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The Case of Hiding the Seminarian Code:
A Phenomenological-Ethnomethodological Explication of Goal-Conflict
in a Catholic Religious Formation Community

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Abstract

A community is a group of people with common aims and goals, and the experience of community involves the learning of rules and customs in order to maintain those common aims and goals. Thus community necessitates a hierarchical structure of novice and teacher. The potential for conflicting perceptions of those roles and the community's common aims and goals exists particularly for communities which are joined by individuals who already have experienced the life-world and have expectations about the goals of the community they join. Catholic religious formation communities, like other communities that individuals join, have a potential for conflicting goals as a result of their very structure. This essay describes the lived-world experience of three seminarians, through specific examples, in order to demonstrate how the very structure of the formation community is problematic for community members.

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Throughout human history people have banded together to form communities, perhaps for purposes of survival and safety. Whatever its (the community) purpose, examples of communities abound. A community is a group of people with shared lived-experience who maintain the ". . .minimum conditions of agreement on common aims, and inevitably some common ways of behaving, thinking and feeling" (Firth, 1970, p. 27). As such, a community is both a culture in itself and a product of the expectations of its members which are derived from a larger culture in which the community exists. Cohen and Eames (1982) define culture as "the way of life of a particular group of people -- their shared set of learned manners, customs and beliefs" (p. 413).

Persons are born into a culture and are socialized and enculturated into a common understanding of the manners and rules of that culture by more experienced participants such as parents or adults, older siblings or peers. Persons are also born into communities such as the community of the family. Throughout an individual's life experience, the individual may experience membership in several communities such as friendship networks, social organizations, work groups, and religious organizations. Persons may choose to join these types of community and thus be enculturated regarding the manners and rules of the community. Upon joining a community, the individual person undergoes a transformation from novice to full member through the process of learning about the culture of the community.

It is in this sense of a progression from novice to full member that a hierarchical structure is necessitated in community living. A community structure inherently exists which allows for the roles of novice and teacher. This structure of novice and teacher exists in any community with hopes of perpetuating its existence. New members join and are admitted into the community. Yet, maintenance of the community requires the continuance of the roles of novice and teacher.

This structure is less problematical for an individual who is born into a community. Learning is necessary for survival, thus the structure defining the roles of novice and teacher is required. However, for the individual who joins a community, the roles of novice and teacher are problematical because the individual brings with him or herself a wealth of experience of a lived-world gained before the decision to join the community. The individual has expectations regarding the goals and ideals of the group he or she wishes to join. The individual also has learned patterns of behavior from the larger culture to which he or she has previously been, and perhaps continues to be, a member. Thus, the individual has him or herself become a teacher of his or her own experience. It is this problematic of the requirement of hierarchical structure of novice/teacher for a community to which an adult joins, within the context of the Catholic religious formation community (seminary), that this essay is addressed.

Method

The phenomenological method has as its focus the lived experience of the individual (van Manen, 1990). It attempts to describe the lived-world at the pre-reflective state before the experience has been categorized. This method is interested in the description of phenomena as it is presented to the individual

consciousness. The purpose of the method is to understand the meaning of the experience for the individual as opposed to the characteristics of the experience that may be manipulated. Phenomenologists reflect ". . . upon the process by which individuals know that experience" (Collins, 1974, p. 140).

The phenomenological method begins with an "orienting to the phenomena" (van Manen, 1990). This orientation implies an interest in the subject matter of study. In orienting to the phenomena the research takes into account the context in which the phenomena of interest takes place. Also, the researcher must take into account that the understanding of context is in and of itself part of the interpretation of the experience of the phenomena.

The next step in the process of inquiry is the formulation of the phenomenological question. The question must ask what the nature of the experience is; what does the experience feel like. This requires an openness towards the possibilities. As a method, the phenomenological inquiry should be free of judgments about the essences prior to the description of the lived-world experience. However, the researcher should be aware of the assumptions and pre-understandings about the phenomena.

The phenomenological inquiry should begin with personal experience. According to van Manen, this allows the researcher ". . . to detect the overall thematic quality of . . ." the described experience (p. 57). The researcher should also remain cognizant of the language used to describe the experience, as the particular language effects the interpretation of the description.

Once this process of self-reflection occurs the researcher is able to obtain experiential descriptions from others. This process is accomplished through interviewing. According to Weber (1986), the interview process is an invitation to engage in a joint reflection about a phenomena. Kvale (1983) argued that the purpose of the interview ". . . is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 174). Kvale (1983) suggests that the interview has twelve aspects: (a) it is centered on the lived-world experience of the interviewee, (b) it seeks to understand the meaning of that lived-world experience, (c) it is qualitative in approach, (d) it is descriptive, (e) it is specific, (f) it is presuppositionless, (g) it is focused on certain themes (which were derived by the self-reflection of the researcher), (h) it is open to ambiguity, (i) it allows for changes, (j) it is dependent upon the sensitivity of the interviewer, (k) it involves interpersonal interaction, and (l) it can be a positive and cathartic experience.

