress they create for the ex-formandee. Other factors may be elements of the factors viewed in the review of the literature. Namely, the resources of an individual’s personality, social and external factors, as well as how much or the quality of an emotional processing of the events faced may have taken place. Peculiar emotions may be present from the initial point of the thought or communication of the termination/withdrawal, at the different stages of the way, leading to whatever point a person may be on the adjustment continuum. Such emotions may be as those seen under the five stages of grieving by Kübler-Ross and others, namely, shock, denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. As seen earlier, the emotions or grief work does not have to occur in this sequence, and some of the steps may be repeated (Williams, 1999; Wortman & Silver, 1987). We now take a look at the steps in this conceptual framework leading to the adjustment process or continuum itself.

The pre-withdrawal stage: this is the moment that is foreseen to set into motion, all the dynamics that go into the adjustment process. This begins in the formation house, convent or seminary, even before the formandee actually withdraws. If a formandee is
withdrawing, then, the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that may crop up as a result of the intention and the planning to quit will comprise the process at this stage. If on the other hand he or she is being asked to discontinue and withdraw, then, the person has also to adjust to this piece of news. The manner of how the news is passed to the formandee affects the impact of the information and the processes set forth, especially, if they are caught surprised or unaware. In the experience of some of the participants for this study, at least two of them found themselves with this kind of situation, one having to be sent home the next twelve hours after being given the news, and another, the day after it was communicated to her. Such sudden or short notice may be found to be quite stressful for the affected person (Butcher, Mineka & Hooley, 2004). Emotions here may include shock, sadness, bargaining and denial.

**The withdrawal:** This is the actual leaving of the formation house and the journey back home. Whether one is returning to one’s own home or elsewhere, there may be feelings of failure, confusion, anger, denial etc. It is also possible, that one may also have the feeling of relief or happiness, especially, if he or she voluntarily withdraws, following a rather stressful or unhappy experience in the formation program or the experience of the life of the community one intended to join. The same can be applied to a candidate who was pushed into that life by others, e.g. the parents (Rice, 1990). As one goes home, he or she would be faced with how to answer the many questions of family members as well as friends and other people who would like to know what exactly had happened; coming to terms with the reality of being out of the formation program or the once desired vocation, what to do with one’s life, and so forth.
Figure 1. *Initial Conceptual Framework*
The exit experiences: In the light of the actual experiences the ex-formandee faces, the real work of transition and adjustment takes place, using the coping resources and the factors earlier mentioned, and thus the ex-formandee finding herself or himself at a particular point on the adjustment continuum.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study, using the consensual qualitative research (CQR) method, was to understand the process of adjustment undertaken by candidates leaving priestly and religious formation programs. This is in the light of their post-termination daily life experiences.

In order to achieve the above general objective, the following specific questions were asked:

1. What factors hindered the adjustment process of the ex-formandi after the withdrawal?
2. What factors facilitated the adjustment process of the ex-formandi after the withdrawal?
3. What is the process of adjustment that an ex-formandee undergoes after quitting or being withdrawn?

Significance of the Study

In this study, it is hoped that there would arise some useful insights to counselors, superiors and formation personnel of formation houses, as well as family members of
candidates who have had to quit. Knowing about the psychological processes that go on within the life of someone who is an ex-formandee, and the dynamics of their adjustment process, will enable the helping professionals to appropriately respond to their needs in the period of their adjustments and thus, help them to live effectively with the changes or transitions in their life situations.

Secondly, the study will also help formation personnel to dismiss candidates with adequate preparation for their transition back to the secular world. This can include an appropriate counseling intervention, in order to better help the ex-formandi to cope with the changes in life with its associated challenges and stresses that may be foreseen.

Furthermore, it is possible that insights from this study about the processes of adjustments and coping mechanisms to change, can be applicable to other areas in life when or where people come face to face with life changes such as the loss of a job, a spouse or marriage, a fame and so forth. At the same time, this study, in an area hardly researched in the counseling field, may be in a position to inspire further researches in the area of religious formation, concerning the adaptation and coping of candidates after quitting.

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

As seen earlier from the review of literature, the process of adjustment, to a far extent, can actually take a long time, depending on many factors. Typically, this could be from about seven months to a year, with some extended ones of two years or more (Williams, 1999). It was targeted that participants would be recruited from among ex-formandi who quitted no more than five (5) years at the time of this study. The subjects
for this study were to be taken by convenience (convenience sampling). It was intended to have at least, eight ex-formandi, and at most twelve as subjects. They were to have already completed at least, six months of having made the exit.

One factor which was envisaged to possibly influence the turn out of the pieces of information, was the long period over which participants were to be asked to recollect themselves, go back into time and space, and into the period after exiting, and recalling their experiences. Time aside, it was also seen that possibly, participants may sift the kind of experiences they were able to recall, according to the nature of their emotions in relating to them. Self-reporting may thus have affected, and hence, so also the reliability of the data and results that ensued. They were however encouraged to take their time to introspect and be as honest as possible in answering the questions in the interview or questionnaire.

It was also not forgotten, that in a qualitative study like this, the researcher is an essential part of the study, and so his personal values and attitudes, biases and interests (reflexivity) affect the nature of the study (Creswell, 182).

**Definition of Terms**

*Life Changes*

These may represent a key type of stress. Life changes are any noticeable alterations in one’s living circumstances that require readjustment (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003). Moving out of the formation house and back to the secular life, the ex-formandee necessarily faces this life changes that require of her/him to make some readjustments.
Transition

As used in this study, this is the internal or observable reactions that the ex-formandi feel or exhibit through their thoughts, effect on behavior, specifically resulting from their leaving a formation program and going home.

Adjustment

The concept of adjustment was borrowed originally from biology, modeled after the term adaptation. This referred to the efforts of species to adjust to changes in their environment. Presently in psychology, adjustment is taken to refer to the psychological processes through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003). In this study, the term is used to apply to the ex-formandee’s changed situation of coming out of the formation program.

Coping Mechanisms/Strategies

Coping refers to efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate the demands created by stress (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003). Individuals cope with life’s difficulties and stress in many ways. These ways are designated as mechanisms, techniques or strategies. Thus these terms may have been used synonymously for this study.

Formation

“Formation” as used here, refers to the initial training that a candidate receives from the seminary, novitiate or any other similar ecclesiastically approved preparatory program. Upon completion of the initial stage, one professes the perpetual vows as a nun
or brother, and seminarians are ordained as priests. The initial period of formation lasts for at least six years for nuns or brothers, while that for candidates to the priesthood could range between seven to ten years. The use of the word “religious” as an adjective qualifying “formation,” is to underline the kind of specific training within the context of the church.

**Formandee/formandi**

In formation terms, “formandi” is the plural of “formandee,” a candidate who is undergoing formation/studies. Thus “ex-formandee” means one who was at one time a formandee.

**Formatter/formation personnel**

These are the personnel in a formation house, who journey with and train or direct the formandi. The latter form is the preferred usage in this work, since as many say, everyone is in constant need of an ongoing personal formation. Formation personnel are said to be involved in the work of “formation ministry.”

**Formation House (FH)**

This is an ecclesiastically designated place or house where the formandi receive their training or preparation to become professed members of a congregation or others. It could be the seminary; the novitiate – where the training of the candidates (the novices) takes place, especially, before the profession of the first of the temporary vows; the
postulancy (place and/or period before the novitiate); the tertiate, which may usually involve the preparations of candidates for the perpetual or final vows. Those designated houses are sometimes represented in this work with the abbreviation “FH”

Congregation/Institute

As used in this work, the two terms are synonymous and refers to any religious order or group of particular men or women in the Catholic Church with ecclesiastical approval as such, having a particular charism in witnessing to the gospel of Christ or spreading the Good News. They are identified by various names – e.g. Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM), Religious of the Good Shepherd (RGS), Order of Preachers (the Dominicans), Servants of Jesus (the Jesuits), the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD), Brothers of Christian Instruction, The De La Salle Brothers of Christian Schools (FSC), The Benedictines (OSB), etc. These are sometimes also referred to as “society” or as a “religious institute.” The members of these institutes, i.e. the priests and religious (sisters, brothers, nuns, monks etc) are sometimes shortened in this work as “PREL.”
Chapter II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the various methods of practically carrying out the proposed study are outlined. There are six main parts: (1) the research design (2) the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) method (3) participants (4) data gathering procedure (5) research instruments, and (6) the analysis of data.

Research Design

This study is exploratory and follows the qualitative research design. It is exploratory because the research tried to delve into the deeper life experiences of the participants involved. As an exploratory study using twelve (12) participants, albeit being a non-random sample, the findings from this study cannot be generalized, unlike in a random quantitative study for example. Nonetheless, this method allows us to get a deeper insight into the life experiences of the sample population (the twelve ex-formandi involved). That underlines the main purpose of the study: to provide an understanding into the processes that the ex-formandi went through after quitting or having been withdrawn from formation programs, and the way they had had to adjust in their life. Being descriptive, this study narrates or describes all that is attained in the above purpose. With a minor alteration, the specific qualitative research design followed is that known as the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR).
The Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) Method.

The CQR is a research method developed in 1997 by Hill, Thompson and Williams (Hill et. al, 2005). It sought to integrate the best features of many already existing research methods at the time. This included elements from phenomenological, grounded theory, and comprehensive process analysis. The authors say of their method:

The essential components of CQR are the use of (a) open-ended questions in semi-structured data collection techniques (typically in interviews), which allow for the collection of consistent data across individuals as well as a more in-depth examination of individual experiences; (b) several judges throughout the data analysis process to foster multiple perspectives; (c) consensus to arrive at judgments about the meaning of the data; (d) at least one auditor to check the work of the primary team of judges and minimize the effects of groupthink in the primary team; and (e) domains, core ideas, and cross-analyses in the data analysis (p. 196).

…We strive to be objective, summarizing the participants’ words and remaining close to the data rather than making major leaps of interpretation. We also look for themes across participants and hope to generalize, at least to some degree, to the population (p. 197).

Consensus is emphasized in the above approach, for they observe of studies which show that it improves decision quality, and allowing a diversity of view points to be incorporated, while at the same time eliminating or minimizing biases. Nonetheless, it is recommended that researches list potential biases they may have at the start of a study. These biases, it is said, can be reflected in values and beliefs about the topic. Accordingly, the biases that the researcher contemplated for this particular study were that (1) The manner of exit (dismissal, voluntary, or a dual decision) may be related to the intensity of associated emotions that is shown after an ex-formandee exits, with the
highest emotions being displayed by those dismissed. Abrupt sending away of candidates would have a harsher impact than if not as sudden. (2) If a candidate received an exit interview or counseling (at least given information early enough about having to leave), post-exit resentment would be reduced, if any at all. (3) Personal resources of the individual ex-formandee as well as other external factors like family and social support may mediate the way one is affected by the exit experiences. (4) Those who had come to terms with the exit experiences would be expected to be better adjusted and freer to recall and talk about the experiences related to their exiting. (5) The experiences of the adjustment process by the ex-formandi would be quite similar to that of ex-priests and ex-nuns.

The slight alteration of the CQR as used in this work lies in the fact that, whereas normally it would be a team of researchers starting aright all together with the conception of the study, here, as a case for the presentation of the Master’s degree, the student is the primary researcher. His team members, who joined in for arriving at consensus at the various stages, and in a way, acting as judges, are: a Filipino woman lecturing at the De La Salle University of Manila, and an Indian priest, both of whom are presently undertaking their doctoral studies in counseling at the same university.

Participants

The participants of this study came from a convenient sample with an Afro-Asian background. Specifically, they are made up of nine (9) Filipinos (Philippines), and three (3) Africans, one each from Angola, the Republic of Bénin, and Ghana. All the Africans were known to the primary researcher prior to the study. They were all in their home-
countries, except the one from Benin who was living in Italy at the time of the interview. All the Filipinos, apart from one in Tagaytay, lived in or around Metro Manila. Only one of the Filipinos was also *a priori* personally known to the researcher, having casually met on two occasions.

The enlistment of the participants in this study was done by the three Africans being personally contacted via email by the researcher. The contacts of the rest of the participants were obtained through the help of friends of the researcher. Among these, were two ex-formandi whose contacts were provided also, by one of the formandee initially interviewed. The initial pool or list of prospective participants was larger but the following inclusion criteria were used to shortlist the final participants: (a) The participant must have exited from a formation program, convent or seminary, not less than six months, and at the same time, not more than five years with reference to the time of the study (2007). (b) He or she must feel very free, and not obliged in any way, to partake in the study. (c) He or she was free to withdraw from the study even after it had begun. (d) The participant must also have completed at least, one year in formation before making the exit. In the end, eight young women and four men formed the composition of the list of participants.

It had been initially hoped to get an equal number of both genders as participants for this study. This however proved difficult, particularly with the recruiting of young men for the study. In the end, the two remaining slots for the men had to be filled with women. Thus the composition of the participants is four (4) men, (i.e. 33.3%) and eight (8), (i.e. 66.7%) women (cf. Table 1; also, Appendix E for individual features of participants). Of all these together, two (2) of the ex-formandi exited out of a mutual
decision with the congregation or formation house. This meant that the superiors or formation personnel led the candidate to see the need to go out (even if for a while), and so the candidate took the responsibility to apply for discharge from the program.

Four of the ex-formandi left after being dismissed or expelled from their congregations or seminary. The six (6) remaining participants left voluntarily, although, sometimes this was instigated by experiences or events within the formation house or convent, (e.g. as in cases 05-MV and 02-FV).

The twelve participants on the final list came from ten different congregations, formation houses or seminaries. The breakdown is as follows (cf. Table 1): 2 ex-diocesan seminarians, 2 ex-seminarians of a religious missionary group; and for the ladies, one ex-novice of an international contemplative order, and the rest of the 7 remaining ladies coming from five different congregations. One was a full time student in the university as at the time of the interview, and the rest were all employed (one of these is a temporal employment though: a call agent). Two of them were graduate working students. All of the twelve were unmarried. None mentioned of even a romantic relationship or commitment as at the time of the interviews.

As of November 1, 2007, the youngest participant was twenty-six (26) year old male, and the oldest, a thirty-eight (38) year old lady, (cf. Table 1). This gives a range of 12 years and a mean age of 32 years, with a standard deviation of 3.13 years. Table 1 also indicates that the modal class of the age range fell on the 31 – 34 age group, with a frequency of seven out of the twelve participants (i.e. 58.3% of the participants).
Table 1

Profile of participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label/Frequency</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Exiting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expelled</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Family related</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Personal issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 – 26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 – 30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>32.75</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Formation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 – 12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean years in formation</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year exiting formation program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean years of exit duration</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute/Congregation joined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious/Missionary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemplative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of how long the participants have spent in a convent or formation program before coming out, the longest was twelve (12) years (12-MV – an ex-seminarian), and the shortest, one (1) year (06-MX). With a few outliers, the mean of the different periods is 5.3 years with a standard deviation of 3.89 years. Regarding the time they had exited from the formation program or house, as at November, 2007, the shortest was eight (8) months and the longest was five (5) years. The spread of these is as follows, with two modal class frequencies of 3 people each of 2002 and 2006; 2 people each from 2004 and 2005, one person having quitted each in 2003 and 2007.

**Data Gathering Procedure**

The researcher got the contacts as earlier mentioned through friends, apart from the African participants who were personally known. Those contact information were basically their cell phone numbers. The sources for prospective participants were advised to give their information about the researcher and overviews before the start of the study. This was done to familiarize the prospective participant and increase the agreement or participation rate. Once the researcher had the contact, a message was sent through a short messaging service (SMS) to the ex-formandee, introducing himself, mentioning who had provided his/her contact, telling about the study and asking if s/he would be interested in partaking in the study by being a participant, and willing to be interviewed. If the prospective participant confirmed his or her participation in the study, the researcher sent a message through the electronic mail (e-mail as in Appendix A(ii)). Through that mail, the prospective participants were again sent a letter of introduction
and of the study, also mentioning the areas from which the interview was going to be based. The letter of introduction was sent out to all the prospective participants on the contact list (including the three Africans abroad).

Having gathered more information from the prospective participants themselves, or from the friends helping to recruit them, those who did not satisfactorily fulfill the inclusion criteria were informed on a good note, after thanking them for their willingness to partake in it. Four men and a woman declined the invitation to partake by saying it outright. Two did not respond to the invitations. One agreed but by passive aggression of extra long delays in replying text messages and emails, it was decided to disregard him. Another young man who could have been a very good participant for this study had initially agreed, but when the time approached for the interview, he changed his mind and told the recruiter that he was “not ready to retell the trauma.” That man was expelled towards the end of his novitiate in a religious missionary congregation. The researcher got the information that the trauma suffered by this man led him to the point of becoming psychotic and wandering on the streets in Manila, far away from his home province (e.g. throwing stones!) He was eventually helped out and his sanity has been restored today.

