Moral Voices: Liminality and Communitas among Peace and Justice Workers in Minnesota

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis.

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Chapter One: “We Are a Gentle, Angry People…”

“We are a gentle, angry people
And we are singing, singing for our lives.”
- Folk song written by Holly Near, 1985

Introduction

In the Twin Cities area of Minnesota, a group, appropriately described as gentle and angry, routinely vigils, demonstrates, and protests together. They are informally united by their shared interest in nonviolent protest as a means for creating peace and by their desire to learn about the realities of foreign policy, international war conditions, domestic and international justice issues, and environmental concerns. All of the activists I encountered are inspiring in their dedication and knowledge. Several are even considered among the most impressive peace activists in the United States. Their work is of interest not only because of their passion, but also because of their unique approach to peace, an approach which emphasizes continuity, solidarity, compassion, and joy.

Drawing on the work of Victor Turner, especially the overlapping and related concepts of ritual, liminality, communitas, and social drama, this thesis argues that the group of peace activists I worked with in the Twin Cities area is engaged in two projects at the same time. On

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1 Though I mostly use these words interchangeably, there are some indications from my observations of peace activists to suggest that there are slight differences in the meanings of the words. Broadly speaking, “vigil” seems to emphasize ongoing protest events that involve an occupation of a particular space in a particular way rather than an activity. “Demonstration” and “protest,” on the other hand, appear to indicate specific, “one-time” events. “Demonstration” also seems to suggest a consciousness of the protest event as a performance put on for a particular audience. Finally, “protest” seems to be a broader term that references the participant’s action of challenging something. In my time in Minnesota, “vigil” was the preferred label for three of the weekly protest events. Other events were often not labeled “vigil,” “demonstration,” or “protest” on posters, flyers, or in emails and press releases, but were casually referenced as such in conversation. In my experience, the events that did not occur weekly or yearly were labeled as “protests.” Perhaps, however, my use of the label “protest” in conversation led more people to use it in answering my questions.

2 This is evidenced by the reputation of these peace and justice workers and their inclusion in books about peace and justice work like A Piece of My Mind by Noltner (2011).
the one hand, the group is concerned with constituting and reconstituting itself and thereby sustaining and reproducing a group of individuals whose relationships are mediated by the values they hold to be ideal: peace, justice, equality, moral engagement, sensitivity, and thoughtfulness. On the other hand, this group actively works to persuade others to change their views, educate them about their interpretation of reality, and negotiate with them their chosen methods for creating desirable social changes. While scholars tend to privilege one side or the other, it is my argument that any adequate conceptualization of peace activism should account for both sides of the process, how they inform each other, and how they challenge any simple dichotomy between internal and external orientations to activism. I argue that through this cultivation of a sense of unity and camaraderie in protests, vigils, and demonstrations that bring the group together, the group offers both a critique of pressing social and political issues as well as an alternative way of doing and being.

Demographic Basics

The group of activists, with whom I spent time in Minnesota, together routinely protests, participates in vigils, attends lectures and conferences, and goes to religious services. It is comprised of roughly fifty members, though its network extends far beyond this figure and probably reaches above a hundred. For the purposes of this thesis, I have distinguished two groups of people, those who routinely attend protests and other events advertised at the protests, and those who are committed to work for peace and justice, but do not routinely participate in the frequent protests, vigils, demonstrations, art openings, film screenings, lectures, meetings, and other peace and justice related events. I have labeled the amorphous group of those who attend several protests and other events per week, like lectures or art openings, the Twin Cities Group.
I will refer to those who are still active in peace and justice work in the Twin Cities area but do not protest or attend events multiple times a week as members of the Twin Cities area peace and justice community, a category which includes but goes beyond the Twin Cities Group. There is a kind of intimacy fostered by the routine presence of the same group of people at the daily vigils and events. Larger events that might attract people who do not protest daily do not have the same feeling of solidarity and equality and often lack some important ritualistic elements, like sharing meals. Some members of the area’s peace and justice community who do not participate in the daily vigils and protests seem to connect with the Twin Cities Group better than others. For example, neither Paul, a local professor and politician, nor John, a retired union organizer, routinely participated in the protest events I went to, but Paul enjoyed considerable respect from the Twin Cities Group, while a tension, acknowledged by both parties, existed between John and the Twin Cities Group. I argue that this is due to differences in opinion about the way peace and justice work should be carried out.

The Twin Cities Group is composed of activists who live in the Twin Cities area. Most are over fifty years of age, white, and from a middle class background. Because the Twin Cities Group is not a formal organization, it does not officially plan or host any events. Rather, the events that the Twin Cities Group participates in are planned and hosted by other formal organizations such as the Women Against Military Madness (WAMM), AlliantACTION, and the Coalition for Palestinian Rights. There are roughly equal numbers of those who identify as women and those who identify as men, though there seemed to be more women at many of the

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3 In using “community” to describe those who work for peace and justice but do not routinely protest, I realize I risk confusing this group with the Twin Cities Group, which I argue is an example of “communitas.” I have chosen to use the word “community,” however, because the phrase “peace and justice community” is used by some of my interlocutors to describe those interested in peace and justice in the Twin Cities area. I will try to maintain clarity by using “community” only in the context in which I heard it used, to mean a vague group of people who periodically interact.
events I attended. This is perhaps due to the strength of WAMM, a regional nonprofit dedicated to ending war and facilitating peace and justice. Many of the men and women participate in the activities of WAMM. I participated in a weekly demonstration on the most crowded street in downtown Minneapolis with members of the Twin Cities Group who were involved in WAMM. The demonstration was a WAMM project where participants walked along the street with signs and stickers and interviewed people about different issues related to the military. At these demonstrations, gender was discussed and was sometimes even a part of their theatrical demonstrations. Discussion of gender included a consideration of the unique position of women in peace activism as the bearers of children, for example. Outside of conversation about WAMM and the history or life of the nuns in the group, I rarely heard gender discussed.

Some of those I consider a part of the Twin Cities Group are Christian, but of those who discussed their religion with me, most are not what I would consider “average” Christians in the sense that they are not members of the most common Protestant denominations and many attend the events of the Network of Spiritual Progressives and Every Church a Peace Church, non-traditional worship groups that emphasize peace and justice grounded in religious or spiritual belief, in addition to or in place of religious services. Several in the Twin Cities Group are nuns, though they are very critical of the Catholic Church on several issues and are a part of a progressive Catholic community that split from another church because of more rigorous liturgical norms imposed by the Archdiocese in 2008 (Spirit of St. Stephen’s Catholic Community). The nuns in the group are very active members. Their decisions to become nuns, which they describe as mostly a response to the few choices available to women when they were young in rural Minnesota, is well known to the group. Others in the Twin Cities Group are Mennonite or Quaker. Though religion is obviously important for the way some work for and
understand peace, about half of the activists in the Twin Cities Group never expressed any religious affiliation to me and one member of the group told me that one beauty of the group is the variety of religious identities ranging from atheists to nuns.

Like religious backgrounds, professional backgrounds were varied, but most activists did not discuss their jobs at peace vigils. It is possible that professional backgrounds were not discussed during the time I was participating in vigils with this group because most group members had been friends for a long time, so everyone in the group probably knew everyone’s professional backgrounds. To my knowledge, many were retired. This is another possible explanation for the limited discussion of work. There are also several members of the group who describe themselves as professional activists or saw peace and justice work as their primary occupation. For some of the older participants in the daily vigils and protests, this consideration of the protests as an occupation is perhaps attributable to their retirement. But some of those who label their peace and justice work as their occupation are younger. There are also some who have other sources of income, like a job as a postman or teacher, for example, though they did not readily identify with these occupations and instead emphasized their peace and justice work.

**Methodologies**

I worked and lived in Minneapolis, Minnesota from February to August of 2011. During that time, I worked at a nonprofit interested in rebuilding relationships between Iraqis and Americans. Initially, I wanted to research conversations about the Iraq War, so a board member of the nonprofit, a key figure in the Twin Cities peace and justice community and the Twin Cities Group, kindly invited me to come to two events where I met the Twin Cities Group: a vigil related to the Iraq War and a protest outside of ATK, short for Alliant Techsystems Inc., a
leading manufacturer of landmines and cluster bombs. I continued to attend protests or vigils three to four days of every week from late May until August. My interest slowly shifted from these peace activists as an example of American engagement with the Iraq War to the peace activists as an important and interesting group itself. I began to see the group of peace activists I was protesting with as representing an approach to social change I was unfamiliar with, one that emphasized continuity in resistance to injustice and violence rather than strategies for creating measurable social outcomes. The group highlighted why they work for peace, not how. This shift in my interest was mostly motivated by my interest in understanding the other infractions of peace and justice outside of the Iraq War in America. Most of the conversations I started were about Iraq, motivated by my research interests of the time, but I often found that conversation would quickly shift to consider a whole variety of problems around the world. A short conversation might start with the Iraq War, move to nuclear energy, then to global warming, and end with the treatment of Palestinians in Israel. I interpreted these conversation shifts as evidence to support the argument that the members of the Twin Cities Group saw the Iraq War as existing in a large network of problems. Certainly it was possible for the Twin Cities Group to sustain a conversation about the Iraq War alone, but it was clear that members of the Twin Cities Group saw connections between the problems related to Iraq and other peace and justice related issues. Thus, peace itself became a context that connected various issues and represented a way of seeing the world. Furthermore, the ease with which the group members participated in quickly changing conversations mirrored their intimacy as a group and their desire to engage with the world at large. As I pushed myself to understand how this network of occurrences of injustice and violence changed their understanding of each instance, the Iraq War, the School of
Americas, or violence in Libya, for example, I became interested in how the group imagined itself, related to its members, and engaged society at large.

I participated in the protests and vigils as an interested and concerned American, but soon the participation became central to me as a student of anthropology. My interest in the group’s activities was met with enthusiasm and the group took me in as an informal apprentice with each member contributing to my education. I recorded conversations and my own informal interviews with a handheld recorder. I was also frequently given books, movies, and articles and encouraged to follow certain news sources and peace activists to further my education. These educational materials ranged from blog posts from little-known investigative reporters to *New York Times* bestsellers, but all provided information about the science and politics of current political issues. Additionally, I was given years of archives of newsletters from one of the groups connected to this larger protest group; subscriptions to the blogs of different participants and related groups, which I still follow; and handouts about various protests, political issues, and song lyrics that were memorized by the group or distributed at events.

I also met on a regular basis with several individuals who were connected to the larger group, but did not participate in the daily protests and vigils attended by the members of the Twin Cities Group. I unintentionally formed one group in my attempt to get to know better an active member of the group who did not come to the regular vigils. This man, who I will call John to protect his privacy, was a veteran and respected organizer for a teachers union. At the time, he was about 60 and retired, but still wrote religiously about political issues. We had a weekly lunch at a cozy restaurant outside of the metropolitan area with his friend, Dana, who also worked for the teachers union and became a freelance writer. When I returned in December
of 2011 I met with John on several occasions, though Dana was out of town. I continue to maintain email contact with John and Dana, and I periodically read John’s blog.

There are notable strengths and weaknesses in the way I participated in the activities of these groups. In my opinion, the most apparent strength came from my position as a novice learning about the realities of America’s military involvement in different countries, injustices in the world, and the ways of nonviolent activism. Whereas in other research situations I have worried that my research did not allow for an equal exchange of information between me and those I observed, I feel that the Twin Cities Group and I both benefited from my research. The Twin Cities Group often joked about the age of the average participant in their vigils and expressed interest in educating my generation about nonviolent methods of working for peace. I think they saw my participation in their vigils as a way of spreading their message to people my age. Simultaneously, however, their investment in my future activism had its drawbacks. The members of these groups seemed to approach me differently than they approached other adults new to their events. Some people seemed more curious about my presence than other newcomers and others appeared to be more cautious about talking to me. Perhaps this was because I was significantly younger than the members of the Twin Cities Group or perhaps it was because I so often reminded them that I was interested in studying their peace and justice work.