In order for the interview to remain focused, a protocol should be specified. According to van Manen (1990), this protocol should guide the interview by focusing on the experience itself, without causal explanations. The interview should focus on the feelings during a particular incident which stand out. However, the protocol should allow for flexibility in the interview process to allow for individual insight.

Once the data has been gathered through the interview process, themes should be derived through phenomenological reflection and reduction. According to Tesch (1987), a theme is a major descriptor of the data: a theme is a pattern which becomes apparent in the data. These themes are derived by reading and rereading the data, underlining the phrases that are particularly revealing. The condensing of data into a

set of themes is known as reduction. The process of reduction allows the researcher to get at the fundamental notions existent in the descriptions.

In the empirical-phenomenological method, these themes are interpreted to explicate the meaning of the concept explored. This process involves a clustering of themes into meaning-expressions, which gives rise to the overall structure or essence of the experience. This final description of the phenomena depicts the universal aspects of the lived-world experience.

To explore some of the assumptions underlying the phenomenological method, the nature of how individuals come to understand or know reality must be grounded. von Eckartsberg (1971) argues that the individual comes to know his or her reality through the process of socialization. He argues that individual variations exist which are dependent on the individuals differing circumstances. However, the individual comes to view his or her world in a way that is common to others. Individuals in a society share common language about their experiences as well as perspectives about what they experience.

Yet, the process by which they can make sense of the experience must ultimately begin with the sense experience. Hume argued that all knowledge is gained through sense experience. In this statement is implied that meaning is ascribed to the experience after it occurs. Human beings are shaped by the world (von Eckartsberg, 1971). This argument does not imply that the individual has to experience a phenomena to know it. The individual can experience a phenomena through others due to common language usage. The individual can understand another's experience when that experience is communicated.

The communication of lived-world experience to another shapes the world of the other. Individuals in the society are informed by the language to which they are accustomed, that is the language shapes the understanding an individual has about the experiences he or she faces. The individual makes a judgment about the experience and ascribes meaning to the experience.

Judgment entails the use of symbols in a language to represent experiences and make those experiences intelligible to others. The ideas one forms about an experience is a cognitive representation of the experience. These ideas are connected to the symbols used to communicate the ideas through common usage which is determined by the society and learned through socialization into the society. The connection between the experience and the symbol used to represent it is arbitrary. However, the connection is controlled by social convention for the purpose of maintaining the functionality of language and the connection between people.

Due to the relationship between the thing (or experience) signified and the signification (the language about the signified) through the common language usage of a society, individuals can understand or make judgments about the experience of others shared through discourse. This argument suggests that individuals may experience and understand the experience through the discourse of others. For example, an individual does not have to experience the pain of separation to see the effects on others. That individual may come to understand the pain through others by observing others reactions to the separation as well as listening to the other's discourse about that pain. This example illustrates a point made by Earle, "The truth is that I didn't explicitly see what he saw until he spoke; and after he spoke then what he

said seemed to me evident enough because it characterizes my experience, and I can "verify" it directly" (Edie, p. 24). Edie points out Earle's contention that the individual can understand the experience of the other through the other's discourse.

If the individual is informed about the experience of separation through the discourse of others or through prior experiences of separation, then the individual will have developed an understanding about the experience of separation which effects the interpretation of later discourse about separation. This has consequences for the empirical method. For example, the researcher has to attempt to bracket out his or her knowledge about the experience, while uncovering the experiences of the other. The attempt to bracket out one's own understanding while focusing on the themes in the data is a researcher's paradox. Tesch (1987) described the researcher's paradox as the need ". . . to be both informed and naïve, experienced and fresh, engaged and distanced, focused and open, pushy and patient" (p. 240). Rose (1990) further observed that for the researcher as participant/observer, there exists a struggle in the need to be trained in how to observe before observing and the need to be fully a participant in the culture being observed. The requirement of full participation entails being enculturated through the same process as other members, thus engaging in the co-constitution of the culture.

The process of explicating meaning from the lived-world experiences of another cannot occur through an objective observation of the other. The process requires the use of language which both shapes and is shaped by the understanding of its practitioner. For this reason, the phenomenological method requires careful organization of thought by the researcher. The researcher must remain aware of his or

her own beliefs about the phenomena to be explored. This awareness comes from self-reflection about one's own lived-world experience.

The ethnomethodological explication is derived from the lived-world experience, and thus is phenomenological. However, beyond the description of individual self-reflection upon experience, in the ethnomethodological approach the researcher orients to how individuals go about the doing of the experience being reflected upon. That is, the ethnomethod is the procedure by which individuals experience the lived social world. The basis for this approach resides in finding, ". . . the detailed ways in which actual, naturally occurring social activities occur are subjectable to formal descriptions" (Sacks, 1984).