Through the emails and text messages, dates and venues for the interviews were arranged. Data were gathered from the three participants abroad through the medium of email and with the use of a pc-pc phone call/chat. One other Filipino first sent quite detailed information about herself based on the areas which had been suggested before it was followed up with the actual interview.

The interviews for each participant lasted roughly about an hour. The shortest was 45 min but few of these interviews were extended for up to 30 min. One was conducted at
the Festival Mall, Alabang; another one in Tagaytay; four at the residence of the researcher in Tayuman, Santa Cruz, Manila, and three others at their places of work: two in their schools, and one in a hospital (participant is a nurse). The interviews were based on a semi-structured interview outline (cf. Appendix B) that allowed individual participants or questions to be probed more deeply, accordingly as found necessary.

Hill et. al (2005) cited studies that indicated that other means of getting qualitative data, apart from a face to face interview may be useful and utilized in a qualitative study such as this. Such means include telephone interviews, questionnaires via emails etc., and in certain situations, have been documented to even provide better data or information. Thus, regarding data from the three participants abroad (numbers 10-12), a questionnaire based upon the semi-structured interview protocol was sent to them via email, filled out and returned to the researcher. Other follow-up emails were made to clarify or elaborate the answers given. This was done at least three times with each, and in the third case, it was also followed up with a 40 minutes telephone chat and interview with the participant living in Italy.

All the interviews were conducted in English, except with the participant from Benin (a francophone country). Although she speaks fairly good English, she was told to use whichever of English or French she felt more at home with, pertaining to any particular question, for the primary researcher also speaks fairly good French. Consequently, this participant answered most of the questions in English with answers to about four questions given partially in both languages. The same was the case in the phone interview. The French sentences were later translated into English, and another competent person was consulted to verify the consistency of the translation made.
At the beginning of each interview, the researcher assured the interviewee of the confidentiality of the information they would be giving, and that they would be used for academic purposes only. Permission was also sought from them to audiotape each interview, which were done with an MP3 and also a mini-cassette recorder. After all the nine interviews were carried out in September and October 2007, they were all transcribed removing names of the participants and of other persons or places or congregations. Code names were also assigned to each case. Apart from a numerical figure, each case was also assigned an M or F for the gender, followed by either an X to indicate that the ex-formandee was expelled or dismissed; a V to indicate that the person voluntarily went out himself or herself, or the two letters LV to indicate that it was a mutual decision to leave – between the candidate and the congregation. This was done in order to maintain confidentiality while at the same time providing important information about the ex-formandee from the code.

**Research instruments**

One main instrument designed by the primary researcher was used as the interview protocol and also, as the basis of the questionnaire sent to the three participants abroad. It is semi-structured. Made up of almost entirely open-ended questions, it elicited data covering information regarding the background or biographical data of the participant, how long she or he had been in the formation in the priestly or religious life and the experiences relating to it; nature of or what led to the withdrawal and feelings about it, how the participant adjusted and factors which influenced these, and so forth, (cf. Appendix B). Answers to the research questions were obtained by the end of each
interview. After the initial composition of the interview protocol, it was first discussed with another doctoral student and then revised. Following that, it was pilot tested by administering to one person via email and another one by face to face interview. The necessary revisions to ensure clearer and briefer statements or questions were then maintained on the final output.

In addition to the tools used, observation proved to be also very useful. During interviews, non-verbal cues were observed, to help see the consistencies of the reported emotions. Three participants cried or shed tears as manifestations of serious hurt and pain and their sentiments were prevalent through their tones.

Data analysis

Simple descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions: means, standard deviations, percentages etc. were used to describe the figures emanating from the data gathered. Apart from this fact, the data analysis from the interviews and questionnaires gathered were analyzed following the outline of the CQR (Hill et. al, 1997, 2005). The first of this is the development and coding into domains.

Domains: Domains are the topic areas covered by the interviewees/ex-formandis. The first step in that analysis process was determining the domains into which the interview material could be placed. Both the primary researcher and the secondary team of the two counseling doctoral students of the De La Salle University, Manila, at first carried out these activities independently. We then met together to compare, discuss and arrive at a consensus. After many modifications, and based upon the interview protocol and the research questions of the study, the following five domains were identified as the
most convenient labels: (i) entry motivations (ii) reasons for leaving (iii) transition experiences (iv) protective factors for adjustment, and (v) risk factors against adjustment.

*Constructing core ideas:* core ideas are the succinct summaries of all of the contents within each domain for a given case. As Hill et. al (1997) say, the general purpose of this procedure is to capture the essence of what the participant said in a clear and concise fashion. In carrying out this part of the analysis, the team took great effort to capture the meaning given by a participant/ex-formandee, using or staying close to the interviewee’s own words. Care was also taken to avoid making theoretical inferences. Again, a shared view of the core ideas were arrived at through consensus by the team. Appendix D & E present the abstractions made on these core areas including the domains and summaries of the cross analysis elements.

*Audit:* The audit process entailed checking to ensure that raw data were appropriately sorted into domains and abstracted into accurate and complete core summaries. The auditor was a counselor with the guidance office of the College of St. Benilde in Manila. She has a doctorate in counseling, as well as many years of experience as a professional counselor. She had also had some experiences in the teaching field. She made some suggestions for changes, and the primary researcher, with the secondary team again met to review the auditor’s comments, discussing and arriving through a consensus of what seemed the most appropriate changes to further apply.

*Cross analyses:* The purpose of this is to identify similarities across cases. The team came together and through consensus, agreed upon the placement of the abstracted core ideas. These cross analyses were also audited by the same auditor earlier mentioned. Changes she suggested were discussed and incorporated when the team found them
warranted. For an appearance in all cases or minus just one only, an idea is said to have a
*General* feature. For half of the sample size to the cut-up point of *general*, it is designated
as *Typical*. *Variant* is the designation for an appearance of two to less than what marks
the typical point.
In this chapter, the results from the data gathered during the study are presented. The section begins with the presentation of each case of the twelve participants using their code names. It is then followed by a thematic presentation of the results based upon the emergent domains and categories and core ideas with relevant examples cited. The third part is a general presentation of the results making some comparisons with different relevant elements. Descriptive statistics, namely, means, standard deviations and percentages have been used to aid us in getting a grasp of the picture from the data. A general discussion then follows the presentation of the results.

*Presentation of the participants.*

**01-FV**

This participant is a 34 years old lady, who voluntarily decided to call it a quit after having been in the convent for four years. She was the only child of her mum and step father. Her own biological father separated from her mum when she was six years of age. It was the second man whom the mother later got married to (her step father), whom she got to really know and experience as a father (and to whom she refers to as such in the interview). After graduating from college with a degree in Business Administration, she worked for a while in the IT industry.
At the age of 28, through a lot of vocational discernment, she decided to go to the convent. She affirms that this was a hard decision as an only child. In late 2002, she entered the formation program of a religious missionary congregation in Manila. “I wanted a 100% availability as a religious/missionary to help and serve the poor.” Although the parents, especially, the mother, were not so much happy about her decision to enter the convent, they allowed her to pursue her dream.

In her first year during her postulancy 01-FV had had to leave and go home for 6 months to care for the mother who had fallen sick, returning to the postulancy after the mum had recovered. During her novitiate, her father (stepfather) fell ill and was admitted to the ICU. The reverend sisters did not inform her about it although they knew it. She was on a community experience at the time in Naga city, Bicol. When however, she got to know of it through a friend’s call to wish her a happy birthday, she was angry that she was not told and became emotional. She decided the next day that “I really had to see my stepfather”, but the sisters would not allow her. She told them “even if I don’t have money, I’ll walk to Manila, with or without your permission.” The sisters agreed and one formator traveled with her to the hospital in Manila, where the father was in the ICU. Upon seeing the situation of her parents, she realized they had no one else to turn to in such difficulties. “They were sickly and really needed me because there were no other kids.” The feelings she had from this experience led her to decide that “I am not for this life,” she said. This led her to quit from the formation program in September 2006, although the father had told her “don’t sacrifice your vocation just because of me.” The father later died in June the following year (2007).
Her adjustment period after her exit from the formation was quite an easy one. She initially regretted. However, it was very brief because she got preoccupied with family concerns: caring for the ailing stepfather and her depression stricken mother. However, there were times later on, when she really missed the religious life that she had left behind, its structures, the community and other experiences. She had a strong parental support, as well as the availability of friends to help her settle down or employ her. She noted that, upon coming out, she felt as if being “technologically out of place” as she had to get used to things like the use of the cell phone and so forth (having not used it for about 2 years in the convent). Money was not a problem for the parents to support her. A stress that many other participants experienced but was absent with this interviewee, is, having to explain to people why she had left the convent. It had helped that she was not really known in any parish because she hadn’t been involved actively. There was a new parish priest at the time she came out. Furthermore, during her days of working life, she had stayed in a few different places, always close to her worksites and going home to the parents regularly. The parents also moved houses at the time she came out.

It is notable to mention that this participant found very beneficial, the exit interview/closure she was given by her formator and also, the mother superior of the congregation she was with. There was a short ceremony of goodbyes and prayers, “thank yous,” “see you again soon,” etc. She had said in the interview: “I think I needed that. Without that, I’d feel it is still hanging and a question mark in my heart ‘Will I go back or not?’” She said that after that ceremony, she felt like there was a confirmation that “entering was a right decision, and now, going out is also a right decision, no regrets!” She admitted having gained a lot in terms of awareness of many things – of herself,
politics, the poor conditions of the destitute in society etc. The convent “opened my eyes a lot ... and made me aware of my blessings and realities, and of God” She adds “I learnt how difficult life is without being pampered as an only child like in my own case; how difficult it is to earn money, the value of a single Peso, the value of prayer, and everything I used to take for granted.”

02-FV

This participant is a 38 year old Filipino woman who voluntarily came out of the convent in October 2006. This was after having spent 7 years with a religious missionary congregation with its center in Italy. She comes from a lowly family of 14 siblings in Mindanao, south of the Philippines. She is a convert to Catholicism (together with two other siblings). Her father is a farmer and a protestant and her mother, a Muslim, is a housewife. Early at about 9 years old (in grade 4), even without knowing much about the life of a nun, she felt attracted to the religious life, attracted by the nuns she was seeing at the time, especially, later in high school. Later on when she was working and on her own in Manila, she attended many vocation workshops and felt closer to God. To continue to feel this closeness and serve God and live a simple life, she entered the convent in November 1999. She had graduated from college with a major in Electrical Engineering having had a third level in Business Management.

02-FV says that because of the background of her family, it was difficult for them to understand the kind of life she wanted for herself. Secondly, during the time she was working before entering the convent, she was the main person who was helping her poor family with her salary. Thus they disapproved of her going to the convent. Although she
really wanted it, she was hesitant and confused at times. Later on, she was able to overcome these uncertainties. After her initial formation, she was assigned to Italy. This meant that she was to be serving there and only to come home to the Philippines every four years or so for holidays. With the kind of experiences she had there however, after more than a year with their community in Rome, she left and came home to the Philippines in October 2006.

This participant says that she actually experienced crisis while in Rome. She had difficulties in adjusting to the Italian culture. Worse still, she was assigned to the kitchen of that big community of over forty sisters, and she was to remain there for a long time. She felt bored and also spiritually dry, and unhappy. She therefore asked the superiors for a reassignment to their communities back home in the Philippines, pledging to return to Rome when the spiritual dryness had gone and feels better. The superiors refused, saying that they really needed her to be in Rome. She asks “but how can I continue to be there if my vocation is down and I have this spiritual dryness within me?”

As a result of the refusal, she did not want to pray, attend Mass or even eat. “I just stayed in my room,” she added. When the sisters continued to be adamant to allow her to join their communities back home, she then decided that if that was the case, then, she would quit this congregation and return to the Philippines to try to join another religious congregation. The superiors, also observed that she was not going to change her decision and spending all the time in her room, bought her the air ticket to return home. She said “it was not my wish to leave the religious life.” She shed tears a few times during the interview as she narrated these.
In October of 2006, the participant flew back to the Philippines, leaving behind the habit of that congregation, sad at the way things were turning up, “Deep within me, I was so sad I didn’t want to talk to anybody.” She stayed with a friend in Manila, but did not want other friends to see her because she was ashamed and “I don’t know what to tell them if they see me.” To those who saw her however, she told them not to worry because she was going to continue and that they should pray for her. As at the time of the interview with the participant almost twelve months after quitting, she had not traveled home to Mindanao. Her family knew that she had arrived from Rome, but knew only, or thought, she was just on vacation. They did not know that she is out of the convent. She was given money from Rome, just enough to reach home, but she decided to settle in Manila and get something to do. She also remembers that the parents were against her going to the convent. Life has been difficult, not getting a substantial job, and troubled by health which led her to surgery of which she was yet to pay the bill. Thus she has no money to visit the parents.

The circumstances of 02-FV has made it difficult for her adjustment outside and says she is not happy. She said crying, “Until now, I cannot adjust well. It is still in my mind and heart that I am a nun,” a thing reinforced by people calling her “sister” or asking her if she is one, although she is not in a religious habit. Sometime, she answered “yes” which also at times led to more embarrassing questions like “if so, why are you not in habit?” She says of herself that she finds herself crying many times, and sometimes wondered if God was punishing her. She misses the religious life and really wishes, if it is God’s will, to, join another congregation. She remarks “When I was a child, I wanted to become a nun, but it was in the religious life that I became most frustrated and now
here I am!” She added “this is the first time in my life that I have become so frustrated, depressed and feel unhappy.”

03-FLV

Converting to the Catholic faith with baptism in 2002, this 29 years old participant originally belonged to a sect founded by her great-grandfather, called in Filipino, Tatlong Persona Solo Dios (The Third Person of the Trinity), where all the rest of her family are members. She explained that the sect focuses primarily on the Holy Spirit. Today, according to her own words, her father is the “right hand man” of the present head, who is her paternal grandfather. The father is by profession a farmer, and her mother, a housewife. She studied at the only school in her town in the Province of Quezon, a Catholic school run by some Catholic sisters.

Having graduated from college with a major in Computer Science, she worked for a while with an electronic company in Makati, Metro Manila, where she was responsible for preparing documents for shipment of electronic goods outside the country. It was a difficult job that took a lot of toll on her especially, with overtime. In January 2000 to January 2001, she felt some emptiness in her life; there was no meaning for her in life and “everything was a frustration for almost a year.” This was so much for her that she would add “I asked God to please take away my life.” In the midst of this experience, a friend invited her one day to come along to a Wednesday Novena Mass in honor of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Mass at Taguig. She would say “this marked a turning point for me.” She was about 24 years old at the time and the words of the gospel of the Holy Eucharist that day hit her so much and she found herself crying. After the Mass, she knew
this was what she was looking for. She continued to frequent the Holy Mass there, even without her friend. This led her to feel the need to know Jesus more intimately. “The only thing that came to my mind was that I could go to the convent to find him more closely there,” she added.

The above eventually led the participant to be converted to Catholicism, after a period of receiving adult catechism. She was baptized on Easter Sunday of 2002, a first step in her mind, of getting into the convent. It was a hard decision with hesitation and anxiety of course. She knew that her family/sect would be against her joining or embracing the Catholic faith. Even after she had finished her catechism, she had to hold on for a while, wondering whether the parents would reject her. “I was really afraid of that,” she says. In the end, she persevered, and later went to the province amidst an uncertainty, to inform them about it, but could not tell them immediately that she intended to go to the convent. She was however relieved with the reassuring words of her father, who told her that he was responsible for her when she was young, but “now that you are old, you are responsible for your own decision.” This also allayed her fears and after contemplating and searching, finally entered the convent in April 2004, joining a religious and missionary community in Metro Manila.

03-FLV was happy and also excited about this new life she had found through the formation she was receiving in the aspirancy through to the novitiate. The formation, for her, was nice and more focused on knowing the personal self. Through the personal self confrontation and self-knowledge she was getting during the formation, she sometimes felt confused “when I faced myself and saw my not-so-good side.” She said that she asked herself, “How come God called me into religious life?” She admitted that before
going to the convent, she avoided issues about her personal life by being busy with other things. Instead of confronting those issues, she would always make means to escape. It was in the formation program however, that she learned to face the truth about herself and confront her personal issues. She became aware (during an inner journey retreat in August 2005) of herself and realized that any personal “baggage” can block or hinder her vocation. With this awareness of the many unresolved issues from her childhood, she said frankly, “it is unfair to profess my vows having these issues.”

Many times, especially, during that retreat, she says she was crying, in the face of that realization in her life. Spending a lot of energy on these issues now, she thought that she needed to first work upon these issues before continuing. In spite of this realization, she could not get the courage to ask to go out. However, as events would have it, the formators realizing this, in connection with the director of that retreat which was taking place in another town, the sisters realized that she needed a vacation, upon which the superiors suggested to her that she could take about two or three years out. She agreed. Things happened quite quickly then, and the next day, packed to go home. This was just over two years ago in August 2005. She is currently employed with a call agency.

