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UTOPIAN GENDER: COUNTER DISCOURSES IN A FEMINIST COMMUNITY

A Dissertation Presented

by

JOLANE FLANIGAN

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2011

Communication

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UTOPIAN GENDER: COUNTER DISCOURSES IN A FEMINIST COMMUNITY

A Dissertation Presented

by

JOLANE FLANIGAN

Approved as to style and content by:

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Donal Carbaugh, Chair

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Department of Communication

DEDICATION

To Tygs, Spud, Schnoo, and Aopk…
with love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the process of writing this dissertation I have thought of the people who made it possible. No work is done without help and I have much gratitude for all who helped me.

I appreciate the folks who cooked my take-out, served my coffee, and made the clothes I wear so that I could dedicate more time to the work that I love.

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My family has always been my foundation. My mom and dad have done so much for me and have worked so very hard so that I could have opportunity. My sister has been my rock and our relationship is one of the greatest blessings of my life. My grandparents have taught me about family and hard work as well as cooking and

composting as meditations. My mate has been with me through one of the lowest points in my life. He has weathered a terrible storm, endured my tendency to listen to the same CD for months on end, and eaten more mushy rice and burned food than anyone should. I admit that he is a better cook and is vastly more patient, but I continue to think I choose the best music. I began the process of analyzing data and writing findings as I birthed my child and so it is fitting that I close by acknowledging my Schnoo who makes me work harder and longer at all things great and small. I am a better person because she has given me reason to be.

ABSTRACT

UTOPIAN GENDER: COUNTER DISCOURSES IN A FEMINIST COMMUNITY

SEPTEMBER 2011

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Directed by: Professor Donal Carbaugh

This dissertation is an ethnography of communication, situated in the context of a feminist utopian community, that examines members' use of communication and communicative embodiment to counter what they consider to be oppressive United States gender practices. By integrating speech codes theory and cultural discourse analysis with theories of the body and gender, I develop analyses of spoken and written language, normative language- and body-based communicative practices, and sensual experiences of the body. I argue that there are three key ways communication and communicative practices are used to counter gender oppression: the use of gender-neutral words, the "desensationalization" of the body, and egalitarian nudity practices. Additionally, I argue that "calm" communication, as a normative style of communicating on the farm, underprivileges both male and female members of color and of the working class.

From the perspective of members, gender was understood to be a category distinct from sex and analyses demonstrated that sex as an identity was a factor in interpretations of gender performances. Sex identities were also necessary for community feminist practice. Communication practices in the community articulated with feminist, health, environmental, and egalitarian discourses to normalize forms of embodiment such as

female shirtlessness and public urination to counter dominant U.S. forms. It was found that making sense of normative communication practices required a cultural understanding of how both spaces and bodies were constituted as public and private. Community spaces were understood by members to be either relatively public or private with the public spaces being the more regulated spaces. Members contested the meanings of bodies as public (and therefore able to be regulated) or private (and therefore not able to be regulated). Normative communication practices in the community indicated that members work to preserve boundaries between private bodies in public spaces by developing rules for privacy, confidentiality, and non-communication. Community feminist communicative practices were understood to be liberatory because (1) the small size of the community allowed members to co-create feminist discourses that resignified body parts and gendered identites and (2) the community provided a space in which women could embody feminist discourses as everyday, sensual performances. This study has implications for the theorizing of embodied verbal and nonverbal gender-based cultural communication practices and for understanding community-based counter discourses as well as sex and gender as cultural identities.

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CHAPTER 1

UTOPIA, COMMUNICATION, AND GENDER: AN INTRODUCTION

> No matter how it has been conceived, the ideal of utopia has retained a central place in the hopes, desires, fantasies, and spiritual aspirations of humanity. To dismiss utopia as a foolish and discredited notion without relevance to the world today would be to dismiss an ideal which has an irresistible attraction for large numbers of people and which helps to explain behavior that otherwise would seem incomprehensible. (Richter, 1971, p. 1)

> [A] well-functioning community of practice is a good context to explore radically new insights without becoming fools or stuck in some dead end. A history of mutual engagement around a joint enterprise is an ideal context for this kind of leading-edge learning, which requires a strong bond of communal competence along with a deep respect for the particularity of experience. When these conditions are in place, communities of practice are a privileged locus for the *creation* of knowledge. (Wegner, 1998, p. 214, emphasis in original)

Many are likely familiar with utopian novels such as Walden Two, Ecotopia, or Thomas More's 16th Century classic, Utopia, from which we derive the word. These works of fiction, like others of this genre, introduce readers to imagined societies that present solutions to social issues surrounding inequality, political representation, health and well-being, and crime. Perhaps fewer people are familiar with utopian communities populated by people whose daily lives compose the story of a different way of organizing society. More complicated and less fantastic than fictional utopian novels, utopian communities bring into view an alternative, arguably more perfect society. While people have varying opinions as to what constitutes utopia, most people knowledgeable of utopian communities agree that wherever these communities are found, they are characterized by two key features: First, they are populated by people who voluntarily

live and work together and, second, members strive to manifest the shared vision for a way of living that they understand to be better than that which is offered by broader society (Kanter, 1972, pp. 1-3).

The history of the United States and its people—from colonial America to the present day—has been intertwined with utopian communities.[1] Early communities such as the Quakers or the Amish were spiritual communities that offered a supportive and safe place for members to practice their religious beliefs. From these roots, religion has continued to influence the development of U.S. utopian communities but subsequent communities have more typically been founded as social and political alternatives to dominant society rather than as spiritual communities (Brown, 2002a, pp. 6-8). The prevalence of this modern version of utopian communities has waxed and waned with growth periods connected to times of widespread social and economic change and unrest. In the modern capitalist economy of Victorian America, as urbanization and industrialization began to take hold, a first wave of modern utopian communities appeared. New Harmony, the Shakers, and Oneida emerged as relatively successful and, today, well-known utopian communities. Each of these communities strove to develop alternatives to dominant U.S. social, moral, and economic systems—for example, developing egalitarian alternatives to Victorian understandings of marriage (Kern, 1981).

The civil unrest of the 1960s and economic insecurity of the 1970s ushered in a second wave of modern utopian communities that Miller (1999) characterized as a

[1] For example, Barbara Welter (1966) argues that utopian communities were one of several cultural features, including westward expansion and industrialization, in nineteenth-century America that propelled women away from Victorian ideals of womanhood (piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness) towards a more public role in society.

"mushrooming" where "[U.S. society was] no longer dealing with communes numbering in the low hundreds but rather with thousands—probably tens of thousands—of them" (p. xiii). These contemporary communities continued the long tradition of utopian communities—developing somewhat isolated social groups where people lived alternative lifestyles. However, there were also noteworthy differences between the first wave of communities and the second. Unlike the earlier utopian communitarians who believed their utopian experiment would transform society, the second generation of communitarians sought social support and an escape from society (Zicklin, 1983, pp. 1-2; c.f. Hicks, 2001, pp. 30-31).

Whether there was an emphasis on reforming or escaping society, past and present utopian communities have been rich sites of what Brown (2002b) has called "indigenous critique," or a critique of a society from within its borders. The richness of a utopian indigenous critique has been attributed to the characteristics of these communities mentioned above—that members live and work together to enact particular social reforms. Because utopian communitarians live and work together, reforms advanced by utopian communities have permeated the daily lives of the memberships. Because these communities have focused on everyday social reforms, they have offered a grounded social critique that has been both detailed and nuanced. The successes and failures of the critical alternatives adopted by communitarians have been opportunities for members, scholars, and societies to learn more about possible and probable outcomes of a rich variety of social reforms.

At base, utopian indigenous critiques have been constituted by everyday practices that are born of the memberships' commitments to living in accordance with an ideology

that is in opposition to dominant U.S. cultural practices. From this perspective, contemporary utopian communities can be understood not only as rich sites of indigenous critique, but are also appreciable as communities that offer people an opportunity to learn about and practice alternative lifestyles. As such, these communities can be defined as social learning communities or, in academic terms, communities of practice.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) have defined a community of practice (CoP) as:

> an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short, practices—emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. (p. 490)

Wegner (1998) has argued that communities of practice are characterized by three elements: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. While individuals may practice to hone skills, a community of practice captures a sense of a community that is formed and fashioned precisely so that a group of people may practice *together*—to work together to accomplish their goals.[2] Members of a CoP make what it is that they are doing together meaningful through ongoing processes where members orient to their cause, to what it is that they believe they are doing together. Because membership is diverse, members need not agree about what it is that they are doing or how it is meaningful, but members engaged in their enterprise will nonetheless produce negotiated

[2] To the extent that a group of individuals is working together, is mutually engaged, in their endeavors, they fulfill the first criteria of a community of practice, but it should be made clear that just because people practice together does not mean that they necessarily agree. Communities of practice are populated by a diversity of people as well as interpersonal relations. Members of a CoP are complex people who may have complex and conflictual relationships but nonetheless function together, in whatever way they do, because they are each engaged in or with a series of processes and interactions that they make meaningful as a group.

meanings of it through a shared repertoire of communicative tools. "The repertoire of a community of practice includes routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice" (Wagner, 1998, p. 83). In sum, a community of practice is comprised of a group of people who work together (engaged), utilizing a range of communication tools (repertoire), in ongoing processes of co-orientating to their task at hand (enterprise). Within this context, members' senses of who they are, their identities[3], may be altered.[4]

By conceptualizing a utopian community as a community of practice that offers an indigenous critique, this dissertation focuses on describing and analyzing discourses that counter and resist dominant U.S. gender conventions. Prior researchers interested in gender have mined historical utopian community documents and conducted fieldwork in communities to assess the successes and shortcomings of past and present utopian efforts to rework gender roles. While some U.S. utopian communities have maintained a

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[3] In this dissertation, following Bucholtz and Hall (2004), "identity" is understood to be produced and reproduced through communicative practices and to refer to cultural notions of sameness, as in group belonging and membership, as well as notions of difference, as in distinctions between groups. Within any given cultural context there are a range of social identities that people may enact. West and Zimmerman (1987) suggest that there are "master" identity categories, such as gender, as well as a range of role identity categories. Importantly, embedded within cultural systems of identification are systemic inequalities. See also Carbaugh (1996b).

[4] A member's sense of self is affected by involvement in a community of practice. Becoming a member of a CoP is in part about learning to enact a competent community identity—to interact, contribute toward community goals, and to utilize the community's communication tools. Thus, the socialization into a learning community channels people to identify in particular ways within that community. By extension, in and through our participation in community practices and in interactions with others we gain a sense of ourselves that shapes individuals' identities outside the community. Furthermore, identities are understood as aspects of people connected to a variety of communities as well as to a world that is always in flux, and as such are dynamic and mutable.

traditional distinction between men's and women's roles in the community, others—even early communities—envisioned a utopia where men and women had equal status and shared social responsibilities and roles. Analyses of women in these egalitarian utopian communities have focused on women's communal roles as workers, mothers, and wives. Studying the women of historic New Harmony, Kolmerten (1990) noted that even in this egalitarian community founded with socialism and gender equity as organizing principles, women occupied traditional roles and were responsible for the domestic sphere—the cooking, cleaning, and serving. Thus, while the women of New Harmony could work alongside men in traditionally male (i.e., income-earning) jobs, they could only do so if their domestic responsibilities were completed—an early version of what Hochschild (1989) has referred to as the second-shift.[5]

Such analyses have revealed a mixed bag of positive and negative outcomes for women and it may therefore be easy to characterize utopian members' efforts as failing to achieve a desired utopian outcome. However, shifting focus to assess the ways that, relative to dominant U.S. culture, women in utopian communities have been more able to determine and to manifest their visions of gender utopia suggests that utopian communities are, in important ways, successful. As Chmielewski and Klee-Hartzell (1993) have argued, women in U.S. utopian communities have negotiated to increase their power and autonomy and to shape alternative notions of womanhood, marital, and sexual relations.

[5] Hochschild (1989) argues that contemporary wifes not only spend more time than their husbands engaged in house work and child care, but that they assumed more responsibility for the upkeep of their houses and the well-being of their children.

Unlike the anthropological and sociological research that has dominated utopian studies, this project focuses not on political structures, social structures, or women's places in these structures but on communication. By characterizing a contemporary utopian community as a community of practice and by focusing on communicative practices in this community that seek to resist dominant U.S. gender inequalities, this work describes everyday communication, identifies key cultural discourses, and assesses the liberatory potential of these practices as they relate to gender. Below, I introduce Twin Oaks, the community in which this research was conducted, before turning to an explication of my theoretical orientation to this research.

Every Day at Twin Oaks: Living and Working Together

Next to the South Anna River in Louisa, Virginia are the over 400 acres of Twin Oaks property—fields are cultivated for hay, pastures are grazed by dairy cows, lawns surround community buildings, and woods surround all of the above. Tucked into these woods are the seven residences, the industrial buildings (saw mill, tofu hut, warehouse), the conference site with its large tent-like shelter, the dining hall, a retreat cabin, a dairy barn, three composting toilets, chicken coops, and two large gardens. The buildings, all within a 15-minute stroll, are connected by well-maintained and lighted paths. Except in the Courtyard where the community's first home, the old farmhouse, is located, there are no paved sidewalks. While there is much that is noteworthy about Twin Oaks, or "the farm" as it is affectionately called, the essence of what must be understood about daily life has to do with the rhythms of living and working together, the shape of the land and the shifting of the seasons that influences members' experiences, and the constellation of

agreements, rules, and norms that regulate what is done from day to day and what is not. On Saturdays, visitors may take a guided tour of the community's grounds; what follows is a more personal account than what a tour offers.

A Day on the Farm[6]

I wake to the sun streaming in through my bedroom window. I am thankful for the wood-burning furnace that warms my room even on the coldest days of winter. On the dresser beside my bed is my alarm clock, although I rarely need to use it as I have requested not to work before 10 o'clock. Getting out of bed, I collect my towel and toothbrush and head down a flight of stairs to the bathroom. Some members of Morning Star, my residence, keep their toothbrush in the bathroom, but I have yet to get into this habit. Squeezing communal toothpaste onto my toothbrush, I prepare to, as the tube suggests, "whiten and brighten" my smile. Once finished, I lay my toothbrush on the counter and turn to take a shower. While drying my hair, Dave walks through the open door and with a quick "good morning" removes his robe and steps into the second shower. Back in my room, I wonder as I dress if it will be as cold today as it was yesterday and opt to grab a down coat that has generous amounts of duct tape securing a rip in the material. I found this coat in Commie Clothes where community members can shop amongst racks of clothes (casual and formal), under- and outerwear, and shoes for items they may take and use without pay. Downstairs in the kitchen, I brew some tea, toast a piece of fresh bread, and grab a handful of homemade granola before heading to the hammock shop.

[6] "A Day on the Farm" is a composit of field notes taken during my research.

After saying hello to two members weaving a rainbow colored hammock, I grab a green rope harness and some stretchers (the two wooden bars that are placed between the hammock bed and the harnesses that are used to attach the hammock to its stand). I begin to thread the strands of rope through the holes in the stretchers in preparation for cutting the ropes to the appropriate length. It is quiet work that affords quality conversation and I find it relaxing.

After two hours of work and conversation, I walk to Llano, the old farmhouse that once served as the community's kitchen and now serves as a snack kitchen as well as the milk processing facility where milk from the community's cows is turned into butter and a variety of cheeses. It is close to lunch, but I grab some dumpstered[7] chocolate that I had heard members talking about and head to the Compost Café. There is a heater in the Compost Café, but it makes a terrible racket and I opt not to turn it on while I smoke my cigarette. Smoking is my guilty pleasure and is certainly not engaged in by the majority of community members or supported by community policy. The Compost Café is one of two indoor places to smoke—the other being the smoker's lounge in ZK, the community kitchen, dining hall, and communication center. Outdoor smoking is restricted to some residences and to the woods where one is unseen and not smelled by community members. Leaving the Compost Café, I look down toward the pond to see if it has frozen over. It has not and seeing the rippling water reminds me of its coolness on the hot summer days and nights. I see the sauna on the other side of the pond and remember that

[7] Periodically members salvage clothing, household goods, and food from garbage dumpsters in nearby towns. Frequently, for example, bread that had been "dumpstered" was available for consumption. Far less frequent were sweet foods such as chocolate. While this chocolate had evidence of insect contamination, some members were happy to eat it.

there is a sauna scheduled for tonight. I wonder if this will be the night that I muster the courage to jump in the pond to cool myself during a break from the hot steam of the sauna. Perhaps, but it is more likely that I will simply sit outside to cool in the crisp winter air as I have tended to do.

Back to the present and en route to ZK to eat a lunch of left-overs and nutritional yeast macaroni, I run into a member who has recently announced her pregnancy. I offer my congratulations in passing and begin to reflect on the pregnancy policy as I walk along the path. To maintain a population that can support itself, Twin Oaks has adopted a procedure where members wanting to birth or adopt a child must have lived in the community for at least two years and must apply to do so. This procedure is designed to ensure that potential parents have thoughtfully planned to birth and raise a child in order to minimize the social impact of a child on the community as a whole. Thinking of the children I have seen—engaged in carefree play with a variety of peers and adults—I imagine that raising a child in such a safe and supportive community would be well worth the process.

ZK is abuzz with activity and I check my mailbox in the off chance the tripper has returned early with my requested cigarettes.[8] I can smell lunch and am thankful for fresh salad greens—compliments of the garden crew and the greenhouse. I eat at the fun table, so named because it is a space designated as a work-talk free zone. Separating work life from daily life on the farm is important for some and can be exceedingly difficult given that work is intertwined in daily life—some work spaces are housed within residences

[8] A tripper is a community member who drives a community car into town to drop off people (members and visitors), shop, and take people to the community. Designating a tripper enables both carpooling and community shopping trips—both of which function to conserve gas and time.

and members do not leave work to go home—the farm is where they live and work. At the table adjacent to the fun table, a trio of members is discussing the malfunctioning tofu press and as two leave before finishing their lunch, I am happy to be sitting at the fun table—and to not be a manager. Beyond the ease with which work can blend into non-work, daily life, members' daily life can also bleed into the work place. Members who have spent even just a few weeks on the farm will discover that they have an intimacy of knowledge about those they work with that is atypical in workplaces off the farm. I smile remembering this and noting that I knew about a member's messy break-up long before I met him during a tofu shift.

I finish my lunch, compost what little is left and sort my used dishes into the proper places at the bussing station. I have twenty minutes before I must start my dinner cooking shift and I opt to make a quick trip to Morning Star to check my email before returning to a cleaned and tidied industrial kitchen to cook the variety of food necessary to satiate the community's meat-eaters, vegetarians, vegans, and gluten-intolerant. Today, I will be working with two other members and we have decided to make tofu and egg quiches, rice and beans, steamed greens, salad, and cakes (vegan and gluten-free included) for dessert. We listen to music and open the window to stay cool as we work. We put the food on the steam table with ten minutes to spare—enough time to finish wiping the kitchen down and washing the last of the pots and pans.

After dinner, I am feeling tired, but decide to go to a room-warming party that a member is hosting to celebrate his moving into a new room. I exit ZK out the back door and notice another new statue in the wooded area between ZK, the Tofu Hut and the main path through Twin Oaks. Several members make art on the farm, but this one looks like

one of Paul's pieces. At the party about 20 people were gathered into two adjacent bedrooms drinking wine and margaritas. There is a piece of paper that members can sign in order to have money transferred to the member's account to defray the cost of the alcohol.[9] On the bed in one of the rooms two females and a male are talking. I sit on the corner and minutes later the three begin to kiss.[10] Across the room two members are debating about national politics and I am talking with two others about a member, well-known on the farm for being passionately vocal, who objected to Joseph being placed on a finance committee. After an hour or so of socializing, I head to the Compost Café to smoke and talk with those gathered there. Walking back to Morning Star, I enjoy the utter quietude and the brightness of the stars through the tree tops.

In the night, the rustic quality of the large, wood-sided, unpainted house that is Morning Star looks like an over-sized cabin. Walking inside the front door, I am greeted by an eclectic assortment of furniture that reminds me of college student dwellings and, in the corner, the remnants of a summer-time spider web. I am home. I walk up the

---

[9] While community members can work off of the farm to earn money, members can only spend this money when they are away from Twin Oaks for more than 24 hours. Members, then, must live on the $2.50 per day living allowance that all adult members are given. Since members basic needs are covered, this allowance is intended to cover some of the members' desires for nonessential items such as chocolate, alcohol, cigarettes, gasoline and mileage to get to town (vehicles are provided by TO), phone calls and stamps (e-mail and internet access is provided by the community), and a variety of other items deemed by the community to be luxuries. The primary currencies on the farm are hand made arts and crafts made by other members and labor credits (I'll give you X labor credits for Y). While some non-essential food items, like chocolate, are a prized commodity, I did not witness its use as currency—perhaps this is because most of this type of food is either purchased with allowance money or obtained during group dumpster diving missions.

[10] While most members were monogomous and heterosexual, polyamorous relationships were both accepted and visible as was sensual and sexual interactions that were not defined as a part of an intimate relationship nor indicative of a member's sexual identity.

stairs to my bedroom, my only personal private space in the community. I turn the light on, close the door, turn on my laptop to check my email and to do some writing. Opening my water bottle I take a drink of unchlorinated, well water. My computer begins to boot and I open a mouse-proof plastic box and fish a piece of chocolate out. I smile as I see the bucket I had tried to use to trap the mouse that had been visiting me nightly. Before turning the light out for sleep, I set my alarm because I have a work date to make pillows with Brie tomorrow morning. I like work dates as good conversation always makes for more productive and enjoyable work. Next to my alarm clock is my labor sheet and it is the last thing I see before turning out the light.

The Communication of Gender in Utopia: In Theory

From its beginning, Twin Oaks has been an egalitarian, income-sharing community with feminist values incorporated into governing documents and daily conversations. While "A Day on the Farm" may present readers with a number of scholarly lines of inquiry, I was interested in what members did communicatively to counter what they understood to be oppressive U.S. gender practices. In particular, I was interested in Oakian feminist communicative practices and what these practices said about people, gender, and the everyday aspects of living a utopian dream. The task of this dissertation, then, was to utilize communication and feminist theory and methods to look beneath everyday life on the farm so as to develop a culturally grounded understanding of the meaningfulness of mundane practices—such as those presented above—as these practices related to gender. This perspective necessitated understanding how Oakers theorized communication—the ways they made communication and

communicative practices meaningful and how they learned to use communication to transform gender socialization born of immersion in dominant U.S. culture. To fulfill the goals of this study, I employed an approach to communication rooted in the theory of the ethnography of communication (EC) developed by the anthropologist Dell Hymes (1962, 1972, 1974) and as extended by communication scholars Gerry Philipsen (1992, 1997; also Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005) and Donal Carbaugh (2007a; also Carbaugh, Gibson, and Milburn, 1997). Work in this tradition, focused on describing and interpreting communication practices observed in social interaction, has utilized methodological tools to produce both particular and general communication theory based on everyday communication. I utilized this approach because of its emphasis on developing grounded understandings of the rules and norms of everyday communication as well as the link established between communication and culture that lends itself to a feminist emphasis on the negotiation, fluidity, and re-making of social identities. These qualities, to be unpacked in the following pages, spoke to my focus on analyzing the ways Oakers made dominant U.S. gender practices meaningful as well as the ways they meaningfully undid and redid these practices.

Communication researchers in the tradition of the ethnography of communication have from the start incorporated gender analyses—beginning with Philipsen's (1975, 1976) publications of his seminal Teamsterville study. The Teamsterville research noted not only that there were gender norms for when and how Teamstervillers communicated, but there were also particular places where males and females conversed—on street corners and in bars for males and, for females, in the domestic arena of the home. Since this classic study, research has expanded the type of gender analyses that may be utilized

in the EC tradition. Researchers may analyze the negotiation of gender in sequences of communicative interaction to assess whether or not these sequences constitute a culture communication form that may be enacted in a variety of contexts. For example, Carbaugh (1996b, pp. 123-139) established that in some U.S. scenes gendered identities were constituted through a vacillating form of communication that privileged a cultural identity, "individual," over gendered social identities. Gender was thus understood as a social identity that was regulated by a cultural system that conceptualized "individuals" as both an inclusive and principal identity. EC work has also furthered our understanding that gendered identities are deeply cultural—that people's understandings of enactments of gendered identities are tethered to cultural interpretations and evaluations. In this line of research, Berry (1997) has offered a cross-cultural analysis of the ways in which Finnish and American female university students had differing notions of what it meant to be a "good" woman. These studies provided a base from which to develop my theoretical and analytical approach to gender.

Moving from an EC foundation, I incorporated feminist and gender theory to produce an interdisciplinary and decidedly feminist perspective that I call a feminist ethnography of communication. In this research, gender was understood as a social identity and position that was made meaningful in part by how it was linked to a sexed body—itself a part of the gender system. Gender was understood to not be determined by biology, but the ongoing performance of a culturally salient identity. From this vantage point, the sense that people made of a body—including the sexing of bodies—was an aspect of gender as an embodiment of a culturally constructed category that was (re-)made through everyday performances and institutional policies and protocols (Butler,

1990, 1993; c.f., West and Zimmerman, 1987). Because gender was understood to not be biologically determined, not natural, it was not fixed or static and, as prior research has shown, the meanings associated with the forms that gender took were understood to be historically and culturally variable (Kimmel, 2005, pp. 54-76).

In order to avoid a problematic conceptualization of gender as a monolithic category where all people identified as women and men were understood to have shared the same experiences of gender privilege and under-privilege, I also worked from an intersectional framing of gender. From an intersectional frame, identities were conceptualized as both socially constructed and socially relevant and were not "pop-beads"—were not distinct, able to be interpreted in isolation and then added together to explain a person's social positioning and subjective experiences (Spelman, 1988). Identities such as gender, race, class, and sexuality were understood to be always enmeshed so that one could not understand "gender" without understanding it also as raced and classed and situated in a cultural context. As Bettie's (2003) work has illustrated, if one wants to ascertain the significance of gender performances enacted by high school students, then one must understand that race, ethnicity, and class intersected with gender to shape students' experiences and to produce the appearance of distinct gender performances that marked dress, make-up, and interactional patterns as deeply meaningful.

In the years since Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) seminal work as well as that of her contemporaries (e.g., hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 1988; and Spelman, 1988; see McCall, 2005, p. 1771, fn. 1) intersectional approaches to gender studies have developed three general orientations to analyzing the complexity of gendered experiences (McCall, 2005).

Researchers adopting an *anticategorical complexity* approach understand identity categories to be socially constructed and are skeptical of the use of analytic categories because of their function to reduce the complexity of people's lived experiences and to perpetuate inequalities that rely on such categories. Because of this skepticism, much work in this tradition favors deconstruction, genealogy, and ethnographic approaches that highlight multiple and conflicting voices (McCall, 2005). Researchers adopting an *intracategorical complexity* approach work to develop analyses of gender that account for gender differences associated with race, class, sexuality, and national identities. Researchers in this tradition are also skeptical of categories, but they also understand categories as socially relevant. Thus, the focus of these researchers is on explicating the complexity of gendered experiences by concentrating on a single dimension of multiple identity categories in order to develop understandings of neglected intersections. For example, early intersectional work by women of color adopting this orientation argued that black women constituted a neglected group because gender studies focused on white women and race studies focused on black men (McCall, 2005). Researchers adopting the *intercategorical complexity* approach understand categories as both socially constructed and socially relevant. Unlike anticategory or intracategory work, however, the emphasis is more on relationships of inequality between categories than on developing case study analyses at the points of intersection. Intercategorical studies examine inequalities by examining multiple groups identified by, for example, gender, race, and class such that gender (typically woman and man) as a group is fractured by classed and raced groups. Importantly, this perspective is invested in "exploring whether

meaningful inequalities among groups even exist in the first place" (McCall, 2005, p. 1785).

The intersectional approach I adopted in this dissertation aligned with the tenents of the intercategorical complexity approach. The extent to which a category was or was not relevant in the range of communicative practices on the farm was an question to be answered empirically. My goal, then, was to develop an understanding of identity categories that were relevant to Oakers and then to assess the relevance of these categories in terms of remedying or perpetuating social inequalities.

As feminist research, this investigation was focused on describing and analyzing gender-related communication, the function of normative ideologies to shape the negotiation and contestation of meanings associated with gender, and gender privileges and under-privileges.[11] The feminist aspect of my work was inherently critical and political for as Weeden (1997) has stated, "Feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society" (p. 1). While the primary focus of this work was on how Oakers critiqued dominant U.S. gender practices, I also assessed Oakian practices from a feminist lens. Here it is important to note that some EC scholars have cautioned ethnographers who have been inclined to adopt a critical approach. These scholars have argued that adopting an *a priori* critical stance may impede a grounded understanding of communicative practices from the native's point of view (Philipsen, 1989/1990; c.f. Carbaugh 1989/1990; Cushman & Nicotera-Mayden, 1989/1990; Huspek 1989/1990). This caution was heeded, and while critique is understood as a defining component of a feminist EC, critique was understood

[11] For the sake of clarity, where "gender" is used in this dissertation it refers to gender as it intersects with other key social identities.

to come only after initial description and interpretation of members' communicative practices.

The feminist perspective in my work shaped the questions that I asked and the theory and methods I utilized to develop plausible answers to these questions. As a feminist researcher interested in the mundane ways that gender under-/privilege is naturalized in communication (Weeden, 1997, pp. 1-11; see also Bem, 1997 and Lazar, 2007), I moved from the premise that to not ask critical questions posed to assess social inequalities risked representing normative communication patterns as politically neutral on the farm. As a feminist EC, then, this project started with analyzing differing communication practices active in the Twin Oaks community, but then asked addition questions such as: What is the normative (privileged) code and what notions of personhood, relating, emoting, dwelling, and communicating are associated with it? What are other ways of speaking and what are the ideologies (systems of belief and value that implicate notions of personhood and communication) associated with these ways of speaking? Who speaks in which ways in what contexts (asked from an intersectional frame)? These questions presumed, as prior EC work has suggested, that culturally coded communication practices that diverged from normative practices had distinct, sometimes marginalized but not unimportant, premises of belief and value (Carbaugh, 2005, pp. 82-99; Carbaugh & Rudnick, 2006). Attending to and analyzing differing ways of communicating and how, if at all, they related to gender was a focus of this research as a feminist endeavor.

The questions that guided this research drew attention to the negotiation and contestation of gender through communicative practices. Conceptualizing the communication of gender as both a practice that was negotiated and a method of contesting normative gender practices required clarifying how people, culture, and communication were to be conceptualized. In what follows, I introduce the ethnography of communication beginning with Hymes' (1962, 1972, 1974) work. From this foundation I move, as key developments have, to explain the connections between communicative practices, identities, culture, and the meanings people make within cultural scenes. The body and issues associated with embodied discourses will be addressed after this theoretical foundation has been laid.

The Ethnography of Communication

Hymes (1962, 1972, 1974) developed the ethnography of communication in an effort to answer the question: What must one know about the communication of a people in order to be a competent communicator? As a sociolinguist, Hymes was concerned with the everyday use of language rather than the structure of a language—its grammar and syntax, for example. Relatively understudied at the time, the goal of this type of research was to describe the ways that people used language as well as how use varied according to social and cultural contexts. Hymes' interest in the use of language combined with his interest in competent communication necessitated a theory of meaning that explained how people made sense of others' communication. Toward this end, language was conceptualized as a system that facilitated shared meanings between people. "Meaning," moving beyond the definitions of words, was understood to be

contingent on the contexts in which communication took place. In order to fully understand how to intelligibly communicate and what communication meant, one must not only have knowledge of the communication system—the patterning of words, sentences, and interactions—but also how contexts shaped peoples' interpretations of communication. In Hymes (1962) words:

> The use of a linguistic form [such as a word or a phrase] identifies a range of meanings. A context can support a range of meanings. When a form is used in a context, it eliminates the meanings possible to that context other than those that form can signal; the context eliminates from consideration the meanings possible to that form other than those that context can support. The effective meaning depends upon the interaction of the two. (p. 19)

Thus, the meaning of a word, a sentence or a linguistic act such as an apology or a greeting was the product of an interaction between the linguistic form used and the context in which it was used. A competent communicator must not only know what the various components of a linguistic repertoire may mean, but she or he must also have a reading of salient contexts that is grounded in the socio-cultural systems of interpretation and sense-making.

Because of his focus on grounded, localized meanings, Hymes argued that research should be conducted ethnographically within a speech community, or a group of people "sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety" (1972, p. 54). (Ethnography as a method of data generation will be addressed in the following chapter). This definition emphasized knowledge of language rules (how to speak according to standard language practices, styles, or dialects for example) as well as how to enact and interpret the meanings of speech according to these rules. However, Hymes (1974) was also careful to

note that there was a diversity of styles found within speech communities. And, further, he understood that while people within a speech community may enact different ways of speaking, these differing ways of communicating were not generally equally valued. There were those styles that were dominant and those that were marginal. For example, as Hymes' (1974) use of Labov's (1966) well-known work demonstrated, differences found in the ways that people pronounced words marked standard and nonstandard styles of communicating and these differences had implications for people's evaluations of others. For Hymes, then, people within a speech community shared (at least a knowledge of standard) communication rules, but did not necessarily always adopt the same way of communicating.

Like other speech community theorists of his time, Hymes' conceptualization of identity was largely implicit. Theorizing identity seems to have taken a backseat to his study of the communication people produce—people were primarily understood as the senders, receivers, and audience of communication. However, people were also understood to gain an identity through their language practices within a speech community. Shifting from one language to another, using a particular dialect, word, or style of pronunciation, was understood to be used to communicate group affiliations and social identities (Saville-Troike, 1982, pp. 187-192). Still, identity in this light took on a structural quality where people were understood to express their identities through language practices that were treated as stable systems—a conceptualization that rendered identity a static feature of a person (Bucholtz, 1999).

Moving from a Hymsian tradition, communication scholars have advanced a theory of social identities as being shaped by culture and contested and negotiated

communicatively in social interaction. Carbaugh (1996b) has moved from a focus on the communication of cultural identity (Philipsen, 1987, 1989b, 1992) to the negotiation of (culturally intelligible) identities in a variety of social scenes. In this work, social identities are understood to range from role identities (worker, sports fan) to master identities (gender) and to be limited by a governing cultural system that is visible in communication practices.[12] While enabled and limited by culture, social identities are negotiated in everyday social interaction. This work suggests that the meanings and enactments of social identities are connected to context and that social identities are mutable and may be contested or rejected through communicative practices (Carbaugh, 1996b; see also Carbaugh, 2007b). Complementing the EC perspective on identities, CoP research has conceptualized community members as learners and has asserted that a person's understanding of self as well as other's understandings of her or him evolved through affiliations with multiple communities and were thus not determined by a group affiliation or bound by the context in which one was located.

The CoP emphasis on learning had important implications for my research. Viewing people as learners who affiliated with and disassociated from multiple communities produced an understanding that at any given time, the membership of Twin Oaks was comprised of people with a range of vantage points from which they made their everyday interactions meaningful. This was so because there were newer members and longer-term members; members who had acquired a knowledge and command of the community's communication and interactional patterns and those who had not; members

[12] A master identity is understood to be those that are major social categories that cuts across and into everyday aspects of life and interacts with other master identities as well as with role identities. See West and Zimmerman (1987).

who were “core” members and those who were “periphery” or “marginal” (Wegner, 1998, pp. 164-172). This perspective was compatible with the EC conceptualization of a speech community as a diverse collection of people (Hymes, 1972, 1974) each of whom could, through the everyday enactment of cultural communication practices and forms (e.g., ritual, myth, and social drama), move from periphery to core membership (Philipsen, 1987). Highlighting the diversity of the membership emphasized the possibility of multiple meanings made of the same communicative practice (Carbaugh, 1988). People who were members of Twin Oaks, then, were understood as enacting identities that did, had, and would change as they became enculturated, as they engaged in practices that supported or resisted the goals of Twin Oaks, and as they integrated into other communities. Moreover, identity, as a practice connected to multiple communities, was seen as fluid—with no necessary attachment to the community in which it was situated—even as it was limited (and perhaps marginalized) by the socio-cultural structures in which it was produced and interpreted.

While not all speech communities would fruitfully be characterized as communities of practice (Meyerhoff, 1999), incorporating a notion of people as learners and conceptualizing identity as a fluidity rooted in multiple communities had an interpretive value that was a crucial aspect of this research. By positioning Oakers as people who were learning to do things differently—as people who were learning to enact identities and ways of communicating that countered the U.S. culture from which they had often come—this research focused on the Oakian emphasis on countering gender oppression.

Negotiation, Contestation, and Marginality

Understanding that multiple meanings were active in communities meant conceptualizing communities as including discord. Disagreement, conflict, and competition were all considered to be aspects of communities composed of members who embodied a range of identities. While people had varying abilities to contest, negotiate, and make communication practices communally meaningful, all members and the communicative practices in which they engaged were subject to this feminist EC enterprise, which sought to offer a complex understanding of the communication in Twin Oaks Community and the people who comprised it. This orientation to people and meaning lent to an analytic focus on how variously positioned people made, unmade, and remade meanings. However, to leave theory development here would have emphasized the mutability of identity and implied a sense of agentive free will that simply does not exist. As Bergvall (1999) has suggested, a limited focus on agency has failed to "systematic[ally] account for gender norms established prior to the local practices of gender, at the more global level of ideology and hegemony" (p. 284).

The EC tradition has provided a balance for agency by developing nuanced understandings of communication as a historical system that includes rules and norms for producing and interpreting communication. When Philipsen (1975) utilized Hymes' work to develop the initial EC communication research, he did so with a clear focus on theorizing communication. Building from the base Hymes' theory established, Philipsen's (1987, 1989a) work fleshed out the cultural aspects of communication. He (1987) argued that a key dialectic people negotiated was the tension between the individual and the communal and that communication was an important vehicle through

which this navigation took place. From this perspective, culture was produced through communication even as it, as a historically transmitted system, structured communication. Culture, then, because it was a relatively stable system, a structure, was also what enabled meaningful (or at least presumed meaningful) interactions—the saying as well as the interpreting of communication. Furthermore, rules about speaking were premised on cultural conceptualizations of people, communication, and society so that it was possible to hear cultural meaning in observations of how people communicated (Philipsen, 1989a). In sum, the work to theorize culture and communication foregrounded culture as a structuring system that facilitated coherent communication and cultural understandings of people, their actions, and their communication.

Pursuing this line of inquiry, Philipsen (1997) and Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias (2005) worked to develop the theory of speech codes, a theory that defined culture as a code and emphasized the cultural qualities of meaningful communication. In Philipsen's (1997) words:

> Every common culture of which interlocutors might partake, and which they might use in speaking together, includes, among its parts, a part devoted to the symbols and meanings, premises, and rules pertaining to communicative conduct. For this specialized subset of cultural code, I use the term speech code. A speech code…is defined here as a system of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct. (p. 126, emphasis deleted)

Focused on communication, Philipsen (1997) saw speech codes as an aspect of culture, which he formally defined as "a socially constructed system of symbols, meanings, premises, and rules" that "does not equate it with a group, nation, or people [but] focuses on culture as a code" (p. 125). According to speech code theory, the meaningfulness of communication rested on the speech code that a

person used to interpret it. A political speech given in 1971 by then mayor of Chicago, Richard Daly, provided a good example of this point. The speech was given following the contested appointment of Mayor Daly's friend's son to political office. Some heard the speech as a factually untrue tirade of an overworked, albeit somewhat apologetic Mayor. However, from Mayor Daly's perspective as well as members of Teamsterville, the community to which he belonged, the speech was a justified, somewhat ritualized, response to those who might question his power to make such appointments (Philipsen, 1986).

While the different speech codes reflected in the differing interpretations provided by critics and supporters of Mayor Daly's speech were understood to be situated in different speech communities, recent developments to speech code theory have suggested that within any given speech community, more than one speech code can be found (Coutu, 2005; Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005). According to this work, which drew on Huspek's (1993, 1994) theory of dueling and oppositional codes, people who shared membership in a speech community did not necessarily share an interpretive code for the communication that happened in the community. Importantly for a feminist EC approach, this development has afforded analyses focused on the negotiation and contestation of meaning by differently located (i.e., privileged or under-privileged) members within a speech community.

Carbaugh (1997, 2007a), working within the EC tradition, utilized speech code theory to develop cultural discourse theory (CuDA) that emphasizes culture as an aspect of communication. While speech code theory defined culture as a code, one part of

which was a speech code, CuDA defined a cultural discourse as "a historically transmitted expressive system of communication practices, of acts, events, and styles, which are composed of specific symbols, symbolic forms, norms and their meanings" (Carbaugh, 2007a, p. 169). Thus, while speech code theory has had an analytic focus on speech, cultural discourse theory has cast a wider net to include expressive forms that may not be linguistically based. Like speech code theory, CuDA has conceptualized culture as a part of and partly produced by communicative practices that reflect, insofar as they were premised on, culturally particular notions of communication, people, and relating (to this CuDA has added emoting and dwelling). A strength of CuDA has been the conceptualization of cultural discourses as including, but also limiting, a range of ways that people can make sense of others, their actions, and the contexts in which they occur (see Carbaugh 1989, pp. 180-182). CuDA's emphasis on fleshing out cultural codes in communication reflected the EC tradition of analyzing cultural structures, but CuDA's theorizing culture to be complexly polysemic, like the recent developments in speech code theory, created room for analyses of the contestation and domination of codes.

Incorporating a feminist analysis into speech codes theory and CuDA required conceptualizing a speech community as including both normative codes and those that were marginal—a move that invited questions of difference in addition to those of dominance. Marginal people within communities—marginalized due to their lack of knowledge, competence, or experience—were understood to be limited in their abilities to engage with others, to be heard, and to produce meaningful contributions to the community (Wenger, 1998). This focus has been at the heart of much contemporary

feminist theory—for example in the work of bell hooks (1984) who conceptualized society as constituted by both dominant and marginalized people. In her theory, society consisted of two key parts: the center and the margin. The center was the location of dominance and home to, in hooks' words, the oppressor. At the margin were those who, due to historical and contemporary circumstances and ideologies, were systematically pushed away from and denied access to the center. Existing at the margin necessitated an intimate knowledge of the center—the ability to interpret and enact, to whatever extent possible, normative behaviors. Thus, those at the margins adopted normative behaviors (or risked social sanctions), but this did not mean that they subscribed to normative interpretations of what they were doing nor did they subscribe to the same worldview that those at the center did. The view of society from the margins was fundamentally different than that from the center. This rendered problematic a position that equated communicative practices with commonly held cultural beliefs: there was a distinction to be made between shared normative communication patterns and shared beliefs, values, and meanings. As argued above, those who occupied the margins necessarily learned to speak according to the center (and become enculturated…e.g., internalized sexism), but this was not to say that they did so with the same cultural beliefs about what they were doing (c.f., Huspeck, 1993, 1994; Orbe, 1998; Woolard, 1985). Being mindful of this distinction stressed the importance and vitality of attending to the differing codes active within communities—and treating the voices from the margins as equally important.

Cultural Discourses and Agentive Subjects

A part of the systematic marginalization of people has to do with the organization and meanings of subject positions available to those within a society. Whereas above "identity" was used to discuss categories used by people to make sense of themselves and others, subject position is used here to shift the focus to the cultural discourses that provide a limited range of meaningful identities that people may enact. Within society, bodies have been organized into identity categories and through processes of socialization and sanctions, people have learned to speak from these subject positions. Thus female-bodied subjects, marked as such, have been channeled towards the feminine subjectivities available and these female subjects will in turn communicate and interpret accordingly. If the differing subject positions and the communication subjects produced were equally valued, evaluated, and able to access and influence all aspects of society, there would be no pressing need to explore the links between people and the discourses through which they rendered their world. Unfortunately, for the vast majority of societies, this has not historically been nor is it currently the case (see Blair, Brown, & Baxter, 1994; Chick, 1990; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1990; and Romaine, 1999 for communication focused examples). In response, theorists have worked to flesh out the contours of subjectivity—balancing a structural emphasis on cultural discourses with a conceptualization of agency that can account for contestation and change.