In the present study, I was a participant/observer in a Roman Catholic religious formation community (a seminary) for a period of approximately four years. The purpose of the community was to "form" men to become priests or brothers for the Catholic church in a particular religious order. I was studying for the priesthood with this community and as a consequence was fully a part of the enculturation into the religious community life. The enculturation involved both formal and informal training regarding the culture of the local community, the religious order, and the Catholic church as a whole. As a culture, the community had/has goals, rules, and structures which were manifested in the formal training as well as in the daily activities and community conflicts. The description of those goals, rules, and structures, as well as a description of daily activities and community conflicts will demonstrate how community structure is constituted through daily activities.

To accomplish the task of description, two co-researchers were interviewed about their experience of seminary life (for the interview protocol see the Appendix). Specifically, the co-researchers were asked to recall specific instances and examples of daily activities and rules which demonstrated the structure of the community. The first co-researcher interviewed was a man with whom I had shared the experience of seminary life. He and I lived together through the formation program during the years 1985 through 1989 when I left the community. He has since completed formation and taken permanent vows and is a brother in the community.

The second co-researcher was a seminarian during the 1950's in a monastic Catholic religious order. He continued through the taking temporary vows at some point after which he left the order. He is currently a deacon in the Catholic church. The interview process allowed the second co-researcher and I to explore aspects of the seminary experience which demonstrate community structure and the conflict between seminarians and their directors of formation (phenomenological analysis), while it allowed the first co-researcher and I to reflect upon our shared experience of community life through remembrance and co-reconstruction of specific events (ethnomethodological analysis).

The Experience of Religious Community

My experience of community membership in a religious organization began with the Roman Catholic church. I was born into a practicing Catholic family and was enculturated into the customs and rules of the church. Enculturation took the form of (a) transmission of values from my family and the church, (b) practice and eventual understanding of customs through ritual observances, including attending Mass and

receiving the Sacraments, (c) participating in ritual and ministering to others as an altar server, (d) formal training through catechism, as well as through family reading of the Bible, and (f) membership in Catholic organizations and communities. Membership in Catholic organizations and communities took many forms prior to my eventual joining the seminary. The most significant of these communities were (a) the Cursillo movement and Ultreya community, (b) the Christian Awakening community, and (c) the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) community.

The Cursillo is an intense retreat designed to initiate the adult Catholic into a greater spiritual understanding of his or her role as a Catholic and as a Christian. I attended a Cursillo retreat when I was nineteen years old. The retreat began with an in-depth self-reflection into my own spirituality and the relationship of that spirituality with Christian and Catholic dogma. The retreat ended with a demonstration of the personal sacrifices others had made for me as a retreat participant. Retreat participants were admonished not to divulge the occurrences of the retreat for the purpose of allowing for the potential of a conversion experience for future participants. Given my experience of the retreat, I understood the injunction, for I wanted to allow others to have a similar experience. For me, the Cursillo retreat was an awakening of values taught to me up to that point. The Cursillo answered many questions about my spirituality, and I gained insight into the purposes of the lessons taught earlier in my life. The Ultreya community was a prayer group which consisted of individuals who had made a Cursillo retreat. In the case of the Ultreya community to which I belonged, many of the members made the retreat the same weekend as I. The Ultreya community met once a week to pray together and to talk about daily experiences and our

understanding of the application of our spirituality to our daily experiences. For many Ultreya community members, the community was also a social group. Some community members choose to associate on a social level only with those in the Ultreya community. Those members cut ties with former friends because they believed that the lifestyle of their former friends was incompatible with their spirituality. These themes of community membership were often discussed at the weekly meetings.

During the same year in which I was a member of the Ultreya community, I had also started my first year of college. The Catholic chapel on campus also had a number of communities in which I became a member. The first of these communities was the Christian Awakening community. This community, like the Cursillo movement, was based on a retreat designed to promote spiritual awakening or renewal, and had its origins in the Cursillo movement. The Christian Awakening community had the same function as the Ultreya community with the added advantage of the common experience of college life. It was this advantage which attracted me to the community as well as the added convenience of a social group of similarly aged and educated individuals.

It was through my connection to the chapel on campus that I was approached and asked to be a sponsor in the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) community. The RCIA community was designed to initiate adult non-Catholics who wanted to join the Catholic Church into the "culture." Therefore, the purpose of the sponsors were to help the initiates learn about the customs and rituals of Catholicism. In cases where non-Christians chose to join the Catholic church, baptisms would be performed. For those already baptized, sponsors would assist by sharing their experiences while converts partook of the other sacraments. In a sense, sponsors

would take on the role of the teacher to the novices who wished to convert to Catholicism.

It is within this context that I made the decision to join a religious community to study for the Catholic priesthood. I joined the seminary of a Catholic religious order in the fall of 1985, when I was twenty years old. My previous experience of community lead me to believe that if I was accepted into the seminary I would be a community member. I chose to join the particular order that I joined because of my previous connection with that group. I was baptized as a child by a member of that order. I went to Catholic schools from second grade through twelfth grade that were administered by that order. My parents were married by a priest in that order and my extended family including my paternal grandparents were all well known to the group. I also had a paternal uncle who had been a minor seminarian with that order. I felt a part of the group. My joining that order, as opposed to some other order or the diocesan seminary, seemed to be as natural as returning home to my family.

