

COUNTERCULTURAL COMMUNES: REJECTION OR REFLECTION OF
CONVENTIONAL MAINSTREAM GENDER NORMS?

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Norms?

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This thesis utilizes a gendered analytical lens and a feminist framework in order to explore if the sixties countercultural communards of Colorado's Drop City, Tennessee's The Farm, and Virginia's Twin Oaks achieved liberation from the mainstream gender roles that characterized post-World War II America. This study complicates the common assumption that communes represented spaces of liberation for individuals who wished to escape an oppressive and inequitable post-war society. Overall, this thesis found that men at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks were not only freed from their contemporary gender roles, but they were also able to remake meanings of masculinity within the communal context. This thesis also demonstrates that new meanings of masculinity tended to perpetuate traditional assumptions about male dominance and female domesticity. Additionally, this thesis discovered that incorporation of structure in communes, a facet of mainstream America that communards sought to escape, ironically furthered gender liberation and contributed to feminist growth in Twin Oaks in the 1970s and 1980s.

Preface

The origins of this thesis can be traced to my participation in Dr. Ruth Feldstein's 1960s and 1970s research seminar. It was in this seminar that my passion for 1960s America and my interest in the counterculture were realized. As I researched and read many histories on the American counterculture, I came across historian Timothy Miller's work on sixties countercultural communes. Miller explained that thousands of communes existed in the 1960s, yet none of the many histories on the counterculture that I had read had attended to them. This inattention to clearly widespread phenomena motivated my search for primary sources on countercultural communes. Though such sources were scarce, I was fortuitous enough to find a few memoirs by former members of the countercultural commune, Drop City, along with publications by former residents of The Farm and Twin Oaks. The discussions of freedom from "oppressive mainstream" society that permeated these primary sources led me to believe that I was beginning a project which would demonstrate the emancipatory and empowering nature of countercultural communes. However, as this thesis demonstrates, the more I analyzed these sources, the further I was led down an unexpected but exciting path; a research project that began as a consideration of countercultural communes as spaces of liberation morphed into a complex evaluation of *who* was liberated from *what* in countercultural communes.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Counterculture, Communes, and Visions of Liberation

In 1999, director Tony Goldwyn released his feature film *A Walk on the Moon*. A reference to the Apollo moon landing, the film's title evokes its 1960s setting. *A Walk on the Moon* focuses on the Kantrowitzs, a family that includes a husband named Marty, his wife, Pearl, their fourteen-year-old daughter, Alison, and their younger son, Daniel. The film commences with Pearl, dressed in a June Cleaver-esque dress, neatly packing clothes into suitcases for the family's trip to a resort for the duration of Marty's summer work at a television repair company. This initial depiction of a dutiful housewife and breadwinning father could lead the viewer to believe that the film is a big screen replica of the small screen television series *Leave it to Beaver*, another story about the archetypical white American nuclear family. However, film critic Robert Ebert's description of the film as a story about a "housewife who feels trapped in the stodgy domesticity of the resort – where wives and families are aired and sunned, while the man labors in town" reveals that *A Walk on the Moon* is less a story about a perfect nuclear family and more a story about a woman struggling with the gender roles that coincide with her position as part of a nuclear family.¹

While Ebert's review of the film is partially correct, his emphasis on Pearl is narrow. What is missing from Ebert's critique of the film is equal attention to Pearl's husband, Marty. Apparent throughout the film is the sense that the demands placed upon

¹ Robert Ebert, review of *A Walk on the Moon*, by Tony Goldwyn, April 2, 1999, <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/a-walk-on-the-moon-1999> (accessed August 29, 2013).

Marty as the family's breadwinner have left him discontented and unfulfilled. For example, each time Marty has to depart for work, his face is overcome with an expression indicative of misery. When Pearl asks Marty if he can take time off work, he explains that his responsibility to provide for his family prevents him from being able to do so. Marty's evident unhappiness shows that *A Walk on the Moon* is not merely, as Ebert says, a story about a "housewife who feels trapped in stodgy domesticity," but, more accurately, is a story about a housewife and a male breadwinner who are both trapped by the conventional gender prescriptions of their time.

Lingering throughout the film is a tension between the relatively conventional conservatism of mainstream society and the assumed liberation from this society that the counterculture provided. Pearl and Marty's teenaged daughter, Alison, seeks freedom from the "Establishment" that she disdains by shunning mainstream conservative dress, attending the quintessential countercultural event, the Woodstock festival, and demonstrating liberal sexual inclinations when, at the age of fourteen, she proposes premarital intercourse to her boyfriend. Alison's mother, Pearl, tries to emancipate herself from her dull domestic life by partaking in a controversial extramarital affair with a blouse salesman whose long hair and free spirit are symbolic of the counterculture. As the film concludes, the viewer gets a glimpse of Pearl's husband, Marty, who appears jaunty when he sheds his straight-laced demeanor as he dances to the counterculture's preferred musical genre, rock and roll.

This study utilizes a feminist framework in order to explore the presumed association of the counterculture with liberation, an association that *A Walk on the Moon*

bolsters and popular culture often promotes.² This study complicates the film's implication that the sixties counterculture freed individuals from mainstream society's traditional gender roles, roles that included breadwinning husbands and fathers like Marty and domestic, caretaking wives and mothers like Pearl. In order to consider the presumed relationship between the counterculture and gender liberation, I will examine gender dynamics at three sixties countercultural communes: Colorado's Drop City, Tennessee's The Farm, and Virginia's Twin Oaks.

In chapter two, I will analyze labor arrangements in these three communes, focusing on the manner in which labor was, or was not, organized by sex. In this context, I will investigate the extent to which the labor men and women executed at communes conformed to traditional post-World War II gendered labor expectations, such as those of the breadwinning man and the homemaking woman. Furthermore, this chapter examines the relationship between formal labor organization, and lack thereof, and gender role progressivism in communes.

In chapter three, I investigate sexual relationships in communes and focus not only on physically erotic exchanges between male and female communards but also, on communards' ideologies regarding marriage and sex.³ As this chapter evaluates the degree to which these sexual relationships were unconventional, it contemplates whether

² The term "counterculture" was coined by historian Theodore Roszak in his book *The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, New York: Anchor Books, 1968.

³ My focus on heterosexuality does not intend to disregard the possibility of homosexual relationships at countercultural communes. Historian Timothy Miller said that there is evidence of homosexuality at various sixties communes and at least a few dozen communes were known to cater to individuals whose sexual orientations were lesbian, bisexual, or homosexual. See Timothy Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999.

they disrupted common assumptions about female sexual passivity and submission and male sexual aggression and dominance. Moreover, this chapter explores whether the countercultural ethos of sexual liberation necessarily facilitated female sexual autonomy and women's liberation in communes. This chapter's examination of sexual relationships also includes stances on birth control and abortion at communes and an assessment of whether or not these stances empowered female communards, especially in regard to their bodies.

Countercultural meanings of liberation took shape alongside and in relation to second wave feminists' discussions about women's emancipation. During the period in which communes were developing, second wave feminists were debating what sexual freedom looked like for women and what it meant for their overall liberation. Thus, as chapter three considers whether female communards were sexually autonomous, it is in dialogue with some of these feminist assessments. By juxtaposing two contemporaneous movements for freedom - the counterculture and second wave feminism - I can analyze the countercultural vision of liberation more critically than if I examined it alone. Overall, examination of these two movements simultaneously produces different conclusions than if the counterculture was examined in isolation.

The common association between the counterculture and liberation is due in part to the fact that a key feature of the countercultural worldview was, indeed, liberation - liberation from anything associated with dominant, "straight" society.⁴ Referring to the counterculture in 1972, sociologist Keith Melville commented, "The counterculture sets

⁴ It is important to note that the counterculture was a predominately white, middle class youth movement. The counterculture often referred to mainstream American as "straight" society. Counterculturalists called mainstream Americans "straights."

the assumptions of the dominant culture on their heads and in the process becomes the most thorough contemporary critique of the established order.”⁵ Communal endeavors, such as Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks, were a way by which counterculturalists sought to emancipate themselves from this order. According to counterculturalists, in the society of their time, people were alienated. This alienation, they asserted, was a byproduct of their exposure to a repressive, competitive, hierarchical, materialistic, consumer-oriented, privatized, technocratic capitalist culture.⁶ Aaron, a former communitarian, captured the countercultural ethos well when he said:

I was living in LA...and felt totally isolated from other people and their lives...I had to get out...I decided that I would have to live in the country and work closely with my brothers and sisters...city life offered me a trivial job I didn't want...I came here because I wanted to simplify my life...I had a lot of things to get rid of – a car, a hi-fi, a million useless things...I couldn't just advocate social change, I had to live it...this whole generation, we don't want to be in a materialist bag anymore, and we don't have to get caught up in the nine-to-five career bag, barbecues in suburbia bag...it was my dream to belong to a tribe where energies flow among everyone, where people care for one another, where no one has to work, but everyone wants to do something because we're all mutually dependent for our survival and our happiness...it's so obvious that society is doomed. I mean the whole thing's just going to self-destruct, and we don't want to go with it. The next step is community.⁷

Aaron's statement demonstrates that the counterculture desperately sought freedom from mainstream society, and that some of its participants, such as the members of Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks, conceived of communes as spaces to do so. Yet their quest for freedom, and their effort to “set the assumptions of dominant culture on their heads,” may not have included gender. This study questions the degree to which the

⁵ Keith Melville, *Communes in the Counterculture: Origins, Theories, and Styles of Life*, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1972, 19.

⁶ See Roszak.

⁷ Melville, 11-12.

counterculture's vision of liberation included liberation from the prevailing gender norms of the time.

Starting in the 1960s, some second wave feminists attacked American capitalist society in a manner similar to that of the counterculture; they argued that capitalism reinforced competitive behaviors, encouraged shallow materialism and consumerism, and contributed to human feelings of alienation. Barbara Haber, curator of the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, an important resource for American women's history, said many feminists agreed with the New Left, of which the counterculture was a part, when it argued in its landmark manifesto, The Port Huron Statement, that "late capitalist society creates mechanisms of psychological and cultural domination over everyone."⁸ Feminists departed from the New Left in the attention that they gave to the patriarchal quality of capitalist society and the way in which it fostered male dominance over women. As second wave feminist Ellen Willis stated in 1970, "To attack male supremacy consistently, inevitably means attacking capitalism in vulnerable places." Additionally, though they agreed with the counterculture's perspective that the consequences of capitalism were human exploitation and consumerist greed, many feminists emphasized the manner in which capitalism especially exploited women.

⁸ Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement," in *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade*, edited by Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert, 176-196, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984; Jerry L. Rodnitzky, *Feminist Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of a Feminist Counterculture*, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1999. Rodnitzky argues that male dominance in the New Left organization, Students for a Democratic Society [SDS], and the lack of leadership positions offered to female members of the organization, stimulated the development of the second wave feminist movement. Many women, frustrated with their second-class statuses within SDS, left the organization to form the first women's liberation groups that comprised second wave feminism.

According to these feminists, late-capitalist America abused women as cheap, reserve labor and “took advantage of women’s subordinate position in the family and their historical domination by man,” by targeting them as consumers of the goods produced by this capitalist system.⁹ Further highlighting this point, second wave feminist Robin Morgan said:

There is one big stumbling block that prevents us from being equal to and interdependent with men in economic production, and thereby making it possible to end our oppression. Our immediate problem is capitalism’s need to exploit its workers. Though women were oppressed before capitalism, male dominance and family relations have been transformed by capitalism to fit its needs for ever increasing profit...In our capitalist society, profit for owners rather than the meeting of the social needs of the majority is the major criterion...The man-job-woman-home ideology, like racism, is used to perpetuate a reserve army of temporary labor which can be used to keep wages down. Women are the last hired, first fired, least organized, most transient, and least skilled group in the labor force...in the family, production and consumption come together. The wage earner produces the capitalists’ profit and his family realizes this profit through consumption. For the capitalist, a society made up of a lot of nuclear families is a joy. It means a lot of workers and a lot of consumption units. The more workers on the labor market, the lower the wages, and the higher the profit.¹⁰

As Morgan’s discussion of “the man-job-woman-home ideology” suggests, second wave feminists simultaneously challenged the post-war capitalist system and the conventional gender roles that this system reinforced.¹¹ In fact, second wave feminism, I

⁹ Barbara Haber, *American Women in the 1960s: Changing the Future*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993, 413; Ellen Willis, “Sequel: Letter to a Critic,” reprinted in *Notes From the Second Year: Women’s Liberations*, edited by Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt, 1970, 57.

¹⁰ Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement*, New York: Vintage Books, 1970, 460-462.

¹¹ For a liberal feminist position on post-war gender roles, see Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1963. Friedan encouraged women’s full integration into mainstream society. For a radical feminist perspective on post-war gender roles, see Ti-Grace Atkinson, *Amazon Odyssey*, New York: Link Books, 1974. Radical feminists often objected to women’s integration into hierarchical, mainstream society and believed that women’s marginalization in the public sphere

would argue, represented the dominant challenge to the conventional gender roles of the time. Due to the prominent role second wave feminism played in denouncing post-WWII gender roles, I will draw upon second wave feminist ideology and utilize second wave feminist texts in order to ascertain the degree of gender liberation within sixties countercultural communes.¹²

Although communes existed in urban America during the 1960s and 1970s, the focus of this study is rural communes.¹³ Sociologists Bennett Berger, Bruce Hackett, and Mervyn R. Millar asserted that rural communes were “more serious communal living experiments than urban communes because they required participants to make a more deliberate choice.” Hugh Gardner also claimed that in comparison to urban communal living, rural communal living represented a commitment to living that was relatively

would not be corrected until their oppressive circumstances within their homes were addressed and transformed. Politico feminists, on the other hand, asserted that socialist revolution was the remedy for women’s oppression. For a thorough study regarding ideological similarities and differences between second wave feminists, see Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in American, 1967-1975*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

¹² For one perspective on post-war gender conservatism, see Elaine Tyler May’s *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, New York: Basic Books Inc., Publishers, 1988. May explains the influence that Cold War ideology had on post-war gender roles.

¹³ For information on urban communes see William L. Smith, *Families and Communes: An Examination of Nontraditional Lifestyles*, California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1999; Noreen Cornfield, “The Success of Urban Communes,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 45 no. 1 (February 1983): 115-126; Rosabeth Moss Kanter, “Communes in Cities,” *Working Papers for a New Society* 2 (Summer 1974): 36-44; Matthew Greenwald, “The Urban Commune,” (PhD diss., Rutgers University), 1976; Michael Weiss, *Living Together: A Year in the Life of a City Commune*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974.

remote from mainstream society.¹⁴ This study's focus on rural communes complicates the premise that rural living coincided with communards' isolation from mainstream influences. Rather, while the modesty and simplicity that marked communards' subsistence living in rural areas contributed to meanings of masculinity that veered from those of mainstream America, communards' labor and sex roles also maintained traditional meanings of masculinity and, especially, femininity. In *The Modern Utopian*, a countercultural magazine, a communard exemplified the simple living that characterized communal living by saying:

Although it seems hard to imagine, we can survive without electricity...and modern plumbing facilities. We can move into the woods with nothing but a few basic supplies...plant a garden...open your head to what Nature has to say. Create a new life and home where a truly peaceful existence is possible...let's stop and look at Nature and our earth now before we are so far away from her that we'll never get back. Invest in some land in the country, build a log cabin, and grow your own vegetables.¹⁵

Some scholars of communes have analyzed the correlation between commune size and equality. Generally, communes fall into two size categories: family and corporate. Family communes house between six and fifteen people and corporate communes possess a population of at least twenty, which could expand into the hundreds. Anthropologist Jon Wagner argued, "While family communes may tend towards equality, the evidence for equality in corporate communes is extremely weak." By looking at gender in one family commune, Drop City, and two corporate communes, The Farm and

¹⁴ Bennett Berger, Bruce Hackett, and Mervyn R. Millar. "The Communal Family," *The Family Coordinator* 21 (1972): 419-427; Hugh Gardner, *The Children of Prosperity: Thirteen Modern American Communes*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, v.