Perhaps nowhere in ethnographic studies of communication has the link between subjects and structure been more clearly explicated than in Huspek's (1991, 1993, 1994) work. In developing his theory of dueling structures, Huspek (1993) has envisioned a variety of rival linguistic structures within any given language and has argued that:

> each of these rival structures offers individual speakers a distinctive code of meanings that is expressive of a specific social group or class position. For the individual speaker, rival structures can thus be said to generate colliding world views, competing ideologies, that are vying for the speaker's allegiance. While this may offer the speaker something of a choice, it may also place him or her under serious strain. For selection of any one structure and its respective colliding world view (ideology)—a prerequisite if one's words and meanings are to find social validation—necessitates selection against a rival structure. (p. 16)

While this particular extract has emphasized agentive choice and thus has diminished the role of cultural discourses and institutions to categorize and socialize people, Huspek's words have eloquently described the range of competing subject positions available to people, each with an attending system of meaning and beliefs. In so doing, he connected differing discursive subjectivities to differing systems of sense making. Furthermore, he argued that these positions were not equal and that opting for one position over another may come with negative consequences.

Understanding the nature of these consequences relied on understanding the nature of the competition to articulate and render dominant the meaning of subjects' communicative practices. Beginning with the understanding that the meaning of this communication or that action was dependent on the cultural system that a person used to interpret it, then it was understood that how members made meaningful their experiences and made their experiences meaningful was influenced by their subject positions. Thus, there was no fixed experience of or meaning to communicative practices because meaning was constituted in competing discourses, localized, for example, in communities of practice and communicated through language, itself not a fixed system of meaning. However, while meanings were not fixed, there were, as hooks' (1984) conceptualization

of society reminded us, meanings, tethered to the subjects who articulated them, that were more dominant and those that were marginalized. Thus, the meaningfulness of communicative practice was polysemic, connected to people as actors and interpreters. As meaning was unfixed, the meaningfulness of communication practices was both personally and politically contestable. As Butler (1992) has pointed out, it is in an understanding of just how a subject is constituted that agency and liberation exist (pp. 12-13). If people can understand the ways in which they are constituted and the ways in which they constitute through communicative practices, then they have the possibility of change, of understanding their experiences differently, and of speaking in oppositional, perhaps liberatory, ways.

The Body, Communication, and Gender

In this section, I work to incorporate the body into a feminist EC project by treating it as a culturally relevant site of gender and communication. To do this, I first present an overview of the ways that feminists have theorized gender and the sexed body. Next, I focus on the appearance of the body in order to develop an understanding of gender as it relates to the culturally comported and adorned body. While the body in the immediately following section further refines my conceptualization of gender (and sex), the subsequent section offers insight into how gender shapes the form and interpretations of the body.

Feminism and the Body

The sexed body has, of course, been a focal concern for feminists although the ways in which the sexed body and its relationship to gender have been conceptualized in academic theories has varied.[13] As others (Daly, 1997; West and Zimmerman, 1987) have discussed, the evolution in feminist thinking on the body, sex, and gender has moved from a clear distinction drawn between sex and gender to the poststructuralist turn that challenges these very categories. In the 1960s and 1970s feminists' efforts were to uproot the hold that biological determinism had on the sense made of women and female bodies. In this effort, the body was split into the sexed body and the gendered person. The sexed body marked the realm of the material biological body and gender the social identity correlated with that body. This distinction afforded a discussion of and subsequent theorizing about women's roles as socio-cultural determinations rather than as attributable to some set of innate, biological inclinations and talents.

Beginning in the 1980s, this body of work was criticized by both feminists of color and poststructuralist feminists (Daly, 1997). Feminists of color argued that feminist theory (and the feminist movement) failed to account for the diversity of people that comprised the category "woman." This was the emergence of intersectionality (discussed above) as a feminist theory. Related to women of color critiques was the poststructuralist movement that sought to question binary categories of identification (e.g., male/female, straight/gay, white/black) as well as the sex/gender system that correlated the binary categories "sex" and "gender." Whereas women of color sought to complicate gender so

[13] Hausman's (1995) genealogy of gender finds that "gender," as a term used to refer to social and psychological aspects of a sexed identity, was not used before the 1950s and was a product of scientific discourses surrounding intersexed people. See also Scott (1986).

as to move away from essentialized notions of "woman," poststructuralists sought to demonstrate "how relations of power are constructed and maintained by granting normality, rationality and naturalness to the dominant half of any binary" (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 318). Because poststructuralist feminists theorizing the body have challenged the categories "sex" and "gender," summarizing key aspects of feminist poststructuralist theory further develops the conceptualization of "gender" and "sex" utilized in this dissertation.

A defining feature of feminist poststructuralism is that this orientation "seeks to trouble the very categories male and female, to make visible the way they are constituted and to question their inevitability" (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 318). Particular attention is paid to analyzing the ways that binary categories are naturalized and to destabilize the categories by increasing the number of culturally recognizable gender subjectivities. For example, feminists have argued that the binary male/female is a socially constructed fiction that is reproduced in the sexing of infants. In supporting the claim that sex is a constructed category, feminists have typically employed a biological fact: not all babies' bodies fit neatly and clearly into one or the other of the sex categories (male or female). Human babies have always been born with a range of chromosomal, hormonal, and genital configurations that reveals a sex-category spectrum rather than a binary (Fausto-Sterling, 1993). The sexing of infants has turned out to be a subjective process of sex assignment that sometimes, as in cases of intersexed babies, includes tests to inventory a baby's sex characteristics (hormones, chromosomes, organs).[14]

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[14] While doctors may run an exhaustive series of tests on intersexed babies before assigning a baby's sex, the categorization of infants tends to be primarily based on whether or not the phallus would be of an appropriate size to penetrate a vagina (Kessler,

One of the most influential feminist poststructuralists has been Butler (1990, 1993, 2004) whose effort has focused on unsettling "sex" and "gender" as both analytic and cultural categories. In her work, Butler (1990) argues that sex is not a separate category that implicates gender, but is in fact a feature of gender—people sex bodies according to the demands of gender. Accordingly, while Butler (1993) does not reduce sex to discourse (and understands the material body and discourses to by intertwined), she theorizes the (sexed) material body as being regulated by gender discourses. Thus, gender is not an identity based on a sexed body, but a performance that has no necessary correlation to a sex-assigned body. Consciously or not, gender is reiterated over and over and over in everyday performances across cultural scenes. From this perspective, Butler argues for a proliferation of gender performances as a way to disrupt inequalities found across normative, binary gender performances.

For some, Butler's work misses the body entirely. Hausman (1995, pp. 175-194) argues that Butler fails to account for the limitations of what can be done to the material body and understands the body as potentially exceeding the bounds of normative gender. In Hausman's (1995) genealogy of gender, she shifts the poststructuralist focus from gender to sex. Using Laqueur (1992), who argues that Western society has moved from a one-sex to a two-sex model, Hausman (1995) argues that sex can be conceptualized as a culturally relevant and variable category that has historically preceded gender. Insofar as she sees gender as arising in a particular historical time (the 1950s), she works to keep both in play, but articulates a politics that focuses on the proliferation of the category sex rather than gender.

1990). Clearly premised on heterosexist ideology and tethered to a gender binary, the appearance of the genitals continues to be the most powerful indicator of sex.

While poststructuralist feminists may not agree on how to conceptualize the body, sex, and gender, their work serves to emphasize the workings of culture on the meaningfulness and function of gender and sex as cultural and theoretical categories. As feminist poststructuralists have worked to destabilize the sex/gender system, and the binary gender categories associated with it, others have demonstrated that conceptualizations of "sex" and "gender" vary across time (Hausman, 2005) and culture (Oyewumi, 1997). For example, Oyewumi (1997) critiques gender studies that apply traditionally Western notions of gender—as a binary social category correlated with sex—to contexts were gender is not a salient social category as in the case of the Yoruba whose pre-Westernized social structure did not use gender as an organizing category. While Twin Oaks is situated in a Western culture and gender is a key aspect of Oakian culture, Oyewumi's work serves as a warning to question rather than take for granted how sexed bodies are made sense of by members—arguably a good practice to adopt in all fieldwork. With this in mind, this research approaches the study of gender by first questioning the significance of sexed bodies, how bodies are understood as sexed, and the relationship (if any) between sex and gender. Thus, it becomes an empirical question: Are sex and gender culturally salient and/or related? This orientation is important in the Twin Oaks context because the community positions itself as an alternative to dominant U.S. culture and a place where the meaningfulness of gender is a primary site of contestation. Accordingly, rather than mapping a dominant Western gender system onto the Twin Oaks context, I worked to explicate an Oakian gender system (see Chapter 3).

Gendering the Body

Of course the body is more than the ways that people make it meaningful as a sexed body—it is also about cultural processes that shape the comportment and adornment of it into meaningful gender performances. While there may be a tendency to understand the body as natural, this orientation obscures the socially constructed qualities of the body and how, as Synnott (1997) has pointed out, the body has been made meaningful in ways that have varied historically and culturally. To explicate the social and cultural meaningfulness of bodies and body parts, scholars across disciplines have relied on cultural forms such as rituals (Turner, 1967), metaphors (Sharp, 2000; Van Wolputte, 2004, pp. 256-257; e.g., Bordo, 1991), and everyday communicative interactions (Carbaugh, 1996a). In terms of gendering practices, research has found that social groups and organizations such as schools, support groups, and sports teams are key places where people have learned how to speak, to move, and to adorn their bodies as gendered people (Paechter, 2006). For example, gestures, codified as being masculine or feminine, were understood as particular ways of moving the body that were learned in communities of practice (Gordon & Labotka, 2009). As a study situated in an intentional community, it was therefore important to analyze embodied gender practices on the farm.

In the vast literature on the body, it is clear that people in cultures worldwide attend to and alter the appearance of the body as they embody cultural ideologies. This section, moving away from feminist theories associated with sex and gender, presents the body as first and foremost a culturally comported and adorned body. In what follows, I review literature on the body so as to demonstrate how it is that adornment and comportment strategies may be thought of as products of cultural beliefs and values.

First, however, it is prudent to explicate how the relationship between bodies is differently conceptualized depending on culture.

The Sociality of the Body

In working to achieve a culturally sensitive conceptualization of a body, it was important in this research to understand the cultural relationship between one body and other bodies, what may be termed the sociality of the body. For example, Becker (2004) has argued that in the United States one's body was a private body and its shape was connected to personal prestige while in Fiji one's body was primarily a social body and its shape was connected to social care and nurturance. Thus, a Fijian body that was not sufficiently rounded suggests a body that was not being well taken care of by those who were socially responsible for that body. Sobo (1994) has argued that in Jamaica the body was similarly social. Kinship was established both through blood and through the feeding, or growing, of people outside of the womb. Within this cultural setting, a thin person who was seen as both healthy and not poor, was understood to be a person who was not adequately connected to kin because they were unkind. While these examples appear to be in stark contrast with U.S. notions of bodies as private, there are links noted when considering that in the US a "skeletal" body has been understood as a focal concern in assessing child abuse and neglect (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005). These cross-cultural studies of the meaningfulness of the body—as relatively social or private—highlight not only differing conceptualizations of how people should relate and the responsibilities people had to others, but also how the shape of a body was understood to say something about the social status of a person.

Gender and the Cultural Comportment and Adornment of the Body

The appearance of a body, some combination of genetic design and cultural adornment and comportment, has been both richly variable and deeply meaningful and, as such, has proved a fertile site of analysis. Importantly, how people's bodies are made sense of has been intimately connected to the subject positions people could or could not hold (Van Wolputte, 2004, p.252; see Sharp, 2000, pp. 301-302). In order to flesh out the utility of attending to the body as an aspect of the cultural communication of gender, in the following paragraphs I offer a summary of work related to the size and shape of bodies (see Gremillion, 2005, for a review of this literature) as well as adornment practices.

In her influential work, Bordo (2003, p. 185-212) has illustrated the symbolism associated with the shape of bodies as she described the changing meanings associated with corpulent, muscled, and slight body frames. Whereas a corpulent body had marked a successful, middle class person in the US during the nineteenth century, it evolved to mark a lazy, undisciplined person who was not investing in advancing his or her class position. Supplanting the rounded, middle class body was a slimmed, tight one achieved through the whittling away of giggling fat and the cultivation of muscle. For women, once properly clothed the emaciated or lightly muscled body was the iconic frame of professionalism—as opposed to the maternalism associated with what was understood to be an excess of flesh and body. It is both the slight body's form and the careful adornment of it that has been pressed into service by professional women and their need

to be seen as attractive while managing and minimizing their sexualized and reproductive bodies (Bloustein, 2001; Trethewey, 1999).

While the light musculature noted above was symbolic of a dedication to self-care and control, the sheer mass of muscle achieved by bodybuilders connoted a different set of primary meanings. Importantly, the meaning of muscle depended on both volume and context and interacted with the social identities people enacted. The hyper-muscular form achieved by bodybuilders indicated both power and authority. This type of power and authority has been historically equated with a working class, hyper masculinity (Wiegers, 1998). Thus, the form achieved through bodybuilding has been understood to communicate masculinity. The increasing numbers of female bodybuilders, many of whom leveraged their middle-class status to gain access a working-class male environment, complicated this popular interpretation of muscle, but has not mitigated it entirely (Klein, 1994).[15]

While both men and women bodybuilders strove to achieve the same muscular hourglass form, men did not have to negotiate their gender identity in the ways that women did. Women bodybuilders, while enjoying the benefits of bodybuilding—increased strength and a sense of control over mind and body—nonetheless styled their body in ways that communicated femininity. For example, women bodybuilders had breast implants, wore their hair long and blond, and utilized make-up (St. Martin & Gavey, 1996). The practice of reasserting one's gender identity by enhancing feminine

[15] Klein (1994) argues that while male bodybuilders tend to be working-class, their female counterparts have professional class backgrounds. Both class and gender articulated to help professional women gain access to bodybuilding before their male professional counterparts who did not embody the musculature of working-class male body builder and found the bodybuilding gym an intimidating environment.

gender markers—such as breast size and hair length that feminized the body builder's silhouette, softened the hardness of the muscles—suggested that there were noteworthy interactions between a body's culturally significant parts and that some parts were more primary in marking social identities such as gender.

Both men and women have managed the appearance of their bodies not only through the everyday activities of nutritional choices and exercise; but also, albeit less commonly, through surgery. Surgeries have been performed to both reduce and enlarge the size of the body or its parts. Liposuction has been used to target particular body parts such as hips, buttocks, or breasts while silicone or saline implants are designed to increase the appearance of mass in desirable locations on the body such as the breasts for women and the calves, arms, or pectorals for men. Facial surgeries have also been utilized by both men and women but for women, more so than men, wrinkles in the skin on the face are a marker of aging, with this marker existing on a spectrum of getting (faint) wrinkles to having (deep) wrinkles (Fennell, 1994).

Gender, as it intersects with race and ethnicity, has been important in understanding how social identity was negotiated when people utilized cosmetic surgery. For example, whereas white people have tended to remove wrinkles, African American people have tended to have surgeries to reduce the size of noses and lips and Asian American people have tended to have surgeries to increase the prominence of noses and to create a fold in eyelids (Kaw, 1994). These surgeries have been done to achieve the appearance of normative, white Western beauty and to alter characteristics that have been imbued with sexist and racist stereotypes. In this way, "Asian American women, immersed in an Anglo American dominated culture that perpetuates racist Asian

stereotypes in mass media and every day interactions, come to associate the shape of their eyes ("small" and "slanted") and noses ("flat") with negative characteristics such as being a "dull" and "passive" person who has a "closed" mind and a "lack of spirit" (Kaw, 1994, p. 243). Thus, "[e]thnic cosmetic surgery enables people to erase or minimize the physical features that mark them as other than the dominant racial or ethnic group. These marked body parts become associated with negative characteristics such as 'weakness, illness and degeneracy'" (Davis, 2003 p. 76).

While some have viewed this type of cosmetic surgery as "fashion surgery" utilized to embody and communicate a celebrated (and white-supremist) cultural identity (Balsamo, 1992), others, agreeing with the basic premise, have emphasized the role of the body in perpetuating systems of inequality through the marking of body parts as existing outside the norm and then imbuing these parts with negative meanings. Davis (2003) has argued that all procedures—including ethnic cosmetic surgeries—should be understood not as a matter of beauty, but as an aspect of embodying an identity. "Aren't all recipients of cosmetic surgery, regardless of gender, ethnicity or nationality, sexual orientation or age, engaged in negotiating their identity in contexts where differences in embodiment can evoke unbearable suffering?" (p. 75).[16]

[16] Recognizing the fiction of any clear distinction between biology and culture as they are embodied, I do not divide the body into a presumably pre-cultural canvas—comprised of bone, cartilage, muscle, skin and hair—that can be adorned with clothes, jewelry, and a range of markings. Instead, I focus on the appearance of the body and how it is made meaningful. The effort is to blur the lines between a presumed biological and cultural body so as to always keep present the need to understand bodies from the native's perspective—including the role "nature" is understood to play in embodiment. From this vantage point, it is up to the researcher to determine what if any emphasis is placed on the binary concepts "natural" and "cultural."

Certainly not as dramatic as surgery, clothing has also been used to communicate attributes such as confidence, gender, age, and group affiliation (Bloustein, 2001). Because dress has been closely connected to identity, it has been a rich site of cultural embodiment that has been regulated by laws, customs, and social pressure (Entwistle, 2000). For example, Luck (1992) discussed U.S. American dress reform and the bloomer. In the early to mid-1800s, proponents of women's trousers were often socialist communitarians and health advocates. The former deemed trousers a suitable garment for women to wear while working because it was comfortable as well as decent—no legs were shown. Health practitioners likewise believed the garment to be practical and functional as well as hygienic. The boomer, however, came to symbolize "loose," or indecent, women and Free Love communities in part because the bloomer was thought to reveal the shape of the leg.

Those who must negotiate illnesses such as cancer have also illustrated the communicative practice of adornment. For example, Ucok (2007) has discussed the adornment practices of women with breast cancer. During support group meetings, these women were taught strategies to normalize their appearance and to communicate a state of wellness rather than sickness. Catalogues featuring clothing such as hats, scarves, and wigs were handed out at support group meetings and makeup application procedures were demonstrated. While some women opted to accentuate their identity as cancer survivors by tattooing their mastectomy scars and baldheads, Ucok (2007) argued that the meetings functioned to limit the range of choices women made about the adornment of their bodies. These choices reflected a limited range of embodied identities as well as the negotiation of normative cultural preferences for healthy appearing bodies.

In the extensive literature on the body—a literature that includes encyclopedias such as DeMellow's (2007) volume on the adornment of the body—the body has been made sense of according to culturally specific systems of interpretation. In the literature reviewed above, while there are a range of body parts that carry cultural significance, these parts are not necessarily equally significant. For example, sexing the body was an important moment in interpreting embodied communication. A female-bodied bodybuilder's muscles, then, were made sense of differently than the muscles of a male-bodied bodybuilder. Furthermore, while there are normative standards of embodiment to which people attempt to adhere, differently raced, classed, and gendered people engaged in different body practices to do so. Ultimately, the sense people made of a body and the embodied performances people engaged in were culturally regulated and ideological—the body was evaluated according to cultural beliefs and values and cultural subjects were celebrated or sanctioned accordingly. In this way, a person was believed to be well liked because her body was fleshy and rounded and it was believed that a fleshy body was beautiful, healthy, and well cared for. Or, conversely and in other cultural contexts, a person was pressured to diet because her body was fleshy and well-rounded and this body form was thought to be unhealthy and was associated with people who were thought to make poor nutritional choices. From this perspective, bodies are culturally meaningful, malleable, connected to subjectivity, and a rich site of gendering communication practices. In sum, the appearance of the body has been used to categorize and make sense of people even as these categories provide the meaningful substance people draw on in fashioning their bodies.

By incorporating the body, communicative practices are understood to include both language-based and body-based forms. Because meaning is tethered to cultural subject positions, it is important to ground communication in cultural contexts. As such, communicative practices and the people who speak and appear and experience as they do from the cultural positions that they occupy are not without a perspective, are not without an ideology and a politic. As Weeden (1997) suggests, "Discourses represent political interests and in consequence are constantly vying for status and power. The site of this battle for power is the subjectivity of the individual and it is a battle in which the individual is an active but not sovereign protagonist" (p. 41). Speech code theory and cultural discourse analysis are in a unique position to contribute to feminist research an explication of grounded communication that includes not only the normative communication patterns and premises, but those that are marginal. Including a sustained analysis of the body adds depth to this work.

Organization and Chapter Content

In the following chapters, I explicate key aspects of Twin Oaks feminist communication practices that counter dominant U.S. gender practices. In the following chapter (Chapter 2), I introduce the methods utilized to execute the goals of this research. As will be explained, data were generated during ethnographic participant observation, interviews, and the reading of archival documents. The findings were produced through analytic tools developed by scholars working in the tradition of the ethnography of communication.

In Chapter 3, Twin Oaks and the Everyday Life of Feminism on the Farm, I introduce Twin Oaks as a feminist community. Importantly, this chapter presents Twin Oaks' sex/gender system as well as a feminine ethos that permeates many aspects of daily life. To do this, members' words are used to explore the valuation of the feminine on the farm as well as devalued aspects of masculinity. Findings suggest that institutional and everyday discourses make use of a distinction between "sex" and "gender" in order to maintain a female-friendly and feminist community. I argue that Twin Oaks as a case study in feminist activism demonstrates the utility, indeed the necessity, of maintaining a theoretic focus on "the natives point of view" in empirical studies of gender.

Chapter 4, Egalitarian Embodiment: Breasts at Home, presents an analysis of the evolution of Twin Oaks' Nudity Policy. While the current policy has been reformed, my analysis begins with the initial policy, which was institutionalized in 1988. Active within this debate were three normative positions: women and men should abide by the same rules, nudity should be in particular places in order to protect Twin Oaks and its members, and Twin Oaks policy should be less restrictive than dominant U.S. culture. Grounded in these discursive positions, members disagreed about the meanings associated with bodies—Are they social or private? Are they to be understood as whole or as divided into parts?—as well as the community itself—is it primarily a home where people can do as they please, or is it a community that needs to be preserved? Ultimately, compromise and changing U.S. culture led to a more relaxed nudity policy that supported female members being shirtless on the farm in more places and at more times. The embodied performance of shirtlessness is presented as a feminist practice that has a liberatory potential for female members.

In Chapter 5, The Appearance of Style: Gender and the Body on the Farm, I present normative aspects of bodies on the farm. In this analysis, feminist concerns articulate with concerns for health and the environment to produce a normative body that is understood to be hairy, to excrete, and to be odorous. Oakers' everyday and playful resistance to dominant U.S. beauty norms and the size of the community, which affords an intimacy between members, combine to "desensationalize" the body on the farm. This body is mundane and natural and its adornment is practical and neuter.

Chapter 6, Communicating Utopian, discusses a normative style of communicating on the farm. This style is understood to occupy the middle ground between a masculine/violent style and a feminine/overly communication-focused style. The Oakian style is characterized by calmness and quietness as well as by a reliance on written communication and an acceptance of refusing to communicate. Critiques of this style are offered by working class members and members of color who understand these features to be aspects of white, middle-class people.

In my final data-based chapter (Chapter 7, Expressing Gender Neutrality in a Feminist Community), I track the use of "co," a gender-neutral pronoun, on the farm. First used in the 1970s, the ideologies underpinning the use of "co" strove to make women more visible and to position women as competent and strong. The evolution of the use of "co" suggests that current use emphasizes not only a feminist orientation that counters dominant U.S. cultural marginalization of women, primarily as workers, but also confidentiality and affiliation with Twin Oaks as a community.

In concluding this work, I offer a summary of the key findings of this research. Additionally, I present trends in Oakian communication that cut across the findings of this study. Finally, I identify limitations of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCHING THE COMMUNICATION OF GENDER

> Ethnography is an active enterprise. Its activity incorporates dual impulses. On the one hand, the ethnographer must make her way into new worlds and new relationships. On the other hand, she must learn how to represent in written form what she has come to see and understand as the result of these enterprises. (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995, p. 15)

This study, in the tradition of the ethnography of communication (EC), begins with the assumption that people interact in patterned ways according to rules and norms that govern everyday verbal and nonverbal communication. Because communication is patterned, it can be systematically analyzed to uncover the cultural systems of meaning that render these everyday communicative practices coherent to the people who perform them. This study also assumes that while there may be common (normative and dominant) ways of communicating, differently located people, people who speak from differing subject positions, may communicate and interpret the communication of others according to different cultural codes.

"Communicative practice" in this dissertation is conceptualized to include embodied communication. As such, this study answers Ahmed's (2004) call for grounded, empirical studies of embodiment. Viewed not only as a site of cultural communication, the body is understood as people's mode of experiencing their world. For this reason, this work includes as data my embodied experiences as a means to access and connect with the sensual experiences discussed by members. In this way, this

research is one example of a "full-bodied ethnography," or an ethnography that foregrounds the ethnographer's body both in the sensual experience of fieldwork and in the writing of the findings (Markowitz, 2006). As Davies and Gannon (2005) state:

> Researchers are not separate from their data, nor should they be. The complexity of the movement between knowledge, power and subjectivity requires researcher to survey gender from within itself. [Researchers] use their own bodies and emotions as texts to be read…or to read the gendered texts produced by others, in order to see gender as it is produced through and in relation to such texts. (p. 319)

While not all EC researchers conduct ethnographic fieldwork that attends to the body as this study does, all have as a focus the everyday ways that people communicate and all have a philosophical commitment to representing the natives' points of view from an inquiring, non-judgmental position. In this spirit, I sought to utilize and account for my embodied experience "with an attitude of exploration, that is, with curiosity about what may be found [on the farm]" (Philipsen, 2009, p. 88).

An ethnographic study of communication does not, strictly speaking, follow a linear course of development from academic theory to field work to grounded theory. Rather, it is a cyclical process that has a linear trajectory (Carbaugh & Hastings, 1992; Philipsen, 1977). Research begins from a particular orientation to communication generally (my own has been explicated in the previous chapter) and to a communicative phenomenon in particular (in this study, communicating gender and gendered members' communication). Situated in a particular field site, everyday interactions are recorded in field journals, interviews are audio/visual recorded, and documents are read. Data generated by

these means are initially coded according to a theoretic framework, typically Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING framework. As the process of conducting fieldwork continues, initial analyses and daily observations raise questions relevant to the focal communication theory or phenomenon and researchers return to where they began—to the books to refine the theoretical base and guiding questions. At the end of an initial stay, researchers leave the field and focus on analyzing data, often according to other descriptive and interpretive frameworks. These analyses are directed towards developing a local theory of communication as well as towards contributing to a general theory of communication. As the answers to some questions come into view, others remain evasive or under-supported and so the researcher returns to the field to generate more data and to hone nascent understandings. While actual research is not a linear process, writing about it in a dissertation necessarily is. In what follows, I introduce Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING descriptive framework and units of analysis, discuss data interpretation and critique, and present an overview of data generated during my fieldwork.

Hymes' Tools: Units of Analysis and SPEAKING

Hymes' dedication to the study of everyday communication as a situated practice yielded a theoretically grounded and empirically tested methodological approach to fieldwork. This approach was organized into two parts: one was a set of social units of analysis that help to focus researchers on particular elements of social life and the other was a framework for the analysis of communication as a

situated practice. In this research project, I utilized Hymes'uj social units of analysis and framework in order to systematically record, describe, and analyze data.

Beginning with the social units, Hymes (1972) suggested that research should begin with a speech community, or a group of people who share at least one language/linguistic code (registers, for example, in Hymes' initial work), but that also may be comprised of people who utilize more than one linguistic code. Developments to the Hymsian project that emphasized the cultural qualities of communication expanded the definitional features of a speech community to include not just linguistic codes, but also speech codes, or systems of rules, premises, and meanings relevant to communicative practices (Philipsen, 1992, 1997; Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005). Beginning with a conceptualization of a speech community as containing multiple active codes meant that this research was premised on an assumption of heterogeneous ways of speaking within Twin Oaks Community. From this orientation, I conceptualized Twin Oaks community as a group of people who shared some, but likely not all codes that were active on the farm.

Beyond the speech community, Hymes (1972) also discussed six other social units: speech fields, speech networks, speech situations, events, acts and ways of speaking. Taking each of these in turn, a speech field was the unit of analysis concerned with all the communities in which one's speech was coherently used. For example, Twin Oaks utilized a particular vocabulary that might not be understood by residents of the surrounding towns but would be

understood by past and present members of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. A speech network was the system of connection between people who were members of the speech field. Speech situations were the scenes, settings or places of communication. Within a speech situation there were a variety of speech events that could take place, for example the event of having dinner at Twin Oaks' fun table, the table where no work talk is to take place. An act was the smallest unit of analysis. Here, a joke told by a person during dinner was categorized as a speech act that took place within the context of fun table conversation. Finally, Hymes (1974) also suggested that researchers analyze the ways of speaking within a speech community. In terms of the fun table, the predominant way of speaking was in a light-hearted, non-serious manner.

For purposes of this study and because the threads of gendering discourses permeated many aspects of life on the farm, the focal unit of analysis changed depending on the communicative phenomenon to which I was attending. In this way, I did not from the outset focus on a particular unit of analysis, but instead used Hymes' units of analysis to organize and interrogate my data.

Hymes' (1972) framework has been used in ethnography of communication inquiries to provide not only a systematic way of generating, recording, and interrogating data, but also to yield rich descriptions of situated communicative practices against which other similar studies can be compared. The framework, which is in the mnemonic form SPEAKING, has been used to differentiate between the components of social communication. According to each of the components, Hymes (1972) suggested that researchers should attend

to the *scene* and the *setting* of communication. Here, he referred not only to the physical setting (for example ZK, the Twin Oaks' dining hall) but also the psychological scene that operated in that setting (for example, the desire for relaxation while eating). The *participants*, included categories of people such as the speaker, the spoken to, and the audience as well as social identity categories such as gender. Communicative practice had two *ends*—the actual outcome of the communication and the desired goals of the communication. A communicative *act* had both content and form, which was revealed in the sequencing of communication. Communication was also *keyed* in particular ways. For example, speech was vocalized in a range of tones and with a variety of emphases and accents. There were two aspects of the *instrumentalities* of speech—the code and the channel of communication such as written, verbal, and recorded communication. There were two *norms* active in speech use—the norms of interpretation and the norms of interaction. Finally, there were a variety of *genres* of communication including such things as an apology, a new member ritual, or "dinner talk." At base, the SPEAKING framework was designed to generate and make sense of data. In utilizing this framework, I asked of communicative practices, including embodied practices, such questions as: Who are the participants? What is the content and sequence of the communication? What is the tone of the communication and what genres are active in this happening? And, importantly, what are the norms that guide communicative practices?

Interpretive Analyses: Key Symbols, Communication Forms, and Cultural Meaning

From a feminist EC perspective there are three moments in data analysis: the descriptive, the interpretive, and the critical. Thus far, I have explained Hymes' SPEAKING framework as a tool I utilized to guide data generation, recording, and description. Now, I turn to discussing more specifically how data were analyzed to arrive at the interpretive findings of this study.

In addition to utilizing Hymes' SPEAKING framework to yield detailed descriptions of the patterned ways Oakers communicated in a variety of scenes, I employed tools developed by speech code and cultural discourse theories. My effort in applying a variety of tools to my data set was to describe and interpret the form and function of gendering discourses active in Twin Oaks Community—attending to both the patterns found in social uses of language and embodied communicative practices. Interpreting the meaningfulness of these communicative practices focused on developing cultural propositions and premises, semantic dimensions, and norms active on the farm that gave communication the meanings that it had to Oakers. These meanings were associated with five cultural hubs: personhood, relating, emoting, dwelling, and communicating (Carbaugh, 2007). Where appropriate, my interpretive findings culminated in the formulation of speech codes (Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005). A final step in my analytic endeavors was to apply an intersectional framework to develop a critical analysis of initial findings. In the following

paragraphs, I slow this process down to offer a clearer picture of the procedures and tools used in this research.

Remembering that analyses begin in the field and intensify after leaving the field, my initial out-of-the-field analytic procedures focused on identifying in the corpus of my data prominent, deeply meaningful aspects of everyday communication. There were two types of communicative practices that I strove to identify: key symbols and communication forms. Key symbols and communication forms were identifiable as such because they held cultural significance and served as fulcrums for cultural discourses (Carbaugh, 1988a, 1996b). Once identified, these features of communication then became my focal concern as data were mined to collect all similar examples. For example, after identifying a key cultural symbol, I compiled instances of its use in my data and described each instance by using the SPEAKING framework. To understand the cultural significant of its use I asked: Who utilizes this communication device? Where? To what ends? And, how? At this stage, I also looked for words that contrasted, substituted for, co-occurred with, and/or could be understood as somehow being hierarchically arranged with the key symbol. Having a general understanding of the ways in which these symbols were used, I returned to the data looking for communication forms, or sequences of communicative action, that the symbols made relevant.

Carbaugh's (1996b, pp. 123-140) study of three key symbols of identity— "individual," "woman," and "man"— provided a good example of work that explicates communication forms. In his research, Carbaugh (1996b) analyzed the

patterned ways that these three key cultural symbols were used to establish a "vacillating form" of communication—so named for the back and forth nature of the interaction that occurred when (some) U.S. Americans engaged in communication that invoked gender identities. More specifically, the enacted form was a "tacking between different gender identities [woman/man] and a common identity [individual], with each identity (i.e., as gendered or "an individual") partly motivating talk about the other. Through this form, identities [were] being expressed, and played, one with the other" (Carbaugh, 1996b, p. 127). As with other cultural communication forms, such as a ritual, myth, or social drama (Philipsen, 1987), the vacillating form was an analytic tool used to understand the cultural import of communicative practice. Similarly, analyzing the data I generated for cultural communication forms was yet another way to look for, find, and reveal the threads of gendering discourses in my data. From this perspective, I develop analyses of ritualized communication events and embodied performances as well as social dramas that crystallized moments where the meaningfulness of communicative practices was brought to the fore.

Performing key symbol and communication form analyses, in addition to analyses that utilized the SPEAKING framework, effectively provided another set of data that was then subjected to an interpretive analysis. These analyses made explicit the cultural systems of meaning that under-girded the symbol or form. The process of making visible underlying meaning systems required me to ask a series of questions directed toward developing summary statements about the cultural beliefs and values that were made relevant by the data set. Helpful here

was the metaphor offered by Carbaugh, Gibson, and Milburn (1997) who suggested that paying attention to the grounded particularity of actual communicative acts could be thought of as providing a "turtle's eye view" while the interpretation of the systems of symbols, forms, rules and norms, premises of belief and value necessary for a cultural discourse analysis provided a "'bird's eye view' of the richly radiating turtles" (p. 8). Thus, for example, it was through a cultural analysis of key cultural symbols that "listening" was discovered to reveal a particular way of orienting to and dwelling in a place for the Blackfeet (Carbaugh, 1999). It was through attending to the sequence of communication that a ritual form of communication was revealed to commence when Vietnam Vets asked, "Were you there?" (Braithwaite, 1997). And, it was through an analysis of earrings, as symbolic and embodied forms of communication, that Illongot men marked themselves as particular kinds of men—as males who have taken a head—with all the cultural meaningfulness of that identity and that practice symbolized in the wearing of the earring (Rosaldo, 1980).

In developing interpretive analyses that fleshed out the meaningfulness of communication according to what it said about cultural notions of personhood, emoting, dwelling, relating, and communicating, I utilized a repertoire of analytic tools aptly described by Carbaugh (2007). I worked to develop "cultural propositions" that combined key cultural symbols in statements that summarized the meaningfulness of communication—the meanings, beliefs, values, and premises that gave the communicative practices the form and function that they had on the farm. Where it was not possible to construct statements that combined active key symbols, I

developed "cultural premises" about members' systems of beliefs and values. Additionally, I worked to develop "semantic dimensions" that developed the cultural meaningfulness of a communicative practice as a continuum rather than as a category. A key interpretive tool used in developing my findings was to explicate communication norms. A norm can be formulated, as Carbaugh (2007) argued,

> through a four-part form: (1) in context C (specify the setting, scene, participants, topics of concern); (2) if one wants to do some task (e.g., be a particular kind of person, establish a kind of relationship, act a in [sic] specific way, exhibit feeling in one way rather than others, dwell appropriately); (3) one ought/not (it is prescribed, preferred, permissible, or prohibited); (4) to do X (a specific action). (p. 178)

A final interpretive tool I used was to formulate active speech codes. Here, I worked to "construct a hypothesis as to the existence and nature of a system of resources" that members use in everyday social interaction on the farm to perform, interpret, and evaluate communicative practices (Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubius, 2005, p. 37).

After I developed descriptive and interpretive accounts of gendering communicative practices, I applied an intersectional framework to develop critical analyses of these initial findings. Intersectionality as a theoretic framework has conceptualized gender not as a category that is distinct from other key social identities, but as an identity that intersects in complex and important ways with these other identities (McCall, 2005). Rather than studying gender as an isolated identity, an intersectional frame understands that not all of those who occupy the same gender category perform the same gender. For example, not all women necessarily perform the same gender because women have different race and class identities—a white working class woman may perform "being a woman"

differently than a black middle class woman. In other words, because women have differing sets of key social identities, they have differing experiences and they perform their gender and interpret others' performances in ways that reflect these differing experiences. Intersectionality as a critical framework used in this dissertation utilized descriptions of communicative practices as the basis for interpreting "the kinds of gendered subjectivities that [were] available within a particular discourse" as well as how these subjectivities were relatively under-/privileged on the farm (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 319). In the same way that I utilized the analytic tools outlined in the above paragraph as heuristics, I used the theory of intersectionality as a heuristic to ask critical questions such as: What are the key social identities that Oakers make relevant in this scene? And, which gendered members communicate in what ways and to what ends? In addition to performing this type of critical analysis, I also noted instances in my data of naturally occurring criticism (Carbaugh, 1989/1990), or criticism of Oakian communicative practices that were offered by members. Both critical questions asked of my initial findings and naturally occurring criticism were used to reveal social inequalities rooted in differing understandings of prominent Twin Oaks' communicative practices.

Data Generation: Participant Observation

While this study employed a variety of methods of data generation, participant observation, understood as a primary method in the ethnography of communication, was the method that enabled me to capture the ongoing culture-

making communicative processes active within Twin Oaks Community. I spent a total of eight months in residency at Twin Oaks—including a three week visitor period and two post-fieldwork visits (one two weeks and the other five days). During my time on the farm, I recorded my observations and experiences. In recording my daily experiences on the farm, I utilized three key tools: head notes, jottings, and full field notes. Head notes were mental notes I made when jotting down key words, phrases or sentences was inappropriate or impossible. Both head notes and jottings were used as tools to remember particular happenings in order to later record them in full field notes (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995, pp. 17-35). For example, I took jottings in the dining hall where pen and paper were easily accessible and where it was common to see Oakers writing messages to others. I took head notes in the Tofu Hut when I was up to my elbows (literally) in vats of tofu and during night saunas where it was dark, no pen and paper were available, and the presence of note-taking behavior would have drawn undo attention.

A primary goal of my participant observation was to develop a sense of a Twin Oakian way of life. A key tool used during participant observation was the taking of field notes, which were taken to record the ongoing process of sense making and enculturation. These field notes then became a source of data that was used to develop descriptions of everyday life and, later, interpretations of this everyday life. Field notes were taken most, but not all, days. In general, I did not take field notes on days when I was sick, had been away the farm, or had very

little social interaction.[1] In producing field notes, participant-observation jottings and head notes were made throughout the day and field notes, providing a "thick" description of the day's events (Geertz, 1973), were typically typed on my computer at night and key moments were coded in light of Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING framework.[2] In addition to providing a descriptive account of everyday happenings on the farm, field notes included three additional parts: theoretical notes, methodological notes, and reflective notes. Theoretical notes were taken as part of the day-to-day process of writing full field notes. These notes strove to link observations with relevant scholarly literature and included an ongoing analysis of observations made in the field. Methodological notes, like theoretical notes, were taken in full field notes to help me maintain a focus on the research questions and to note current issues as well as future lines of inquiry. For example, when I did not understand a word used by a member of the Twin Oaks Community, "wolfing," I made a methodological note to listen for further uses of this word and to inquire about the meaning of this word. Finally, I used reflective notes as a way of including my reactions to my experiences in the field. It was in the reflexive notes that I recorded key moments of my embodied experience. Raw field notes ranged in length from a paragraph to more than a

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[1] After two months in residency, as winter continued to minimize the public life of Oakers, my field notes grew repetitive. For this reason, I opted to suspend taking field notes in order to focus on being an Oaker in the hopes of deepening my cultural knowledge. During this time, about three weeks, I developed a wider range of relationships and began to see and hear more of Oakian culture. This hiatus was ended by the coming of spring, a time when Oakers emerged from their dwellings and everyday life on the farm became significantly more public.
[2] Because I did not have access to a computer, I handwrote field notes during my three-week visitor period, during subsequent visits, and during a short period of time when I was a resident member and my computer was being repaired.

page of single-spaced typing. Combined, I generated 112 single-spaced typed pages as well as 49 handwritten pages of raw field notes.

Everyday Data Recordings

In addition to participant-observation field notes, I also audio and video recorded Oakers in a range of scenes. These recordings were made toward the end of my stay on the farm and captured aspects of everyday embodied communication on the farm that field notes and preliminary analyses had revealed to be important. I carried a pocket recording device with me, which was turned on after asking for consent and in contexts or during conversations that had included, in my initial analyses, cultural communication salient to my research interests. For example, as I walked to Tupelo to weave hammock chairs, I noted that a group of Oakers were talking on the deck. Given who the members were and where they were situated (outside of a residence that was located at the outskirts of the community), I thought that the conversation may evolve to include a discussion of "passive aggressive" communication from the perspective of those critical of normative Oakian communication practices. It was for this reason that I postponed my chair weaving and sat to ask the members if I might record their conversation. (A small part of this recorded conversation was used as data for my analyses in Chapter 6.) Three and one half hours of audio recordings were made during impromptu small group conversations and planned social gatherings. For all audio recordings an initial and abbreviated transcription that captured the content, but not verbatim, of the recording was made (yielding 9 single-spaced

pages of typed text). Portions of audio transcriptions that were relevant to data analyses were later transcribed verbatim. Five single-spaced, typed pages of verbatim transcription were utilized in data analyses.

Similar to audio recordings, video recordings were made in contexts that had proven to be key sites of Oakian communication practices. Unlike audio recordings, video recordings focused on capturing embodied communication practices. Video recordings were made during coffee houses (a combination of talent show and poetry reading), musical events (Twin Oaks was home to two bands and many singers and musicians), Anniversary celebrations, hammock weaving, warehouse work, hula-hooping, Courtyard conversations, and social gatherings. As with audio recordings, these contexts were chosen because preliminary field work indicated that both everyday and celebratory Oakian embodiment were culturally significant and that these were the contexts in which everyday and celebratory embodiment crystallized. Because there were Oakers who preferred not to be recorded, there were times and places where I did not record. All totaled, I video recorded 15 hours of members at work and play. These recordings were viewed and coded according to Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING framework.

Data Generation: Interviews

In addition to participant observation, informal and formal interviews were an important part of ethnographic fieldwork. Informal interviews, asking members for clarifications or additional information, took place during everyday

social interactions and were recorded as part of my field notes. Formal interviews, however, were semi-structured events that were quite separate from common daily happenings. Approximately 45 hours of formal interviews, including two group interviews, were audio recorded. In terms of generating data, interviews, treated as another observable speech event in an ethnographer's total fieldwork experience, enabled me to accesses the Oakers' interpretations and understandings of a range of communicative practices. In the following paragraphs, I delineate the components of an interview as a culturally situated speech event and present the two types of recorded interviews that I conducted on the farm.

Following Briggs' (1997) suggestion, I waited until I became sensitive to the cultural norms operating at Twin Oaks to begin conducting interviews. Spending time getting to know how communication happened—who asked whom questions, how questions were asked, the role of question asking and the like—helped to assuage the risk of jeopardizing my rapport with members and enabled the interview event to be, on the whole, more efficient and productive. This is not to say that I did not ask irrelevant questions in interviews or that I did not enact off-putting communication, but in the times that I did I was able to identify a probable cause for my informants' reactions and to turn uncomfortable situations into opportunities to achieve a greater understanding of Twin Oakian culture. So when an interviewee grew quiet and distant after I grew animated with volumous emotional expression, I understood that I had exceeded the Oakian norm for emotive communication (see Chapter 6). Offering a sincere apology, I was able

to hear in the member's response a new dimension of an Oakian code of emotionality.