Acceptance into the seminary (formation community) amounted to mentioning a strong desire to enter the seminary to a parish priest who was a member of the order. This conversation occurred in May, 1985. Following the conversation, I was required to complete and return a few simple forms. I was contacted by the Vocation director, who knew my parents, and had an interview with him regarding my desire and the reasons why I believed I had a "calling" to the religious life. The Vocation director then discussed the interview with the Formation director, the Vice-provincial, and the Education director, and this committee made the decision to accept me into the seminary.

In August 1985, with a subset of my belongings, I moved into the formation community house, which formerly housed a community of religious sisters (nuns). The formation community house was just opened by the vice-province. (Religious orders have regional organizations, known as provinces, which are semi-autonomous. Provinces have administrative hierarchies which consists primarily of priests who have been elected by their colleagues, that is community members in permanent vows. These provinces can recruit and expel members, make decisions about placement, and determine locations for ministry. Provinces have a leader, known as a provincial, who is in charge of making final decisions, in consultation with colleagues, about issues relevant to the province. Vice-provinces, likewise, are semi-autonomous but are typically connected with a larger province. This hierarchical structure is analogous to dioceses, with their attendant bishops, within the Catholic Church.) However, the vice-province had formerly sent their seminarians to the province to which they were attached. Consequently, the formation house was a new place for all the occupants, however, some of the occupants were already members of the community. In total, there were ten seminarians who were joining the community, three seminarians (in temporary vows) who moved into the house from the provincial seminary, and three priests: the formation director, the co-formation director, and the vocation director. Of the sixteen people living in the house, I was only acquainted with the vocation director. My acquaintance with him was through my parents.

Within the first week the ten new seminarians had several orientation sessions to acquaint us with basic rules of the house, daily schedules, and what was expected of us as new "community members." The three seminarians in temporary vows were

required to attend orientation although they were aware of many of the expectations. Specifically, rules of the house included issues such as the performance of chores, space and time boundaries. All residents of the house were expected to follow a prescribed daily schedule, which included morning and evening prayers, daily Mass (Church service), and common meals. Other expectations of the seminarians included academic standards, room and board arrangements, and tuition and financial aid. It was through the learning of these house rules that enculturation into the community began.

Membership into the community, the religious order, is gained through a series of ritualized levels of acceptance. The first step was to gain acceptance into formation as a student. This was the level at which the ten seminarians, including myself, were considered "members." The next step in the process of gaining full membership into the order was the period of one year referred to as pre-novitiate. This year usually occurred during the final year of baccalaureate studies. A boundary existed between undergraduate studies and acceptance into the Masters of Theology program. This boundary took the form of a perception of more serious consideration for religious life by the seminarian. Therefore, the novitiate year usually occurred between undergraduate studies and the theologate. Consequently, the pre-novitiate year occurred just prior to acceptance into novitiate. The pre-novitiate year involved a weekly program of meetings with members from other religious orders around the city. The program involved presentations and discussions about the vows (poverty, celibacy and obedience) and other aspects of religious life and community living. With these programs, pre-novitiate served as specific training for the novitiate.

The novitiate was the third step in the process of acceptance into full membership of the community. Novitiate involved separation from the community of seminarians, to a new location. (My move to novitiate was with one other seminarian with whom I had lived (the first co-researcher), and with novices from the provincial seminary). The process of novitiate included focused study about the charism and specific ministry of the order. Upon completion of novitiate, seminarians are invited to take temporary vows. (If the formation, vocation and novitiate directors determined that a particular seminarian was not prepared to take vows, they may ask the seminarian to leave the community or complete novitiate again). Following the taking of temporary vows, seminarians gained new privileges in the community in terms of use of community property (space) and permission to go places.

The period of time in which seminarians remained in temporary vows, provided they renewed their vows annually, last approximately three years. This period coincided with masters coursework in the theologate. Following this period, seminarians were invited to take solemn vows. Upon taking solemn vows, seminarians were considered full members of the community with voting privileges. (Seminarians studying for the priesthood would enter the diaconate and be ordained to the priesthood, after taking solemn vows).

Although full membership into the community occurred upon taking solemn vows, acceptance into the formation program was considered by myself, and others I was in contact with, to be a source of identity. In a sense, as a seminarian I considered myself to be a member of a religious community, even though I did not have full privileges of community membership. My "membership" in the community lasted

through eight months into the novitiate process, when I left the community. However, it was through this series of levels of acceptance into the community that the hierarchical structure of community became apparent, and this structure was implemented on a daily basis through interaction between "members", and the implementation of rules and expectations regarding community living. In the following section I will describe specific examples of how the hierarchical structure distinguishing the full membership of the directors from the "membership" of the seminarians became apparent.