Other aspects of my position also appeared to affect the information I received and the way I was treated. Because I identify as a woman, I found that it was easy to participate in WAMM activities and meet new activists through this network. In fact, when I returned to Minnesota in December of 2011, a WAMM member who I had never met before offered to let me stay in her home for free. I believe I would not have been given such an opportunity if I
identified as a man, not because this member of WAMM expressed any disdain for or prejudice toward men, but rather because of the sisterly solidarity emphasized by WAMM. Furthermore, because I am white and do not hold strong to any particular religious confession, though I am both Jewish and Christian by birth, I might have had an easier time becoming close to Twin Cities Group members. However, I sometimes felt like my socioeconomic status alienated me from some members of the group. At the time, I had an unpaid internship and lived solely off of the money my parents generously gave me, a reality of which several members of the Twin Cities Group were aware. I also wore nicer clothing than most members of the Twin Cities Group and I drove a nicer car. I overheard a considerable amount of discussion about money during vigils, meals, and other events and I was aware that what I considered expensive was significantly more than what was considered expensive by those who were vocal about their financial situation. I was not aware of any negative perceptions of my socioeconomic status, but I did not participate in conversations about money to try to minimize any potential discomfort.

Like most anthropologists, I feel the need for more depth. I was only with the group for several hours a week over a few months. This exposure taught me much about their opinions of nonviolent action and peace and justice work, but I know that there is still much more I could learn about the way they conceptualize their actions. For example, I did not have the opportunity to participate in a major protest where multiple members of the Twin Cities Group planned to get arrested. Despite the limitations on my research, the time I spent with the Twin Cities Group certainly allowed me to get a sense of some of their efforts to sustain the unity of the group, the way they are perceived by the members of the area-wide peace and justice community, and their understandings of what peace and justice making entails.
My work with the group is also interesting in that unlike other research situations, I feel like I have an obligation to all those I talked to for the future. All of them see significant problems in society and believe that it will be my generation that has to deal with these problems. This view has put me in an interesting position in that my commitment to those who helped me with my research extends beyond the completion of this thesis and a continuation of my friendships with them. I believe they also want me to use what I learned from them to affect change in my own communities. This is interesting anthropologically because I feel the obligation to become, in a sense, one of the “Others,” the objects of my study.

I found that my transformation from a student to an activist and back and my feelings of closeness with the group is well captured by Victor Turner’s notions of liminality and communitas, central concepts that will be referenced throughout this project. The next chapter will provide a brief overview of the history of Minnesota and the peace movement in order to contextualize the work of the Twin Cities Group in the webs of meaning in which it is embedded. Chapter three will introduce Turner’s key concepts of liminality, communitas, and ritual. The next chapter, chapter four, will address issues of memory, meal sharing, and knowledge politics with special attention to the way these themes relate to Turner’s notion of communitas. Chapter five includes a discussion of Richard Schechner’s theory of performance and Turner’s notion of social drama and explores how these help us understand the spatial dimension of protest. The conclusion offers concluding thoughts on the meanings of change and how it relates to some of the main concepts of this thesis, specifically communitas and liminality.
Chapter Two: An Abridged History of Minnesota and the Peace Movement

“How beautiful the day will be
When freedom finally dawns
When people live in liberty
Beyond the guns and bombs
America! America!
When will this killing cease?
Our taxes pay for war today,
But we will work for peace!”

-Lyrics by Beatrice, a member of the Twin Cities Group. Sung to the tune of “America the Beautiful”

Minnesota History

The examples of activism that this thesis describes are contextualized spatially and temporally. In order to understand the meanings and significance of protest events in Minnesota, one must understand the specific context of the event and the history of the group, the state, the nation, and the international peace movement. The activities and discussions I participated in with the Twin Cities Group were often tied to specifics of Minnesota. For example, during bad weather the activists might joke about all of us going up north to stay in our summer cabins. This joke is mostly intended to make people laugh about the disparity of wealth in our country and to position the Twin Cities Group as part of the working class, “the other 99%” as has been made popular by the Occupy movement as a reference to all but the most powerful and wealthy Americans. To understand the joke, however, one must also understand a little about life in Minnesota. Minnesotans often joke that because their winter is so long and hard, they “do” summer with extreme gusto. Going to the northern part of the state is quite popular during the summer, though most do not own their own summer homes. Thus, the idea of people going to stay in their own summer cabins is particularly desirable in Minnesota.
This example illustrates one moment where background information about Minnesota is important to understanding the discussion of the Twin Cities Group, but the broader issues that the Twin Cities Group addresses in its activities must also be contextualized in the history of the state. Many have considered the interesting mix of insular and international feelings in Minnesota. Journalist Robert J. White called it “the global contradiction” (2000:307). This contradiction is played out for White in the simultaneous worldliness and seclusion, liberal social movements and conservative political heroes, history of bigotry and international reputation for welcoming immigrants and refugees. This contradiction is exemplified in the current political figures in the state. Keith Ellison, elected in 2007, currently represents Minnesota in the United States House of Representatives and is the first Muslim to be elected to the US Congress. The fact that Ellison was elected at a time when Islamophobia is so widespread that labeling presidential candidate Barak Obama a Muslim was a tactic to prevent his election shows the progressive views of at least some residents in the Minneapolis area. Michele Bachmann, who represents Minnesota in the House of Representatives and ran in the Republican primary with the blessing of America’s social conservatives, represents a different sentiment in Minnesota. Bachmann speaks to the long history of religious conservatism and “family values” in Minnesota.

Much of Minnesota state history is beyond the scope of this thesis. I will not elaborate on early Minnesota history more than to note that much of the state’s founding and early years were characterized by conflicts between white settlers and Native Americans, and the harsh treatment of the Native Americans who stayed in the state. In addition to Minnesota’s historical oppression of Native Americans, the state is also known for its history of anti-Semitism in the early twentieth century (Plaut 1959). The negative views held by Minnesotans about Jews were
often described as a response to a perceived lack of effort on the part of Minnesota’s Jews to become integrated into society (Plaut 1959). This opinion, of course, raises questions as to how Minnesota’s Jews were supposed to integrate into a society where many places Jews were not allowed to rent or buy, businesses were not open to them, jobs were not available, and an explicit disdain for Jews seemed socially acceptable (Plaut 1959). Anti-Semitism in the area was so pronounced that Carey McWilliams, editor of The Nation in 1946, labeled Minneapolis “the capital of anti-Semitism in the United States” (Plaut 1959:275).

The simultaneous coexistence of anti-Semitism and an acceptance of immigrants is arguably an illustration of White’s notion of “global contradiction” (2000:307). If, indeed, it is the Jews’ lack of participation in society compared to other immigrant groups that made them so worthy of criticism, then one cannot help but see a contradiction. Yet, the contradiction is complicated by the oppression of other groups at certain points in Minnesota history. Minnesota was hardly immune to the racist sentiment prevalent in America (Minnesota Historical Society), and the push for a woman’s right to vote and succeed in the workplace (Gilman 2000) was also resisted. Additionally, during World War I, Minnesotans of German descent who opposed the war were subjected to verbal and physical violence by their fellow citizens, which went unchecked by the government. Negative feelings towards Germans were so strong that expressions of German culture were outlawed even though German was the largest nationality in Minnesota at the time (Gilman 2000).

Though Minnesota’s history includes oppression, the state has also been historically progressive in other times with regards to the statuses that minorities have achieved. For example, though Minnesotans resisted granting women the right to vote and the advancement of women in the workplace and in positions of authority, in 1990, Minnesota became the first state
to have women as the majority of the highest court (Gilman 2000). Thus, the contradiction between acceptance and exclusion is a real one. Minnesota has both a historical reputation for accepting many different immigrant groups and oppressing them. Perhaps rather than a contradiction, this tension suggests the influence of many different ideas and beliefs that are played out at different points in history in response to changing circumstances.

Related to the history of oppression in Minnesota is the history of an international focus. By 1900, 29% of Minnesota citizens were immigrants (The Minnesota Foundation 2004:3). In Minnesota’s early years of statehood, its percentage of foreign-born residents was more than twice the national average (White 2000:311). This high percentage of immigrants meant that many Minnesotans had unusually strong connections to another country through their family or to the cultures of many other countries through exposure to their fellow citizens. These immigrants also brought with them a strong appreciation of education. The early international connections of Minnesotan immigrants are mirrored in the strong international connections of the many universities and colleges in the state (White 2000). Though many colleges all over the United States have international connections, the colleges in Minnesota are unique in the strength of their international focus and the early date at which many of the international connections started. Carlton College’s relationship with China began when the empress dowager asked the college to open a medical mission in China in 1904 (White 2000). In addition to the high percentage of students at Macalaster College who are international, the college also flies the United Nations flag. Today, St. Paul has the largest Hmong urban population in the world and Minnesota has the largest Somali population in the United States (Palm 2009). The strong connections between Minnesotans and the world have created an environment where, as Walker

As White pointed out, however, this widespread international awareness is accompanied by an equally strong history of privileging a focus on America first. Minnesota’s experience in World War I left many feeling that the attention of Americans should be refocused on issues at home. White concluded, based on votes by the state’s congress people on international subjects that the state was “solidly isolationist” from 1933 to 1950 (White 2000:308). Rhoda Gilman, research associate from the Minnesota Historical Society, noted that though the aviator Charles Lindbergh had left Minnesota by the time his “America First” campaign became popular, Minnesotans still felt a sense of solidarity with him and claimed him as one of their own (2000:11). Gilman also argued that an individualist sentiment can be traced throughout Minnesotan history manifesting itself in furious debates over the right to own guns, opposition to the preservation of wilderness, and the “mystique of the hunter” (2000:26). Indeed, these attitudes are apparent in the rise of the Tea Party and the Religious Right in Minnesota.

The international awareness of Minnesotans is in many cases clearly tied to the history of social and political activism in the state. From the early days of the state’s history, times of economic depression led to significant farmer protests. In the 1890’s the beginnings of the labor movement sparked populist beliefs in the area despite the long Republican reign in the state government (Gilman 2000). Farmers united in farm coops which became significant in their influence over society (Gilman 2000). The depression of this era also pushed local mine owners out of business and the United States Steel Company formed in 1901. Several major strikes in the early 1900’s ended poorly until the 1916 strike of the Industrial Workers of the World was stamped out, resulting in a period of harsh tactics aimed to prevent activism (Gilman 2000).
During this time of oppression, some business leaders formed a secret group called the Citizens Alliance with the goal of preventing the formation of union contracts (Gilman 2000). The struggling laborers and farmers along with the immigrants, many of whom were conservative, united to form the Farmer-Labor Party which produced Governor Floyd B. Olson, who was sympathetic with the concerns of the protesters. Olson generally did not respond to the protesters with military action, but in 1934 he called in the National Guard when conflict between the Teamsters union and Minneapolis employers resulted in significant violence. The conflict was only resolved when President Roosevelt pressured banks affiliated with the Citizens Alliance. In 1935, the National Labor Relations Act passed and Minneapolis finally broke its long reputation as an anti-union city (Gilman 2000).

Throughout history, Minnesotans have made a point in rejecting dominant systems when they felt it necessary. The Farmer-Labor Party joined with the Democratic Party in 1944 to form the Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) Party (Gilman 2000:12). This party still exists today in place of a Democratic Party though it is aligned with the national Democratic Party. Additionally, in the 1960’s a significant group of citizens was inspired by Minnesota’s rural history and reconnected with the land, formed cooperatives, and focused on environmental sustainability. The movement was motivated by a disdain for and rejection of rising business culture across the country. Simultaneously, however, religious conservatives were also inspired by Minnesota’s history and moved to reject what they saw as the degeneration of morals by reasserting family values and facilitating the development of fundamentalist communities and churches (Gilman 2000). A final example evidences the popularity of movements that reject societal trends. In 1998 Minnesota elected Jesse Ventura of the Reform Party as governor. At a time when many political campaigns spent millions of dollars, Ventura raised short of one
million dollars and asked for help from the public to pay for the celebration of his inauguration. According to Gilman (2000), the election of Ventura was explicitly considered a rejection of the politics of the time.