In my interviewing, I utilized the seven components that Briggs suggests as an analytic framework. Thus, I kept an interview journal in which I noted details of the channel, the social situation, the key and genre, the interactional goals, the type of communication event, the reference and the social roles (Briggs, 1997, pp. 39-59). While in many (Western) cultures verbal means of communication are the primary *channel* of communication in an interview, I attended to members' use of other channels of communication such as nonverbal, embodied communication and written communication in the form of follow-up notes or emails given to me by some members. I was also aware of the broader *social situation* in which the interview took place—noting norms that would inhibit the discussion of certain topics or the potential for eavesdropping in some physical settings. I attended to the ways interviewees altered the way in which they spoke, how they *keyed* their communication. In other words, the ways in which members altered their tone, rate, or manner of speaking. Switching delivery styles through verbal or nonverbal means typically signaled a change in *genre* of speech being used. For example, moving into light-hearted stories of former Twin Oak members sometimes indicated a desire to move away from my abstract questions and, thus, provided an opportunity for me to better understand an Oakian emphasis on experiential learning. Attending to *interactional goals* helped me to highlight not only my goals, to gather information and understanding, but the goals of the interviewee. For example, in conducting one

interview I came to understand that my interviewee was more focused on presenting himself as a rather sensationally traditional man than on answering my questions about Oakian feminism. Understanding the interview as a particular type of *communication event* suggested that there were likely different understandings of what the interview event was. As a researcher I understood an interview as a time to seek clarifications and to generate data, but my interviewees may not have always had that same understanding—utilizing the event instead as a time to assert their status as a good member or as a time to vent frustration or as an opportunity to reinforce the positive aspects of living on the farm. Noting the *referential* component of an interview enabled me to keep in view the possibility that the interviewee may have answered a different question than I had intended to ask and that the answer may have been only a partial response. Finally, understanding that *social roles* were not bracketed for the time it took to conduct an interview enabled me to be more sensitive to the type of relationship that existed between the interviewees and myself.

There were two types of formal interviews that I conducted during my fieldwork—group interviews and open-ended individual interviews.[3] I conducted two group interviews, which were semi-structured events with between 17 and 24 participants. The first group interview was just over two hours long and the second was more than three hours. The goal of these interviews was to capture

[3] Following Fontana and Frey (2000), I use the term "group interview" rather than "focus group" to highlight the purpose of the group interviews I conducted. Whereas focus groups tend to be designed to gain familiarity with a topic and are facilitated by interviewers who take a directive approach to posing and seeking answers for questions, a group interview seeks to develop an increased sense of cultural meaning by using a relatively nondirective approach.

the rich conversations that took place among members when topics related to gender arose. Semi-directed group interviews were also helpful in identifying key informants and, as Fontana and Frey (2000) have suggested, group interviews were used to "aid respondents' recall of specific events or to stimulate embellished description of events or …experiences shared by members of a group" (p. 651). (See Appendix A for a guiding set of group interview questions asked during these interviews.)

While group interviewing strove to capture a members' talk about and examples of gendering communicative practices, open-ended individual interviews sought to obtain a particular informant's understandings and explanations. In this way, individual interviewing enabled me to explore particular topics more thoroughly and deeply. Whereas Spradley (1979) has argued that good informants should be fully enculturated in the community, I was interested in the range of subjectivities represented by both newer and longer-term members. Thus, I interviewed members who had been on the farm for as little as two months as well as those who had been in residency for more than 20 years. 19 interviews were conducted averaging two hours per interview.

In keeping with the spirit of egalitarianism on the farm, I posted an invitation for interviews on the community's Opinions and Information (O&I) board. In addition to this initial list, I also requested interviews from other members. Because I was interested in both normative and marginal discourses, I requested interviews with members who occupied subject positions not represented by the volunteer interviewees. For example, I asked to interview a

member who was part of a small but prominent group of Oakers who tended to be more conservative (in terms of adhering to established community protocol) than the majority of members on the farm. In selecting these interviewees, I chose those who had "the greatest facility for operating within [the interviewing] mode of discourse" (Briggs, 1997, p. 91). In other words, these informants were comfortable and culturally able to be interviewed. Additionally, I also requested formal interviews with members who had become my key informants—those members who I had come to know as having rich insight into Oakian culture. Finally, I interviewed members who other Oakers had mentioned as being important to interview. (See Appendix B for the questions asked during individual interviews.)

Formal interviewing provided important glimpses into the meaningfulness of cultural ways of being that were recordable. Time spent interviewing was an investment in the on-going process of data generation. All interviews were partially transcribed to capture the content and flow of conversation and to facilitate initial data analysis. The two group interviews yielded 32 single-spaced pages of transcription. The 19 individual interviews yielded 94 single-spaced pages of transcription. Exemplar portions of these interviews, those that were used in my analyses, were transcribed to include all words, pauses, laughter, overlaps in speech, and embodied affect.[4]

[4] Affect was marked by variations in vocalics, such as increased loudness or tempo, as well as in facial expressions and body movment, which were recorded in handwritten notes at the time of the interview.

Data Generation: Archives and Written Materials

Beyond the verbal and nonverbal communication processes that the above methods seek to capture, I also needed to attend to Twin Oaks' written communication systems. A key aspect of Twin Oakian communication is the institutionalized system of written communication that creates what many members talk about as Twin Oaks' "written culture." There are a variety of forms of written communication that the community utilizes to manage everyday communication. A large portion of all written communication consists of O&I papers that are posted on clipboards in ZK, the dining hall and written communication center of Twin Oaks. The O&I papers contain everything from policy discussions to ideas for new business and are kept and archived by the community archivist. The 3x5 board is another form of public communication housed in ZK. This board lists brief announcements such as job openings, social gatherings, and off the farm excursions. While there are other forms of written communication, these two public forms were an important aspect of Oakian communication and were incorporated in field notes.

In addition to everyday written communication, I read archives of O&I papers. As a researcher, this was a significant source of Twin Oakian cultural history and as such was an important data set. As such, it was important to mine these papers in order to enrich my understanding of the history of gender at Twin Oaks. I read all archival files that were related to everyday talk on the farm during my residency. All total, I read approximately three-quarters of the files—about four, four-drawer file cabinets worth of documents. Archival documents

and contemporaneous documents were analyzed as other forms of communication. Written secondary sources for this project included three books, one student internship paper, one Master's thesis, and several magazine and newspaper articles that were published about Twin Oaks. Like the archival data, these secondary sources provided a rich history of Twin Oaks culture, but unlike archived papers these sources did not contain everyday social interaction.

Procedures for Data Analyses

The primary research questions that this study sought to answer were: What are the everyday feminist Oakian communication practices that countered dominant U.S. gender practices and understandings? What gender related aspects of Oakian culture are revealed by attending to these communication practices? And, how, if at all, might these practices serve a liberatory function? In answering the latter question, I focused on identifying normative Oakian practices as well as those that were marginalized gender practices. Because this research viewed gender as both a performance and as a mechanism through which people made sense of and sexed bodies, it was necessary to determine how Oakers conceptualized sex and gender. From this perspective, I asked three questions that Chapter 3 answers: How, if at all, do Oakers correlate sex with gender? What are the preferred forms of masculinity and femininity on the farm? And, how does sex influence the reading of gendered performances?

To answer these questions, I began with analyses of communication surrounding Oakian policy that explicitly correlated sex and gender. I used field

notes, interviews, archival documents, and Twin Oaks' Bylaws to yield a description of the policy's function from the perspective of Oakers. From this starting point, I asked of my data: Are there other prominent terms that Oakers use to index gender? This question yielded three cultural identity terms—"rooster," "alpha male," and "wolf"—with instances of their use found in Twin Oaks' documents and archives, field notes, and interviews. Coding uses of these terms according to Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING framework, I developed a descriptive interpretation of normative, prescribed masculinity on the farm. After explicating Oakian norms for performing masculinity, an interpretive analysis formulated the beliefs on which the meaningfulness of these terms rested. In concluding, I argued that this analysis reveals a cultural code of feminist egalitarianism and that while Oakers tend to correlate sex and gender, sex as an identity category is used to interpret members' gender performances.

As I identified key Oakian communicative practices that countered U.S. gender practices I formulated additional questions that guided my exploration and explication of these practices. Chapter 4 focused on women's shirtlessness on the farm as a feminist egalitarian practice. With an interest in identifying the symbolic meaning of women's breasts, two questions guided data generation and analysis: What do communication practices surrounding shirtlessness reveal about the significance of women's breasts on the farm? And, how has the meaningfulness of women's breasts and the shirtless policy been negotiated and evaluated?

Because women's shirtlessness had been debated on the farm for over 15 years, I first looked to archival data to investigate the negotiation of the meaningfulness of women's breasts. Archived O&I conversations pertaining to shirtlessness began with the institution of the first Oakian nudity policy in 1988. Some members heard the policy's mandate that women wear shirts in public places in which men could be shirtless as a breach of Twin Oaks' egalitarian principle. I treated the publication of this breach in a 1988 O&I paper as the initiation of a social drama (Turner, 1980, 1988). Analyzing over 250 pages of archival documents, I used the social drama form as a framework and coded archived conversations according to each of the four phases: a *breach*, or violation of a community norm; the *crisis* phase during which time members publicized their orientations to the breach; the *redressive* actions taken to resolve the conflict; and the *reintegration* (or schism) of members.

While communicative practices were analyzed at each of these phases, the bulk of analysis addressed communication in the crisis phase. I asked: How did members orientate to having a policy that applied different rules for men and women? To answer this question, I open coded O&I conversations by looking for comments that utilized the same term or clusters of terms to label the identified breach or others' orientations to the breach. I continued open coding, comparing and contrasting comments, for each of the conversations in the archived documents. Through this method, I identified three orientations to the policy. Some Oakers focused on egalitarianism and thought all members should adhere to the same dress code. Others thought that the farm should not be more restrictive

than dominant U.S. culture. The remaining members prioritized the safety of members and the viability of the community.

Interested in the ways that Oakers made women's breasts meaningful from each of the three discursive positions, I worked to develop an interpretive analysis that identified a range of meanings associated with women's breasts. During this process I asked: What is the cultural meaningfulness of women's breasts? In order to situate the debate in a broader understanding of Oakian culture, I also asked: What might the shirtless debate suggest about dominant Oakian notions of people, relating, emoting, communicating, or dwelling? And, what might this say about Oakian culture more generally? Through an interpretive analysis that returned to the archival documents to answer the above questions, I identified three semantic dimensions relating to Oakers sense of place (the farm as a private home or a public community), ways of relating (as private or social bodies), and notions of personhood (bodies as integrated wholes or bodies as a series of parts). As this analysis shows, members engaging in the shirtlessness debate were tethered to one of three discursive positions. In speaking from these positions, members negotiated not only the meaningfulness of women's breasts, but also the meaningfulness of Twin Oaks and of members' bodies more generally.

In order to capture a contemporary sense of shirtlessness as a feminist action, I attended to shirtlessness as an everyday bodily practice and topic of conversation. I combined archival data with interviews of female members who practiced shirtlessness (six), participant-observation (primary focus on 10 entries), and four hours of video recording to develop an analysis that captured a sensual

component of shirtlessness. In this section, I argued that the performance of shirtlessness enabled female Oakers to develop an integrated and liberatory understanding of their bodies.

In Chapter 5 I attended to the normative Oakian body as a body that countered dominant U.S. cultural practices. I began with the premise that bodies were inherently cultural insofar as they are fashioned and interpreted according to cultural codes and discourses. Treating bodies as inherently cultural, I worked to develop an understanding of normative Oakian embodiment—culturally meaningful, patterned ways of doing one's body on the farm. To gain a sense of the body as a site of cultural communication, I read extensively literature related to embodiment in Communication, Anthropology, Sociology, Fashion Studies, and Cultural Studies. Grounded in cultural communication theory as well as theories of embodiment, I asked: How is gender an aspect of embodied communicative practices on the farm?

My initial effort was to identify instances of talk about the body and descriptions of performances of embodiment in field notes (18 entries), interviews (8), and video recordings (6 hours). These instances were reviewed and key aspects of Oakian embodiment were identified, following Carbaugh's (1988a) conceptualization of "key symbols," as key symbols of embodiment. After identifying key symbols of embodiment, I returned to my data to look for other terms or concepts that co-occurred and contrasted with the embodied communicative practice. In this way, I noted that when members talked about the size or shape of women's bodies, which they rarely did, it was couched in terms

of health. Similarly, I noted that body products such as odor, hair, and urine were understood to be fundamentally natural. Through this process, I identified three cultural discourses—feminist, environmentalist, and health—that gave these embodied practices the meanings they had for Oakers. For example, cross-gendered adornment was supported and made meaningful by a feminist discourse just as body odor was a meaningful expression of an environmentalist discourse. Clustering instances of normative embodiment around three aspects of embodiment on the farm—size and shape, body products, and adornment—I develop an Oakian framework for cultural embodiment. Finally, I argued that the sum total of normative Oakian embodiment functioned to "desensationalize" the body on the farm.

Continuing my focus on normative modes of communication, in Chapter 6 I turned from the body as a site of communicative practice toward language and communication style. Here I asked: What are the features of normative ways of communicating on the farm? Which women are under-/privileged by this way of communicating? And, how might these relate to gender?

During fieldwork, Oakers talked frequently about the normative style of communicating on the farm. In doing so, Oakers typically used the terms "middle class," "passive aggressive," and "the written culture." These terms were treated as key cultural symbols (Carbaugh, 1988a) and instances of their use were recorded in field notes (37 entries). After leaving the field, these instances along with Oakers' uses of these terms in interviews (9 hours), and recorded naturally occurring conversations (15 minutes) were coded according to Hymes' (1972)

SPEAKING framework. I then asked of my data if there were other key terms that co-occurred or substituted for the terms "middle class," "passive aggressive," and "written culture." In answering this question, I noted that Oakers used two other communities, East Wind and Ganas, to mark gendered and classed ways of communicating that were different than the Oakian way. Using data pertaining to these two communities, I developed an Oakian understanding of normative communication on the farm as being middle-class and gender-neutral. After developing a descriptive account of normative communication as a quiet and "calm" way of communicating, I worked to formulate an interpretive analysis by asking: what rules, beliefs, and values give this way of communicating the meaning that it has for Oakers?

Identifying norms surrounding members' refusal to communicate, confidential communication, and tempered emotional communication facilitated an interpretive analysis that argued Oakers conceptualized members as primarily autonomous people who were free to choose with whom they engaged in interpersonal relationships. The intersectional view of gender highlighted members' critiques of the normative way of communicating on the farm embedded in participant-observation and interview data. To flesh this out, I asked: Which women are under-/privileged by this way of communicating? Raced and classed critiques of normative communication on the farm understood confidential and written communication as indirect and dishonest. While normative Oakian communication was found to not be clearly androcentric,

working class women and women of color were understood to be disadvantaged by the norms for calm and confidential communication.

In Chapter 7 I narrowed my focus once again to attend to "co" as a gender-neutral pronoun and key cultural symbol. As with my focus in Chapter 4 on women's breasts as a key cultural aspect of the body, I developed both an historical and a contemporary analysis in this chapter. Here I asked: How do current uses of "co" relate to historical uses? What might this say about Oakian feminism as it relates to language planning? And, what can be said of Oakian notions of (gendered) personhood?

To do so, I utilized archival documents and children's books that were historically used in the community childcare program (71 instances) as well as everyday uses (both face-to-face and written uses recorded in field notes and in audio recordings) and Twin Oaks' Bylaws (34 instances). To record historical instances, I took field notes of uses of "co" as I read archived documents and children's books. Here, I used Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING framework to organize my field notes and to capture the sequence of communication that surrounded the uses of "co." In analyzing data, I noted uses of "co" as well as terms that contrasted with, were substituted for, and that co-occurred with "co." My analytic focus was to establish the function of "co" in everyday historical and contemporary uses as well as the rules and beliefs associate with the use of "co" and the associated other terms such as gender-specific pronouns and gender-neutral nouns (e.g., "honcho"). Repeating this analysis for contemporary uses of "co" revealed an evolution in its use and function. No longer exclusively used as

a gender-neutral pronoun that was used to counter androcentrism found off the farm, “co” had taken on a membering function.

This chapter, combined with the other data-based chapters, is summarized in the final chapter of this dissertation and an Oakian communication code is explicated. A part of this final chapter synthesizes the findings of this study to produce an answer to the question: What departures from normative U.S. conceptualizations of gender can be understood to disrupt oppressive gendering institutionalized practices? The chapter concludes by identifying limitations of this study as well as avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 3

TWIN OAKS AND THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF FEMINISM ON THE FARM

> Twin Oakers are certainly feminists. Partly this is a natural result of the Community's original egalitarian principles. There was never any question about women's being permitted to do "men's work"…. One noticeable impact…is the effect on the male population. Men who exhibit obvious macho behavior are not usually accepted for membership…. Our men tend to be sensitive, reasonable, and well able to deal with women as equals. They seek relationships; they don't chase tail. (Kinkaid, 1994, p. 238)

From its beginning, Twin Oaks has been an egalitarian, income-sharing community with feminist values incorporated into governing documents and daily conversations. In this chapter Twin Oaks is introduced as a feminist utopian community. I use Twin Oaks' governing documents, Bylaws and Membership Agreements; archival documents, including a transcript of a group interview recorded in 1999; interviews; and field notes to explicate gender policies and practices that not only constitute feminist practices on the farm, but are understood to maintain a feminine, female-friendly environment. In order to provide a richer sense of the culture that these policies and practices seek to maintain, I present an analysis of proscribed masculine identities. This analysis focuses on key masculine identity terms to explicate underlying cultural norms and meanings (Carbaugh, 1996b) that constitute a cultural code of feminist egalitarianism (Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005).

Utilizing this orientation, it became possible to ask productive questions that proved helpful in establishing an Oakian sex/gender system. The guiding research questions asked were: How if at all do Oakers correlate sex with gender in their cultural discourses? And, how if at all does sex as a category interact with gender performance?

Describing institutionalized feminist practices as well as feminist social interaction served not only to lay the groundwork for understanding Twin Oaks' sex/gender system, but also to contextualize focal sites of feminist gendering that will be analyzed in subsequent chapters. In concluding, I argue that Oakian feminist practices made use of a distinction between "sex" and "gender" that reflected affirmative action and provided an example of the utility of treating conceptualizations of sex and gender as empirical questions rather than as theoretical claims.

Twin Oaks: A Feminist Utopian Community

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the hallmark of utopian communities is that they are populated by members who share a vision of a better society and who opt to live and work together to manifest this vision. According to this definition, Twin Oaks, founded in 1967, is one of the oldest and most successful contemporary utopian communities in the United States. While membership fluctuates, most members are white, college educated and, judging from the everyday discussions of social issues, critically informed. The 90 adults and 12 children who call Twin Oaks home share living and working space as well as a desire for more just social and political arrangements than that typical of U.S. culture. A Twin Oakian sense of a just society is flavored by feminist concerns and Twin Oaks' website states that the community offers an alternative feminist lifestyle ("Feminist Culture," n.d.). Historically, the seeds of a Twin Oakian feminist philosophy can be heard in early writings on Twin Oaks—especially in connection with egalitarian notions of work and the development of the labor system (see Kinkade, 1973). Contemporaneously, members, often drawing from academic feminist theories, enact a

range of practices intended to counter gender inequalities found in dominant U.S. culture. Work practices continue to be a major part of an Oakian feminist practice, but members also work to assuage obstacles that women face in the US by sharing income and thus leveling disparities in individual wealth and prestige goods, supporting pregnancy and childcare, practicing non-sexist language, and striving to treat both sexes equally in all circumstances. How practices such as these have functioned to lessen gender-based inequalities among members has been both well documented (Goldenberg, 1993; Weinbaum, 1984) and presented as a model for feminist reform strategies in the US (Rothschild and Tomchin, 2006).

Twin Oaks' self-definition of an egalitarian based feminism is understood as being counter to dominant U.S. culture, as indicated in the following taken from the Twin Oaks web-site:

> Much of the organizational infrastructure here is classically feminist in nature; for example, our decision-making process is egalitarian (as opposed to hierarchical) and the community's labor system equally values traditionally women's work (cooking, cleaning, laundry, some amount of child-care) whereas in the mainstream this work is often undervalued when done as paid labor, and/or is done over and above paid labor….We have much less division of labor based on gender. Women and men both do traditionally women's and men's work. Both men and women prepare food, fix cars, do child-care, use power tools, etc. Unlike the mainstream, there are no cultural barriers to being a manager or being involved in our system of self-government. It's assumed that personal boundaries will be respected and that all people (especially men towards women) will be sensitive and tuned into interacting with and treating each other with appropriate respect. We largely ignore mainstream values of clothing choices, make-up, hair (including body hair), etc., instead opting for a fashion of self-determination. Whereas in the mainstream, certain relationship styles tend to be socially and economically rewarded (most notably a man and woman married to each other), at Twin Oaks a much wider range of relationship choices are accepted as normal and are not remarked upon. ("Feminism," n.d.)

As this extract suggests, Oakian feminism is tethered to equality in four key areas: the workplace, politics, personal relationships, and clothing choices.[1] When talk of Twin Oaks as a feminist community arose during fieldwork, Twin Oaks' policies and practices pertaining to work done on the farm were generally the first examples used by members to build the case for the existence of a feminist ethic. Following closely behind were Twin Oaks' policies and practices pertaining to politics. In order to understand Twin Oaks' governance and labor structures it is important to note that Twin Oaks was founded by a group of people who were inspired by B.F. Skinner's book, Walden Two. While much of the initial Twin Oaks behavioralist practices taken from this book have faded, the influence of Skinner's theories of labor and governance can still be seen.

The governance structure is perhaps the clearest example of Skinner's influence as the community operates according to a planner/manager system described in Walden Two. On the farm, three planner/members serve staggered 18 month terms and are charged with doing long range planning as well as helping the community to develop according to the agreed upon goals of the community. The manager/members are

[1] Notice, too, in this quote that language used to define a Twin Oakian feminism gains its intelligibility through the use of juxtaposing life on the farm with life off the farm. Words such as "hierarchical," "traditional," and "mainstream" mark features of dominant U.S. culture that Twin Oaks attempts to counter—social divisions that marginalize women's traditional work and political involvement, and a culture that includes boundary violations and that evaluates and rewards people based on such things as their fashion and marital status. Words such as "egalitarian," "equality," and "self-determination" mark key features of a feminist life on the farm—equality in the workplace, in political endeavors, personal relationships and clothing choices. The juxtaposition of dominant U.S. culture with life on the farm is often used by Oakers to clarify and establish the values and beliefs associated with everyday practices. This juxtaposition will be heard in the following chapters and discussed in the conclusion.
While Oakers present the workplace, politics, personal relationships, and clothing as key sites of feminist activism, I was not tethered to these categories during field work or data analysis. Quite the opposite, I worked to question the association of these categories with feminist practices on the farm.

charged with organizing labor and administrating her/his area. At Twin Oaks, there are managers for areas such as the dairy, food ordering, the garden, maintenance, labor, housing, and recycling. Community-level decision making in this system is not done by consensus, but rather an elaborate system of input that utilizes conventional means such as discussion, voting, and vetoing and unconventional communication media found in ZK such as a 3x5 message board and the O&I (opinions and information) board, a wall of clipboards that organizes and displays the opinion papers of members who have cared to write them—at TO, reading the daily news means reading the O&I board.

In theory, this system flattens (but does not eliminate) hierarchical decision making so that all members can access and participate in the political process. In reality, there are members whose access and participation in these processes are limited. This is not, however, primarily attributed to gender but, rather a combination of personal choice and marginalization. Personal choice was evidenced when older members spoke of seeing the same issues come up time and again only to be resolved in much the same way or when newer members spoke of a lack of desire. Members were marginalized because they were not "good members," which typically meant that they either did not fulfill the work quota or that they did not get along well with others. (Chapter 6, Communicating Utopian, unpacks this latter category—and makes connections to gender, race, and class—by analyzing normative communication on the farm.) Once marginalized and if there are no behavioral changes that would bring the member into alignment (and especially if the member is both considered to be a poor worker and to lack celebrated interpersonal skills), there is growing pressure exerted on the member by others on the

farm. Members respond differently to this pressure, but eventually many leave the community and some stay living a marginal, but seemingly content life.

The labor credit system that Twin Oaks uses is an example of the Skinnerian labor system found in Walden Two. Twin Oaks labor system is not based on the exchange of money for labor, instead, members share the responsibility of maintaining the desired quality of life on the farm and labor to remain in good standing with the community. According to this system, all members must work a set number of hours each week, referred to as "quota," to fulfill their share of the necessary work. During my stay, an average of 43 hours per week was required of members to continue enjoying the rights and responsibilities of their membership. Members may work over quota and bank the excess hours to be used at a later time. Cashing in over-quota work hours enables members to take a vacation, whether on the farm or away from Twin Oaks, and remain in good standing. Another way to spend saved labor credits is in the form of personal service credits (PSC). Members who have accrued surplus hours can give one PSC for each hour that another member spends doing a personal service for them. Personal services may include cooking, cleaning, helping to move, or taking care of a pet.

There are a number of caveats to this basic outline. While all members are required to work, some members are given hours by the community to reduce their required workload. Older members are given pension hours; sick members, members with physical or mental difficulties, and those with doctor appointments are given hours for the work missed; and pregnant women and parents are given a reduced quota. These caveats adjust the workload for members who are unable or in a class of people who may be less able to work and function to promote a sense that personal health is important.

All totaled, credits that count towards meeting quota include community approved work, health and healing time, pension hours, and personal service credits.

Importantly, this system is an egalitarian system that equally values all work done for the community and that radically alters the division between private (in capitalist economies, unpaid) and public (in capitalist economies, paid) work. Accordingly, all work done is given the same number of credits; an hours worth of work, no matter how boring, hard, or messy, is given one labor credit. Furthermore, creditable work in this system includes work done in the income-producing industries (hammocks and hammock chairs, soy foods, indexing and herbs), food-producing areas (garden, dairy, farming), upkeep and maintenance of the grounds and buildings, care of members and their children (food preparation, counseling, health and wellness, childcare) and—perhaps the most radical of creditable work—pregnancy. Because what counts as creditable work on the farm goes beyond income producing work to include, and equally value, worker and member producing work that has been historically and is currently the unpaid work of females in the US, Twin Oaks' labor system is a clear example of a feminist practice and scholars who have studied Twin Oaks as a feminist community have tended to focus on Twin Oaks' labor system[2] (Goldenberg, 1993; Weinbaum, 1984).

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[2] The unpaid labor of females has been a focal topic among feminists activists and theorists. From one vantage point, Twin Oaks labor system can be considered an example of comparable worth in practice. Comparable worth, the idea that jobs that are traditionally done by women that require comparable skills as those that are traditionally done by men should have the same wage, is not without its detractors. In Bem's (1993) analysis, comparable worth functions to maintain "gender polarization…[which is] the organization of social life around the male-female distinction, the forging of a cultural connection between sex and virtually every other aspect of human experience, including modes of dress, social roles and even ways of expressing emotion and experiencing sexual desire" (p.192). In developing a theory capable of undermining a pervasive and powerful androcentrism and thereby gender polarization, Bem suggests that "people of

In addition to a labor system that equally values both laborers and work done and not done for profit, Oakers also focus energy on countering gendered work roles through affirmative action—where both males and females are recruited to do work that is understood as nontraditional for their sex category. For example, women are encouraged to do the kettle shift in the tofu hut—a job that requires lifting 32 gallon trash cans filled with okara, a tofu byproduct; while men are encouraged to do child care. Affirmative action can also legitimate the formation of all female workers for areas that they have been traditionally been excluded, such as construction. According to Twin Oaks' labor policy, this is done "for purposes of righting old wrongs…[and] in order to encourage self-confidence" ("Labor Policy Notes for Managers," n.d.). Within this policy, there is also an effort to maintain sex balance on teams where having a gender balance is deemed important. This is established policy on the community membership team (CMT) that is charged with facilitating the processes associated with visitors becoming (or not) new members.

In working to rectify dominant U.S. cultural gender inequalities, Oakers emphasize egalitarian ideals of equal access and treatment. Oakers also practice affirmative action that is designed to offer female and male Oakers both opportunity and support to work in areas that may have been closed to them off the farm. In this way, affirmative action is understood to function as both a remedy for off the farm sexism and a tool of empowerment. Both of these goals are consistent with the history of affirmative action in broader U.S. culture (MacLean, 1999). It is worth noting that whereas

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different sexes would no longer be culturally identified with different clothes, different social roles, different personalities, or different sexual and affectional partners" (p. 192). The extent to which Twin Oaks can be considered to dismantle androcentric structures found in broader U.S. culture will be analyzed in subsequent chapters.

resistance to affirmative action policy and practices has persisted off the farm (MacLean, 1999), on the farm affirmative action is accepted. This is in part because members have successfully demystified the "myth of individualism," the belief that all people in the U.S. have equal opportunity and access despite systemic barriers (Fox-Genovese, 1986). A component of Oakian affirmative action that tends to be omitted from discussions of affirmative action off the farm is the establishment of gender-balanced committees. These committees ensure that those who must interact with the committee have a choice of male or female interlocutors and a balance in feminine and masculine qualities. This latter point is further explicated by exploring the 60:40 policy.

Gender Balance: 60:40 and Creating a Women's Space

Maintaining a gender-balanced community is valued by many Oakers and, in the 1980s, policy was drafted to ensure that the numbers of one sex would not exceed a 60:40 ratio. Enforcement of this policy means that "no member of the majority gender may join until the ratio after cos[3] joining will not exceed 60:40" ("Membership Policy," n.d.). In explaining the need for this policy, members generally suggest that gender imbalanced communities have a range of issues attributable to being imbalanced. A secondary consideration is that the community's membership is primarily heterosexual and monogamous and a balance enables more heterosexual couplings.[4] Whereas the

[3] "Co" is gender-neutral pronoun used by Oakers.

[4] Sexed bodies, understood as particular types of sexual bodies, are also a factor in gay and lesbian communities as well as other communities focused on actualizing social change. See Conover (1975) for a discussion of gender and sexuality in intentional communitie, which are understood to be contexts of social change. See Barnes (2005) and Ralston and Stoller (2005) for discussions of life in lesbian communities. See the Intentional Communities website (http://www.ic.org/qic/directory.html#wimmin) for a

governance and labor systems outlined above rectify U.S. gender inequalities by enlisting egalitarian principles of equal treatment and access, the 60:40 policy seeks to regulate gendered behavior—in particular traditional U.S. masculinity—by counting sexed bodies. While the policy is designed and by all accounts succeeds in fostering a female friendly, feminine community, the equation of sex to gender in the policy fails to account for gender queer and transpeople. In talking with one transmember, it becomes clear that there are no commonly held beliefs or policies that maintain a distinction between sex and gender. According to Joe, a female-to-male transgendered Oaker, the member responsible for maintaining the statistics, was "happy when I came because I could occupy the opposite category as Robyn [a male-to-female transgendered Oaker]."

While the 60:40 policy was rarely talked about in everyday social interaction, there is indication that the policy is brought into daily conversation when the membership numbers threaten to require its application. In a 1999 taped group interview, Deidra, a long-term, self-identified lesbian member suggested that "every time we get close to it [the 60:40 ratio] and talk about it, and it's been like three phases since I've been here, we come up with well what does it mean? How do we count gays and lesbian?" (Spalding, n.d., p. 40). Here, the question of gay and lesbian members was heard as a concern with members' opportunities to partner sexually and was not heard to suggest that gay and lesbian members tend to embody gender in a way that is incongruous with their sex. However, this category of concern seems to be relatively minor. In the 1999 transcribed interview, of the 104 lines of text pertaining to the 60:40 policy, the discussion of sexual partners earned a brief 8 lines. Similarly, in a group interview I conducted during my

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list of Queer Communities. While there are gay and lesbian centered communities, there are also communities that seek both gay and lesbian members.

fieldwork, the same sentiment was articulated by Blue whose statement, "Well, we're primarily heterosexual and monogamous," was countered by Beth's suggestion that lesbians and gay men would still want to have a pool from which to choose sexual partners before the conversation turned to a discussion of issues surrounding gender imbalanced communities. Of the 36 minutes of conversation about the 60:40 policy, Blue's and Beth's comments yielded less than one minute. Thus, while Oakers consider sexual partnering possibilities, the primary focus is on avoiding the pitfalls of a gender imbalanced community by counting the numbers of sexed members.

The primary reason to strive for a gender-balanced community is the membership's desire to maintain a feminist community where women are active, culture-influencing participants. According to Sam, a long-term member, the policy came about because, during a time when men comprised about 60% of the population, members began to notice "how it affected the whole feel of the place" and "women started not liking that and started wanting to go off by themselves" (Spalding, n.d., p. 42). Without an adequate number of females and with women's decreased engagement with the community, the farm began to take on a different tone that was unsatisfying for members. As Mia suggested in a recorded group interview, "it seems like when you get into that situation of too many men, it's sorta a downward spiral [7 seconds of boisterous laughter]…most women don't want to live in communities where there are a lot more men than women." While Mia delivered her comment with seriousness, the laughter that interrupted Mia's statement pointed to the devaluing of a male dominated culture and a brand of masculinity that is understood by members as a product of it. Male dominance and the attending genre of masculinity are understood by Oakers to exist in dominant

U.S. culture and this is the key issue that the 60:40 policy attempts to remedy. In this way, the 60:40 policy was written to ensure adequate numbers of female members in order to ensure women are active participants in the everyday living on the farm—rather than having their communication and interaction inhibited as it is in dominant U.S. culture.

While the policy is written to regulate both males and females if either group approaches 60% of the membership, during my residency members spoke positively about the times when women outnumbered men on the farm. Mia—making a link between Twin Oaks as a feminist community, the "danger" of too many men and the 60:40 policy—made this point eloquently:

> There was a brief period of time when we had noticeably more women and I heard a lot of positive commentary on that… I think more the sort of danger we are trying to avert [with the 60:40 policy] is too many men rather than too many women and I think that has to do with identifying as a feminist community attracting feminist people who find sorta social traits that are more stereotypically cultivated in women more appealing than those stereotypically cultivated in men and wanting more of those [stereotypical women traits] around and one way of having that sort of balance is having at least as many women as men.

As Mia makes clear, monitoring the numbers of male and female members at Twin Oaks is not only connected to a desire to ensure that Twin Oaks was a place where female members are active and engaged, it is also about nurturing a feminist environment that celebrates what are understood to be feminine social traits.

If Twin Oaks' 60:40 policy is in part intended to guarantee a particular type of space, or a space with a particular "feel" to it, then it appears to be successful. There is evidence of women-only practices shaping larger Twin Oaks' culture, for example, there

is a female only living space and female only social gatherings.[5] These structural facts and social events render women highly visible in the community and symbolize that women, as a group, are content, indeed happy, to be independent from men—in living, socializing, and making culture. Within this context, communication practices are contested with members seeking to promote the use of "co" as a gender-neutral pronoun and to sanction men who used "girls" to refer to women.[6] Female members are also well-respected and active in governance and politics—serving as planners, managers of key work areas, and members of powerful committees.

The problems pointed out by members of gender imbalanced communities are often brought to life through the comparison of Twin Oaks to East Wind, an egalitarian community in Missouri that, like Twin Oaks, lists Kat Kinkaid as a founding member. Here, gender imbalance indicates significantly more males than females. From an historical perspective, adopting the 60:40 policy, according to Sam, was largely due to "the example of East Wind being as far out of gender balance as it was [at the time]" (Spalding, n.d., p. 42). 30 years later, Oakers continued to use East Wind as an example of a community that has an issue with having too many men. In this comparison, East Wind is understood by Oakers as "having a hard time keeping women [as members]" because of the large numbers of male members relative to female members. Because of

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[5] Some female only social gatherings, such as movie nights and walks, emphasized conversation. Other female only social gatherings, such as kissing parties and naked gatherings, emphasized the fluidity of sexuality as well as the desexualization of female bodies. Chapters 4 and 5 help to explain this aspect of Oakian culture.

[6] Members objected to the use of "girls" to refer to women because "girls" was understood to diminish women's power by infering that adult women are child-like. The objection to this use of "girl" is one instance of Oakers resisting sexist language practices. The use of the gender-neutral pronoun, "co," is another instance and will be analyzed in Chapter 7.

inadequate numbers of women to balance both the predominant masculinity and the influence of a long-term, influential male member, East Wind's culture is adversely affected. For instance, both Twin Oaks and East Wind allow public nudity but at East Wind "the men felt free to gawk at women" and to make comments about her body without risk of being sanctioned for his behavior. At Twin Oaks this would not be tolerated and the presence of female members is understood by members to keep in check an East Wind style of masculinity. In this way female members are understood by Oakers to enact a form of femininity that counters and balances traditional men's masculinity. However, it is also the female body, as a symbolic reminder to male members, that is used to balance traditional masculinity. To further explicate these points, the following section analyzes the everyday use of three key Oakian terms—"rooster," "alpha males," and "wolves"—that mark a proscribed style of masculinity.

Masculinity: "Roosters," "Alpha Males," and "Wolves": Stereotypical Men and the Twin Oaks Man

By the third month of my residency, as the crispness of winter faded and members began to congregate and socialize outside in the warmth of the sun, I had recorded a spectrum of instances of communicative practices that were devalued by Oakers and the ways these transgressions were sanctioned. I had read archival data of members who had been reprimanded or asked to leave the community and I had noted within these archives the ways these members communicated, but I had not yet recognized a clear gendered component. I was not to hear a local term that connected Oakian evaluations of communicative practice to gender until, on a warm spring day, I rocked in a hammock

with May, a long-term member, and talked about my research and her experiences as a member.[7]

We were in the Courtyard and could watch members weaving hammocks, the Planners having their weekly meeting, and a small group of people snacking on fresh bread and yogurt. I had recently returned to Twin Oaks after being away for a week and was trying to explain the differences between how I experienced being off the farm and how I experienced being on the farm. As I strung together my evidence to form a narrative of my time in a nearby city, which included cat-calls and walking at night, May began to talk about the social and organizational pressures that work to promote a safe environment for women. "We'd come down on a person for not being safe [for violating another person in some way]," she said. Continuing, she added, "The rooster man has a harder time here because there is a subtle push to be not that way." In asking for an explanation, May offered that a "rooster" is "a sort of swaggery person who presents themself in a stereotypically masculine way. People do it, but they don't get that much respect." My further questioning whether or not a "rooster" has something to do with having multiple sexual partners yielded a quick dismissal with the suggestion that Blue was a man who had multiple partners but who "doesn't have this macho thing." Instead, May offered the example of Roman who had been given feedback for being chauvinistic and arrogant. "[His style is] paternalistic… protective… [treating a woman as a little girl]… here, it stands out more. Oh my god, an asshole," May concluded.

[7] In Chapter 6 I explore normative Oakian ways of communicating. Here, my effort is to focus on proscribed styles of masculinity, as forms of embodied communication, in order to further explore Twin Oaks as a feminist community and culture.

As I walked back to my bedroom, I remembered a conversation I had while working with Roman some weeks prior. We had an eclectic schedule of odd jobs to do: crawling under Morning Star to adjust the timer on the pathway lights, surveying and measuring in preparation for upgrading the Tofu Hut, and carrying unused lumber to the storage area. Exiting Morning Star, he handed me a 2x4 and then picked up a 2x6 of the same length. Halfway down the path to the Courtyard, he stopped, turned to me and said, "I'm not being sexist [by carrying the larger piece of wood], it just worked out that way (he had handed me the top piece, which was the smaller of the two)." Taking a few more steps, he turned again to add, "If you want to carry the bigger piece you can… I mean, I don't want to assume you'd want to…. Some people here get upset if a man doesn't let a female do heavy lifting." Occurring relatively early in my stay, I recorded this incident in my field notes along with the note: "Similar to when I was cleaning rain gutters as a visitor… women and men do the same work. But why would Oakers get upset? I don't even know if I could lift the bigger piece."

From early on in my time on the farm it had been clear that women were treated as being capable of doing, indeed often expected to do, the physical work that men were understood to do in dominant U.S. culture—operating a saw, lifting heavy objects, and going into dark and dirty spaces. What crystallized in the days following my conversation with May was the connection between Roman's communication—both his words and the symbolic practice of carrying the larger piece of wood—and performances of proscribed masculinity as well as the cultural meaningfulness of this set of communicative practices. In fleshing out this meaningfulness it is necessary to introduce

another proscribed gendered identity term that was used in a similar way as "rooster": "alpha male."

In the above exchange, a "rooster" was defined pejoratively as a person who is experienced as traditionally masculine—swaggery, macho, paternalistic, and protective. While this performance of masculinity was thought to be acceptable if not celebrated off of the farm, it certainly was not respected at Twin Oaks. "Alpha male" was generally substitutable for "rooster" and some members just seemed to prefer to use one term over the other. Broadly, however, "rooster" tended to refer to masculine qualities that centered primarily on personal relationships and "alpha male" tended to relate to workplace and political relationships—as was observed in the symbolism of a man handing a female a relatively small piece of wood.

The following excerpt of a taped group interview where participants discussed gender norms suggested as much about "alpha male":

> Beth: In the vast majority of the world men rule and it's a direct effort to not do that here. We pay special attention to having men primaries and women on a management team. I've heard other people say they don't want it to be a boy thing. I'm not sure of the exact word… They don't want it to just be a team of men.
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> Mia: There's a reference to "alpha males"—people talk about that all the time. (laughter)
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> Darci: Ah yeah, the alpha males… (laughter)

In this example, "alpha male" was used as a term to mark a man (or a group of men) who in some way dominated a work scene or policy-making group—making it a "boy thing." For example, in a garden shift conversation Breeze was expressing her frustration with a male member who had written her a letter criticizing her management of the kitchen's food supplies:

Breeze: He's not even on the team. He just appointed himself to the team. He has no [official] say but he thinks he *is* the committee.

Autumn: He thinks he's the only one who can manage the kitchen.

Breeze: He thinks he's the alpha male…. He could have at least calmed down before he wrote the letter.

Highlighting workplace contexts, "alpha male" served to mark the same general proscribed, domineering masculinity that "rooster" did. In the above example, the male member's letter was understood to be an attempt to usurp power and to control the decisions made by the committee. He was labeled an "alpha male" because, instead of either respecting the committee's decision or objecting in a way that followed Oakian communication rules—for example, posting a survey to obtain members' thoughts or sharing his concerns calmly rather than aggressively (see Chapter 6), he chose to adopt an authoritarian and dictatorial position.

Using the above examples it was possible to flesh out underlying premises that made proscribed masculinities make sense to Oakers. If Roman had handed me the larger piece of wood, he would have been expressing a belief that I was physically strong and capable as a female. This would have aligned with an Oakian understanding that, while perfectly capable, women have not been given equal opportunity off of the farm to experience their physical strength and interpersonal power. Furthermore, women were understood to have been disempowered off the farm by men who had protected them and whose pompousness had not left them with adequate interpersonal or personal space in which to be powerful, agentive, decision makers. From this starting point, Oakers celebrated communicative practices that countered these forms of disempowerment—for example, expecting a female member to take care of her personal well-being, to make

good workplace and political decisions, and to not need help in doing any of the above. Roman, realizing that he was carrying a significantly larger piece of wood and already having been sanctioned for being a "rooster," tried to rectify the situation and in so doing to counteract off the farm forms of female disempowerment. His stammering, "I don't want to assume you'd want to," was born of then having to not appear as if he was trying to take care of or speak for me—an act that would be inherently disempowering. Thus, a norm that was active on the farm that regulated male members' performances of masculinity could be stated as: *At Twin Oaks, if a male member wants to enact a celebrated masculinity, he should support female members' empowerment by expecting women to (be able to) do physically demanding work and to take care of their needs.*

"Wolfing" marked yet another performance of masculinity that was proscribed on the farm. Whereas "rooster" tended to mark dominance in social interactions and "alpha male" tended to mark dominance in work and politics, "wolfing" referred to untoward sexual relations between members and visitors. By definition, a wolf was a member who had sex with a visitor and this behavior was troubling because of power imbalances between members and visitors who, in applying for membership, needed the support of members. In practice, "wolves" were understood by Oakers to be male members while female members who slept with visitors were understood to be enacting a qualitatively different sex act because the power imbalance between female members and visitor sex partners was qualitatively different. These differences were understood to be born of off the farm experiences where men were celebrated for their sexual experience and women were villainized for theirs. As one member said, "Men are like 'I'm such a stud.'"