¹⁵ Nancy Nesbit, "Get Back to Where You Belong," *The Modern Utopian* 4 no. 3-4 (Summer-Fall 1970), 15.

Twin Oaks, this study reconsiders this belief that small, family communes are more egalitarian.¹⁶

Sixties scholarship is replete with images of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's assassination, students protesting the Vietnam War, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, and the Apollo 11 moon landing. Less commonly mentioned are the counterculture and its communes. As historian Alice Echols stated in 2002:

"I was struck by the absence of good histories of the counterculture...most histories of the period make only passing mention of the counterculture...the counterculture appears as a sideshow in most sixties books."¹⁷ Although the exact number of sixties communes is contested, experts have estimated that at least a thousand communes existed in America by 1970. This estimate demonstrates that communes were not an inconsequential phenomenon and were, in historian Timothy Miller's words, "a critical manifestation of the time."¹⁸ Through my examinations of Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks, I not only draw deserved attention to an important movement, the counterculture, and significant phenomena, the counterculture's communes, but I also

¹⁶ Judson Jerome, *Families of Eden: Communes and the New Anarchism*, New York: Seabury, 1974; Jon Wagner, "Sex Roles in American Communal Utopias: An Overview," in *Sex Roles in Contemporary American Communes*, edited by Jon Wagner, 1-45, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, 34.

¹⁷ Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The '60s and its Aftershocks*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, 17; see also Timothy Miller, "The Sixties-Era Communes," in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, edited by Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, 327-351, New York: Routledge, 2002, 324. Miller argued that the histories of the counterculture that do exist often overlook communal experiments.

¹⁸ For various estimates of the number of 1960s and 1970s communes refer to Gardner, 8-9; see also Miller, "The Sixties-Era Communes," 324.

consider them in relation to another liberation movement of the era – second wave feminism.

Frequent scholarly neglect cannot be equated with total scholarly disregard for sixties communes.¹⁹ Nevertheless, few scholars have addressed women's experiences in sixties communes and even fewer have utilized gender as a category of analysis while investigating these communes. In *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States*, political scientist, Marylyn Klee-Hartzell, and historian, Louis J. Kern, said that gender and women, if present in investigations of American communalism, are often found at the periphery. Echoing Klee-Hartzell and Kern, sociologist Jessie Bernard stated, "something very essential is missing in our studies of communes and communities and that is the female structure."²⁰ This study brings gender and women from marginal to central positions in communal studies, positions that they both so rightly deserve. This dual focus on gender and women allows this study to explore meanings of masculinity and femininity in sixties communes and to determine whether these meanings ran counter to those produced by mainstream American culture. Overall, this study is in conversation with Klee-Hartzell, curator and women's historian, Wendy E. Chmielewski, historian

¹⁹ For contemporaneous analyses of 1960s and 1970s communes refer to Robert Houriet, *Getting Back Together*, New York: Avon Books, 1972; Lawrence Veysey, *The Communal Experience: Anarchist and Mystical Counter-Cultures in America*, New York: Harper and Row, 1973; Keith Melville; Richard Fairfield, *Communes, U.S.A.: A Personal Tour*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972; Benjamin Zablocki, *The Joyful Community*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971.

²⁰ Marylyn Klee-Hartzell, Introduction to *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States*, edited by Wendy E. Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern, and Marylyn Klee-Hartzell, 3-13, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993, 4; Statement by Jessie Bernard spoken at the 1975 Conference on Communes and quoted in Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, New York: Schocken Books, 1984, xv.

Louis J. Kern, anthropologists Jon Wagner and Bryan Pfaffenberger, and sociologist Patrick W. Conover, all of whom rely on gender as categories for their analyses. I will also be in dialogue with historian of communes, Timothy Miller, sociologist William L. Smith, and Herbert A. Otto, whose investigations of communes locate gender at the periphery.²¹

These scholars are divided over the degree to which they believe gender roles in sixties communes were progressive. Wendy Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern, and Marylyn Klee-Hartzell argued that progressive gender relations were often not a communal priority. Elaborating on this point, Klee-Hartzell asserted that many sixties communes reinforced traditional gender norms.²² Similarly, in his study on sex roles in contemporary American communes, Jon Wagner concluded that many sixties communes were characterized by gender role conservatism.²³ As historian Timothy Miller explained in 1991:

²¹ See Klee-Hartzell; Louis J. Kern, "Pronatalism, Midwifery, and Synergistic Marriage: Spiritual Enlightenment and Sexual Ideology on The Farm (Tennessee)," in *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States*, edited by Wendy E. Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern and Marylyn Klee-Hartzell, 201-220, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993; Wagner; Bryan Pfaffenberger, "A World of Husbands and Mothers: Sex Roles and Their Ideological Context in the Formation of the Farm," in *Sex Roles in Contemporary American Communes*, edited by Jon Wagner, 172-210, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982; Patrick W. Conover, "An Analysis of Communes and Intentional Communities with Particular Attention to Sexual and Gender Relations," *The Family Coordinator* 24, no. 4 (Oct. 1975); Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond*; Herbert A. Otto, "The Communal Alternative," in *The Modern Utopian: Alternative Communities of the '60s and '70s*, edited by Richard Fairfield, Process, 2010.

²² Chmielewski et al.; Klee-Hartzell, 4.

²³ See also William L. Smith; Bryan Pfaffenberger; Herbert A. Otto.

Sex roles were often traditional in the counterculture and when feminist ideas first began to be raised in progressive circles, around 1968, many male hippies turned out to be as disinclined to give women equal rights and privileges as males elsewhere in society.²⁴

Other scholars have arrived at divergent conclusions regarding gender liberation in countercultural communes. Though he initially said that counterculturalists failed to embrace gender progressivism, in his later article, “The Sixties-Era Communes,” Miller claimed that due to their exposure to the Civil Rights movement, many communards often advocated racial, class, and gender equality within their communes. A sociological analysis conducted by Patrick Conover in 1975 drew similar conclusions. In his examination of deference behavior at Twin Oaks, Conover stated, “the case of Twin Oaks supports a view of the alternate culture and its communes as being sexually and genderally equalitarian and significantly dedifferentiated.”²⁵ This study undermines these arguments, which claim that countercultural communes were marked by gender equality. I argue that despite an ethos of freedom, countercultural communards, especially women, were not completely liberated from traditional gender roles.

This study also demonstrates that male communards enjoyed some gender freedom in countercultural communes. In the rural domain of natural, humble communal living, male communards were liberated from their contemporary roles as professionals and producers for wives, children, and an oppressive capitalist system. By contrast, female members of these communes were frequently relegated to domestic roles comparable to those expected of them in mainstream society. This finding challenges

²⁴ Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991, 26.

²⁵ Timothy Miller, “The Sixties Era Communes,” 341; Conover, 462.

Ruby Rohrlich and Hoffman Baruch's claim that "men's and women's utopias differ: men escape from freedom, for women, utopia is a way at arriving at freedom" by showing that men actually arrived at a greater sense of freedom, while women did not discover freedom upon joining communes.

At the same time that my study complicates Conover's conclusions about progressive gender roles at Twin Oaks, it also challenges his methodology. I argue that a single case study, such as Conover's examination of Twin Oaks, is not sufficient to generalize that all countercultural communes were marked by gender equalitarianism. Even this study's attention to three communes still does not allow for definite conclusions about the degree of gender liberation at all countercultural communes. Instead, this study demonstrates the extent of gender freedom at these three specific communes.

My focus on three communes does, however, allow me to demonstrate that although unconventional gender roles at the three specific communes under consideration were not pronounced, the degree of gender progressivism between these three communes varied. Thus, I stand at a middle ground in a polarized debate in which one side asserts that communes conformed to conventional gender roles and the other argues for gender liberation in sixties communes. In all, this study challenges this dichotomized debate by demonstrating that the degree of gender progressivism at sixties communes did not always fall neatly into this progressive-non-progressive binary.

Origins of Sixties Communes

This study's focus on sixties American communes does not seek to disregard the long history of communal experiments both in the United States and in other international locales.²⁶ The choice to examine sixties American communes over their earlier versions was influenced by my questioning the common image of the 1960s as a radical departure from the historical periods that preceded and followed it. As historian Alice Echols has said, scholars have already begun to challenge this popular idea that the 1960s was an exceptional decade unlike any other.²⁷ This study contributes to this scholarly conversation by exploring and challenging the belief that 1960s gender norms diverged from those of other historical periods, particularly the period often referred to as the "ultradomestic fifties." In sum, this study argues that despite being contested during the 1960s, especially by second wave feminists, gender norms were relatively continuous with those of the 1950s. The fact that the American counterculture, a movement that

²⁶ See John Curl, *History of Work Cooperation in America: Cooperatives, Cooperative Movements, Collectivity and Communalism from Early America to the Present*, Berkeley: Homeward Press, 1980; Jyotsna Sreenivasan, *Utopias in American History*, Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2008; Robert P. Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Secular Communities, 1824-2000*, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004; Robert P. Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Religious Communities, 1732-2000*, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003; Arthur Eugene Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian Origins and the Owenite Phase of Communitarian Socialism in America, 1663-1829*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970; Robert S. Fogarty, *All Things New: American Communes and Utopian Movements, 1860-1914*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2003; Foster Stockwell, *Encyclopedia of American Communes, 1663-1963*, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland Books, 1998; Charles Nordoff, *American Utopias*, Stockbridge, Massachusetts: Berkshire House, 1993; Ira L. Mandelker, *Religion, Society, and Utopia in Nineteenth-Century America*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984.

²⁷ Echols, *Shaky Ground*.

proactively sought to isolate itself from and contest mainstream influences, did not, ultimately, distance itself from or challenge the conventional gender roles characteristic of mainstream society, demonstrates the stubbornly pervasive influence of traditional mainstream gender norms.

A precise date marking the beginning of the sixties communal movement has not been determined. However, Drop City is often referred to as “the first hippie commune” and May 1965 is considered to be the date that “more or less began the era of modern communes.”²⁸ It was on this date that former University of Kansas students, Gene Bernofsky, his wife, Jo Ann Bernofsky, and Clark Richert purchased five acres of land from a Colorado goat farmer and began constructing their commune, Drop City.²⁹ Contrary to Gardner’s claim that the commune’s name was inspired by Timothy Leary’s injunction to “turn on, tune in, and drop out,” or related to the act of dropping acid, the name was inspired by Gene’s, Jo Ann’s, and Clark’s collegiate experiences. While they were in college in Lawrence, Kansas, the three had painted rocks and dropped them from their apartment windows. They used to say, “Just drop it [the rock] and see what happens.” Dropping rocks was a metaphor for dropping out of a society that the three

²⁸ Hugh Gardner, 35.

²⁹ Gene Bernofsky’s parents, David and Mary Bernofsky, named their son Eugene, after the socialist leader, Eugene Victor Debs. The Bernofsky’s had a family history of socialist-Marxist revolutionary activity. During the early twentieth century, Gene’s paternal and maternal grandfathers were involved in European Marxist groups. Later, both Gene’s paternal and maternal grandparents immigrated to Philadelphia, where they maintained their commitments to Marxism. Around the late-1920s, Gene’s parents, David and Mary, met in Philadelphia, married, and conceived Gene’s older brother, and named him Carl after Karl Marx. Overall, the Bernofsky’s championed humanitarian ideals and the rights of lower-class workers. This family history, undoubtedly, influenced Gene’s communal project, Drop City.

believed was corrupt. Gene, Jo Ann, and Clark said, “Lets drop [out of society], start from scratch, and see what happens.”³⁰

Gene, Jo Ann, and Clark believed that America’s anti-egalitarianism was evidence of their country’s corruption. After interviewing Gene Bernofsky, free-lance journalist Mark Matthews concluded that the members of Drop City:

Witnessed white America continue to oppress its own citizens of color. They observed the rich manipulating the poor. They resisted the growing culture of consumerism and the standardization of American life with its forty-hour work week, self-service supermarkets, tract homes in the suburbs, and stylish automobiles. They understood that most assembly-line factory jobs provided little intellectual stimulation, and they had no desire to sit in vast offices amidst an armada of desks and other white-collar workers. They also noted that even many of those who had bought into the American dream seemed unsatisfied with the status quo.³¹

As Gene Bernofsky said, “Humanity still needed to be liberated. People were oppressed by society, by each other.” Gene, Jo Ann, and Clark hoped that Drop City would be a space where individuals could be peacefully liberated from the oppression and stark monotony of mainstream American life. Later Drop City member, Peter Douthit, highlighted this hope by saying, “the only really challenge left is to learn how to live, how to create an environment of peace and freedom.”³²

At about the same time that Gene, JoAnn, and Clark Richert were constructing their so-called “environment of peace and freedom,” the working-class Haight-Asbhury

³⁰ Gardner, 35; For quote about “dropping out” see John Curl, *Memories of Drop City: The First Hippie Commune of the 1960s and the Summer of Love*, New York: I Universe, Inc., 2006, 40-41.

³¹ Mark Matthews, *Droppers: America’s First Hippie Commune, Drop City*, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010, 45.

³² For Gene’s quote about oppression see Curl, 10; For Peter Douthit quote see Peter Rabbit, *Drop City*, New York: Olympia Press, Inc., 1971, preface, does not have page numbers.

neighborhood of San Francisco began to “morph into a giant counterculture commune—of sorts.”³³ It was from this “giant counterculture commune” that the Tennessee commune known as The Farm originated. In 1967, Stephen Gaskin, inspired by his participation in the hippie movement that was penetrating California’s Bay area, started his “Monday Night Class.” Due to his previous position as a graduate teaching assistant at San Francisco State College, Gaskin was permitted use of the college’s Gallery Lounge to conduct the class. Bay Area hippies and San Francisco State students were Gaskin’s primary followers. Gaskin said:

The idea was to compare notes with other trippers about tripping and the whole psychic and psychedelic world...we discussed love, sex, dope, God, gods, war, peace, enlightenment, mind-cop, free will and what-have-you, all in a stoned, truthful, hippy atmosphere.³⁴

Stephen believed that the use of psychedelic drugs raised one’s consciousness, fostered a sense of interconnectedness between individuals, and contributed to spiritual growth. This emphasis on spiritual growth prompted the American Academy of Religion to invite Gaskin to speak at various congregations and universities around the United States. Gaskin accepted these invitations and, joined by nearly two hundred of his

³³ Matthews, 76; For information about Haight-Ashbury see Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History*, New York: Rolling Stone Press, 1984; Alice Echols, *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin*, New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1999; Leonard Wolf, *Voices From the Love Generation*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968; Hank Harrison, *The Dead: A Social History of the Haight-Ashbury Experience*, San Francisco: Archives Press, 1990; Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test*, New York: Bantam, 1969; Lewis Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip*, New York: Western Publishing Company, Inc., 1968; Peter Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall*, New York: Counterpoint, 1998; Warren Hinckle, “A Social History of the Hippies,” in *The Sixties: The Art, Attitude, Politics, and Media of Our Most Explosive Decade*, edited by Gerald Howard, New York: Pocket Books, 1982.