Some of the most recent events in Minnesota’s history have highlighted another Minnesotan contradiction and the passion with which those who challenge dominant power structures approach regional issues. On Friday March 11, 2011, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker signed into a law a piece of legislation that significantly limited the ability of public-sector unions to bargain collectively (Runge and Durkin 2011). Many Minnesotans closely followed as protesters swarmed the capital in Madison. For many, the situation raised fears that Minnesota’s Republicans might be interested in passing a similar law. Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton responded to these fears saying that a proposal like that signed by Governor Walker would not become law while he was governor (Birkey 2011). The events in Madison also highlighted an example of the contradictory sentiment coming from Minnesota’s political leadership. Political leaders from Minnesota have had strong reactions on both sides of the Wisconsin law. By March 2010, Representative Ellison, Representative Tim Walz, and Governor Dayton had already criticized the Wisconsin law and praised the protesters, while Republican primary candidates Tim Pawlenty and Michelle Bachmann had praised Governor Walker’s action as an appropriate response to the current economic troubles of the state (Birkey 2011). The difference in opinion of the Minnesotan representatives about the Madison legislation indicates that Minnesota is both strongly conservative and strongly liberal.

Like Wisconsin, Minnesota was also experiencing economic difficulties and the debate between DFLers and Republicans reached a climax in the summer of 2011. The debate was over a five billion dollar budget deficit that, if no deal could be reached, would result in a government
shutdown starting on the first of July. As July approached, many believed the threat of a shutdown would force leaders to compromise. Though, as the regional newspaper The Star Tribune described the days prior to the start of July, “talks imploded” between DFLers and Republican leaders, no compromise was reached (Helgeson et al. 2011). On Friday, July 1, 2011, the Minnesota government shutdown resulting in the layoff of 22,000 state employees (Davey 2011) and the suspension of all government services deemed not essential. The shutdown lasted two weeks, and though many were relieved when a deal was finally reached, many were disappointed by the terms of the deal. The event succeeded, however, in pushing many Minnesotans to take political action. The day before the shutdown, protesters covered the steps of the capital. Throughout the shutdown, protesters hung around the capital urging their leaders to make a compromise. The appeals to legislators, ranging from referencing the value of state parks to the Minnesotan identity to highlighting how destructive the shutdown is to Minnesota’s immigrant population, illustrate the way the events of today in Minnesota are put in conversation with the sentiments of Minnesota history.

The influence of the history of peace activism in America is also apparent in the activities and discussion of the Twin Cities Group. The commitment of many in this to nonviolent action as a way to create peace developed out of the war protests around the Vietnam War. All of the members of the group were young when the New Left emerged; many were in college or of college age and active participants in activities that characterized this new political and social force. Simon Hall, in his book *Peace and Freedom: the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s*, argued that the New Left was defined by “its campus base, its rejection of anticommunism, its high degree of decentralization, its advocacy of participatory democracy, and its emphasis on a politics of authenticity” (2005:23). An important contribution of the New
Left was its effort to link the social movements of the time with the peace movement (Hall 2005). The variety of social issues around which the Twin Cities Group organizes and attends events illustrates that this link is still present today. It is also apparent in the way conversation rapidly shifts between different political and social issues, which shows that the group views these social issues as connected to peace.

The popularity of peace protests and vigils during the Vietnam era in response to the draft, political decisions, and the violence during these protests also motivated members of the Twin Cities Group to become involved in peace and justice oriented activities. Several members of the group were drafted, and their questioning of the war began during or following their connection with the war. Draft protesting and resistance, resistance to follow commands of those in the military, and veterans’ peace activism became exceptionally influential during this period (Cortright 2008). The tension between veterans’ peace activism and the government during the war and after is also arguably the birth of the widespread belief that the government desires to control the media because of its potential to damage their military pursuits. Nixon’s administration was very concerned about the publicity that veteran activists were receiving and how it was eroding US commitment to the war (Cortright 2008). This tension between free media and government resulted in a deep suspicion of mainstream media sources.

For those who were not inspired to act by the draft, student protests of the time and the violence of police in responding to these protests, such as that exerted at Kent State, were an important inspiration. The Kent State killings were particularly significant for many because they occurred after a lull in the peace movement that corresponded to Richard Nixon’s popular decision to increase American bombing and leave much of the ground fighting in the Vietnam War to the South Vietnamese. When Nixon announced his decision to send American troops to
Cambodia to destroy the supply lines of the North Vietnamese, the fervor of the peace movement was reignited (Cortright 2008). For many this was the point at which they could no longer accept the political and social problems of the time and they became involved in the protests.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan inspired action among those in the group who did not begin their activism in response to the Vietnam War. Many of the group’s ongoing activities are inspired by these wars. Members of the group cite these military campaigns as particularly egregious because of their violation of international law, use of controversial weapons and torture, and lack of well conceived long-term plans. Ironically, because the activist response to the first Iraq war was so quiet compared to the protests of Vietnam, President George W. Bush believed that Americans would no longer rise up to challenge military interventions in other countries. Bush proclaimed, “we’ve kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all” (Cortright 2008:171). The mass anti-war movement after the second Iraq war demonstrated the inaccuracy of this claim. As the military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan continues, the wars are becoming increasingly unpopular and the peace movement is growing. In his book *Peace: a History of Movements and Ideas*, David Cortright called the success of the peace movement during the escalation of military activity “winning while losing” (2008:174).

Two of the major focuses of the Twin Cities Group are the changing nature of war and the increasing militarization of our country that corresponds to this change. This attention to war is motivated in part by the alarming reports coming from Iraq and Afghanistan about the moral implications of certain types of weapons, like drones and guns that shoot around corners, and the medical consequences of the chemicals used in US weaponry.\footnote{See for example Chulov 2010.} This is the primary motivation behind the weekly protest at ATK. The focus of the peace movement on increasing militarization and weapons, however, crystallized long before America’s involvement in Iraq and
Afghanistan. From the 1940s to 1980s, the popularity of the movement to control nuclear arms came in waves. The height of this movement occurred in the 1980s in response to the increasing production of weapons during the Cold War, at a time when the movement to “freeze” the development of nuclear weapons was supported by public opinion (Cortright 2008:139). The Twin Cities Group generally believes that the increasing militarization and use of more destructive weapons is part of the way war is changing. Cortright supports the idea that war has changed with his argument that “full-scale war” has not happened between “industrialized” nations since after World War II (2008:4). This change reflects the increased use of military intervention in the affairs of other countries and different military tactics, which have given the peace movement increased international legitimacy and popularity. The frequent discussion about weapons and how war is changing illustrates how members of the Twin Cities Group see themselves working for peace at a critical moment in history.

Internationalism is an important characteristic of the Twin Cities Group’s appreciation of peace and justice. Though members of the group without an understanding of international law might risk arrest, international law is often central in their defense of their actions when arrested and an appreciation of international law is a core value of the group. International law has been an important part of the peace movement since the years preceding World War I. Popular movements emerged throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that favored the development of international law and the use of international arbitration (Cortright 2008). After World War I and World War II, peace movements in America also focused on internationalism. Woodrow Wilson’s commitment to the foundation of an international organization was popular among the public and peace workers, but not supported by many of the political leaders whose participation was necessary to establish the organization following Wilson’s vision (Cortright
2008). Today, the influence of internationalism is evident in the beliefs of the group not only in the construction of a defense after an arrest, but also in the discussions and work of many of the group members and those in their network. One individual who is connected to and respected by the group, though he does not protest with them daily, is currently writing a book, in which he proposes a new world order focusing on international organizations.

The Twin Cities Group’s international engagement is not limited to an interest in wars abroad, but also includes interest in international issues like nuclear power, human rights, and women’s rights. These international interests exemplify the group’s firm belief in a connection between peace and justice. This connection extends back in America to the earliest peace groups. Cortright argued that this issue first gained attention in the 1840’s when women were increasingly becoming involved in the American peace movement and slavery was becoming a more contentious issue. Many theorists and activists argued that peace cannot really be achieved while people are oppressed (Cortright 2008). Those who made a connection between peace and justice used this view in their framing of the problems with the US/Mexican War. In addition to their qualms with the militaristic behavior, some peace workers of the time linked the war to the spread of slavery. The increasing focus on a connection between peace and justice also fostered one of the first significant acts of political action. Henry David Thoreau went to jail because he refused to pay taxes that would fund slavery and war (Cortright 2008). Cortright explained that many scholars have captured the nuance of this issue by distinguishing between negative and positive peace. Negative peace is “the absence of war” while positive peace is “the presence of justice” (2008:7). The Twin Cities activists clearly see a connection between peace and justice. This is apparent in the different kinds of projects on which the members of the group work. Group members protest America’s military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also the
preservation of Native American sites. Many members are critical of the development of drones and other military technologies, but most are also passionate about increasing the taxes of the richest Americans.

Beyond the connection between peace and justice, the group’s understanding of “peace” is also complicated by debate over the extent to which peace means the absolute rejection of war. Like the connection between peace and justice, the debate about the meaning of peace originated early on in the history of peace movements in America. The degree to which those who work for peace fully condemn war is closely tied to the history of the word “pacifism.” The term was first used by Emile Armand of France. It encompassed all those who worked for peace regardless of whether they rejected war unconditionally or accepted it as necessary occasionally. Its appeal is exemplified by its adoption at the 10th Universal Peace Congress in Glasgow (Cortright 2008:8). As conflict increased in the build up to the First World War, many pacifists began to feel that military action was appropriate in this situation. Those who remained constant in their rejection of war and declared their absolute opposition to war narrowed the definition of pacifism to include only their approach to war. The meaning of this definition was solidified in 1931 when A.C.F. Beales used “pacifism” to mean an absolute rejection of war in his book, The History of Peace (Cortright 2008:10). The lasting influence of the tension between absolute peace and the belief in just war in the Twin Cities Group is evidenced by frequent debates over the degree to which President Obama should be held accountable for the wars, torture, development of weapons, and oppression of people at home and abroad that occurred during his term.

Furthermore, the differences in opinion about the degree to which President Obama should be held accountable relate to the differences in understanding change. John, for example, believed that the Twin Cities Group should work to try and get President Obama elected for another term
because John believed that, despite his mistakes, President Obama was better for the job than any of the other candidates. For the most part, however, the Twin Cities Group actively disagrees with him. Rihanne explained this to me, saying that it is one thing to think practically about who is the best choice for president when you are in the voting booth, but it is another to support a man who has not acted justly in his first term. Rihanne’s explanations suggests that the Twin Cities Group sees it as their responsibility to be consistent in their resistance to violence, even if it may be interpreted as idealistic, in order to best affect changes in the world.

A final issue that is key to the group’s understanding of history relates to the fluctuating public response to the group’s activities. Over time, the connotations of “peace” as an ideal that one might pursue professionally or through activism have changed. A general trend emerges from these shifts. On the one hand, prior to war, when it is of increasing importance to political leaders to foster the support of the people in public discourse, “peace” takes on negative connotations. This was exemplified prior to the Second World War when even those who had been major advocates of the peace movement criticized pacifists. Peace workers who advocated a non-military solution to the conflict were seen as defeatist and even guilty of treason (Cortright 2008). On the other hand, as wars carry on and the destruction becomes more apparent to the public, “peace” becomes increasingly popular. This is evident in the recent upsurge in peace activism in America, like the widespread Occupy movement. Members of the Twin Cities Group spoke directly to this fluctuation of peace when I asked about the response to their protests. One group member told me you could gage the general public opinion of the war based on how many middle fingers verses peace signs were displayed by those who pass by their vigils. Sometimes misunderstood by the public, sometimes unappreciated when their goal is the betterment of all society, and always confused about how peace work could be ill-received, the
members of this Twin Cities Group understand how their work fits into the map of peace work occurring now and in the past.