Regarding her adjustment afterwards, this participant says that it was a big issue in the family at home (province) that she had entered the convent for it was hard for them to accept. With that knowledge, she was unsure of how she was going to be received at home. “I was expecting that they would ask me questions, but thank God, nobody asked me, but you could see on their faces, all of them looking at me wherever I went, that they had questions to ask.” Her family was however supportive. In fact, she says “I was not really expecting it to be so calm.”
Noticing this after a day of silence, she let them know that “I was home not because I was sacked, but I saw that I was not ready.” She relates that it was like “I went to the hospital (convent), and the doctor treated me and I was told to go home and rest!”

During the first few days, there were times she felt depressed, asking God to take away her life! Her home however, really became a healing place for her because of the support of family and friends. In addition, everything was pleasant, like the surrounding beautiful natural environment, the rivers and the greenery, the flowers, the smiles of a baby in the house and so forth. These made her feel better inside. She also found it helpful to occupy some of her time by gathering and teaching the children some things she had learnt from the convent – making crosses and rosaries etc. It was in this time also, that she really experienced the love of her parents.

It is good to note with this participant, that she actually went to the convent after she had come out, to arrange to go there monthly for some guidance to help her in her transition, a thing she continued to do for over a year (until May this year, 2007!).

04-FX

This 32 years old lady is the only one among the participants, who had belonged to a cloistered order (contemplative). She is also perhaps the one who had been most affected by the experiences of having to come out of the religious life. She had a serious depression after the exit. She could not sleep “for even a second for five consecutive days!” as she said in the interview. She added that she became like a “zombie with sunken big eyes.” She could not eat, and at the same time. The only alphabet she could
write, was the letter “X”, and she wrote a notebook full of Xs only. “I could not even write my own name!” she quipped.

The manner of withdrawal of this participant from the nunnery had been a bit dramatic and perhaps, it contributed to the intensity of the crisis she had when she went home. After five years of having joined those cloistered nuns (an international order), and still in the initial formation, she was cleaning the chapel of the nunnery on the evening of September 14, 2003, when her formator superior came to inform her there that she had to pack and go home. About twelve hours later, in the morning, she was on the way home, picked up by her brother and sister who came from Manila.

The participant said that the nuns actually appreciated her selflessness to offer herself to the community, that she was generous in giving herself to the community, but the only problem they saw with her, was that “I cannot give up my ideas.” She added laughing “They said that I was moralistic, legalistic, rigid, lack openness, and cannot hear others’ opinion.” She had asked her formator why she was not informed earlier, so that she could prepare herself and at least have time to pack. The formator replied “I could not tell you because I know you are closed-minded.” She had had this same formator from aspirancy to the novitiate when she was sent out. She admits that she did not like this formator and had resentments towards her, and so could not be open to her, for each time they met, she felt as if it was not a friendly meeting but something more of an interrogation. Another added hindrance to her life during the formation was the Italian culture that she found in the nunnery, which added to making it “a sacrifice to live there.” 04-FX remarks that “In all my experiences in life, this was the most painful. After that, I had depression, the first time in my life.”
04-FX hailed from a poor family of nine children, herself being the fifth born and also a twin. Her mother used to sell petty articles in a small shop in their province of Batangas. The father was a laborer. She describes his father as irresponsible and at the same time, engaged in many vices – drinking, smoking and womanizing. Caring for her and her siblings was therefore left solely to their mother. She had also had some disturbing personal experiences in her childhood (also in college). She had been sexually abused a few times. She however kept this for a long time, causing a trauma that lingered on. No one in her family knew of her sufferings.

This participant says that as young as when she was six years old, she had the desire to become a nun. She says “I thought the only way to be closer to God was in the religious life.” She graduated in 1997 from college with a Bachelor of Science in Accountancy. The desire continued until when she was 23 years and entered the religious life in 1998. Her parents (the siblings as well) were not in agreement of her entering the religious life. In fact, her father was angry. Her family thought that her interest to enter the convent would send her away from them. For her love of silence, a simple life and stability, she decided to join a contemplative rather than an active order.

The adjustment period for 04-FX begun by her living with her family in Manila. She initially found the atmosphere to be irritating. She hated the noise from the TV and radios. She even got disgusted with the motor sound of the electric fan. There was also a clash of values for her, noticing her relative flirting and fornicating. She then found solace going everyday to the nearby Adoration Chapel and spending long hours, almost all day for about three weeks, “praying to Jesus to give me the grace to overcome this excruciating experience,” she had said. She also decided to seek help in a crisis center in
Quezon City. When she could no longer bear the atmosphere at her siblings’ home, she moved out to go and live in this center. There, she was also asked to be a resource person to teach catechism and handicrafts to some children in the center. Further helping her adjustment, she also soon got a job as an accountant.

In the first few days of her arrival and sleeplessness, she had also gone to see and talk to a priest who supplied her with a list of retreat centers. From that, she chose one, and had a five days retreat in Tagaytay. She also got psychotherapy during that retreat. This was helpful for her to accept the reality of what had happened. Only then could she begin gradually to sleep for two hours at night, the hours of sleep increasing gradually by the day.

The above experiences not withstanding, this participant had enjoyed the time in the religious life. She said that the formator had helped her to retell the stories of her past which “I thought I buried already in the core of the earth that I hate to recall.” Because of her tendency to keep everything to herself, she said that she had sicknesses while in the nunnery – glaucoma, rhinitis, and acidity health problems. All these have however gone away after she came out. In the early part after coming out, she used to have grudges against the nuns she was with. Now however, she feels the loving hand of God, is ready to move on, and in fact, the cloistered nuns have become her friends again, and adds that she visits them every Christmas.
This participant is a 29 old male who used to be a seminarian of the arch-diocese of Pampanga in the Philippines. He was requested by the formators to proceed on a two years of regency at the end of the first year of theological studies. Disappointed by the reason given, and the way it was communicated to him, he felt de-motivated to go back at the end of the two years period.

He is the fifth of eight children of a poor farmer, and his mother had a part-time job as a laundry woman in Pampanga. When he was in high school, a certain benefactor convinced him to go to the seminary. Without knowing much about seminary at that time, but thinking of it as “a kind of becoming a Knight of the Altar (servers at the Mass), he agreed. The benefactor arranged for his entrance exams into the junior seminary. He passed and was admitted. Later however, he saw something good in the seminary and so his own vocation started to grow. The parents were very proud and happy with him going to the seminary, because, there was a view held at the time in his place, that only the good and intelligent boys gained admission to the seminary. Thus they really supported him to be in the seminary. Later on, he proceeded to college to study philosophy and then onwards for the study of theology. At the end of the first year of that (i.e. four years in the major seminary) the authorities in the seminary asked him to do the regency program.

Before the occasion of being asked to do the regency, the participant had at times himself felt that he wanted to quit the seminary, but was convinced by a classmate and friend of his to stay on. There was a time he tried joining a religious community for a while, motivated to stay on because the superiors had told the students that they would be going to continue their seminary in the USA. He had thought that it could be a chance to
go abroad, and so stayed on. Later, he left and went back to the diocesan seminary. For reasons given him, of which he became disappointed and resentful to this day, he said he was told by his formators that it had been observed that “I have a lot of questions about life and it was good for me to go out for a while and think about all these.” It was further added that he had a lot of insecurities, and he might as well also work to help the parents first. He was told that he could go back to the seminary after two years of the regency.

Normally, during the regency, a seminarian is expected to be in regular touch with the seminary formators. This participant however, failed to do so throughout the entire period of the regency, even though his mother reminded him regularly to do so. At the end, he was hesitant to go back. What added to this hesitancy, was, when he came to the awareness that “if I were rich, I would not be in the seminary. I realized that I was a victim of the circumstances of poverty.” It had been even difficult for him to break the news about being asked to do the regency to his parents. With time, the people accepted that he was not going back to the seminary. But not until he had had a few quarrels and misunderstandings with his mother who was insisting that he should go back.

To begin with that hard time, he did all kinds of menial jobs – worked as a barber, as a tricycle driver, construction worker etc. People who knew him as a seminarian, three years away from ordination were surprised to see him do those works and mocked at him “he is intelligent, and look at him doing those works! How would he apply his knowledge?” People were curious and wondering, wanting to know what really happened. He says “In fact, I cannot explain fully, the disappointment I had at that time. I really felt that I was abandoned and rejected by God. There came a time I did not believe in him anymore.”
In the face of those disappointments, he felt challenged to let life go on, and particularly, not to be overcome by the poverty. That readied him to do all kinds of menial jobs, complete his college education and so forth. He treasures the spirit of discipline and hard work he learned from the seminary. To this day however, he has regrets, especially, his disappointments with the seminary formators. He was even told that if he became a priest, he would only use it to uplift the reputation of his clan. He also got a disappointment from even his own family. According to a grand uncle who was also a priest, his performance assessment in the seminary was not impressive. This was told him in front of all the people at a family meeting. This embarrassed him very much, adding to all his resentments about his withdrawal.

06-MX

06-MX is a musician and song writer, and also, the bunso (last born) of four children. The father was a soldier and her mum, a housewife. He says that it was his childhood dream to become a priest, and so as early as in grade three, he had become a faithful altar boy serving at Masses. “I was one of the sidekicks of the priests,” he says. Eventually, he arrived in the major seminary. For him, in his youthful years, he saw priests as holy and good people and “I wanted to be like them.” His family had been very supportive of his decision to go to the seminary, especially, his mother and a deceased aunt who was financing the seminary expenses. “The belief was (still is with many) that it was a blessing for a family to have a priest,” he said.
This participant got to the seminary as a candidate for a diocese. He had enjoyed the seminary life and activities. However, at the end of the first year of his theological studies, he was handed a letter informing him that he was not admitted for the next year, (in effect, dismissed!) He says “I was kicked out because it was not my destiny, God didn’t want me to be there.” He adds, “I was devastated, sad, but eventually got over it.” He could not accept the reason for which he was being laid off: “They said that I was a gay, tender, feminish!” What made it hard for him to accept that reason was that, he could see there were many other gay seminarians at the different year levels who were allowed to stay on, “and some of them are priests today, so I could not see the reason.” He felt that he was unfairly treated. He suspects that the real reason may have been because his father once came to the parents’ retreat/meeting at the seminary drunk and caused a scene of a commotion during that time.

The feelings that this participant had was that “I felt as if I was robbed of my dream, that I was blocked and I no longer had the opportunity of realizing my dream of becoming a priest. I was devastated and I felt angry.” He eventually came to terms with this event in his life. He said “Even if I was kicked out, I forgave the seminary. God gave me the grace and I was able to forgive them all (the priests who sent him out).” His mother was particularly sad at this dismissal. His father did not really mind. His family was supportive of him in this time, but at the beginning of that period, it was difficult for him to tell other people in his community and parish: “I was too ashamed to tell them that I was kicked out. I couldn’t tell them on their faces.” He makes an analogy: “It was like I was in the prison cell and I came out but too shy to tell people I was there. That’s a bit shameful, isn’t it?” It was after about a year that he could begin to talk about it.
06-MX says that the letter he received on the last day of the seminary is one of his most devastating moments in life. The frustration of his dream was unbearable at the beginning. His days in the seminary had however, helped him to hone his talents in music. He brought this talent when he left the seminary and started to get serious about it. It begun by turning his anger into writing poems. Later, he arranged and put musical notes (melody) upon them. That has led him to be a music writer today!

Although he could not talk much about the sacking event with them, his family and friends had been helpful to him in adjusting. Today, he had overcome all hard feelings of that event, grateful for that one year experience of the seminary and all the discipline and lessons learnt, especially, his talent of music which was born there. “God has a purpose for everything that happens to us. If something didn’t work for you earlier and later you see what God was saving you from, you say ‘WOW, God I thank you!”

07-FV

In terms of academic achievements, this 32 years old woman seem to have the most of achievements among the participants. She finished college and also took Masters in Education. She is presently also undertaking another program on the Master’s level in a university in Manila, while at the same time employed at a renowned institution. She had entered the religious life in 1998, joining an international missionary group. After almost ten years, she requested to come out in February this year (2007, eight months prior to the interview), to have more time to reflect, whether she should go ahead to make her perpetual vows. This however, she explains, is a secondary reason. The primary one is that, she had observed on her regular visit home, that her parents, who are now both
retired over a year ago, were now facing some financial crises which often led them to quarrels. Thus she wants to work and help them for a while. She gives herself about two years to sort these things out and possibly return to the convent.

This participant is the elder of two siblings. She has a brother but he is not so much active or responsible. She comes from a family of staunch Catholics and the interesting thing is that her mother is also an ex-nun! Both parents are very active in the life of the church in their parish. “I think I owe my vocation to my family, especially, to my mother,” she said, a thing also enhanced by her attendance of Catholic schools throughout. In those places, she came into contact and befriended some of the reverend sisters, especially, during the high school. Those of them who were friends to her mum also visited their home frequently.

Already in Grade One, she wanted to be a nun! “At the age of seven, I was already convinced that I would be a sister.” She adds “I used to roll a towel around my head and dress like a sister, and used to tell my parents that I would be a sister.” In high school, she had a Jesuit spiritual director and she used to tell him that she needed special directions because she wanted to become a sister. I really wanted to serve God. That was my motivation and intention.” Like the parents, this participant has also been very active in the life of the church at her parish at a young age. She says also that at a very young age, she was given a lot of opportunities to be independent of her parents.

Having entered the convent at 22 years, 07-FV similarly was also exposed to a lot of opportunities in line with her line of college degree - education, especially as it is one of the main apostolates of her congregation. Already in her first year as a junior, the superiors had seen her potential and so gave her many opportunities. She says she liked
them all. Of course, she likes her field and appreciated the opportunities given her, along with the challenges therein composed. She had taught at all levels of the school (up to college). Later on, she was mostly given administrative positions in their Category – A and well run schools. She had handled many people: staff and students working under her. She would say later however, that because of these responsibilities, she was not able to enjoy her stages of formation as a young sister.

In spite of the fact that her working life or carrying out her responsibilities as a junior sister was going very smooth, she however had her challenges when it came to the experience of community living in the religious life. She said that she had observed that when assigned to their big communities (ten or more sisters), she almost always seemed to have difficulties. “It was a problem for me to live in big communities” she had said. In smaller communities of about three people, that pattern was not observed. She observed that most of the sisters were far older than her (fifties and above!) and thus there was often a big age gap in the communities she had been. Added to this, the style of formation they had received is different from hers. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for her to notice some kind of jealousy from the old sisters, when she, as a young junior one, was given high administrative positions in their schools, and had to have sometimes, her older sisters under her. At the same time, their noticing her youthful energy and enthusiasm and dedication, and also undertaking another course for further studies, aggravated these human weaknesses of jealousies, which she agreed, were bound to happen in a normal big human community.

Life continued and the time came for her to take her final vows. The superiors of the congregation had already recommended her for the final vows. A week before she
was to be handed the official letter about it, however, after making a week of retreat to prepare for the final vows, she decided to leave! She was actually about to have the final vows about two years earlier, but at that time also, she requested for an extension of the time for one year before this time of departure arrived. Final vows were normally taken five years after the first vows. In her letter of departure, she had stated clearly the problems she faced and the reason for going out for a while, “It was not difficult for me because it was my personal decision, and I was already aware of the reason why I wanted to be out for a while.” She said that the Mother General of the congregation assured her that “our door is always opened to you” if she wanted to return. In fact, she had added “you are an asset to the congregation” and also that they were so sad that she was leaving. The congregation catered for her financial needs and graduate school fees for the first two months after she left.

07-FV was taking another graduate part time course at the time she came out, and she is continuing it. She was also lucky that two weeks after coming out, she was immediately signed on, at first temporary, and later made a permanent employee, when she submitted her application for a job at a prestigious college. Her background and experiences stated in her resume, plus the fact of having held administrative positions in the educational institutes of her congregation (which is known as one of those with a lot of good educational practices), won her the immediate employment without difficulty. In fact, they told her “we are lucky to have you.” It is here that she has had to make some adjustment immediately also. That included the less disciplined and courteous attitude of the students here, compared to where she had come from. In the former, students respected and greeted you, came to her office to do so. Now, here she is with the students
who do not even mind you when meeting you on the corridors. Public display of affection (PDA) was a common sight, not only among students, but also among the staff. She was not used to these and they were a clash of values for her, and gradually had had to get used too. Here she was who used to be a superior, being an administrative officer, and now she is also a subordinate under someone’s supervision! With all these, she says, “is a very humbling experience for me.”