³⁴ Stephen Gaskin, *Monday Night Class: Revised and Annotated Edition*, Tennessee: The Book Publishing Company, 2005, 9.

students and approximately thirty brightly painted buses, embarked upon his Caravan tour in 1970. During this four-month tour, Gaskin's following expanded and was accompanied by an increased sense of community among these young individuals. In reference to The Farm's origins, former Farm member, Rupert Fike, said:

By their shared experience on the road, the Caravaners had become a community – a church. The decision was made to pool their money, head back across America, and buy some land. Tennessee had seemed like one of the most inviting places they had visited – land was cheap and the people were friendly.³⁵

In 1971, Stephen Gaskin's Caravan established The Farm in Lewis County, Tennessee, a commune that still exists today.³⁶

In 1965, the same year Drop City's members were just beginning their communal endeavors in the Colorado countryside, seven individuals set up an urban cooperative house in Washington D.C. The seven wished to create their own communal utopia, inspired by that presented in B.F. Skinner's fictional novel, *Walden Two*.³⁷ Walden House served as an experiment in cooperative living and a temporary home until its members could afford a large farm in the countryside. In 1966, members from Walden

³⁵ Rupert Fike, ed., *Voices from The Farm: Adventures in Community Living*, Second Edition, Tennessee: The Book Publishing Company, 2012, 12.

³⁶ For contemporary information about The Farm visit <http://www.thefarm.org/>.

³⁷ B.F. Skinner, *Walden Two*, London: The Macmillan Company, 1948; In the late-1940s American psychologist B.F. Skinner asserted that humans could achieve the utopia presented in his novel *Walden Two* through proactive human improvement. According to Skinner, behavioral engineering techniques would produce better humans. Behavioral engineering posited that behavior was shaped by positive reinforcement derived from outward environmental influences; behavior that was positively reinforced through praise or rewards would be repeated. Likewise, Skinner asserted that behavior that was negatively reinforced, or ignored instead of punished, would become extinct. Skinner believed that if negative behaviors, such as violence, jealousy, and exploitation were ignored and positive behaviors, such as pacifism, nonpossessiveness, justice, and cooperation were rewarded, the result would be perfect individuals residing in a utopian society similar to that in *Walden Two*.

House met with *Walden Two* enthusiasts from across the nation at a conference in Hartland, Michigan to discuss plans for creating a large, rural community similar to that in Skinner's novel. The conference estimated that it would be approximately five years until enough Ford Foundation grants were available to fund a *Walden Two* community. In 1967, the same year that Stephen Gaskin started his Monday Night Class, members from Walden House, too eager to wait and resistant to the idea of depending upon corporate grants, met with *Walden Two* supporters from Atlanta that they had befriended at the national conference to discuss setting up their own *Walden Two* community. After much discussion and an offer of a loan from a participant named Hal, the group purchased a 123-acre farm near Louisa, Virginia in the summer of 1967.³⁸ Inspired by the presence of two large oak trees on the farm and tired of debating ideas for the community's name, the group chose Twin Oaks as their community title.³⁹

³⁸ It is significant to note that the summer of 1967 is often referred to, quite paradoxically, as both "The Summer of Love" and "The Long Hot Summer." "The Summer of Love" refers to the thousands of predominately white, middle-class youth that gathered in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district with the objective of building a liberal lifestyle that countered [what they considered] the repression and inhibition of the more conservative mainstream culture. "The Long Hot Summer" includes the over one hundred race riots that erupted in major American cities, such as Newark and Detroit, in the summer of 1967. It could be said that "The Summer of Love" and "The Long Hot Summer" are interrelated and share a correlation with the communal "boom" that took place in the late-1960s.

³⁹ For information on Walden House see Walden House Newsletter (December 1965), published in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune: The Collected Leaves of Twin Oaks* vol. 1, Issues 1-15, Louisa, Virginia: Twin Oaks Community, 1972, 3; Conference information see Walden Pool Newsletter (September 1966 and January 1967) and Walden House Newsletter (October 1966), published in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune*, 6-12; The Atlanta conference see Walden House Newsletter (March 1967), published in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune*, 13; For Twin Oaks name see *Leaves of Twin Oaks* no. 1 (July 1967), published in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune*, 19.

Similar to Drop City and The Farm, all of Twin Oaks' original members were white, and most were in their twenties, with the exception of founder, Kat Kinkade, who was thirty-six, Kat's daughter, Jenny, who was thirteen, and Amos, a teenaged high school student. Before starting Twin Oaks, Kat was a divorcee and single mother who had enrolled in night classes at a local college. She hoped that furthering her education would allow her to escape "meaningless" employment in local office jobs. It was during these night classes that Kat was introduced to Skinner's *Walden Two* community. She later recalled, "The community it [*Walden Two*] depicted was everything I had ever wanted, everything I had ever believed in, everything I needed to be happy."⁴⁰ In addition to Kat and Jenny, Twin Oaks' original members included Dwight, who came across *Walden Two* as a philosophy student at a Midwestern university. Dwight believed that the creation of a good society like that in *Walden Two* could ameliorate the devastation and hopelessness that the Vietnam War produced. Similarly, Brian, a student at a southern university whose family ridiculed him for his civil rights activism, found hope in the peaceful and harmonic communities he read about in utopian novels like *Walden Two*.

In addition to Kat, Dwight, and Brian, who were "the solid core that saw the community through its first shaky year," Twin Oaks' original members included Brian's wife, Carrie, Leif, an avid reader who came across *Walden Two* during a period of heavy drug use, and Hilda, an Oberlin student tired of the competitive, college environment. The last of Twin Oaks' original members was Amos, a young drug user who felt that "there was nothing out there [for him] in the world." Amos decided to venture to Twin

⁴⁰ Kathleen Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community*, New York: William and Morrow Company, Inc., 1973, 7.

Oaks after coming across an advertisement for the community in an underground newspaper. Commenting on the time he spent at Twin Oaks Amos later said:

I was in better shape emotionally than I was before I came...the size of the group is limited, there is no escape. I have to deal with problems as they come up and it's a healthy place. People give a shit. We are the closest, most loving, most caring group.⁴¹

As the origins stories of Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks suggest, the majority of their members were college-educated; Drop City's founders were University of Kansas students, The Farm's founder, Stephen Gaskin, was a teaching assistant at the University of San Francisco and many of his followers studied there or at nearby schools, and the original members of Twin Oaks came from various colleges throughout America. In addition to being college-educated, almost all of the members of these three communes came from middle class families, and evidence suggests that all members were white. According to historian Timothy Miller, the predominately white, middle class membership of countercultural communes was not a result of explicit classism or racism. Rather, Miller attributes these communes' largely white, middle-class populations to non-whites' difficulty to relate to the anti-materialist countercultural critique. Highlighting this point, Miller said:

The standard explanation of this demographic fact is that the counterculturalists were divesting themselves of materialism, or all the meaningless goods with which they had been brought up, whereas nonwhites typically had been social have-nots, without all of those meaningless goods, and were searching for a share of the material good light that they had never enjoyed.⁴²

⁴¹ Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 10.

⁴² Miller, *The 60s Communes*, 171; See also Angela A. Aidala and Benjamin D. Zablocki, "The Communes of the 1970s: Who Joined and Why?" *Marriage and Family Review* 17 (1991):87-116.

It is important to note that although the majority of countercultural communards were white, the predominately white counterculture and nonwhites were not necessarily in opposition. Paul Krassner, member of the countercultural activist group, the Diggers, stated:

Hippies, black people, Viet Cong – they’re all expendable...for a long while, there has been a certain resentment by blacks and Hispanics – who never had a choice – toward hippies who had decided to forego middle-class society. But now they’re increasingly learning how much they have in common, including the enemy: coercive authority...what blacks and hippies and Vietnamese share is a goal: to have power over their own lives.⁴³

The fact that many counterculturalists advocated racial equality and some had been civil rights activists demonstrates some countercultural support for black activism. During the urban unrest in 1967, the Diggers collected and donated food to aid the victims of violence in Newark and many hippies and Black Panthers comingled in places such as People’s Park near Berkeley, California. Although some African Americans endorsed counterculturalists, a comment by a Black Panther member suggests that other African Americans may not have viewed the counterculture as favorably. This Black Panther member exclaimed:

Black brothers, stop vamping on the hippies, they are not your enemy. Your enemy, right now, is the white racist pigs who support this corrupt system. We have not quarrel with the hippies. Leave them alone or the Black Panther Party will deal with you!⁴⁴

These statements indicate that although the white counterculture and African Americans may not have been adversaries, the rapport between these two groups is, indeed,

⁴³ Paul Krassner, “The Birth of the Yippie Conspiracy,” in *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade* edited by Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert, 411-416, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984.

⁴⁴ “Warning to So-Called ‘Paper Panthers,’ *Black Panther*, September, 14, 1968, 10.

complicated. It is my hope that future studies will further explore this rapport and thus, contribute to a more thorough understanding of the relationship between white counterculturalists and African American civil rights and Black Power activists.

Ultimately, utilizing a gendered analytical lens and feminist framework to examine Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks, this study reconsiders the common association made between the counterculture and gender freedom. Chapter two's examination of labor arrangements in communes will argue that meanings of masculinity were recreated within the context of rural communes but they often rested upon traditional assumptions about male physical dominance. Chapter two also suggests that Twin Oaks' incorporation of a facet of mainstream America – structure – ironically helped its objective of liberation. Chapter three's analysis of sexual relationships at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks will demonstrate that the countercultural vision of sexual freedom was important to male communards' masculine identities. However, as this chapter will also indicate, sexual relationships at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks tended to objectify women and perpetuate conventional notions about male sexual dominance. Overall, this study shows that gender roles in countercultural communes were more complex than the current dichotomized debate suggests: the extent of gender progressivism not only varied *between* different communes but also, between men and women *within* the same commune.

CHAPTER TWO

Economics and Divisions of Labor at Communes

The context in which *A Walk on the Moon* takes place is that of post-World War II America, a historical period often referred to as the “the age of abundance,” “the affluent society,” “the era of mass consumerism,” or “the leisure society.”¹ The film captures this postwar cultural context well: the Kantrowitz’s, like many other white nuclear families of this era, jump into their automobiles, depart from their comfortable suburban homes, and quickly arrive at the rural resort where they will spend their summer vacations. This resort is a blatant symbol of this postwar culture, with its endless leisure activities, daily visits from vendors selling items from blouses to various snacks, and regular announcements over the campground loudspeaker promoting consumption of these items.

The irony in the film is that despite access to leisure activities and goods that abound, the Kantrowitz’s are not satiated. It is apparent that the family craves something more, something that this postwar capitalist boom does not merely fail to provide but, in fact, quite proactively inhibits – liberation. The extensive time Marty miserably spends at work as, in his daughter’s words, “a slave to the Establishment,” prohibits him from enjoying any of the perks of the so-called postwar “leisure society.” Pearl, bored with the confines of domesticity, dabbles in the sexual revolution of the time by having an extramarital affair. However, Pearl realizes firsthand the truth behind the second wave

¹ Brink Lindsey, *The Age of Abundance: How Prosperity Transformed America’s Politics and Culture*, New York: HarperBusiness, 2008.

feminist assertion that more sex does not necessarily result in female emancipation; her responsibilities as a mother and wife redirect her to her domestic reality where she says, “her most important decision in any given week is whether or not to go to the A&P or Waldbaums.”

This chapter explores labor in the American counterculture, particularly its communes, and asks whether communes offered the freedom that many Americans, such as the Kantrowitz’s, longed for. Through an examination of labor dynamics at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks, this chapter considers whether communes, whose members rejected the mainstream nuclear family, also rejected the gender roles characteristic of such families – the providing husband, father, and capitalist worker and the homemaking wife and mother. In reference to countercultural communards, historian Timothy Miller said, “they saw themselves as the people of zero, the vanguard who would build a new society on the ruins of the old, corrupt one.”² But were the communards of Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks the “vanguard” that built new gender norms on “the ruins of the old ones?”

Labor Systems in Countercultural Communes

The members of Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks scorned capitalism and its interconnected exploitative, gluttonous consumerism. As a result, these

² For more about the new society the counterculture envisioned see Timothy Leary, “The Declaration of Evolution,” *East Village Other*, May 1968 (online access: http://www.erowid.org/culture/characters/leary_timothy/leary_timothy_declaration.shtml); Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values*, xiv.

counterculturalists were devoted to subsistence living and only consumed what was absolutely necessary to survive. Oftentimes, this mode of living meant that they constructed their communal shelters themselves and produced their own food. Because they hated standardization, which was characteristic of modern American life, members of some communes, such as Drop City and The Farm, and, initially, Twin Oaks, were reluctant to formally organize the communal labor necessary for subsistence living.

Due to its members' distaste for structure, Twin Oaks originally lacked formal methods for managing communal labor. Kat Kinkade, founder of Twin Oaks explained, "We wanted to have a free, unstructured time of just doing what we pleased."³

After just a month, Twin Oakers noticed that this laissez-faire stance on labor perpetuated inefficiency, exploitation, and inequality. For example, the community realized that the most unpleasant tasks were either left incomplete or were unfairly executed by the same individual who felt that if he or she did not complete the task then no one would. Kat Kinkade said, "that was the first sign of difficulty – someone was exploited because he didn't like to complain."⁴

In order to put an end to this unequal distribution of labor, Twin Oaks adopted a formal labor credit system inspired by that which psychologist B.F. Skinner imagined in his fictional novel *Walden Two*.⁵ A labor credit was defined as a "degree of

³ Kinkade, 40.

⁴ "Labor Credits," *Leaves of Twin Oaks* no. 8 (December 1968), published in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune*, 55.