The next chapter will build on this discussion of the ups and downs in the popularity of the peace movement by adding an analysis of how members of the peace movement relate to each other. I will introduce Victor Turner’s theories of communitas, liminality, and ritual to identify some of the techniques in the peace movement, and the Twin Cities Group specifically, that contribute to a sense of solidarity, fellowship, and equality on the one hand, and a moral engagement with social and political problems on the other.
Chapter Three: Ritual, Liminality, and Communitas

My Last Vigil

On July 27, 2011, I drove to the offices of Alliant Techsystems Inc., ATK, for my last vigil with my friends and mentors before my departure from Minnesota. As usual, I arrived early, around 6:55 AM, but there were already a few people standing with signs under umbrellas and talking. Like I had seen everyone else do week after week, I honked and waved at the early vigilers as I drove past ATK to the nearby apartment complex to park my car (ATK was particularly vigilant about towing the car of anyone they thought was a part of the vigil from their parking lot). As I walked down the hill from the apartment complex toward the place on the sidewalk by the car entrance to ATK where we gathered each week, I greeted a few of the group members who I knew best and who were also walking toward the gathering spot. We began to chat, small talk first, about a video I had been given by another group member and a dream of Molly, one of the women who was walking with us. She dreamed she had awakened from sleep and was in her bed, when in reality she was still asleep. From Molly’s description of her dream, Joyce, an older nun who had a reputation in the community for her kindness and passion about peace, offered an explanation of the dream in terms of Native American theology. She said that dreams are our teachers and that perhaps there was a lesson in Molly’s dream, though none of us could find it. The conversation then moved on to the subjects of Native American theology and Native American funerals, but the sharing of this dream remains important. It is notable that a dream, an arguably liminal state between consciousness and sleep, reality and fantasy, would be shared during a vigil. Like the dream, the vigil encompasses different liminal states that could open for different interpretations and possibilities.
After about twenty minutes, we heard the voices of a few of our group members beginning to sing farther down the sidewalk. We joined in song and walked towards the spot on the sidewalk where we always formed the big circle at 7:30. We sang the lyrics as we always did, slow and softly.

Who will speak if we don't? Who will speak if we don't?
Who will speak so our voice will be heard? Oh, who will speak if we don't?

As we repeated these verses, we made room for everyone in the circle. Bran, a white man in his 50’s wearing overalls and smiling, raised his megaphone and welcomed the group, and we began our “circle” ritual. Bran walked around the circle with the megaphone and gave each in the group time to say their name and anything else on their mind. I announced that it would be my last week and one of my closest interlocutors, Joe, a white man in his 60’s who is a widely known and respected activists in the peace and justice community, told me that they would give me a proper send off. After we finished going around the circle every week, we always took time to sing a few songs together, either from memory or from some laminated sheets one of the members, sister to Joyce and also a nun, had prepared for the vigil long ago. This week, however, I was asked to stand in the center of the circle. Everyone shuffled in closer to me and reached out a hand to touch me. It was a rainy day so most participants had umbrellas. The clump around me became like a large tent of umbrellas. The entire group joined in song from memory.

Rainbow woman, rainbow woman
Go where you want to go, do what you want to do
Our love will follow you
Rainbow woman, rainbow woman
Go where you want to go, do what you want to do
Our love will follow you.  

Unfortunately, I know very little about the history or meaning of this song. I have not been able to find its lyrics in any source. It was clear from the event, however, that this song is essential to the Twin Cities Group’s traditional way to say goodbye to someone. Every participant appeared to know the words to the song.
After the singing, another one of my close friends, Anthony, a shy white man in his 50’s who wore glasses and usually talked to me about books, presented me with a gift. It was a box of cards made from his own photography. The photographs were varied: a beautiful hilly landscape, the interior of an ornate greenhouse, a famous modern art piece in Minneapolis. There was also a framed photograph of a picture he had taken of a field of sunflowers with one sunflower standing above the rest. It said on the back that I am a “standout for peace.” I was so moved by the ritual and the feeling of everyone’s love and support. I even noticed another of my close interlocutors, Scout, tearing up. I was struck by how much I felt like part of the group despite the relatively short time I had been in Minnesota and the difference between my age and that of the rest of the group. In truth, prior to this morning I felt like I had spent months with a group of interesting acquaintances, but had not connected with them beyond an academic level. At that moment, I felt truly appreciated and valued.

It is no coincidence that the analysis of the Twin Cities group begins here with the end of our time together and with my experience. It is moments like this that illustrate the camaraderie and solidarity of the group. This particular event, with its inclusion of ritual, group recitation, and sense of equality, generates something similar to what Victor Turner called “communitas.” As I stood in the center of the huddle on that morning, under a cluster of umbrellas watching the people I had come to know as a student of peace work, a student of anthropology, and a friend, I felt what I think Turner was attempting to describe when he wrote about the solidarity and equality of communitas, that “flash of lucid mutual understanding on the existential level” (1982:45-48).

Additionally, though the lyrics of the song suggest it would only be used as a send off for women, I imagine there must be a similar ritual, maybe the same with a slight alteration of the lyrics, for men.
This chapter will elaborate on the concept of communitas and connect it to Turner’s notions of liminality and ritual. It will consider Turner’s analysis of liminality, communitas, and ritual, and explain the ways each concept is related to the others. Furthermore, liminality, communitas, and ritual will be applied to the vigils, protests, meals, and gatherings of the Twin Cities Group in order to understand the nuanced ways these concepts relate to my field research.

Victor Turner’s Concept of Communitas

In his studies of rites of passage, Turner highlighted the concept of communitas as a mode of relationships facilitated by rituals and the liminality they generate. Turner used the word communitas rather than community to articulate a specific feeling, sense, and kind of relationship rather than a location of “communal living” (1995:96). He described “the spontaneous, immediate, concrete nature of communitas, as opposed to the norm-generated, institutionalized, abstract nature of social structure” (1995:127). In communitas, social structure is “simplified and homogenized” (Turner 1974:201) such that everyone becomes a part of a “communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of ritual elders” (Turner 1995:-96). Communitas is defined by its anti-structure, which we can understand in some cases as a lack of structure and in others as an alternative structure. This rejection of the structures of society at large is inherently dangerous to society, and as a result communitas is often bounded by specific requirements and conditions (Turner 1995). Paradoxically, these requirements often take the form of structures that not only set limits on communitas, but also sustain it. Turner argued that “communitas is made evident or accessible, so to speak, only through its juxtaposition to, or hybridization with, aspects of social structure” (1995:127). The fragile relationship between structure and communitas often means that communitas cannot be
sustained for long. The transitory nature of communitas can result in the establishment of what Turner calls “normative communitas,” which occurs when the “existential or spontaneous communitas” by necessity “is organized into a perduiring social system” (1995:132). A group, for example, might define roles for its members such that solidarity and equality are emphasized. Alternatively, Turner argued that “existential or spontaneous communitas” can also be realized through utopian structures in what he calls “ideological communitas” (1995:132). In this mode of communitas, Turner referenced alternative communities, like intentional communities. These three iterations of communitas illustrate the complexity of the relationship between structure and communitas. Communitas may be fleeting, it may be normalized with social structures, or it may be facilitated by utopian social models.

Two of my friends provide insight into the kind of communitas facilitated by the Twin Cities Group. They argued that the structures of “regular” society imposed by gender, politics, and socioeconomic status do not disappear in the Twin Cities Group, but are negotiated differently. This indicates that structures play some part in whatever sense of communitas exists, which might lead us to believe that the group represents a normative communitas because the structures of society might only have been manipulated in order to maintain a sense of solidarity. Yet, it is hard to think of the Twin Cities Group as representing a “perduiring social system” (1995:132). Perhaps then we might think of the Twin Cities Group’s protests as based on utopian models which generate the qualities of communitas. And yet, this is also not completely satisfactory, because there are not clearly articulated utopian models beyond nonviolence. No structures exist for the whole group that significantly modify, for example, living situations, participation in the economy, or understandings of private property. Perhaps the theory of nonviolence could be emphasized such that it would create a utopian model, but some in the
Twin Cities Group itself admit that they do not follow the doctrine of nonviolence completely in every aspect of their lives at all times. Thus, we are left with the conclusion that different iterations of communitas are present at different times and in the various contexts in the Twin Cities Group. Shifts between these modes also complicate Turner’s analysis of communitas, and suggest that there are three distinct forms of communitas rather than allowing for fluidity in the way communitas is experienced.

Turner’s understanding of communitas includes qualities beyond the lack of structure or presence of anti-structure. He associated communitas with people who occupy the lowest positions in a hierarchy of social status. This is because these individuals have a kind of “sacred power,” which positions them particularly well in the ambiguous places on the interstices of society (1995:125). Furthermore, the unique position of these actors often gives them rights to criticize the larger social structure. Turner discussed court jesters and members of the Barotse royal barge who have the special privilege of criticizing the political leaders. This results in a paradoxical understanding of these figures in society. They are at once reviled for their low status and threatening communitas, but they also “symbolize the moral values of communitas as against the coercive power of supreme political rulers” (1995:110). It is no surprise then that we would find communitas among a group of peace activists. Peace and nonviolent protest, as I argued in the previous chapter, are at once vilified and revered. Peace workers are at times, or even simultaneously, demonized for what some see as their anti-patriotic behavior and praised for their participation in what others would argue is the essence of what it means to be American – freedom of speech, democracy, the challenge of the underdog to authority.

The negative reputation of the peace movement and the belief that its activities in America are anarchical and threatening exemplifies the tendency for groups characterized by
communitas to be perceived dangerous. It is clear from the police supervision of the Twin Cities Group protests and some negative responses from the peace and justice community and the rest of society that this kind of behavior, the way in which the Twin Cities Group attempts to create change, is threatening to society. Additionally, the bad press the Occupy Movement has received in America today illustrates the threat people feel from groups that lack clear goals and organization and define themselves by a rejection of certain social structure.

Turner talked specifically about communitas in Western “hippie” and “beat” groups. He made connections between the qualities of communitas and the way “hippies” “opt-out” of the status-bound social order and acquire the stigma of the lowly,” express interest in Zen Buddhism, “stress personal relationships rather than social obligations,” and privilege “spontaneity, immediacy, and ‘existence’” (1995:113). This is significant for the Twin Cities group because many members of the group began their peace and justice work in the sixties, seventies, and eighties when “hippies” and the “beat generation” were popular. Like the “hippies,” some members of the Twin Cities group also “opt-out” of the structures of society. Some do not have “regular” jobs but rather consider their peace and justice work to be their main occupation. There are also several who are nuns, which entails the rejection of many American social structures like marriage and children. Others choose not to participate in the problematic economic structures of food production and consumption by choosing to be vegetarians. Additionally, the spiritual interests of the group, Native American spirituality, progressive spirituality, Quakerism, the Mennonite Church, and a Catholic community which has rejected some of the teachings of the Catholic Church and gone its own way, illustrate the way members of the group reject mainstream religious practices.
The Twin Cities Group works to cultivate a communitas by abandoning some of the structures of society and developing others in order to foster spontaneity and solidarity. For example, the group actively challenges social norms by utilizing spaces in socially unexpected ways, but its members also perpetuate the group's own social norms, like the way in which appearance should be managed in order to express individuality and personal style without participating in materialistic overvaluation of clothing or accessories. Whatever alternative structures the group emphasizes, however, do not immediately appear to be particularly well-defined. Rather, most vigils I participated in had a free-form atmosphere, though there were certainly structured rituals for certain circumstances. The kind of structures the Twin Cities Group highlights in their vigils, demonstrations, and protests even seem to challenge the structures privileged by other social movement groups. Rather than organizing one-time protests or demonstrations that emphasize goals, solicitations to local news groups, or the introduction of new tactics, the group prides itself on its continued presence and work to create change through modeling peaceful and just behaviors. Certainly, however, all of these structures, including goals, media attention, and tactics, are important to the Twin Cities Group and other groups working to promote social change. The distinction is between the ways in which these structures are emphasized or de-emphasized. We might think of the attempt to facilitate spontaneity and solidarity within the alternative structures of the Twin Cities Group's protest events as support for interpreting their camaraderie as normative communitas.