Daily Life in Religious Community

During orientation week, seminarians learned from the directors that there were certain house rules and expectations. These rules were explicit and concerned issues regarding space and time constraints. Space constraints pertained to what areas within the house were considered private and what areas were public or common. Each member of the house had a private bedroom. In the description of the nature of privacy in a religious house, the priests told the seminarians about their experience in the seminary and how they followed the dictum: seldom one, never two, usually three. Although the dictum was no longer held, private rooms were considered to be primarily for sleeping and studying. Although visiting another in his room was not prohibited, it was discouraged. Through time, seminarians seemed to disregard this suggestion. However, the rule regarding quiet time in the house, between 10 PM and 6 AM, was understood within the community as an injunction against visiting another in his private room between those hours.

The community also had a common room. This room was a public space that was used for social gatherings and community activities. The room was large with

furniture, a stereo and cabinets for storage of party items. Attached to the common room was a television room and the community library. For the first two years, 1985-1986, the common room was shared by the whole community: seminarians and priests. During the third year, the directors decided to create a common room for themselves separate from the seminarians. This common room was off-limits to the seminarians and was intended specifically for use by the priests in the community. The creation of the separate common room was a source of strain for the seminarians and was widely talked about. Sharing of the common room allowed seminarians to feel part of the larger community. Yet, a separate common room for the priests in the house seemed to the seminarians as a subversion of the idea of common room. For the priests however, they expressed a need to have a place of their own where they could be away from the stress of dealing with the seminarians. The issue of a separate common room for the priests was an issue that was widely discussed in the community, but in the end the separate common room stayed.

These types of issues were discussed in private among the seminarians as well as in public at "Town Hall" meetings. Town hall meetings occurred once a month and were intended for the community to discuss issues regarding the "running" of the house. Seminarian concerns were solicited by the directors, and many, but not all, were discussed. The community also had monthly "community growth" meetings which were administered by a licensed psychologist, who was hired on contract but otherwise was not connected with the order. These meetings allowed for discussion of issues such as the separate common room, however, sensitive and controversial issues, such as serious complaints regarding distinctions between seminarians and the directors, were

discussed only in the absence of the formation director. Indeed, seminarians were more likely to talk to each other about their frustrations or concerns than to talk to any of the directors. Some subjects were completely avoided in interactions with the directors.

One such issue involved the seminarians' requirement to notify an ask permission to leave the house for personal reasons or recreation. This injunction was not placed on solemnly-professed members (those who had taken permanent vows) of the community. On a few occasions, one of the directors would leave for a few days, and seminarians would not know where the director was. On one occasion, a seminarian discovered serendipitously where the formation director was located from a friend. This friend was a nun who lived in the seminarian's home town five hundred miles away. This seminarian was incensed that someone outside the order would know where the director was located when the seminarians were not told. This particular incident, and the feelings of the seminarians regarding this incident, was discussed with the community psychologist in the absence of the director.

The distinctions between those who were professed and those who were not was a source of strain for the community. Professed members of the community had certain privileges regarding leaving the house for personal or ministerial purposes. Further distinctions existed between those who were solemnly-professed and those who were in temporary vows. Solemnly professed had privileges of leaving without seeking permission. They were asked to leave a note specifying where they were going and when they would be back, although that was not a requirement. Members in temporary vows would need to notify the director and ask permission to leave the house. However, asking permission was a formality and common courtesy. One

purpose of the formality was to determine if there were any time conflicts regarding common activities or duties. Seminarians who were not in vows did not have the same privileges. Not only did the seminarians have to notify and ask permission to leave, but they had to have legitimate reasons for leaving the house. Seminarians were given the privilege of one night out a week for recreation, although that privilege was seldom utilized due primarily to lack of funds (as well as lack of social networks outside the community). Professed members of the community had the same privilege of one night out per week for recreation. Yet, the distinctions in other house-leaving privileges emphasized the differences between the professed and non-professed.

During the first year, all seminarians, professed and non-professed, lived in the same house. Distinctions in privileges between the solemnly-professed and temporarily-professed members of the community was a source of strain for the temporarily-professed seminarians. The following year, the temporarily-professed members of the community moved into a new house with a new formation director. Although there was still interaction between the professed and non-professed seminarians, the interaction became very limited. This separation relieved some of the stress which existed in the community between the professed and non-professed seminarians. One source of this stress concerned the belief among the professed seminarians that they should have some privileges that the non-professed do not share because of their status. These privileges for the professed seminarians included use of community property and rights regarding leaving the house for personal or ministerial purposes. The basis for their belief was that since they took vows of poverty, they

should have rights to common ownership. A particular example of common ownership included use of community vehicles.