⁵ Twin Oaks' definition of a labor credit was borrowed from Skinner. Twin Oaks agreed with Skinner that the more pleasurable a member considered his or her work to be, the fewer credits the member would be granted. Whereas Twin Oaks had labor clerics to ensure that all work, pleasurable or not, was completed, Skinner did not have a specific system that would organize labor. Thus, in Skinner's utopia, if no members considered a

unpleasantness” and one credit equaled one hour of work. Hence, the more unpleasant the task or the more time it required, the more credits it received. The labor credit system required each person to complete various amounts of credits per week, depending on community needs. If much work needed to be done one week, one was required to perform fifty labor credits by that week’s end. On the other hand, if there was less work to do, fewer labor credits would be asked of each person. Members filled out sheets on which they voiced the extent to which they considered the listed tasks pleasant. Community labor clerics, who were responsible for monitoring labor distribution, then created schedules for each person based on his or her preferences. If the labor cleric assigned a member work that he or she believed to be undesirable, the member received more credits, which meant that he or she could fulfill labor credit requirements in a shorter amount of time.⁶ Since labor clerics ensured that all work was completed, individuals generally completed work that they thought satisfying or, at least, tolerable, and all members fulfilled equal amounts of credits, Twin Oaks’ hoped that this labor credit system would facilitate economic efficiency and equality within the community.

The Division of Labor at Countercultural Communes

My investigation demonstrates that rural living freed men at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks, not only from their contemporary gender roles but also, from mainstream

particular task to be pleasurable enough to execute, then the task could have been left incomplete. However, Skinner’s use of technology eliminated this issue, for technology took care of the tasks that humans wished to avoid. See B.F. Skinner, *Walden Two*.

⁶ “Labor Credits,” 55; Kinkade, *Walden Two Experiment*, 44.

meanings of masculinity. The labor that the communal context required allowed men to define masculinity in ways that diverged from the mainstream. However, these new definitions of masculinity failed to challenge traditional ideas about male dominance and contributed to the maintenance of women's conventional domestic roles.

The counterculture's aversion to capitalism and the nuclear family provided male communards with some freedom from conventional gender roles. Due to their staunch anti-capitalism, communards generally avoided employment in the public sphere.⁷ One of the consequences of the counterculture's hostility towards capitalism was that male communards were liberated from their contemporary roles as full-time, nine-to-five, wage-earning, employees. Since male communards did not earn wages, their responsibilities as financial providers were eliminated. Highlighting this point, a countercultural communitarian, Jud Jerome said:

One of the reasons I moved to a country commune was to write – especially poetry. I wanted to free myself to write what I wanted to write, without professional demand...nothing felt cleaner than liberation from my paycheck.⁸

Male communards' emancipation from professional work often coincided with their freedom from mainstream expectations of professional male appearance. Men in communes did not have to wear the perfectly pressed, button-down shirts and slacks that mainstream men were required to wear. Instead, men in communes could dress casually and comfortably in jeans, overalls, cotton t-shirts, and flannels.

⁷ In rare cases of financial desperation, communards did seek temporary employment in mainstream America.

⁸ Jud Jerome, "Middle Aged Men in Communes," *Communities: Journal of Cooperative Living* no. 28 (September-October 1977), 10.

As a result of the counterculture's aversion to the nuclear family, many communards, especially those of Drop City and Twin Oaks, chose not to marry. This choice freed some male communards from their contemporary roles as husbands and fathers. Though this choice did free some female communards from their traditional roles as wives, it did not, as this study will later show, free them from their traditional domestic duties.

Although liberated from the mainstream notion that the breadwinning husband and father epitomized true masculinity, a different image of masculinity took shape within the communal context, which reaffirmed traditional presumptions about male physical strength. Instead of seeking employment in the capitalist world in order to provide their families with money to purchase the latest products, male communards carried out manual labor in order to provide communes with basic resources pertinent to survival – housing and food. The formation of this countercultural vision of masculinity suggests that while male counterculturalists frequently questioned mainstream society, they often did so without undoing mainstream assumptions about male dominance.

In all of the communes under consideration, male communards were responsible for providing needed communal shelter. For example, men constructed the flamboyantly colored domes in which Drop City's members were famously known to reside. According to Drop City member, Gene Bernofsky, Drop City's domes originated when fellow member, Clark Richert, first saw these structures on a Colorado farm. Intrigued by the dome, Clark asked the farmer for advice on building one at the commune. The farmer told Clark that his dome was modeled after architect Buckminster Fuller's plan for futuristic dome dwellings. The same day that Clark encountered the farmer, Gene came

across a post on a telephone pole advertising a lecture by Buckminster Fuller at the University of Colorado. “Recognizing that the cosmic forces were coming together,” Clark and Gene attended Fuller’s lecture, obtained instructions on dome building, and sought to replicate Fuller’s structures at Drop City.⁹

Before they could build the domes, the men at Drop City needed to gather the necessary supplies. Because they believed that Americans were wasteful, Drop City constructed their domes with recycled materials found in junkyards. Highlighting this belief, Gene Bernofsky said:

This area’s poor, but the country’s so rich that even here it’s full of stuff that nobody else is using. If you went down to Mexico you wouldn’t find good junk like this just laying around...but right now there’s grand pickings...a lot of people are just glad for us to take it away.¹⁰

Junkyard scrounging was a job that Drop City’s male members did. Former Drop City member, Peter Rabbit, recalled an instance in which male communards, “the Wop,” “Luke Cool,” “Lard,” and himself went to a junkyard in Trinidad, Colorado to scrounge for old car tops to use for their domes.¹¹ Rabbit said, “we chopped out about twenty car tops in the junkyard swelter and reflection, working our asses off.” After they uncovered the proper materials, they then began constructing the domes. Former Drop City member, John Curl’s, comment regarding his first morning at the commune illuminates the male-

⁹ Matthews, 64.

¹⁰ Curl, 34.

¹¹ Drop City members were all given nicknames upon their arrival to the commune. While I do not know “Wop’s” name, “Luke Cool’s” real name was, in fact, Luke, but his last name is unknown. “Lard” was Drop City founder, Clark Richert’s, nickname.

exclusive nature of communal dome building; he explained, “all the guys went to build the domes, it was hard labor.”¹²

Although the male-exclusive nature of dome building at Drop City augmented traditional ideas about men’s physical superiority, the proud manner in which Rabbit and Curl discussed their labor also hints at the evolution of a newfound sense of masculinity within communes. Rabbit appears to extol his ability to chop multiple car tops in high temperatures. Likewise, it seems as though Curl was satisfied with his participation in the arduous labor of dome building. Additionally, Jud Jerome suggested the development of a new image of masculinity in communes when he said, “But here I was, mainly body – a washer of dishes, chopper of wood, hauler of manure.”¹³ Thus, whereas mainstream men may have boasted about their professional work, countercultural men, like Rabbit, Curl, and Jerome, bragged about their manual labor.

Just as men at Drop City built the commune’s domes, men at The Farm were responsible for carrying out the physical labor necessary for communal livelihood. Men built The Farm’s plumbing system, wired its electricity, and provided for its carpentry needs.¹⁴ During one of the rare times when The Farm was in desperate need of money, its male members also helped out at a construction site in Nashville. Describing such a time, former Farm member, Ellen Piburn said:

¹² Rabbit, 44; Curl, 46.

¹³ Jud Jerome, 12.

¹⁴ Stephen Gaskin, *Hey Beatnik*, 11.

When I was nineteen and had lived on the Farm for about a year, my fiancé was working construction in Nashville to earn money for the community...it was fun living in the park. There wasn't much work besides preparing food for the meals, so I spent much of the day in the water.¹⁵

The Farm's temporary work at a nearby Tennessee saw mill highlights the way in which male communards reaffirmed conventional meanings of masculinity, even as they rejected work in corporate America. Specifically, only The Farm's male members assisted Tennessee local, Homer Sanders, with manual labor at his sawmill. As former Farm member, David Friedlander, said, "Somehow I was elected straw boss of this crew of ten or so long-haired, bearded men. Plus we had Robin, Homer's teenage son, and a close neighbor, Scott Shrader, also helped out." Friedlander proceeded to explain that The Farm's agreement to temporary labor at the sawmill evolved into a long-term educational experience for the commune's men. He said:

Sanders Lumber Company became a backwoods vo-tech school for all us middle-class white boys with ponytails and beards. I learned how to drive a logging truck with a dual rear-axle, how to cut trees and snake logs out with a tractor, how to build with oak, and how to basically survive in the woods.¹⁶

Friedlander's and Shrader's statements also illustrate the manner in which male communards simultaneously challenged dominant ideas regarding masculinity. First and foremost, by growing long hair and beards, these male communards disrupted the image of the well-kept, professional, mainstream man. Also, instead of working in an office like many mainstream men, these male communards toiled in a sawmill. Additionally, while

¹⁵ Fike, 35; It is significant to note that while The Farm's men were working at this construction site, communal women, like Ellen, executed domestic tasks such as meal preparation.

¹⁶ Fike, 29.

mainstream men drove their Ford automobiles and lived in the suburbs, these men drove tractors and resided in the woods.

Just as in Drop City and at The Farm, men at Twin Oaks tended to control the community's manual labor. When the community purchased its first chainsaw, the firewood manager divided the work so that the men, or what the firewood manager called the "stronger people," sawed the wood while the "less-muscled" women transported the firewood to the house.¹⁷ The firewood manager's decision to divide the labor in this manner was problematic for multiple reasons. First, Twin Oaks had an apprenticeship rule that required skilled members to teach unskilled members the proper way to complete certain tasks. Thus, according to the apprenticeship rule, the firewood manager and the men who sawed the wood should have shown the women how to use the chainsaw. Since neither the firewood manager nor the men did so, they violated the community's apprenticeship rule. The manager and men's failure to show women how to saw firewood also fostered a male monopoly over the community's manual labor and thereby, reinforced a conventional sexual division of labor within Twin Oaks. Additionally, the firewood manager's use of descriptive words such as "stronger" and "less-muscled" indicates that he did not object to assumptions regarding male physical dominance.

Men at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks were responsible for these labor-intensive tasks and it was also their duty to obtain food for the commune as a whole. In every instance in which John Curl and Peter Rabbit's accounts of Drop City mentioned

¹⁷ "Winter Work," *Leaves of Twin Oaks* no. 4 (January 1968) published in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune*, 34.

hunting, only men were said to hunt.¹⁸ John Curl recollected a time when Peter Rabbit requested that John join him saying, “We need to get some meat on the table. After lunch I am going rabbit hunting, want to come?”¹⁹ Peter Rabbit’s account also included hunting experiences he shared with his fellow male communards. In immense detail, Peter described one particular elk hunting experience he had with another communard, Ivan. While the two men waited for an elk to appear that they could shoot, they chanted, “we are men, we are hungry, we want to eat meat. Brother deer, sister deer, please come to this place and join us.”²⁰

While male communards at Drop City hunted animals for food, male members of The Farm harvested crops in order to nourish the commune’s vegetarian population. The Farm’s commitment to vegetarianism was inspired by the members’ shared disgust with the evident exploitation that characterized mainstream capitalist America. Demonstrating this ideology, The Farm’s founder, Stephen Gaskin said, “We decided to be farmers for a clean way to make a living - to interact with something that didn’t rip off a bunch of other folks and didn’t depend on any social position.”²¹ The irony of The Farm’s Farming Crew was that it actually depended upon premises regarding men’s positions of dominance. As men at The Farm asserted, male control of The Farming Crew was “the way it ought to be...that’s why the dude gets to operate the machinery because he doesn’t squash anybody.”²²

¹⁸ Accounts by female members of Drop City have not been uncovered. In fact, when Mark Matthews sought an interview with JoAnn Bernofsky, she refused.

¹⁹ Curl, 48.

²⁰ Rabbit, 77-78.

²¹ Gaskin, *Hey Beatnik*, 14.

²² Gaskin, *Hey Beatnik*, 29.

References to women in accounts of Drop City by male members, John Curl and Peter Rabbit, not only indicate that a gendered division of labor was maintained in the commune but also, that male communards did not contest women's conventional roles as domestic caretakers. In almost every instance in which Curl and Rabbit mentioned women, the men associated them with homemaking and caretaking. For example, discussing his arrival to Drop City, Curl noted seeing Peter Rabbit's wife, Poly Ester, exiting the kitchen to dump water outside. In another instance, Curl mentioned that when he and Gene took a break from dome building, they entered the kitchen and received hugs from female communards Jo and Frinki.²³ John Curl also explained that Gene's wife, Jo Ann, rang a bell outside of the kitchen door when dinner was prepared. Additionally, Curl described female communard, Crayola, as "the mother hen of Drop City, always nice, always kind, and a good mom. But she didn't seem interested in much beyond her kids, a Dropper with the imagination of a secretary."²⁴ By characterizing Crayola as a "mother hen" and a "good mom," Curl placed emphasis upon her maternal qualities. Curl's use of descriptive words such as "nice" and "kind" reinforced a tradition that associated women with these personality traits. Finally, Curl perpetuated conventional gender stereotypes by comparing Crayola to a secretary, which was a job that mainstream society considered "women's work."

Peter Rabbit similarly described women in a manner that strengthened traditional gender stereotypes. One example included an incident when male communard, Larry

²³ For Curl's mention of Poly Ester dumping water see Curl, 35; For Curl's mention of Jo Ann in the kitchen see Curl, 39; "Jo" was Drop City founder, Jo Ann Bernofsky's nickname; Poly Ester's and Frinki's real names are unknown.

²⁴ For Curl's mention of Jo Ann ringing kitchen bell see Curl, 77; For Curl's quote describing Crayola see Curl, 84; Crayola's real name is unknown.

Liard, cut himself while slicing a car top. The woman who managed the junkyard nursed Larry's wound. Peter stated, "She did a fine job doctoring his cuts. She got all soft and feminine and spent the rest of the day serving us lemonade and donuts and stuff." Again, in this case, men, Larry and Peter, carried out the labor-intensive task of chopping car tops to be used for dome construction. As was the case with John Curl's account, the woman in Peter's account was associated with caregiving by "doctoring" Larry's cuts, cooking by "serving Larry and Peter lemonade and donuts," and traditional female traits, such as "softness" and "femininity." As with the woman at the junkyard, Peter associated female communitarian, Jo Ann, with caregiving, cleaning, and traditionally feminine traits. As he noted, "She was quiet and sensitive and worked very hard at taking care of her family. It seemed like every day she was washing diapers."²⁵

The Farm, particularly its male leader, Stephen Gaskin, explicitly stressed that women's domestic and maternal roles were important to the commune's livelihood. In The Farm magazine, *Hey Beatnik*, Gaskin expressed his belief that "woman should maintain a tidy home for her family and, more importantly, her children."²⁶ Former Farm member, Joan McCabe's experience living with nearly fifty members suggests that women adhered to Gaskin's conventional gender ideology. Joan said:

The women had to divide up duties - baby-sitting, cooking, cleaning, along with the twice-a-week mammoth laundry run. One woman took care of the little kids and another would take care of the older kids. One woman would clean the house and one would cook.²⁷

²⁵ For quote regarding junkyard manager see Rabbit, 45; For quote regarding Jo Ann see Rabbit, 47.

²⁶ Gaskin, *Hey Beatnik*, 80.

²⁷ Fike, 114.

Former Farm member, Rupert Fike's, description of the communal kitchen further echoed this perspective. Fike stated, "you had to scramble to keep from getting run over by sweating women yelling 'hot stuff!' as they carried large pots of hot beans from the stove to the counter."²⁸

The Farm's midwifery network, led by Stephen Gaskin's wife, Ina May, reinforced associations between women and motherhood. The Farm's midwifery network originated with the birth of baby Anne in the late 1960s. While in Michigan on the Caravan tour, Gaskin's follower, Cara, went into labor five weeks early. Ina May Gaskin, with the help of other Caravan women, aided Cara in the delivery of her baby, Anne. When Anne was born, she was blue and not breathing. Stephen Gaskin breathed oxygen into Anne's lungs and revived her. This miracle motivated many of Gaskin's followers, all female, to establish a midwifery network on The Farm.