Another example of this attempt to utilize structure to perpetuate communitas comes in a recent change in the structure of the Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers, MAP, meetings. Many members of the Twin Cities group attend these meetings every other month. In total, around 35 people are typically in attendance at MAP meetings. I consider between one quarter and one half
of those at MAP meetings members of the Twin Cities Group because of their frequent protesting. Previously the structure had been that the meeting was a time for each member organization to briefly share their current projects and solicit the participation and support of the other members. In the summer of 2011, MAP decided to adopt a new structure called “Open Spaces.” The meeting begins with a number of paper-filled clipboards in the center of the floor. The number of clipboards corresponds to the number of small circles of chairs in the meeting room so that if there are seven circles of chairs, there are seven clipboards that are taken by whoever wants to propose a topic of discussion, facilitate the discussion, and take notes on the clipboard. The members of MAP may go to any circle they want and can stay as long as they choose, moving from circle to circle as their interests change. The result of this new meeting style is a rather structured meeting in the sense that conversations are limited once topics have been chosen, spaces are defined for discussion and sharing with the whole group, and time limits are enforced. Yet, what makes this structure notable is that it is designed to facilitate equal sharing, spontaneity in conversation topics, and camaraderie. This new meeting structure is an example of what Turner indicated occurs when groups “under the influence of time, the need to mobilize and organize resources, and the necessity for social control among the members” work to “organize” communitas into a system (1995:132). Thus, a structure for the meetings has been put in place rather than completely unmediated conversation, but the structure tries to maintain some of the benefits of free-form conversation, such as, for example, the opportunity for the equal participation of those talking.

Communitas, Liminality, Ritual
It is important to note that communitas does not merely come into existence, but rather it is generated by rituals and events. Much of the academic conversation about the categories of behavior that facilitate communitas centers on ritual and liminality (Bell 1997; Rubenstein 1992; Jencson 2008; Hambrick 1979; Woocher 1977). These categories are often, but not necessarily, intimately related. Rituals may create a liminal period, but liminality\(^6\) can also facilitate the enactment of ritual. In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Victor Turner carefully defined ritual. He described ritual as “prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers” (1967:19). Simply put, rituals are not repetitions that just happen. Rituals are planned and are meaningful because of their value which extends into a realm of meaning that is beyond the mundane nature of “normal” human activity. Furthermore, Turner (1967) articulated the symbol as the smallest unit still containing the meaning of the ritual (1967:-19). Yet, Turner did not believe that the symbols of rituals could be studied in isolation. Rather, he found it imperative to consider them in the context of the ritual which is essentially tied to social process. He viewed rituals as “distinct phases in the social processes whereby groups [become] adjusted to internal

\(^6\) Turner would probably consider his conception of liminoid as a better fit for the situations discussed in this thesis than liminality. Turner believed there was a difference between the phase of transition labeled here liminality in pre- and post-Industrial Revolution societies. He bases this argument on an analysis of the differences between understandings of work, play, and leisure in these two categories of society he has created. His argument is that in post-Industrial Revolution societies, leisure/play and work are separated whereas in pre-Industrial Revolution societies, all work has an element of play (1982: 29-30). Thus, Turner differentiates between liminality, the transition phase in pre-Industrial Revolution societies, and liminoid, the same phase in post-Industrial Revolution societies. These two concepts are similar, but liminoid “resembles” liminality without the same sense of obligation (Turner 1982: 32). Turner (1982) believes liminality is characterized by obligation, whereas in a post-Industrial Revolution society we might encounter liminality-like situations, but we are not obligated to be in the liminal position. Though I acknowledge that there might indeed be differences between different cultures in their understandings of work and play, I, like Spariosu (1997), wish to challenge the notion that this split occurs cleanly between pre- and post-Industrial Revolution Societies. Furthermore, if we accept that liminality best applies when work and leisure exist on a continuum, then liminality is very appropriate for this project’s consideration of the Twin Cities Group where the borders between work, hobby, play, and occupation are blurred. Some in the Twin Cities Group are retired, others call themselves professional activists, though they make no money off of their activities, and most consider their protest activities their life calling and their social time.
changes adapted to their external environment,” which leads Turner to conclude that “the ritual
symbol becomes a factor in social action” (1967:20). Though it is useful for us to think about
rituals as part of social action, and, in this case, specifically actions that generate communitas or
liminality, Turner’s focus on the role of ritual in internal adjusting or adapting to external
changes hints at his functionalist tendencies. Perhaps even the way the Twin Cities Group blurs
the distinction between the group and external circumstances complicates Turner’s suggestion
that the internal and external are clearly differentiated and stand in a causal relationship vis-à-vis
each other.

The way in which ritual might foster liminality is described by Turner in his discussion of
rites of passage. Rites of passage are specific types of rituals that relate to significant life
changes and have special characteristics. Turner drew on Van Gennep’s understanding of rites
of passage as containing three phases. The first is of separation from the larger community.
This involves “symbolic behavior,” which conveys the dissolution of a connection between a
person or group of persons and “an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural
conditions” (Turner 1967:94). The second phase, the liminal phase, which is of particular
interest to Turner, is a phase of inbetweenness where the individual or group are not of the state
they just left, but not yet of the state they will become; in this phase “the ritual subject … is
ambiguous” (1967:94). The final phase is of the reincorporation of the individual or group into
society where the individual or group is again subject to the structures of that society (Turner
1967).

Yet, liminality is not only produced during rites of passage. Turner describes rituals that
he did not classify as rites of passage as containing phases with characteristics like that of the
liminal period. For example, Turner considers Ndembu rituals that address issues related to
reproduction. He names four that all are composed of three phases. In the second phase, the
subjects are secluded, "separated from everyday existence," and required to respond
appropriately to certain taboos (1967:13). These examples, and the discussion of rites of passage
above, exemplify how liminality can be created through ritual. As mentioned, however,
liminality can also contribute to the enactment of rituals. Turner argued that "liminality,
marginality, and structural inferiority" are "conditions" which often "generate" ritual (1995:128).
For example, in the Twin Cities Group, though this was never stated explicitly, it seemed that the
ritual of the sharing circle at the ATK emerged because of the need to share thoughts in response
to negative attention from bystanders and surveillance from guards. These three conditions also
foster communitas (Turner 1995). Thus, the generation of communitas and ritual are related
because the same conditions foster their development. Furthermore, because rituals can generate
liminal periods, and liminality can foster communitas, the part ritual might play in the creation of
communitas is apparent, but even where ritual is not imbued with communitas, it may still be
parallel to communitas in its rejection of "the order of things with a form of dramatic/poetic
license" (Wegley 2007:57). Complicated as these categories may be, they prove to be invaluable
analytical tools in the consideration of the Twin Cities group.

In order to better understand the concept of liminality, one must also consider the
qualities Turner associated with this state in addition to ambiguity and inbetweenness. The
degree to which these qualities are associated with liminality depends entirely on the context,
however, such that some of these attributes are meaningful analytical tools, while others are not
applicable for this discussion. Through several books, Turner articulated how liminality often is
accompanied by "outsiderhood", symbols of poverty and nature, a de-emphasizing of gender
distinctions, celibacy or "free love", humiliation (1974:233, 245, 253, 247, 246, 260), the use of
death as a symbol (1967:96), silence, foolishness, anonymity, and sacredness (1967:106). These attributes are articulated differently in various spatial and temporal contexts. Thus, liminality might mean many things and it is the combination of certain qualities and inbetweenness which makes Turner’s notion of liminality a rich category rather than a name for the mere lack of structure in certain social situations.

Turner’s notion that liminal periods can be conducive to reflection and consideration of important questions is of particular interest for the actions of the Twin Cities Group. Turner argued that periods of liminality free those in this state from the confines of previous states which allows them “to contemplate for a while the mysteries that confront all men, the difficulties that peculiarly beset their own society, their personal problems, and the way in which their own wisest predecessors have sought to order, explain away, cloak, or mask … these mysteries and difficulties” (1974:242). The potentially experimental and transformative aspects of liminality are also related to Turner’s idea that a special knowledge, a “gnosis,” is often related to liminal periods. Gnosis often accompanies liminal periods and is powerful in its ability to change those to whom this knowledge is revealed (Turner 1974). Perhaps this knowledge is so powerful because of its exclusivity. Turner (1967) argued that the gnosis made available to those in liminal periods is carefully guarded by cultural protections. These characteristics of liminality are useful for understanding the work of the Twin Cities Group, a group that is oriented towards the transformation of society through knowledge of its ills and introspection. The knowledge one gains, whether it’s gained through watching a Twin Cities Group protest or participating in one, is described as powerful in the way it changes people. There is a belief in the group that once you know, once you really understand problems in society, you have no choice but to work to make a difference. Thus, when I began attending
vigils, I was given books and encouraged to routinely listen to certain news sources. This knowledge even takes on a sacred dimension as an ineffable motivator. One particularly vocal and iconic leader in the Twin Cities Group would often invoke the sacredness of knowledge in discussion. When people waffled or acted uncertain about the navigation of the onslaught of information available regarding a controversial event, this leader, Sam, would give his interpretation of the event, which was informed by the news sources the group accepted, and emphasize the sacredness of this knowledge by placing his fist on a table or in his other hand and saying, “it’s the truth.”

With this discussion of ritual, liminality, and communitas in mind, we might return to the event described in the beginning of this chapter. The ritual of singing to someone leaving the group can be interpreted as a rite of passage that put me in a liminal situation where I was not part of the group, but not yet gone as I went with the group after this ritual to breakfast and I continued to see them over the next few days before I left. The symbols employed in this ritual include the circle formed around me and everyone placing a hand on me. The ritual increased the sense of solidarity which reconstituted the group drawing attention to the group’s role as an alternative to the injustice of the rest of society. This ritual exemplifies the ways in which rituals constitute the group and allow the group to engage with society at large, themes that will be analyzed in greater detail in the following chapter about meal sharing, memory, and knowledge politics.
Chapter Four: Sharing Meals, Memory, and Knowledge

“We shall not, we shall not be moved
We shall not, we shall not be moved
Just like a tree that’s standing by the water
We shall not be moved”

- Traditional American folk song

One particular ritual that is important in the remaking of the communitas of the Twin Cities group during different group activities is dining. The sharing of a meal is not only about satisfying the group’s hunger, it is also an important social and symbolic event. The inclusion of a meal or coffee break at almost every protest event, regardless of the time of day, and the social/symbolic value of these meals, which is so great that it is not uncommon for a person who misses a protest to join the group later for the meal, suggests that these mealtimes are ritualistic. Evidence that these gatherings for food are not merely added out of necessity is reflected in the way the meals or snacks are enjoyed, the kind of conversations that are participated in, and the length of time spent at restaurants. All three weekly protests I attended contained an eating component. The vigil at ATK, which felt like the “home base” activity of the group, began each morning at seven. We participated in the vigil for an hour, and then the entire group would drive to a chain restaurant a few minutes away. The organizers of the vigil once produced maps that showed the location of ATK in relation to major highways and the restaurant the group ate at each week indicating the importance of the meal to the vigil. By the time I started participating in the vigil, everyone knew the way to the restaurant and were adept in managing the transportation from one location to the other. Participants were used to organizing carpools, adjusting their personal schedules to the timeframe of the vigil and breakfast, picking up the signs from the protests and storing them in someone’s car, navigating construction and bad weather, and making quick time from the vigil to the booths of the restaurant.
Participants of the vigil would arrive at the restaurant as soon as they could. Some group members always got there early and some spent more time walking to their cars from the site of the vigil. Others stopped to smoke a cigarette before entering the restaurant. On some days, people who could not make it to the vigil due to some conflict in their schedule would meet the rest of the participants at the restaurant. As we wondered in, the staff, who, after years of serving the same group members, were prepared for our entrance, would begin filling glasses of water and taking them over to our regular tables. The group always chose a few rectangular tables along the back wall of the restaurant and one large circular table nearby. Usually, seating was not determined in any way other than by time of arrival, but sometimes, when peace work needed to be discussed over the meal, the group would divide in order to allow smaller groups to sit together. For example, some weeks those who owned stock in ATK and could attend shareholders meetings or those who had been arrested at a recent event would all sit together at the large circular table in order to plan for upcoming events.