The course which this participant is currently undertaking has many of her classmates being priests and religious, and she has good rapport with them all, especially, her *barkada* (closer or inner circle of peers or friends). In the same class are also two other former ex-nuns of her congregation (they had quitted after the final vows)! She had informed some of her classmates and professors in the previous term before going out, that they might likely see her out of the religious habit in the following term. Thus it was not surprising for many of them. They had been very supportive of her when she came out. Nevertheless, some were also taken aback, and she observed that some of the foreign classmate nuns she used to be close to, and helped in their studies, started to keep their distance when they begun seeing her now, not in a habit but in pants/trousers and other mufti dresses and they ask why. In fact, she stated that some of their reactions did hurt her. It happens that she sometimes meet some of her former students in the present college she is employed. They are usually shocked and ask why she is in jeans. “I tell them I am having my exposure,” the same explanations she gave to her other classmates. “Even if I share with them the whole story, they would not understand, and I am not even ready to share my experiences, not even to all my relatives because they have different perspectives.”
Furthermore, 07-FV also found mixed reactions at home in the province, beginning right away in her nucleus family. The father was very supportive of her, welcoming her: “whether you go back to the convent or not, where you will be happy is your own decision.” It was the opposite with her mother. “She was very angry, very indifferent and disappointed when I left,” she says, and adding “Before, she used to be very proud of me, and every time we went out, she would introduce me to her friends, but after I left, she never anymore introduced me.” She says that her mother has not tried to get her side of the story, and continues to be very insisting to this day “no, you will be a sister, you have to go back to the convent.”

Many people, especially the older folks (women especially), would ask many questions about her and why she was home. They also had many presuppositions. They gave many reasons why she is out: “maybe you have a boyfriend; maybe you are getting married; maybe you are pregnant.” Despite the negative talks, she is still very confident that her reasons for coming out of the convent (temporary for now) are justifiable. Those talks therefore do not bother or affect her very much. She believes God is always with her. These negative remarks and attitudes of people around her (sometimes from relatives also), were nonetheless, on occasion, a nuisance to her. Other things which helped her cope and adjust, are the counseling subjects she was enrolled in at the time, as well as some of her professors in the university. She also has spiritual strength from her regular prayer life, personal monthly retreats, as well as spiritual direction.
From a family of six siblings in Pangasinan but settling in Metro Manila, came this 31 years old lady. She is the fifth born. The father is a technician in a garments factory and the mother, a housewife. Presently, she is employed with an NGO catering for abused teenage girls. After studying banking and finance in a state university, she worked for almost three years with a bank, before entering the religious life. The uniqueness of this case is that this participant first entered a contemplative order, discovered therein that she is not for that life of contemplation and so after six months, moved out in January 2004, although the order encouraged her to stay on. In June of the following year, she formally joined an active international religious congregation here in Metro Manila. In September 2006, as a result of health problems, she was led to see the need to quit and first see to her health needs – with the openness that she could return afterwards when she had recovered.

This participant admitted her inactive response to religious activities or in the life of the church in her earlier years. Her interest to become a nun was as a result of a dramatic experience. During her brief working life, she had belonged to the “Singles for Christ” group at her parish. One afternoon in 1999, at a time when she was in a relationship and discerning if she was ready to marry at all, she prayed that the Lord’s will be done. At lunch time in the computer room of the group at the parish, “something asked me (not a vision) ‘do you want to be a nun?’” This is what prompted her to give up marriage in favor of the religious life which her parents were not in accord with.

08-FLV had liked the formation she was receiving, especially, focusing on the self. She was more at home in this place and happy to be here. Part of the charism of the
active congregation she had joined was fighting the course of the poor and destitute in society. Thus already in the initial formation of candidates to this community, the formandi are exposed to those life situations of the people for whose cause they have to work with and for. In line with that, the formandi spend sometime living in the payatas (or poor slums/neighborhood.) It was at such a time that the health concern of this participant became an issue. Her formators and superiors became concerned about a skin allergy she had, that going into such slum environment may endanger her health and life. Thus as she said, everybody in the convent advised her to get the ailment cured first.

Once upon a time as a child when she had a skin allergy and the doctor prescribed a certain medicine for her, the mother continued to buy her the same drug from the pharmacy, whenever the allergy persisted. Later, she herself would continue to do likewise. It was discovered when she went to see a specialist and had lab tests and medical examinations, that her body had become intoxicated by the overdose of that steroid, and had affected her body in some ways. “With all these, the congregation asked me to consider my situation … and I helped them to make the decision,” she said, not wanting that the coffers of the congregation would be depleted on her health needs, nor be given some special treatment or consideration in the formation. After more than a month of discerning and with a retreat, she decided, and once decided, quickly moved out “to avoid the pain” she said.

The participant was hurt with the turn up of events. She said crying, “I felt really hurt. I felt betrayed by myself, and at that time, by the congregation also.” She also adds: “I thought I had given up so much for God – I gave up my work with a chance of a very good career, the financial aspect; I gave up the chance to become more successful in my
field.” Remembering these, and at the same time, what she had learnt in formation, that
God does not need what we bring to him, she sometimes think that she acts rebelliously
to God, for example, on going out, from a daily attendance at Mass, she now frequents
the church mainly on Sundays. “I don’t know, but maybe I am being rebellious to God!”
she had said.

08-FLV had found support from her family upon coming out. She said her
siblings aided her in everything – financial, emotional and physical. She also frequently
saw her spiritual director. She also observed that during the formation, “they were always
preparing us and telling us that there are no assurances. There could be situations where
the decision could come from one herself or the congregation to go out.” As a result of
this, she adds about her going out: “Actually, it was not too surprising for me.” A good
observation she made also was “I remember my formator saying that it is more difficult
to go out than staying, because it demands courage to go out.” She adds that “they
prepared me for going out and it helped me to adjust.”

Regarding some of her exit experiences, she says that in the beginning, “I didn’t
want to go out, just staying indoors, and I didn’t want to be connected with my friends.”
She was living with her siblings in Manila. “I just wanted to be at home and think about
myself. I watched TV almost 24 hours!” She also said that it was a good thing for her that
she did not have a cell phone at that time, and neither was there a line phone in their
rented place. Asked if people at her home parish knew she had gone to the convent, she
replied in the affirmative and said “Actually, that was one of the reasons why I didn’t
want to go out, because I don’t want to be explaining why I went out if they asked. They
would not understand, and I was afraid of being ridiculed.” Not only that, she adds: “I am actually afraid of rejection!”

This participant had also found in the beginning, the void of the structure of the religious life affecting her; because of lack of it, she for example did not pray as would have been the case. The idleness or lack of work also had bored her, plus the financial aspect of it – she who used to help the siblings now at this time had to depend upon them. Of course, they always supplied her needs, but she was not at ease with that situation.

Another important observation with this participant is that, although the congregation was good and warm to her, having gone out, she developed some aversion for the congregation and did not want to go anywhere near their convent. Even still as at the time of the interview, she said she still has some difficulties. “Maybe, not because of the congregation but because of my life I left behind there. Maybe I still want to be there,” she said tearfully. She agrees that she has some regrets about these exit experiences and having been in the religious life, “but the benefits far outweigh the regrets that I had.” Among others, she has learnt a lot from the religious life, gained more wisdom, more involved in the life of others now, and “I am more ready to face any situation in life.”

09-MV

09-MV is the last born of four children, having two brothers and two sisters, all of whom are overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) abroad. He is presently a nurse employed in a reputable hospital in Metro Manila. He is still single. He hails from Roxas-Isabella. His mother died when he was four years old, and the father also followed when he was in
fourth year high school. He was then taken care of by the grandparents in the province. He used to be an altar boy in high school and because of activities connected with that, he developed an interest to become a priest. “I saw the goodness of serving the people in the church and also getting something in return. So I entered the seminary.” That was in 1997. The high school he attended was run by a missionary congregation and so he naturally joined them.

The participant found life very good and secured in the seminary. Everything was provided for by the congregation. Not only that, he observed also that because he was a seminarian, whenever they went out to visit people around, they were treated with special honor. He realized with these that in terms of material things, it was easy to become a priest, but then, “what kind of priest?” he asks. This led him to have a struggle with himself. It was more so because at the time also, “I heard some news which were disturbing, about priests involved in scandals, not only here in the Philippines, but also outside – priests involved in pedophilia, priests marrying, etc. Although my faith did not stumble because of that, I came to realize myself that “what sort of priest would I become?”

With the above issues in mind, the participant begun to evaluate himself in many ways, “what if I were not a religious or a seminarian, would these people still be treating me the way they are doing now?,” “What if I would be assigned to a place where people do not recognize so much the religious people, would I be able to survive?” These led him to try to see for himself, how the world is, outside the seminary where he would be taken for who he is, and not as a seminarian or priest. He also wanted to know how to earn money by himself. He thus decided to go out of the seminary. However, he said that
it was not easy to go out because there were so many things to consider after being in the major seminary for five years like “people may say sayang! A wasted time! Another thing to consider was, there were many people expecting you to become a priest, how would I explain to them, to answer many questions after coming out? I really prayed hard, but then, it was difficult for me to get out of the seminary.”

Yet still, there was another concern: of her senior sister who had been supporting him. Her sister had also once dreamt of becoming a nun, but at 16 when their mother died, with only a high school education, she sought work abroad as a domestic helper, and gradually supported the rest of her siblings. “She was so happy when I was in the seminary, but became disappointed when I left. Actually, she was one reason why it was difficult for me to go out of the seminary because she was really hoping that I would become a priest, and when I came out, she cried a lot!”

Eventually however, he was able to push through to withdraw in 2002. That was even shortly after he had handed in his application to have his novitiate. It was at that time that he discovered that all his other five classmates in the formation house had handed in their applications to quit, while he erroneously thought that they had also applied to go to the novitiate! This gave him a nod, for he said it would be hard to be the only person remaining. “So I retracted my application, telling father-director that I would like to change my decision, because I realize that I still have a lot of things outside to prepare before I push through,” he had said. He therefore could now get out. Immediately, he enrolled in a college for nursing, for which, apart from interest in it, hoped that it would brighten his chances for opportunities to work abroad like his siblings.
This participant says that it was not hard for him to adjust, considering that he had to go back to school immediately, and his siblings supported him with finances. He notes that “A lot of people were asking me why I came out of the seminary and I kept on explaining to them that I am still young and I have to check a lot of things for myself, because I want to become a quality priest, a holy priest. I don’t want to enter and then if you do bad, it will be shameful to the church and a lot of insult to the religious life.” There was nothing he could think of as a hindrance during his adjustment.

In the first month after he had left the seminary, he continued his life with the routines he had back in the seminary. These included his daily morning prayers (lauds) and going for Mass. As time went by however, it reduced to twice a week. He said that he honestly missed the structure and life in the seminary. “Frankly, every month, I used to dream about my seminary life about four times, even, until now. But perhaps, I just miss those times and I don’t want to take them as a sign to go back. But then, I say to myself that if God really wanted me to go back, then he will find a way to get me back, and if I should indeed go back, then my vocation would be much more stronger.”

10-FX

This participant is a 36 years old woman coming from the Republic of Benin in West Africa. She is the second of seven children. Presently, she lives in Italy where she was sent for further studies by the religious missionary congregation she joined. She was the second African to be recruited at home, into this predominantly Italian congregation. It was in the course of studying there that she was informed that she was not granted the permission to make her final vows. This came at the time that she was due for the
perpetual vows and had actually submitted her application to be allowed to profess her final vows.

After an unduly long delay in getting a response, the reply to her application finally came in a letter from the superiors, saying that she was not granted to continue with them. She was of course disappointed, having been with them for eleven years. It was to follow the example of Jesus in helping and serving the poor that had motivated her to want to enter the religious life. The main reason for the objection was that she had a strong personality or character. She explains that she is actually a frank person and always said what needed to be said. She was however, earlier given some kind of warning as to this character trait of hers, about six months before the final sending out.

The above incident happened in 2005, and having been laid off, she decided to be on her own, continue to stay in Italy and complete her studies. She solicited some part time jobs around like baby-sitting and care-giving while she continued to study in the university, having moved out of the convent to rent a place and live by herself. In the course of her studies there, she had taken bachelors in languages (Spanish, French and Italian), and further courses in theology, as well as a course in formation training. Without her knowing, before she herself was informed, the superiors had sent letters to her parents, parish priest and bishop at home in Bènin, informing them that she was no more allowed to continue with the congregation, a thing that surprised her. Such letters are of course not detailed enough to explain every thing to the recipients. Mixed reactions were thus at home until she visited home sometime later and explained herself, whereupon her own people understood better her predicaments and situation.
Following that, 10-FX was accepted and supported by her family and friends, especially, some priests and religious. She said of her visit home however, that “I sometimes had a bit of shame towards some people in my village” (translated from French). That aside, she did not have much problems in adjusting on coming out, for she continues to live in Italy and is still busy with studies in the university and part time jobs. When some of her classmates noted that she was no more wearing the religious habit and wanted to find out more, she told them that the congregation now allowed members to wear other dresses apart from the habit! She says that what had also helped her to cope and adjust to this situation was her level of education and the friendships she had there in Europe. Furthermore, she said a fundamental help to her has been her faith in God with which she read and interpreted the events of her life with the light of the Word of God. Perhaps, her being away from her homeland might also have helped in this line.

In spite of the disappointment of having been laid off, this participant acknowledges that she had learnt many things over the period of her long stay with that religious community, especially in terms of human and psychological formation; the experience of meeting and living with people from different cultures in the same community. “Aucune expérience est nulle ou négative n'est-ce pas? Dieu a ses chemins par lesquels il nous conduit et ces chemins ne sont pas les notre. C'est après cout qu'on comprend que l'expérience vécue était pour notre bien.” [“God has his own ways of leading us on his path which may be different from our own expectations. It is only afterwards that we come to understand that the experiences we had, came for our own good!” she writes, adding a question “No experience is ever all negative, isn’t it?”]

* (Data from this case is both from email and interview over pc-pc phone chat. It was also conducted in both English and French.)
11-FX

This is a 31 years old Ghanaian lady presently studying in a university in Ghana, West Africa. She had thought that it was a very good way to serve the people of God by being a religious. Consequently, she joined an international religious missionary congregation at home. It was three years into her formation, at the time in the novitiate, two months prior to the date of the profession of the first vows, when she was laid off in 2004. She says “… on that day, the novice-mistress came and told me to pack my things and the following day, I was sent home.” She alleges that she was not given any prior warning before this. She adds “I was not given any letter to say that this is what I have done, but one sister only told me I am timid, that is all.” She elaborates: “This was their judgment: that I am timid, for me I know, I am vocal when it is necessary for me to bring things out, but when it is not necessary for me, I do not talk and I felt maybe that is where they judged me. And this was the only thing I was told. Myself, I do not understand if someone asks me to explain.”

Asked about how she felt about this expulsion, she says “very bad, wickedness, hatred and pain.” She says that it was very painful, and actually, providing this data reminds her of that pain she wanted to forget. Her parents or family were neither informed about her withdrawal before she was sent home and they were surprised of this event. Despite that, she was warmly received at home and also supported – financially, spiritually and emotionally. A priest and few kind sisters were among her other frequent supporters or helpers in the adjustment period. She had also made use of spiritual direction and retreats. She went back to school and studied very hard.
Apart from the above, this participant was also helped in adjusting by soon securing a work. However, an event surfaced there, linked to her former formators which further aggravated her pains at the exit experiences. She writes:

When I came back home, doing my quiet work and not minding their business, they went round to spoil and destroy me to my boss, and based on that, my boss treated me and insulted me as if I am an outcast. My dear father, it was a bad experience for me: that even when I came back home for them to be after me! I have not committed any crime in the convent. Please permit me not to go far, ok.

If that was really the case, then indeed it was a bit too much! Not surprisingly, when asked whether she is still in touch with her superiors or formators of that congregation, she responded with emphasis: “NEVER! AND I WILL NEVER IN MY LIFE!”

12-MV

This last participant hails from the country of Angola in Africa. He is a 32 years old young man presently employed with one of the United Nations agencies over there in Angola. He had entered the seminary, joining an international religious missionary group after high school, to train to become a priest. Asked about his motivation for having wanted to become a priest, he says “A priest was the most respected man in the town and I wanted to be like him.” From the time he begun his formation with the missionary society, it was over twelve years when he finally opted out in 2004, six months away from professing final vows. That was still about a year left for the completion of his theological studies and he completed it.
The theological formation for this participant was carried out in Kenya in East Africa (those before this time were at home). During that period, he also had the opportunity to undertake the two academic years of a program abroad in the United States, called the “Overseas Training Program” of that congregation. It is also worthwhile to mention that during his theological formation, he developed keen interest in computers and devoted time for learning more about computer hardware etc. as well as getting a few other technical training, especially while in the US.

12-MV had enjoyed the seminary life and community living with all its challenges. However, he came to realize that he had to quit because “I felt that I was misguided on what God wanted me to do (the will of God).” As he says, one must continue to be discerning the will of God all the time, concerning what God would like him to do, “Even if you are priest, you should not stop asking “what God want you to do” every moment. Nobody is confirmed in his/her vocation.” It was in line with this that he had a vocational discernment at this time, realizing that he was misguided into the seminary.