At the time of my fieldwork, Oakers were grappling with the significance of thinking of men as "wolves." For some, characterizing men as "wolves" positioned their female sex partners as naïve, helpless sheep and thus compromised her agency. As one female member, who as a visitor had a relationship with a male Oaker, explained:

> This person was a known wolf and there was a lot of process around this—and he was up front about it… his hanging out with a lot of young women visitors. It sorta bothered me that people thought I had just had this trip laid on me by this guy and that I was not choosing it.

The anti-wolfing policy was premised on the belief that men and women have been socialized off the farm to experience their sexuality differently. Accordingly, it was understood that women were more vulnerable than men and more likely to be taken advantage of sexually. In attempting to be sensitive to these beliefs and lived experiences the policy could also be heard as paternalistic—a community-based rather than a male-based form of paternalism, but paternalism nonetheless. In this way, the wolfing policy butted up against the sanction on disempowering women by treating them as incapable and non-agentive.

Here it is important to note that I generated no evidence of equivalent terms for female members' communicative practices and performances. For example, I have no data where Oakers used a gender term in reference to proscribed feminine communicative practices in relationships, politics, or sexual interactions. Furthermore, similar forms of communicative practice, enacted by female members, were understood as being fundamentally different. Women who slept with male visitors may have fit the definition of a "wolf," but, because of differences in off the farm socialization, were understood to not be "wolves" because men could not be sheep. Said differently, a female-bodied member sleeping with a male-bodied visitor did not carry the symbolic meaning of a

predatory "wolf." Similarly, women were not understood to be "roosters" or "alpha females." A point highlighted by an example that occurred on a winter day when I was a member of a four-person wood delivery team—two females and two males. During our work the other female, Elle, and I swore and talked loudly and aggressively—monopolizing conversational space and disagreeing with statements made by the male members. Laughing, Blue, who was honchoing,[8] commented that his time working with us felt more like an all-male wood delivery crew than it did a mixed-sex crew. Even though our way of communicating was understood to cross gender lines, Elle and I were not sanctioned for being "alphas." Instead our masculine communication was greeted with curiosity and laughter.[9]

It is interesting in this example that the other two members did not begin to adopt a more traditional, less Oakian performance of masculinity. As has been established, an issue Oakers had with all-male groups was that there was a tendency for men to be "alpha males." Female members, through their symbolic bodies (not reducable in the Twin Oaks context to gender practices), were thought to keep this in check and in this example might well have done so. As Blue stated in a group interview weeks after our working together: "When I'm in a group that has more men, then I start acting in more stereotypical ways—speaking louder, more debate, more raunchy language. [At Twin Oaks], I'm trying to do something different, relate to men in a different way, more like I want men to do in the outside world." Again here, stereotypical men, who were

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[8] A honcho is a member is assumes responsibility for organizing and ensuring that a tast is completed.

[9] In Chapter 6 I analyze proscribed forms of communication on the farm. These forms are understood to be raced and classed. Women enacting loud and aggressive communication were heard to violate normative communication customs, but this was attributed to individual actions and not to gender socialization.

characterized as loud, argumentative communicators with a penchant for raunchy, sexualized language, were located off the farm and Twin Oaks was understood as a place where a different masculinity was practiced. When male Oakers formed groups, they were more likely to revert to a performance of masculinity that was typical off the farm and in this way female Oakers served as reminders to enact a masculinity more in alignment with Twin Oakian ideals. This expressed understanding suggested that the female members, as feminine members and as symbolic body, were a reminder for men to enact a particular type of masculinity.

In sum, considering "roosters," "alpha males," and "wolves" as symbols of proscribed masculinity rendered the shape of a cultural code that governed male members' communicative practices on the farm—the code of feminist egalitarianism. Accordingly, it was taboo for male Oakers—in personal, professional, and sexual relationships—to be paternalistic or domineering or to treat women as sexual prey. Men should embody a belief in women as powerful agents. To do this, men should treat women as equal workers and also as people who may (still) be sexually vulnerable because of their off the farm experiences. Symbolic acts like handing a female the larger piece of wood, electing her to powerful committees and then respecting her decisions, and waiting to have sex until she has been extended membership marked male members as performing a prescribed masculinity—as did not communicating loudly, in a way that monopolized conversations, with obscenities, and in authoritative and aggressive tones. In this way while both men and women were understood to be socialized off the farm to enact inegalitarian gender roles, men should practice relinquishing power through language-based and embodied communicative practices. On the other hand, women were

thought to need to be given the opportunity to practice the power that has been denied them.

Twin Oakian Sex/Gender System

In the introduction of this dissertation I argued that a first step in grounded feminist ethnographies of communication was to establish a culturally sensitive understanding of the local sex/gender system. Through exploring Twin Oaks' policies and communicative practices that pertain to feminist practices it was possible to hear key aspects of an Oakian sex/gender system. According to the policies and communication norms discussed above, sex was thought to determine gender, which was understood as a binary. For example, counting the sex of members as either female or male was used to maintain a female friendly and feminine culture on the farm. However, this is far too simplistic to capture the richness of Twin Oaks' genderscape. In the first place, there was a range of understandings of sex and gender active on the farm. In the second place, revisiting how Oakers contested dominant U.S. notions of masculinity suggested that while sex and gender were correlated, sex as an identity category in some cases trumped gender.

Importantly, there were a range of perspectives on sex and gender on the farm. In my first week living at Twin Oaks and in response to members inquiring about my research, I suggested that sex did not necessarily correlate with gender. My fellow diners grew more animated—some remained silent but listened attentively, some suggested that sex equaled gender while another, who has a degree in Women's Studies, agreed with my statement. Nearly four months later, during another mealtime conversation, I listened as

a member asked a pregnant Oaker if she knew the sex of her baby. She replied, "No. It doesn't matter to me which sex co is and co will figure out co's gender when co is ready." Clearly, for some, gender was understood as an identity that was not necessarily tethered to sex. For these members, sex was a biological determination and gender was both a social construction and an expression of a sense of self that was connected to, among other things, styles of communication, work preferences, and body comportment and adornment. On this point an example was provided by a gay male member who joined a hacky sack circle because, as he said, "I noticed there were all males [in the circle] and that's why I joined." The humor with which this remark was made did not go unacknowledged. As the laughter subsided, what lingered was not the humorous critique of efforts to achieve gender balance, but a critique of the equation of gender to sex—a general failure to account for feminine males and masculine females, for men who were not interested in having sex with women, and for those whose bodies were incongruous with their gender.[10] There was, in fact, an easy tension between these divergent understandings of gender. The ease with which members stated their different understandings of gender, the utter lack of instances where arguments arose surrounding differing beliefs, and the effort to celebrate diversity when represented as gender nonconformity all indicated that community agreement as to whether or not gender is biological in basis was not a key issue amongst Oakers.

[10] Readers may read this joke as being humorous because, as a gay man, he may be (erotically) interested in joining the circle. While this may be a subtext, I would argue that in the context that was Twin Oaks during my residency discussions of gender balancing and the femininity of this gay member who was critical of the 60:40 policy pointed toward the interpretation I have presented.

In revisiting data related to "roosters," "alpha males," and "wolves" it became clear that while sex and gender were, in normative communicative practices, correlated, sex was an integral aspect of reading gendered performances on the farm. While female members who talked raunchily, loudly, with obscenities, or who adopted an authoritarian and domineering style may not have been celebrated, they were not understood to be enacting a male and masculine gender identity. Rather, they were understood to be females who were enacting traditionally male ways of communicating. Taking a male-to-female transgendered person as yet another example of how sex categorization influenced the interpretation of communicative practices further illustrates this point. Robyn had a relatively masculine appearance—she was tall, with a square jaw-line, and a fairly flat chest. Her narrowness of hip was only a bit camouflaged by a roundness of belly and without make-up there was the faint appearance of facial hair. As a lesbian, Robyn expressed attraction to both female members and visitors in ways that included sexual jokes and the touching of other bodies without prior consent. Both her sexual interest in female visitors and her methods of expressing her sexual attraction were problematic by Twin Oakian standards. However, had Robyn been more easily categorized as female, these issues would not have caused the concern that they did nor would have Robyn been categorized as a "wolf." This reflected Dozier's (2005) study of female-to-male transgendered people. When gender performance and sex characteristics (for example, facial hair and breasts) aligned, gender performance became less important in establishing gender identity. When these categories did not align, gender performance become more important. Thus, the meaningfulness of gender performances was based on the meaningfulness of the body—how it was made sense of as a sexed body.

As grounded research this chapter speaks to poststructuralist feminism's critique of the continued use of gender categories as a political strategy (e.g., Bem, 1993). The analysis of Twin Oaks' sex/gender system provided an example of how feminist practices to counter sexism relied on body-based sex identities, as was demonstrated in affirmative action practices. As this example (and others discussed above) suggests, sex and gender were vdistinct categories on the farm. Analytically treating sex as one aspect of gender, as Butler (1990, 1993) has invited us to do, positions the body as discursive rather than material and as "that-which-can-be-transformed to accommodate the cultural category gender" (Hausman, 1995, p. 193; see Chapter 1). But as Hausman (1995) has argued the material body, which at one time in U.S. history signified sex and not gender, exceeds and resists gender. Some aspects of the material body cannot be made through comportment, adornment, or surgery to fit a person's gender identity (although may well be a part of gender insofar as body features signify gender). Robyn could not alter her height, her hips, her feet, or those characteristics that some transwomen can finance the alteration of off the farm (voice, facial hair, breasts). Beyond establishing the Oakian sex/gender system, then, this chapter provided an example of the importance of maintaining a theoretical distinction, at least in some U.S. contexts, between sex and gender. It was this distinction that helped to make sense of how Robyn could be a "wolf" even as she identified as a woman. As such, this chapter suggests that feminists seeking to change sexist policy need to account for both sex and gender systems as well as how they function relationally.

This chapter has served to contextualize the study of gender in the Twin Oaks context. Gender was a significant aspect of life on the farm in large part because Twin

Oaks was understood by both members and visitors as a feminist utopian community—a collection of people who strove to rectify the oppressive and discriminating gender structures found in dominant U.S. culture. Focusing on institutional policies and norms of social interaction, the contours of an Oakian feminism were explored and analyzed. Within this process, the ways that members related sex and gender as two separate identity categories were revealed. From this base, it was possible to hear that sex was treated as a binary and that sex influenced the interpretation of gender. While the link between sex and gender was variously conceptualized and included an understanding that sex and gender had no necessary connection, the predominant understanding was that sex correlated with gender.

CHAPTER 4

EGALITARIAN EMBODIMENT: BREASTS AT HOME

> In this patriarchal culture, focused to the extreme on breasts, a woman…often feels judged and evaluated according to the size and contours of her breasts, and indeed she often is. For her and for others, her breasts are the daily visible and tangible signifier of her womanliness, and her experience is as variable as the size and shape of breasts themselves. A woman's chest, much more than a man's, is *in question* in this society, up for judgment, and whatever the verdict, she has not escaped the condition of being problematic. (Young, 1990, p. 189, italics in the original)

> As a shorthand for the promise of sex, it [the female breast] also represents maternal love and protectiveness, the glamour associated with economic success, the status conferred by physical beauty and access to high fashion, and—at least intermittently—a source of food for infants. (Giles, 2005, p. 126)

There is perhaps no feature of a woman's body that is as emphasized in the United States as her breasts. Women's breasts are saturated with meaning. In some contexts the breasts' contours evoke images of motherly love (e.g., breast feeding), in other contexts breasts evoke images of sex, sexuality, and an attending illusion of power Bartky (1997) associates with normatively shaped (i.e., beautiful) bodies (c.f., Giles, 2005). Regardless of context, women's breasts are a quintessential marker of femininity. Female body builders opt for breast augmentation to achieve a feminine form that has been surrendered by muscularity and low body fat (St. Martin & Gavey, 1996). Breast cancer survivors cope with the loss of their breasts through augmentation, adornment strategies, and tattooing the mastectomy scar to reclaim their femininity as well as to celebrate survival (Langellier, 2001; Ucok, 2007). In dominant U.S. culture, women's breasts are a number of things, but they are not insignificant. Oakers are keenly aware of

this fact and have, for a number of years, countered the emphasis dominant U.S. culture places on women's breasts by framing women's shirtlessness as an issue of equality—women should have the right to be shirtless without risk of repercussions or sexualization. As will be presented below, female shirtlessness on the farm is not only an outgrowth of Oakian feminist egalitarian philosophy, but one that serves to liberate some women from oppressive self-consciousness born of the sexualization of women's breasts in dominant U.S. culture.

My arrival on the farm coincided with the culmination of the first official summer of a relaxed nudity policy. Within this context and after seeing a number of shirtless female members, I speculated that on the farm women's breasts were insignificant body parts. Months later, as my initial fieldwork drew to a close, I understood that female members who performed shirtlessness did note that their breasts were in some ways less significant on the farm than they were off the farm, but women's breasts were by no means without significance. By attending to communication surrounding Twin Oaks' shirtless policies, this chapter explores the negotiation of meaning of women's breasts and in so doing explicates Oakian conceptualizations of members bodies and the community. The guiding questions of this exploration were: What do everyday communicative practices reveal about the significance of women's breasts on the farm? How has the meaningfulness of women's breasts been negotiated and evaluated by members? And, what might this say about Oakian culture more generally?

To answer these questions, I used Turner's (1980, 1988) conceptualization of a social drama as a theoretical framework to explore the evolution of Twin Oaks' nudity policy. Turner (1980, 1988) developed his social drama theory in order to account for the

depth and range of social processes found in times of conflict—times when the connections between a group of people become strained or are called into question. According to his model, a social drama has four primary phases: a breach, the crisis, redressive action, and reintegration or schism. The initiating phase begins with a *breach* that occurs when a social rule or norm is violated. Following the breach is a time of *crisis* when factions publicize their orientations to the breach. *Redressive* actions are taken to contain and resolve the crises that have developed after the breach. These actions range from the more personal and private dyadic conversations to the more institutional and public legal processes. In the final phase, either the social factions are once again *reintegrated* or there is an enduring *schism* between social groups. From a communication perspective, an application of Turner's theory begins by identifying a violation in a norm for communicative practices (breach). From this starting point, the researcher analyzes communication in each of the four phases to yield an understanding of the re-formulation of the cultural discourse or code that makes the communication meaningful (Hastings, 1991; Coutu, 2008).

Working from Turner's conceptualization of a social drama, the first part of this chapter explicates the tensions born of differing ways members made shirtlessness a meaningful symbolic act on the farm. This historical analysis utilized over 250 pages of archived O&I (Opinion and Information) communication to gain insight into conflicting, historically rooted, and culturally coded ways of being, related, and dwelling (Carbaugh, 2007). Archival data were combined with participant-observation field notes (with a primary focus on 10 entries), interviews (six), and four hours of video recording to develop a descriptive analysis of the function of shirtlessness on the farm. Using this

data, I return to a focus on embodiment to argue that the practice of shirtlessness is an ongoing undoing of the sexualization of women's breasts experienced in dominant U.S. culture (Millsted & Frith, 2003).

Social Drama

Breach

In 1988 Twin Oaks formalized a nudity policy—the first policy of its kind on the farm. This policy outlined the places and times where members and guests could be shirtless, the places where nudity was allowed, the places where neither were, and exceptions to these rules. In determining when and where Oakers could undress in public, the policy was, from an outsider's perspective, extremely complex and, occasionally, illogical. For example, it was possible to be shirtless and in compliance with the policy and then, turning a corner, to be in violation of the policy. It was also possible to be in compliance with the policy one minute and, as the clock ticked that minute away, to be in violation of the policy. To be sure, the clear intent of the policy, which was limited by those who wanted no or reduced nudity on the farm, was to provide some space for members to be without items of clothing that would be necessary in dominant U.S. culture. As will become apparent below, the parceling out of community spaces as, in the word of one member, clothing optional "ghettos," was a compromise born of the negotiation of differing conceptualizations of women's breasts, members' bodies, and Twin Oaks Community.

The debate surrounding the 1988 policy, which ebbed after 1991 and hibernated until 2003 when the policy was officially revised, publicized one critical aspect of the

1988 policy—that it was inherently inegalitarian insofar as it institutionalized a gender-based double standard where men could be shirtless and women could not. The failure of the policy to mandate that men and women should follow the same rules was understood, by some, as a clear and significant breach of Twin Oaks' egalitarian ideals.

Crisis

Discussions in the O&I papers related to the 1988 Nudity Policy (from 1988 until 2004) was comprised of relatively similar dialogue. While the core issues surrounding the policy had some variations in theme and intensity, three key normative rules were found to be active throughout the 15-year debate. In brief, these were: *women and men should abide by the same rules*, *nudity should be in particular places in order to protect Twin Oaks and its members*, and *Twin Oaks' policy should be less restrictive than dominant U.S. culture*. Importantly, these norms were tethered to distinct cultural discourses and members engaging in the ongoing debate spoke from one (or more) of these discursive positions. The norms, then, can be understood as being grounded in differing discourses, as organizing the flow of debate, and as indexing particular discursive positions. After explicating each of these normative positions, I will discuss the common ground and tensions in order to describe the possibilities for overlap and impossibility of agreement between these discursive positions.

Those who understood the 1988 Nudity Policy as a breach of Twin Oaks' core value, egalitarianism, initiated community-level debate by posting O&I papers pursuing formal policy change. While some of these members argued for a more relaxed nudity policy that included genital nudity, the focus of those speaking from an egalitarian

position was on achieving gender parity in shirtless practices. For example, in an O&I paper posted in the spring of 1990, the author requested members' time in order to talk with them "about a subject that is near & dear to [the author] **egalitarianism!**"[1] This Oaker explained that, because the community must interact with mainstream U.S. culture, Twin Oaks had developed "norms of compromise" that limited genital nudity. While these norms were, according to the author, understandable, the prohibition on women being shirtless when and where men could be was called into question. "Why is it o.k. to have exposer [sic] of this type [a caricature of a male member points to a picture of a male's bare chest]…but not this type [the male caricature points to a picture of a female's bare chest]???"

Throughout the debate, O&I papers such as this publicized the breach of Twin Oaks' egalitarian ideals, encouraged community debate, and reaffirmed the value of egalitarianism. In response to a member who opposed increased restrictions on men's dress code (men wearing shirts if women had to do so), another replied that the proposed change was "**not** more restrictive. It is more egalitarian. I would be delighted with a no-shirt-required policy for all." From this perspective, whatever the issues that members may have with shirtlessness, the focus should be on upholding the community's egalitarian ideals. Thus, members adopting this position argued that all members—women and men—should have the same dress code. Where and when women were required to wear shirts, men should be required to wear shirts. Conversely, if men could go bare-chested then women should be able to do the same. Also noteworthy in the above quote was the expressed preference for a relaxed rather than a restrictive resolution

[1] Written O&I comments included bolded and underlined emphases. These and other forms of emphasis were faithfully represented.

to the breach. By and large, the members who adopted the egalitarian orientation preferred relaxing nudity rules and promoted the freedom of members to choose how and where to not utilize clothing. In the face of opposition to increased nudity in the community, though, these members adopted a feminist orientation that men should not be given preferential treatment in an egalitarian community.

A second norm active in the 1988 Nudity Policy debate was that Twin Oaks should be less restrictive than dominant U.S. culture. For these members, both men and women should be free to choose how they want to dress and where they want to be undressed. As a male member stated, "I oppose compulsive dress codes. I truly believe that we all should dress freely, women and men." Members with this primary orientation supported a policy change to establish that women could be shirtless, but stopped short of an egalitarian emphasis that would restrict men's shirtlessness. Thus, as a member argued, the proposal to adopt an egalitarian nudity policy in the face of the prevailing opinion that nudity should be restricted in the community was "an incredible thing…to think that in an alternative community men would be asked to take a backwards step…that would thus make our lives here more restrictive than the general society."

There was much common ground between these two discursive positions. In persuasive efforts to decrease the restrictions on nudity in the community, both positions made appeals to personal freedom and choice—what some Oakers, then and now, referred to as "following your bliss." "Following your bliss" emphasized members' personal choice in undressing over other's preferences. Towards the end of a lengthy O&I paper, a member pleaded:

> Lynn [a female who rode across the US on her motorcycle shirtless and who feels more restricted on the farm], follow your heart and

> do the right thing for you. Me too [a male who promotes women taking their shirts off—even if policy forbids it]. Brooks [a man who refused to wear a shirt in solidarity], the same. Follow your bliss. This is an individual choice. In my opinion the so called nudity policy is an invasion of individuals' right to choose how they dress on their own property, in their own home.

So, when a female member complained that wearing a shirt in the summer heat was oppressive and uncomfortable, another replied, "I hope Twin Oaks womyn will have the common sense to take their shirts off when it will help them feel more comfortable during the hot weather and help them feel free as individuals too. Each person will, inevitably, decide for co's self, 'policy' or no 'policy.'" As this statement suggested, "following one's bliss" may mean that a member chooses not to follow the nudity policy. While adherence to community policy, referred to by members as "keeping our agreements," was (and is) a potent dictum, some during this time promoted "civil disobedience" as a way to express dissatisfaction with the policy.

In the face of stern disapproval for violating community agreements—members did practice civil disobedience. These embodied protests took one of two forms. First, members simply chose not to adhere to the policy as when one member admitted to taking her shirt off in a work area when she was getting too hot. And, second, members chose to adhere to the policy, but wore clothing that drew attention to the dress code. For example, one male member donned a bikini top in an expression that simultaneously expressed solidarity with women who were required to wear shirts and exhibited a form of dress that would draw attention back to the social drama as well as invite the unwanted attention of neighbors—a concern, to be explored below, of those who wanted no or reduced nudity on the farm.

Common ground between the first two positions could also be found in their appeal to breaking free from U.S. cultural taboos on nudity. Having less restrictive dress norms would, it was argued, free both men and women from oppressive and "screwed up bonds of society & a depleted culture." Adopting a policy that promoted members' experimenting with nudity and experiencing female shirtlessness would establish the farm as a place where people could recover from the effects of a restricted dress code that sexualized women's breasts. Thus, liberalizing the nudity policy would provide an opportunity for male and female Oakers to reframe and redefine what females' breasts signified. In a place where women's breasts were as ubiquitously visible as men's, members reasoned, the female breast would no longer be noteworthy, much less sexualized. "It would be a personal growth thing for me to get so accustomed to seeing womyn's breasts that I wouldn't notice them any more than men's," a member argued, then added sarcastically, " But I suppose that's rather a Utopian dream, isn't it??"

In sum, members whose primary orientations to the breach of Twin Oaks' egalitarian ideals in the 1988 policy supported the same rules for men and women as well as less restrictive dress codes agreed that policy should not interfere with personal choice or comfort. Freedom to dress or undress as one pleased would liberate both females and males from oppressive U.S. cultural norms that emphasized women's breasts as sexual objects. Where they disagreed was in terms of which position the community should prioritize—egalitarianism or freedom from dominant U.S. cultural restrictions. As will be shown below, both of these orientations were ultimately trumped by a third—safety—and resulted in no change to the policy until 2004. Ultimately, the position that members

should not jeopardize the safety of others nor the viability of the community served to limit nudity practices on the farm.

The counter position to those who wanted both equality and freedom supported the 1988 policy restrictions on nudity to more private spaces and during the night. These members did not want to liberalize the policy and argued that increased nudity in public spaces would jeopardize the viability of the community and the safety of its members. "I do fear what might happen," stated a member "when the word gets around that people, especially women, hang out with little or no clothes." In part, this comment gains validity in the context of a commonly repeated story of Twin Oaks' early years. In the early days of Twin Oaks, there were occasional night visits, usually when the sounds of a social gathering could be heard by neighbors. On these occasions, as the story goes, car loads of drunken men would come to the farm looking for sexual encounters. Not only was their lewd presence understood by members to perpetuate the objectification of women on the farm, but it was also experienced as a form of emotional violence and Oakers feared that these men would physically harm Twin Oakian women. If female shirtlessness was to become a practice, then, women may be or feel unsafe on the farm and, further, while walking or running on the roads that surround the farm.

Other related issues for those who desired a more restrictive dress code pertained to the legality of shirtlessness as well as upsetting members and neighbors. When legality was raised as an issue, it was closely connected to the related issue of promoting good public relations with the neighbors. Clearly, violating a law would, it was argued, jeopardize the continued existence of the community, but this was also understood as being connected to public relations. If the neighbors were upset with or disturbed by

Oakers' practices, they were more likely to cause trouble for the community. They might alert authorities to presumed illegal activities, for example. In addition to neighbors being offended by shirtlessness, members also expressed discomfort with shirtless women. Efforts to assuaging these concerns, focused on building privacy screens and planting hedges to protect both Oakers and neighbors from any negative effects of Oakers' nudity. Both the community and individual members would be safer because neighbors would not see the nudity and would not, therefore, be titillated or offended by it or be able to report it as a violation of obscenity law.

Ultimately, what was seen in the crisis phase was a tension between those members who adopted a discursive position that argued for personal freedom from oppression and those who adopted a discursive position that argued for safety from outsiders. During the debate, the actual breach—the violation of Twin Oaks' egalitarian principle—was subsumed by concerns with the well-being of female members in particular and the community as a whole. Combined with a belief that Twin Oaks should not be more restrictive than dominant U.S. culture, these concerns stifled debate and forced egalitarian members to adopt a mild form of civil disobedience premised on the belief that "everyone should be free" to "follow their bliss." The tensions between these positions pivoted on three semantic hubs related to dwelling, relating, and personhood. While I explore the endpoints of these hubs in what follows, these hubs should be thought of as spectrums of meaning rather than as categories.

Private Home vs. Public Community: A Sense of Place

In part, the negotiation of the crisis depended on how members conceptualized the place that was Twin Oaks. For some, Twin Oaks was "home"—a private place that was separate from elements of dominant U.S. culture such as neighbors, delivery drivers, and oppression. We can hear this in the quote above: "to think that in an alternative community men would be asked to take a backwards step…that would make us make our lives more restrictive than the general society." In this extract Twin Oaks was positioned as a community that was different than, ideologically separate from, dominant U.S. culture. However, Twin Oaks was not only understood as ideologically different than "general society," but was also conceptualized as a *place*, a home, that was separate. As a separate place, one could dress as they pleased without any ill effect. "The local rumor mill wont change," a member argued, "because we dress or undress here at home."

For others, Twin Oaks was a community with highly permeable borders that could not escape the scrutiny of the greater society—of those people who were not members. In reference to the 1995 debate surrounding the practice of a holiday exception for nudity on the farm, "I don't think we can keep strangers away. I don't want a holiday exception." A part of this permeability was attributed to Twin Oaks' businesses that brought delivery drivers and consumers to the farm:

> It seems to me that we interface with more folks at T.O. as the years go by. I notice this in the form of ever-increasing #'s of truckers coming to EC…. It just seems to me that we all as a group need a common understanding of the fact (?) that it isn't a good thing to be nude in front of people here to do business and to act accordingly in places where people come to do business.

Focusing on the business rather than the home aspect of Twin Oaks highlighted the ways that the farm was not an isolated enclave, but a community that was enmeshed with a

larger community comprised of neighbors, law enforcement, delivery drivers, customers, as well as, importantly, friends and family. In this area, there was "substantial interest in having some places in the community where outside people can come (or be brought) and not be 'exposed' to our nudity."

Private Body vs. Social Body: Relating to Others

There were two general senses of the body on the farm. For some, the body was something deeply personal and private and all people should make choices according to what was best for their personal bodies. For others, the body was something that was inherently social and public and people should make choices that were sensitive to others. Each of these ways of rendering the body meaningful influenced how members conceptualized relating to each other. If the body was something deeply personal, then members understood that all individuals made personal choices about how to clothe or not clothe their bodies. Because these choices were personal, they were understood to not affect others. Dressing or not dressing one's body, then, should not have any bearing on others. Speaking from this position a member asked, "Are there areas of one's personal life in which no form of authority has any right to interfere whether it is a government policy or merely the disapproval of a neighbor?" In continuing to argue her point, she moved from this idea of the private body to describe a position of radical separateness that denied that shirtlessness could affect another member:

> Obviously, I believe in the right of all individuals to freely express themselves provided they don't hurt anyone. I suggest that our problem with the nudity policy is that we are assuming that someone who is offended is therefore hurt. Nudity hurts no one although some choose to be offended. I am offended at the degree of carelessness that prevails in our snack areas, but I am not hurt

> by it. I choose to be offended because of a sense of order that gives me some satisfaction, but at no time have I ever seriously considered going after adult members to remind them to bus their cups and glasses, cover the jam jar and return the butter to the fridge. That would violate their personal sovereignty. Neither would I approach a shirtless man or woman and ask them to put something on because that too would violate their sovereignty. After all it's co's body, not mine. We don't interfere in people's love life either for the same reason, even though members have left over broken love affairs; and it can certainly lower a persons productivity, whereas nudity may increase it in those whose skin on a hot day would feel better in direct contact with the air.

Counter to Sobo's (1994) illustration of a Fijian understanding of a body as social (a body that should be rounded as this form signified connected to and nurturing from others), this Oakian orientation argued that the body should not be a factor in everyday social relations. What one did with one's body, according to this system of meaning, was a personal matter that did not, should not, be regulated by social conventions.

However, the 1988 Nudity Policy itself was evidence of the conceptualization of bodies as fundamentally social. The meaning and implementation of this policy relied on an understanding that bodies, insofar as they could be seen, could not be private and therefore the body could be and, indeed, should be governed by social rules. The policy functioned to not only conceal nakedness behind screens and shrubs, but to contain it to particular and predictable areas and times. If members violated this policy in protest, as suggested above, it was not just a violation of the policy, but also a violation of an understanding of the body as primarily social—as something that was connected to and that affected others. Moving from an understanding of the body as inherently social, these members argued that people have the responsibility to make choices that were sensitive to others. If neighbors or members were uncomfortable with the exposure of women's breasts, then women should either cover their breasts—or at least their nipples

"with the least little bit of material"—or take their shirts off in designated and private areas. Understanding the body as a social, rather than private, matter enabled members to argue that, in order to preserve social connections, members needed to manage their bodies on the farm. As the following anecdote suggested, opting to keep one's shirt on, was to embody a sensitivity to others that facilitated relationship building:

> It seems to me that we are all fairly sensitive to respecting our diverse values. For example, one summer Marsha's sister Carol came to visit T.O. & went swimming in the wading pool behind Oneida. Carol prefers to wear a bathing suit so when Leslie joined them she wore a suit, too. Devon came by and was amazed to see three adults wearing bathing suits!

Beautiful Body (with Breasts) vs. Sexualized Body Parts: Notions of Personhood

In addition to the social aspects of members' bodies, bodies were made meaningful along a continuum that foregrounded either an integrated body or a body composted of parts. These two conceptualizations of bodies constituted two differing understandings of personhood on the farm. In this way, the body focused attention on cultural understandings of what constituted a person—what it meant to be a person on the farm.

Some Oakers emphasized the value of all bodies—male and female—and then addressed the breasted aspect of these bodies as one aspect of the different, but nonetheless equal beauty of bodies. According to this view, "the body is a BEAUTIFUL instrument—male, female, big, small, skinny, fat or somewhere in between it all." The body was to be celebrated for its beauty and function no matter its shape or sex characteristics. This position countered the sexualization of women's breasts, which was

understood to underpin members' (and U.S. citizens') objections to female shirtlessness. Accordingly, members saw the sexualization of women's breasts as a product of dominant U.S. culture, which emphasized breasts as objectified parts that were separate from the woman whose body part they were. Practicing shirtlessness would, according to these members, facilitate women's integrating their breasts as an aspect of her body and her being.[2] A person, then, has a body with a unique shape and this body should not be reduced to a sexualized body part.[3]

Other Oakers highlighted breasts as parts of bodies and understood that "men and women are physically different [as] an undisputable fact." Based on polarized understandings of people as having distinctly different body parts—between the presumed relative flatness and relative fullness of breasts—this position emphasized that people's bodies were comprised of parts and that these parts had meaning as parts. The meanings associated with women's breasts were different than those associated with men's breasts. For members speaking from this position, this was undeniable, indisputable. At base, this view naturalized the sexualization of women's breasts—

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[2] This conceptualization of women's breasts is an example of other discourses on the farm that function to "desensationalize" the body. Chapter 5 discusses the body as "desensationalized" on the farm.

[3] Whether due to consciousness raising or the engagement with the academy or popular U.S. culture, members sought to resignify women's breasts through embodied practices. Importantly, the effort to resignify women's breasts exceeded the bounds of the shirtless debate. For example, during my time on the farm, members talked about Oakian mothers who were supported in their decisions to breastfeed their children until the child self-weened—a process that could continue for 3 or more years. This was contrasted with how Oakers talked about breastfeeding off the farm—as a short-lived practice (if done at all) lasting only a matter of months. Breastfeeding a preschooler in public spaces on the farm, contrasted with off the farm breastfeeding practices, highlighted the function of women's breasts rather than their consumption as sexualized objects. See Dettwyler (1995) for a discussion of this point as well as cross-cultural perspectives on breasts and breastfeeding. In Mali, for example, she argues that women's breast hold no value as sexual objects and are understood as nothing more than a means to feed children.

framing biological differences as inherently meaningful. The "undeniable" meaning of women's breasts, the innately sexual flesh and fat, underpinned the fear that shirtless women would attract unwanted, sexualized violence and would, necessarily, make modest people on the farm and off uncomfortable.

Redressive Actions

Throughout the debate, members proposed a range of redressive actions. As suggested above, these actions tended to focus on the issues surrounding wearing a shirt rather than on the breach of egalitarianism. For example, in response to a female member who argued that taking her shirt off in the Virginia summer heat would make it possible for her to make quota, a member suggested:

> In the summer a white cotton shirt provides much more comfort than going shirtless. The white color reflects the sun, the material absorbs sweat and cools the body. The shirt also protects from the sun's cancer causing rays. I always wear a shirt, more out of a desire for comfort than out of solidarity.

Similarly, members discussed where to erect privacy screens and the importance of planting shrubs as well as the safety risks associated with female shirtlessness on the farm. Rather than focusing on the publicized breach, these redressive actions served to lessen the discomfort and increase areas where Oakers could be shirtless. The "ghettos" were established as a direct result of this process—a process that was framed by issues related to the safety of members and the viability of the community. The dominant meaning of women's breasts, then, was that they were sexualized in such a powerful way that it was dangerous and uncomfortable to have female members be shirtless unless the risks were contained by privacy screens. Nudity on the farm was not a private issue, it

was public and the body was understood to be a part of the public, not the private, life of members.

Integration: United in Compromise, Solidarity, and Relaxed Work Areas

Through the course of the debates, the 1988 Nudity Policy came to be understood as a "good compromise." Clearly, members continued to experience the policy as inegalitarian and restrictive, but most "could live with it." The debate ebbed; members left and new members came. Men kept their shirts on in solidarity with women and, over time, this became the practiced norm. In some areas, both men and women continued to practice shirtlessness and nudity. In rainstorms, members could take their clothes off and enjoy an impromptu shower. In privacy areas and designated nudity zones, members removed clothing. In some work areas, members worked without shirts. The garden, situated between the two main roads into the community, was one of these areas—a particularly high-profile area where women were told to keep their shirts handy and to put them on if a car was spotted. Because no better solution could be found, this pastiche of norms and rules went largely unchallenged until 2003. In 2003, the practice of shirtlessness in the garden had changed to the extent that women did not don a shirt when delivery trucks and cars drove into the community. The evolution of shirtlessness on the farm was largely a function of practice and, as is suggested below, policy changed to better suit the lived experiences and ideologies of contemporary members who did not feel fettered by the judgment of neighbors.

In June of 2003, a long-term male member posted an O&I paper proposing that the community liberalize the 1988 Nudity Policy. As in the past, the paper centered on shirtlessness and stated simply:

> I would like to change the policy to a norm where people would use their best judgment as to whether or not it would be a good idea to wear a shirt or not…. I've been wanting to change this policy since its inception 15 years ago.

While the response to this proposal was both qualitatively and quantitatively more supportive than the earlier proposals, the themes and positions adopted by members were consistent with the earlier papers. Members promoting the liberalization focused on… fighting oppressive dominant U.S. culture:

> We should stand together, beauty unfettered [in order to] challenge the Victorian standards of our society.

health and comfort:

> YAY! I'm so for this idea. When "do as the Romans do" means real discomfort in our home, it is too far!
> While we're busy talking about freedom and liberty, don't forget to slather on lots of sun-tan lotion, even tho [sic] it's fairly expensive. We shouldn't want to pay for freedom by getting skin cancer from over-exposure, would we?

egalitarianism:

> It is <u>very</u> upsetting to me that Twin Oaks has created a policy that honors the gender discrimination of the outside world. Feminist Ecovillage? Yeah right.

and safety:

> I do feel threatened as a female who does a lot of walking and running around the area. For me it's a safety issue. I have men stop me fairly often and ask me if I want a ride…. I have our drunk neighbors calling me honey and trying to approach me. I feel if word gets out w/ the very conservative outside world and that makes me feel even more at risk and vulnerable. There's a lot of very sick people out there.

While the issues that were debated were similar, the debate as a whole was less contentious and the initial paper did not couch the desired policy change in terms of a breach of egalitarian ideals. Again, the practice on the farm was at this time largely an egalitarian one. What was being requested was a liberalizing of the nudity policy. Throughout the debate, the semantic hubs that shaped the course of earlier debates once again shaped the course of this debate—albeit in a different direction. Twin Oaks was still understood to be both a private home and a community with permeable boarders, but in 2003, members believed that dominant U.S. culture had changed and that neighbors were no longer threatening:

> I support [the] call for a liberalized nudity policy, and I commend [the member] for bringing this issue up for discussion. The one thing that has consistently irked me since I was a visitor last spring was our bizarre and arcane norms surrounding nudity. I understand that, 36 years ago, we would have been concerned about local relations. Obviously we did not want to be a lightning rod for the potential fears of our neighbors who, at the time, did not know us. But, a lot changes over three decades. Popular culture, love it or hate it, has exposed even people in rural America to a lot of ideas that "polite" people did not talk about at the time. Today, our neighbors know us, and either like us or not. Exposed nipples in the Courtyard will not change either opinion.

It was also still considered problematic that breasts were sexualized parts of women's bodies, but in 2003, members discussed sexism on the farm rather than positioning Twin Oaks as an oasis from the sexism that happened off the farm:

> [On the farm] I've heard men have made offensive comments about women's breasts, comparing certain women's breasts to others…. I've heard many stories of a certain member talking openly about visitors/guests who are "stacked." This is why many of us women feel more comfortable being nude in all-women spaces, knowing we will not be judged or ogled. In other words, there is a societal double standard in the US, and it's evident at Twin Oaks, though to a lesser extent.

Perhaps the semantic hub that was most similar to the debate surrounding the 1988 nudity policy was the understandings of bodies as private or as social. Here again we see members who speak from a position that understands the body to be fundamentally private:

> Frankly, I don't think regulating what people do with their own bodies ought to be legislated in such cases. If someone is harmed by a bare breasted woman, I really feel it their responsibility to explore their psychological conditioning and understand why they were harmed by it…. I understand that some people feel impacted by shirtlessness, but I don't think it is any fault of the shirtless. I feel that people who want to be shirtless are not the appropriate targets. The real targets are the sexist patriarchal machine and the human mind being influenced by it. And when I say 'target' I'm not saying that in a violent way.

And, we also see members speaking from a position that sees the body as fundamentally social:

> Additionally, when working with someone respectfully ask co if they are comfortable with you being topless. For instance it would be inappropriate to say "I'm gong to take my shirt off. Do you have a problem with that?" rather, something like "Is it ok if I'm topless while we work? If not, that's ok." If someone says they would rather not work with you topless that should be the end of the discussion during the work shift. Please accept their answer gracefully. You should not try to convince them at that time or as "Why not?" at a later time you may wish to talk to them about it but please do so in a sensitive manner.

As indicated above, the terms of the debate changed very little from 1988 to 2003 so it should, perhaps, not be surprising that in 2004, the planners proposed a new policy that was remarkably similar to the 1988 policy. This 2004 proposed nudity policy sparked a short-lived but well-organized and assertive counter movement from members reasserting their desire for a more relaxed policy. Given that the viability of the community, a key concern of the 1980s, was no longer understood to be a pressing issue, there was little leverage those opposed to the policy change had. If the community was

not in jeopardy, the debate was reduced to individual concerns and these were simply not as plentiful as they were in the 1980s and early 1990s. In the ensuing weeks, an appeal to the policy was made and signed by 51 provisional and full members—enough to have the revised, relaxed, and egalitarian policy be adopted. While there continued to be restrictions, members could be shirtless in more places and during more times.

In the above analysis, I described three norms associated with key discursive positions and three semantic hubs that guided the sense members made of breasts, bodies, and the place that is Twin Oaks. Members who adopted an egalitarian orientation to shirtlessness tended to understand bodies as private, Twin Oaks as home, and believed that the sexualization of women's breasts should be countered on the farm. Those who thought of Twin Oaks as a home that should be less restrictive than dominant U.S. culture saw bodies as private and beautiful wholes, but through the course of the debate conceded the point that women's breasts were sexualized. Those who believed shirtlessness to be a potentially unsafe practice, understood Twin Oaks to be a community with permeable borders, members' bodies as social, and breasts as fundamentally sexualized. Throughout the debate the meaningfulness of women's breasts, more than the meaningfulness of bodies and the community, shaped the outcome. Ultimately, the policy change, implemented in 2004, was attributable to how Oakers made sense of their neighbors as well as dominant U.S. culture. Both groups came to be understood as unthreatening—the neighbors had come to know Twin Oaks and women's breasts were understood to be less evocative in larger U.S. culture.

While this analysis was about the body—how Oakers communication about body practices revealed cultural discourses—in some ways the body has been missed entirely.

What was not captured by the above analysis, what was missed, was a sense of the experience of a body situated in a context where it was acceptable for a woman to walk in the sunshine, in public spaces, without a shirt. What it failed to capture, then, was the meaning of shirtlessness as a feminist embodied practice. It is to this focus that I now turn.

Shirtlessness as an Embodied Practice

In part, focusing on the experience of an embodied practice seeks to address Ahmed's (2004) concern with the "relative lack of grounded, empirical data (in comparison to the reams of theorizing about the body)" that "suggests there is a need… to explore the embodied self…the body as a lived reality" (p. 285). Beyond this academic call to action, however, my motivation is to capture an aspect of shirtlessness on the farm that members spoke of, but that experience made meaningful. In order to access this type of meaning, I necessarily write myself into the following description. This is not an autoethnographic move as my words, taken from field notes expressing my experiences, are but one set of data. In order to document a fuller range of meaning surrounding shirtlessness on the farm, I utilize Samudra's (2008) conceptualization of "thick participation" that foregrounds a sensual body. While Samudra (2008) has focused on developing methodological tools to aid in the analysis of kinesthetic experiences (in this case, a form of self-defense training), my effort here is to capture a sensual experience of embodiment. Of key importance is to move from an emphasis on *seeing*—common in ethnographies of the body—towards *feeling*, an orientation more helpful for my purposes.

In reading the archival material related to shirtlessness and in everyday communication while I was on the farm, members spoke of female shirtlessness in a range of ways. Some thought it a rather trivial effort to counter gender oppression—a better choice would be to focus on training women to do the jobs typically considered men's work. Others thought shirtlessness was problematic because it made women's breasts objects of beauty and thus perpetuated an off the farm emphasis on them. Still others thought shirtlessness was a beneficial practice that helped women to overcome negative attitudes toward their body— attitudes born of the dominant U.S. cultural sexualization of women's breasts in particular and women's bodies in general as well as the over-arching beauty ideals that make women body conscious. It was the women in this latter group that were my key informants and compatriots in my own explorations of shirtless embodiment.

As a researcher, I was conscious of how members might make my embodied actions meaningful and yet, as an ethnographer, I understood the limitations of being "a fly on the wall" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Coming to live at Twin Oaks, I was accustomed to swimming nude in natural settings, but this practice had always been connected to my love of nature and was a practice I closely associated with an environmentalist identity. Taking my shirt off to pull weeds in the garden was, then, not all together out of the ordinary for me, but this is not to say that it was entirely comfortable—it was clearly an atypical context in which to be without my shirt. It should also be made clear that there were no great epiphanies the first times that I was shirtless on the farm, but as the performance of shirtlessness, the ongoing practice of being shirtless, became less uncomfortable and more of a normative practice, something

rather extraordinary happened. Shirtlessness became an unexpected source of personal and professional knowledge about being female in the United States.