The order's understanding of the vow of poverty included the notion of usufruct. The term usufruct pertains to personal rights over common property. All property is owned by the community at large, that is the order. However, property is administered at the provincial or vice-provincial level and is delegated to local communities or houses. An individual community member may have the privilege to use certain property of the community, such as a vehicle. The individual thus exercises secondary territorial privileges over the property. However, community members do not exercise primary territorial privileges over any property. It is in this sense that community members have use of (usufruct) community property.

Non-professed members did not have the privilege of usufruct. It is in this sense that non-professed members had to have permission to use community vehicles. During the first year, the issue of usufruct became a source of stress between the professed and non-professed seminarians. As part of the duties to the house, seminarians had household chores or areas for which they were responsible. These chores were delegated by the formation director at the beginning of the year. The director tried to call upon the talents of individual when delegating these responsibilities. I became responsible for the vehicles when it became apparent that I was the individual with the most experience repairing vehicles. As part of my responsibility, I was in charge of keeping the vehicle keys and a log of vehicle usage. All seminarians had use of the same three community vehicles, therefore the professed seminarians had to ask me, a non-professed seminarian, for the keys and report where

they were going and when they would be back. This requirement for the professed seminarians resulted in open conflict because they believed that since they took the vow of poverty, they should have usufruct.

At the time, the directors had usufruct over separate vehicles. If the directors wanted or needed to go somewhere, they did not have to confer with others over the use of a vehicle. However, the professed-seminarians had to share vehicles with the non-professed seminarians. Therefore, some system of determining which requests for vehicle usage would have priority. This issue was discussed between myself and the formation director because, at the time I was feeling much animosity and resentment from the professed seminarians for an unfair responsibility that was delegated to me. I asked the director to be taken off vehicle detail or to have that particular part of the detail removed as a responsibility. The issue was then raised at a town hall meeting, where it was decided that the professed seminarians would have a separate car for the three of them to use. The professed seminarians would have shared usufruct over the vehicle. The non-professed seminarians would have to gain permission from the director or co-director for use of the other two vehicles. I no longer had responsibility for keeping the keys or usage log. At the start of the second year, after the professed seminarians moved into the new house, they gained full usufruct privileges over vehicles, as well as other privileges of full membership.

Interestingly, one of the non-professed seminarians owned a private vehicle that was kept at the house. Because the non-professed did not have an injunction against private ownership, a non-professed member could keep a vehicle at the house provided he could pay for it. Although the individual did not have constraints regarding

vehicles usage as did the other seminarians, the individual did have constraints regarding when he could leave the house. The individual was not required to share the use of the vehicle with other community members, although he was generally generous.

The examples provided above demonstrate ways in which distinctions were made between groups of individuals in the community according to status (or level of acceptance into the community). The second co-researcher described the same types of distinctions between community members according to status. For example, seminarians were separated from the lay community. The seminary was located three miles outside a small town of 700 people and an hour away from a large town. However, the seminary was a self-contained community in which community members had little incentive to go to town. Seminarians at the high school level (minor seminarians) were separated from other high school students by curriculum and social networks. Minor seminarians social networks involved those with whom they shared classes. Upon entering the major seminary (philosophy studies at the baccalaureate level), the non-professed seminarians interacted primarily with those at the same level.

The major seminary was housed within a monastery. Seminarians shared common prayer with professed members of the community. Seminarians also shared common space with professed members of the community during meals. However, seminarians were seated separately from professed members in the dining room. This lack of interaction between professed and non-professed members of the community was formalized in the form of an explicit rule prohibiting such interaction. Interaction between solemnly-professed members and temporarily professed members took place,

but in limited amount. Seminarians in novitiate had no interaction with other community members, nor did they interact at any depth with the novice director.

Other distinctions that occurred between the professed and non-professed members of the community included the professed members ability to skip common activities, whereas non-professed seminarians were required to attend all common activities. Furthermore, seminarians were observed by professed members of the community for reports to the formation director. These professed members could interact with the formation director, who was also professed. However, the seminarian being observed could not interact with the professed member who was observing. These differences emphasized the distinction between community members in terms of status.

The second co-researcher offered the possibility that allowing for the distinction was part of the training for the vow of obedience and acceptance of authority. He further suggested that the distinction between the seminarians and the directors is maintained in order to create a dependency on authority. Whether this occurred or was intentional is not at issue in this paper. However, in both the experiences the second co-researcher described and the experiences co-reconstructed by the first co-researcher and myself, the common element of specific distinction by status in the community occurred. Furthermore, the distinctions represented a hierarchical structure within the community.

Analysis of Structure and Function

According to Francis (1950), "the community of religiosi represents an intimate face-to-face group which . . . performs practically all the functions of a natural family

short of biological procreation" (p 438). Like a family, the religious formation community develops a commonality through shared "... history, a present reality, and a future expectation of interconnected mutually influencing relationships" (Galvin and Brommel, 1996, p 3). The religious community becomes the primary social network for its members. However characterized, community can be thought of as a system of interdependent individuals who are bound together by common goals. Watzlawick, Bavelas and Jackson (1967) applied Hall and Fagen's (1956) definition of a system to human interactants such that a group of relationally interdependent interactants can be described as a system.

