



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	xi
Introduction.....	1
The Participants	3
The Life-History Method: Process and Product.....	4
Theoretical Frameworks	6
Symbolic Interactionism.....	6
Feminist Perspectives in the Study of Religion.....	7
The Bahá'í Religion	8
1. The Bahá'í Faith.....	11
Origins: Canadian Bahá'í Community 1898–1948	11
Mentors and Heroes: “Kill Me...But You Cannot Stop the Emancipation of Women”	15
2. The Setting.....	31
Social Landscapes.....	31
Demographic Characteristics of Women’s	
Labour Force Participation	31
“Be Smart, But Not Smarter than Your Brother!?”: Images and Perceptions of Femininity	34
Religious Landscapes.....	36
From Hostility to Diversity: A Changing Milieu	36
The Feminization of Religion in Canada: Women’s	
Participation in Christian Churches.....	37
Early Bahá'í Growth: An Ethic of Dispersion.....	44
<i>Messages to Canada</i> : Nurturing Identity and Social Memory	47
Significant Events and Processes: The Development of the Bahá'í Community	52
3. Exploring Sacralization and the Female Self	55
Redressing Eve and Other Discriminatory Tales	56
The Feminine Principle of the Divine.....	61
Imagery, Metaphor and Sacred Symbolism	62
Language and the Construction of Self.....	66
Coming to the Sacred: An Independent Responsibility	68
Women and Worship: New Views on Old Taboos	69
Women’s Roles Outside Marriage and Motherhood	73
Mandates for the Advancement of Women.....	73
Family Life, Occupation, and Education.....	75
Women as Knowers and Social Agents: The Production of Knowledge	78

Women’s Leadership in the Formation of Religious Community	81
Institutional Participation: Nature, Role, and Function.....	85
International Levels of Administrative Service.....	88
Roles in Decision Making and Governance	90
4. Developing A Bahá’í Identity: Living the Life	93
“Deepening”.....	94
“Being Active”.....	96
“Teaching”: Sharing the Message of Bahá’u’lláh.....	99
Aqdas’ Story: “I Was Like a Bird Freed from the Cage”	100
Ruth’s Story: “It Was a Risk to Stand Out, Be Counted, Be Different”	105
Françoise’s Story: “It Was Hard to Leave My Traditions and to Commit”	111
5. Moving Beyond Belief: Fields of Service.....	119
“Pioneering”	119
Gale’s Story: “Weathering the Storms of Tests”	121
Joan’s Story “I Never Dreamed of it Developing the Way it Did!”	129
Pioneers’ Rites of Passage: Separation, Transition, and Incorporation	137
Administration and Governance	142
Audrey, Ethel, and Friends – Envisioning an Institutional Order: The “Airy Fairies” and the “Steadies”	143
Conclusion	159
Appendix 1: Methodology	167
Appendix 2: Historical Background	171
Appendix 3: Major Teachings	173
Appendix 4: Hands of the Cause.....	179
Appendix 5: The Ringstone Symbol.....	181
Appendix 6: Calendar of Bahá’í Months.....	185
Notes	187
References.....	199
Archival Sources	210
Life-History Participants	210
Index	211