Right away, conversation would begin. Conversation was often of the same kind that group members participated in at the vigil: a mix of discussion about other group members, the news, politics, peace, and international issues. Quickly, waitresses would come over to the tables. They never brought menus because they knew that the group members had long ago stopped needing them. Many group members ordered the same thing each week and many shared each week with the same people, but periodically people would decide to order something special and proffer up an explanation for their change in behavior. People ate slowly each week and many enjoyed several cups of coffee. Usually the food was not a particularly significant source of conversation except for the occasional comment about how appealing a certain person's breakfast looked. The group had also developed a relationship with the wait staff. One
of the older women in the group told me once at breakfast that they had worked at talking to their old waitress about what they were doing at the ATK vigil. She felt like they had really made a difference in the way the waitress viewed conflict. While I was with the group, however, I did not witness any significant exchange between the waitress and the group. After about an hour, the waitress would distribute checks individually and the group would leave little by little after stopping to pay at the cashier.

The other trips to restaurants that were attached to group activities were either not as long or I did not attend the restaurant portion. On Thursday at 12:30 PM I would meet several members of WAMM, the Women Against Military Madness, a group with significant overlap with the group of people I call the Twin Cities group, at a regional chain coffee shop before we demonstrated along a busy street in downtown Minneapolis. People arrived slowly and usually the first person to arrive would order a drink or food and find a table. Often this seemed to be out of consideration for the coffee shop rather than the group member's desire to eat or drink. This was especially true during the summer when the coffee shop gave away free small glasses of iced coffee outside. On these days the pressure for someone to purchase something from the coffee shop was more explicit.

Over drinks and small pastries, participants in the demonstration would wait for everyone they expected to participate to arrive, talk about the day or the news, and organize. At this time we would discuss each person's role in the demonstration. A few people would hand out stickers. Others would distribute small flyers with information. One person would be responsible for operating a small video camera if a professional camera man had not come along. If the event had a theatrical element, which it did every week that I participated, those who were thought to be the best actors would be given no responsibilities except to draw sufficient
attention to the group and be convincing in their performance. Finally, the group would use this opportunity to practice a song if one would be included in the demonstration. I was often aware how uncomfortable I felt while doing this inside of a coffee shop. This last fact emphasizes the differences between the restaurant component of this activity and the restaurant visit of the ATK protest. Whereas the group participants were model diners after the ATK protest, in their friendly relationship with the wait staff, the efficiency of the meal, and the purchasing of food by every participant, at the coffee shop, we were not ideal customers because of our noise, costumes, signs, lack of purchases, and crowding. Nonetheless, the group members made a point in being exceptionally polite to the employees of the coffee shop and most weeks one of the members of the group would make a comment to the employees about how sorry we were that we were in the way and promise that we would leave soon. Additionally, the group could have met outside, so the choice of the coffee shop as a meeting location is still significant.

The significance of eating and drinking in enhancing a sense of communitas and camaraderie has not been ignored by anthropologists. Scholars have considered how eating and drinking together changes relationships and this is not surprising given the way many people interact with other people while eating across the world. We eat with our family and friends. In America, a meal between two individuals of opposite genders may have romantic connotations. Among the anthropologists who have considered how eating and drinking can facilitate communitas are Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter (1979) who described how Yap eating rituals during the holy month created a kind of communitas. Their work considered in great detail how

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7 Though this project considers how eating and drinking together facilitates camaraderie and equality, it would be unwise to ignore how eating and drinking can perpetuate inequalities in other circumstances. That food can be a medium for asserting dominance is persuasively argued by Luanne Roth (2005). Roth demonstrated that “food may be employed simultaneously to reinforce hegemonic or patriarchal structures as well as punish, cajole, or otherwise negotiate power relationships” (2005: 197).
social status affects the sharing of food. During the holy month, through rituals of feasting and fasting, the normal social hierarchies were undermined. Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter described how “a 20-day period of rest and sharing of good food” for women, children, and young men exemplifies the increase of social freedom and contributes to a sense of communitas (1979:423). The older men and those with social status must fast during this time. For them it was “a time of seclusion, fasting, learning, and ambiguity between communitas and structure” (Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter 1979: 423). The work of Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter suggests that the act of eating meal allows for multiple possibilities to emerge including those that might affect the bonds of human relationships. Perhaps we can even think of a meal itself as a liminal time that is the transition between the parts of our days and where the potential for the re-negotiation of structures emerges.

Rubenstein (1992) echoed the idea that eating together can affect relationships. He argued eating together creates a sense of togetherness related to communitas in his study of rituals related to the Jewish holiday Purim. The feasting, drinking, and celebrating of the holiday creates a sense of joy. Food is eaten together and given as gifts. Rubenstein wrote that the “exchange of food creates a sense of mutuality and symbolizes the interrelatedness of the individuals” (1992:259). The joy these rituals of food sharing create in combination with “intoxication, feasting, and these colorful festivities encourage spontaneous celebration, the destruction of normal protocol, and an experience of communitas” (1992:260). Similarly for the Twin Cities group, eating together creates a communal feeling. In fact, when I explained the concept of communitas to my friend Penny and asked her how it might be generated in the Twin Cities Group, she told me directly that it is done through “eating together.”
The liminal aspects and communitas Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter (1979) and Rubenstein (1992) suggested might be present during the eating of Yap holy month and Purim are also visible in the meals of the Twin Cities Group. Like the indulgence of eating identified by these scholars as a part of what makes mealtime fun and encourages camaraderie, so there is also some element of indulgence when the Twin Cities Group eats out together. Though most in the group are very money conscious and the restaurants that the group frequents are not particularly fancy, someone’s decision to order something new, a special on the menu, or a new restaurant might elicit talk that heightens the sense that to be served at a restaurant can be a treat. The group also enjoys their time at the restaurants leisurely eating slowly and enjoying conversation.

Beyond the leisure of time, the idea of “eating out” in American society contains many layers of meaning. Going out to eat often carries the meanings of luxury and indulgence, though this may not always be true in practice. Additionally, the idealized image of meals in American society is that of the Family Dinner. Time Magazine captures this ideal perfectly:

June Cleaver is in an apron and pearls, Ward in a sweater and tie. The napkins are linen, the children are scrubbed, steam rises from the green-bean casserole, and even the dog listens intently to what is being said. This is where the tribe comes to transmit wisdom, embed expectations, confess, conspire, forgive, repair. (Elins 2006)

The article goes on to conclude that the “ideal runs so strong and so deep in our culture and psyche that when experts talk about the value of family dinners, they may leave aside the clutter of contradictions” (Elins 2006), like that the Family Dinner model is not practical for or of interest in many families. Because this ideal is so influential in the American conception of what eating rituals should be, the Twin Cities Group eating together functions as a modification of eating ritual. The shift from the ideal of eating with family to the reality of the group eating together equates the group with family which furthers a sense of solidarity and togetherness.
This is an example of the way in which the group facilitates normative communitas, discussed in the previous chapter, by negotiating the structures of daily life to generate communitas. An alternative reading of the group’s modification of the ideal American family meal is that the Twin Cities Group offers a subtle critique of what mealtime should be. In eating together while enjoying thoughtful conversation, often about serious peace and justice issues, the group deemphasizes the values that have become associated with the Family Meal, consumerism and tradition, for example, while emphasizing the values of shared passion, knowledge, and commitment.

Memory: Communitas, Liminality, Performance

The sharing of a meal in the Twin Cities Group is just one ritualized event that cultivates a sense of communitas. The solidarity and equality of the group members is also arguably facilitated by memory and the spoken recollection of these memories. Many scholars have discussed the connections between memory and group, or more specifically, memory and communitas (Franko 2007; Aden 1999; Guijarro 2007; Esler 2005; Larson and Lizardo 2007). Turner in his discussion of the varied modes of communitas also noted that communitas could eventually become the “memory of communitas;” the effort to reproduce communitas through constant remembering can create a structured communitas based on the memories of what was (1982:47). Furthermore, Turner noted that communitas is not merely “the product of biologically inherited drives released from cultural constraints” (1995:128), a result of “crowd psychology” (Richman 2002:198). Turner argued instead that communitas is specifically generated by “human faculties, which include rationality, volition, and memory” (1995:128). From these excerpts of Turner’s work alone we can see the complicated relationship between
memory and communitas. Indeed, communitas begets memory as the experiences shared between those involved in the communitas become memories, and yet, memory also begets communitas.

Memories of shared events become potent communitas-generators when they are given meanings that emphasize the continuity and solidarity of the group. Riki Van Boeschoten (2005) described this in her own usage of the concept memory in the creation of group during the Greek Civil War, which was marked by characteristics that she sees as similar to Turner’s communitas. Van Boeschoten described how the changes in structures led to new relationships, which she associates with the “local belonging” of communitas. Memories from this time indicate that at times this sense of “local belonging, cohesion, bonds of kinship, reciprocity, [and] human solidarity” was preferred to the “logic of division” (2005:57). Furthermore, she noted that it is not relevant whether a communitas really existed, whether the memories of solidarity are real, but that it is important that the meanings given to these memories where powerful enough to have created opportunities for solidarity rather than division (2005:57). Van Boeschoten’s analysis illustrated the way in which memories are important carriers of meaning related to the aspects of a group which make it a communitas.

The interpretation of memories can also be used to create communitas through the explicit linking of the present with the past as a way of implying certain things about the present, one’s membership in a group or the noble nature of one’s goals, for example. Maria Gabrielle Swora utilized this understanding of memory in the creation of solidarity in her analysis of the Alcoholics Anonymous. Swora described how individuals interpret their own experiences in the memories of the founding of the organization (2001:60). Moreover, she noted that when individuals use the mode of memory as an interpretive tool to describe their own experiences,
they become “a living memorial to the founding of the fellowship” (2001:60). This is an explicit articulation of the way in which memories can constitute the group, but it takes our analysis one step further. Swora suggested that the members of a group who share their own memories embody their own fellowship. Put more clearly, with the sharing of memories, group members embody their own solidarity.