At the same time that The Farm's midwifery network maintained links between women and motherhood, it also represented a critique of mainstream society comparable to and different than that of male communards. As male communards denounced the mainstream professional world, women at The Farm challenged a part of this world – the male-dominated, medical establishment. The Farm's female midwives sought to take control of childbirth away from male doctors and placed it in their own hands. Elaborating on this, Cara, who later became a midwife said, "delivering a baby had put us into a level of taking care of business for ourselves that we hadn't been into previously, and we knew we didn't want to go back to the old way of having someone else do it for

²⁸ For Joan McCabe's quote see Fike, 114; For Fike's quote see Fike, 66.

us.”²⁹ Further, male communards’ farming, hunting, and recycling and midwives’ support for natural birthing, illustrate their similar desire to reclaim nature, which they believed mainstream society jeopardized. However, female midwifery at The Farm demonstrates women’s eagerness to empower themselves by challenging male doctors’ control over female production.

Members of The Farm appreciated midwives for their influence over childbirth within the commune. Stephen Gaskin often lionized the community’s midwives and one male communard also said:

One thing you did not do on the Farm was to intimidate a pregnant woman. They shared a special relationship with the midwives, one of absolute trust, and the midwives were the community’s ultimate power figures...they commanded respect and set the tone for how a lady should be treated.³⁰

These instances of male respect for women are noteworthy, considering women were typically expected to defer to men in mainstream society. Nevertheless, a different perspective emerges when one evaluates these men’s comments alongside those of some second wave feminists. In her landmark work, *The Dialectic of Sex*, Shulamith Firestone, argued:

The heart of women’s oppression is her childbearing and childrearing roles...women’s reproductive biology accounted for her original and continued oppression...TO BE WORSHIPPED IS NOT FREEDOM; FOR WORSHIP STILL TAKES PLACE IN SOMEONE ELSE’S HEAD AND THAT HEAD BELONGS TO MAN.³¹

²⁹ Ina May Gaskin, *Spiritual Midwifery*, Tennessee: The Book Publishing Company, 1975, 6-7; Gaskin, *Hey Beatnik*, 87.

³⁰ Fike, 101-102.

³¹ Shulamith Firestone, *A Dialectic of Sex: A Case for a Feminist Revolution*, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 81-83.

Hence, while midwifery was certainly a personal commitment for some women at The Farm, through which they sought to empower themselves, it is also feasible that male praise pushed some otherwise disinterested women to get involved in midwifery. For these women, whose childrearing roles were influenced by male adulation more than personal choice, “to be worshipped was not freedom.” Furthermore, these women’s childrearing duties, potentially more a result of male persuasion, were, indeed, “the heart of their oppression.” Perhaps some men at The Farm drew upon worship in order to maintain conventional ideas about femininity, ideas that men’s senses of masculinity and dominance within communes rested upon. Overall, it is possible that pressure from men and a desire to please men may have motivated women to become midwives as much as women’s desire for autonomy and control over their bodies.

Before Twin Oaks instated its labor credit system, many of the community’s women were relegated to domestic tasks similar to those carried out by the women of Drop City and The Farm. As noted, Twin Oaks was initially a more loosely structured commune that allowed members to freely and leisurely complete labor duties. Under this laissez-faire labor system, Twin Oaks’ female communards found themselves constantly fulfilling domestic tasks. For example, former Twin Oaks’ member, Carrie, explained that as she worked strenuously in the kitchen and house, Twin Oaks’ male members “worked at projects that appealed to them, they built a work table, and put up some shelves in a storage barn, experimented with rammed earth, built a swimming dock.”³² Furthermore, Kat Kinkade described a time when she observed Naomi “doing morning kitchen, fixing supper, and doing the late night dishes” while male members “drove

³² Kat Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 40-41.

tractors, scraped the cow yards, leveled the volleyball courts, worked in the automobile shops...and virtually lived outdoors.”³³

An article in the Twin Oaks’ community journal regarding a decline in food quality further indicates that a conventional sexual stratification of labor was the norm at Twin Oaks. During periods of financial desperation, the community required its members to work outside of the community in order meet Twin Oaks’ financial needs. Describing a period when some members worked outside of Twin Oaks for additional financial support, the community journal noted:

As the outside work crew got larger, community work suffered a drop in quality. Most noticeable was the drop in the food standard. During one week when all the women were either employed or sick in bed, inexperienced men had to do the best they could with lunches and suppers.³⁴

When men fulfilled domestic duties, they deviated from convention, but the fact that the journal described men as “inexperienced” and claimed that food quality was inferior when men cooked, suggests that meal preparation by men was a rare occurrence.

Structure and Gender Progressivism in Communes

After Twin Oaks adopted its labor credit system in the fall of 1967, the division of labor in the commune, though still conventional, became more progressive, especially compared to the divisions of labor found in both mainstream society and in other

³³ Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 39-40.

³⁴ “We Get Outside Jobs,” *Leaves of Twin Oaks* no. 6 (April, 1968) published in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune*, 43.

communes, such as Drop City and The Farm.³⁵ As mentioned, Twin Oaks' labor credit system was a response to noticeable labor inequity. It is important to point out that this labor credit system was a response to labor inequality more generally and not gender inequality more specifically. As former Twin member, Batya Weinbaum later said, "Twin Oaks was not initially socialist or feminist in intent."³⁶

Though it did not consciously seek to overturn the conventional sexual division of labor that had originally prevailed at Twin Oaks, the community's labor credit system which, for the most part, allowed members to perform the tasks that they most preferred, facilitated a degree of gender role unorthodoxy not found in either Drop City or The Farm. Under Twin Oaks' labor system, both women and men carried out tasks not historically associated with their sexes. For example, Kat Kinkade said that some men indicated on their labor preference sheets that they enjoyed "female tasks" such as mending, while some women preferred to be assigned to "masculine tasks" such as construction. In his account of his two-week visit to Twin Oaks in August of 1970, Robert Houriet described a time when he and Twin Oaks' member, Rudy, washed the community's dishes after breakfast. Houriet said, "It's one chore he [Rudy] likes to sign up for." Houriet also observed women participating in manual labor on the farm, driving tractors, and shoveling manure, jobs commonly carried out by men in both mainstream society and at other communes, such as at Drop City and The Farm.

³⁵ Twin Oaks adopted its labor credit system just after three weeks of settling on the land.

³⁶ Batya Weinbaum, "Twin Oaks: A Feminist Looks at Indigenous Socialism in the United States," in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, edited by Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, 155-167, New York: Schocken Books, 1984, 161.

Kat Kinkade's mention of female member, Shannon's, mechanical lessons further suggests that Twin Oaks' labor credit system did not only promote an untraditional division of labor but also, that some women enjoyed breaking out of their conventional labor roles. Kat Kinkade explained:

Shannon attacked the job with enthusiasm and dedication. She knows she has to overcome the mechanical vacuum that her typical female upbringing has left her with...it is partly for that reason she enjoys working with cars.³⁷

Similar to its labor credit system, Twin Oaks' communal childrearing program also fomented unconventional gender roles, for it distanced women from their traditional association with caregiving and maternalism. Nevertheless, as with the community's labor credit system, the childrearing program did not consciously seek to encourage progressive gender roles. Rather, the overall objective of Twin Oak's communal childrearing program was to undermine the possessive ties that often characterized parent-child relationships. Explaining Twin Oaks' anti-possessiveness stance, former member, Marnie Oats, stated, "The whole idea of possessiveness or private property is the antithesis of community. We do not own property, or money, or people."³⁸

Initially, Twin Oaks excluded children from its community, believing it was too financially unstable to properly care for children. As Kat Kinkade noted, "Twin Oaks needed some time to get on its economic feet without the drain of nonproducers...the

³⁷ For Kinkade see "Equal Work for Women," in *Leaves of Twin Oaks* no. 3 (November 1967) published in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune*, 28; Houriet comment on Rudy see Robert Houriet, *Getting Back Together*, 292; Houriet comment on women executing manual labor see Houriet, 296; Kinkade comment on Shannon see "Auto Repair," *Leaves of Twin Oaks* no. 14 (April 1971) published in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune*, 99.

³⁸ Within the Twin Oaks community, everything, including property, income, clothing, and even children, were shared; Marnie Oats, "Twin Oaks," *Women: A Journal of Liberation* no. 2 (1972), 29.

problem is supporting little children in a fledgling organization that can barely support itself.”³⁹ However, around 1973, when Carrie discovered she was pregnant with her daughter, Bonnie, the community embarked upon a plan for its communal childrearing program. In order to achieve this objective, the program adopted Skinner’s idea for housing children separately from their parents. Within this children’s housing facility, children would be cared for by volunteer “metas,” men and women, biological parents and not. According to the community, “metas” not only discouraged parent-child possessiveness but also, made children feel that “they are loved and taken care of. That there is a lot of physical and spiritual love that goes on.”⁴⁰

The fact that men, traditionally disassociated from caregiving, were community caregivers demonstrates that Twin Oaks’ childrearing program contributed to unconventional gender roles. Moreover, the physical separation of a mother and her child in separate living quarters, in addition to the fact that mothers were not the sole caregivers to their children, also promoted gender progressivism within Twin Oaks. Sharing caregiving responsibilities with the community allowed women to pursue activities aside from the domestic and maternal activities frequently prescribed to them by mainstream society. Commenting on Twin Oaks’ member, Jenny, another communitard said:

Because Jenny found it difficult to do other things she wanted, she stopped nursing [her son] Thrush at two months. Shawn took over the nursings, feeding Thrush cows’ milk through a device which enables the baby to suckle at Shawn’s breast.⁴¹

³⁹ Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 140, 145.

⁴⁰ “Twin Oaks and Little Folks,” *Communities: A Journal of Cooperative Living* no. 9 (July-August 1974), 12.

⁴¹ Twin Oaks and Little Folks,” 11.

Similarly, regarding another Twin Oaks' member, Rosa, in 1973, founder Kat Kinkade said, "Rosa loved her baby dearly, but she was pleased to be free of constant childcare."⁴²

If communal childrearing did not exist at Twin Oaks, these women would have been primarily responsible for their children; this could have not only hindered them from exploring interests beyond caregiving but also, reinforced a conventional sexual division of labor that emphasized female maternalism.

Whereas Twin Oaks' childrearing program had a liberating effect on some women, other women felt that the program disempowered them and specifically, stripped them of their maternal authority. Freddie Ann and Sara's personal battles with the community's childrearing program demonstrate this point. Freddie Ann decided to leave Twin Oaks because she was discontented with her lack of control over her daughter's education and care. She stated, "I want to be able to teach my kids what I believe."

Similarly unhappy with the limited influence she had over her child, Sara asserted:

Let people feed their kids meat, or not feed them meat, circumcise them or not...one of the reasons I left had to do with breastfeeding. I was only semi-successful at breast-feeding because of my paranoia over some people's dislike over the mother-child relationship.⁴³

As Freddie Ann and Sara's cases show, the community's childrearing program was double-edged; whereas some women felt liberated by not having to be solely responsible for their children, others felt that the system weakened their influence over their children's upbringing. Freddie Ann was not permitted to instill her personal values within her own daughter but rather, was pressured to teach her daughter communal values

⁴² Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 124.

⁴³ "Leaving Twin Oaks," 20-23.

that she did not always advocate. The community's staunch opposition to parent-child possessiveness caused Sara discomfort when breast-feeding her child. The instances in which Sara was unable to breastfeed because of communal pressure for non-possessiveness were instances in which she felt her maternal instincts were denied. In the Twin Oaks community, both Freddie Ann and Sara were unable to fulfill what they believed were their maternal identities.

While male members did care for the community's children, as the presence of male "metas" demonstrates, communal childrearing also eliminated some fathers' accountability to their children and, in doing so, allowed them to define masculinity in different ways. Whereas in mainstream America, to be truly masculine included fatherhood, Batya Weinbaum explained that in Twin Oaks, "fathers do not even have to be present to care for children since the community cares for the children collectively."⁴⁴ For example, while Carrie was pregnant with Bonnie, the father, Brian, began a sexual relationship with another female member, Marjorie. Due to his involvement in another relationship, Brian was not often present after Bonnie was born. As a result, the communal childrearing program assisted Carrie with Bonnie's care. At the same time that it allowed for the formation of new meanings of masculinity, meanings that did not always include fatherhood, Twin Oaks' childrearing program's tendency to release men of their paternal duties could have also unintentionally reinforced the conventional presumption that women were natural caregivers.

As with Twin Oaks' labor credit system and communal childrearing program, the community's Planner-Manager government structure also fostered untraditional gender

⁴⁴ Weinbaum, 164.

roles. Overall, Twin Oaks' three Planners, who were appointed by outgoing Planners when their eighteen-month term reached its conclusion, were responsible for appointing managers, settling disputes among managers, and establishing community ideology. Managers were responsible for a very specific area of community life, such as hammocks or farming, among many other possible areas. The decisions these Managers made directly affected the daily lives of community members.⁴⁵ The fact that female member, Kat Kinkade, was one of Twin Oaks' first Planners testifies to the community's unconventional attitudes about gender. Additionally, men and women generally occupied the community's Managerships equally. When Twin Oaks included women in governing positions, the commune departed from mainstream society where women were less likely to occupy positions of authority.

Under Twin Oaks' labor credit system, work that mainstream society traditionally considered "women's" work, and unworthy of compensation, received labor credits. For example, when Rudy and Robert Houriet volunteered to wash morning dishes, his labor was rewarded with credits. Similarly, the "metas" who rotated shifts caring for children were also granted labor credits for their nurturing work. Additionally, the community even administered labor credits to pregnant women, believing that the nine months of pregnancy were extremely taxing.⁴⁶ When Twin Oaks paid for these domestic and maternal duties, they unexpectedly forged progressive gender roles, especially in contrast to mainstream society where "women's" tasks were not considered legitimate work worthy of payment.

⁴⁵ "Proposal for Government," *Walden Pool Newsletter* (June 1966), published in *A Journal of a Walden Two Community*, 6. Kat Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 50.

⁴⁶ Weinbaum, 163.

The gender roles that evolved at Twin Oaks after the group instated its labor credit system in the fall of 1967 were not welcomed by all of the community's members. Evidence suggests that some male members were opposed to the unconventional division of labor. For example, the community newsletter advised members to be aware of "the prejudice in the minds of most men." The newsletter provided examples of such "prejudice," which included a man who questioned "why should I should do women's work when there are women around to do it?" Another man asserted, "True man's work is involved with nature-building, planting, harvesting, brewing, fighting, arguing, and management." Furthermore, Kat Kinkade described a time when a male member, Fred, claimed that she [Kat] was "more use in the kitchen than on the tractor."⁴⁷

Male members who failed to abide by the Twin Oaks Apprenticeship Rule further suggest that men resisted changes in gender roles that some community policies set in motion. As noted, the Apprenticeship Rule stipulated that all members had to explain their work to any members who were interested in learning about such work. The goal of this rule was to create equal opportunity for all members to become skilled at various tasks and to avoid any one member's monopolization of any particular skill.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, there were many cases in which male members were reluctant to abide by this code because they claimed that the time required to train another member would jeopardize efficiency. Batya Weinbaum, labeled this mentality, "the economic efficiency argument," and described those men who advocated it as "those that think that affirmative action is not economically efficient and that investing labor time in teaching

⁴⁷ "What is a Labor Credit?" *Walden House Newsletter* (February, 1966) published in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune*, 3. Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 64-65.