The above led him to voluntarily come out. On returning home to Angola from Kenya, he explained to his family and they understood him and so supported him. Friends also expressed a strong support system for him. Something he found very helpful in having facilitated his process of adjustment was the fact that he immediately got employed (as said, with the prestigious UN body). He says of this “After six months, I was able to set up my home and buy my first car, fruit of my work only.” He does not seem to have any hindrance whatsoever regarding his process of adjustment upon coming home from the seminary. In this case too, training for a long time away from his own
home country may have further reduced the stress as is common with people of whom their local parish or community were well aware that they were in the seminary and so bombard excitants with questions, wanting to know what had happened that a candidate is out of the seminary or a convent.

This participant continues to have a good relationship with the religious community he had joined for a few years. He says that he is very much well welcomed in their house and “whenever they need help with their computers, they call me. We have a very good relationship.” He also invites the members of that congregation to his home, now and then for parties or other social gathering.

Factors hindering the process of adjustment of the ex-formandi after coming out.

In the event of a person having to make a change with respect to a life event such as the discontinuation of the priestly and religious life (PREL) or the life in the formation house, certain factors may help one to adjust positively. On the other hand, some factors may be a hindrance to an appropriate adjustment. Those may act negatively against the person in the process of adjustment. Thus they pose risks to the person. These are the factors that have been labeled as “risk factors.” The other positive ones are the “protective factors” for adjustment.
**Risk Factors for Adjustment**

In the cross analyses of the data to answer the first research question, the domain that emerged to handle this question is titled “risk factors for adjustment” (cf. Table 2). These are the negative factors hindering the adjustment process.

Table 2.

Cross analysis of data: Risk Factors for adjustment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Core Ideas</th>
<th>Times Featured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RISK FACTORS</td>
<td>Negative reaction of others.</td>
<td>-Hurt or ill at ease by the reactions of people.</td>
<td>3 – Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in lifestyle.</td>
<td>-Difficulties in adjusting to the secular environment</td>
<td>5 – Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memories – nostalgic or painful.</td>
<td>-Remembering events in the formation house that causes nostalgia or hurts.</td>
<td>7 – Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial crisis.</td>
<td>-Not having adequate money to meet personal needs.</td>
<td>2 – Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor Health.</td>
<td>-Having to be overtly concerned with one’s health and its costs.</td>
<td>2 – Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanations to peoples’ questions.</td>
<td>-Real or imagined anxiety about answers to give to people’s queries about coming out.</td>
<td>8 - Typical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following six categories were obtained: Featuring typically were: “explanation to peoples’ questions,” and “memories - painful and/or nostalgic from the FH.” The rest featured variantly (two or more, but less than 6 citations) and are “change in lifestyle,” “peoples’ negative reactions,” “poor health,” and “financial crisis.” (see Appendix E for the frequencies of how these were indicated by the individual participants).
Explanation to peoples’ questions.

With eight citations, this typical category is the highest occurrence as a risk factor for the study sample. This entails both the actual situation when a participant had found himself or herself having to answer the curious questions that were directed to them after they had come out of the seminary, convent or formation house. It also could have been a merely imaginary anxiety, as they seriously contemplated the answers to give, should people ask them. Case 08-FLV for example mentioned that she was anxious, not only because of the questions anticipated, and the answers she may have to give, but leading from that, that she may be rejected. Case 09-MV acknowledged the fact that although he felt anxious in a way, it is quite to be expected, and “natural that people would want to know what happened, and so would ask.”

Memories – painful or nostalgic.

This category also featured typically with seven (7) cases out of the twelve participants citing something to do with it. The way this category may have impeded a participant’s fruitful adjustment lies in either of two ways. Either the memory carried from the FH, seminary or convent may have been cherished joyful ones like community living, the structure and or routines of the community; the close friendships one experienced therein, etc. These caused some nostalgia when they came out and sometimes, actually causing them to want to go back, especially, in the immediate period of a month or so after coming out. One participant (09-MV), for over four years of having voluntarily quitted, mentioned at the time of the interview, that he continues to have dreams almost every month about the life in the FH! He is not taking it though, as a sign
to go back, although he is still single and says the possibility is still there to return to enter the PREL.

Further to what was said above about the cherished moments from the FHs, they also caused the ex-formandi to continue relishing and re-living the life from the FH or convent, and hence, being slow in coming to the reality of a different life when they had come out, and moving on to the secular reality. Cases 02, 03, 01, 06, 09, and 07 all mentioned specifically that they missed the life left in the convent or FH. In the first few weeks after coming home, they for example continued living as if in the FH, some drawing their own structures of routine to run their days; making effort to attend daily Masses, praying regularly their Lauds or morning prayers, especially, from the Divine Office prayer book (the breviary), if they had their own copy.

On the other hand, when the memory from the FH or convent had not been so pleasant or is indeed negative, those memories seem to have created some difficulties for the adjustment of the ex-formandi. In fact, those negative memories of what happened to them often provoked (or continue to do so), strong emotions, among other things: anger, resentment, grudge, blaming, retaliation, aversion etc. Case 06-MX mentions that although he has now overcome and forgiven those who sent him out, the letter he received from the seminary on the last day (end of his first year), of not being admitted to continue, is still one of the darkest days of his life. 08-FV still has aversion of going near the convent from which she was advised to come out as a result of ill health. 04-FV also remembers the rather unsatisfying interpersonal relationship between her and her novice mistress, the abrupt message given her in the evening to pack and go home the next
morning. Incidentally, she is the participant who had been most affected in this way and was in a severe depression and had to undergo psychotherapy.

**Changes in Lifestyle.**

This concerns difficulty experienced by some of the participants (02, 04, 07, 08 & 09) in adjusting to the secular life after they came out of the FH. Things cited in this area included such as the noise at home from people as well as the high volumes of the TV or radio; witnessing immoral life in and around the home, seeing people compromise one’s own cherished values like respect or hard work; the public display of affection (PDA) in school or office. In one case (07-FV), there was also the experience of role reversals, where the experienced administrator who used to be the boss with people under her, now became the subject under someone else.

**Poor health.**

Poor health was noted to have a considerable negative impact on two of the participants. It was the very reason for which case 08-FLV had had to go out and afterwards had to seek ongoing medical attention. She blames this for her being out of the convent today, and is also hurt by it. It has even led to her succinct rebellion, as she puts it “maybe I am rebelling against God” as she says her slack in attending the Holy Mass or praying these days may be due to this very reason.

Similarly, few months after coming out, case 02-FV had had to undergo surgery. At the time, she was not having any substantial job (now temporarily employed at a call
center with meager allowance). Consequently, to date, she still has an outstanding medical bill to pay. This is to cover the surgery undergone.

In these cases of poor health, we would take it that an additional stress is placed upon an ex-formandee when she or he has to worry about the status of his or her health, in addition to the concerns of having come out. This can therefore interfere with one’s adjustment.

Financial crisis.

A further area in which the adjustment of an ex-formandee can be made difficult is to be found in the absence of adequate financial resources to meet his or her personal needs. It was the experience, especially, of two of the participants (05-MV and 02-FV). For a long time, upon coming out, 02-FV, had been in dire needs. She is just lucky to have a friend with whom she shares her rented apartment. She has not yet got enough money to enable her rent her own apartment. Coupled with this, for over a year now since her return to Manila from Italy where she had been assigned as a junior sister, all that her family in Mindanao knows of her, is that she is just on vacation.

The lack of a good financial resource base compounds the anxieties of an ex-formandee, as we see in case 02-FV. Recently, when a family member died, a message was sent to her in Manila to send some contributions towards the funeral. On the other side, Case 05-MV’s experience was chiefly resulting from the poverty he faced and which led him in the first few months to take various menial jobs which occasioned peoples’ curious questions and reactions. These financial concerns, were not the worries of those ex-formandi who received some sort of financial help from their families and
friends or, the congregation left (as in the case of 07-FV). Thus worries in these areas affect the ex-formandi’s adjustment accordingly.

**Protective Factors Against Maladjustment**

In contradistinction to what has been discussed under the negative or risk factors, the factors under the domain here are those ones that enhanced the adjustment process of the ex-formandi. Thus the discussions here go to answer the second research question of the study, namely, “what factors facilitated the adjustment process of the ex-formandi after coming out?”

Table 3

Cross analysis of data: Protective Factors against maladjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Core Idea</th>
<th>Times Featured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| PROTECTIVE FACTORS   | Quality Relationships/ Connectedness | -Having & being in good relationship with significant others.  
|                      | Acceptance by others              | -Felt welcomed by significant others in spite of leaving.  
|                      | Counseling                        | -Talked to a professional counselor or others about predicaments.  
|                      | (Professional/Popular & Spiritual Direction) |  
|                      | Activities                        | -Engaged in activities that helped to defuse worries.  
|                      | Financial support                 | -Received generous financial help.  |
Table 3 indicates that five categories were recognized under this domain “protective factors against maladjustment”. These are “quality relationships” and “activities,” both of these were cited in ten (10) instances and thus are very typical descriptions of the data and cases, missing “general” designations only by a mark of one (1) count. The rest of the categories, which are also all typical are: “acceptance by others” (cited 8 times); “financial support” (7); and lastly, “counseling” (6).

Quality relationships.

An example for this, is case 01-FV, who says that she was welcomed home with “open arms” by the parents, while her many friends were very ready to immediately provide her with employment in their own business setups. Case 03-FLV had been anxious when going home, uncertain of the reactions of her parents and family since she was the only one who broke out of the family’s sect (cf. Appendix E for a fuller account). However, after two days or so, she was very relieved and found it wonderful that the parents welcomed and accepted her. She says that this helped her in a great way to settle down and to adjust.

In the case of 04-FX (who seemed the most affected after coming out) however, she seemed to be the participant with the least connectedness to other people. That is, she has just a few friends only. Even with her family and siblings, she does not have a quality relationship with them, not even her own twin sister. She has not been able to discuss or talk about many things over with them way back from childhood. The lack of this quality relationship may therefore not have provided enough cushion for her in her adjustment process when she was asked to pack and go home, albeit, in a sudden way.
Acceptance by others.

In this category, the participants mentioned things as to whether they were accepted by other people or not. We have in the case of 07-FV where her mother was insisting that “you have to go back to the convent.” She also observed that her mother was no longer proud to introduce her to her (mother’s) friends, perhaps a surreptitious way of her non-acceptance of her daughter coming home. In the same way, the mother of 05-MV was a few times involved with quarrels with her son and also insisting that he must return to the seminary. It was earlier mentioned of 08-FLV’s fear of rejection from people, which also contributed for her staying indoors and avoidance of people at the beginning of her exit.

Activities.

The idea under this category is that it was discovered, that the ex-formandi were helped in the process of their adjustment when they got actively engaged in doing something. It seems to be the case that those activities helped them not to preoccupy themselves with some kind of self-pity or hurts. Doing something took away their minds from otherwise idle and harmful thoughts. These activities include immediately being engaged or enrolled in schooling upon coming out as was the cases of 07, 09, 10 & 11. It could also have been in the form of getting an immediate employment e.g. 07, 10 & 11. Case 06-MX had an interesting and beneficial pastime of writing poetry. He said that he managed to transform all his hate and hurts at that time into poems. Later, he added musical notes on some of them through the musical talents he had developed in the one year in the seminary (and for which he is grateful). That activity has led him to be today,
a song writer, the main source of his income. On the other hand, 08-FLV reports that she found life boring in the beginning when she was at home doing nothing.

Other activities were found to have as well helped in this area. Case 03-FLV at a point had to gather the children in her community in the province to teach them some of the things she had learnt from the convent like making rosaries, crosses, as well as teaching them some songs and catechism or bible lessons. The same was true for Case 04-FX who was asked to help teach the children at a home of abused children. Almost all (10) had indicated something of this sort of activities, suggesting that it was found very helpful for adjustment to be engaged in doing something. Gal & Lazarus (1975) have affirmed the positive impact of having an activity doing, in dissipating one’s stresses in life. The engagement of the participants in the above activities confirms this.

Counseling – popular, professional and spiritual direction.

This also featured typically with 6 people citing something to do with this. It involved the realization that in the effort to make a good adjustment to the secular world they had returned to, they found it helpful to go out of their way to talk to somebody about their predicaments. This other person could be a relative, a priest or nun, a former teacher or a friend. With these their pieces of advice were sought and so are classified under a popular kind of counseling (seeking counsel) as to what to do. Many of the participants made use of this.

Where necessary, the ex-formandi were also found to be ready to engage in professional counseling to help them face their situations. A classic example of this is case 04-FX, who not only talked to her former priest teacher, but also went on to seek
counseling at a center. In fact, due to the gravity of her situation, she even had had to have psychotherapy at a time when she could hardly eat and sleep, neither was she able to write anything, save the letter “X”. As she said, at that time she could not even write her own name! Therapy helped her eventually to come out of her depression and begin to adjust and live a normal life.

Another thing that many of the participants mentioned was centering on their faith as a resource for their coping and adjusting. Thus they prayed a lot, had retreats as well as spiritual direction. Case 10 said that her faith was very fundamental for her in this situation, and it helped her “to read the events of my life with the light of the word of God like the people of Israel and this gave me joy, peace and serenity.” Some like 07-FV continues to have her regular spiritual direction and monthly personal retreat.

It is also significant to note that at least, two of the participants (01-FV & 03-FLV) mentioned that after they had come out, they went back to see their formators in their convents to give them some inputs or guidance that would help them to adjust or reintegrate well into the secular society. Their formators were happy to do this and the latter case carried out that arrangement to go every month for over six months, to the convent for this purpose. This had stopped only two months prior to the time of the interview for this study.

Financial support.

While the issue was raised under the previous domain that the lack of adequate financial resources can be a hindrance to, or a risk factor for adjustment, it is only to be expected that when this support is available, then the exiter is greatly helped in his or her
process of adjustment. As the only child of her parents, coupled with the financial soundness of the parents, 01-FV was greatly helped and she had all the resources she needed and so there was nothing to worry about. Another good example of this financial support was mentioned by case 07-FV, who said that her congregation paid her school fees at the graduate school at which she was enrolled in at the time of deciding to come out (for a while). They also supported her for the first two months after she left the convent. By herself, she had even gained a good employment just two weeks after leaving the convent!

Discussion

The Process of Adjustment that the Ex-Formandi Undergo, after Coming out of Formation Programs.

The discussion here focuses on the main research question of the study. It follows the outline depicted in figure 2 (next page) – the adjustment process of ex-formandi.

Termination/Pre-departure.

The adjustment process as observed from this study, starts at a beginning stage here termed “termination.” This is in fact the pre-departure stage. This is the stage before the candidate moves out of the formation house or program (FP), after either the decision had been freely made, or when the news to pack and go home had been given him or her. Along the domain of the reasons given for leaving the FP, the candidate at this stage belonged to either of three groups (Table 4). If he or she was asked to pack and go home (expelled), then the termination period begins for such a person at the time the formators
Fig. 2. New conceptual framework – The ex-formandi’s adjustment process.
or superiors gave him that piece of unpleasant news (could also actually be a pleasant one for some who would see this as a relieve!) until he or she leaves.

Table 4

Reasons for participants leaving the formation program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Core Idea</th>
<th>Times Featured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REASONS FOR LEAVING</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>- Decided freely to leave</td>
<td>2 – Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Due to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Family related needs:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Personal issues:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asked to leave</td>
<td>- Asked to leave (expelled)</td>
<td>4 – Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual Decision</td>
<td>- Came to a common realization with FH of the need to, and applying to go</td>
<td>2 – Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we have observed from the data of our participants, the termination period was as short as less than half a day, when case 04-FX was informed in the evening and was on the way home the next morning never to return. 05-MX similarly got his letter on the last day of the school year. The next morning, he was leaving not to return. Case 10-FX had handed in her letter for permission to profess her final vows. After an unusually long delay for the response from the superiors, the reply came saying that she was not admitted to profess or to continue with the congregation. She had over a month to prepare to move out of the convent in Europe where she was at the time on further studies. It is
observed that it is this group that may usually have a short time between notification and departure.

A second group in this stage of termination is of those who freely decide to go out by themselves. Two main reasons emerged as the common reasons for which candidates decided to voluntarily leave. It had either to do with a family related need such as caring for sick or aging parents (01-FV), or time out to reflect and also work to financially support one’s family (07-FV). The other reason is a departure due to a personal issue, such as one unable to cope with the mixed or foreign culture of the community (e.g. 02-FV who was assigned her mission to Italy from the Philippines), or as 12-MV says, realizing that “I was misguided into the seminary,” in other words, realizing that he does not see himself becoming a priest in the future and so discovered that it was a mistake that he was in the seminary. He therefore had to, but to leave.