For me, the journey toward this embodied knowledge began in earnest on a beautiful sunny day in the garden. I had been performing shirtlessness for months and this day was no different. I was working with others to weed a patch of squash. As I dug and pulled in a meditative rhythm, I noticed how the sun felt on my back—wonderfully relaxing and soothing. Standing to stretch and to deposit my pile of weeds into a nearby bucket, I noted the sun on my breasts. Having lived a life of working quite hard to hide my breasts with hunched shoulders, I noticed that I was standing erect. I felt emotion rising, a mixture of joy and sadness, but tamped it down in time to feel a gentle breeze caress my torso. The following evening, while sitting in the Compost Café with friends, some of us decided to go for a moonlight swim. Interested in exploring toplessness further, I exited the pond with the others and, like the others, wrapped the towel around my waist to return to the Compost Café. Sitting around the table talking about politics and gossiping about the happenings on the farm, it was utterly unremarkable that I and other women had not covered our breasts. In reflecting on this, I wrote that "this is different than swimming in the river [back home]…. It's more normal here…and it's also a feminist practice."

Without the fear of unknown others encountering my nakedness and embracing the everyday practice of shirtlessness, it was possible for me to experience my body differently and to make its parts, specifically my breasts, differently meaningful. The feeling of the sun or the wind on the flesh of my breasts, in the context of Twin Oaks, was a reminder of my shirtlessness as a feminist performance. As such, the sensations

invited thoughts of concealment and fear as products of off the farm culture. The sun warmed my breasts and I thought of uninvited and unpleasant cat-calls, of walking faster at night, of never being safe. The wind blew and I thought of how justified and right it was that I was shirtless, how strong and confident the reclamation of my breasts as a desexualized part of my body made me. On the farm I felt solidarity with others who performed shirtlessness; I felt empowered. To hell with how others made sense of my body. I knew it differently and they had no (normative) right to see it any other way.

My experience with shirtlessness in many ways reflected Komar's 1979 experience at a women's only dance on the farm (Komar, 1989, pp. 201-203). Like me, Komar, a self-identified older and more corpulent woman, had struggled with her beliefs, inculcated off the farm, about how others would read her body. Also like me, Komar came to understand that no one really cared to read her body on the farm; bodies just did not have the same meanings or meaningfulness on the farm as they did off the farm. Like other women who have danced, or swam, or worked with breasts and bodies unfettered, Komar rejoiced in her experience, felt a falling away of dominant U.S. cultural beauty and body norms. Komar also, rightly in my experience, marked women-only clothing optional gatherings as contexts in which women experienced toplessness and nudity as communicative performance of feminist solidarity. "I was naked among my sisters," she said, "It was like flying to be totally frank about my body, very different and much better than being naked alone. It was a statement, a commitment to me and to them" (Komar, 1989, p. 203).

During my time on the farm, female members were sometimes quite vocal in their appreciation for the practice of shirtlessness. Issy was one member who was well known

for her support of the new, more liberal shirtless policy. She had, as other members told me, grown more "okay" with her body as she performed shirtlessness. In a recorded interview, Issy talked with me about her experiences—her first, self-conscious performances and the function of subsequent performances to alter her experience of her body. In her words:

> Breasts, on the outside, were sexualized and so I still had that feeling of taboo about exposing that part of my body…. So a few weeks later [after the new policy was passed], I was topless in the tofu hut with an apron on and I was covered in okara. I didn't put my shirt back on, I just walked down the path [to the pond]. And, I was very aware of my breasts. It wasn't at a dance party where toplessness was the norm…. And so bit by bit I just did it and slowly I got way from seeing my breasts as objects…. Breasts were a part of my body. Here is my body… my breasts, stomach, arms…. I think it happens [that some members ogle breasts], but to me it's how I experience it. I'm not focused on my body, my being exposed, as a sexual thing.

As she spoke, Issy glowed. Her smile was wide and her eyes twinkled. She was excited to be talking about these experiences that she valued so highly. Performing shirtlessness in everyday scenes had developed within her an appreciation for her body as an integrated wholeness. Exposing parts of or the entirety of her body to the elements was not a sexualized performance—while Issy understood her body to be sexual, the appearance of her breasts in public spaces was not a sexualized image. If members noted her breasts, she understood this to be a person noting an aspect of her body that was not sexualized and was not separate from the sum of who she was as an embodied being.

Echoing my own experiences, those of Komar (1989), and other Oakers, Issy's words pointed to the feminist potential of Twin Oaks' Nudity Policy. Coming to the farm, Issy was self-conscious and hyper-aware of her body. Performing shirtlessness had eroded her self-conscious awareness of sexualized body parts learned off the farm.

Replacing the off the farm understanding of body parts, was an understanding of her body as a wholeness that functioned to safeguard the sexualization of any one part.

My point here has not been to say that all women performing shirtlessness would have the same experience—even on the farm. While some research suggests that U.S. women across racial and ethnic categories have similar beliefs and feelings about their breasts (Forbes & Frederick, 2008), research has also demonstrated that large-breasted women, more than their smaller-breasted counterparts, become defined by their (large) breasts, which are "associated with sexual openness, loose sexual morals and sexual licentiousness" (Millsted and Frith, 2003). It may be, then, that large-breasted women, more than small-breasted women, find the prospect of being shirtless both unsafe and unsettling.[4] It is indeed important to note that while shirtlessness was practiced across race and class lines, it was rare to see an older or more corpulent female member topless in outdoor public spaces. Likewise, during my fieldwork transmembers were not seen shirtless in public outdoor spaces—perhaps because clothing was an important part of their gendered performances (see Dozier, 2005).[5]

My point has been, however, that the performance of shirtlessness, understood as a feminist performance, has a liberatory potential for at least some women on the farm. This potential is understood to be due to the feminist meanings associated with breasts and the everyday performances of shirtlessness. As a practice, shirtlessness functioned to help (at least some) female members integrate their now (i.e., on the farm) desexualized

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[4] Future research may also investigate members' moral codes that influence the liberatory potential of shirtlessness.

[5] Clothing may be even more important on the farm than off the farm for male-to-female transmembers given the Oakian proscriptions on make-up and other cosmetic adornments (see Chapter 5).

breasts into the wholeness of their bodies. As the focus shifted from a sexualized body part to an integrated wholeness of female personhood, women experienced an increased sense of personal power, safety, and contentment with their bodies.

In sum, this chapter has explored Twin Oaks' Nudity Policy, specifically as it pertains to shirtlessness. The guiding questions of this chapter were: What do everyday communicative practices reveal about the significance of women's breasts on the farm? How has the meaningfulness of women's breasts been negotiated and evaluated by members? And, what might this say about Oakian culture more generally? In the first part of this chapter, the debate surrounding the 1988 policy was presented as a social drama. In this analysis, three key normative discursive positions were identified: egalitarianism, the farm as less restrictive than dominant U.S. culture, and nudity should be restricted on the farm. Also identified were three key dimensions of meaning associated with shirtlessness. One, women's breasts were seen as inherently sexual or they were understood to be one part of peoples' bodies. Two, the body itself was understood to be either social or private. And, three, the community was understood to be a home where members could do what they wanted to do or it was a community where members would have to monitor their behaviors. In the concluding section, I discussed shirtlessness as a feminist practice that desexualizes women's breasts and facilitates an experience of an integrated body.

CHAPTER 5

THE APPEARANCE OF STYLE: COMMUNICATION, GENDER, AND THE BODY ON THE FARM

> Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. (Butler, 1990, p. 44)

> Parts of our anatomy such as hair, face, genitals, limbs, or hands have long been of interest to anthropologists for the social and symbolic significance they bear. (Csordas, 1994, p. 5)

Bodies are made meaningful in particular contexts according to cultural discourses. In exploring the symbolic and expressive aspects of cultural bodies Carbaugh (1996a) has demonstrated that the Finnish coding of bodies as natural, simple, and strong is not only heard in everyday conversations, but is seen in everyday practices such as nudity in public saunas. Whereas much research in the cultural communication of gender, like gender and communication work more generally (see Bow & Wood, 2006), has focused on speech communication rather than embodiment (Berry, 1997; Fitch, 1998; Philipsen, 1975, 1976), this chapter seeks to add gender to the conversation surrounding embodied communication and culture begun by Carbaugh's (1996a) Finnish study. More specifically, this chapter focuses on the body as a site of culturally communicative gendering practices. By focusing on the appearance and meaningfulness of bodies on the farm, key aspects of normative Oakian embodiment are explicated below in order to answer the guiding question of this chapter: How is gender an aspect of normative embodied practices on the farm?

In this analysis, embodied communicative practices were conceptualized as both communicative and cultural, both symbolic and regulated. In this way, how Oakers tended to perform their bodies was understood as a communicative practice, defined as "a pattern of situated, message endowed action" (Carbaugh, Gibson, & Milburn, 1997, emphasis deleted). The messages that were attributed to embodied practices were understood to be shaped and made meaningful according to culturally coded systems of symbols, or discourses (Carbaugh, 1996b). As I made sense of the body during my fieldwork, I noted moments when Oakers talked about bodies as well as prominent embodied practices, what can be called, following Carbaugh (1988a), "key symbols" of embodiment. I used field notes (18 entries averaging one page), parts of 8 interviews (averaging between 15 and 20 minutes), six and one-half hours of video recordings, and Twin Oaks' documents to develop analyses of these communicative practices. Descriptions drew from instances of body- and language-based forms of communication. The analytic processes explored the relationships between embodied community practices as well as the juxtaposition of these practices with those found off the farm.

A vital part of analytic procedures identified key discourses that made embodied practices meaningful. Symbolic ways of comporting, adorning, or talking about the body, then, implicated environmental, feminist, and health discourses. These analyses laid bare the meanings and premises that make normative embodiment culturally intelligible for Oakers. The performance of these practices was understood as a form of symbolic embodiment that marked members as following a code of natural, healthy living. The performance of this code, in combination with the relative smallness of the

community, functioned to "desensationalize" bodies on the farm. From the perspective of body practices, disrupting gender on the farm required both personal knowledge of people and an emphasis on "desensationalizing" the body—its size and shape, its adornment, and its products.

In what follows, I present a description of a normative, culturally meaningful Twin Oakian style of embodiment—specifically the size and shape of bodies, body products, and adornment. I do not suggest that I account for the full range of body styles on the farm, but I do argue that what I describe in the following chapter are normative and culturally meaningful embodied practices on the farm.

Body Size and Shape

During my time on the farm, the size, shape and composition of members' bodies seemed unremarkable—the vast majority of bodies on the farm were within the average range of height and weight and all looked like bodies found across the United States—some were thinner, others more corpulent. It was not the appearance, then, of bodies on the farm that was remarkable, it was what was said and not said about these bodies and the meaningfulness of this communication that was remarkable. On the farm, nonchalant discussions of dissatisfaction with one's body size was not a typical topic of everyday public conversation. Conversations about such body issues, generally understood to be an issue confined to the female membership, were normally held in private contexts.[1] Talking privately amongst friends was a preferred alternative to

[1] In my time on the farm, I discussed body size, in private conversations, with only three members—two female and one male. While the male's focal reason for wanting to and indeed reducing his size was to be a healthier person, the two female members tended to

publicly communicated dissatisfaction because the circulation of negative feelings about one's body in everyday talk was understood to perpetuate the sexist discourses found in dominant U.S. culture. As Sage asserted:

> That's [body issues] what you talk to your friends about—body image and other things like personal insecurity. I don't want to talk about it in groups of women like it's a women's issue because it comes from a culture that I don't approve of. We can end up perpetuating it.

As discussed in Chapter 3, a key quality of Twin Oaks' culture was a feminist valuation of females and the feminine that sought to counter oppressive aspects of dominant U.S. culture. In terms of body size and shape, feminist beliefs shaped the communication practices to produce a norm the guided public communication: *On the farm, members should support the feminist valuation of differently shaped and sized bodies by opting to talk privately with friends rather than to talk negatively about their bodies in public spaces*. Adhering to this norm was understood to counter the emphasis on thinness as a normative beauty ideal for women in the US.

Twin Oaks' feminist culture, coupled with the paucity of public communication about body shapes and sizes it helped to produce, created an environment that some female members experienced as pressuring them to not voice body dissatisfaction on the farm. As Beth, an affable twenty-something, said, "I struggle with it [body image] because I've gained weight at Twin Oaks and I feel like I can't bring it up because there's a counter-culture pressure to be a good feminist." As this member suggested, the lack of public communication about body issues did not mean that female members did not experience body discomfort on the farm, but rather that the members who did tended

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focus on sexiness. With such a small sample size conclusions can only be suggestive, but these conversations did substantiate the idea that more females than males experienced body dissatisfaction.

not to talk about their discomfort in public. Furthermore, the discomfort that some members had with their bodies was understood not as a product of Twin Oaks' culture, but rather as a product of dominant U.S. culture that was brought to the farm—a "cultural hangover." A "cultural hangover" was a term used by some Oakers to explain the times when members' everyday practices reflected dominant U.S. culture rather than an alternative, utopian system of believes supported on the farm. In terms of body size and shape, this term explained how it was that women experienced discomfort with their weight in a community that supported both women and feminist critiques of thinness as a key part of oppressive U.S. beauty ideals (see Bartky, 1987). Thus, concerns over weight were framed as concerns that women learned to have off the farm and that they sometimes have difficulty relinquishing on the farm.

Importantly, differently gendered women may experience the size and composition of their bodies differently within the context of dominant U.S. culture and, thus, not all female members may have had to resist "cultural hangovers" in order to practice an Oakian way of not communicating about the body. For example, while African American females in the United States have not been immune to experiencing dissatisfaction with the corpulence of their bodies (Grant, et al, 1999), research on body issues has found that African American women with strong ethnic identities have tended to be better equipped to resist mass media depictions of ideal thinness and have tended not to succumb to eating disorders (Zhang, Dixon, & Conrad, 2009). This research was supported by Watermelon, an African American member of average body size, who brought to Twin Oaks a belief in the strength and beauty of a body that was not excessively thin. According to Watermelon:

> White women are taught that they are only okay if they are a size two and fit into these little slots. If they don't then they aren't useful. Black women are taught that by white standards…and black women are taught to be comfortable with themselves by other black men and women. We want strength and the ability to deal with life. You can't sufficiently deal with it if you are hungry and weak.

This orientation to body size was supported by Twin Oaks' culture and demonstrated that not all women on the farm arrived with the same set of feminist issues and struggles.

In addition to the feminist culture active on the farm, there was another aspect of Oakian living that explained why weight was not a commonly discussed issue. Many members in the community talked about how much of life was lived publicly on the farm. With member bedrooms being the only private space and with gossip being a valued form of communicating current happenings, much of what would be considered private and personal off the farm was public on the farm. Break-ups, romantic interactions, embarrassing moments, arguments… it all happened, to varying degrees, in public. As we will see below, even eliminating body products was done in public spaces. With so much of life lived publicly, members' knowledge of others extended far beyond the appearance of their body. "Being seen" on the farm, then, meant that members knew a range of personal information about other members. In terms of the body, "being seen" shifted the focus from the exterior, the surface, to people's behaviors and demeanors. As Tad suggested, "We're smaller [than broader U.S. society]. Who you are matters way more than how you look…whether or not you'll find friends, a partner, whether or not you'll get work. How people will respond to you." In a context where everyday communication emphasized personality characteristics, weight issues

were understood to be less important because what a member looked like was only a small, de-emphasized part of all that was known about a person on the farm.

Above, body size was addressed from the position of members who had (or had not) experienced discomfort with the corpulence of their bodies—an experience that was understood to happen less on the farm than in dominant U.S. culture. Now, the emphasis turns to members who comment on female members' bodies in a form of non-private communication. Here, non-private communication is used to indicate communication that did not include the person whose body was in question as well as communication in public spaces. In this area and while there were some aspects of bodies that were talked about, as will be addressed below, there were others that simply were not. Body size was one of these. *On the farm, members should support the feminist valuation of differently shaped and sized bodies by not commenting on the size of women's breasts or bodies in non-private conversations*. (This norm can be understood as a dimension of the Oakian focus on confidentiality discussed in Chapter 6.)

In an interview, Betty talked with me about egregious violations of this norm (to not talk about women's bodies). I was already aware of one example as it was discussed in a number of everyday conversations during my stay on the farm. In this example, a male member had been heard commenting negatively on the corpulence of female visitors, ostensibly because their size made them both less attractive and less able to do the physically demanding work that farm life required. Other examples concerned comments about women's breasts that Betty had heard talk about or had witnessed: a male member saying that he liked the way women's breasts looked while they were

lactating, another male member commenting that a visitor "was really stacked," and a mixed-sex group of people discussing the "perfectly shaped breasts" of a female member. In all of these cases, the communication was understood to violate the norm to not talk about the size or shape of women's bodies. As such, the comments were objectionable from a feminist influenced Oakian position. In the first example, the member was barred for a time from working with visitors; in the latter examples, members were told verbally by both men and women that their communication was offensive and that it objectified women.

Even when comments were couched in terms of concern, it was not typically acceptable to inquire about or comment on a female member's body in non-private conversation. This was made clear to me when, during a recorded interview, Holly crossed the Courtyard, waved in greeting, and exchanged brief words with my interviewee about meeting up later that day. I noticed that Holly looked much thinner and commented after she entered a residence, "She's looking thin." In a softened voice May clarified that Holly's weight loss was not intended, but that she had been sick. I expressed my concern and we continued the interview. Later that day, I saw Holly in my residence. Seeing me, she said, "I heard that you were asking about my weight loss today." Even though I had been communicating concern, my comment on Holly's weight warranted a remark. Because Holly was not smiling and did not lead with "I heard that you were concerned…" this conversation was a gentle sanction on inquiring about or commenting on another's body. Even when the conversation was not a negative evaluation of another's body, the norm was to not comment.

In sum and from an Oakian perspective, body image issues were brought to the farm by members who were inculcated by dominant U.S. culture to value thinness. On the farm, members experiencing body issues and wanting to talk about it did so in private so as not to perpetuate a U.S. emphasis on the body. Furthermore, the size and shape of female bodies on the farm were not to be a topic of everyday communication; it was not acceptable to comment about women's bodies. While there were these restrictions on body talk, there were also instances when members did talk about the size and shape of their bodies. Now, the focus shifts to these instances of permitted public communication that pertained to body size and shape.

The summer of my residency was the summer of the "lemonade cleanse." Beginning with just a few members, soon it became common to see a number of members walking around the community with Mason jars filled with a mixture of water, freshly squeezed organic lemon juice, and cayenne pepper. A popular cleansing fast that can be accessed on the Internet, many members adhered to its protocol. Public talk surrounding the fast mostly included the taste of the drink, at what stage a member was (what type of food was being eaten), the consistency of bowel movements, and how hot it made the member. Explanations for why members were doing the cleanse were articulated in terms of the health benefits of cleaning the digestive system—increased energy and improved immune system functioning.

Weight loss, however, was also mentioned, but it was framed as an outcome of cleansing to improve health. Thus, as one cleansed, one got rid of stored fecal matter in the intestines, which promoted better digestion and weight loss. At least one member was fasting to improve health and was also known to be working to reduce her body's

size. Sliding around the end of the steam table at dinner, a practice members did in order to form two lines and expedite the acquisition of food, April said with a smile, "I can fit behind here now! I can get food from this side." Two members who knew that April had been trying to lose weight offered their congratulatory support. While members other than April grew visibly thinner while doing the fast, April was the only member who I observed to publically comment on her weight loss—and she was the only member who was actively (and publically) working to achieve a smaller, more average body size. The Mason jar filled with spicy lemonade, whether or not members privately hoped to lose weight, was symbolic of a commitment to health, not the achievement of a thin body form that was celebrated off the farm.[2] Being a more corpulent member, April's weight loss was understood as a part of improved health.

Even though the fast was couched in terms of health, some non-fasting members turned a critical eye to the practice of fasting and to the fact that female members comprised the vast majority of fasters. As one member reported:

> Some of us were in a conversation about what people are eating or not eating and the fast and someone turned to me and said, "This is like diet porn." I felt like it was largely women having these conversations in the same way you'd hear how women [off the farm] talk about losing weight on the Atkins diet, but because it was drinking lemonade as a fast for health it was acceptable.

[2] Using the lemonade cleanse as a guise to loose weight in a context that does not support women actively trying to achieve the thin form idealized as quintessentially beautiful in dominant U.S. culture is not outside the realm of possibility. It would, in fact, be quite similar to Martins, Pliner, and O'Connor's (1999) argument that some men and women in the US adopt a vegetarian diet as a covert dieting behavior.

From the perspective of those who were critical of members who were fasting, the "lemonade cleanse" seemed more like female members engaging in public talk about (reducing) body size, which was proscribed on the farm, and less like healthy practices.

In terms of body size, a "cultural hangover" coupled with a strong feminist undercurrent to reject dominant U.S. cultural practices that were understood to diminish women's power meant that female Oakers, more than their male counterparts, were likely to feel the tension of being a good feminist on the farm.[3] An intelligible counter U.S. discourse, from an Oakian perspective, suggested that a desire to reduce one's size should be based on health—not to support a dominant U.S. belief that a thin body is a beautiful body. Such an orientation would not only undermine feminism, but it would emphasize the body's surface, which was understood to be unnecessary because members "were seen" for much more than their appearance on the farm. Taken in sum, norms surrounding communication and body size and shape could be stated thusly: *On the farm, members should support the feminist valuation of differently shaped and sized bodies by opting not to talk negatively about their bodies in public spaces, by not commenting on the size of women's breasts or bodies in non-private conversations, and by focusing on the health of bodies rather than their appearance. Members desiring to talk about body discomfort should do so in private conversations with friends*.

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[3] Heywood and Drake (1997) explore the tensions born of having a feminist ideology and living in a cultural context (the US) that bestows a form of pleasurable, but ephemeral power to those women who can achieve it (see Bartky, 1987). They see these tensions as defining features of Third Wave Feminism that "makes things 'messier' by *embracing* second wave [feminist] critique as a central definitional thread while emphasizing ways that desires and pleasures subject to critique can be used to rethink and enliven activist work" (p. 7, emphasis in the original).

Body Products and the Natural Body

Norms surrounding substances that a body produced, its products, were located in communicative body practices that symbolized health, environmentalism, and feminism. Oakers talk about body products and the everyday practices that surrounded body products revealed the normative body to be "natural"—a body that was celebrated for its innate qualities. Rather than comporting the body's natural qualities, members tended to embrace these qualities as part of a larger discourse that celebrated and sought to conserve a natural environment. From an Oakian perspective, the natural body had three key features: it was hairy, it eliminated, and it produced odors. The communicative practices that constituted these three categories of body products were understood as countering a dominant U.S. cultural way of comporting and restricting the body. For some body products—such as urine, feces, and odor—there was no clear association with gender or a feminist consciousness. For others—such as hair and blood—there was.

Odor

One morning while brushing my teeth, I spoke with a long-term member and resident of my residence who had just finished taking a shower and was drying off with a community towel. In casual conversation, Dave began to explain that while some members did not bathe regularly, he took a short shower every morning. His reasons were two-fold. One, a shower helped him to wake up and, two, he didn't want to emit body odor. Elaborating on this later point, he explained that some members really could use a shower as it was unpleasant to smell their bodies' odors in the public spaces of our

residence. Happening early in my residency, this conversation revealed a tension between the general norm at Twin Oaks that members should maximize their individual happiness and an emphasis on conserving water—first impressed upon me during the land tour I took as a visitor. On this tour, Ultra Violet pointed to the site of the new, deeper well and explained Oakian water conservation practices: not taking showers and not flushing toilets as often as one does off the farm. Months later, there was a discussion about the showerhead in my residence, which was not a low-flow head. Reference was made to the "water wars." Noting how the "water wars" were talked about and after reading archival data, I grew to better understand both Ultra Violet's and Dave's communication.

As often happened with activism on the farm, community-level water conservation began with a small group of members believing that the community as a whole should reduce the amount of water it used. Converting this belief into activism on the farm, the members posted O&I papers calling for more conservation. The activists asked members to reduce the amount of water used by flushing toilets less frequently, taking shorter and less or no showers, turning water off at sink taps whenever possible, and using low-flow shower heads. In part, this activism tapped into larger U.S. environmental discourses, but in part it was also based in the material reality of having a shallow well during an extended drought. While the "water wars" happened several years before I lived at Twin Oaks, member's body practices reflected a discourse of water conservation. Within this context, a body's smell did not have to be washed away with soap and water. A body could smell as a body that sweated smelled. While most members did bathe regularly in some fashion—showering, taking a tub, swimming in

the pond—some did not. For those whose body odor permeated public living spaces, as Dave discussed, this might be cause for comment, but for those who did not wash odor away the odor symbolized a commitment to water conservation as an environmental practice rather than slothenliness—a point that even Dave made clear when I asked him why he thought some members did not shower regularly. "They think we need to conserve water," he explained.

Discontinuing the use of deodorant on the farm added another layer to the discourse on body practices that pertain to body odor. While the discourse of water conservation rendered acceptable—even celebrated—body odor as a symbol of an environmental consciousness, there was another articulated discourse that refined an understanding of on the farm body practices. This aspect was highlighted in numerous conversations when body-care products were discussed. Deodorant, like other body products used off the farm, was understood to be unnecessary and, unless it was an alternative brand that was understood by members to be natural, harmful to members' health. The practice of forgoing unnecessary products or, when the product was deemed beneficial, opting for "natural" products was exemplified by a conversation that I had with the House Manager while stocking supplies in a community building. As House Manager, Betty was responsible for buying toilet paper, soap, tampons, toothpaste, and the like. In talking about toothpaste, she explained that the community bought their toothpaste at a dollar store in town, "It's not the good kind… it's not [an all-natural brand]." She continued, "it all has fluoride…and some members believe fluoride is toxic." The toothpaste, like other common U.S. consumer body-care products, were

understood by members to made with chemicals that were unhealthy. According to these members, better choices were natural products that were less harmful.

On the farm, odor was understood to be something that bodies naturally produced. It was, of course, acceptable not to smell strongly; managing body odor could be achieved without wasting water (swimming in the pond, limiting bathing, and using low-flow showers) or using harmful products. For those whose odor was easily smelled, they were understood as practicing a form of environmentalism with environmental practices being celebrated on the farm. In sum, *on the farm if a member wanted to be known as an environmental and health conscious person, the member should not waste water or use toxic products to reduce or conceal the natural odors that their bodies produce.*

Hair

A second key feature of a natural body was that it was hairy. Research on hair has argued that it has been a key component of embodied performances of identity. Hair on the head, face, body, arms and legs has been found to be a body product that is both personal and cultural (Weitz, 2001) as well as symbolic of membership in social groups (such as hippies, skinheads and punks, Synnott, 1997). During my time on the farm, hair was a light-hearted topic of conversation. Members talked about managing their hair when they went off the farm (e.g., shaving or cutting their hair), they talked about how hairy they were; how nice it was that being hairy was not a political statement on the farm; and they discussed how to style the hair on their heads or faces. This type of communication, combined with everyday communicative practices, was a performance

of an Oakian embodiment of naturalness that was in opposition to dominant U.S. forms of embodiment.

On the farm, unlike in dominant U.S. culture, all varieties of body hair were celebrated as it naturally grows. This aspect of Oakian cultural body practices was demonstrated on a warm summer night when five members and two visitors gathered in the Compost Café:

> "Can I feel your leg hair?" a visitor asked MCR, a male member.
>
> "Sure," he replied, extending his leg with a smile.
>
> "It's so soft," she said. "I think leg hair is sexy."
>
> "Do you want to feel mine?" asked Carmel, the other visitor, standing to walk closer.
>
> "I always get shit for not having leg hair," April says feeling her hairless leg. "I just don't have it. It's not that I shave it." Then, looking at my legs, stated, "Yours grows all funny—in patches."
>
> I knew the patchiness of my leg hair was a result of waxing, but I opted not to out myself as someone who conformed to off the farm beauty standards. "Yes, it does," I said.

In this scene, as in other scenes, the natural growth of hair was not only accepted but was also admired and celebrated. Conversely, the absence of leg hair, like hair on other parts of the body, was suspect and warranted comment. For example, while talking with current and ex-members during an anniversary celebration an ex-member, seeing the stubble that was my armpit hair, asked: "What is that?" Clearly this member didn't pose his question because he was genuinely unsure what was in my armpit (as was the case with a two-year old child who posed the same question of a different member whose armpit hair had been shaved a week prior). Rather, the member posed his question to call attention to the violation of normative Oakian embodiment and to invite my

comment on the meaningfulness of my stubble—was I conforming to U.S. beauty customs or was there another explanation?

The celebration of hair on the farm was connected to two discourses: environmentalism and feminism, both of which were understood to counter dominant U.S. normative practices. As with odor above, Oakian environmental discourses supported the natural growth of hair in two ways. The first connected to conserving water and positioned shaving as unnecessary waste of it. The second understood shaving products as potential sources of harmful chemicals. A conversation with Fire highlighted another aspect of the environmental practice of not shaving. Sitting on a picnic table in the Courtyard during a post-fieldwork visit, I asked why there were now members who shaved their legs. She commented that there were a few new members, but that they didn't fit in well. Then, offering the example of one young woman who viewed herself as an environmentalist, explained that the brand of shaving cream (and deodorant) that she used was made by a subsidiary of a large corporation that engaged in environmentally unsound practices. Thus, this new member's shaving practices rendered both her self-identification as an environmentalist and her fit in the community questionable.

For female members, the practice of not shaving leg hair was also a feminist practice that countered dominant U.S. notions of beauty. Shaving leg hair, a normative practice in Western culture, has been understood by some feminists to construct a version of femininity that is both appearance-focused and child-like (Toerien and Wilkinson, 2003). For female Oakers, not shaving leg and armpit hair was a clear refusal of U.S. normative femininity. Unlike feminist research, however, Oakers' talk

about body hair tended to celebrate and highlight the importance of natural beauty rather than the rejection of a femininity that infantilizes women.

Managing hair on the farm also included practices that made head hair a rich site of personal expression. As Weitz's (2001) research has suggested, Oakers' hair was both profoundly personal (associated with a person's body) and public (able to be seen by others) and was therefore an important aspect of Oakian embodiment. Unlike the emphasis on natural hair explicated above, head-hair was also cut, colored, and styled to achieve a rich variety of forms—all of which were unremarkable on the farm. This point was impressed upon me when I saw a huge hair clip lying on a dining table in ZK. I commented that it was the biggest clip I had ever seen and began to use it in what I had hoped would be a funny effort to contain my locks. A member watching my antics commented with a half-smile, "you can wear crazy things in your hair here and no one cares. No one pays attention." Indeed, no one seemed to—not even the people with whom I had been talking.

In the context of a community of people who embody naturalness, it seemed incongruous to me that some members dyed and adorned their hair. Some opted for non-chemical dyes and colors, while others opted for vibrant pinks, blues, and greens. Members adorned their hair by braiding or dreading colorful strands of yarn and twine into it. None of this was remarkable for Oakers. Neither was it remarkable for females to shave off their head hair or for males to grow long head and facial hair. What was remarkable was when men shaved off their facial hair or went from shaggy hair to a clean-cut, short style.

Men who cut their hair short or shaved their beards solicited questions as to their reasons for the change and members' communication typically expressed surprise and regret. One member was told that he looked like a cop after shaving his beard, which was a comment that was not considered a compliment. The normative management of hair on the farm, then, was about being natural, but it was also about using hair to express oneself. These expressions were understood as personal, but they were also regulated by an undercurrent that whatever expression one chose, it was better to not enact mainstream U.S. beauty ideals. For those members who occasionally used products to alter the color of their hair, their practice was not understood as an unnatural effort to reproduce off the farm beauty standards. For men who cut or shaved their hair, it was a style change that quickly became mundane. As long as the management of hair did not reflect and underlying effort to achieve U.S. beauty ideals, it was understood by Oakers to be a personal, sometimes outrageous, expression of one's personality, unremarkable even if it was noteworthy. Succinctly and summarily, *on the farm if members wanted to convey environmentalist or feminist beliefs, they should let their body hair grow naturally, but these members can personalize their head-hair by using dyes, razors, and items of adornment that do not reflect dominant U.S. normative beauty standards.*

Excreted products

The third natural feature of bodies was that bodies excrete. Whatever was excreted was understood to be a natural product and there was no reason to hide these products. In public discourses on the farm there were two general categories of excreted

products: waste products that all members excreted and reproductive products that some females excreted. Naturalizing excreted body products relied on moving what has been behind closed doors in dominant U.S. culture to the public realm on the farm. Thus, naturalizing embodied communicative practices increased the visibility of excreting and excreted products.

One of the first normative Oakian practices that I learned while a visitor at Twin Oaks was "if it's yellow, be mellow. If it's brown, flush it down." Connecting to the aforementioned water conservation discourse, this saying meant that when one urinated (yellow), one should not flush, but when one defecated (brown), one should. Because this was a normative practice on the farm, it was common to have other members' urine in the toilet bowl that would, sometimes, emit a powerful smell. One sign, posted in a residence first-floor bathroom, suggested that "even if it [the smell of urine] can be smelled down the hall and all the way to the kitchen" one should still practice being mellow.

While the majority of members used bathrooms or one of the composting toilets, voiding one's bladder did not need to take place in a bathroom. This was the second aspect of elimination that I learned during my time as a visitor on the farm. Throughout my time on the farm, I noticed workers leaving the garden to relieve themselves in the grass beside the road. I saw members exit residences and walk several feet in order to urinate. And, I saw a small child being held in a squatting position beside his residence. Members grew so accustomed to being able to urinate outside that they talked about being off the farm and, realizing that they needed to relieve themselves, found themselves surveying the land rather than the buildings to find an appropriate place.

While the practice of outdoor urination was connected to water conservation and environmentalism, it was also connected to an Oakian promotion of people growing more comfortable with body functions.

Just as outdoor urination was a practice that took place in public, indoor elimination was also not necessarily private. While bathrooms in common buildings had either stalls or doors that were typically closed if the toilet was being used, it was common practice in residences to have an open-door bathroom norm. This meant that if one was to use the toilet, the door would be kept open so that others could use the sink, the shower, or the tub. A very long-term member suggested that this policy dated back to the founding of the community when there were far fewer people and quite limited bathroom space. Because the community, with less numbers, was more like a family, an open-door policy was a relatively innocuous pragmatic solution to limited bathroom space. Because people found that practicing what was then a necessity—having an open door—was freeing and good, the practice became a norm that continued even when there were plenty of bathrooms.[4] During my stay, my residence discussed whether or not to put a curtain between the toilet and the rest of the bathroom's amenities. The curtain would offer privacy for members using the toilet. Aside from concerns that the curtain would block natural light from the window and be aesthetically displeasing, members argued that the open door policy promoted members becoming more comfortable with the natural processes of excreting.

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[4] Bathrooms were also constructed to have open bathtubs and showers. For example, in one community bathroom, there was a "double shower" and a "double tub." The tub was designed so that more than one person could share a bath. The shower was designed with two showerheads so that two people could shower next to each other. Indeed, they would have to if both intended to shower at the same time.

The above discussion of naturalizing body excretions by making them publically visible communicative practices, spoke to all members, but omitted a product that many female members managed. As Issy pointed out, the norm to be mellow if it is yellow and to flush it down if it is brown omitted one body product that could be found in a toilet—menstrual blood. While the norm failed to attend to, or naturalize, this body product, public conversations about menstruation did occur with some regularity. Members talked in public spaces in conversational tones about bleeding and having menstrual cramps. In a Courtyard conversation where some members were drinking a beer and one was hula-hooping, a member asked the tripper, who happened also to be her dating partner, if he would feel comfortable buying a menstrual cup for her. While not as naturalized as urine or feces, menstruation was certainly not contained to private spaces and individual female's concerns. Not only were conversations about menstruation held in public spaces amongst a range of members, but menstrual products were openly visible in public bathrooms and were just as likely to be bought and stocked by male members as by female members.

Breast milk was also a naturalized body product on the farm. Breastfeeding was talked about as a healthy, natural way to nourish a child. As such, it was performed in public spaces, without covering, and with children from birth to aged three and beyond. On one occasion, while sitting at the outside fun table for lunch, a group of members and visitors were eating lunch as a nursing mother expressed some breast milk into a glass. Asking if anyone wanted to taste it, she passed the glass around the table. While some passed on the opportunity, three-quarters of those present took a small sip. Having tasted the milk, members commented on its sweetness—a quality of the milk that was

surprising for most. As these instances demonstrate, breast milk, as other body excretions, was understood as an unsensational, natural body product that was acceptable to talk about and express (or excrete) publically.

Analyzing body products on the farm revealed a connection to both the health of the body (not using toxic body products) and of the environment (water conservation, reducing pollution). Through the articulation with discourses of health and environmentalism, the body was positioned by Oakers as fundamentally natural. Rather than emphasizing the comportment and containment of body products found in the management of the body in dominant U.S. culture, Oakers tended to celebrate a natural appearing body as well as the products it naturally produced. These innate products included odor, hair, and excretions. While menstrual blood was not as naturalized as urine or feces, it, along with breast milk, was a part of public communicative practices.

Body Adornment

Entwistle (2000) has argued that "dress is…a situated bodily practice that is embedded within the social world and fundamental to microsocial order" (p. 325). From her perspective, clothing can be thought of as an aspect of everyday, individual choices that are governed by social norms—these choices are not frivolous even though they may be mundane. Clothing choices on the farm were, indeed, a rich aspect of Oakian cultural practices and, as such, deeply meaningful even as they were often routine and sometimes playful choices.

It would be a mistake to attribute Oakian style, or perhaps any dress style, to a choice based on a set of cultural beliefs and values without considering other contextual

factors. On the farm, working conditions and member income influenced style. Members worked in a combination of farming, light industrial, domestic, and desk jobs. For most members, this meant working in jobs that were both physically demanding and replete with dirt, grime, and foodstuff. Because working in the garden, the dairy barns, the kitchen, the fields, the warehouse, the tofu hut, or the auto shop meant that bodies needed a full range of movement and that clothing would get dirty, members wore clothes that were physically comfortable, washable, and damageable. Even though there were a variety of Commie Clothes (community clothing) options for clothing, Oakers adopted, in the words of one long-term member, a "TO grunge" style that featured well worn, holey t-shirts, sweaters, and patched jeans and shorts.

While working in the hammock shop on a cold winter day, I found myself engaged in a stimulating conversation with Paul who inadvertently alerted me to this aspect of Oakian style. I was wearing an old green wool sweater and Paul commented that he liked it. I thanked him and explained that I really liked it too—it was warm and fit well—and that it had been in my wardrobe for years.

> "Oh," he said realizing that it had not come from Commie Clothes, "I knew it wasn't a Twin Oaks sweater."
>
> "How did you know that?" I asked, thinking that it must be because Commie Clothes did not stock wool sweaters.
>
> "It doesn't look like a Twin Oaks sweater."
>
> "What does a Twin Oaks sweater look like?" I asked, puzzled.
>
> "Well," Paul explained, "I don't see any holes in it."
>
> Laughing, I showed him the three holes that were on the sleeves and the one hole along the shoulder seam.

This example suggested that it's not the fit, fabric, or fashion of a sweater that marked it as an Oakian sweater; it was whether or not the sweater had holes. This exchange was not to suggest that all Oakian clothing was holey, but rather that some clothing did not look worn enough to be Oakian. Oakian style was also visible when Oakers wore mismatched socks or flip-flops, patched jeans, duct tape over holes in down coats, and tutus to stay cool. This style emphasized the utility of clothing to do what it was needed to do—keep members warm in the winter and cool in the summer, cover the parts of their bodies that were to be covered on the farm, and make work a more comfortable experience—rather than the newness or trendiness of the garment as would be more expected off the farm. As a practice, continuing to wear even well-worn clothing when other options were available emphasized the reuse of material goods and functioned to conserve money. As Rafaeli and Pratt (1993) argue, organizational members' dress conveys core organizational values. In the Twin Oaks context, Oakian fashion tapped into conservation discourses that reflected a more general interest in shunning U.S. beauty culture and embracing environmental discourses associated with reducing waste.

Adornment on the farm was restricted not only by the pragmatic elements of a farm/industrial lifestyle. There were also factors associated with the choice to work where one lived and to share income. Both of these choices limited the amount of disposable income any one member had and resulted in limiting the range of style choices that were made. For example, high-end or name brand fashions would not be sustainable choices for members who were given a daily allowance of $2.50—even if they were desired ones. Here, thrift combined with working conditions to influence style on the farm. As an egalitarian community, Twin Oaks took responsibility for

clothing its members—keeping a large room stocked with a wide variety of clothing including undergarments, skirts, dresses, shorts, pants, coats, shoes, boots, socks, and hats. While the community had hundreds of thousands of dollars in investments and could have chosen to stock new, store-bought clothes, this was not a choice the community made.[5] As discussed above, spending money on new clothing was understood to be unnecessary when, for example, a holey sweater continued to keep one warm. The community's decision that clothing was an unimportant area on which to spend money and individual members' lack of economic resources translated into an emphasis on frugal living and the functional aspect of clothing that all individual members necessarily embraced. As Tea highlighted in a conversation about parenting and budgets, "if you want to take your kid shopping in the mall, or take them to see first run movies, or enroll them in expensive sports…this isn't the place. But if you want to shop frugally, shop outta Commie Clothes or on E-bay or something, then we can support that."

Even with these work- and economic-based factors influencing members' clothing choices, Oakers still made sense of the adornment of bodies according to cultural discourses that reflected the differences between an Oakian style of body adornment and that seen off the farm. In responding to interview questions asking members to articulate differences between life on the farm and off the farm, members often referenced the differences in styles of adornment. For example, members working in office jobs on the farm did not dress as people who had an office job off the farm would. On the farm, office workers wore clothing that they found comfortable—t-shirts

[5] I would like to thank Ultra Violet for information on the extent of the community's wealth.

and jeans or shorts—and not typical off the farm professional clothing, which was understood to be "power" suits for men and "sexy" suits for women. Off the farm clothing style, then, was thought to position men as powerful and women as sexualized workers with cleavage revealing shirts and high-heals. On the farm, members were encouraged to dress comfortably, whatever that meant to a member, and gender-based distinctions in wardrobes were discarded.[6] While most members dressed casually in t-shirts and jeans or shorts, there were occasions were adornment was playful and clothing took on a costume-like quality. These moments crystalized Oakian discourses that surrounded adornment.

Personalized Oakian Style: Comfort, Silly Play, and Gender Play

Twin Oaks' adornment norms, bolstered by a norm to maximize personal happiness, promoted experimentation with clothing choices to produce a *follow your bliss, dress as you wish* norm (see Chapter 4.). Experimentation was promoted in the guidebook given to visitors. In the "Living like a Twin Oaker" section, it explained that visitors should "Lighten Up" and "take advantage of [their] time [on the farm] to dress comfortably or silly…don't brush [their] hair, perhaps put a flower in it." This

[6] There was sometimes talk among members as to whether or not a woman wearing high-heals and power suits would be celebrated for her clothing choices. Typically, when this conversation was begun members would invoke an ex-member who came to the farm after leaving her job as a "high-powered stock broker." This former member was known to wear fir coats, which were seen by Oakers as an impractical choice given that living at Twin Oaks meant living a "farm lifestyle." Thus, while encouraged to wear what was comfortable was an oft communicated norm, there were limits. Chapter 4, for example, discussed shirtlessness as a choice some members found to be comfortable, but it was also regulated. Similarly, choices that Oakers might read as not complying with feminist, environmentalist, egalitarian, health, or naturalizing discourses would likely be open to public critique.

orientation encouraged visitors and members to experiment with clothing choices and to move away from U.S. styles of adornment. Adornment, then, was understood not only as a pragmatic choice, but also as an individual choice—a choice that should not be curtailed by the dictates of dominant U.S. culture. In terms of gendering practices and adornment, Oakers' focused on countering dominant U.S. culture's rigid gender codes related to apparel. What was seen, then, was a refusal of gender-specific adornment beauty norms so that women did not wear make-up and only limited amounts of small jewelry. What was also seen was a spectrum of playfulness and gender bending and blending that was visible in everyday practices, but that was more pronounced during festivities and social gatherings—the times when Oakers cleaned up and had fun.