⁴⁸ "Twin Oaks Behavior Code," *A Journal of a Walden Two Commune*, appendix iii.

women construction detracts from reaching other investment goals.” Marnie Oats discussed a time when she was a victim of “economic efficiency supporters.” She explained that while a male member was teaching her construction, “he was anxious to complete the job and pressured me to hurry.”⁴⁹

While some men may have actually been concerned with “economic efficiency,” it could be possible that other men resisted innovative gender roles because they felt that their senses of masculinity were threatened when women partook in “men’s work.” As noted, Jud Jerome claimed that upon joining communes, many men abandoned the only image of masculinity that they had known – that of the breadwinning father and husband and capitalist employee.⁵⁰ As the cases of Drop City and The Farm indicate, in the communal context, a new image of masculinity evolved which compensated for the loss of the old. A male communards’ description of “men’s work” as that which “involved nature-building, planting, harvesting, brewing, arguing, and management” suggests that meanings of masculinity at Twin Oaks compared to those found at Drop City and The Farm. Moreover, Fred’s claim that Kat was “more use in the kitchen than on the tractor” indicates that some men at Twin Oaks developed new meanings of masculinity without contesting assumptions about male dominance and female domesticity. It may be the case that when women began to take on “men’s work” at Twin Oaks, some men felt that their newfound images of masculinity and their customary dominance were in jeopardy. Perhaps these men utilized the “economic efficiency” argument in order to deter women from doing “men’s work” and thus, maintain their new senses of masculinity. Regardless

⁴⁹ Weinbaum, 166. Oats, 28.

⁵⁰ See Jud Jerome, “Middle Aged Men in Communes.”

of their intentions, such preoccupation with economic efficiency not only compromised women's learning experiences but also, made it more challenging for women to gain access to labor traditionally associated with men.

Towards a Feminist Consciousness at Twin Oaks

After its labor credit system was instated in the late-1960s and evolved in the 1970s, Twin Oaks underwent changes, which contributed to the community's modern reputation as a "feminist utopia" or "feminist eco village."⁵¹ When Zena Goldenberg visited Twin Oaks in 1987 she commented on the presence of "a strong, multifaceted, and ongoing women's culture" which was observably and staunchly feminist. Though this culture experienced the most growth during the 1980s, it could be traced back to women's only activities in the 1970s. Such activities included dances, discussion groups, concerts, and parties. Goldenberg explained that the main objective of Twin Oaks' women's culture was female empowerment.⁵² The development of this women's culture at Twin Oaks from the 1970s onward begs the question, why did female communards feel the need to build a feminist consciousness in a community that, from the outset, had

⁵¹ Valerie, "Twin Oaks Community," *Ahimsazine* no. 2 (Fall 1999) <http://ahimsazine.com/arch/twinoaks.html>; Emily Rems, "Thirty-six years ago, one woman dreamed of creating an independent society. Today, her dream is a thriving community that's creating its own feminist culture," *Bust Magazine* (Winter 2003) http://www.twinoaks.org/leaves-of-twinoaks/-leaves-issues/doc_download/11-feminist-ecovillage-bust-magazine.html.

⁵² Zena Goldenberg, "The Power of Feminism at Twin Oaks Community, in *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States*, edited by Wendy Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern, and Marylyn Klee-Hartzell, 256-265, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993, 256.

proclaimed egalitarianism and sought to provide an alternative to mainstream society?

Despite some degree of gender progressivism in the late-1960s and 1970s, conventional gender roles and ideologies persisted within Twin Oaks. Over time, women felt that they needed a feminist women's culture as a result of some male resistance to unconventional divisions of labor and female empowerment, and the community's failure to provide a true alternative to mainstream gender roles.

Statements by some female members at Twin Oaks suggest that the rise of Second Wave Feminism inspired Twin Oaks' female members to critique gender roles and ideologies within the community in the 1970s. In 1973 Kat Kinkade claimed:

Outside society is heavily sexist, and women, in particular, suffer from it. We weren't conscious of this problem when we started the Community, but when Women's Liberation consciousness hit the rest of the nation, Twin Oaks naturally started thinking about it too. We examined our attitudes, and they were not entirely free of sexism.⁵³

According to Kinkade, in this context, women at Twin Oaks realized that male communards were as sexist as mainstream men. She stated, "at Twin Oaks, as elsewhere, the closer a girl came to the standard of beauty, the more she received the attentions of men."⁵⁴ Marnie Oats and another female member, Margaret, also realized that many of Twin Oaks' members tended to assume that women were incompetent in labor fields historically associated with men. As Marnie explained in 1972, "women were not expected to be very competent outside their traditional areas...women had to be very

⁵³ Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 169-170.

⁵⁴ Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 170.

assertive to be noticed.” Echoing Marnie, Margaret said in 1979, “in government we are sensitive to male tendencies to take charge.”⁵⁵

This persistence of sexism at Twin Oaks encouraged women to collaborate and initiate some change. Elaborating on this point, Marnie Oats said in 1972:

When I arrived two years ago [1970], women’s consciousness was very low...As time went on and the community grew, other competent women arrived, women who had had some exposure to women’s liberation. In the fall of 1970 two women returned to Twin Oaks who had left a month before because they found the community too oppressive. They came back with strong views on women, men, and Twin Oaks and they catalyzed a change.⁵⁶

For example, in the early 1970s, women began to thoroughly read and frequently discuss community policy so that their voices were heard at government meetings, which men often dominated.⁵⁷ Margaret explained that Twin Oaks’ women also encouraged one other to fill Planner and Manager positions, in order to rectify male monopolization of these leadership roles. Additionally, according to Margaret, some women developed affirmative action plans in the late-1970s to facilitate women’s entry into “men’s work.” She explained:

One conflict we’ve met is how to achieve affirmative action goals of people working at non-traditional jobs...limited resources make us want to be efficient. But what if efficiency means that a construction job goes to a skilled male instead of a woman who is ready to learn and wants to make a commitment? That would perpetuate the sexism of the larger society. We have resolved this conflict by giving extra weight to the non-sexist ideal...thus the construction crew will continue to apprentice women until the crew is balanced.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Margaret, *Communities* (Fall 1979) cited in Ingrid Komar, *A Documentary Study of the Twin Oaks Community*, Pennsylvania: Norwood Editions, 1983, 186.

⁵⁶ Oats, 30.

⁵⁷ Kinkade, 48.

⁵⁸ Margaret, 185.

⁵⁹ Margaret Oaks, “One Woman’s Choice,” *Communities* (Fall 1980), 45.

While women's collaboration stimulated political changes within the community, the most significant changes occurred within women themselves. Various women's-only spaces and activities comprised women's culture at Twin Oaks. The spaces women carved out for themselves included a tearoom, library, living room, and dormitory. Women also organized several feminist theory, discussion, and support groups, in addition to women's dinners and conferences. Overall, women's culture allowed women to form friendships, build trust, comfortably share personal issues and discuss community problems, consciousness raise, cultivate senses of personal fulfillment and empowerment, and ultimately, execute their own feminist movement within Twin Oaks. Margaret expressed:

For me one of the most reliable sources of support has been my women's group, a weekly gathering of four to seven committed women. We sympathize and strategize. We talk about what's happening in our personal and interpersonal lives. We give a stable support from which to grown and empower ourselves.⁵⁹

In addition, in reference to her experience at the 1978 women's conference, Jane Dandelion said:

The conference was a time of heavy soul-searching...we confronted our futures, listing our personal long-range goals, as well as what we see blocking us from achieving them...and it brought tears for some who recognized for the first time opportunities and relationships lost because patriarchal society had shaped us into something less than our full human potential. One of the most important experiences for me was confronting the issue of power...we broke into small groups to consider what makes people powerful in our own communities—to consider currencies of power...it was liberating to realize that we can all be powerful.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Margaret Oaks, "One Woman's Choice," *Communities* (Fall 1980), 45.

⁶⁰ Jane Dandelion, "Speculum '78: A Look at Ourselves," *Communities* no. 39 (1979), 2-6.

When it began in the 1970s, and especially, when it gained momentum in the 1980s, women's culture, similar to Twin Oaks' labor credit system, was met with resistance from both men and women who were long time members. As women's culture emerged in the 1970s, Kat Kinkade "resented" when women held, what she termed, "speak bitterness meetings," in which they discussed their encounters with male oppression within the community. According to Zena Goldenberg, Kinkade felt that such meetings were unnecessary because women and men had been equal since Twin Oaks originated in 1967. Apparently, Kinkade was not the only individual who expressed disfavor for women's culture, for many men voiced discontent over their exclusion from women's spaces and activities. While some men argued that women's-only events hindered opportunities for men to learn from women, other men claimed that women's-only activities were reverse discrimination.⁶¹

While some men may have genuinely been interested in learning from women, others may have claimed "reverse discrimination" for other reasons. As Robin Morgan asserted in 1970:

The most slanderous evasion of all is that women can oppress men. The basis for this illusion is the isolation of individual relationships from their political context and the tendency of men to see any legitimate challenge to their privilege as persecution.⁶²

As noted, the rise of second wave feminism fostered a greater awareness among women that, despite Twin Oaks' support for egalitarianism, sexism and male dominance were still issues. The feminist nature of women's culture was a means by which women sought to contest persistent sexism and male dominance. Perhaps some of Twin Oaks' male

⁶¹ Goldenberg, 264.

⁶² Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful*, 534.

members complained that women's culture was inequitable in order to hinder women's challenge to the male privilege that lingered even after Twin Oaks adopted its labor credit system.

Although it failed to achieve total gender equality, Twin Oaks' labor credit system was, undeniably, noteworthy. Of the three communes under consideration, Twin Oaks was the only community to acknowledge that communal labor was inequitably distributed among its members. Drop City and The Farm had labor dynamics similar to those that Kat Kinkade observed in Twin Oaks' early years; women at Drop City and The Farm generally fulfilled duties similar to those executed by Carrie at Twin Oaks, such as cooking and housework, while men at Drop City and The Farm executed manual labor similar to that carried out by Twin Oaks' men. Some of Drop City's women expressed dissatisfaction with their labor roles, yet the community failed to address their discontent. For example, Peter Rabbit mentioned an instance when he told female communitarian, Jo Ann, to clean the messy communal kitchen. Jo Ann angrily retaliated against Peter's comment by telling him to clean the kitchen himself.⁶³ Additionally, in his memoir of Drop City, John Curl shared a time when Jo Ann explained to Curl's girlfriend, Patt, that each night the commune's women took turns cooking dinner and cleaning up the kitchen. Patt expressed dissatisfaction with these prescribed domestic roles by questioning why only women were responsible for cooking and cleaning. Patt responded to Jo Ann:

I thought Drop City was different...I don't want to be stuck in the kitchen. I didn't come here for that. All the time I was growing up my mother was groaning about being stuck with the house chores. That's what she fought all her life to get away from and now I'm supposed to think of it as advanced?⁶⁴

⁶³ Rabbit, 48.

⁶⁴ Curl, 85-86.

Despite the fact that labor arrangements were similar in all three communities, and some of Drop City's women clearly objected to such arrangements, only Twin Oaks devised a labor system that altered such arrangements.

In addition, even though gender inequality remained at Twin Oaks, the feminist consciousness that consequently developed was a significant step in a progressive direction. Gender inequality was also found at both Drop City and The Farm, yet a women's culture only took shape at Twin Oaks.⁶⁵ What about Twin Oaks allowed for the rise of this unique women's culture? What circumstances provided female members with the opportunity to enjoy the support, growth, and empowerment that the women's culture provided. Did Twin Oaks possess characteristics that the other sixties communes lacked, which fostered the creation of this culture?

Evidence suggests that although it was imperfect, the gender progressivism that was a byproduct of its structured labor, childrearing, and Planner-Manager government programs, contributed to the evolution of a feminist women's culture at Twin Oaks. These structures permitted some women to occupy leadership positions as Planners and Managers, allowed other women to carry out "men's" work, such as construction, and created opportunities for men to fulfill "feminine" responsibilities, such as childrearing. Although this study has shown that the women's culture at Twin Oaks was a form of resistance to lingering sexism, I also believe that some women's earlier access to and mastery of roles they were traditionally denied, boosted their confidence and encouraged

⁶⁵ Specifically, while traditional gender roles plagued other sixties communes, women in these communes did not organize for change see Kerry Conlon, "Sixties Countercultural Communes: Rejection or Reflection of Conventional Mainstream Gender Norms? Case Studies of Drop City and The Farm," Newark, New Jersey: Rutgers University, 2012.

them to further assert themselves as participants of women's culture. For example, Marnie Oats and Alan Watts described moments when female members developed feelings of competence due to attainment of proficiency in "male trades." Goldenberg similarly observed:

Most women enjoyed performing "men's work"...women experienced deeper and more far-reaching satisfaction in this work, they became self-confident, competent, proud, and strong through such work...many faced fear and total ignorance. However, when they overcame their fears and successfully performed these jobs, women overwhelmingly expressed feeling personally empowered.⁶⁶

Conclusions

This chapter demonstrates that as the simplicity that characterized rural living at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks liberated male communards from mainstream meanings of masculinity, it also these reinforced traditional assumptions about male dominance and female domesticity. Within the context of subsistence living, men did not have to fulfill their contemporary roles as professional employees and breadwinning fathers and husbands. Nevertheless, men generally executed the manual labor that subsistence living required, while women disproportionately carried out domestic duties. Twin Oaks was the only community in which this sexual division of labor was not as pronounced and, as this chapter suggests, this was due to the community's incorporation of structure. Although Twin Oaks' labor credit system and communal childrearing program provided women with access to a degree of gender liberation that only men

⁶⁶ Marnie Oats, ; Alan Watts, "Twin Oaks: So You Think Twin Oaks is a Behaviorist Community?" *Communities: Journal of Cooperative Living* no. 1 (December 1972), 26; Goldenberg, 262.

could enjoy at Drop City and The Farm, these structures were not without limitations. At the same time that these structures allowed some women to break out of their traditional caretaking roles, it also posed parenting issues for other women. Moreover, as some women began to shed their conventional domestic roles and get involved in “men’s” work, male communards resisted, as their impatience with female apprentices and their claims regarding “efficiency” indicate. Male resistance did not stifle gender liberation, but, in fact, stimulated the growth of a women’s culture at Twin Oaks, which confronted gender inequality and helped the community evolve into the more gender equal community that it is today.