In spite of the fact that they decide themselves, it can take this group quite a long time after thinking of the decision, and finally executing it to ask to go out. Many factors have to be considered before making the final decision after the first of those thoughts, as 09-MV mentions. For him, the disappointment that he would cause, especially, to her eldest sister who was so happy that he was in the seminary and was going to become a priest, was one of the things which kept him thinking for a long time (over a year), about whether to leave or not to leave. From her work overseas, she had supported his upkeep already as a young girl when their parents died.

Other areas that people may contemplate, influencing the time to come out concerned what one would do upon coming out (occupation or schooling for example). As already seen, the “how”, and the “what” to explain to people who are sure to ask them
later of why they are out of the formation programs, are considerable anxious factors. 07-FV had been thinking about her decision for almost up to two years. 05-MV decided at the end of his two years of regency period that he was not going back to the seminary. These are only some of the reasons observed to have been at the back of the minds of participants when they were thinking about going out. There can be more others.

The third group are those who were led by the formators to gradually see the need to go out, even if for a while, and also, with the possibility of a comeback. In the case of 03-FLV, it took a few days starting from midway on an inner awareness retreat. For case 08-FLV, the decision, including a discernment through a retreat, was finalized over a two months period.

It is to be taken note that, no matter the way a person was to come out, within this stage of termination or pre-departure and coming to grips of owning and effecting the decision to leave or when asked to leave, while still in the formation house and planning or packing to go home, the candidates’ experiences is similar to those mentioned about stages of grieving by Kübler-Ross (1969). Namely, in this termination stage, it was observed that some were shocked, in a way, some denied that it could be happening to them (e.g. 09-MX), some were angry (e.g. 05-MV who also went into depression). Those who decide themselves, or whom it is suggested to, to go out, only do so upon accepting those decisions and their foreseen consequences.

Exit.

In brief, this stage is merely the physically moving out of the formation house, seminary or convent, or program and going home. At least, in the instance where one
does not go home, like in the case of 02-FV, she or he had moved out of the formation house or convent. As observed earlier, especially with respect to memories that one may have, one may have physically come out all right, but the mindset may still be occupied by thoughts of the formation houses. The factors of exiting discovered here in this study are likened to what Rulla et al (1988) summarized about things that contributed to peoples’ quitting of the priestly and religious formation programs.

Transition experiences.

The stage of transition experiences, as labeled here and used in this study, refers to three main areas observed with the participants of the study. This was after they had come out of the convents or formation programs. Namely, these are the internal or observable cognitions (thoughts), behaviors and affects (emotions) of the ex-formandi interviewed. Using the CQR research method of analysis, it was noted that the categories of cognition and affects featured generally. That is, everybody cited something under affectivity, and except one person, all also cited something under cognition (cf. Table 5).

Seven (7) people were marked for the category of behavior, designating this feature as typical. Examples of what was mentioned under these categories of the domain of transition experiences include for cognition – the thoughts had in coming out: “… I was treated like a criminal” (case 11), “I wondered if God was punishing me” (02), and “I was afraid that people would reject me” (08-FLV).
Table 5
Analysis of transition experiences of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Core Idea</th>
<th>Times Featured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRANSITION</td>
<td>Cognitions</td>
<td>- Thoughts had as a result of the coming out</td>
<td>11 – General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPERIENCES</td>
<td>Affects</td>
<td>- Emotions had in leaving</td>
<td>12 – General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>- Peculiar behaviors exhibited related to the leaving</td>
<td>7 – Typical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those things mentioned and classified under affect – emotions felt in leaving the FH or FP, are for example: “I was depressed” (04), “I wanted God to take away my life” (03), and “I have a kind of aversion going close to the convent” (08). As regards behaviors exhibited relating to leaving: going back to formators for guidance for adjusting to the secular life (01 & 03); having regular prayers, retreats and spiritual directions (07 & 04), and resorting to “white lies” (10 & 07).

It is worthy to remark that it is not always what the participants can express and be put strictly under one classification. It is fluid sometimes and one can be put at one place or another at the same time, e.g. “aversion to the convent” marks well under affect as well as under the behavior category. What is obvious from this domain, is that the participants in general had very similar experiences, especially, with regard to their cognitions and affects or emotions.

The processing of the inner (the personal resources of a participant like esteem, hardiness, self efficacy, etc.) and external means (things in the environment like social
support, financial support, the environmental surrounding etc.) of adjustment of the ex-formandi after they come out in this transition stage is like this: within the immediate period (up to and about two months or more) of the exit and going home, the life of the ex-formandee is dominated by his affects as he or she, according to the circumstances of coming out, may feel temporary lost or having no sense of connection, neither to the formation house just quitted, nor to the secular world that she is returning to. These are times when recalling happy memories would eventually lead one to a desire of returning to the formation house. On the other hand, painful memories would cause one to feel bad about himself or herself. Feelings of anger, revenge, denial, low self-esteem etc. may be experienced here. With the background of these affects, the ex-formandee may also come to pay more thoughts about his or her situation, giving more dominance to cognition.

The dominance of the cognition of the person in this stage comes to the fore when one thinks seriously of what to do about his or her situation. With the personal resources and influencing factors around a person, alternative things are thought of, as to what one can do to improve his or her own situation. In the sample for this study, this has been mainly positive thoughts, in the sense that the ex-formandi were led to positively do something to ameliorate their situations. It is possible to think of cases where through negative or self-crippling thoughts (self-fulfilling prophecies), an ex-formandee can retrogress because of the negative thinking patterns. In the cases in this study, their cognitions about their situation led them to active behaviors that helped them to adjust. These behaviors, include as has been seen, seeking counseling, talking to friends and getting a job or schooling etc. These usually took place from about six months.
**General comparison of results**

"Emotional hang-up" (or baggage) and "moving on": operational definitions

In order to facilitate the presentation of the results here, it is important to have a common understanding and perception of these terms. Taking insights from Rachman, (1980), as used in this work, an ex-formandee would be said to be having emotional hang-ups if he or she exhibited any or a combination of the following: (1) Signs of still being hurt or in distress from the exit-related event. (2) Orally expressing by oneself, or observing in him or her that she or he is in distress because of that event. (3) Not wanting to talk about the exit-related event. (4) Crying or shedding tears now and then because of the exit-related events. (5) Not wanting to have anything to do with some or all of the members of the religious institute or formation house one had belonged to before the exit.

On the other hand, "moving on" is indicated by the following: (1) The person’s ability to freely talk about the experience or exit-related event. (2) Being able to be reminded of the exit-related event without raising severe reactions (distress), e.g. crying. (3) Acceptance of the reality of the exit-related experience and carrying on with one’s life as a fully functioning person.

**Graphical presentation of the impact and adjustments of the participants**

Based on the above characteristic definitions, the ex-formandi participants were further categorized in accordance with the perceived level of their having left behind their emotional baggage or hang-up, and having been able to move on with their lives. The ex-formandi are seen to be possibly “severely”, “mildly” or “unaffected” by the exit related
event. After the passage of time within which they had made (or not made) transitions, they could now be seen to have “somehow adjusted” or “well adjusted” to their present daily lives.

Table 6.
Perceived impact of the exiting circumstances on participants in the period immediately following the exit (based upon interview).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severely Affected</th>
<th>Mildly Affected</th>
<th>Unaffected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04-FX</td>
<td>02-FV</td>
<td>09-MV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-FLV</td>
<td>06-MX</td>
<td>07-FV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08-FLV</td>
<td>12-MV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>05-MV</td>
<td>01-FV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-FX</td>
<td>10-FX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows the impact upon the individual participants, at the beginning of the exit-event, as recalled by the interviewees. Table 7 shows where each of the participants was perceived to be presently, after the duration of the process of adjustment to the time of the interview.
Table 7.

Perceived stages of adjustment of participants as at the time of the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severely affected</th>
<th>Mildly affected Adjusted</th>
<th>Somehow Adjusted</th>
<th>Well Adjusted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02-FV</td>
<td>03-FLV</td>
<td>01-FV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-FX</td>
<td></td>
<td>07-FV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-MV</td>
<td></td>
<td>06-MX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-FLV</td>
<td></td>
<td>09-MV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-FX</td>
<td></td>
<td>12-MV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10-FX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Type of excitants: Voluntary (V), Expelled (X) or Led to go out (LV).*

As has been earlier identified, the above letters indicate the nature of one’s exit from the formation program: respectively, whether voluntarily quitting, being expelled; or being politely advised or helped to see the need to depart the program and then the person himself or herself applies to go out.

From this study (cf. Table 7), seven (7) people were altogether (both “somewhat” and “very well” adjusted) seen to have adjusted after the duration of the exit experiences. Most of these - four (4), i.e. 57% were from the V-group; those who had voluntarily opted out of the formation program.

Table 6 indicates that of the four (4) persons who were expelled, one had been severely affected; two were mildly affected, while one appeared to have been unaffected
by those events. At the time of the interviews, (cf. Table 7), two (2) of these (i.e. 50%) remained mildly affected and the other two being well-adjusted. Of the two who were led to go out (LV), had one had adjusted and the other remained mildly affected (50-50%).

When it comes to those voluntarily going out (V), of the six (6) of them, two (2) were evaluated to be mildly affected while the rest of the four (66.7%) had adjusted well. This indicates that more of those who voluntarily went out of the formation program are more likely to adjust easily than those in the other categories. It could be also said of the V-group that they perhaps found their process of adjustment easier.

**Comparison by gender**

It was the experience of the researcher, that it was easier to deal with women participants than with male participants. Furthermore, when it came to particularly, the lookout for the category of male ex-formandi who were expelled, the men were more hesitant to talk about their experiences relating to their exit from the formation programs. The reason for this is unclear, and it is beyond the scope of this study, but it will be interesting for this comparative study to be made.

Within this study however, it must be borne out that the ratio of women to men in this study is 8 to 4. That is, the number of women participants were twice the number of male participants (cf. Table 1 on page 47). As can be seen from the separate means for the men and women in the mean age of the female participants of this study is higher (i.e. older by 2.25 years) than that of the males. Thus regarding the participants, the women are generally older than the men in this study. Similarly, the women generally spent a longer time in formation, compared to the men (mean duration of 5.25 years as against
3.3 years of the men) before coming out of the formation programs. On the other hand, the men participants have generally spent a longer time since coming out of the formation programs – 4.5 years against the 1.9 of the ladies.

Of the four men, 3 were able to become well adjusted from their exit experiences, including the lone male among the four who was expelled. The remaining male participant who was mildly affected by his experiences as at the time of the interview (05-MV), had gone out by himself. With regard to the 8 women, half of them had become well adjusted (cases 01-FV, 03-FLV, 07-FV, and 10-FX). Of the 3 ladies who were expelled, two (04-FX and 11-FX) were mildly affected while one, 10-FX, was able to become well-adjusted.

Duration in the formation program.

It had been expected at the beginning of this study, that most probably, those who had spent longer time in the formation program before making the exit may have more difficulty in the process of adjustment in all the categories. Data from this study however, does not give any clear indication to this expectation or against it as there are participants from all lengths of duration in every group of adjustment. (See Table 1 on page 46 of the profile of participants and also, Appendix E for the participant’s individual length of duration). The studies of Rulla (2003), and Rulla et al (1988) on the process of leaving the priestly or religious vocation brought up a number of interacting factors. Like this present study however, no clear mention was made of this element of the duration that an exiter had in the formation program.
Duration of period since making the exit

It had also been expected that comparatively, those ex-formandi who had come out of the formation program a longer for a longer time would have made a more favorable transition than those who have exited in a shorter time to the interview time (of about up to two years). Again, the data from this study is not clear on this as we have both people of the maximum span of time period of five (5) years as well as the shorter duration of just less than a year all mixed up in the group of well-adjusted participants. In all, we have four people here who came out between 2005 and 2007 (Cases 01, 07, 10, and 03). The remaining three in this adjusted group came out between 2002 and 2004 (Cases 06, 12 and 09).

It is good to note though, that according to one participant (06-MX) “time heals.” He has been out over the five years maximum time span allowed under this study. He said that in the course of time, he had been able to get over his hurts, pains and bitterness, and able to forgive, and move on with his life. Although he had been affected (mildly) by his experience, today he has adjusted well.

Parental Consent to one’s priestly or religious vocation

The following had indicated during the interviews that their parents and/or family members were not in agreement of their proceeding into the convent and to become nuns or religious: Cases 01, 02, 03, 04, and 08. Family members consent is observed to likely play a role on the process of adjustment. In the cases above, although their parents and/or family members did not like their idea to go to the convent (and in some cases were persuaded not to go), they nevertheless, pursued their desires to the religious vocation
and left home for the convent. Sometimes, they were with some negative reactions or comments from such families. The remembrance of those sentiments created stress and tension when the candidates for whatever reason had to discontinue and go back home to the family. They were noted to often have mixed feelings, unsure of what the family would say to them or if they would be welcome home.

In one case (01-FV), this one is an only child, and although there was no direct disapproval of the desire for the religious vocation, the parents warmly received her back home. It was a wonderful support for her. The situation was however different for the rest of cases cited here who did not have the parental consent. Case 03-FLV was so afraid and uncertain about her parents’ reaction. It was understandable so, as the only member of the family who had broken away from the family sect to become a Roman Catholic and also enter the convent. She was however very relieved when she arrived home and found a positive welcome from the parents, not rejecting her for having broken away from the family religion.

We note that in the list of the adjusted, only the two from this group of non-parental consent (01 and 03) had become adjusted, perhaps, aided by the positive reactions they received when they had to go out of the convent. The other three appeared to have been still mildly affected as at the interview time. Thus, as the works of others have shown (e.g. Taylor and Aspinwall, 1996; Williams, 1999), such reactions from the side of the parents or their families constitute elements within the environment of the exiter’s experience that also affect the nature or the process of their adjustment.
Explanations to peoples’ questions

It has been observed that from the participants of this study, with 8 out of the 12 participants indicating the above element under the domain of the risk factors of adjustment, this is the highest frequency of reason for the stresses the ex-formandi faced upon coming out. Of the four who did not cite the above element, only 11-FX was expelled from the formation program. The rest are voluntary excitants. The above picture seems to indicate that the participants are quite concerned about other peoples’ perception about them (or the self) Gardner and Kosmitzki (2002), Santrock (2005).

What perhaps adds to the anxiety about peoples’ questions is the fact that, often, the public is prejudiced in their opinion about someone leaving the formation program or the priestly and religious life, as indeed appears is the case with all socially non-desirable shift (Ebaugh, 1988). Rice (1990) had mentioned it also as the situation faced by ex-priests and ex-nuns. Thus the variant category of “people’s negative reactions” is closely connected to the anxiety that the ex-formandi may have in giving answers to peoples’ questions. This is what Ebaugh explains that, it is a kind of social stigma that goes along with this kind of “socially undesirable role change.” Case 07-FV mentioned that people were for example asking her and family members when she came out, “Is she having a boy friend?” Is she pregnant?” and “Is she going to get married?” Case 05-MV said people were saying of him “look at him, a bright guy and only a few years away from becoming a priest and now here he is doing menial jobs!”

It is to be observed that sometimes, in peoples’ own opinion, it is inconceivable or incomprehensible that people would depart the honor of this religious vocation. The suspicion about the failures or weaknesses of a person is even higher, should it be learnt
that the person was actually sent away from the formation program, causing a presupposition that the candidate might have done something bad or is simply a bad or an unsatisfactory material or candidate. These free floating false ideas or prejudices can affect the self-esteem of the ex-formandi. All these are in line with the factors that Taylor and Aspinwall (1996) have identified, that they create vulnerabilities, stresses, and offsets coping system of a person in reaction to a stressful event.

In the light of the above anxieties about peoples’ questions, the participants coped in diverse ways with the situations within which they found themselves. One frequent coping mechanism noted of them was that, participants who had this anxiety about peoples’ questions frequently isolated themselves. This was particularly so within the very first few weeks or months upon coming home. Cases 02, 03, 06 and 08 all mentioned this behavior.

Often times, the participants were not ready to tell the long story of their exit. Sometimes too, to avoid long explanations they resorted to “white lies.” When case 07-FV was asked by classmates and also by her former teenage students “sister why are you in jeans and not in habit?” she said “I just told them I am having my exposure.” Case 10-FX similarly told her classmates in Europe why she was no more in habit: “the congregation now allowed members to use ordinary dresses.” It helped case 07 to cope with all those remarks and negative reactions from family members and others because of her good self-perception and self-esteem. Moreover, she said, she had reflected seriously, including making a retreat and in consultation with her spiritual director, and so, she knew what she was doing when she herself asked to be out for a while.
With the passage of time however, and depending on each ex-formandee’s particular situation and resources, they are usually able to make a shift from those self-isolation and other behaviors as well as the negative thinking about themselves. Consequently, they are then able to move out and mingle with more people.