During a Courtyard discussion amongst a handful of members, Carl, a middle-aged male member, joined our conversation. Carl was wearing gold lamee short-shorts and a tank top. Off the farm, one might expect these shorts to be worn by a woman and paired with an equally shiny black shirt and heels. In the Twin Oaks context, the juxtaposition of the casual-grungy shirt and flip-flops with the shiny shorts highlighted characteristics of this member—his fun-loving, devil-may-care attitude, his artistic eye—as well as the freedom Oakers had to wear clothes designed for members of the opposite sex. Occurring in the last months of my stay on the farm, Carl's shorts seemed unremarkable to me, but not to Toby who offered his approval, "I just love those shorts." As the conversation drifted toward the fun Carl had wearing the shorts, I learned that he had been asked not to wear them to town because locals would take note and offering locals opportunities to observe Oakian counterculture was typically avoided. (As argued in Chapter 4, these opportunities were understood as jeopardizing local acceptance of

the community and, therefore, Twin Oaks very existence.) While the shorts were understood to solicit negative reactions if worn off the farm, on the farm Carl was greeted with appreciative compliments.

Examples of practices that de-gendered clothing, that bent and blended dominant U.S. gendering adornment styles, were plentiful during my time on the farm. An illustrative example of gender blending occurred in the early summer at a naming party in the hammock shop. Lee, the emcee for the event, wore a bow tie and suit jacket, no shirt, and a long green skirt. Both men and women on the farm had worn each element in the outfit. Skirts were understood to be dressier, for both men and women, and also cooler in the hotter months. The suit jacket and tie, like sequined dresses and business suits, were worn by both women and men to mock dominant U.S. culture and to play with gender. While some members had worn formal attire in this same mocking way to their office shifts, these garments were typically reserved for festive occasions. In either context, the playfulness of the clothing choice was revealed through a number of co-occurring factors. Formal dresses worn by females would fail to conceal leg or armpit hair. A business suit worn by males would be countered by long, shaggy hair, a full beard, and flip-flops. A man would use a pink skirt suit to bend gender during his office shift while a female would wear a suit jacket and tie to do the same.

Festive social gatherings were also occasions for members to play with genres of clothing—countering dominant U.S. gender practices through a form of mocking playfulness. Fron, Fullerton, Morle, and Pearce (2007)—examining adult dress-up play as ritualized performances—have argued that costume play is a form of mimicry that people use in order to express facets of their personality that are not readily expressible

in everyday contexts. In the US, for example, a person may dress-up for Halloween or Mardi Gras or design a particular type of online avatar in order to explore a character other than self or a characteristic of self. While festive gatherings might well have been utilized by members as a context in which to explore aspects of their personalities that were not able to be enacted in everyday farm life—including using clothing to express an idealized or enhanced version of self (Guy and Banim, 2000)—my focus in these events was on the cultural symbolic value of dress. From this perspective, members' playful style of dress reflected a mimicry of what was understood as dominant U.S. culture that included experimentation not only with clothing but with nudity as well.

During a Validation Day party, a man wore a full slip, while a woman wore a Saran Wrap shirt. For a fashion show, a man wore purple briefs, while a woman wore pasties. In examples such as these, Oakers used clothing to bend and to flout normative U.S. cultural gender practices. Women's nipples, concealed in normative U.S. culture, were emphasized in the above performances of Oakian dress. Wearing a Saran Wrap shirt or pasties emphasized the nipple precisely because it was covered in a mocking fashion. Similarly, the briefs worn by the male member had been festooned with shiny silver beads so that the underwear, like the slip, emphasized femininity rather than masculinity. As Oakers used clothing to play with gender, they pushed against restrictive understandings of appropriate dress found in dominant U.S. culture. Accordingly, men played with feminine clothing and strove to divest masculine formal wear of its formality. Women played with nudity and used formal feminine dresses to incorporate a distinctive Oakian sexiness (void of high-heels and with the addition of hairiness) into a farm lifestyle. This playfulness was but one aspect of members' "being

seen" on the farm and was understood as a dimension of members' personalities. The type of play engaged in, however, clearly referenced a countering of dominant U.S. gender ideals.[7]

There is perhaps no clearer way to understand the Twin Oakian style of embodiment as a discourse that counters dominant U.S. culture than to look to the young children being raised on the farm. In my time on the farm, I noted that children old enough to express a clothing preference were allowed to choose what they wanted to wear—from a dragon costume to boys wearing barrettes in their hair and dresses. Children too young to express a preference were dressed in what was available in Kids' Commie Clothes and, for a party, a young boy child was dressed in a fancy red dress. These children, then, suggest an important aspect of Twin Oaks' normative body adornment: *On the farm, members should counter U.S. adornment norms by choosing clothing that is functional and well-worn and by experimenting with gender bending and blending*.

Conclusion

On the farm, the body was coded as fundamentally natural. The naturalness of the body in many ways aligned with Carbaugh's (1996a) analysis of a Finnish coding of a body as natural, simple, and strong where "[n]aturalness… de-emphasizes the unnatural, more civilized accoutrements of refined urban living, social stratifications, class distinctions, or luxurious 'things'" (p. 48). However, the Finnish coding of

[7] In the context of a community where members have personal knowledge of other members, adornment was read against the sum total of all that was known. So it was not understood as gender play when a trans woman wore a short, tight skirt. Rather this was understood as an expression of personal choice as a trans woman.

naturalness was historically rooted in Finns' interactions with their natural environment while Oakers' coding of naturalness was rooted in countering dominant U.S. culture. In this way, Oakers' performances were premised on a belief that in dominant U.S. culture the body was a powerful site of unhealthy, environmentally unsound, and oppressive gender practices. Oakers countered problematic U.S. embodiment by adhering to a number of norms, which are summarized here:

1. On the farm, members should support the feminist valuation of differently shaped and sized bodies by opting to talk privately with friends rather than to talk negatively about their bodies in public spaces, by not commenting on the size of women's breasts or bodies in non-private conversations, and by focusing on the health of bodies rather than their appearance.
2. On the farm if a member wanted to be known as an environmental and health conscious person, the member should not waste water or use toxic products to reduce or conceal the natural odors and products (hair) that their bodies produce. Likewise, to celebrate a natural body and to conserve water members should perform natural bodily functions in public spaces and, when using a toilet, should be mellow if it is yellow.
3. On the farm if members wanted to convey environmentalist or feminist beliefs, they should let their body hair grow naturally, but these members can personalize their head-hair by using dyes, razors, and items of adornment that do not reflect dominant U.S. normative beauty standards

4. On the farm, members should counter U.S. adornment norms by choosing clothing that is functional and well-worn and by experimenting with gender bending and blending.

While these styles of embodiment were connected to discourses of health, environmentalism, and feminism, they were also described as the normative style of Oakian embodiment. As such, members doing the Oakian style were expressing, with their bodies, a particular, Oakian way of communicating—what can be understood as a nonverbal way of communicating akin to Hymes' (1974) notion of ways of speaking. In this way, doing the Oakian style had to do not just with environmentalism, feminism, and health, but also with expressing an affiliation with Twin Oaks. From this perspective, styles of embodiment on the farm can be considered a nonverbal communication form that served a membering function not unlike verbal forms identified previously (see Philipsen, 1987, 1989a).

Taken in sum, these normative practices indicated, as a longer-term member suggested, that the body was "desensationalized" on the farm—a body that deemphasized surface, sensible, features as well as gender and sexuality.[8] Liberating body odor and excrement from the comportment and confinement found in dominant U.S. culture by making these body products a part of the everyday life on the farm functioned to "desensationalize" the body by making its products commonplace and unremarkable. Similarly, body hair was typical and mundane even as it was sometimes

[8] Here I am using a term supplied by an Oaker, "desensationalized," during a group interview. By using this term I do not mean to indicate that there were no regulatory norms of appearance or that the body was unimportant. Rather the term is to indicate that the appearance of the body as well as its products was understood by Oakers to not be as titillating or emphasized as bodies off the farm were.

a celebrated part of a member. On the farm, the appearance of the body was but one aspect of a member that was "seen" by others. "Being seen" by other members was a critical aspect of the "desensationalization" of the body—a point that I only fully understood after I completed my initial fieldwork and left the community.

My epiphany came during a house party that I attended the week of my arrival back in Massachusetts. I was socializing with friends outside until I went with a few to obtain another beer. Walking through the front door, I was struck by the scene before me. Women in tight clothes, low-cut shirts, and make-up tossed their stylized locks as they laughed and juggled purses and beverages. Men in t-shirts and shorts sported buzz-cuts and clean-shaven faces as they told entertaining stories and tore the labels off their beer bottles. The room smelled of perfume and aftershave. After spending months on the farm, I was utterly overwhelmed by a scene that I had been a part of a number of times previously. I began to grow aware of my body, of the clothes I was wearing, my lack of make-up. Escaping to the kitchen to catch my breath, I realized that no one in the other room knew me; that their only understanding of me, at least initially, had to come from my appearance. Then, I understood.

In the context of the house party, it would surely have been remarkable (and remarkably misunderstood) if I urinated on the front lawn. On the farm, however, this was but one of several body practices that symbolized an adherence to environmentalism, healthy living, and feminism and that functioned to "desensationalize" bodies. Conversely, if I were to return to the farm dressed in tight clothes and wearing make-up, it would be remarkable, but not sensational… just an odd performance by a person who was "known" to the membership. Even if an unknown person visited the farm wearing

heals and a fur coat, that person may be remarkable—at least at first—but quickly more than these facts would be known of the person, who may or may not be supported in her fashion choices, but whose appearance and adornment would become but one aspect of a "known" member. The "desensationalization" of the body on the farm, then, had less to do with the basic facts of living at Twin Oaks that influenced style choices—the farm life-style and lack of disposable income—and more to do with environmental, health, and feminist beliefs that promoted naturalizing body practices *combined* with the size of the community that made members "being seen" by others an unavoidable consequence of living there. It was this combination that made the meanings associated with embodiment cultural meanings that were understandable as liberatory. Oakers' abilities to bend, blend, and break free of U.S. gender comportment and the meaningfulness of it to U.S. Americans was, then, both facilitated by and limited to the community context.

CHAPTER 6

COMMUNICATING UTOPIAN: A LANGUAGE-BASED STYLE OF COMMUNICATING ON THE FARM

> We are working in the garden. I am weeding a row of squash next to five other communards—four women and one man. The early June sun is hot and all but one of us is shirtless. After six months of living at Twin Oaks, I understand that women exposing their breasts to the sun is as much about gender equity as it is about an embodied experience that is not readily permissible in broader U.S. culture. But, as I work to uproot a vine, I remember that I am weeding next to a Black woman who has recently asked community members to call her Watermelon Jenkins. Knowing that her name change was an effort to alert the predominantly white membership of what she understands as her class-, and race-based marginalization in the community, the picture of gender equality demonstrated in the garden becomes more complicated.

While there is a range of language-based communication styles that members enact on the farm, this chapter is concerned with describing a normative Oakian style of communicating and with applying an intersectional analysis to this style of communicating so that race- and class-based gender differences are brought to the fore. In so doing, two research questions will be answered: What are the features of a normative way of communicating on the farm? And, how can these features be linked to gender from an intersectional frame? The first question seeks to establish privileged and celebrated communication practices and to position these practices within everyday discourses that invoke gender. The second question describes a critique that some members have of this dominant Oakian way of communicating. The primary goals, then, are to describe normative communication practices and members' critiques of them in

order to develop a gendered understanding of these practices so as to discern whether or not and how they might be androcentric (Bem, 1993).

Since the publication of Lakoff's (1975) influential book, *Language and Woman's Place*, scholars have focused attention on gender differences in communication styles. In early sociolinguist work, theorists argued that "American men and women come from different sociolinguistic subcultures, having learned to do different things with words in a conversation, so that when they attempt to carry on conversations with one another, even if both parties are attempting to treat one another as equals, cultural miscommunication results" (Maltz and Borker, 1982, p. 200; see also Tannen, 1990). Thus, because males and females were socialized differently, they had different rules for understanding and engaging in communication. For example, minimal responses—head-nods and vocalizations such as "yeah" and "mhm"—were found to be used and interpreted differently by men and women. Women tended to use minimal responses to indicate that they were listening and to encourage conversation and men tended to use minimal responses to convey agreement. Or, in another example, men and women engaged differently in talk about a problem—women tended to interpret an issue as a situation requiring supportive communication and understanding while men tended to interpret problem talk as requiring a solution (Tannen, 1990).

For some sociolinguists, identifying differences in how men and women tended to communicate was a crucial first step in assuaging the miscommunication that occurred between women and men. For others, "viewed in the context of male power and female subordination [a position that is well argued in feminist literatures], the explanation that

miscommunication [was] the unfortunate but innocent by-product of cultural difference collapses" (p. 19). In a powerful continuation of their point, these scholars argued that:

> Hierarchies determine whose version of the communication situation will prevail; whose speech style will be seen as normal; who will be required to learn the communication style, and interpret the meaning, of the other; whose language style will be seen as deviant, irrational, and inferior; and who will be required to imitate the other's style in order to fit into the society. (Henley and Kramarae, 1994, p. 19)

From this perspective, assessing gender differences in language was a first step in assessing gender under-/privilege, but to stop at analyzing differences would reveal only a part of the function of language styles. Moving beyond description, work from this tradition found, for example, that women more than men do relationship maintenance communication, what Fishman refers to as the "shit work" (1978, 1990).

Much of this work in gender and language has tended to see gender as a binary where people are categorized according to the sexing of their bodies. Thus male bodies comprised one category and female bodies the other, communication differences were analyzed and, in some research, dominance was assessed. Because people are socialized into gender roles according to their biological sex and sanctioned for not adhering to the rules of their prescribed gender (see Feinberg, 1998), both difference and dominance work revealed important trends in male and female communication patterns (see Coates, 1998, for discussions of difference and dominance approaches). However, this work tended to essentialize gender in two ways. First, the equation of biological bodies to gender diverted attention away from the ways people bended and blended gender identities and styles of communication. For example, people may have adopted a style of communication that was incongruous with their biological sex—a woman may have performed a masculine style of communication in her relationship by suggesting

solutions to her partner's troubles rather than the more feminine style of offering support. Additionally, the focus on sexed communicators tended to essentialize gender differences among people who occupy the same sex/gender category. This orientation rendered invisible key identities other than gender (e.g., race and class) and implied that all women, regardless of coming from different race and class positions, shared a feminine style. However, as Brown (1997) maintained, not all women (or men) have the same gender—there are important race and class differences among them.

To rectify these shortcomings, recent work in gender and communication has begun to (1) emphasize the complexity of gender evidenced in the differences between people with the same biological sex who occupy different ethnic, race, or class positions (Cameron, 1998; Uchida, 1997), and (2) emphasize the fluidity of gender by uprooting gender from its grounding in the female/male binary (Bing & Bergvall, 1996; Rodino, 2006; cf. Cameron, 1998). Like recent feminist sociolinguists, this study sought to assess gender differences in communication practices while accounting for both the complexity and the fluidity of gender. Rather than tethering these differences to gendered people, this study viewed normative language-based communication practices as a gendered cultural system. Working from an intersectional frame, this system was also understood to be raced and classed so that gender differences could be found not only along the gender axis, but also along the race and class axes. For example, rather than attending to trends in women's culturally specific communication practices (Kulick, 1993) or in the raced and classed ways that women communicated (Shankar, 2008), this work looked first at culturally normative ways of communicating in general and then turned to a culturally grounded gender analysis. In this way I began, as other researches have, with

analyzing particular ways of communicating (Carbaugh, 2007; Goldsmith, 1989/1990; Katriel and Philipsen, 1981) that may be gendered (Fitch, 1998), raced (Bailey, 2002), and classed (Huspek, 1994).

During my time on the farm, talk related to an Oakian style of communication permeated daily conversations. Much of this everyday talk critiqued the utility and function of what Oakers referred to variously as "the written culture," "passive aggressive communication," or a "middle class" style of communication on the farm. During fieldwork, these terms were treated as key cultural symbols—defined as terms that are mutually intelligible, deeply felt, and widely accessible to a group of people—and became the focus of data generation (Carbaugh, 1988a). With these terms as my focus, I attended to and recorded instances of their use in everyday social interaction in order to identify key features of a normative Oakian style of communicating (Hymes, 1974).

As I grew attuned to the members who used these words and places where these words were typically spoken, I audio recorded naturally occurring conversations. These methods yielded a corpus of data that included field notes, interviews, and recorded conversations. For this analysis, I focused on 37 field note entries averaging one single-spaced page; parts of two recorded group interviews, one conversation less than 30 minutes and the other longer than two hours; parts of 12 recorded individual interviews, averaging between 20 and 30 minutes; and two recorded naturally occurring conversations, one less than five minutes and the other just over 10 minutes.

To describe normative Oakian communication patterns that these terms implicated, I utilized Hymes SPEAKING (1972) framework. Formulating the norms,

rules, and premises that give this way of communicating the form and meaning that it has for Oakers produced an interpretive analysis of the cultural discourse being tapped in attending to these communication patterns (Carbaugh, 2007; Carbaugh, Gibson, and Milburn, 1997). The opening major section contextualizes and describes the normative way of communicating on the farm. Using gender focused sociolinguistic research as an entry point, the following major section will use naturally occurring criticism to interrogate this normative way of communicating.

Speaking: We Don't Talk that Way on the Farm

Coming to understand a general Twin Oakian style of communication necessitates understanding members' use of two other intentional communities, East Wind and Ganas, to mark undesirable styles of communicating. While East Wind is, like Twin Oaks, a rural income-sharing community, Ganas community is not. Ganas is situated on Staten Island, New York and members do not share income.[9] Members' talk makes these communities relevant metaphors for classed masculinity and femininity and this talk serves to establish the boundaries of acceptable ways of communicating. East Wind is typically depicted as a working class, masculine community where members are violent, drunken, and sexist. While East Wind is invoked frequently, Ganas generally shares the stage only when members begin to talk about interpersonal communication. Unlike East Wind, Ganas is characterized as a sophisticated, refined, communication-focused, feminine community. In this way East Wind and Ganas characterizations show class

[9] The core group of members (about 10) at Ganas do share resources, however the more periphery members (about 60) do not.

intersecting with gender to mark the endpoints of a spectrum of communication styles that locates Twin Oaks in the middle.

East Wind: Violence as Communicative Act

An early reference to East Wind in everyday social interaction occurred during the third week of my visitor period. Because a female member in my visitor group shared the first name of a full member, members met around a bonfire to engage in a common community practice—a naming party. While baked treats were staples at naming parties, this gathering doubled as the visitor party and thus the appreciated treat was alcohol. As we sat around the fire, one member suggested a rather absurd name for my fellow visitor, sexatonic love-monkey, precipitating a volley of both negative and positive evaluations of the suggested name as well as remarks that this member was not being helpful. Evaluating the scene, a few members sitting together talked about the role the alcohol may have on the tone of what I understood to be a relatively raucous gathering (but seemed rather sedate to me). After one member commented, with a hint of sarcasm, that the naming party may get out of control, another member countered, with a joke: "We're not East Wind."

Even though I had not been on the farm long, I had already heard talk about East Wind and I knew that East Wind was another egalitarian community, that it had more male than female members, and that public drunkenness was an accepted part of communal living. However, the member's comment, it seemed to me, carried more significance than I could at that time understand. While I was unaware of it, this comment marked what Oakers understood to be a working class way of communicating,

in this case associated with alcohol consumption, that was marked by members as being loudly critical of others. Importantly, what made the joke funny was the juxtaposition between this scene and an imagined East Wind scene. As will become clear, what was revealed in the comparison was both the violence that Oakers say happens at East Wind and the absurdity of the bonfire turning into a violent scene—whether or not alcohol was being consumed and people disagreed, relatively strongly, with another's suggested name.

Twin Oaks members invoked East Wind as an example of an alternative to an Oakian way of communicating. In this contrast, East Wind was often portrayed as a working class community whose membership utilized physical violence to resolve conflict. Take for example the following excerpt from a recorded group interview where Mia offered a depiction of East Wind as a way to reinforce her understanding of a Twin Oakian style of communication:

> Mia: Yeah, I mean I guess let's see… I guess there's these three options of like this ideal being like direct communication and then the other sorta options being this sorta passive aggressive or more active aggressive. And we have the other alternative it's East Wind and usually they hit each other when they get pissed at each other. And so one of the, like, one of the ways that I feel sorta weird about people being passive aggressive is to me it's like infinitely preferable to people hitting each other, ya know.
>
> Blue: That's because of your class background.
>
> Mia: Yeah, I guess so….
>
> Beth: But it's not!
>
> Blue: Yes, it is!
>
> Beth: (Emotionally.) I come from a family that fucking was poor and we beat each other and this is better, Blue. It doesn't come from being middle class.

Loud talking over 4 seconds

In this conversation, East Wind was described as a community where people hit each other when they were upset and served as an example of a proscribed style of resolving conflict. While Beth's refutation of Blue's argument was validated by others, no member disputed violence as a key aspect of East Wind's working class identity—a quality that was deeply troubling to Beth and to others present. Through the use of East Wind, Oakers classified physically violent forms of communication as a product of a working class identity. The belief that violence was a communicative practice learned in the harsh conditions of working class life was not, of course, exclusive to Twin Oaks' membership. Indeed, research has identified physical forms of discipline and conflict resolution as characteristics of working class communities (Garger, 1995; Philipsen, 1975). However, members' talk tended to conflate physical violence with a working class identity even though violence was acknowledged to be a social issue that cut across class.

When members talked of East Wind as a physically violent community class was clearly the dominant explanatory identity, but it was not the only identity in play. Talk of East Wind also gave that community a decidedly masculine gender identity. East Wind was well known not only for having significantly more male than female members, but also for having a de facto patriarch, Butch. Oakers credited Butch, who had been a member of East Wind since its earliest days, for perpetuating a misogynistic culture that fostered sexual harassment, loudness, and public drunkenness. When Oakers talked of East Wind, then, it evoked an image of that community as not only working class, but also masculine. The meaning of the male working class community (and person) was one that emphasized violent forms of interpersonal communication. Violence here

included both physical contact and verbal harassment characterized as loud, aggressive, unrefined, face-to-face communication.

Ganas: Process as Interpersonal Communication Event

Unlike East Wind, Ganas was characterized as an upper class, feminine community. The classing of Ganas occurred when Oakers talked about Ganas community's core members. In these conversations, Oakers explained that the core Ganas members had had lucrative careers that made earning income not as pressing an issue as it was at Twin Oaks. Freed from economic constraints, Ganas members were able to dedicate time and energy to non-income earning pursuits such as talking with each other. Like East Wind, Ganas was not only classed, but gendered as well. However, while East Wind was understood as a masculine community, Ganas, which had a female as its de facto leader, was understood to be a feminine community. A significant part of the feminization of Ganas was its emphasis on interpersonal communication and talking to resolve personal and interpersonal issues.

Everyday uses of Ganas community to describe differences between Ganas and Twin Oaks were far less frequent than Oakers' use of East Wind. My first recorded use of Ganas, from an ex-Ganas member, came a month into my residency and was in response to a question asked about the absence of formal community involvement in the resolution of interpersonal conflict between members. Joseph smiled at my inquiry and explained that core members of Ganas spent two hours six days a week in meetings talking about interpersonal issues. His tone and general dismissal of this method of

communication made it clear that the Ganas example was an unviable, laughable practice in the Twin Oaks' context.

As with the East Wind example above, I realized that Joseph's use of Ganas carried more meaning than I could understand in that moment. In an effort to gain more insight, I used a community computer the following morning to explore the Ganas web site. My research revealed that communication was the core value of Ganas community. To fulfill this value and because members valued honest self-disclosure about their thoughts and feelings, they participated in two hour meetings five days a week ("Communication, Our Central Value," n.d.). By answering my inquiry with a description of the amount of time Ganas members dedicated to interpersonal communication, Joseph used Ganas as an example of what would not work at Twin Oaks. I understood (as was already quite clear) that the general tone around meetings—ranging from community meetings, team meetings, and planner meetings—at Twin Oaks was that it was unproductive labor that took valuable time away from income-earning pursuits. What would become clearer was that "processing," or communication in order to resolve issues, was not only considered to be unproductive work, but also necessary, emotionally draining work.

Twin Oaks was a doing community that emphasized work, especially income earning work. In this context interpersonal "processing" was relatively marginal. While some members worked to develop better communication skills on the farm and to engage in interpersonal "processing," the culture surrounding communication clearly did not support the level of "processing" found at Ganas. Still, interpersonal "processing" on the

farm had one striking similarity with the Ganas system: it was an event that was understood to be separate from everyday friendship communication.

Whereas, as members noted, off the farm they would simply discuss interpersonal issues with their friends and lovers as they came up in interpersonal interactions, on the farm members would address interpersonal issues by asking others to "process" with them. For example, after two other cooks and I agreed to not cook rice for dinner, one came over to ask me if I had started the rice. "No," I said, "We agreed not to do the rice. Do you see any rice on our menu?" The defensiveness of this statement began a downward spiral of perceived accusation and mutual defensiveness that culminated in me ending the conversation before a mutually satisfying agreement could be reached. After I cooled down, I approached my fellow cook, "I'm sorry for the misunderstanding and my defensiveness. I would like to process what happened. Would this be okay with you?" Typically members who were engaging in "process" talk would do so in a mutually chosen place that was removed from the everyday hustle and bustle of life on the farm. In this case, though, we had fallen behind in our dinner preparation so our "process" talk took place while chopping and cooking food. The third cook, understanding that we were doing "process" talk, did not interrupt us during our conversation (roughly 10 minutes in duration). In this way, Oakers engage in mini-processing events that contrast both with their understanding of Ganas community's 2 hour processing events and with off the farm issues-based interpersonal communication that is woven into everyday conversations.

With East Wind at one end and Ganas at the other end of a communication spectrum, Twin Oaks was understood to occupy the midpoint. The structure and style of

Oakian communication were what members used to define Twin Oaks' class. In this regard, Twin Oaks was understood as a middle class community not because of per capita income, but because of the normative style of communication. Occupying the middle ground, Twin Oaks was understood as a community that was not the working class, masculine East Wind style (violent and aggressive communication) and was also not the upper class, feminine Ganas style (far too much time spent processing). In terms of communication style and how members position Twin Oaks, normative communication on the farm was explicitly classed, but neutrally gendered. A clear class identity emerges and pivots on communicative practices surrounding nonviolence and time dedicated to interpersonal talking. Here, Ganas serves as the upper class impossibility: who has the time to process when money needs to be made and there are limitations on the amount of energy one can dedicate to emotionally costly processing? East Wind serves as the working class repugnancy: violence is simply not acceptable. Below I utilize Hymes (1972) SPEAKING framework to refine this understanding of normative Oakian communication before turning to a critical analysis of this communication system that recognizes both class and race, but not gender, differences.

SPEAKING: Doing it the Oakian Way

Participating in the Scene

In the fall and winter, I heard the sound of the wood splitter as the forestry crew did its part to keep the buildings of the community heated. In the spring and summer, occasionally, I heard the sound of a tractor or a lawn mower, hammers or saws, as well as crickets and birds. Throughout the year, if I thought to do so, I heard members walking

the paths engaged in quiet conversation. What I did not hear were traffic noises, loud music or television, or loud everyday communication. Twin Oaks was a quiet community in which to live. This quietude was not a coincidental happening or the natural product of rural community living; it was a normative way of being that was protected and cultivated. Tempering loudness applied to both nonhuman and human noise. When a dog barked, it was asked to quiet down. When a noise deemed to be loud could not be avoided, as when grinding coffee in the morning, Oakers alerted others with the words: "loud noise." While some work areas such as the kitchen and tofu hut played music for workers, music in the hammock shop, which had an ongoing flow of workers and was situated in the Courtyard, was listened to by an elaborate system of wires and headphones that one long-term member referred to as "hippie ingenuity." Only during the designated "out loud" music times could hammock workers listen to music without headphones.

Beyond noises produced by nonhuman animals and everyday technologies, people were also expected to be avoid talking with raised voices. The emphasis on quiet communication was more pronounced the more public the space. Public spaces were those where members could reasonably be expected to be. The hammock shop, the dining hall and community building (ZK), and the Courtyard were all very public with a steady flow of members moving through and dwelling in these spaces. The surrounding woods, the retreat cabin, and the conference site were all more private spaces located some distance from the typical flow of members. While one could go into the woods to "blow off steam," as one member put it, in ZK members were given negative feedback

for being too loud, for not "using their inside voices," and very young children that screamed or cried in ZK were taken outside until they had quieted.

In a recorded conversation with April, a new member, we spoke about ZK and the norm of being quiet. Knowing that April's everyday voice was louder than was typically heard at Twin Oaks, I asked her whether or not she found herself being quieter on the farm. Her reply highlighted not only the Oakian emphasis on quietness, but also the subtle power of quiet communication as a normative practice on the farm:

> I'm not sure if I tempered my voice in any way. It's quite possible. Indoors it's possible. It was definitely a bigger thing in the winter when we were stuck inside. But there were comments about it. I'm not sure there were as many comments as that I was hyper aware of it—of being louder.

While April was unsure of the extent to which she practiced a quieter voice on the farm, she was aware that her way of talking was louder than what was normative and that her way of talking was labeled by some as problematic.[10] This is not to say that all Oakers demanded quietness in public spaces, indeed some, like April or Watermelon Jenkins, felt stifled by the norms of quietness. However, being too loud in public spaces was clearly both a noteworthy and sanctionable offense.

While the Oakian emphasis on quietness may provide members an opportunity to engage in quiet contemplation or reflection as Finns do (Carbaugh, Berry, & Nurmikari-

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[10] Like many violations of norms, or even policies, sanctions leaned towards social pressure and members, if they were to be well liked and successful, adhered to normative practices—especially in public spaces. The pressure to be quieter likely did temper April's volume in ZK and this does not mean that April wasn't still one of the louder members. It is important to note the difference between normative communication practices and behaviors that would be formally sanctioned. Again, social pressure to adhere to norms is powerful on the farm. This does not mean that the majority of members celebrated the normative style. Norms are historically rooted and changing them is a slow process due in part to the power of negative feedback that values normative ways of communicating.

Berry, 2006) or to "listen" in nature as the Blackfeet do (Carbaugh, 1999), quietness for Oakers was primarily about maintaining boundaries between members. As such, the Oakian emphasis on tempering noise stood in sharp contrast to cultures, like that of Antigua, that understand loudness as "coming from within, and closely tied to genuine expressions of feeling" as well as a form of communication that is relatively unremarkable (Reisman, 1974). In the following pages the Oakian emphasis on maintaining separation between members will be further explicated.

Communication Instruments and Actions

Within this context of quietness was an elaborate system of written communication, influenced by Walden Two, that was designed to make both political and personal communication more efficient.[11] Of central importance was the O&I (Opinions and Information) board, a wall of clipboards that organized and displayed opinion and policy papers posted by members. At Twin Oaks, reading the daily news meant reading the O&I board. Some papers stated an opinion or expressed a thought as to how the community should be; others were a part of a formal process of establishing or revising community policies or practices. Still other papers offered information on the state of the community—for example the community's budgets or the insurance fund. In addition to the O&I board, there was a 3x5 board, a wooden board with rowed slats designed to hold note cards. On this board, members posted brief notes that did not ask for nor require

[11] During my time on the farm, I found the Oakian system of communicating rather confusing. It took me several months before I understood the function of each component—where I should post what type of information. I was near the three-month mark of my residency before I understood that there were two different 3x5 message systems. I knew of the 3x5 board where announcements were posted, but I did not know that the hanging 3x5 slots were for personal messages.

comments from other members. The 3x5 board displayed noteworthy happenings on the farm such as social gatherings, job openings, the posting of important papers on the O&I board, lost personal items, and members' name changes. This board was also used to invite members to read letters that were put in private members' more private mailboxes. These letters typically contained personal information about the writer and her or his relationship issues with others on the farm. Placed in a mailbox, this privatized form of written communication enabled members to define as personal the information shared with other members without having to repeat the information in verbal communication to the other 90 or so members or to rely on community gossip networks. Finally, there were the private 3x5 slots in which members put brief notes to each other. This message center was the written equivalent to leaving a telephone voice message.

Oral communication on the farm, like written communication, had both institutional and interpersonal forms. [12] There were a variety of meeting formats used at the community level. A community-wide meeting, which was labor creditable, was called to discuss issues important to the future of the community such as budgeting, new construction, or an interpersonal conflict or crisis that was negatively affecting the community as a whole. Some types of community-wide meetings were: naming parties, festive events called to name a new car or building or when a member wanted help in

[12] While research has identified differences between how people communicate in writing or with words (Akinnaso, 1982), research does not indicate that there are significant stylistic differences between men and women in written communication in business settings (Smeltzer & Werbel, 1986). Likewise research has indicated little variation in writing style among U.S. racial and ethnic groups although African American high school students, but not grade school students, preferred an African American vernacular style (Ball, 1992). Variation in writing style across social identity groups may be due in part to, as Homzie, Kotsonis & Toris (1981) indicate, people's tendency to adjust their writing style as an effect of status differences. Analyses of writing style were beyond the scope of this chapter.

choosing a new name; sharing circles, called to help members work through difficult feelings; and feedbacks, called to facilitate members hearing that their behavior negative impacted others in the community. Feedbacks were structured community meetings where a member listened to the complaints others had of her/him and were understood as a part of the process of sanctioning a member. As such, feedbacks were typically the first step in the expulsion of a member—something that very rarely actually happened at Twin Oaks. In addition to these institutionalized, community-wide oral communication forms, Oakers also utilized informal forms of oral communication. Gossip, sometimes viewed as a form of entertainment, was an honored way that information was passed between members. Salons were informal group meetings where members gathered to discuss an evocative interpersonal or community issue. While salons could be announced community-wide meetings, salons were more typically informal meetings advertised through word-of-mouth where like-minded members gathered. Because like-minded people were together, there was a freedom to discuss issues with more emotion, sarcasm, and humor than one would typically find in formal community meetings.

It is difficult to gain an understanding of these key Oakian communication practices without having a sense of how members utilized these tools in everyday interactions. Helpful here are two examples of members use of these communication forms that took place on the farm. The first example pertains to communication surrounding a member's violation of communication norms and the second pertains to communication surrounding a member's break-up.

DJ's Violation of Communication Norms

DJ had posted a number of notes on his residence's 3x5 board. Because these notes were critical of other members' behaviors—such as members violating norms or not doing their assigned chores—and used members' names, the notes were seen as objectionable. During a regular residence meeting, this violation of 3x5 board norms was debated and possible solutions proposed. It was decided that a member would approach DJ to discuss his use of the 3x5 board. During the next meeting four months later, members continued to discuss the evolution of this situation. In the time between these two meetings, the minutes had been posted and DJ had offered his comments in the margins of these minutes. In reference to the proposal that a member discuss the norm violation, DJ stated that members "are obliged to respect another's wish to not be approached." Members agreed that it was an Oakian practice to respect another's wish to not communicate and that the solution may be to have DJ elect a third party to discuss the issue and then to relay the information back to DJ. If this was not acceptable to DJ, then a feedback could be called and if DJ, or his third party designee, did not attend then that would be a violation of the residence policy and further punitive measures could be taken. The issue was resolved without a feedback being called.

Elle's Mailbox Letter

Elle's relationship with Dax had been strained by polyamory. Elle had a boyfriend off the farm and Dax had two other lovers on the farm. Elle expressed her dislike of one of the other relationship partners and the weight of her disapproval, in her mind, taxed the relationship and ultimately led to its failure, a rather lengthy

disintegration that lasted several weeks. When Elle finally decided to end the relationship, she put a letter in her mailbox explaining how she felt about the relationship's demise and what others could do to support her through her sadness. She posted a note on the 3x5 board stating simply: "Mailbox letter in A5. Elle." Through personal conversations with Elle as well as gossip conversations with her close friends in the community, I knew that she was having a hard time with her polyamorous relationship and yet I was surprised by the depth of sadness she explained in her letter—while I saw her often on the farm I had not seen her embodied expression of emotion. I had, after all, laughed and joked with her during lunch—just hours before she publicized her mailbox letter. Reading the mailbox letter, I became grateful for the efficiency of this communication form and its function to disseminate emotional communication in a safe way. In reading this letter, I came to understand how to best support Elle and felt relief that I would not make matters worse in my efforts to be kind and thoughtful. Feeling generally exhausted, I also felt a lightness that I would not have to expend valuable energy working to figure out how best to support Elle.

Understanding these Vignettes: The Function and Keying of Norms

When explicating normative communication on the farm, it was important to consider the distinction between public and private contexts as a dimension of interpersonal communication. Weintraub (1997) argues that there are two fundamental aspects of distinctions made between the public and the private. One is the distinction between what is hidden and what is openly observable while the other is a distinction between what is individual and what is collective, or communal. In terms of

communication practices on the farm, as indicated above, the more public a space, the more Oakers could be seen and heard and the more communicative practices were expected to adhere to community norms. In private relationships and spaces, members were not (typically) seen or heard and there communicative practices could be idiosyncratic. While the only spaces defined as private were members' bedrooms, spaces such as the woods were understood to be more private than, for example, the Courtyard, which served as a primary hub of community activity.

Just as the public or private nature of spaces dictated appropriate ways of communicating, so too did the public or private nature of members' relationships dictate the kind of communication that took place in them. Members who had close personal relationships with one another had norms that governed communication that were sometimes distinct from the prevailing norms on the farm. These norms, then, were understood by the membership to be private and unless the private relational communication violated Twin Oaks core principles, for example nonviolence, or became public, for example because of loudness, it was left to relationship partners to work out their style of communication. Conversely, members who did not have close relationships tended to follow the normative patterns of communicating on the farm. These relationships took place in less private spaces and were more a part of the normative, public communication culture. Communication in these less private relationships, or when personal friends were in a public space, crystallized Oakian norms for public communication.

The above vignettes served as examples of normative ways Oakers communicated on the farm. DJ's story was a poignant example of the norm that *members could*

communicate if they wanted to, but could also choose not to communicate if they did not want to do so. In DJ's case, he did not want to discuss the 3x5 issue with members of his residence. Because this was an acceptable choice for DJ to make, a neutral third party would be chosen to engage in the communication deemed necessary to resolve the issue. This norm also governed other everyday behaviors such as requesting to talk with a member rather than assuming it would be fine to do so or disengaging from a conversation before interlocutors were satisfied by it. Thus, a member would say, "Can I ask you a question?" rather than asking the question outright. Or a member would, as Dave, a member who lived in my residence, did: disengaged from a conversation with another Oaker by simply stating that, "I'm angry, too, and I'm hanging up now because I've already answered that question." Members opting to disengage or not to engage in communication may not have been celebrated by those wishing to communicate, but it was acceptable by Twin Oak standards to not communicate when continued communication would have undesirable personal consequences. In this way, members who did not communicate in times when communication was experienced negatively were understood to be taking care of themselves, to be honoring personal limits. Members were not, according to this normative orientation, thought to be anti-communitarian, passive aggressive, or selfish.

There were a number of reasons why members might opt to not engaging in communication with others—what was understood on the farm as self-care. Chief among these reasons was a belief, born of the experience of maintaining multiple communal relationships, that too much interpersonal communication left one emotionally and physically exhausted. When asked why they did not pursue face-to-face conflict

resolution, for example, members—even those who valued face-to-face communication and conflict resolution—said that they had to pick relationships, issues, and conflicts in which to invest their time and energy. In practice, this meant that close personal relationships tended to be invested in and the more periphery relationships tended not to be. Because it was tiring to communicate with so many people and because conflict was understood as especially emotionally taxing, members, like DJ, opted not to communicate, or, like Elle, used written communication that enabled a form of on the farm mass communication.

DJ's example also highlighted the Oakian norm for confidential communication. According to this norm, confidential communication was understood to facilitate communication. Thus, *if the community wanted to promote the communication of honest opinions and feelings about potential members as well as existing members, then the community must allow this type of feedback to be confidential*. Premised on a belief that constructive feedback was both good and experienced as negative criticism, confidential communication enabled members to give feedback without fearing consequences that would make living on the farm with a disgruntled communard emotionally difficult. Tea, for example, explained the outcome of her decision not to remain confidential when vetoing a person for membership. In the end, she said, "It was emotionally costly. It was really hard to live with the negative feedback I got from not supporting him for membership." While all members could waive confidentiality, the vast majority did not. Practicing confidential communication was generally unremarkable and expected and, for some, a highly celebrated way of communicating that enabled the honest communication

of potentially hurtful observations and feelings by lessening the fear of retaliation or protracted interpersonal conflict.

While confidentiality was generally understood on the farm as a practice used in order for members to give others constructive feedback without having their identity known, it was also a practice on the farm to not reveal the identity of a member in a public conversation that may result in others having a negative evaluation of that member. Keeping confidential the identity of a member in public communication about something that would be considered negative was not the topic of everyday conversation. Nonetheless, it was a practice that was typically engaged in and, as DJ discovered, was a sanctionable offense. I first noticed this practice during my visitor meetings when members used words such as "some members" and "co," a gender neutral pronoun, in conversation—a practice that had the effect of masking who was being talking about (see Chapter 7 for an analysis of this point). For example, in a new member meeting held in my first month of residency, in reference to the new nudity policy, a long-term member said, "As I understood it, there was a member, or, a group of members who had some concerns about safety." Not only was this member skillful at qualifying his statement as his interpretation, he also utilized ambiguous references to other members—a practice not done when praise was given or when talking about an uncontroversial topic.

Some members practiced this form of confidential communication even when the identity of the member was widely known. For example, in a conversation in the garden, Lilly used "co" to maintain the confidentiality of another. As we talked critically about pornographic magazines kept in the Compost Café, a relatively public space, Lilly added what was likely to be new information for many of us. "Co keeps those magazines in his

residence, too," she said. Even though we all knew who put the pornographic magazines in the Compost Café, she was not certain that we did and opted to practice confidential communication. While related to the norm of confidential feedback presented above, this aspect of normative confidentiality could best be phrased as: *in everyday public conversations about controversial topics or objectionable behaviors, members should maintain other members' confidentiality*. By enacting this norm, Oakers strove to preserve privacy and, as with the aforementioned confidentiality norm, to lessen the possibility of interpersonal conflict.

While the above norms regulated whether or not and how a member communicated, norms regulating the communication of emotion were perhaps the most important for achieving an understanding of an Oakian style of communication. How people express, make sense of, and value emotion varies depending on cultural and historical contexts (Planalp, 1999; Stearns, 1994; Wierzbicka, 1999). Research in emotion expression has sought, and occasionally failed, to attribute differences in emotion expression to social identities such as gender (Shimanoff, 1983) and race (Mabry & Kiecolt, 2005). While differences—such as women engaging in emotionally supportive communication more than men (Palomares, 2008)—have been noted, research has also argued that social status (Domagalski & Steelman, 2007) and social domain (home or work; Lively & Powell, 2006) rather than social identity accounts for variation in emotional expressivity. Developing an understanding of normative patterns related to the communication of emotion was of focal concern, but, as with prior research, social status and identities as well as community contexts were also considered.

On the farm, members tended not to express strong emotion, especially those, such as anger and rage, that were considered to evoke negative feelings in others.[13] Members also promoted the explicit statement of their thoughts and feelings—articulating specific emotions experienced—rather than relying on the nonverbal communication of affect to convey emotion. Olive made this point eloquently during a coffee date spent swinging on hammock chairs under an oak tree. After receiving, and being confused by, negative and confidential feedback that I was an aggressive communicator, I asked her to describe the best way to communicate on the farm. She stressed that one needed to remain calm and offered an example of how to talk when telling someone that they were being upsetting. You could say something like, "You are being rude to me and I don't appreciate it," she offered. Then she suggested that I should disengage from the conversation and leave the scene before I became too upset to contain my emotion. Relatively unfamiliar with such a strong prescription for the containment of embodied emotion in interpersonal communication at that time, I recorded this conversation as a revelation in my field notes: "I really like this way of communicating in interpersonal conflict. It seems peaceful…a skill I should hone."[14] In further reflection, I realized that this was a skill Dave utilized when disengaging from the phone conversation with a fellow Oaker. Just as Olive suggested, Dave had used words to express emotion deemed negative on the farm and disengaged from the conversation before his slightly raised voice grew more so. Similarly, when Elle explained her sadness in a mailbox

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[13] The normative Oakian style of communicating emotion echoes the normative U.S. style Stearns (1994) calls "American Cool."