CHAPTER THREE

Sexual Relationships, Sexual Ideologies, and Women's Bodies in Communes

Early on in the film, *A Walk on the Moon*, viewers get a glimpse of Pearl and Marty Kantrowitz as they "fool around" in the backseat of their car. The couple's sexual interaction reflects mainstream society's idea of a traditional sexual relationship, that is, sex that occurs between a man and a woman, within the context of marriage. Later in the film, viewers follow Pearl's sexual relationship with a blouse salesman, which would be considered unconventional by mainstream standards due to the fact that Pearl and the salesman are not married. Implicit in Pearl's affair with the blouse salesman is the assumption that countercultural women enjoyed a degree of freedom that mainstream women did not. For example, while Pearl seems bored with her mainstream homemaking duties, she is exhilarated as she and the blouse salesman sway to rock music at the Woodstock festival. Also implicit in Pearl's relationship with the countercultural blouse salesman is the presumption that sexual freedom is synonymous with women's emancipation. Particularly, Pearl appears noticeably liberated as she engages in sexual intercourse with the blouse salesman during various scenes in the film.

While examining the countercultural philosophy of sexual freedom alone may lead to the conclusion that communards were freed from conventional sexual relationships, exploring this vision of liberation beside another of the era – second wave feminism - produces different conclusions. Juxtaposition of these two contemporaneous movements for liberation suggests that the countercultural ethos of sexual liberation did not always liberate women at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks. This is evident in

sexual relationships between men and women at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks, in communards' ideologies about sex, and in each community's positions on reproduction. However, the countercultural ethos of sexual liberation allowed men to revamp meanings of masculinity within the communal context. Ironically, as this chapter shows, the new meanings of masculinity that took shape within these communes still rested upon conventional ideas about male dominance and female sexual passivity and submission.

In some respects, sexual relationships in countercultural communes were untraditional. Since counterculturalists often repudiated the mainstream institution of marriage, sexual encounters often occurred outside of the conventional context of marriage. For example, although Twin Oaks did not completely reject marriage, the community supported individuals' choice to marry or remain single and to be sexually active regardless. Kat Kinkade said, "So far we are sticking to patterns which give the feeling of free choice...we are different from society at large in that we merely practice marriage. Society at large virtually requires it."¹

Twin Oaks was impartial because its members believed that mainstream notions about economics and sex gave rise to many marriages based on feelings of perceived necessity, rather than affection. Twin Oaks asserted that mainstream society perpetuated the fallacious idea that women needed men in order to obtain and maintain economic security. Moreover, Twin Oaks believed that because mainstream society often condemned single women who engaged in sex, some women married in order to legitimize their sexual activity. Kat Kinkade said:

¹ Fairfield, 181.

Marriage is a very weak institution...I don't think the reasons for marriage on the outside have a whole lot to do with interpersonal relationships...they have to do with things like, the need for sex, and a place and time to do it without hassles. Second of all there's a problem of support. Somebody has to make a living and marriage has traditionally been a way for a woman to make a living...also, it's [marriage] is a place and way to raise children. In a community these things are totally meaningless: everybody makes his own living, and sex is readily available and not disapproved of.²

As Kinkade's statement demonstrates, Twin Oaks' members did not consider sex outside of marriage to be taboo. To them, sex should not be dramatized or treated as a big deal. According to Kinkade, "lovemaking...nobody asks and nobody much cares. Sex is very important to us but we don't make a big deal of it...like eating and working...it is part of the good life."³ Overall, these attitudes regarding sex and marriage allowed Twin Oakers, particularly women, to enjoy greater sexual freedom and economic independence than they often did as part of mainstream society. Women at Twin Oaks were not criticized if they had one, several, or no sexual partners. Furthermore, women within the community worked and earned for themselves, instead of depending upon the work and earnings of men.

Similar to Twin Oaks, Drop City was indifferent to its members' decisions to wed or not wed. In fact, all of Drop City's communards were single, except for its founders, Gene and Jo Ann Bernofsky. Likewise, Drop City was unconcerned with whether its members had one or multiple sexual partners; Gene and Jo Ann were married and evidence suggests that they were faithful, while other members, such as Ivan, were

² Fairfield, 189-190

Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 171.

³ Twin Oaks supported "free love" ideology; they believed that sexual matters should be the concern of those individuals directly involved in and affected by such matters. "Free love" ideologues asserted that sex was private and should not be regulated by public entities, such as governments and religious institutions.

unmarried and had many sexual partners.⁴ As a result of Drop City's laissez-faire stance on marriage and sex, its members, especially women, could make choices about sex that would be considered less acceptable by mainstream advocates of matrimony and monogamy. For example, Peter Rabbit of Drop City explained that many female communards wore transparent clothing to the commune's Joy Festival because they enjoyed that "their bodies were all hanging loose."⁵ While such provocative clothing was welcomed within the commune, it may not have been if worn in mainstream society, where more conservative attire was the norm. Overall, it appears that Drop City accepted what mainstream society was more likely to frown upon.

Moreover, at times, sexual relationships between male and female communards disrupted traditional ideas about male sexual aggression and female sexual passivity. In his memoir, Peter Rabbit recounted a time when a female visitor to Drop City named Ludamilla tried to initiate sex with many of the commune's male members. Peter recalled another instance in which he witnessed the sexual aggression of another female visitor named Flippen, saying, "she made two men grovel and whipped them until they rolled on the floor and under the tables to get away from the sweet lash." By taking on roles as sexual initiators and aggressors, these women reversed traditional sexual dynamics and contested conventional beliefs about female sexual submission.

Stephen Gaskin's lectures regarding sex at The Farm seem to indicate that he disapproved of the male tendency to control sexual relationships. Gaskin frequently

⁴ See Curl and Rabbit.

⁵ Rabbit, 13.

attacked the sexual position known as the missionary position, in which a man, on top of a woman, predominated over the sexual encounter. Gaskin said:

If you make love in the ordinary Western man-on-top position, and the man goes bang-bang-bang and gets his jollies and the lady's still waiting, well, that's an energy-loss trip. But if a man and a woman are really together and really move that energy back and forth between them, it gains instead of loses.⁶

Instead of the missionary position, Gaskin advocated “tantric love-making,” which he considered to be “an equal sexual transaction.” According to Gaskin, in tantric lovemaking, the woman was the “steerer” or “guide” who possessed the sexual energy and passed it on to the man.⁷ Based on these statements, it appears as though Gaskin supported more equitable heterosexual relations and greater sexual authority on the part of women. Gaskin’s reference to “moving that [sexual] energy back and forth” hints at his belief that pleasure should be equally distributed between a man and a woman.

Due to the countercultural ethos of sexual freedom, women at communes could enjoy greater degrees of sexual activity and sexual assertiveness than they could in mainstream America. However, if we examine men’s attitudes about sex at communes alongside second wave feminism, it is unclear how liberated women at communes – sexually active or not – were. In 1968, radical second wave feminist, Dana Densmore, published an article in *Radical Feminism* titled “Independence from the Sexual Revolution” in which she asserted:

⁶ Stephen Gaskin, *The Caravan*, New York: Random House, 1972, 108.

⁷ Gaskin, *Monday Night Class*, 128.

Everywhere we are sexual objects...we wear miniskirts and see through tops. We're sexy. We're free. We look as if we are free...people seem to believe that sexual freedom is freedom...the unarticulated assumption behind this misunderstanding is that women are purely sexual beings, bodies and sensuality, fucking machines.⁸

Accounts of Drop City indicate that some men there considered female communards to be sexual objects. For example, Peter described the voracious sexual appetite of one member, a man named Ivan. According to Peter, at Drop City's Joy Festival, Ivan was determined to "get laid and came on [to women] like a big, slobbering puppy." Peter further claimed that Ivan engaged in sex with three different women at the festival and the woman that provided Ivan with the best sexual experience later became his girlfriend.⁹ The manner in which Ivan sought out multiple women for sex indicates that he was less concerned with sharing sexual intimacy with a particularly special woman and more preoccupied with using women in order to satisfy his own sexual hunger. Furthermore, Peter's implication that Ivan relied exclusively upon sexual criteria when he decided which of the three women would be his girlfriend, not only suggests that Ivan considered women predominantly in sexual terms but also, that these women had to compete on a sexual terrain in order to obtain the status of girlfriend.

Evidence suggests that Peter may have also been guilty of objectifying women. In his account of Drop City, Peter Rabbit said, "I go to the mountain, she fucks, he fasts, she eats, he prays, she serves."¹⁰ Though Peter does not explain this random statement, it is a

⁸ Dana Densmore, "Independence from the Sexual Revolution," in *No More Fun and Games: A Journal of Female Liberation*, reprinted in *Radical Feminism*, 107-118, accessed <http://www.feminist-reprise.org/docs/densmore.htm>, online access does not have page numbers; see also, Shulamith Firestone, 163.

⁹ For quote about Ivan see Rabbit, 73; Rabbit, 75.

¹⁰ Rabbit, 30.

potential clue to his ideology regarding women. By saying “she fucks” it seems as though Peter does, in fact, view women in sexual terms. Peter’s use of the words, “she serves,” could additionally suggest that he believed that women were submissive individuals who served others, including men.

Similarly, John Curl described a time when one of the commune’s founders, Clark, told his girlfriend, Nani, to have sex with another Drop City male member, Gene.¹¹ Clark’s order to Nani to have sex with Gene seems to indicate that Clark viewed Nani as a sexually passive subject to be consumed by men. However, Nani not only refused Clark’s suggestion, but she also ended their relationship after this incident. This assertive act of resistance was significant because it enabled Nani to reclaim personal control over her sexuality and body. Further, this incident seems to suggest that while freedom to have sex with many women may have constituted sexual liberation for men, the freedom to refuse sex with men embodied sexual liberation for some women.

When Stephen Gaskin rejected the male-dominated missionary position, he seemed to challenge conventional sexual relationships and encourage women’s sexual authority. But *whom* did this challenge really benefit? On the one hand, it could be argued that, in countercultural context of sexual liberation, women, as sexual “steerers” and “guides,” were able to experience what they had traditionally been denied – sexual agency. However, if considered alongside second wave feminism, it not only seems that men disproportionately benefitted from Gaskin’s support for tantric lovemaking but also,

¹¹ Curl, 44; It is worth noting that Gene had been dating female communard, JoAnn, for many years prior to Drop City’s founding, and at the time that Clark made this suggestion, Gene and JoAnn were married.

that Gaskin was motivated more by the question of how to improve sex for men than by investment in female sexuality.

During one of his Monday Night Classes, Gaskin explained the prerequisite role of muscle rubbing to tantric lovemaking. According to Gaskin, tantric lovemaking could begin after a man asked a woman to rub his muscles.¹² Although Gaskin explained that tantric lovemaking was the most satisfying when both partners were massaged, he explicitly counseled men to initiate the process by requesting massages from women. By encouraging male initiation of lovemaking, Gaskin appeared to perpetuate the traditional sexual relationships with which he had previously claimed to disagree. Specifically, although Gaskin seemed to support women who assumed sexually assertive roles as “steerers” and “guides,” the fact that lovemaking only began when a *man* asked for a massage indicates that men maintained greater sexual authority.

On another occasion, Gaskin said, “if your lady gets off good enough, she’ll get you off too, just on contact. The woman is supposed to come because that’s the fire that lights the bonfire, and gets you all off.”¹³ Gaskin’s reference to both the man and woman “getting off” could seem to convey his progressive belief in “equal sexual transactions.” But it also appears that Gaskin may have encouraged women to perform in order to improve sex for men. As second wave feminist Robin Morgan put it in 1970, “their [men’s] sexuality would be enhanced by bringing women to orgasm and, again coopting feminine sexuality for their own ends, they put pressure on women to perform.”¹⁴ Gaskin’s claim that women’s orgasm was “the fire that lights the bonfire, and gets you all off”

¹² Gaskin, *Monday Night Class*, 126.

¹³ Gaskin, *Monday Night Class*, 130-131

¹⁴ Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful*, 203.

indicates that he may have believed that female pleasure was a means to an end – male sexual satisfaction. Sociologist Jon Wagner defined the traditional American “helpmate ideology” as the “viewpoint that women exist to fill men’s needs; this helpmate ideology defines women as a means to an end, and that end, at least in the most immediate sense, is men.”¹⁵ It seems that Stephen Gaskin, The Farm leader who claimed to disagree with conventional sexual relationships and to advocate greater sexual enjoyment for women, embodied this traditional “helpmate ideology.”

In 1968, second wave feminist, Anne Koedt, published her landmark analysis of female sexuality, “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm,” in which she advised, “What we must do is redefine our sexuality. We must discard the ‘normal’ concepts of sex and create new guidelines which take into account mutual sexual enjoyment.”¹⁶ While Gaskin may have believed that he was “discarding normal concepts of sex and taking into account mutual sexual enjoyment” through his promotion of tantric lovemaking, he was, in actuality, perpetuating the conventional notion that women depend on men for sexual satisfaction. Gaskin not only disregarded the fact that a woman could achieve orgasm in isolation from sexual intercourse with a man, via the clitoris, but he also defined female sexuality in terms of what was pleasing to men. As Koedt claimed, heterosexual intercourse was in men’s best interests because “the best physical stimulant for the penis is the woman's vagina. It supplies the necessary friction and lubrication.”

¹⁵ Wagner, 5.

¹⁶ Anne Koedt, “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm,” in *Notes from the First Year*, New York: New York Radical Feminists, 1968; see also Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970; Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for a Feminist Revolution*; Ti-Grace Atkinson, *Amazon Odyssey*, New York: Link Books, 1974.

Koedt, along with other second wave feminists, also argued that the “penis was the epitome of masculinity,” and use of the penis during heterosexual intercourse was a way by which men could boost their masculine egos. As Robin Morgan stated “the endorsement by marriage manuals of the desirability of vaginal orgasm insured that women would be asked, “Did you come...and thereby validate my masculinity?”¹⁷ Jud Jerome, who lived on several communes in these years, explained in the mid-1970s that men at communes did get validation through sex. In his article “Middle Aged Men in Communes,” Jerome said that many men struggled with losing their mainstream identities as professionals and breadwinners upon joining communes. He stated:

In the straight society, a male’s identity is a number: his annual income...it was scary without it. I felt my identity peeling away: I was a nothing-a-year man...income, competence, authority, status: How much of my life had I given to achieve these, and who was I without them?¹⁸

Jerome explained that instead of numbers, male communards’ sexual experiences define their identities. He said, “one hangs onto the bed as a last scrap of disintegrating identity.”¹⁹ Jerome’s potency struggles further demonstrate the significance of sex to his identity in communes. He discussed:

No ejaculation today, I imagined, no erection tomorrow. Panic. Overcompensation. Depression. Symptoms on all side that I was diminishing, disappearing. Out there in the straight world I might have some income, status, or authority with which to hedge the terrors of bodily decrepitude. But here I was mainly body, sexual performer.²⁰

Though Jud Jerome was speaking autobiographically, he contends that many communards also battled similar identity issues. According to Dylan of Twin Oaks, he

¹⁷ Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful*, 203.

¹⁸ Jerome, *Families of Eden: Communes and the New Anarchism*, 10.

¹⁹ Jerome, “Middle Aged Men in Communes,” 11.