*Changes in lifestyle*

The elements seen under the protective factors for adjustment are chiefly supportive of one’s successful process of adjustment. On the other hand, as was seen in some cases (e.g. 04-FX, 02-FV, 07-FV & 08-FLV), the environment can be considered unsupportive and stressful to the adjustment process. 07-FV observed that the values of the new institution she now found herself working, were too lax compared to her former institutes of working as well as with her convent life. 04-FX reports of noises at the home of the siblings she came to live with, the use of the electric fans, and most irritating to her, the sight of her sister flirting and fornicating. These are situations which she found herself outside her power to control. Within the walls of the nunnery she had come from, she was not experiencing them, or at least, could control in a way - as of not using the electric fan.

The changes in lifestyles that were experienced by some of the participants of this study invariably sometimes caused anxiety and necessitating restructuring of their own thoughts or values, and/or their behaviors also. The earlier they realized and accepted that they were no more in the convent or formation program, and had to face the realities of these experiences in the secular world, the better they swayed off their difficulties and helped them to also get adjusted and moving on with their own lives. Williams (1999)
had indicated that when the environment is supportive, it facilitates a smooth transition. Others, including Taylor and Aspinwall (1996); Taylor (1983), Livneh (2001) likewise observed the same thing. The present study as we see, has also affirmed this fact in the cases of this study.

*Quality relationships.*

It is indeed the observation from the data of the participants in this study, that they really found their social ties very helpful for them when they came home. These were mainly the network of the parents or family, as well as of friends and ties with other significant people in their lives. Case 01-FV says that “I was welcomed with open arms” and at the same time, reports that her many friends were happy to have her back in their company, while some were ready to provide her with employment in their own businesses. But for the few, but good relationships with her friends, the predicaments of case 02-FV would have been far worse today. As at the time of writing this, over a year since she came out by herself, this ex-formandee had not secured a tangible job to have a satisfactory income to sustain her own basic needs. She could not afford to rent a place but a good and kind friend had freely hosted her to date in her own apartment.

The lack of this quality relationship and its consequential effect on the adjustment of a person is seen in the case of 04-FX, who already as a child had kept many things to herself and could not be open to even her own parents, her siblings (not even her twin sister). In the event of her being withdrawn from the convent, she could not explore the relations she had by sharing with them adequately about her precarious situation and
feelings. It is not perhaps surprising that she presents the case of the most affected by the withdrawal by the severity of the depression which she revealed that she had.

Earlier, in the discussions of the literature review, talking about the “factors that influence the transition-adjustment process,” it was noted that the social ties that one has can influence greatly the adjustment process (Holahan & Moos, 1991), Cobb, 1976; Taylor & Aspinwall, 1996; Kaplan, 1996; Weiten, & Lloyd, 2003). Williams (1999) indicated that this kind of social support or network facilitates a smooth transition to take place. The examples of the cases in our study here support this view of the importance and good effect upon the adjustment process, of the social ties. The better the quality of this, so did it better enhanced the adjustment process also.

Acceptance by others.

Closely connected to the above social network of ties pertains to acceptance by society, especially, by significant others. It is not automatic that when one has a connectedness to many people, he or she may be accepted when events turn up like that of leaving the vocation of the priestly and religious life. On the one had, we have in the experience of case 07-FV being well accepted by her friends and classmates in the university. Even, her congregation affirmed her. When she goes home at her province however, her mother, she reports, insists “you have to go back to the convent,” and at the same time, she was not at ease to introduce her to her (mother) friends as the child who used to be in the convent. A similar insistence was reported by 05-MV, whose mother even ended up with a few quarrels surrounding the urge of her son to try to return to the seminary.
Ebaugh (1988) says the socially undesirable thing can sometimes lead others rejecting you. So far as the vocation to the priestly and religious life is highly appreciated in the Afro-Asian cultures of this study, withdrawal from it at any stage, whether in the initial formation period or after one had become a finally professed member, or ordained as a priest. Some people would not consequently desire to see quitters from it. Such excitants may often be seen as unacceptable, with the associated stresses or challenges, as indeed is reflected in the cases cited here.

Financial situation of the participants

Cases 02-FV, 04-FX and 05-MV expressed the fact that they came from poor families. This seems to also affect the adjustment period. As can be seen from Table 7 (page 110), all the three are to be found among those who, at the interview time, were still showing signs of being mildly affected from their exit-related event.

It appears from this study, that, when one came from a family being financially stable, they were readily able to help out to the ex-formandi of his/her needs and to settle down. Financial support was thus given out to the affected candidates. This however, did not depend only upon the family.

It was observed with 01-FV, and also with 02-FV that friends also gave out this financial support. Case 07-FV also represents a unique case of her congregation actually helping her with financial support when she decided to come out for a while. The congregation had paid her graduate tuition fees for the next semester at the university in which she was enrolled in at the time of her exiting. She received financial support for
two months. In addition to all these, she gained a good employment only two weeks after making the exit. Thus although she came out just eight months prior to this study, the above factors interacted together to make her one of the well adjusted in this study.

On the other hand, when one who exited, is deprived of financial resources like employment, the transition would be harder. Such was the situation of case 02-FV. 05-MV was also in a similar situation for a long time before getting a more respectable job other than being a tricycle driver or a barber or laborer. These kinds of financial support falls under the designation of “tangible assistance” as Taylor and Aspinwall (1996) noted, and seen by Williams (1999) as “economic security.”

The presence of financial benefactors to people in transition has been found to be very helpful as indeed observed from the participants in this study. It has also been noted, like in earlier studies, that the absence of this support can truly make the process of adjustment of the ex-formandi more difficult (e.g. case 02-FV). Thus again, earlier studies on adjustments, (e.g. Taylor & Aspinwall, 1996; Williams, 1999; Weiten & Lloyd, 2003) are affirmed by this study.

*Adjusting well.*

After the transition stage in the previous discussions, the next marked observation of the ex-formandi, is to see how they fare after sometime. That makes them to find themselves somewhere along the two points of having been able for “letting go” and moving on with one’s life, or still, many years after the experience of the coming out of formation programs, still carrying hurts and emotional hang-ups.
One thing that we wish to see with all people leaving the convent, seminary or formation house or program, irrespective of what had happened, or how one was sent out, is to see that each of them is able to come to terms adequately with his or her individual experiences, and thus can adjust well too. It is not desirable that the experiences one would carry from the convent or formation house would affect a person and his or her functioning in daily life. That would be a maladjustment if it happened so. For one to adjust appropriately, it is necessary for some cognitive re-structuring to take place, whereby one comes to terms with all or at least, most of what had happened to him or her (Livneh, 1984, 2001; Williams, 1999).

As seen from Tables 6 and 7 together (pp. 109-110), some participants have been able to make transitions, in which their cognitive restructuring had been very helpful in making them well-adjusted. Reference is made here again to Case 06-MX as a good example who admitted having been truly hurt, but today, is a happy man seeing those negative experiences of his in a new light, through the healing of the passage of time. Cases 10-FX and also 08-FLV showed that they had also made some cognitive restructuring. Indeed, it is seen as necessary for all to adjust well to the changes they face in their lives. In this stage, one would be said to have made a successful emotional processing of the experiences had, and also accept them (Rachman, 1980, 2001). Such a person is able to almost always freely recall and talk about the experience.

In contrast to the above, if one fails to have a successful emotional and cognitive processing, then the person is most likely to end up with emotional baggage. For a long time (e.g. one case observed in this study is five years since leaving), a person in this state would be carrying his or her hurts, blames, resentments, aversion and avoidances
Weiten and Lloyd, (2003) etc. This is seen in some of the participants of this study (e.g. 05-MV, 11-FX, and 04-FX). This state of affairs is wont to cause distress to the person here, and could affect his or her day to day activities. None of those interviewed however, was, as at the time of the data collection, noted to be very seriously affected in this way. When it is so serious, people in such a state may not want to even recall the events or experiences through some mental suppression. Recall that one prospective participant for this study declined at the last minute, stating precisely this reason – that he does not want to relive the trauma of telling his story.

Certain factors come into play to lead a person as to adjust well or not. These are those in the discussions already seen: the protective factors for adjustment, and the risk factors against adjustment, affirming earlier studies (e.g. Taylor & Aspinwall, 1996; Weiten & Lloyd, 2003). It is not the case that one may experience either, all of risk factors and none of protective factors, or vice versa. Each person’s experience more often would be a mixture of both groups of factors. However, like a balance sheet, the domination of elements of the risk of factors may lead one to become maladjusted with a high tendency of having emotional hang-ups or baggage (unresolved issues). On the other hand, when one has the domination of more protective factors on his or her side, then such a person would have most of the possibilities of coming to terms with the experiences gotten, moving on and letting go, and becoming well adjusted to carry about his or her day to day living and activities.

It had come out of this study that some participants (especially three of them) in the course of their adjustment, more so immediately after coming out, coped with the associated stress of their situation by avoidance of people or withdrawing from the public
eye. This behavior has been found in earlier studies also (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Weiten & Lloyd, 2003; Newstrom, 2007) and so, it is not frequently unexpected. However, these avoidance or withdrawal, are considered to be inappropriate or dysfunctional. Lewis and Frydenberg (2002) have noted that in general, these avoidances are non-productive and as an avoidant technique, would tend to leave one being less well-adjusted to the provoking situation or event. These styles of coping to their situations by the ex-formandi, is similar to people in other situations of transitions or changed environments. For example, common features can be found to be parallel in the studies of Pabiton (2004 & 2006) as to how university students, (also, international or foreign students), adjust to their new situations of challenges in the universities or new environments in which they find themselves.

Furthermore, it is to be noted also, that it is not simply the case that one may end up well-adjusted and another person, simply maladjusted. As has been earlier stressed, ex-formandi may find themselves somewhere between the two ends of having adjusted well or being still maladjusted and carrying emotional hang-ups. It is to be observed, that through counseling interventions, as well as other programs, ex-formandi who are maladjusted as a result of their experiences of exit from the formation programs of the priestly and religious life, can be helped to move on to become better adjusted. This would be especially beneficial if they still carry emotional baggage from the exit-related event.
**Sending and arriving home**

Most of the participants in this study received warm support from their families when they arrived home. Sometimes however, the family members only got to know of the situation only upon seeing their wards arrive. In spite of that, some have observed that sometimes, their own families were unsure of how to help them in their predicaments. Rice (1999) also observed this of the families of ex-priests and religious. As a result, he recommends, which this study affirms, that these families should also be attended to, counseled and helped to also come to terms with the reality of their wards coming home, and given skills to better be able to help their wards, especially, with emotional support.

It is not to be forgotten, that, the candidates in formation are also human beings, and must not in any way be considered (no matter their misfits) like goods on the production line in a factory that can just be dumped anyhow. Neither are they for example like fruits or vegetables at the grocery that one can pick up and put back onto the table just like that, when found to be undesirable. As Giallanza (1989) states, whatever the situation may be,

Formators must take care that their message (of having to send someone out) does not diminish the person’s self image or self-esteem. The decision to tell a person to depart from a formation program is never an evaluation of his or her worth, goodness, or lovablelessness…Formators must take the time and to be clear and fair as possible in explaining the decision that has been made and what led to it (p.7).

**Synthesis**

The forgoing chapter brought us to present and discuss the data ascertained from the twelve participants of the present study. The results of the study affirmed many things that have been pointed out by earlier similar studies on change and transitions, coping
and adaptability to those changes. Some of those things include the stages of transition, namely: The Pre- Withdrawal or Termination Stage; The Exit, The Transition Stage and finally, the Adjustment level or position on that continuum.

This four stages framework, is within the general framework of existing stage theories that ranges from 3 to 6 stages Williams (1999); Livneh (1986) and Hopson and Adams (1976). This study’s framework can be seen in the light of William’s “Phases and features of the Transition Cycle” adapted from Hopson. Mentioning in effect the same things, our post-study framework is simpler while having the same features. Again, the emergent framework of this study can be subsumed in the Unified Model of Adaptation to disability by Livneh (1986).

Other similarities of this study with earlier works include the risk and protective factors on the adjustment process of people in transition Williams (1999), Taylor and Aspinwall (1996), Bridges (1980), Weiten and Lloyd (2003), DeLongis et al. (1982), and Holahan and Moos (1991). Also, the general experiences of the ex-formandi is similar, as had been anticipated, to that of ex-priests and ex-nuns Cruz (2003), Fernandez (2001) and Rice (1990).

On the other hand, an interesting thing found out from this study relates to the period at which people in transition are said to hit a crisis point. Williams’ (1999) adaptation of Hopson’s Phases and Features of Transition situates that point to come about six (6) months plus or minus one. Of the two cases in this present study which went as far as a crisis (by a depression, and a near depression by the other, 04-FX and 03-FLV respectively), these occurred within two months after coming out of the formation programs. This is worthy of notice.
Considering the unique vocation of the participants of this study, it was noted that parental consent to their religious vocations contributed to the stresses they had when they came out and as such, impacting upon their process of adjustment, both positively and negatively. It was also found out that it was often helpful for one’s adjustment, when he or she came out and was in a location where he or she is not known. Finally, this study highly underlined the magnitude of the stresses posed, when the ex-formandi have to face and answer people’s questions.

*Implications for Counseling*

This study found out that all the twelve participants mentioned of having gained something positive or good for their lives in general, even if it was the case that they had been sent out against their will. It also did not matter how short or long they have been in the formation program. Thus counselors who would have to help ex-formandi in a counseling relationship have to keep cognizance of this fact. It is to be considered as a possible resource, that an ex-formandee client can bring into a counseling relationship, and of which can be used to develop the relationship and help them.

The above work also found out that the issue having to explain to people about what happened, when one goes out, is the most stressful and also regularly encountered by the ex-formandi. It is the same, even if one had opted out of the formation program himself or herself. With this knowledge, counselors are given a prior knowledge of a possible area which ex-formandee clients would need to work upon, and hence, the counseling profession draw up interventions to address this important issue.
It was also found out that having the experience of a closure or exit counseling in some way or another was very beneficial for those four persons who had it. Case 01-FV came out voluntarily, but even for her, she had found the closure very useful. Counselors will therefore prove to be very helpful, when, together with formation personnel, are able to provide such closures before the departure of the candidates from the formation houses or programs. These would be greatly helpful to the ex-formandi in their adjustment process.
Chapter IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to have an in-depth knowledge of the process of adjustment that candidates who withdraw from priestly and religious formation programs undergo. The study sought answers to the following specific questions:

4. What factors hindered the adjustment process of the ex-formandi after the withdrawal?

5. What factors facilitated the adjustment process of the ex-formandi after the withdrawal?

6. What is the process of adjustment that an ex-formandee undergoes after quitting or being withdrawn?

Twelve ex-formandi comprising 8 ladies and 4 men were involved as participants of this study, from whom data was collected. They were from the Afro-Asian background, specifically, made up of three Africans and the rest being Filipinos. The Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) method was used as a framework for the analysis of the data collected through interviews, questionnaires, emails and pc-pc calls.
Conclusions

Based upon the findings of this study, the following conclusions are derived:

1. The process of adjustment of the ex-formandi comprised four stages beginning in the formation house or convent – The Pre-Withdrawal or Termination; The Exit; The stage of Transition Experiences; and finally, The Present Level of Adjustment (at the time of the interview).

2. Different people undergo their adjustments in different ways, aided by protective factors or hampered by risk factors. Common protective factors helping the ex-formandi against maladjustment include quality relationships or connectedness to significant others; acceptance by other people; having opportunities for counseling (including spiritual direction and ordinarily seeking advice from others); being engaged in activities that defused the focus on oneself and its attendants worries, and finally, having a financial support.

3. Common risk factors noted to have caused an ex-formandee to find it difficult to move on, and leaving him or her with emotional hang-ups, include the negative reactions of other people; anxiety about explanations to be given in answer to peoples’ queries as to why they had come out; changes in lifestyle and the attendant difficulty of adjusting; nostalgic or painful memories carried out of the experiences from the convent, seminary or formation house; being in financial crisis; as well as when one is plagued by poor health.

4. Ex-formandi asked to discontinue (expelled) from the formation program are more likely to be found to be among those who faced most problems. This also
meant, having more difficulty with the process of adjustment. This is in comparison to those who voluntarily left.

5. For a long time (the maximum limit of 5 years in this study) after leaving formation programs, some people may still carry emotional hang-ups from exit-related events.

6. In spite of the fact that some ex-formandi come out of the formation programs with some unpleasant experiences, the overall experience is that something positive is gained for their lives from the time spent in a formation program. This disregards the bitter experiences or the shortness of the time spent therein.

**Recommendations**

Following from the findings of the above study, the following recommendations are being proposed:

_On the Assessment of Candidates into Formation Programs_

It is important for seminaries, congregations and formation houses to take recruitments processes seriously. Counseling and/or standard psychological tests or assessments can lend a helping hand to the scrutiny and admission process by helping to more likely identify those candidates who may be at risk in the undesired areas. On the other hand, if such candidates are admitted into the formation program, the results obtained may help the formation personnel to accompany and attend to any special need a
candidate may have, before those things become a hindrance to the candidate’s growth and vocational success and needing to be sent out.