[14] In truth, it was a skill that I had, arguably, already cultivated, but this skill had been reserved for business communication. In interpersonal communication it seemed disingenuous to conceal embodied affect from others—a point I shall return to in the section on natural criticism.

letter, she was working not only to conserve energy, but also to contain the embodiment of her sadness in face-to-face public interactions.

Of course, members did communicate in ways that were not understood to be calm and these instances were generally chalked up to either a person having a bad day or, more than likely, that member's rather unfortunate personality (rather than to race- or class- or gender-based differences). On the farm, there were two key proscribed ways of communicating emotion. The most strongly proscribed way of communicating emotion invoked the specter of East Wind and was a style of interpersonal communication. This style was characterized as loud and, when a member did not disengage communication to prevent a heightened expression of emotion, was understood to be aggressive and confrontational as well. Marked as violent and potentially (physically) unsafe, this style of communicating utilized the body as a medium of the expression of negative emotion (anger) or sentiment (disapproval of another's thoughts or opinions). While it was fine to have an argument "in the most quietest of terms," as Watermelon observed, it was strongly proscribed to yell. While it was celebrated to state verbally that one was angry, it was threatening to embody that anger and express it through raised voice or agitated movement—what one member referred to as "flaming out." The link between loud, confrontational, and bodily emotional expression and violence was not, as will be discussed in the following section, held by all members, but it was a pervasive belief that was occasionally made explicit in conversation. "We're a nonviolent community. You can't yell at your partner while cooking dinner," Beth offered, explaining how Twin Oaks culture shapes interpersonal communication. Yelling was seen as aggressive, abusive

and violent—it was understood to be violent communication because it was volatile, out of control, and threatening.

The understanding that loud and volatile expressions of negative emotion constituted a violent, proscribed style of communicating contrasted with prior ethnography of communication work in a utopian community. Studying a spiritual, therapeutic community, Crawford (1986) found that members practiced a form of confrontational therapeutic communication. Accordingly, interpersonal communication in meetings and everyday interactions could acceptably include yelling, insults, and obscenities, which sometimes escalated to physically striking another member. While some members of this community disliked this aspect of interpersonal communication, it was, nonetheless, an aspect of normative communicative practices that, unlike Oakian normative communicative practices, privileged face-to-face, confrontational, loud, and public interpersonal communication.

Another proscribed way of communicating emotion was an emotive style of communication that was understood to be "crazy." This style of communicating was characterized by amplified embodied emotional expression associated with the disapproval of community policy—not interpersonal issues, as was characteristic of the above proscribed style. Members who had the reputation of regularly having heightened emotional expression in the face of community issues were marginalized by this behavior and referred to as "crazy"—a point May made explicit after being asked why she did not talk to the planners about the swamp created by the tofu effluent—an issue she found to be very upsetting. She said, "I don't want to have the reputation of being crazy because I think that happens here if you show emotion you get labeled crazy." Shena regularly

attended a range of community meetings and assumed a critical watchdog position in the community. On several occasions, I observed Shena discussing community policy issues with committee members. Often during these occasions Shena spoke with raised voice and with an intensity of posture visible in her unwavering eye contact, slight forward bend to her torso, and animated gestures. Shena also wrote weekly letters and notes to members of key policy-making committees that were critical of their work. Both her face-to-face and written communication were evidence that Shena was aberrant in her emotional investment in community issues and was, therefore, "crazy."

Shena was the clearest example of a member who was labeled "crazy" because of both the quantity and quality of her emotional expressivity, but she was not the only member who was talked about as being "crazy." During my stay on the farm, both men (regularly, 2) and women (regularly, 2) were talked about as "crazy." While Oakers' metacommunication did not categorize "crazy" communication as a feminine style, popular U.S. understandings of gender and emotion positioning women as excessively emotionally expressive and neurotic persist despite research that finds more similarities than differences between men and women (Shields, 2000; c.f., Brody (2000) discusses gender differences in rules for expressing emotion).

It was possible to summarize in two norms the proscribed ways of communicating emotion on the farm as well as the normative temperance of emotion: *On the farm, if one wants to be an effective and well-liked member, then one should not express negative emotion loudly—either vocally or with one's body. It is preferred that members articulate their emotional experiences with words, either in writing or in face-to-face communication, rather than to rely on their bodies to express emotion.* These norms

were especially important in interpersonal conflict, but it was also true of situations where members were upset with community policy-making. In the section following the one below, Oakers' race- and class-based critiques of normative Twin Oakian communication practices will be discussed.

Summarizing Normative Communication on the Farm

Not engaging in communication that evoked negative emotion, practicing confidentiality, and tempering emotional expression were key aspects of a normative Oakian style of communication. Taken in sum, these norms could be understood as expressions of culturally coded understandings of people and how they relate. The *no need to talk* norm, for example, privileged a member's desire to maintain separation (autonomy) and marginalized a member's desire to achieve or maintain connection through communication (Baxter, 1993; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). This contrasted with the emphasis on interpersonal communication that Ganas community was thought to maintain—a contrast explained not only by a difference in material wealth that enabled more leisure time for core Ganas members, but also by cultural differences. Whereas Ganas community facilitated interpersonal communication, Twin Oaks encouraged personal choice. Personal choice was premised on the understanding that members were primarily autonomous and that relationships were chosen. Because relationships were understood to be chosen and not a natural outcome of or requirement for living in a community, Oakers were not expected to work through interpersonal conflict and they were not expected to enjoy the company of all other members. Relationships on the farm were complex—some members no longer talked with those they once loved, some

members were sustained by a small but tight circle of friends, and others enjoyed the company of a wide range of people—but no one was close friends with all of the 90 people who live on the farm. In this light, the norm for *confidential communication* was understood to be a good way to communicate potentially hurtful feedback to friends, acquaintances, and disliked members because it lessened both the likelihood that interpersonal relationships would be disrupted and the amount of time and energy members would have to dedicate to interpersonal communication.

As suggested above, Twin Oaks was a quiet community. In light of the norm for *tempering emotional expression* explicated above, it becomes clear that Twin Oaks cultivated quietness included a normative way of expressing emotion that privileged the calm articulation of emotion while it proscribed loud and nonverbal expressions of emotion—especially negative emotion. As with *personal choice* and *confidentiality*, this functioned to regulate how members in public spaces connected with others. Emotion was to be contained; in public spaces it was to be tempered. If the expression of emotion was not tempered, if it was too loud or too intense, it not only violated the normative standard for quietude on the farm, it also connoted violence. Violence, loudness, and intense emotional expression exceeded the personal space afforded individual members and, thus, violated the space of others. The cultivated quietude was one way that Oakers worked to maintain personal boundaries in public spaces. Violating this set of norms for the expression of emotion compromised members' abilities to choose not to participate in the emotional life of another. Just as the emotion expression norms functioned to preserve personal boundaries, the norms for maintaining members' confidentiality and respecting members' choices to not communicate also functioned to maintain boundaries

between members. The belief that boundaries between people were good and necessary was premised on an understanding of community members as individuals with a primary allegiance to themselves and a secondary allegiance to the community. This reflects a prominent US understanding of whom people are (individuals) and the primacy of this notion of a unique and autonomous person when individuals enact their social roles (e.g., as community members) (Carbaugh, 1988b).

Egalitarianism Doesn't Mean Gender Equity: Raced and Classed Communication Practices in Community

In many ways Oakers were a self-reflective lot who took their identity as an experimental community seriously. While they strove for a utopian life-style, they realized that they had not yet arrived. When members found a community practice objectionable, open communication was supported and effort was made to analyze issues and rectify problems. In my time on the farm there was no more hotly discussed issue than Oakian communication practices.[15] While the above sections worked to explicate a normative style of communicating on the farm, this section utilizes *naturally occurring criticisms* to develop a race- and class-based critique of this style of communicating (Carbaugh, 1989/1990).

[15] It should be noted that the ready availability of this critique to me may have been due to my own communicated discomfort with what I understood as the normative Oakian way of being—an ethos that contributed to my belief that I must tamp down loudness, swearing, and negativity. I was keenly aware, because members had made it apparent, that on the farm there is little escape from others and one's style of communicating intimately affected others. While the intensity of my efforts to embody the Oakian way of being ebbed, perhaps most attributable to my enculturation, the importance of embodying an Oakian style, for Oakers, did not.

Critiques of Oakian communication practices clustered around the terms "passive aggressive," "middle class community," and "written culture." The clearest and perhaps most classic example of passive aggressive communication that members found troubling was interpersonal conflict that was suppressed until a situation arose where it could acceptably be expressed. For example, as Lou explained, "the most common example of passive aggressiveness is that someone is mad at someone for some reason and they'll hold that for 2-3 years until that person is going for a managerial appointment and then say the person wont do a good job and cite reasons that if they weren't mad wouldn't come up." Other than opposing the appointment of another to a community committee, Oakers also talked about members using written communication to engage in conflict communication without making an effort to resolve the conflict. This critique centered on the O&I board. In O&I conversations and comments, members who consistently opposed another with vehemence and, occasionally, with statements that conflicted with prior ones, marked an underlying personal conflict that was being passive aggressively played out. Conversely, understanding strained interpersonal relationships on the farm helped to understand why members might oppose another's suggested policy reform paper even though the reform appeared to align with the opposing member's politic.

In the early months of my stay, I heard these critiques as general statements made about a "middle class" communication system that relied heavily on personal choice, confidential feedback, calm emotional expression, and writing. Accordingly, the identified issues stemmed from the middle class architects of the community who crafted a communication system that was in important ways flawed. Towards the later months of my fieldwork, however, the critiques had come to identify normative Oakian

communication practices not just as "middle class," but as fundamentally racist. It was not just that Oakers practiced a "middle class" way of communicating; it was that the system, which was now also identified as a white system, marginalized people of color and working class people. These class- and race-based critiques pivoted on two key interrelated issues: directness and honesty.

Twin Oaks' elaborate system of written communication was often cited as the primary issue for members of color. According to Black members, Oakers' reliance on communicating through 3x5 notes and O&I papers perpetuated indirect and passive aggressive communication. A stylistic difference identifiable in broader U.S. culture (Kochman, 1990; Spears, 2001), Black members rejected indirect, written communication, favoring instead direct, face-to-face communication. For example, April, a new member of color who identified as middle class, participated in a series of practical jokes that culminated in turning several items in a residence upside down. Because a residence was considered to be relatively private space, this type of practical joke was potentially problematic and could jeopardize April's acceptance into full membership. Concerned for April, Karl wrote her a note saying that he had "reason to believe that [she was] a member of the upside down club" and that he "suspect[ed] [she wouldn't] be accepted for membership." While Karl was motivated by a genuine fondness for April, April understood this note to be a part of Twin Oakian passive aggressive culture. Wanting to make clear her position on written interpersonal communication, April took what was intended to be a private note and posted it on the O&I board along with the explanation that members who had an issue with her or her behavior should talk with her face-to-face. The O&I conversation on this issue was

short-lived and consisted mostly of public interpersonal repair work being done by both Karl and April. However, having violated an Oakian conceptualization of confidentiality, April's posting of Karl's 3x5 note resulted in negative feedback for April that extended beyond the duration of the O&I conversation.

As part of the membership process, after three months of living on the farm, the membership was asked to provide input on new members. Input could be either positive or negative—what was understood to be "constructive" insofar as it was meant to help a new member to understand the behaviors others found troubling. In her three-month feedback, April was told that some members, who were to remain confidential, thought she was too loud and too aggressive in her communication style. Furthermore, she was told that at least one member no longer felt comfortable eating in ZK's lounge because of her style of communicating. Clearly hurt by this feedback, April tried to figure out who these members were so that she could talk directly with them in order to come to a mutually beneficial understanding. She reasoned that without more information on when she was aggressive and loud, this feedback was not helpful. April approached a few members to ask if they had given her feedback and on one of these occasions she approached Shena who was finishing her lunch. Shena denied having given feedback but explained that it was likely that the objection had to do with April's louder, heightened emotional expression. Hearing this, I asked Shena what was wrong with being emotionally expressive—especially since it was an honest way to communicate. Shena's demeanor changed, her eyebrows raised and moved slightly together while her eyes grew wider. Her smile changed to a frown as she stated that it was oppressive to others and was understood to be violent.

In this series of happenings, it was clear that April spoke from an orientation to communication that was distinct from what was normative on the farm—the position from which Shena spoke. April understood written communication to be indirect and hurtful and valued direct, face-to-face communication. Accordingly, when a member had issues with her, April believed that member should talk with her face-to-face. This belief was in tension with the norm for confidentiality and the support the community gave to members who did not want to communicate. Operating from the belief that direct, face-to-face communication was a less hurtful and more genuine form of communication, April was heard by members like Shena as being aggressive. That aggressiveness was attributed to the directness with which she spoke—she tended to state her thoughts, feelings, and opinions without hedges or qualifiers—as well as her violation of interpersonal boundaries as a member of the upside-down club and as a person who spoke with a louder voice and emotional expression.

Like April, Watermelon Jenkins, a working class member of color, had also received negative, "constructive," feedback during her three-month membership poll. This feedback included comments that she was too emotionally expressive and that she stated her opinions as fact. In her response to this feedback, Watermelon stated:

> My opinion don't count for shit and neither do any one else's. They're a drop in the bucket. I completely understand that. But if I'm goin' to have them, they are my personal facts. How dare I say something and then let someone sway me. And people here pretend—they give you lip service. I don't give a fuck about lip service.

According to Watermelon, all people had opinions and these opinions may not matter, but they should not be denied. Like opinions, emotion should also not be denied—a point Watermelon made explicitly on a number of occasions and one that is implicit in

the tone and word choice of her statement. While her words were delivered with animated, but not angry emotion, the addition of obscenities marked it as a violation of the Oakian norm for the calm expression of emotion.[16] In contrast to Watermelon's preferred style of communicating, Oakers were understood to "give lip service" rather than honest and forthright communication. Understanding this, Watermelon found herself altering her communication. "I used to be much more nice. I used to be much more, ya know," then, leaning forward in an exaggerated listening pose, "That's nice…." In the absence of honest and direct communication, Watermelon was finding it difficult to continue to attend to members' communication.

April's and Watermelon's three month feedbacks served as crystallizing moments for self-identified working class members and members of color. Given that I identified as coming from the working class and that I, like these other members, struggled with the normative style of communicating on the farm, I had many conversations that bemoaned the downside of the "passive aggressive," "written culture" at Twin Oaks. As argued above, this critique centered on a belief that good interpersonal communication was honest and direct with increased self-disclosure of person thoughts and feelings and that the heightened expression of emotion was one form of honest communication. The heightened expression of emotion contrasted with the Oakian emphasis on quiet and verbal expressions of emotion that Stearns (1994)

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[16] Spears (2001) identifies "cussin' out (cursing directed to a particular addressee)," along with "going off on someone (a sudden, obten unexpected burst of negatively critical, vituperative speech), getting real (a fully candid appraisal of a person, situation, event, etc.), and trash talk (talk in competitive settings, notably athetic games, that is boastful and puts down opponents)" as features of African American verbal culture (p. 240).

identifies as the dominant U.S. style of emoting—a style that he contrasts with more emotionally expressive working class Americans as well as African Americans.

Differences in how communicative practices were counted produced tensions between normative Oakian communication and the communication style normative for self-identified working class members and members of color. Whereas the normative Oakian style supported confidential communication, quiet and calm communication, verbal rather than embodied expression on emotion, and choices to not communicate, the working class and members of color style favored face-to-face communication and the forthright expression of emotion and personal opinions. Normative communication on the farm was premised on an understanding that honest and emotional interpersonal communication took energy and that, because people had no necessary relationship with other communards, members could choose in which relationships they communicated this way. Conversely, the working class members and members of color style of communication was premised on an understanding that disingenuous and "passive aggressive" communication took energy and was hurtful. Honest and direct communication was a preferred way of communicating that was not contingent on the quality of relationship—on whether or not the relationship was more private or more public.

In many ways the tensions between these two styles supported Kochman's (1990) findings in his analysis of black and white styles of communicating. In his work, black communicators strongly preferred direct and forthright communication as well as genuine expressions of emotion. Conversely, white communicators strongly preferred the subdued and contained expression and communication of emotion. What members'

critiques of the normative Oakian system highlight, however, was an affinity between working class (white) communication and the communication of members of color (regardless of class).

When assessing Twin Oaks' communication system, what emerged in light of these findings was not a clear androcentrism subtly embedded in everyday communication norms. During my time on the farm, it was clear that, where normative ways of communicating were concerned, gender was not the social identity on which to focus if one wanted to understand communication-based marginalization. As mentioned above, while East Wind and Ganas were both gendered, raced, and classed communities because of their styles of communication, Twin Oaks' style of communication was ambiguously gendered at best. In general, normative Oakian communication occupied the middle ground between on the farm conceptualizations of masculine (aggressive and physical) communication and feminine (too much talk) communication. However, gender was invoked when members deviated from normative communication—aggressiveness was understood by members to be a working class man's style of communicating while too much communication invoked feminine ("crazy") styles of communication.

Gender as an isolated social identity would not have, could not have, provided the understanding that the intersectional view of gender did in this chapter. By accounting for race and class critiques, this intersectional feminist analysis asked, "Which women were understood to be under-/privileged by this way of communicating?" According to the findings of this study, middle-class and white members were privileged insofar as

they tended to be enculturated off the farm to perform normative Oakian ways of communicating. Key norms of this communication system were:

1. If the community wanted to support members' choices of interpersonal relationships, then the community must support members' rights to communicate with others if they wanted to, but also to not communicate if they did not want to do so.

2. If the community wanted to promote the communication of honest opinions and feelings about potential members as well as existing members, then the community must allow this type of feedback to be confidential. A corollary to this norm was: In everyday public conversations about controversial topics or objectionable behaviors, members should maintain other members' confidentiality.

3. On the farm, if one wants to be an effective and well-liked member, then one should not express negative emotion loudly—either vocally or with one's body. It is preferred that members articulate their emotional experiences with words, either in writing or in face-to-face communication, rather than to rely on their bodies to express emotion.

While working-class members and members of color were understood by some Oakers to be under-privileged by this dominant Oakian system of communication, it is also important to note that other social identities with normative communication patterns that emphasized direct, face-to-face communication, that eschewed written and confidential communication, and that did not eschew loud communication or bodily emotional expression would also be marginalized by the Oakian system. For example,

New York City Jewish speech has been characterized as relatively louder and faster, with increased interruptions, than dominant White speech styles (Tannen, 1981). In the Twin Oakian context this style might well be problematic. As a feminist community who supports anti-racist and classist causes, this has been cause for much reflection for Oakers (Sadiq, 2006). This research was, in part, an effort to add to this ongoing conversation on the farm.

CHAPTER 7

EXPRESSING GENDER NEUTRALITY IN A FEMINIST COMMUNITY

> Those who oppose the generic masculine are concerned with both equal rights *and* equal words. Nonsexist language would not only reflect a move toward a nonsexist ideology; it would also function in itself as one form of social equality. Eliminating the ambiguity and sex exclusiveness of the he/man approach would enable us to communicate more clearly and fairly about the sexes. (Martyna, 1980, p. 487)

In the 1970s, feminists in the United States began to focus analytic attention on sexist language practices or, as Spender (1980) termed it, "man-made" language. Focusing on the use of the pronoun "he" and the noun "man" as gender-neutral words, researchers conducted experiments that proved the use of these words evoked images of men at a far higher rate than images of women, or even women and men (see Todd-Mancillas, 1981, for a review of these early studies). Understanding that the continued use of "he" and "man" as gender-neutral words perpetuated androcentrism, feminists called for language reform and suggested a range of possible solutions (Martyna, 1980). Some argued for the use of "they," others argued for the combined use of existing pronouns (e.g., "s/he" or "he or she"), and still other argued for the use of alternative pronouns such as the neologisms "tey" (she or he), "ter" (her or his), and "tem" (him or her). Opponents of language reform countered with a range of arguments premised on beliefs that change would be too difficult, spoken and written communication would become too awkward, language was relatively trivial and inconsequential, and people should have the right to choose how they communicate (Blaubergs, 1980). Unhampered by critics, language planning efforts to reform androcentric language have resulted in

amending language in legal documents (Markowitz, 1984), State constitutions ("News," 2002), and the popular press (Balhorn, 2009). Today, sexist language practices continue to be researched and debated, but the debates have expanded beyond the United States to include countries with grammatical gender as a component of language such as Russia (Kapatsinski, 2006), France (Romaine, 1999), and Sweden (Milles, 2011) as well as studies of English in a range of global contexts (Winter & Pauwels, 2006; Pauwels, 2011).

This chapter adds to language planning research on sexist language by analyzing the everyday use of an alternative and gender-neutral pronoun, "co," in Twin Oaks Community. "Co" has been used by Oakers for over 40 years to enact an egalitarian feminist ideology that explicitly counters the positioning of women in dominant U.S. culture. Importantly, current uses of "co" have extended beyond its historical use as a gender-neutral pronoun used when the sex of a member was unknown. In working to achieve a culturally grounded understanding of "co," I collected instances of its use in everyday social interaction and noted historical uses found in Twin Oaks' archives and children's books. My data set consisted of over 100 instances of the use of "co" with 34 instances being from everyday interactions collected over the course of my fieldwork and ranging from publically posted O&I (Opinion and Information) papers, 3x5 notes, and Twin Oaks' Bylaws to verbal interactions recorded in jottings and on video and audio digital formats.

Different than studies of how sexist language shapes thought and perception, this chapter focuses on linguistic reform as it is embedded in everyday discourse (Ehrlich & King, 1998). Scholars who have had as their analytic focus pronouns in everyday social

interaction have tended to focus on pronomial address terms. Brown and Gilman's (1960) seminal essay established the utility of this type of research. According to their findings, in languages that offer people a choice of second person pronouns—for example, derivatives of *tu* and *vos* (Latin) such as *tu* and *vous* (French) and *tu* and *usted* (Spanish)—attending to the patterned way that people choose the pronoun with which to address another yields insight into underlying relationship ideologies. Of lasting importance in the Brown and Gilman (1960) theory is the concept that the use of *tu* (T, the familiar pronoun) or *vos/vous/usted* (V, the polite pronoun) reveals dimensions of power or solidarity in relationships. The power dimension is illustrated when one person uses T while the other uses V, while the solidarity dimension is illustrated when both people use T. In this way, power indicates a relationship of dominance and subordination while solidarity indicates closeness in social status.

Since the publication of this report, scholars have expanded their focus to include a range of other address terms such as kinship terms, titles, and nicknames (Fitch, 1998) as well as uses of last names in marital forms of address (Carbaugh, 1996b, pp. 89-112; 113-122), and even whether or not people avoid personal address terms (Erving-Tripp, 1972).[1] While the terms of address in these studies have expanded beyond second person pronouns, the workings of power/difference and solidarity/equality can be seen in how people use terms of address to negotiate and make meaningful their relationships. Importantly, these studies also achieve a grounded understanding of the cultural meaningfulness of personal address terms—what their use says about people and their relationships to others. Moving from a culturally sensitive, grounded orientation to

[1] See Philipsen and Huspek (1985) for an early bibliography of personal address studies.

personal address, research has questioned the reductionistic orientation of Brown and Gilman's (1960) early work. Covarrubias (2002) has questioned the conceptualization of *tu* as a pronoun of solidarity, preferring instead to conceptualize *tu* (as her informants do) as a term of equality. Covarrubias (2002) makes this move in part because "solidarity" was understood by her informants to have political and ideological overtones and *tu* was not used by them to convey like-mindedness, but rather social equality (pp. 60-61). Furthermore, Tannen (2003) has argued that communication such as personal address terms that mark sameness or difference between people is polysemic. For example, how people interpret communication that marks similarity may not always be in terms of solidarity (for example a professor enlisting communicative practices to convey solidarity with her students even as there is an established hierarchical relationship that contradicts these practices). Tannen's (2003) work suggests the utility of research that focuses on grounded meanings.

In sum, research that moves from Brown and Gilman's (1960) work suggests that communicative practices, such as personal address terms and pronoun usage, says something about relationships between people. Often, what is said has to do with establishing difference or sameness and this implicates dimensions of solidarity and power. While much of this work had focused on personal address terms, Tannen (2003) has demonstrated the application of this framework to more general forms of communication. Integrating conceptualizations of power and solidarity into an analysis of feminist language planning helps to flesh out the function and meaning of such practices to the people who use them. From this perspective, the use of "co," is understood as a feminist linguistic reform practice and Oakers' use or lack of use may

indicate efforts to establish sameness or difference, equality or hierarchy. By treating "co" as a key cultural symbol (Carbaugh, 1988a), this research answers the questions: How do historical uses of "co" compare to current uses? What might this say about Oakian feminism as it relates to language planning? And, what can be said of Oakian notions of (gendered) personhood active on the farm? In sum, this research serves as a case study of language reform, the evolution of feminist language practices designed to increase women's political and cultural voices, and the cultural notions of gender and personhood on which these practices are premised.

Focusing on "co" as a key cultural symbol provided an anchoring point for the exploration of the cultural discourse that was both partly constituted by and constitutive of it. As a first step in my analyses, I utilized Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING framework to develop a descriptive account of the uses of "co." With a focus on the everyday uses of "co" grounding my analysis, I then looked for symbols that substituted for, contrasted and co-occurred with this key symbol, and asked the basic questions: who uses this symbol, how, and to what end? The goal of this analysis was to render meanings of the key symbol and in so doing render the culture discourse in which it was understood as meaningful. As an interpretive move, explicating these meanings required formulating culturally relevant rules, beliefs and values, and dimensions of meaning that were active in uses of "co" (Carbaugh, 1996b, 2007; Carbaugh, Gibson, and Milburn, 1997). This analysis brought into view an evolution in the use of "co"—moving from a gender-neutral pronoun to a gender-neutral noun. Tracking the changes in Oakers' uses of "co" suggested changes in the feminist ideology/-ies maintained by Oakers. After a brief history and cultural grounding of the use of "co" as a gender neutral pronoun is

presented, an analysis of the current and past uses of "co" that move beyond and include its original and mandated use will be explicated.

History

An early use of "co" by an Oaker was found in the August 1971 issue of the *Leaves of Twin Oaks*. Writing about her experience in a community Awareness Group—a group formed so that members could increase their knowledge and understanding of other members so as to facilitate interpersonal closeness—this member said, "Personally, I am much more comfortable with some members of my group than I was. It has been a way of multiplying good feelings. As a group, I'm sure we've given strength to a couple of members. I might not otherwise have felt comfortable about asking the individual about what was bothering co*" (unknown, 1971, p. 111). The asterisk at the end of this quote referred the reader to the meaning and use of "co":

> Co means he, she, his, hers, him, and her. It was invented by a women's liberation group in New York who felt that the generalized he referring to both sexes should be done away with as part of our language. Many Twin Oaks members agree and write their articles accordingly. (unknown, 1971, p. 115, emphasis in the original)

This early reference defined "co" as a gender-neutral pronoun used on the farm and reflected a feminist orientation to sexist language, the academic aspect of which was outlined above.

The focus on using "co" as a gender-neutral pronoun has been further reinforced and explained by the Twin Oaks' Bylaws. In Article I, Definitions, it states that the "word 'co' shall mean 'she or he'; 'cos' shall mean 'hers or his'; 'coself' shall mean 'herself or himself.'" Here we see the addition of "cos" and "coself" as additional

gender-neutral pronoun forms. The following sentences suggest the use and function of these words:

1. With gendered pronouns:
   She went to get her coat. She's careful not let herself get cold.

2. With the use of "co," "cos," and "coself":
   Co went to cos room. Co's careful not to let coself get cold.

Inclusion in the text of governing documents validates and institutionalizes the use of these alternative pronouns as a feminist practice.

Historical Uses of 'Co'

Because the use of "co" has evolved through the years of its use, it was helpful to provide an analysis of its historical grounding. There were two sources that provided the rich data necessary to accomplish this task—the files of O&I papers that were archived by Oakers and the children's books that were once used in the community child care program, which was discontinued in 1997. Twin Oaks had a highly organized archival system and for this part of my study I read through a wide range of files from each topical area with some topics being read entirely. My reading was geared towards achieving an historical understanding of current Twin Oakian culture. While reading these files, I noted instances where "co" was used and wrote these in field notes. In taking field notes on the children's books, I first gathered the children's books that had been altered—words changed, sentences rewritten, characters' gendered identities transformed and plots redirected—and then read through the books recording the changes that had been made. For this analysis, I utilized 24 books.

In analyzing the data pertaining to the use of "co" on the farm, it was helpful to note words that (1) contrasted with the use of "co," (2) were substitutable for, insofar as they served the same general function, "co," and (3) typically occurred in the same utterance as "co." Generating data according to these three categories (words that relate to "co" by contrast, co-occurrence, and substitution) enabled the marking and interpretation of observable changes in the use of "co" on the farm.

"Co" in Twin Oaks Children's Books

While the bulk of this section discusses children's books that were altered by Oakers, it is also important to begin with those that were not. Hans Christian Andersen's (1958) The Swineherd, presented the story of a prince who, desiring to get married, woos a rather fickle princess. Throughout this book, gendered pronouns were used and in the Twin Oaks' version none of these pronouns were substituted by the gender neutral pronoun "co." Similarly, in My Body is Private (Girard, 1984), we find Julie, the main character, saying, "My baby brother's body is private, but he still has to have his diapers changed and he can't take baths by himself. Someone has to touch the private parts of his body, to take care of him." Using gendered pronouns, contrasting with the gender-neutral use of "co," suggested two important qualities of communication. First, gendered pronouns were used to refer to characters whose sex/gender was known. Second, as we will see in the following paragraphs, the sex/gender of these characters could have been changed and given that they were not we can assume that they were not deemed to be objectionable.

In contrast to the books that were left unaltered, there were those where gendered pronouns were used to transform characters' genders. For example, a dragon who had "fierce eyes and a huge mouth" had, coming from "[o]ut of *her* [his] mouth a crimson-red tongue and a breath that was like fire and smoke" (Hamada, 1967).[2] While some books only altered the pronouns, others altered both words and pictures. In Curious George gets a Medal (Rey, 1957), a farmer and the farmer's offspring have had their gender altered with the aid of a pen. In this transition, the farmer developed shoulder-length curly hair and *her* [his] daughter, had been transformed to have her inked-in hair pulled back in braids. Female characters were also remade as male characters in some of the children's books. For example, in The Lost-and-Found Town (Loots, 1978), the absent-minded dog, Perry, "Loserville's most famous act*or* [actress]," had a gender transformation in text, but not in the images. In this way, the feminine dog-character, Perry, was referred to as "he," but the picture of a long-haired, blue dress wearing anthropomorphized dog was not altered.

While some characters underwent a gender transformation, others were altered to achieve gender neutrality. In a book about a muffin-eating dragon the text was altered, with the use of "co," to render the dragon's gender neutral. The Twin Oaks' altered text substituted the gender-specific masculine pronouns "he" and "his" with the gender-neutral pronoun "co," rendering the dragon's sex/gender ambiguous. Thus we read that the

> *dragon* [he] was very tired from *cos* [his] long journey, so *the dragon* [he] unpacked *cos* [his] pillow, *cos* [his] pajamas and the picture of *cos*

[2] For presentation of children's books data, italics will be use to indicate Oakian editing. Immediately following the italicized edits bracketed text will indicate the original text of the book.

> [his] pony," and "with crumbs still on *cos* [his] face from the muffins *co* [he] had eaten at the last castle…the dragon came trotting down the hill. (Cosgrove, 1974)

Similarly, we meet de-gendered Jeeter, who was Loserville's resident fix-it person. On holidays, though, "*co* [he] stopped fixing things and started finding them instead" (Loots, 1978). As these examples suggested, the words for which "co" was the substitute were the gender-specific, masculine pronouns "he" and "his." While, as we learned above, some characters were changed from linguistically identified males to females, and some characters were not altered, there was no evidence that suggested a female character was neutered in Twin Oakian children's books. In part, the lack of neutered female characters paralleled the broader U.S. feminist movement to discontinue the use of sexist language by discontinuing the use of he/his as gender-neutral pronouns—as a practice that sought to render females more visible, not less so (Martyna, 1980). Of course it was not purely a question of visibility as Perry's transformation from a female character to a feminine male character suggests. At play was a complex feminist discourse with a set of rules and rationales that governed which books were altered, in what ways, and which were not—a point to be returned to shortly.

While the examples presented above utilized both gender-specific and gender-neutral pronouns, nouns that co-occurred with "co" also omitted gender from language-based communication in children's books. In an example, taken from <u>The Tears of the Dragon</u> (Hamada, 1967), the text was altered from its original to the Oakian version where "parent" and "person" were substituted for the original word choices: "'So I have been told by my grand*parent's* [father's] grand*parent* [father],' the *person* [man] would reply." Similarly, two occupational titles, police*officer* [man] and mail*carrier* [man],

were altered so as to function as gender-neutral nouns. Thus, we read in one altered text, that:

> Whenever the children of the village were not behaving, some old *person* [man] would be sure to wag *cos* [his] finger and warn them that the dragon was just waiting to snatch them away. (Hamanda, 1967)

In these examples, "co" was used to support the use of gender-neutral nouns and both were used to counter sexist language practices that promoted "he" and "man" as gender-neutral words. In the children's books, "co" was used as a pronoun with gender-neutral nouns being substituted for the gendered nouns that were present in the original versions of the children's books. There were no instances of "co" being used as a noun, a point that becomes important as we track the changes in usage of "co" on the farm.

Noting both the unaltered and the altered passages, basic rules for the use of "co" in these books were identifiable. First, one should use gender-specific pronouns and not "co" when the sex/gender of a character is known (even as it may be altered in pictures) and, second, one should use "co" when the sex/gender of a character is unknown. (These rules will expand in the following section.) What makes the alterations, or lack thereof, intelligible and important in this context was an underlying set of beliefs—that sexism existed "off the farm" and that sexism perpetuated confining gender roles and the invisibility of females—and a norm for communicative practices—that sexism should be counteracted by altering language practices and gender comportment.

Attending to the instances of alteration as well as the lack of alterations, laid bare patterned features of the feminist discourse that guided the changing of children's books on the farm. These patterns revealed a discourse that countered traditional U.S. practices by presenting alternative roles and gender comportment for female- and male-bodied

characters while maintaining gender-neutral similarities. For example, the friendly, muffin-eating dragon was thought to possess qualities that both males and females can and should have: friendliness, and a non-violent interest in the (playful) acquisition and consumption of muffins. Conversely, the fierce dragon underwent a reversal of gender. Fierceness, physical toughness, was not understood by Oakers to be a typical characteristic of a female-bodied person. Altering the sex of the fierce dragon functioned to render "fierceness" a quality of femaleness. Similarly, male characters performing jobs that were not traditionally counted as men's work off the farm were altered to become female characters—as in the farmers above. These types of alterations suggested a reversal of traditional gender-roles and traits and worked to convey the message that females were strong, tough, and capable of doing what had been traditionally counted as masculine behaviors. Altered male characters, like the altered female characters, were also understood as being able to do that which had been traditionally counted as belonging to the realm of the opposite gender. Male characters could be absent-minded and silly and could go shopping and be adorned with feminine attire—a frilly blue dress and jewelry.

Importantly, these examples suggested that traditional phenotype markers of gender such as body morphology and hairstyle were typically altered when the character was male and was doing traditionally masculine activities. Thus, the farmers were transformed into feminine females by penning long hair. This was not the case for female characters who were transformed into male characters. The newly transformed male characters tended not to be altered and thus embodied a feminine style. While it is certainly true that adding long hair to a shorthaired character is easier than changing a

dress to over-alls, the net result of these practices were to render femininity more visible. This aspect of the alterations made to the children books can best be understood as a textual embodiment of a feminist concern with the invisibility of females in the imaginations of people influenced by sexist language. Unlike language's function to mark a sexed body in the children's books, the alterations to characters marked gender as it was embodied. Thus, "he" marked Perry as a male-bodied character while the pictures marked Perry as feminine. Already having established that both female- and male-bodied characters could perform across gender categories, this quality of the children's books served only to make femininity more visible.

In determining the cultural rules that governed the gendering of characters, we can look to the examples of the dress-wearing, forgetful dog (male) and the hard-working farmer (female) as well as the unaltered uppity prince and the object of his love, the princess who throws away the rose given to her by the prince because it is not fake (and is, since being cut, dead); and we can compare and contrast the two dragons—the fierce dragon and the muffin-eating dragon. What made these alterations, or lack of alterations, meaningful was an underlying belief that there was something about the characters that either supported (and were thus altered) or undermined (and were thus left unaltered) the confinement of females to traditional roles and the devaluing of the feminine. In these examples, the female characters were capable, kind, strong, and even fierce while the male characters were feminine or had less-than-desirable traits such as absent-mindedness and arrogance. While people's use of pronouns has been understood to convey messages about power and solidarity so that, for example, a French student may use *tu* to convey solidarity with another student while using *vous* with a professor to

recognize power differences (Brown & Gilman, 1960), the Oakian practice of using gendered pronouns suggests an effort not to perpetuate power differences, but to counter differences that implicate power imbalances between female and male U.S. citizens. Where gendered pronouns were used, it marked a countering of male privilege and power by positioning female characters as more visible and powerful. Where "co" was used, however, it marked a form of gender solidarity, of celebrated similarities between characteristics that both females and males should, or traditionally do, have such as friendliness or playfulness. In this way, "co" functioned as a "universal" pronoun that expressed "the egalitarian ideal" in theretofore unequal gender roles (Brown & Gilman, 1960, p. 266).

"Co" in Twin Oaks Archives

The Twin Oaks archived O&I papers offered a glimpse into communication between members that took place in the past. Because the papers were dated, it was possible to get a chronological sense of this history. The wide range of paper topics and discussions archived provided a sense of the richness of life on the farm—the ebb and flow of issues, the celebrations, and the times of grief. More than the children's books, these papers suggested the discursive life of "co" and it was for this reason that I included data generated from these files. In what follows, I again focus on words that contrast, substitute for, and co-occur with "co." In so doing, it became clear that the use of "co" in everyday talk on the farm deviated from its original intended use—countering androcentrism—to include uses that facilitated confidentiality.

As with the examples of contrasting, gender-specific words in the children's books, s/he, her/him, and hers/his were used when the gender of the member was known. Thus we hear early in a 1999 conversation about gender a female Oaker saying to laughter, "What he says. I defer to [him]" (Spalding, 1999, p. 2, male member's name omitted). And, later, a male member talking about another male member whose identity was known to the discussants suggesting that "he has taken on a lot of projects and I think…he feels trapped" (Spalding, p. 51). Similarly, we see in a 1991 O&I paper an Oaker writing about the pride he feels for his friend, who some Oakers have met, suggesting that "she's strongly into feminist and lesbian politics." Again, these examples suggested that when the sex of a person was known and when reference was made to that person, the gender-specific pronouns were used.

"Co" and "coself" were used, however, when identity and gender were not known—because, for example, the person had not been met and cos name, or personal/job title, offered no clear gender identity, or because a general statement was being made that could apply to any person. A 1992 paper clarifying Twin Oaks' expulsion procedure stated, "A public meeting is required, at which the 'accused' has the right to defend *coself*." In another use of "co," from a paper posted in 1990, a member sought to clarify the process by which an Oaker received input on "cos" behavior in a facilitated meeting, a feedback. As an author explained:

> Reasons that feedbacks have occurred are because someone called it for *co's self*, the membership team called it for a provisional member just before co's six-month poll, or it was deemed necessary to have one for a newly arriving member who had mixed responses to their membership poll. It seems in the past that anybody that found a facilitator or was willing to facilitate one *co's self*, could do it.

While “co’s self” is a deviation from the typically used “coself,” the above examples are consistent with general usage patterns and with the definition of “co,” “cos,” and “coself” as gender-neutral pronouns found in the Bylaws—as a gender-neutral term used when gender identity was unknown.

The examples of “co” used above were in the context of papers written to address policy issues, but there were also examples of “co” that used a more conversational tone in posted O&I papers. The more conversational use was seen in a statement affirming a prior comment that articulated the difficulty of negotiating boundaries between work-time and time off, or personal time, on the farm. In this example, the member commented:

> Yeah—that norm we have about asking someone if we can ask *co* a certain type of question helps serve this purpose…. I think it’s a good way to respect the boundary between work life and leisure, public and private life.

This latter example of the use of “co” contained the gender-neutral noun, someone, a word that, among others co-occurred with the use of “co.” This example was similar to those we saw in the children’s books in that the gender of the person being invoked was not known, because the speaker did not have access to gender markers (e.g., morphology, gendering names, and linguistic markers) or because there was no specific person being referred to and therefore the person could be either a male or a female. As in the children’s books, there were a variety of words that were utilized as gender-neutral words by Oakers. “Someone” has already been mentioned, but there were examples of “person,” “member,” “somebody,” “communitarian,” and “communard” being used in this capacity in the archives. What was worthy of noting, however, were the times when the gender of a person was known, but a gender-neutral noun was used, which in turn

facilitated the use of the gender-neutral pronoun, "co." The use of gender-neutral words in these two differing cases, revealed an emergent use of "co"—a use that rendered the gender ambiguous and facilitated confidential communication (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of confidential communication).

In a lively O&I discussion about the use of "girl" to refer to adult females, was an example of the use of "co." One Oaker explained that she, surprisingly, had heard members using girl as a diminutive and continued by explaining that those who use "gal" were also objectionable. She stated that she:

> had a good interaction with a member here [on the farm] where co used 'gal' in this way, I explained that it bothered me and *co* was receptive to this feedback.

In this example, the gender identity of the member who used "gal" was known, but gender and the member's identity was veiled by the use of gender-neutral language. Similarly, in a paper that summarized a discussion some members had regarding the privatization of community resources, a member wrote that "one member feels *co* has learned that one must lead by example in this realm at TO." These examples demonstrate that gender-neutral words were used when the gender identity of the person being invoked was known. However, in the latter example, it was not just the two interlocutors who were privy to the conversation; the identity of the speaker and therefore cos gender was known to others who attended the discussion. The effect produced by this use of "co," in conjunction with gender-neutral nouns, was that the identity of the member was camouflaged and the words appeared as though any member could have uttered them—they were not specific to a person or to a gender. As with the use of "co" in children's books, this use expressed a gender egalitarianism such that both females and males were

understood to be equally capable of expressing the thoughts and beliefs that were being discussed. In this way, the use of "co" facilitated a form of equality and gender solidarity amongst members based on a choice to opt for a gender-neutral term rather than gendered pronouns that would have established and perpetuated difference.

Appearing in the archives were two additional words used by Oakers that should be noted, "honcho," a manager of a project, and its verb form, "honchoing." While not gendered in the uses noted in archival data, "honcho" was understood, at least by some, as being gendered during my fieldwork. For this reason, it is important to unpack the meaning and use of "honcho" found in the archives. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, "honcho'" is a Japanese loan word used to indicate a manager or a person who is in charge of a project. This is, in fact, how Oakers used "honcho'" in the 1999, when a member stated, "it's true that in recent years a number of our buildings [construction] have been honchoed by men but that's not always the case" and then asked of a female Oaker, "You did some honchoing didn't you?" (Spalding, 1999, p. 9). Again, "honcho/-ing" was understood as a word that could be used to refer to either a male or a female member who supervised a project. While the gender-neutrality was in alignment with "co," this use stands in contrast with the pronoun "co." "Co" was used as a gender-neutral personal pronoun, while "honcho/-ing" marked a job. The use of "honcho/-ing" thus highlighted a feminist emphasis, reflected in the anti-sexist language agenda—rendering job titles gender-neutral so as to make more visible women's (ability to) work in these positions (Frank & Anshen, 1983; Todd-Mancillas, 1981; see also Chapter 3 for a discussion of Oakian affirmative action).

In sum, in historical data "co" was not only used as a gender-neutral pronoun utilized when a gender identity was unknown or ambiguous, as with the muffin-eating dragon, but we also see "co" being used, in conjunction with gender-neutral nouns, when the gender was known to the speaker and, upon occasion, to others as well. Acknowledging this use of gender-neutral language required a reformulation of the first of the two rules established in the prior section for the use of "co": one should use gender-specific pronouns and not "co" when the gender of a character is known. Given the archival data, the first rule should read: one should use gender-specific pronouns when the identity, and therefore gender, of a person is known to all. If the identity is not known to all, one may choose to use either gender-neutral or gender-specific words. Rule two—one should use "co" when the gender of a character, in this case person, is unknown—remains vital. Furthermore, an additional rule that takes into account this new data should be articulated: If one substitutes a gender-neutral noun for the name of person, one should use "co" as a gender-neutral pronoun. It was in the use of gender-neutral terms when the identity of the member was known that "co" moved beyond the language planning emphasis on decreasing the androcentrism in language toward uses that facilitated confidentiality.