The linking of the past and the present through memory has also been discussed by Joseph Roach. Yet Roach built on this argument by noting that not only can the present self be substituted for the past self in memory, but that liminal figures can also be substituted for each other. Roach cited the burial of “Laurence Olivier”, a transvestite, as “the surrogated burial of Shakespeare in Westminster Abbey.” This, he argued, is an example of “the uses of liminality in the creation of memory” (2003:131). Similarly, Roach discussed the death of Thomas Betterton who was also substituted for Shakespeare. Betterton’s study of theater connects him to Shakespeare through a chain of teachers: Shakespeare, Taylor, Davenant, Betterton (Roach 2003:132). Roach wrote, “Betterton, paragon of Anglo orature, vessel of its collective memory, thus doubles Shakespeare … but he does so wearing blackface, just as Thomas Jefferson did it in war paint, and Lord Olivier more recently played it in drag” (2003:133). Perhaps, the substitution Roach discussed of liminal figure for a figure in the shared memory of a group can be applied to events as well. The way the Occupy movement has called on Tahrir Square and Tiananmen Square is an example of this process of substitution. Similarly, perhaps we can view the protests of the Twin Cities Group as substituting for previous events such that a chain of protests is created in the memory of those involved in work for peace and justice in the Twin Cities Area. This example also suggests that local spaces used in the protests, vigils, and
demonstrations of the Twin Cities Group include a national and even international dimension in their association with other protests around the globe.

Though Swora never used the term “communitas” to describe the qualities of the group that are fostered by the sharing of memories, her analysis of the connections between memory and the sacred and the connection between memory and liminality suggested that we are not remiss in associating her understanding of fellowship with Turner’s communitas. Swora used the term “anamnesis” to indicate “memorial,” “remembering,” and “not-forgetting,” but the connotation is spiritual (2001:74). The acts of anamnesis performed by the group are more than just the remembering of the past: the remembering has a sacred dimension. This is relevant because of Turner’s association of sacredness and holiness with communitas (1995:128).

Additionally, Swora cited Turner’s concept of liminality in her explanation of memory. She described Turner’s analysis of Ndembu affliction by matrilineal shades and the rituals used to re-orient the afflicted one into “a proper relationship with the afflicting shade” (2001:71). She argued that in this re-orientation of the afflicted, in the transition through the liminal phase of the rite, the afflicted is consecrated as “a living memorial” to the initial cause of the affliction (2001:71). This argument built on Swora’s previous discussion of the embodiment of memory to suggest that it might be something about liminal experiences, which consecrates an individual as a memorial.

A thorough explanation of one case of remembering will provide the opportunity for applying these theories of memory, communitas, and liminality. This example occurred on a warm summer day around 7:30 in the morning in the year 2011 at one of the weekly protests in front of ATK. At the time, the group of peace activists had already been assembled for about half an hour and the portion of the vigil in which the participants stand in a circle and share had
already begun. Like every week, the last person to talk was Bran, because he was the one who walked around the circle with the megaphone letting everyone speak into it on their turn. Bran discussed several different subjects, including recent events in the news, before he began to remember an event that many of those in attendance at that day’s vigil had also witnessed. Bran spoke slowly in the megaphone and told the memory with a smile and a periodic chuckle:

And then for some of us, we are standing on the other side of the driveway there before we circled up here and the sprinklers came on. And it reminded me of the time at the shareholder’s meeting when they were still in Edina and it was … their address was an odd address and the shareholder’s meeting was on an even day and they turned their sprinklers on us who were standing outside there greeting the shareholders coming in. And we promptly went to the police and said you know there’s not even … there’s a watering ban on here in Edina and they got their sprinklers on and they’re not allowed to be watering today. And amazingly the police, the police said to us, well you know that’s not really our problem but we’ll follow up on it or something. And so what they did was they called the public service department in the Edina City Hall and the City hall sent out an inspector really quick to check and then went in and threatened that they were either going to give them a ticket or they had to turn off the sprinklers and so they promptly turned off the sprinklers.

This act of remembering was greeted with smiles, cheers, and claps from the participants at the vigil.

This act of remembering and retelling a past shared event serves the group by tying their present work to their past. This connection serves several purposes: it reminds the current vigil participants of their constant dedication to change, an important value in this group; it indicates that the vigil participants have the power to compel the authorities they are trying to challenge to make changes; it draws attention to the shareholder’s meetings, a routine event which was coming up soon at the time of this remembering; it celebrates the membership of the current vigil participants in a group that can enjoy “inside jokes”; and it reminds the vigil participants of the disdain of ATK towards their efforts to make a better society for everyone, including the ATK
employees; and encourages the current vigil participants to continue their important work. Additionally, this episode of remembering illustrates Swora’s notions of embodiment. Their physical presence in that space, the sidewalk and front lawn of ATK, was at that moment a reminder of what had been, their push for peace and justice, and of the injustice that makes them continue to push. Finally, it is interesting to note the similarities between this act of remembering and a performance. Without expanding on performance, a concept which will be thoroughly discussed in the following chapter, it is notable that the vigil participants listened quietly and clapped at the end of Bran’s account. Additionally, their cheering frames the performance as if the audience is different than the performers. In some sense, they are not cheering for themselves, but for their past selves, though these two “selves” are not so separate. These notes are worth highlighting because they suggest that the retelling of past events inside the group can appear as performances for the self, or to use Clifford Geertz’s phrase, “a story they tell themselves about themselves” (1994: 121).

Though shared memories can certainly generate solidarity, this does not mean that they are always enough to hold a communitas together. As will be discussed later, when ATK moved away from Minnesota, Bran was not in favor of transforming the ATK group into something new in order to maintain the weekly connection between the ATK vigil participants, despite his recollection of the past. His resistance to continuing to meet as a group is in line with Turner’s understanding of the risks of communitas that becomes based on memory. Rather than letting the group fall into structure, it seems Bran chose to spend his time on other events likely to generate a fresh communitas.

The Politics of Knowledge in Communitas
Knowledge offers another avenue for the analysis of different moments of communitas. Yet, knowledge and the authority that might accompany specific forms of knowledge complicates the argument that communitas is based on complete equality. The presence of authority based on knowledge is apparent in Turner’s discussion of communitas as well. Turner wrote that there are two “models” of “human interrelatedness.” One model is “an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated comitas,” which he associated with liminality. This model is of a “communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of ritual elders” (1995:96). This “communion of equal individuals” correlates to the solidarity Turner calls communitas, which is especially facilitated by the “lowliness and sacredness” (1995:96) that liminality fosters.

Turner’s discussion of the place of ritual elders in communitas indicates that hierarchy plays some part in the “horizontal comradeship,” to use Benedict Anderson’s phrase (1983:7) which several authors have associated with communitas (Smith 2010 and Bow 2009). The presence of hierarchy and equality seems to be paradoxical. Perhaps this paradox will make sense if we understand the ritual elders, the authorities, as outside of the communitas. As Turner described, communitas consists of “equal individuals who submit” to the elders, those with more knowledge and expertise (1995:96). Yet, this positioning of the ritual elders as outside of the communitas is not possible in the Twin Cities Group. Indeed, authority based on knowledge, that of extensive personal experience, international law, the news, or effective peace-making strategies, is present in the Twin Cities Group, and it would not be appropriate to suggest that when these authorities are emphasized they are separate from the rest of the group. Yet, the acquisition of this authority does not translate into any meaningful increase in status, though the knowledgeable individual may enjoy respect from the group. This argument is elaborated by
Michael Lambek’s (1990) discussion of Mayotte textual authority, though he draws different conclusions about the implications of knowledge on status.

Lambek described the politics of knowledge in a community based on the oral interpretation of texts. His observations of textual authority are comparable to the negotiation of authority in the Twin Cities Group. Lambek considered the recitation of Islamic texts in a community in Mayotte. He drew on Ricoeur in identifying the “the specific problems raised by the translation of the objective meaning of written language into the personal act of speaking... [that is] appropriation” (Lambek 1990:23-4). Lambek noted, then, that “if the ascription of meaning or knowledge is a product of appropriation, it is a political act” (1990:24). We might compare this to the way members of the Twin Cities Group utilize knowledge. Lambek’s analysis suggests that the use of knowledge is a political act intended to change the actor’s status. Lambek supported this conclusion with his argument that knowledge of texts and participation or recitation is a factor in increased status (1990:28).

In my participation in protests, meals, parties, retreats, and speaking events with the Twin Cities Group, several moments of Ricoeur’s “appropriation” transpired in conversation. Sam used the open space of the circle during an ATK vigil to educate the group about the problems with nuclear power plants. Over breakfast after an ATK vigil, Darleen rattled off detail after detail about the dire situation of Palestinians in Israel. In an email, Penny reported on the status of the attempt to protect a local spring from destruction as a result of the construction of a highway. In a coffee shop before a protest event on Nicollet Avenue, Pat explained the influence of the American Legislative Exchange Council on the political decisions made in the United States. During a “Billionaires for War” protest, Cleo clarified for all of the participants what a spectator is referring to in their criticism of the protest. In a presentation before a church, Joe

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8 Yet, this, Lambek states clearly, is not the only factor (1990:25).
informed the audience, many of whom are members of the Twin Cities Group about the realities of work for peace and justice by Afghans in Afghanistan. In these moments, particular people are highlighted for their knowledge, for the skill with which they “appropriate” the texts they read or the opinions they hear on the internet, television, or radio and interpret them meaningfully for the group in a way comparable to Lambek’s description of the appropriation and interpretation of religious knowledge. Yet, in these moments those acting as the “ritual elders” are not seen as somehow separate from the group, and though the rest of the group might in some form “submit” to their authority, either by accepting their judgment of a situation or the background information they provide, whoever is acting as an authority certainly does not enjoy complete submission, as their knowledge and its related authority are at best temporary and contextual and at worst interesting but not an inspiration for any change. Thus, people might act on someone’s demonstration of knowledge, or they might ignore it.

In these liminal spaces, while protesting or eating, for example, members of the group take turns being educated and being educators. The frequency with which knowledge is shared is related to the value of gnosis in the group. Moreover, the importance of gnosis in the group is emphasized by the frequent encouragement I received from group members to listen to appropriate news sources, read certain books, and watch certain videos. Ultimately, the group’s alternation between different authorities, and the times when it appears that no one is more informed than anyone else, creates overlapping perspectives on hierarchy. From one perspective, the group performs protests and communitas-building together in solidarity, without the structures of society at large, and in an equal way. From another perspective, group members take turns being teachers, being ritual elders to which the others submit (or not) by accepting their knowledge. These two perspectives overlap such that when one observes members of the
Twin Cities Group participating in a vigil, meal, or conversation at an art opening, one sees individuals acting as authorities and the equality of the group simultaneously. These two perspectives could be framed as both spontaneous and normative or ideological communitas.

From the perspective of the group participating in a protest event together as equals, the solidarity of spontaneous communitas is emphasized. When we focus on moments where an individual is sharing knowledge, whatever vague hierarchy is created by respect for experience and wisdom hints at the kind of social structures of normative or ideological communitas.