*On the Formation Program and Formation Personnel*

It is recommended that formation houses would need to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different styles of accompaniment of their formandi, e.g. on the issue of whether they allow one group of formandi go through the program with the same formation personnel, (e.g. from postulancy to novitiate), or having a different personnel at the different stages. These styles have their own effects upon the formation programs and the formandi.

*On the Manner of Sending out of Candidates*

It is necessary to appropriately see to it that a candidate’s departure from the formation program, is preceded by such things as a closure or an exit counseling; or any prior preparation in one way or another.

Secondly, a good enough time needs to be always taken into consideration over when to prepare the candidate to go home.

Furthermore, it is fitting that the parents or families of candidates are also duly informed about the predicaments of their wards, and that they are being sent home. This must also be done on time. The Afro-Asian background of which this study was made and the participants came from, is one that highly values the role of the family or community on individuals and families in these cultures.
On Adjusting After Exiting From Formation Programs

Ex-formandi who have made successful transitions and adjustments from similar exit-related events and have settled, can be tapped to use their own experiences to help new ex-formandi. Where they exist, associations or groups of such “ex-s” can be tapped to form a kind of support group for new ex-formandi.

Areas for Future Study

1. A study using homogenous participants like either the same gender, or all participants being of one category according to the manner of leaving the formation program, can be done and the findings of such a study compared with this present study. In the same way, the different homogenous studies could also be compared, e.g. men versus women; voluntary as against involuntary excitants.

2. A study can also be made on a similar sample population using a quantitative research method. This method can be particularly helpful to determine the effects and relationships of various factors such as gender, duration of stay in the formation program or during the time of the temporary vows. Other possible factors to consider are the age of the individual participants, educational or career backgrounds, length of the time spent on coming out, manner of leaving the formation program, etc. on the quality of, and the process of adjustment of the ex-formandi.

3. Specific studies can also be carried out to produce appropriate intervention programs that would address the needs highlighted by these studies. Such an
intervention for example, would include helping ex-formandi still hurting, several months after exiting formation programs, to successfully process their emotions and thoughts related to that. It would aid them to get over their emotional garbage and lead fully functioning or whole lives.

4. Another area which can also be investigated, may include programs to boost the self-esteem of the ex-formandi. This will help them deal with the different reactions, especially, the negative, stigmatization or prejudices that people may have against them when they go out. Activities such as role plays can be used to help them to foresee possible future situations and how they would likely react, and thus boost their own self-confidence in dealing with people and their questions.

5. It is recommended that a study be carried out to draw up meaningful programs to help formation personnel get the skills to provide relevant exit counseling or closure techniques (interventions or interviews) for candidates in order to help them adjust well when they go out.

6. Another possible area of research has to do with the formation house and personnel. An exploration of the impact of the quality of relationship between the formation personnel and the candidates in formation can prove to be useful for studies in this area since the nature of that relationship could have a lot of impact on the process of adjustment of the ex-formandi.
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Dear

Letter of Introduction of the Researcher/Study.

I am Fr. George Clement Angmor, a student of the above university. As part of my requirements for the Masters of Arts in Counseling, I am undertaking a research on the topic: The Process of Adjustment of Ex-Formandi: An Exploratory Study. This concerns young men and women who once upon a time were training to become religious nuns, brothers or priests but they have had to come out themselves, or were withdrawn. It is hoped that the findings of this study would provide insights to counselors, formation personnel, families of candidates exiting, as well as others in the helping profession, to more appropriately prepare for and help exiting candidates or ex-formandi and their families.

I would be most grateful therefore, if you, as a prospective respondent, can afford a little bit of your time and be willing to contribute to this study by providing responses to the questions in this questionnaire. Please, be assured of anonymity and confidentiality of any information to be given. No names are required. Information obtained would be used for academic purposes only.

Should you be interested in the results or anything on this study, please feel free to contact the researcher at geoselema@gmail.com or on 0915 4444 256.

With sincere thanks in advance,

Fr. George C. Angmor, SVD

Endorsed by:

Dr. Nancy Rivas, Ph.D
(Supervisor)
Dear .................,
Thanks very much for accepting to help me in this study/thesis on ex-formandi for my Masters. I'm glad ....................... linked us up. I look forward to meet you sooner or later.

A bit about myself: George Clement Angmor is my full name, and I come from Ghana in West Africa. I belong to the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD). It is just over 2 years ago since my arrival here in the Philippines for my studies for the Masters of Arts in Counseling at the De La Salle University, Manila. I am living at the SVD Catholic Trade Community at Tayuman (1916 Oroquieta Street [Tayuman corner]), Sta. Cruz, Manila.

This is the topic I am working on:

THE PROCESS OF ADJUSTMENT OF EX-FORMANDI: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY.

For the data collection towards this study, I need to get some ex-formandi to be interviewed. I am almost done with the number I need, but I still wish to meet or have the contacts of as many people as possible, who may be interested to partake in it.

As the title suggests, I'll be focusing on ex-formandi - meaning: ex-seminarians, ex-brothers and ex-nuns who came out of the formation programs (or were sent out) before they have had to make their final vows. The following conditions may have to be met:
1. They must have spent at least a year in formation before coming out.
2. This must have happened not more than five (5) years ago.
3. He/she must have at this time completed at least 6 months of having made the exit.

Areas that the interview may cover:
1. Your background & present life
2. Your experiences in the formation program (or religious life) before the termination
3. Events of the decision/communication about the termination/withdrawal
4. Your adjustment experiences after the withdrawal from the formation program
5. What you make of those experiences and how u see yourself today, relating to those experiences
6. Any suggestions you may have relating to formation, exiting and adjustment

With this study, it is eventually hoped to help formandi and also, the congregations to prepare someone who has to be sent out, or expresses the desire him/herself to quit.
Please take note that data to be collected is for academic purposes only and all information to be ascertained would be kept confidential. The participants will remain anonymous.
Please feel free to ask any question pertaining to this study. Note also that you must not feel obliged in anyway to participate in this study. It must be done with free consent.
Once again, thank you very much. Hope to hear from you soon.
God bless you!

Sincerely,
Fr. George, svd
APPENDIX B.          No.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

The Process of Adjustment of Ex-Formandi: An Exploratory Study.

Please be reminded that responses given here will be kept confidential and used for academic purposes only. For additional space, please feel free to use overleaf. If answering electronically, fill in or bold/capitalize (or put an X in the right box) to mark out your answers. Thank you.

Date:

A. Background Information.

Sex:   [   ] M   [   ] F    Age ……….

Location/Town ………………………………….

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your background?

2. What had you been training to become? –

   [   ] nun/sister   [   ] brother   [   ] priest

3. When did you decide to become a priest/religious?

4. Nature of withdrawal: [   ] Asked to withdraw   [   ] Personal Decision

5. Can you tell me of the circumstances leading to your exit or the termination?

6. How many years is it now since you came out of the formation program?…..

7. How many years were you in formation before the exit?

8. What was your motivation to become a priest or religious?

9. At which stage of your training were you before the exit –

   [   ] postulancy   [   ] novitiate   [   ] tertiate/juniorate   [   ] philosophy   [   ] theology?

10. If you were training to become a priest, how many years were left before priestly ordination? …..

    For others: How many years were left for you before the final profession?

11. What educational level were you when you entered the formation program?

12. In what occupation are you presently engaged?

B. Life in the formation house: the termination & associated feelings.

13. How was your experience of life in the religious life and/or formation house?
14. What were the reasons for quitting/being asked to withdraw?

…… *(if you quitted yourself, continue with q. no. 17).*

15. How was it communicated to you that you had to withdraw?

16. How did you feel about the manner of the communication?

17. How were you prepared for the exit/withdrawal?

18. If you were prepared, how useful did you find it?

19. What were your feelings about being asked to withdraw and/or leaving the formation house?

C. Communication & reactions of the quitting upon going home.

20. How did the formators give the news to your family?

21. How did your family take it or react to the news of your termination?

22. How were you received back home?

23. What were your feelings about the way your family welcomed you back?

D. Adjustment – coping.

24. Can you tell me about the adjustment you have made since the exit?

25. How are you coping with it now?

26. What was helpful to your process of adjustment?

27. What problems/obstacles did you have in adjusting?
28. What was/is the attitude of people to you, when they learn that you left the convent/seminary?

E. Prologue & Suggestions.

29. Looking on your life today, how has this event affected your life?

30. In the light of your experience of exiting, what suggestions do you have for formation personnel (formators)?

31. What suggestions do you have for seminarians and others still in formation?

32. What suggestions do you have for families of ex-formandi?

33. Any other comments you will like to add?

THANK YOU!
APPENDIX C
Summary of responses: Domains

I. ENTRY MOTIVATIONS

1. Wanted a 100% availability as a religious/missionary to help and serve the poor
2. To become closer to God, serve Him and lead a simple life
3. To know Jesus more closely
4. To be closer to God and live a simple life
5. Saw something good in the seminary, could also get a chance to go abroad
6. To be like other priests: good and holy people
7. I really wanted to serve God
8. To help and serve people
9. To serve the people in the church
10. To follow Jesus in helping and serving the poor and others
11. To serve God’s people
12. Wanted to become like the priest in town – most respected

II. REASONS FOR LEAVING

1. As an only child, to take care of ailing and sick parents
2. Felt confused, bored, dry and unhappy
3. Had unresolved personal issues that needed to be first worked through, agreed with the congregation to get out (for a while) and see to this
4. The congregation sent me out

5. I realized that I won’t be in the seminary if I were rich

6. Seminary did not admit me to continue

7. To be out for a while to work and help my family, and secondly, to reflect more
   on my ability to make a final commitment (profession of vows)

8. Mutual decision with the congregation to get out because of my health

9. Wanted to experience life outside

10. Dismissed for the reason of my strong personality/character

11. Dismissed by the congregation (for the reason that I am timid)

12. Felt that I was misguided on the will of God for me ending up in the seminary

III. TRANSITION

1. Anxiety and guilt that I should have come earlier to be with my sick father,
   missing the structure of the religious life, and a feeling of being out of place back in
   the secular world

2. I felt ashamed and depressed. I wondered if God was punishing me.

3. Feelings of anxiety, uncomfortable, pain, confusion, depression and suicidal

4. I was hurt, filled with grudges, resentments and felt rejected. Had depression. Had
   clash of values

5. Felt disappointed, and also, as if God had rejected and abandoned me. I did not
   believe him anymore

6. I was devastated, angry and ashamed
7. Nostalgia for the religious community; initial difficulties with values, structures and atmosphere different from my own and what I am used to. Hurt by the reactions of some people
8. I felt betrayed and was afraid of being rejected and ridiculed
9. Felt nostalgia for the missing structure of the FH and was uneasy about people asking why I came out
10. Surprised and disappointed
11. It was very painful, felt treated like a criminal
12. Anxious

IV. PROTECTIVE FACTORS (against maladjustment)
1. Very supportive parents and friends, initial preoccupation with care of parents and relocation of habitat, plus support and preparation by the congregation.
2. Support of friends, talked to others, solace in prayers
3. Support of family and friends, refreshing environment/nature, monthly guidance from the congregation I left, pastime teaching the children, and prayers
4. Talking to others, prayers, retreat, counseling & psychotherapy, got active doing something (pastime)
5. The challenge to overcome poverty; talking with friends
6. Support of family and friends; writing poems, and God’s grace to forgive
7. Immediate employment, educational level, present studies, especially, the counseling subject; support of dad and classmates (barkada) and teachers; regular retreats and spiritual direction; assurance of congregation to welcome me back.
8. Family support, talking to others, and hints/preparation by the congregation
9. Support of family, and immediate enrollment in school
10. Support of family and friends; my level of education; ongoing schooling abroad, and my faith - helping make meaning of the events
11. Support of family and friends; spiritual direction, immediate job and schooling
12. Loving support of family and friends; immediate employment

V. **RISK FACTORS OF ADJUSTMENT.**

1. None
2. Loss of the structure of the religious life, and having to explain to people why I am out of the convent. Poor health leading to surgery, and financial crisis
3. Having to explain to people; idleness
4. Unsupportive atmosphere/environment at home
5. Explaining to people of my coming out; the poverty in the family and the mockery of people
6. The painful memory of being robbed of my dreams, and having to explain to people why I am out (sacked)
7. Having to explain to questioning people, and negative attitude of people around me (including mother’s disappointments)
8. The loss of the structured life from the formation house; having to explain to people why I am out, and idleness (lack of work)
9. Having to explain to people why I came out, initially, loss of structure
10. Having to explain to people why no more in the religious habit
VI. LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Made me a stronger person able to manage my emotions better, and becoming open-minded to people and situations

2. God is so good to me, given me hope, strength & courage to move on, and entrust myself to His will in whatever happens to me

3. Knowing myself, dealing with my personal life issues; awareness of parents’ love

4. The experience of the presence of God with me

5. Discipline and hard-work from the seminary

6. God always has a good plan for us even if our own plans do not seem to work

7. I learnt a lot, both professionally and community experience; and learning of humbling experience now

8. I have become more reflective, more understanding of people and ready to face any situation in life

9. Caused me to be self critical in whatever I want to do

10. Theological, human and psychological formation received. Also, that God has His ways for us which we may not initially understand but may be for our good

11. Learnt more about life and its pains. It helped me to be more inspirational to others. Also realized that religious life is not the utmost way to heaven

12. To be grateful to God in whatever I decide to do in my life
### Table D1
Over all cross analysis of data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>CATEGORY (e.g. of cases)</th>
<th>CORE IDEAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. ENTRY MOTIVATIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual: 2,3,4,10</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Entry with view of meeting a spiritual motive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal: 2,4,5,6,12</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Centered primarily on meeting a personal satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service: 1,2,7,8,9,10,11</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Entry with view of serving God and other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Family needs: 1,7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Personal issues: 2,5,9,12,7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. REASONS FOR LEAVING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked to leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Decided freely to leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,6,10,11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual Decision</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Came to a common realization with FH of the need to, and applying to go out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitions</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Thoughts had as a result of the coming out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. TRANSITION EXPERIENCES</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affects</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Emotions felt in leaving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Behaviors exhibited related to the leaving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Relationships/ Connectedness 1,7,9,10</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Having &amp; being in good relationship with significant others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance by others 1,3,7</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Felt welcomed by significant others in spite of leaving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling (SD, Prot/Pop) 1,3,4,7</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Talked to a professional counselor or others about predicaments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities 3,4,5,6,10,7</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Engaged in activities that helped to defuse worries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support 1,7,9,8</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Received generous financial help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMAIN</td>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>CORE IDEAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e.g. of cases)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. RISK FACTORS</td>
<td>Negative reaction of others: 7,8,5</td>
<td>- Hurt or ill at ease by the reactions of people.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in lifestyle: 7,4,8,9</td>
<td>- Difficulties in adjusting to the secular environment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memories – nostalgic or painful: 2,4,5,9,11</td>
<td>- Remembering events in the FH that causes nostalgia or hurts.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial crisis: 2,5</td>
<td>- Not having adequate money to meet personal needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor Health: 2,8</td>
<td>- Having to be overtly concerned with one’s health &amp; its costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanations to peoples’ questions: 8,2,3,5</td>
<td>- Real or imagined anxiety about answers to give to people’s queries about coming out.</td>
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Appendix E

Tables showing individual participant’s data.

Table E1

Profile of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th>Yrs in Formation</th>
<th>Year Quitted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01-FV</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>02-FV</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/2006</td>
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<td>03-FLV</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>LV</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/2003</td>
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<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>07-FV</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2/2007</td>
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<td>08-FLV**</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>LV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>V</td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<td>12-MV</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2004</td>
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Mean: 32  5.3  4.73*
SD: 3.13  3.89  3.44

*Note: Mean years of duration since the exit.

**This participant had in the previous year spent 6months with a congregation and then voluntarily departed.
Table E2.
Risk factors for adjustment experienced

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>CASE</th>
<th>P’s negative reactions</th>
<th>Explanation Of questions</th>
<th>Poor health</th>
<th>Memories</th>
<th>Financial crisis</th>
<th>Change in lifestyle</th>
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</table>

Note: “P” stands for “people”

Table E3
Protective factors against maladjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>CASE</th>
<th>Quality relationships</th>
<th>Acceptance by others</th>
<th>Counseling – SD/Pop/Prof</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Financial support</th>
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Table E4
Distribution of the reasons for participants leaving the formation program

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Asked to leave</th>
<th>Mutual decision</th>
<th>Voluntary exit</th>
<th>Family needs</th>
<th>Personal issues</th>
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Table E5
Frequency of transition experiences indicated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Cognition</th>
<th>Affects</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
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Feature: General General Typical