Once again, what made the use of "co" meaningful in the historical examples was the set of beliefs on which they were premised. The use of "co" when the gender of a person was unknown suggested, as it did above, a belief that sexism existed off the farm and that it was good to counter this sexism by altering language practices. Furthermore, rendering gender invisible in contexts ranging from community policy to members' behaviors as described in stories, suggested a belief that gender was both irrelevant and a

salient identity marker that should sometimes be masked. What was valued was equality (as in the case of policy statements) and the discussion of actions or outcomes of the actions of a person regardless of cos gender (as in the case of stories). In this way the person, the member, the communard was a more salient category in many, if not most, situations.

While uses of gender-neutral terms sought to establish equality and solidarity by prescribing gender-blind practices, there was evidence that these practices conflicted with other aspects of countering gender oppression. In these cases, disadvantage experienced off the farm was compensated for on the farm—the clearest example of which would be affirmative action practices that recruited female Oakers to fill jobs that were traditionally men's work. A poignant series of questions posted in 1992 interrogating the community's role in protecting individual rights in the face of a culturally diverse membership (some of whom have past experiences of, among other things, sexism) highlighted the tension between gender-blind and affirmative action feminist practices. A member asked:

> How far should the community go to compensate for its members past experience[s] in which women's experience is frequently invalidated and rarely affirmed? At what point does the community's desire to compensate for women's disempowerment in mainstream society come in conflict with the rights of male members?

While this quote validated the explications of gender-neutral beliefs offered above, the use of the word "male," in combination with "women's," serves to highlight gender differences and references affirmative action practices. In cases such as these—where sexism was a part of a woman's lived experience off the farm—one cannot easily say that her identity as a member (person, communard, etc.) was the more salient category. As

the quote suggested, sometimes countering sexism required attention to gender. At Twin Oaks, this almost always indicated work-place affirmative action as well as efforts to maintain gender-balanced committees.

"Co" in Contemporary Everyday Social Interaction

In everyday communication on the farm, it was possible to note exceptions and differences between the written historical documents discussed above and the discursive life of "co" active during fieldwork. Significantly, there were times when gender-specific pronouns were used when the gender was not know, and the person could legitimately be either a female or a male. For example, a member was speaking in general about people in what another member termed an intellectual conversation. In this case, the pronoun chosen was "he" and as such this example marked a moment when even the traditional use of "co," as it was defined in 1971 and as it was defined in the Bylaws, was not adhered to. While "co" was clearly a part of Oakian cultural practice and its use was encouraged in the visitor handbook, there were members who self-identified as non-users of "co." For the most part, but not exclusively, these members represented the younger crowd at Twin Oaks and had typically spent less than 5 years in community. This was consistent with research that understands differences in communicative practices as, in part, a product of differing levels of enculturation (Wenger, 1998). Differences in gender, race, or class of non-users or users were not, however, noteworthy. While self-identified feminists and politically conscious members were more apt to use "co," not all feminists did so. Even with a relatively high rate of non-users, there were patterned uses of "co" in everyday social interaction on the farm. Some of these patterns reflected the

uses explicated above and others suggested a continued evolution in the use and meaning of "co."

Paralleling examples taken from written sources, there were traditional uses of "co" and other words that contrasted and co-occurred with, and substituted for "co." The gender-specific pronouns s/he and her/his were used by Oakers when the gender of a person was known. There were also a variety of gender-neutral nouns that co-occurred with the use of "co" such as "person," "member," "folks" and including job titles such as "emcee" and "labor assigner." And, of course, there were uses of "co" as a substitute for the gender-specific pronouns s/he, her/his, and hers/his—both when the gender of the person was known and when it was unknown. So we hear a member (1) explain what happens at a naming party by stating that "it depends on the emcee…*co* may allow more or less rounds to get the crowd into it," (2) refer to my unborn child as "co," and (3) tell an elaborate story involving not one, but two *cos* both of whom were known to the story teller and therefore so were their gender identities. We even hear a member, in the middle of a conversation about objectionable magazines being kept in a public space by a member who was known to the discussants, say that "*co* has those magazines in *cos* residence and no one seems to be bothered by it." All of these examples reflected the patterns suggested above. However, there were also uses of "co" and other gender-neutral terms that moved beyond the uses already discussed.

In the section above I noted that "honcho," a word with Japanese origins, was used to refer to a person who manages a project on the farm. Because "honcho" functioned as a gender-neutral noun (and honchoing a gender-neutral verb), I suggested that it functioned in ways similar to "co." In current everyday use, however, "honcho"

has been teamed with a feminine version, "honcha."[3] While long-term members understood "honcho" to be gender-neutral, newer members understood it to be a masculine noun. Thus "honcha" originated in newer Oakers' desires to not privilege masculine identity terms—a practice that reflected a historically rooted, folk language planning ideology that emphasized the equal representation of females and males in communicative practices as a remedy for androcentric communication structures. "Honcha" as an Oakian neologism also afforded the possibility to have agreement between gendered subjects and their job titles—a helpful shorthand to use when affirmative action or gender-balance was desired. Thus, when a member posts a 3x5 card asking for someone to lead a work crew that member said, "Wanted, honcho/honcha for food processing." Or, when a male or a female member was sought for a job in order to achieve gender balance the 3x5 used "honcho" or a "honcha" and, typically, an explanation that the gender-balance of the work crew was skewed. With the masculinization of "honcho," the addition of "honcha" functioned both to maintain the visibility of females and as a gender-specific word useable in situations where gender should be taken into account by Oakers in order to achieve the feminist goal of gender equity.

There were two additional uses of "co" found in current everyday discourses that were not found in either the children's books or the archives—the use of "co" as a noun to refer to inanimate objects and the use of "co" as a noun to refer to members. I should say here that the noun usage of "co" was not a development that occurred while I was

[3] Honcha as a neologism that was used to refer to feminine members most likely originated from a misunderstanding of "honcho" as a word of Spanish origins that, with an -o ending marked masculinity.

doing fieldwork. According to one member, this usage had been around since she was first a member over five years prior to my fieldwork. One particular usage, substituting "co" for "man" in the word "snowman," was a common example of this variety given by Oakers for a historic use of "co" to render a masculine noun gender-neutral. In a story relayed to me on several different occasions, the children of Twin Oaks grew up using the word "snowco" for the human-esque form that is made out of snow. It is only when they encountered the outside linguistic code that they learned the word "snowman." This usage was consistent with gender-neutral job titles and the feminist emphasis on not treating "man" as a gender-neutral word.

While working in the hammock shop I witnessed a use of "co" that was similar to its use in "snowco." On this occasion a two-and-a-half year old female entered the hammock shop with her dad following close behind. A member who was making hammock harnesses near the entrance engaged the young child in conversation. Very soon attention was drawn to the child's boots.

> "Oh, cowboy boots!" the member exclaimed.
>
> "No," the child stated, continuing with an explanation, "They're cowgirl boots. If a girl is wearing them, then they're cow*girl* boots."
>
> With this comment, her father interjected, "If a boy wears them, they can still be cowgirl boots. They're *cowco* boots."

As this and the prior example suggested, "co" was substituted for gender-specific nouns such as man and girl in order to render inanimate objects genderless—a use consistent with language planning ideology.

An additional use of "co" was as a noun used to refer to members generically. In one example, a note was posted above a computer in the hammock shop office that

stated, "If you're the last *co* online, ya gotta log out of the desk profile." In this example, words such as "member" or "communard" could have been used and, according to some long-term members, should have been used instead of "co." A clear violation of the traditional, Bylaw defined use of "co," this use of "co" indicated an evolution in "co's" use and function. As the Visitor Guide has stated, "Now, it ["co"] is used colloquially as a generic personal noun." Members' use of "co" as a gender-neutral noun both reflected and extended the use of "co" as a camouflaging gender-neutral pronoun in archival data. In both cases, "co" emphasizes equality among members, but the use of "co" as a gender-neutral noun extends beyond establishing equality—a point I will address below.

While the three rules mentioned previously applied to contemporary uses of "co" on the farm, it was necessary to add the following rules: (4) one should use "co" to render inanimate objects gender-neutral and (5) one can use "co" as a substitute for a generic member. These additional rules reflected the Oakian feminist belief that male and female members were not just equal, but also essentially interchangeable—they could do the same work and wear the same clothing (see Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6). There were occasions, however, where the use of "co" to conceptualize work a gender-neutral activity was not desirable. Equality was desired, and it was a part of feminist Oakian beliefs that some forms of off the farm sexism rendered women disadvantaged in terms of acquired skills and access to "men's" work (see Chapter 3). For this reason, gender-specific terms needed to be used to counter these forms of oppression by ensuring female members had access to and support for gaining skill at traditionally male jobs (hence the use of "honcha").

The contemporary uses of "co" as a personal noun—even when other words (e.g., person, member, and communard) would serve the same function—suggests that "co," as a gender-neutral word not used outside of the community context, performs an affiliative, membering function. Philipsen (1989a) has discussed the "membering," or "communal," function of communication. In discussing Teamsterville speech styles, he has stated that, "[e]ach time a speaker speaks in the neighborhood style, that speaker performs an act of identification; she or he identifies with the social group by using a way of speaking that historically has defined that group (Philipsen, 1989a, p. 82; c.f., Brown & Gilman, 1960, pp. 276-277). Similarly, Bucholtz and Hall (2004) argue that language practices establish "authentic," "credible or genuine" identities. Thus, people use language to perform a social identity in alignment with others who occupy that (gender, race, class, sexuality, national) identity. From these perspectives, Oakers who used "co," a word thought to be exclusive to the farm, can be heard to perform not only a communal identity, but a feminist Oakian identity—an identity that, in part, emphasized and prized gender inclusivity and equality.

"Co" and Feminism on the Farm

In the early years of Twin Oaks the use of "co" as gender-neutral pronoun was a feminist language planning practice that reflected an Oakian feminist ideology. Early uses of gender-neutral and gender-specific terms as well as alterations in the appearance of children's books' characters suggested that countering androcentrism was of vital importance. Two key ways that Oakers countered androcentric U.S. practices were to use gender-neutral language to render gender roles more fluid, thus redefining women as

competent and strong, and to render gender comportment more fluid, thus rendering femininity more visible and varied. In the 40 years of its use, "co" has evolved to include two additional uses. The first use reflected a contemporary Oakian focus on confidentiality (see Chapter 6). In this use, "co" was used in the masking of a member's identity and functioned to focus attention on behaviors enacted by members rather than on the gender of a particular member. This use moved beyond language planning practices and highlighted the equality and solidarity of members. In the second use, "co" was used as a personal noun—an unnecessary practice given the range of other words that may be substituted for it. In this use, insofar as "co" was unique to Twin Oaks and was connected to a pervasive feminist ethos, this use of "co" served a "membering" function that highlighted affiliation with an Oakian feminist ideology.

Tracking the use and evolution of "co" as a key cultural symbol, emphasized not the affect of gender-neutral language on the thought patterns of Oakers, but the evolution of the meanings that anti-sexist language had on the farm. In this case, what started out as a clear and specific feminist practice designed to counter U.S. sexism evolved to serve other culturally important purposes—confidentiality, affiliation, and the performance of a feminist identity.

CHAPTER 8

THE UTOPIAN COMMUNICATION OF GENDER: A CONCLUSION

> Consider that a sedimentation of gender norms produces the particular phenomenon of a "natural sex" or a "real woman" or any number of prevalent and compelling social fictions, and that this is a sedimentation that over time has produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in a binary relation to one another. (Butler, 1990, p. 178)
>
> The question remains, though, what departures from the norm constitute something other than an excuse or rationale for the continuing authority of the norm? What departures from the norm disrupt the regulatory process itself? (Butler, 2004, pp. 52-53)

This dissertation began with an interest in feminist communities that strove to counter aspects of dominant U.S. gender practices and knowledges. For this work, Twin Oaks, a utopian community, was treated not only as a feminist community, but also as a community of practice. Positioning Twin Oaks as a community of practice highlighted the potential of members to learn communicative gender performances that countered those they found objectionable in ways that were, at least potentially, liberatory. Positioning Twin Oaks as a learning community, as a community of practice, resonated with my theoretic interest in cultural communication and gender—a perspective that emphasized the meanings, beliefs, and values that underpinned communicative practices as well as the fluidity of social identities such as gender. From this grounding, I posed the general research questions: What are the everyday Oakian feminist communicative practices that seek to counter dominant U.S. gender practices and understandings? What gender related aspects of Oakian culture are revealed by attending to these

communication practices? And, how, if at all, might these practices serve a liberatory function? In the following pages, I summarize this research—the methods used to generate data and the key findings. I also discuss the implications of this study and answer the final question of this project, a question inspired by Butler's (1990, 1993, 2004) work: To what extent can Oakers' feminist communicative practices be understood to be liberatory? I will close this final chapter by presenting limitations of this study and thoughts for future work.

Summary of Key Findings

In part, I situated this project in Twin Oaks Community not only because it was a feminist utopian community, but also because it was an egalitarian community that explicitly worked to mute the gender polarization found in the US. I wanted to investigate how a group of people used communication to counter what they understood as oppressive U.S. gender practices and the Oakian egalitarian emphasis would, perhaps, strike a blow to the heart of gender inequality—the binary underpinnings of the U.S. sex/gender system. In many ways, understanding and explaining gender was, as the metaphor goes, like trying to understand and explain water if one were a fish. Gender, like the fish's water, was woven seamlessly into Oakers' everyday lives; it was embedded in and constitutive of their identities as well as the institutionalized policies and practices that shaped life on the farm. Before conducting fieldwork, however, I had overlooked the obvious—seeing gender would have been easier if there was a polarity between genders (or at least differences between my culture of origin and the culture in which Twin Oaks was embedded). Seeing gender seemed somewhat more difficult because the personal

and institutional practices favored an egalitarianism that promoted gender homogenization.

As it turned out, what attracted me to this field site, egalitarian feminist practices, also made more challenging my work—albeit in exciting ways. Gender at first seemed unimportant on the farm and yet off the farm sexism and androcentric practices were clearly frowned upon. Where was I to find a loose strand, a way into the communicative practices that surrounded and constituted an Oakian gender system? While there were likely innumerable strands that I could have pulled, I focused on feminist communicative gender practices that were thought by Oakers to countered U.S. sexism. This provided a fruitful foothold from which to explore the gendering practices on the farm that invited members to learn a different way of doing gender. From this perspective, the 60:40 policy became about more than maintaining gender balance; it was also intimately connected with a prevailing Oakian ethos of being other than dominant U.S. culture. In positioning Twin Oaks as an alternative to dominant, sexist U.S. culture, members developed feminist practices that opposed off the farm practices and within these practices I gained access to Oakian gender ideologies. In the end, Twin Oaks stood as a remarkable example of feminist egalitarianism, but there are subtle ways that sexism has been woven into U.S. culture and Oakers, like other feminists, have not yet unraveled all of the strands.

Before I could develop analyses of communication-based counter gender practices, however, it was prudent to develop a grounded understanding of "gender." From my theoretical perspective, I understood gender to be the performance of an identity, or subject position, that intersected with other key social identities (such as class

and race) (McCall, 2005). I also knew that feminist academics disagreed on the definition of gender—a disagreement that often pivoted on the conceptualization of and relationship between sex and gender (c.f., Butler 1990. 1993; Davies & Gannon, 2005; Hausman, 1995). In Chapter 3 I developed answers to the questions: How if at all are sex and gender correlated on the farm? What are the preferred forms of gender (masculinity and femininity) on the farm? And, how does sex influence the reading of gendered performances? By using Twin Oaks' governing documents and archives as well as field notes and interviews, I introduced the 60:40 policy that counts the sex of members to ensure that neither sex exceeds 60 percent of the membership. I argued that the function of the 60:40 policy was to maintain a gender-balanced community that ensured the active, culture-making participation of female members and that avoided the pitfalls of male-dominated communities.

To further flesh out Twin Oaks as a feminist and feminine community, I analyzed proscribed masculinity on the farm. This analysis focused on key masculine identity terms that marked proscribed performances of masculinity—performances that were understood to treat women as sexualized objects and to be paternalistic and domineering toward women. After explicating norms for male members' communicative practices and the beliefs on which preferred practices were premised, I identified a code of feminist egalitarianism that governed the interpretation and performance of gender on the farm. Noting that, according to the 60:40 policy, sex was used to control the kind of gendered communicative practices that occurred on the farm, I questioned whether or not sex, as an identity, influenced the interpretation of gendered performances. Returning to field note and interview data, I noted instances where sex and gender were not correlated (as in the

gendered performances of a male-to-female trans member) and when gendered performances crossed sexed identities (as when female members enacted proscribed masculinity). These instances, which exceeded the parameters of the 60:40 policy, suggested that Oakers treated sex and gender as two distinct identities and that sex, in important ways, influenced the interpretation of communicative practices. Thus, the meaningfulness of gender performances relied on member's reading of sexed bodies (see Dozier, 2005). In this way, female-sexed members were not, could not, be understood as enacting proscribed masculinity just as a male-to-female transmember was understood to be able to enact proscribed masculinity.

Having a sense of the sex/gender system active on the farm as well as the ways in which Oakers valued female members and femininity in general, I turned to an analysis of one of the most contentious feminist communicative practices: female shirtlessness. On the farm there was a relatively long history (over 15 years) of debate surrounding the visibility of unfettered female breasts—a practice that stood in stark contrast to normative U.S. culture. Noting the history of a decidedly feminist practice peaked my interest in the symbolic value of women's breasts on the farm. From this orientation I asked: What does shirtlessness, as a communicative practice, reveal about the significance of women's breasts on the farm? How has the meaningfulness of women's breasts been negotiated and evaluated? And, what might this say about Oakian culture more generally? Combining archival data, field notes, and interviews, I used Turner's (1980, 1988) conceptualization of a social drama as a theoretic framework to investigate the evolution of negotiated meaningfulness of women's breasts. This analytic process focused on

shirtlessness as a communicative practice that said something about Oakian culture, specifically cultural ways of being, relating, and dwelling.

In sum, this analysis identified three normative discursive positions, which were not mutually exclusive, that spanned the history of the shirtlessness debate. These positions were: women and men should abide by the same rules, nudity should be in particular places and at particular times to protect members and the community, and Twin Oaks' policy should be less restrictive than dominant U.S. culture. The tensions between these positions pivoted on two beliefs about women's breasts. One, was the belief that female breasts were intrinsically sexual and would thus invite sexual violence from off the farm people and expose members on the farm to a form of emotional violence. The other was that female breasts were one part of the body that could and should be de-sexualized. The ongoing negotiation of the meaning of female breasts invoked three semantic hubs that revealed a contestation and negotiation of Oakian ways of dwelling (in a home or a community), relating (as social or private bodies), and being (as whole people or people with sexualized parts). Ultimately, Oakers did not come to a mutual understanding of the meanings associated with bodies, nor did they determine whether bodies could be regulated, instead, off the farm culture changed—neighbors grew to know Oakers and in U.S. society female breasts had become ubiquitous. This, combined with the ways that shirtlessness had become a more prevalent practice on the farm, facilitated the adoption of a more liberal shirtlessness policy. The practice of shirtlessness as a feminist practice was one that liberated women from an embodied understanding of their breasts as sexualized body parts (in public). In its place was an

understanding that breasts, as an integrated part of a whole body, may be a part of a sexual body (in private).

Having identified shirtlessness as a key feminist practice and having analyzed the negotiation of cultural meanings associated with the exposure of female breasts, I turned to an analysis of a normative Oakian style of embodiment that linked to gender and that countered dominant U.S. practices. Combining both language-based and body-based forms of communication, I used field notes, interviews, and video recordings to develop an analysis of prominent bodily practices that were common, patterned, and meaningful to Oakers. The guiding question of my analyses of normative embodiment on the farm was simply: how is gender an aspect of normative embodied communicative practices? In chapter 5 I presented three categories of Oakian embodiment that related to gender and that functioned to counter dominant U.S. forms of embodiment. One, it was understood that members should not comment on the size and shape of female bodies in public. As such, female members should not talk negatively about their bodies and members should not talk about female bodies in non-private conversations. Two, body products (odor, hair, excretions) were understood to be natural, unremarkable aspects of people. Members were encouraged to normalize, by not concealing or relegating to private spaces, body products. Finally, adornment on the farm, inhibited by economic and work scene factors, reflected an emphasis on gender bending and blending and on wearing clothes that could comfortably be worn during and ruined by the work members did. Coursing through these normative aspects of embodiment were three interconnected discourses, environmentalist, health, and feminist, that functioned to "desensationalize" the body on the farm. The size and shape of the body, the products it produced, and its

adornment were treated as unremarkable and natural. On the farm, the appearance of the body was but one aspect of "being seen" by others, a concept that emphasized a relatively high level of personal knowledge of others. The promotion of a natural, "desensationalized" body, combined with members knowledge of each other, made the normative Oakian embodiment an aspect of life on the farm that liberated members from rigid gendered forms of embodiment and tethered the interpretation of female embodiment not to sexualized power, but to environmental, healthy feminism.

In Chapter 6 I moved from normative embodiment on the farm to a normative style of communicating. I used Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING framework to analyze field notes, interviews, and recorded conversations in order to answer the guiding questions: What are the features of normative ways of communicating on the farm? Which women are under-/privileged by this way of communicating? And, how might these relate to gender? Discursively positioned between two other communities, East Wind and Ganas, Twin Oaks embraced a style of communication that was understood as neither masculine (violent and aggressive as East Wind was understood to be) nor feminine (with the Ganas emphasis on excessive interpersonal communication). The normative way of communicating on the farm was in a style that emphasized calm and quiet communication and the verbal rather than embodied communication of emotion. This style of communication relied not only on written communication, but also on confidential communication and the belief that members did not have to communicate if they did not want to do so. This style was heard to stand in stark contrast with prior ethnography of communication research in a spiritual community whose members practiced confrontational, loud, sometimes physically violent interpersonal

communication (Crawford, 1986). I presented an Oakian counter discourse that positioned this normative style of communication as passive-aggressive and middle class. This race- and class-based critique maintained that, counter to the dominant Oakian style of communication that practiced confidential and written communication, good communication was direct and face-to-face.

In the final data-based chapter, I analyze the use of "co" as a gender-neutral word. In this final chapter, I treated "co" as an instance of feminist linguistic reform and traced the evolution of its historical and contemporary everyday uses. Using archival documents and field notes, I treated "co" as a key cultural symbol and asked: How do current uses of "co" relate to historical uses? What might this say about Oakian feminism as it relates to language planning? And, what can be said of Oakian notions of gendered personhood? As a case study of language planning and reform, this analysis explicated key beliefs that undergirded the use of "co." Through the use of "co" Oakers expressed a belief that sexism that occurred in dominant U.S. culture should be countered by emphasizing female strength, ability, kindness, and fierceness as well as male femininity, silliness, absent-mindedness, and arrogance. The use of "co" also established the value of equality between females and males on the farm. While the use of "co" as a gender-neutral pronoun continued to be hearable during my fieldwork, it combined with the use of "co" as a gender-neutral noun. Because other gender-neutral nouns were available for use—such as "communard," "person," or "member"—this use of "co" emphasized the Oakian practice of confidential communication and performed an affiliative, "membering" function (Philipsen, 1989) that emphasize a feminist identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004).

An Oakian Communication Code: The Feminist Code of Natural Egalitarian Dignity

In Chapter 3 I argued that proscribed masculinities marked by the Oakian terms "rooster," "alpha male," and "wolf" implicated an underlying communication code, which I termed a code of feminist egalitarianism. Taken in sum the findings of this study helped to elaborate that code. According to the code of feminist egalitarianism, male members' communicative practices that relinquished power bestowed upon men by dominant U.S. culture were celebrated as were female members' communicative practices that embraced power denied them by dominant U.S. culture. Communicative practices adhering to this code were premised on the belief that, while all people are equal, women who have been disadvantaged by androcentric practices in U.S. culture needed to be given an opportunity to experience personal power. From this perspective, the farm was, of course, understood to be different than and counter to dominant U.S. society. Looking more closely at the communicative practices enlisted to counter U.S. practices refined the code of feminist egalitarianism.

Feminist egalitarianism was found to permeate a range of communicative practices on the farm. In terms of gender, the equal treatment of female and male members gave rise to female shirtlessness, gender bending and blending adornment practices, and everyday practices that supported masculine qualities in women and feminine qualities in men. One egalitarian practice, public urination, helped to highlight an additional component of the code of feminist egalitarianism—that part of the egalitarian, desensationalized body that was connected to environmental and health discourses, namely the natural body. Accordingly, products that members' bodies

naturally produced such as odor and hair were to be respected and celebrated, not comported or contained. Likewise, members respected and celebrated the natural environment by reducing water use and refusing to use body products that polluted the environment or were manufactured by corporations who did so. In this way, communicative practices were governed not only by premises that constituted feminist egalitarianism, but also premises that valued a natural style of living.

As equals, members were also understood to be autonomous. A key aspect of Oakian culture, and one that permeated communicative practices, was that members were understood to be fundamentally separate from one another. Members were also assumed to be unique and adornment choices were thought to reflect and celebrate this uniqueness. This aspect of Oakian culture echoed a larger U.S. understanding of people as "individuals" with "unique" selves—what has been identified as a code of dignity (Carbaugh, 1988b). Accordingly, what members chose to wear, or not to wear, were limited not by an explicit dress code, but rather by whether or not the adornment style violated deeply held Oakian beliefs. For example, shirtlessness was a contentious issue in large part because it was thought to violate the separation between members' bodies. Likewise, in language-based communicative practices, members conscientiously maintained boundaries between individual members. As autonomous people, members could choose with whom to talk and with whom not to talk in interpersonal communication. Because communication was valued, an elaborate system evolved to diminish occasions for unwanted face-to-face and tense interpersonal communication—written, confidential communication was a corner stone of this system.

In sum, Oakers communicated according to cultural premises that valued the equal treatment of members, gender-balancing affirmative action strategies, natural bodies and the environment, and members' unique qualities and autonomy. While sometimes in conflict, egalitarianism, natural living, and unique autonomy formed the core beliefs that guided communicative practices on the farm. Amending the initial explication of the code of feminist egalitarianism to include these additional key aspect of Oakian communicative practices, the code would now more accurately be posed as a feminist code of natural egalitarian dignity. This formulation highlights both the findings of this study and the feminist lens that guided this research.

Implications

In this section I move from the specificity of the key findings of this study toward the assessment of the theoretical and methodological tools I used and the explication of trends that cut across these findings. Through this process, I highlight the contributions this research makes to the ethnographic study of the communication of gender. In what follows, I begin with a discussion of the theoretical and methodological tools I used. Then, I explicate two identifiable trends that spanned the data-based chapters of this dissertation. Finally, I answer the question of Twin Oaks' liberatory potential.

Feminist Ethnography of Communication: Theoretical Tools

There were two theoretical traditions that I tapped in order to develop research questions, generate data, and interpret data. At base, this project was an ethnography of communication in the tradition of Hymes (1962, 1972, 1974), Philipsen (1992, 1997; see

also Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005) and Carbaugh (1996b, 2007; see also Carbaugh, Gibson, and Milburn, 1997). While there is a range of tools that the ethnography of communication utilizes to generate and interpret data, of central importance for this study was Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING framework, which was used in the writing of formal field notes and in the analysis of data. Also important to ground my inquiries in everyday communicative practices was the use of key cultural symbols (Carbaugh, 1988a) and Turner's (1980, 1988) social drama as a cultural communication form. In these analyses, I worked to explicate normative Oakian communication practices as well as marginal on the farm practices. I also developed interpretive analyses that explicated the cultural meaningfulness of these communicative practices—what the practice said about cultural ways of being, relating, emoting, relating, and communicating—by attending to semantic dimensions and to premises of belief and value (Carbaugh, 2007). Finally, I worked to formulate the culture codes that guided the performance and interpretations of communicative practices (Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005). Beyond this base, this project was also a feminist project that conceptualized gender as a performance (Butler, 1990, 1993; West and Zimmerman, 1987) of a constructed social identity that intersected with other key social identities (Spelman, 1988; McCall, 2005). As a feminist project, I asked critical questions that were grounded in and answered by Oakian cultural communication practices. Integrating feminist theory with communication of ethnography theory proved to be useful in explicating Oakian gendering communication practices that countered dominant U.S. culture and that, as in the case of a normative style of communication, could be

understood to be a normatively raced and classed form of communication that was problematic for members of color and working class members.

This study also provided an extended deliberation of the role of the body in cultural communication practices that contributes to prior gender and cultural communication research (Berry, 1997, Carbaugh, 1996b, pp. 123-139; Philipsen, 1976). In so doing, it treated features of embodiment as key cultural symbols and used both visual and spoken communication as data in the analyses of these embodied forms of communication. Thus, female breasts served as a key cultural symbol and the norms, meanings, and premises associated with female shirtlessness were explicated. Similarly, aspects of normative Oakian embodiment were treated as key cultural symbols, which were presented in the form of a grounded Oakian framework of cultural embodiment. The size and shape of female bodies, the products a body produced (odor, hair, excretions), and the adornment of bodies were explicated as categories of culturally meaningful symbolic embodiment on the farm. In this way, the analyses and treatment of Oakian embodied communicative practices reflected and extended, Carbaugh's (1996a) argument that embodied practices were an aspect of cultural communication. In addition to the focus on bodies as key cultural symbols, this dissertation also emphasized the importance of full-bodied ethnography (Markowitz, 2006) to develop a culturally sensitive explication of Oakian bodily communication that included not only visual data, but also sensual, ethnographically generated data.

Interpretation: Twin Oaks in Opposition to Others

This dissertation focused on identifying and analyzing feminist Oakian communication strategies that countered dominant U.S. gender practices. In my analyses, four discourses were found to articulate with Twin Oaks' feminist discourse: egalitarianism, environmentalism, health, and safety. As Oakers embodied subject positions and communicated according to these discourses, they communicated their support of and identification with the cultural ideologies (beliefs, values, meanings) that underpinned the communicative practices. Thus, by talking in a certain way and by doing their bodies in a certain way members signaled ideological commitments (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Sometimes, of course, the meaningfulness of a particular communicative practice was contested and competing discourses came into tension—as was demonstrated in the negotiation and resistance surrounding the normative style of (raced and classed) communication and the shirtless policy. Such examples not only demonstrated the multifaceted nature of Oakian communication, but also the polysemic quality of communicative practices (Carbaugh, 1988b, pp. 177-184).

Consistent with my focus on feminist counter discourses, I noted how Oakers crafted their communication practices in opposition to others—primarily to dominant U.S. culture, but also to East Wind and Ganas. This us-them quality of communicative practices, which spanned each of the four data-based chapters, can be understood as an over-arching agonistic component in Oakian discourses.[1] In this way, members'

[1] The agonistic quality of communication practices on the farm reflects Carbaugh's (1988/1989) discussion of "deep agony"—a communication form enacted when people play symbols of personhood against symbols of society in order to "mediate (and momentarily resolve) the social tensions of autonomy and union" (p. 206). However, what is negotiated and resolved in this case is not the tension between personhood and

communal identities—as feminist, environmentalist, health- and safety-conscious Oakers—were played against the specter of dominant U.S. culture. In classic Burkean (1969) terminology, "identification" with Twin Oaks was achieved in part through the continued "division" of Twin Oaks from dominant U.S. culture as well as other communities. While this us-them quality has been identified as a prominent part of some U.S. American discourses (Chase, 2008), the findings of this study suggest a complex relationship between Oakers and U.S. culture. Most members were born and raised the US and Oakers saw Twin Oaks as embedded within the U.S. context. As such, off the farm economic and cultural institutions shaped Twin Oakian lifestyles even as Oakian policy and practice was intended to help members learn alternative ways of being, relating, dwelling, emoting, and communicating.

Interpretation: Twin Oaks as Public and Private Spaces and Bodies

Members defined spaces and bodies as public or private, and these concepts influenced the type and interpretation of communication that took place in the myriad of culturally salient places on the farm. How a place, such as the Courtyard or the woods or a member's bedroom, was marked as a particularly public or private space was important. Indeed a significant part of the resolution of the debate surrounding the Oakian shirtless policy was the building of private spaces where Oakers could be shirtless. Similarly, it was acceptable to be loud, to blow off steam, in spaces that were more private (the woods) than public (the Courtyard). The marking of places in the community as

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society, but rather an Oakian communal identity and a larger cultural identity, that of the US. This, then, is a counter-cultural form akin to "deep agony" but one that is qualitatively different.

particular types of public/private spaces where particular types of communication should take place was similar to Philipsen's (1976) findings in his research in the Teamsterville community. Like Philipsen's (1976) study, this research found that public/private was a semantic dimension active in the ways that members made sense of places and the communication that was situated in these places.

This study also demonstrated the ways that the public/private dimension extended beyond the sense people made of places to the sense Oakers made of bodies. In Chapter 4 I argued that a key dimension active in the debate surrounding the shirtless policy conceptualized members' bodies along a spectrum with bodies as private occupying one end and bodies as social occupying the other end. If the body was understood to be private—something deeply personal—then it could not be regulated by Oakian policy because each member must do what was best for her or his body. If, however, the body was social—something that could be seen in public spaces (and therefore could not be private)—then it could be regulated. The public/private dimension of bodies could also be heard in Oakers negotiation of the boundaries between public social interaction and the private dwelling of members. Here, the boundary between private members and social interaction was vigorously guarded so that even if members were located in the same public space, it was not assumed that social interaction was to be forthcoming. Indeed, much of Oakers written communication practices and governing policies sought to ensure that the boundaries between members were maintained. Confidentiality, asking to ask a question, privacy screens, acceptance of non-communication, and the support of quiet and unobtrusive (written) communication were all normative ways of communicating that helped to preserve the privacy of members. In contrast, the critique

of working class members and members of color, which emphasized direct, face-to-face communication, was premised on an understanding of members as fundamentally within the social sphere if their bodies were in the public sphere.

Given the Oakian emphasis on boundaries, it is ironic that the realization of feminist goals on the farm sometimes hinged on moments when boundaries were nullified as was the case with shirtlessness and excreting in public spaces. From this perspective, clothing was understood as a cultural artifact that served, among other things, to maintain the boundary between a public body and the private body just as open-door bathrooms and outdoor urination served to move to the public that which was private in broader U.S. context. As part of the resignification of the body as a natural whole, these practices countered off the farm meanings of female bodies as sexual and shameful by transforming what are private practices in the US to public practices on the farm. Furthermore, the everyday performance of shirtlessness, of normative Oakian embodiment, of using "co" resignified breasts or bodies or the meaningfulness of females and women precisely because it was done in public spaces where its meaningfulness was affirmed by other members. An important aspect of the ways Oakers made members' communicative practices meaningful was the size of Twin Oaks Community, which was small enough to facilitate the dissemination of personal information about members to other members. In other words, to make public what was typically private information in off the farm contexts.

Consider the ease or difficulty with which Oakers negotiated moving into the public realm activities that were understood to be private in dominant U.S. culture:

Difficult = shirtlessness

With ease = public urination, breast milk

This schematic illustrates a key feature of counter Oakian practices that were more readily adopted and those that were not. In cases where members had to participate or observe for extended periods of time, such as shirtlessness or the acceptance of loud communication, acceptance was difficult. In cases where members exposure to the practice or participation in the practice was less all-encompassing, members accepted the practice more readily. Initially, at least, resisting dominant U.S. norms was more palatable if it was a relatively contained, restricted practice.

Interpretation: Twin Oaks as a Liberatory Feminist Utopia

As stated above, this project was undertaken not only to investigate the ways that feminist utopians countered what they understood to be oppressive U.S. gender practices, but also to contemplate the liberatory potential of their communicative practices. One focal aspect of this dissertation has been conceptualizations of sex and gender—both theoretical and Oakian. Some feminist poststructuralists have theorized “sex” as a part of “gender” (Butler, 1990, 1993) while others have argued that “sex," the primary category, is distinct from gender (Hausman, 2005). My perspective, influenced by Oyewumi’s (1997) work, was that fieldwork necessitated that conceptualizations of “sex” and “gender” be arrived at empirically. Moving from data, I argued that Oakers analytically separate the categories and that sex is sometimes used to interpret gender and as a basis for affirmative action. From this perspective, this work demonstrates that the material reality of bodies must be considered by maintaining a distinction between sex and gender. Robyn, for example, identified as a woman but was positioned as a wolf in sheep’s

clothing—as a man, presenting as a woman, who preyed on women—because her body was masculine. In another example, I argued that shirtlessness was a liberatory feminist practice for *some* women. In working to qualify the liberatory potential I cited research that large-breasted women more than small-breasted women are defined by their objectified and sexualized breasts. In sum, maintaining a sex and gender distinction helps to keep in focus the body and the challenges it poses to feminist practices.

In concluding this section, I would like to return to the quotes offered to introduce this chapter. Butler (2004) was, of course, talking about practices that would upset the institutionalization of the sex/gender system. Her perspective is decidedly more global than my own, grounded as it is in the Oakian context. Still, I used her question—What departures from normative U.S. conceptualizations of gender can be understood to disrupt oppressive gendering institutionalized practices?—to ask of my findings: To what extent can Oakers' feminist communicative practices be understood to be liberatory?

According to the findings of this study, female Oakers benefitted from both feminist policies and feminist forms of embodiment. For example, the 60:40 policy as well as Oakian affirmative action functioned to establish a female-friendly and feminine community in which female members could learn new skills and actively contribute to everyday culture-making activities and governance. Combined with an Oakian proscription for masculinity that discouraged paternalistic and sexist behavior from male members, these policies helped to make Twin Oaks Community a safe place for (some) female members to explore other avenues of liberation—for example going shirtless. Shirtlessness in particular and normative embodiment in general served a liberatory function for many of those members who practiced such activities. Not only was the

public body understood to be natural rather than sexual, but the everyday practice of shirtlessness, as a feminist practice, gave female members an opportunity to experience their bodies as integrated, de-sexualized wholes—a profoundly liberating experience that was, for me, difficult to put to words.

The meanings Oakers associated with embodied practices were, of course, not supported in dominant U.S. culture. But this is not to say that liberatory practices experienced on the farm did not influence off the farm liberation, or upset U.S. notions of gendering practices. Indeed, Twin Oaks can be understood as an "oppositional community," a community committed to challenging and remaking an unjust social order (Ferguson, 1995). As part of the daily life of crafting an oppositional community members performed alternative gendering practices. Through this everyday, relearning process, these practices were integrated into members' identities. While not translated by normative U.S. discourses, the meanings of the practices would not be lost to members if they left the community in which they practiced them (see Wegner, 1998, for a discussion of communities of practice and meaning, see Chapter 1 for a brief summary of this point).

One answer to Butler's question reframed above would be: On the farm, embodied practices that naturalized the body disrupted institutionalized oppressive gendering practices that were normative in the US. Another way to answer this question, however, is to say that any practice that was meaningful to Oakers as a departure from normative U.S. conceptualizations of gender, disrupted U.S. normative practices in the spaces in which they were practiced and made meaningful and to the extend that these meanings were carried off the farm by Oakers. Oakian feminist practice was, then, an

effective form of liberation because it was fundamentally about the transformation of meaning.

Limitations

All research has its limitations and these limitations become the productive ground on which future work is conducted. In this section, I identify two limitations of this dissertation. One, I did not take up with sexuality as it relates to gender. And, two, my reliance on O&I communication in my discussion of shirtlessness offered a limited picture of on the farm communication.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of this study is that I did not offer an analysis of sexuality on the farm. At least since Rubin's (1975, 1984) seminal critique of the sex/gender system, feminists have linked sexuality to gender, arguing that the sex/gender system functions to regulate sexuality and perpetuate heterosexism. In the field, it was my intention to generate data related to sexuality, but as I set about doing so I encountered some unexpected obstacles. I had a basic understanding of Oakian policies and the range of sexualities and relationship styles active on the farm (gay/lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual; monogamy, polyamory) and I had interviewed members, but I had no significant observations of the everyday communicative life of sexuality on the farm. I was, as it turned out, dreadfully uncomfortable engaging in kissing pits and cuddle puddles or being a "fly on the wall" as Oakers negotiated their sexual relationships. Realizing these limitations, I asked members to videotape social contexts in which Oakers typically publically negotiated sexuality. Unfortunately, Oakers are busy folks

and this did not come to fruition. In the end, my efforts to develop analyses of Oakian sexuality were stymied by the absence of data that moved beyond surface understandings.

What I know about sexuality in the Twin Oaks context, however, indicates that it would be an important and complex aspect to explore. Sexual relationship styles that are marginalized in dominant U.S. culture—such as polyamorous and gay, lesbian, and bisexual relationships—are supported at Twin Oaks. And yet, as one member suggested, "Twin Oaks is not a sex positive place." Displays of affection such as hand-holding happened only periodically, and typically only with established partners. I did not see other forms of sexual intimacy, except for members kissing at a social gathering and these were often not relational partners. Still, despite the proscription on loud noises, noise made during sex was talked about as an exception to that rule. Additionally, experimenting with sexual pleasure was generally promoted and one member sold dildos out of his bedroom. But, there were caveats to this at well: experimentation could not invoke violence (as BDSM practices did) and women were by far more likely to experiment in same sex groups than men. As a gay male member quipped, "women have kissing parties all the time [on the farm], but there's never been a circle jerk." Examining these practices would help to answer questions such as: How, if at all, does gender regulate sexuality on the farm? What, if any, are their feminist practices that counter dominant U.S. notions of sexuality and how might these be liberatory? What might examining sexual practices from a cultural communication perspective reveal about Oakian notions of embodiment, personhood, relating, communicating, emoting, and dwelling?

The second limitation of this research was my reliance on O&I communication in Chapter 4. Because I was interested in the historical negotiation of the meanings associated with female breasts, O&I communication was a vital, but limited, data source. During my fieldwork, it was clear that not all members posted comments to the O&I board—a quality of O&I communication that appeared to be consistent with archived O&I communication (insofar as only a dozen or so members consistently posted comments). Even though I supplemented archived O&I data with interview data, this historical analysis missed the everyday life of the debates surrounding shirtlessness. Not captured were the more private conversations and political maneuvering that tended to take place away from the public O&I board.

Future Studies

Limitations often lead to future work. Such should be the case with the first of my limitations discussed above. Because theorists have linked the regulation of sex, gender, and sexuality it would be important to develop an analysis of communicative practices surrounding sexuality on the farm. This type of research would attend not only to language-based communication but also to body-based communication and would seek to develop an understanding of how, if at all, Oakers link sex and gender to sexuality as well as how, if at all, feminist communicative practices facilitate or limit a range of sexual practices.

Additionally, future work would apply the feminist ethnography of communication theory and methods enlisted in this research to explore other communities in a range of cultural contexts. This work would assess the ways that

communication symbols, forms, and communicative embodied practices are contested and negotiated as well as the ways that these communicative practices make the everyday life of gender meaningful. Particular attention would be paid to further exploring and refining the nascent framework for embodied communicative practice. Finally, this work would attend to normative communicative practices and would develop analyses of marginalized practices. Of focal concern here would be to determine the underlying cultural notions of personhood, relating, communicating, emoting, and dwelling that underpin the differing communicative practices.

APPENDIX A

GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are some significant aspects of Twin Oaks' life?
   Follow up: which are most celebrated within the Twin Oaks community and which are least approved of?

2. Are Twin Oaks' gender roles different than mainstream gender roles?

3. Is the body understood differently here as opposed to 'out there'?

4. What role does sex play in the formation of Twin Oaks' culture?

5. What have I missed? What are the questions that I should be asking?

APPENDIX B

DYADIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How long have you lived at Twin Oaks?

2. Why have you chosen to live at Twin Oaks?

3. Do you think Twin Oaks is significantly different than mainstream U.S. culture?

   If so, how so and if not, why not?

4. What is your idea of 'utopia'? In terms of gender?

5. How does Twin Oaks measure up to this utopia? In terms of gender?

6. Twin Oaks calls itself a feminist eco-village. Do you think Twin Oaks is a feminist community that supports feminist values and ways of life? Explain.

7. In terms of gender, what are some prevalent Twin Oakian norms?

8. What have I missed? Are there others you think I should talk to?

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