Systems have structural components which are determined through interactional patterns (Minuchin, 1974). According to Minuchin, structure in a community is "the invisible set of functional demands that organizes the ways in which" community members interact (1974, p 71). Structure also refers to the hierarchy of authority which is charged with maintaining the boundaries of the system (Arliiss, 1993). It is this maintenance of system boundaries which provides the community with its definition and identification.

Yet the ideals of community require a sharing of history and presence. The demands of hierarchy, requiring differences in status and role seem to be at odds with issues of collegiality and oneness. An individual may achieve equal status with those who are in positions of authority. However, it is unlikely that an individual will enter into a community at equal status with all other members of the community. It is more likely that an individual will enter into a community and assimilate into the community through a series of levels of status.

Individuals thus become part of a subgroup of equal status individuals within the larger group. These subsystems within the community are defined by intrasystem boundaries. A boundary is the set of rules, roles, and limiting conditions between what is defined as part of the system and what is defined as not part of the system. Boundaries serve a function of regulating interaction between systems and subsystems. In a community with a hierarchical structure, status may function as a boundary by specifying limitations on interaction between individuals of differing status.

In the context of the religious community, status is associated with the stage of formation. Higher status is afforded those individual members who have taken solemn vows than those who have taken temporary vows. Likewise, professed members are afforded higher status in the community than those who have not taken vows. The qualities of the status differential relate to the individual member's privileges in the community. A definite interactional boundary exists between subgroups in the seminary. In the monastery (co-researcher two), a separation of space and explicit rules limited interaction between members of differing status. In the formation house (primary researcher and co-researcher one), solemnly professed, temporarily professed and non-professed members shared the same living space during the first year. Lack of explicit separation created strain in relationships between members of different status. Separation was made explicit by moving those in temporary vows into a new house and by creating a separate common room for the directors.

Boundaries within the community take other forms. Privileges regarding use of community property differed by status, as did privileges regarding leaving the house (for the formation house). Yet for the seminarians, the interactional boundaries may

have been the most significant. For example, at town hall and community growth meetings of the formation house, certain subjects were not talked about in the presence of the directors.

The limits on interaction between individuals of differing status contributed to a strain in the community. The strain was manifested in open conflict, as well as through the solidification of status separation. Yet, it is the separation of community members which is in conflict with the notion of community. The existence of subsystem boundaries seems paradoxical to the goal of shared experience in community. In the context of religious formation, subsystem boundaries create a limit to intimacy between community members of differing status. This limit to intimacy seems in direct contradiction to the motives of individuals who join the community to be members of a group of "intimates" (Francis, 1950).

The desire for connection, prompting the choice to join community, is in dialectical tension with desires for autonomy. According to Baxter (1990), individuals struggle with the dialectical tension of intimacy-autonomy in their relationships with others. This tension occurs due to opposing needs of intimacy and autonomy. Intimacy requires a sharing of the self with the other, whereas autonomy requires a separation of self from the other. Schutz (1973) proposed that the individual has three basic relational needs of inclusion, affection and control. Inclusion involves the individual's feelings of significance, importance and belonging. Affection concerns the individual's desire for intimacy. Control involves the individual's ability to make decisions. By sharing self with other (and having that sharing reciprocated) the individual meets the needs of inclusion and affection. By defining boundary between self and other, the

individual meets the need for control by creating autonomy. These opposing needs thus create conflict within the self and in relation to others. The process of coping with these relational paradoxes, dialectical management, is accomplished through communication (Galvin and Brommel, 1996). Yet dialectical management may be subverted by imposed limits on interaction between community members.

In the context of religious formation, issues of intimacy and autonomy are played out through status differentiation. Intimacy occurs more frequently within subgroups but is limited between subgroups. More autonomy, in the form of privileges, is granted to those with higher status in the community. The requirement of asking permission to leave the house for low status individuals limits low status individuals' control. For the seminarians, status differentiation, while affording certain levels of autonomy to some and limiting intimacy between subgroups, was paradoxical to the goals of community living. Thus structural distinctions, in the form of status differentiation, created an environment where conflict was inevitable.

Structural distinctions according to level of acceptance into the community did occur on a daily basis. These structural distinctions were an aspect of the community at large and a function of formation within the context of a religious community. The distinctions were a source of conflict particularly for the seminarians who were seeking acceptance into the full community. For the seminarians, community membership was a source of identity. Yet seminarians were concurrently members and non-members of the community. Seminarians were members by name and by space but did not share in the benefits of full membership. As a "partial" member, the seminarian experiences neither autonomy nor intimacy with the full community.