²⁰ Jerome, “Middle Aged Men in Communes,” 12.

too, struggled with defining his identity upon joining the community. As a result, he started an extremely short-lived men's group in the mid-to-late 1970s that "created a regular space for me...to define my identity, and to sometimes get advice from others' similar experiences."²¹ Like Jud Jerome, Dylan acknowledged that mainstream male identities depended upon "materialistic signs of success--car, house, attractive wife, and nice clothes--and the psychological struggles for dominance." Twin Oaks sought to reduce the importance of materialism and dominance to male identities. Specifically, instead of competing with one another as they often did in mainstream society, some of Twin Oaks' men tried to relate to and be harmonic with one another. Dylan explained:

Twin Oaks has created the cultural foundation for a different male dynamic. Aspects of this dynamic can be seen in the daily interactions among men; the support and validations men offer each other, the free physical touching and hugs among men...long hair and skirts are not uncommon.

Moreover, while sexual relationships with women were significant to the meanings of masculinity that took shape at Drop City and The Farm, Dylan suggests that this was not the case at Twin Oaks. According to Dylan, in mainstream society:

Women are merely a piece of the stakes in these potency struggles; objects of attainment and sexual satisfaction; sources of nurturance and ego-renewal which allow men to continue to 'go out and face the world'...by contrast, Twin Oaks has created the cultural foundation for a different dynamic.²²

However, other information indicates that in certain situations, women at Twin Oaks were viewed as sexual objects. For example, Kat Kinkade mentioned that men at Twin Oaks "preferred women who didn't chase them but just smiled and waited to be approached...and most of all it mattered a great deal to them that women have long hair

²¹ Komar, 193.

²² Komar, 192.

and bodies that somewhat resembled that of a *Playboy* foldout.”²³ Preference “for women who didn’t chase them but just smiled and waited to be approached,” shows that some men at Twin Oaks, like some at other communes and in mainstream society, presumed sexual passivity on the part of women. Further, some men’s greater attraction for women that looked like models in *Playboy* magazine, a media outlet that exploited and sexualized women in order to fuel and satisfy male sexual appetites, suggests that contrary to Dylan’s claim, some men at Twin Oaks not only continued to view women as “objects of attainment and sexual satisfaction” but also, celebrated the consumer society that they claimed to oppose.²⁴

In the 1980s, some women in the community started a “wolfing” program, which sought to promote women’s sexual autonomy and address some men’s tendency to sexually objectify women. The program warned new women of the presence of “wolves” in the community, which were defined as men that aggressively and persistently tried to have sex with female members. Advocates of the “wolfing” program believed that because male sexual assertiveness was the norm in mainstream society, some women were conditioned to believe that they lacked the authority to make free choices about sex. Thus, participants of the “wolfing” program encouraged new women to feel comfortable rejecting unwanted sexual advances.²⁵ The fact that women at Twin Oaks felt the need to begin the “wolfing” program demonstrates that despite the community’s attempts at change, some men continued to treat female communards as sexual conquests.

²³ Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 170.

²⁴ See Robin Morgan’s discussion of “Mindless Sex Objects in Morgan, “Women Disrupt the Miss America Pageant,” in *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist*, New York: Random House, 1968, 64.

²⁵ Goldenberg, 264-265.

Although the need for “wolfing program” suggests that women were sometimes objectified at Twin Oaks, it also demonstrates unique feminist growth within the community. Women at Drop City and The Farm were sometimes treated as sexual objects but they did not confront such treatment. Why did women at Twin Oaks challenge such objectification but women at Drop City and The Farm did not? I believe that the same structural factors that emboldened women at Twin Oaks to organize for more progressive labor divisions also encouraged them to resist unwanted sexual advances by men. I contend that the progressivism provided by Twin Oaks’ labor credit system, childrearing program, and Manager-Planner government empowered women and galvanized subsequent feminism within the community, including the “wolfing program.”

Reproductive Politics in Communes

The Farm’s leader, Stephen Gaskin, espoused natural birthing and forbade the use of artificial drugs, including the birth control pill and anesthesia. According to historian Louis J. Kern, The Farm’s midwives supported Gaskin’s vision of natural childbirth, believing that it provided women with complete control over their bodies and the birthing process. Specifically, midwives believed that natural birthing liberated women from the control of drugs and male doctors.²⁶ While women at The Farm may have been freed from the control of drugs and doctors, the fact that their male leader created the natural birthing rule demonstrates that they were not liberated from male authority.

Since Gaskin did not permit women to use birth control pills or anesthesia during

²⁶ Kern, 214.

childbirth, can it really be said that women at The Farm had control over their bodies? Second wave feminists argued that female control of reproduction constituted women's true control over their bodies. As Shulamith Firestone asserted, "To assure the elimination of sexual classes requires the revolt of the underclass [women] and the seizure of control of reproduction: the restoration to women of ownership of their bodies, as well as feminine control of human fertility."²⁷ Without the use of anesthesia, women could not control their bodies' pain levels during childbirth. Similarly, since they could not take contraceptives, women at The Farm could not control their fertility and reproduction. Such lack of control over pain during birth, fertility, and reproduction suggests that women at The Farm did not exercise control over their bodies. Although at one Monday Night Class Stephen Gaskin proclaimed, "I am a believer in free will,"²⁸ when he prohibited drugs and birth control, he deprived women of their free will.

If the lack of access to birth control restricted women at The Farm, its availability could pose obstacles in other communes. As noted in chapter two, since Twin Oaks encouraged non-possessiveness and the community shared childrearing responsibilities, mothers were alleviated of some of their caretaking responsibilities. However, communal childrearing also had the potential to undermine women's reproductive rights and thus, women's control over their bodies. Since all members cared for children and contributed financially to the community, Twin Oaks' Planner and Manager government reasoned that the community as a whole should monitor the birthrate. Hence, Twin Oaks encouraged women to take community-provided contraceptives. In cases of pregnancies,

²⁷ Firestone, 11.

²⁸ Gaskin, *Monday Night Class*, 12.

a meeting was arranged in which the community discussed whether it could afford a child. Lani Wheeler Higgins, who visited Twin Oaks in 1967, explained, “If circumstances are favorable on a group wide basis, a woman and her partner are given the blessings of the community.” For example, since the community was financially stable at the time, it provided its’ “delighted consent” to the birth of Carrie’s child. On the other hand, according to Higgins, “If the community is in a crisis situation that would only be exacerbated by her pregnancy, she may be asked to postpone her attempt at child-bearing or be offered the option of a community financed abortion.” Higgins claimed that during her visit to Twin Oaks, there were two instances in which the community suggested abortions to women. However, both women denied the community’s suggestion, bore their children, and the community ended up raising the children under the communal childrearing program.²⁹

Support for birth control and abortion at Twin Oaks may seem to be progress for women, especially in comparison to the restrictions The Farm placed upon contraceptives.³⁰ However, the Planner-Manager meetings regarding birthing that Higgins witnessed demonstrate that reproductive decisions were not in the hands of individual community women. According to second wave feminists, true liberation encompassed women’s control over their reproductive processes. As Ti-Grace Atkinson said:

²⁹ Lani Wheeler Higgins, *Not Yet Utopia: A Study of Twin Oaks Community*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1982, 75.

³⁰ See Elaine Tyler May, *America and The Pill: A History of Promise, Peril, and Liberation*, New York: Basic Books, 2011.

The Constitution of the United States, in the Fourteenth Amendment, clearly protects the life, liberty, and property of every person. Any legislation interfering in any way with any woman's self-determination of her reproductive process is clearly unconstitutional. It would interfere with her life by interfering with her person [child]; it would interfere with her liberty by interfering with her freedom of choice as regards her own person; it would interfere with her property since her reproductive process constitutes, in the most integral and strictest sense, her property.³¹

In the context of the Twin Oaks' community, it is clear that Twin Oaks "interfered with woman's self-determination of her reproductive process." Moreover, when it suggested abortions to women, Twin Oaks, "interfered with her life by interfering with her person [child.] Overall, that women's pregnancies were heavily contingent upon the desires and decisions of the community shows that Twin Oaks "interfered with [women's] property since [their] reproductive process constitutes, in the most integral and strictest sense, her property.

Conclusions

This chapter demonstrates that although unconventional in some respects, sexual relationships at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks adhered to tradition in many, significant ways. On the one hand, communards' disinterest in marriage was unconventional compared to the mainstream ideal of the nuclear family. Likewise, there were instances in which counterculturalists' support for sexual freedom allowed women to sexually assert themselves and therefore, challenge men's traditional sexual dominance. However, the evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the

³¹ Ti-Grace Atkinson, *Amazon Odyssey*. 3.

countercultural ethos of sexual liberation sometimes oppressed women at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks. In addition to sexual exchanges between men and women, the manner in which some male communards spoke about women and sex in communes suggests that, at times, women were viewed as sexual objects. At the same time that this ethos oppressed women, it allowed men to recreate and validate their masculine identities, which were unstable and transforming within the communal context. Additionally, while these communes seemed to advocate members' sexual freedom, their positions on birth control and abortion suggest that they limited women's reproductive autonomy.

If the countercultural philosophy of sexual freedom tended to objectify women within these communes, such objectification catalyzed significant feminist growth within Twin Oaks, as its "wolfing program" shows. Feminist growth at Twin Oaks attests to the difficulty of placing communes within a progressive-conservative dichotomy; initially quite conservative, gender roles at Twin Oaks became increasingly, but imperfectly, progressive after the community incorporated its structural arrangements. Women then reacted to such imperfect gender progressivism, built upon these structures, and, ultimately, created a community in which women can now say:

I've lived at Twin Oaks for 10 years. Upon arrival from a big city, I was struck by how safe it feels here to walk alone in the dark. It's an incredible feeling of freedom to walk anywhere on our land without fear.³²

³² Comment on Twin Oaks' current website. <http://www.twinoaks.org/twinoaks-community-culture-government/feminism.html>

CONCLUSIONS

Although some communes still exist today, including The Farm and Twin Oaks, the communal movement that burgeoned in the late-1960s, and surged across America in the 1970s, has died down. Nevertheless, the significance of communes remains, which makes the study of them important.

On a basic level, examination of communal experiments provides for a greater awareness of the historical context in which they took shape. As noted, the white, middle class migration to rural communes in the 1960s was a response to the Vietnam War, capitalist expansion, and what communards believed to be an overall climate of repression and injustice. Thus, analysis of sixties communes allows for better understanding of the post-World War II context, and the effects that this context had on some Americans at the time.

The study of communes also offers insight into methods employed to achieve change, the opportunity to assess their accomplishments and shortcomings, and the chance to consider alternative approaches for the future. Sixties communards attempted isolation from mainstream society not merely to escape but to create change. According to communards, communes were miniature models for innovation that, if replicated enough, would eventually yield a larger, and entirely new, society. The new society that communards visualized was everything that they believed mainstream America was not: minimalist, cooperative, harmonic, equitable, and ultimately, liberating.

In general, this study has shown that communards did not completely succeed in building the society that they had envisioned. Life at Drop City, The Farm, and Twin

Oaks, was not always cooperative, harmonic, or equitable, as some women's discontent with traditional labor divisions, some men's resistance to gender role unorthodoxy, and some sexual relationships between men and women suggest. However, due to their "back to the land" ethos, members of these three communes did lead relatively humble lives. As this study has indicated, such modest living was liberating for men in a way that it was not for women. Within the context of this lifestyle, men were freed from their contemporary gender roles and able to remake meanings of masculinity, while women's roles and meanings of femininity more closely resembled those found in mainstream America.

At the same time that this analysis has demonstrated that the extent to which gender freedom was achieved varied between men and women, it has also illustrated that women's liberation varied between Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks. As indicated, women at Drop City and The Farm were not only relegated to traditional homemaking duties, but they were also often treated as sexual objects by male communards. On the other hand, although women at Twin Oaks frequently carried out domestic tasks and were sometimes sexually objectified by men, the community's labor credit system and communal childrearing program allowed some women to break out of conventional gender roles and empowered them to later address remaining gender inequality.

This study's discovery of differences in gender freedom within and between communes complicates the current scholarly debate. As noted in chapter one, this debate is characterized by a dichotomy, in which one side argues that communes were marked by gender progressivism, and the other asserts that traditional gender roles were maintained. Thinking of gender in communes in terms of such a simple binary risks

losing the opportunity to see communes for the complex phenomenon that this study has shown they were. For example, it is easy to simply assume that Twin Oaks was gender progressive because it adopted a labor credit system and communal childrearing program and allowed feminism to thrive. However, by doing so, one not only misses that the intention of Twin Oaks' labor credit system and communal childrearing program was equality more generally, not gender equality specifically, but one also cannot understand the complex forces that contributed to the evolution of feminism within the community.

By analyzing meanings of both masculinity and femininity in communes, this study also challenges the common male-female dichotomy. This study has suggested that attempts to define masculinity and femininity in universal terms are problematic because these terms take on different meanings between people and contexts. While the white, middle class, professionally employed, breadwinning husband and father embodied masculinity in postwar mainstream America, the rugged and sexually active manual laborer epitomized masculinity in communes. Although meanings of femininity in both mainstream American and communes were generally similar, they did start to shift in Twin Oaks as some women broke out of the homemaking roles with which they were traditionally associated. Overall, this study's challenge to the male-female dichotomy raises questions that have implications not only for historical research but also, for society at large. Such questions include: what is "masculine?" What is "feminine?" To whom? Who can judge what is "masculine" or "feminine?" Can anyone judge?

This study also upsets the mainstream-other dichotomy by exhibiting that Drop City, The Farm, and Twin Oaks did not achieve isolation from mainstream influences. Although definitions of masculinity changed within the context of communes, they

depended upon mainstream assumptions about men's physical and sexual dominance and women's physical delicacy and sexual passivity. Moreover, some male communards treated women as sexual objects, despite their apparent disdain for mainstream consumerism. Additionally, as this study has shown, the development of second wave feminism in mainstream America stimulated the evolution of feminism at Twin Oaks; feminist debates circulating in mainstream society encouraged women at Twin Oaks to question gender roles and challenge some men when they sexually objectified women.

This study's gendered analytical focus leaves other avenues of inquiry unexplored. Although many scholars, including myself, have attended to the fact that the postwar communal movement was a white, middle class one, none have thoroughly examined the significance of whiteness and middle classism to communalism. Scholarship on communes would benefit from studies that explore the reasons for white, middle class predominance in communes. Perhaps one way to understand these reasons would be to consider the utopian visions of African Americans alongside, and in relation to, the utopian vision of white, middle class communards. Doing so could also contribute to a better and important understanding of the complicated relationship between white and black sixties activists.

In addition, since this study has only examined three of approximately thousands of sixties communes, more work is needed to not only further comprehend these phenomena but to also understand gender and women within these communities. Although studies of women in communes have certainly been carried out since Jessie Barnard asserted in 1975 "the female structure is missing from studies of American communalism," much research still needs to be done. It is my hope that, in time, we can

better determine women's motivations for joining communes, whether communes provided opportunities for women that mainstream America did not, and if any communes, other than Twin Oaks, facilitated women's emancipation.

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