These dialectical tensions between intimacy and autonomy exist in any relationship as it develops (Baxter, 1990). Yet, the unique quality of voluntary membership into a community, particularly during adulthood, carries with it the potential for conflict due to the struggle between pre-membership, sedimented perceptions of what constitutes community and the lived reality of hierarchy. Formation functions as an enculturation process by which "new" members are trained in the ways and mores of the community. As such, the function of formation necessitates the hierarchical structure of student/teacher or novice/director. This structural/functional aspect of formation, therefore, inevitably involves the conflict of the self in relation to others.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study observed individual perceptions of community living and the interactional patterns of community members in a religious formation house. A study of this nature syncretized three types of methodological approaches: ethnomethodology, phenomenology and ethnographic description. This combination of approaches are qualitative in nature, and all fall within the human action paradigm. However, this combination of methods carries with it certain limitations

One limitation of this study is that my interpretations of life in the religious community may be sedimented through years of reflection on my own experience. I am situated as a researcher who has been immersed in the culture of study: naive in the observational techniques of research while a member of the culture, but perhaps overly aware of the nuances of the culture before beginning the process of formal research. In this sense, I cannot be a truly unmotivated researcher, open to the possibilities of "new" insight. At the same time, I bring a deep understanding of the culture, having

been a serious member without any notions of conducting research. According to Langsdorf (1983), the individual participant perception of events will be necessarily more complete due to the participants access to both overt and covert acts. As a member, I was motivated to fully participate in the culture.

Membership in the community points to another limitation of this type of study: immersion into the culture being researched requires acceptance into the community. Given the nature of the type of culture being researched in this study, this may be impossible to do. Acceptance into the religious formation community of an order is contingent upon motivation to become a full professed member of the community. Acceptance into the community is determined by community members according to apparent motives of the individual who wishes to join. The researcher, thus, has an ethical constraint upon conducting this type of research.

A third limitation of this type of research concerns the language of a culture. A high degree of common knowledge and understanding of terms was needed for dialogue between the primary researcher and the co-researchers. Knowledge of the issues relevant to living in a religious community was necessary to interpret comments made in interviews with the co-researchers. For example, an understanding of the vow of poverty and the particular interpretation of that vow in terms of usufruct was necessary to interpret the meaning of comments made by the co-researchers in reference to their comments about distinctions between community members. It is this sense of the nuances of cultural understanding that require the researcher to be an insider.

Provided those limitations can be met, this type of analysis might lend itself to other areas of study. Areas for further study, in examining the characteristics of community in other contexts, such as academic institutions, may include how an individual community member integrates the needs of a specific community with his or her own need of autonomy and intimacy. Also, further studies might examine how a community integrates issues of status and hierarchy within the context of enculturation and the individual's needs of inclusion, affection and control. If enculturation into a community necessitates a hierarchical structure of novice/teacher as inherent in functions of maintenance and survival, how does the community deal with goal-conflicts of individual membership into the community versus the community's need for maintenance and survival?

The dynamics of community membership formation seemed to parallel the processes described by Wieder (1988), in that such formation required status distinctions between groups of members. It would be interesting to consider how the structural distinction subverts the process of community membership, particularly how members might lose sight of the ideals of community living, such as collegiality and open interaction, given hierarchical distinctions between members.

Analysis of the relationship between structure and function in community formation may allow for a critical examination of other types of communities, such as an academic community, through which the process of acceptance into the community requires the passing through of specified levels of training and enculturation. Furthermore, application of this type of analysis to other communities with a primary function of teaching might call into question certain established pedagogical models

which do not consider the lived-world experience of individuals who choose to join such communities. It is reasonable to expect that individuals who join communities have some expectations regarding the primary goals of the community they join. It is the negotiation and renegotiation of these expectations which lead to inter-community conflict.

Finally, this particular study has brought to fruition a long-existing desire to put down on paper my understanding of the life-changing experience of membership in a Catholic religious formation community. The experience was insightful, growthful, painful, life-giving, and otherwise unregrettable. It will remain with me as a significant and important part of my life-world which I take with me into any new community I join.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

The purpose of these questions is to determine the nature of the structure of the formation community. It is understood that the function of the formation community (seminary) is to train young men to become ministers, therefore the function of the community requires a distinction between the seminarians who have come to be trained and the formation directors who have the role of training.

1. Could you talk about your experience of living in community in terms of how seminarians were distinguished or separated from the directors.
2. Can you give me some specific examples of how the distinction between seminarians and the directors were negotiated, maintained or demonstrated through rules or activities?
3. Tell me about your daily schedule: Who made the schedule?
4. Tell me about the living arrangements:
 - a. Was physical space a factor for distinguishing between members of different status (seminarians or directors)?
 - b. Who talked to whom within the community; were there subcommunities within the community?
5. Tell me about the rules of the community:
 - a. Who made the rules?
 - b. Were the rules differentially applied depending upon status in the community?
6. How did you gain admittance or acceptance into the community?
7. What goals or ideas did you have about what community life entailed?
 - a. Were these goals different from those of the directors or other seminarians?
 - b. How were any differences in goals or ideas about community negotiated?