Perhaps the simultaneous moments of authority and equality can be summarized by the notion of sharing, which describes the appropriation and interpretation of knowledge and the generation of solidarity. Sharing also describes group meals and the discussion of memory. Sharing is then another process through which bonds are bridged and solidarity is facilitated. The next chapter elaborates on the results of sharing in a discussion of the way liminality and communitas are generated by the sharing of a performance or a space.
Chapter Five: Performance, Social Drama, and Space

The Liminality of Performance

In addition to its importance in anthropology, the concept of liminality has become significant in the emerging field of performance studies. The connections between this concept and performance are many and will be considered later, but it is important to understand the context in which performance studies developed and the place of Victor Turner’s work in this field. Jeffrey Alexander and Jason Mast argued in their introduction to Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual that Victor Turner built upon the work of Weber and Parsons who supported a “schema of means-ends-norms-conditions, which simultaneously mimicked and critiqued economic man” (2006:10). Alexander and Mast showed how Turner’s conceptualization of social behavior as performance moved performance studies beyond Weber’s conception of a “social act” and Parsons’s action theory. Weber understood a social act to be “all human behavior” with a “subjective meaning” that “takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course” (1964:88). Turner’s understanding of social behavior extended Weber’s analysis by considering not only an actor’s behavior in the context of “the behavior of others,” but also the actor’s behavior in isolation, as a part of a performance. Turner’s contribution to performance theory allows the analyst to conceive of a social act “in a theoretical rather than a nominalist and mundane manner” such that “cultural traditions could be viewed not merely as regulating actions but as informing dramas, the performance of which could display exemplary motives, inspire catharsis, and allow working through” problems (Alexander and Mast 2006:10).
Though Alexander and Mast clearly considered Turner’s contributions to performance theory to be a productive extension of previous understandings of social behavior, the authors also point out that Turner did not leave a completely satisfactory “theory of cultural practice,” because Turner, like others, had a clear nostalgia for a simpler time. Alexander and Mast pointed to Turner’s belief that “through liminality we may return to an idealized state of simple humanity, a community of equals” as evidence for Turner’s preoccupation with recreating an idyllic past (Alexander and Mast 2006: 11). Though Alexander and Mast might be right to suggest that Turner’s nostalgia may limit “the implications” of his theory, nostalgia for a simpler society might not be so incongruent with the desire of some in the Twin Cities Group for a less complicated present. Several in the group do not use email, and make jokes periodically about their understanding of computers. Members of the group frequently express concern about the technology of today’s world and how it is allowing for a different kind of war through the use of drones, cluster bombs, landmines, or guns that shoot around corners. Yet, I know that to suggest that members of the Twin Cities Group long for the past would be simplistic and inaccurate. Though there may be some nostalgia for an older simplicity, there is also joy in the increased awareness of inequalities and social justice in contemporary society and hope for the future.

Gerardo, an artist one of my friends from the Twin Cities Group introduced me to, suggested that Victor Turner believed in all of these utopian possibilities because he was an old “white guy” – the implication being that Turner could romanticize the past because people with his level of education, skin color, nationality, and sex would not have had to suffer in the past in the same way as others.

Victor Turner is, of course, just one of several theorists who have contributed to performance theory. Other scholars have given different definitions of performance, a few of
which are especially useful for the purposes of this thesis. John MacAloon wrote that performances are “occasions in which as a culture or society we reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatize our collective myths and history, present ourselves with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others” (1984:1). This definition of performance is helpful for understanding the activities of those in the Twin Cities Group because it suggests that performance is introspective. This might entail an audience, but as Marvin Carlson pointed out, the audience might occasionally be the self (1996:6). This point helps us understand the weekly vigils of the Twin Cities Group at ATK. Certainly these weekly vigils qualify as “protest events,” a phrase used by Ron Eyerman (2006) to describe occurrences of protest that suggest there are performative aspects to protest, and yet, they have occurred in front of roughly the same audience weekly for about fifteen years. Because the ATK headquarters was very isolated, almost no one drove by who was not an employee, and never in my time in Minnesota did I see someone who was not a part of the protest or an employee of ATK pass by on the sidewalk. Some might argue, and several peace activists in the area have, that the time and repetition has emptied the performance of most of its intended meaning. They argue that the performers have disappeared for the audience, the ATK employees, that they have “faded into the woodwork,” as John, one of my friends in the area, suggested. Perhaps this is true, but the self-audience, the audience that is the group itself, never went away and the performance continued to be meaningful throughout the years for many of my interlocutors, evidenced by their steady attendance and current nostalgia for the ATK protests. Even the choreography of the vigil suggests that the performance was intended just as much for those driving to work as those participating in the event. The first half of the vigil was spent facing the employees driving to work. Vigil participants held signs and waved at those in cars. But even
during this time, conversations occurred between those participating in the vigil that might have caused the participants to orient themselves slightly away from those driving into the ATK office. The second half of the vigil, however, was performed in a circle such that everyone had their back to the street, the entrance to the ATK parking lot, and the ATK office building. Because the vigil was only seen by ATK employees driving by, the vigil was an almost entirely visual performance. Thus, when the activists turn their backs to the road it indicates a shift in focus.

Other understandings of performance emphasize the connection between performance and theater. Performance is of course not necessarily equivalent to theater, but as Philip Auslander suggested, “it may well be that our primary concept of what performance is derives inevitably from theatre” (1995:80). Thus, we might think of performances as having audiences, casts of characters, and rehearsals. Joseph Esherick and Jeffrey Wasserstrom (1990) even provided persuasive evidence to suggest that protests on the street might work from “scripts” of sorts. Esherick and Wasserstrom argued that Charles Tilly’s (see Tilly 1978) notion of a “historically established ‘repertoire’ of collective action” served as a script for Chinese protestors in 1989 (Esherick and Wasserstrom 1990:839). That there is some repertoire of material ready for use in a protest is apparent in discussions with the Twin Cities Group about protests. For vigils, many participants carry signs. When I was struggling to figure out what to put on my own sign I asked a veteran peace activist in the group for guidance, and he told me that he prefers to keep it general and positive. At one weekly vigil, for example, he always carried a large rainbow flag that said only “PEACE.” In this way, he represented the spirit of nonviolent vigil by loving his enemies such that even his protesting is not aggressive or insulting. This example illustrates
the thoughtfulness of the protesters in creating a “script,” a repertoire of slogans and one-liners that has been tested and is thought to express the messages of the protest action.

The Elements of Performance and Social Drama

Richard Schechner argued that there are seven phases in a “performance sequence” including “training, workshops, rehearsals, warm-ups, performance, cool-down, and aftermath” (1985:16). Schechner noted, however, that these aspects of the performance sequence may not be articulated equally in different performances across cultures (1985:19). Schechner is a primary example of a scholar of performance theory who incorporates Turner’s ideas into his work. Turner and Schechner even collaborated in a summer institute where they led students in the “performance” of Turner’s ethnographic work (1982:92). Schechner used Turner’s concept of liminality to group the seven phases he saw as part of a performance sequence. He posited that “training workshop, rehearsal, and warm-ups are preliminary, rites of separation. The performance itself is liminal, analogous to the rites of transition. Cool-down and aftermath are postliminal, rites of incorporation” (1985:20-1). Schechner’s association of his performance phases with the stages of a rite of passage makes sense in that during the training/workshops/rehearsals one is separating from the “real” world in preparation for a liminal event and during cool-down/aftermath one is reintegrating into “regular life,” Schechner also suggested that workshop is a liminal phase in itself because it is “a deconstruction process, where the readymades of culture … are broken down and prepared to be ‘inscribed’ upon” (1985:99). Thus, one would be mistaken to think a phase of performance is always preliminal, liminal, or postliminal.
Victor Turner also considered performance theory in his work. He referred to a type of performance as a “social drama” which has four parts. The first stage is the “breach of a norm” which may be accidental or intentional. The second is a stage of crisis. During crisis conflicts emerge where there might have been a seeming peace earlier. The third stage is of redress. In this stage, actions are taken to minimize “the contagious spread” of the violation of norm or custom (1982:70). Finally, in the fourth stage, the group responsible for the breach either reintegrates into society, though some things might be different, or determines the conflict is insurmountable and leaves the group (1982:71). Turner argued that it is the third stage, that of redress, that is characterized by liminality. He argued that this is a “liminal time, set apart from the ongoing business of quotidian life, where an interpretation … is constructed to give the appearance of sense and order to the events leading up to and constituting the crisis” (1982:75). Yet, liminality is arguably generated in stages other than those identified by Schechner and Turner. We could associate Turner’s liminal redressive period with Schechner’s (1985) understanding of the aftermath in which a performer might be involved in generating meaning through the processing of critiques and reviews or the production of scholarship or theory. We might then see Schechner’s aftermath as liminal and Turner’s stage of redress as a part of the meaning-making which is required to re-enter society. Furthermore, we might note that Turner’s stages of breach and crisis have the potential to be performative and thus, might be liminal in the same way Schechner argues the phase of performance is.

Turner’s theory of social drama also allows us to contextualize the protest performances of the Twin Cities Group as a response to the actions of politicians, economists, and corporate leaders. In a sense, the decision to plan and participate in a vigil, protest, or demonstration is motivated by what the members of the Twin Cities Group see as a breach of social norms, such
as, for example, the government’s use of drones. The protests of the Twin Cities Group target whomever is responsible for the breach, be it those who work on Wall Street, in the White House, or for ATK. The performance of the protest and its potentially chaotic or disruptive nature constitute a part of the crisis caused by the breach committed by the target of the protest. However, these protest activities also contribute to meaning generation of the redressive phase, in that the way that those targeted by the protest respond is a particularly critical element of the phase of redress.

One of the weekly protests on Nicollet Avenue, a protest which will be described in detail below, illustrates the network of social dramas I am describing. This protest is generally about peace and justice, but it seems that each week takes a different more specific direction, like “Crones against Drones” or “How is the War Economy Working for You?” This particular week in July of 2011 was about the Minnesota state shutdown and the location was inside of the city hall because it was raining outside. The basic tension of the state shutdown, as described in chapter two, was about the best way to make up for a budget deficit. Governor Mark Dayton wanted to tax the wealthiest whereas many conservative Republicans and Tea Party members wanted to cut programs. The morning of this protest, Governor Dayton announced that he had agreed to compromise with the Republicans, and that the wealthiest Minnesotans would not be taxed. Before the protesters learned of this announcement, they had planned on responding to what they saw as a breach of social norms by conservative politicians who sought to create laws, which protected the wealthiest citizens of the United States. After the protesters heard about Governor Dayton’s announcement, some proposed that a change in the protest in order to target Dayton by using a one-liner like “Dayton caved!” When the protestors heard Governor Dayton’s announcement about his decision to compromise and the way he framed his decision, however,
they decided not to target Dayton, but rather to frame this political incident as another event where politicians who favor unfair tax policies won again.

This example shows the overlapping social dramas of the protesters, Governor Dayton, and an onlooker. The breach of the protesters, their violation of social norms by participating in protest, overlaps with the crisis of Governor Dayton’s, the conflict across the state about his announcement. When one of the protester’s chose to engage in a conversation with an onlooker, the conversation became heated, exemplifying the crisis of the protest. In the argument that ensued, what was the redressive phase of the protester’s social drama, where they tried to explain their actions to justify their breach and the ensuing crisis, overlapped with the breach by the onlooker who violated social codes by becoming hostile.

The utility of these understandings of performance and social drama is apparent in the application of these concepts to the protests of the Twin Cities Group. Let us consider the rough structure of a weekly protest that I participated in during the summer. This protest occurred weekly during the warmer months in Minnesota, but it had a different theme almost every week. During the shutdown of the state, described in the second chapter of this thesis, the theme was “Billionaires for War” each week. This protest usually involved a group of women, and the occasional man, walking down Nicollet Avenue during lunch. Nicollet Avenue is a very busy thoroughfare in downtown Minneapolis, and only buses and bikes are allowed in the street. In the warmer months, the street is full at lunch time and crowded tables creep out into the sidewalk. Most of the patrons are business people, many of whom work at Target whose headquarters is on Nicollet. The protest was also timed to line up with the farmer’s market, which attracts many people from different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds.
Usually during this protest, the participants would walk down the street with signs and handouts. One woman would operate a camera or a cameraperson from the UpTake, a “citizen fueled” news source (The UpTake 2012), would walk with the group. The camera person would film the procession, periodically stopping to interview someone on the street. During the government shutdown, however, this protest became increasingly focused on performance, specifically satire. The participants in the protest were aware that their “Billionaires for War” theme would require commitment to developing a character and staying with it. Each participant was informed prior to the first Billionaires-themed protest that her or he should dress “like a Billionaire.” The performance was focused on playing with stereotypes. Thus, women wore black clothes, large hats, feather boas, costume diamonds and tiaras, and carried plastic martini glasses. The women would make facetious comments about how glad they were that their taxes would not be raised and how hard life is as a billionaire. Cleo, one of the best actors in the group, joked when state parks, a major source of Minnesotan entertainment during the summer, were being shut down, that there is no need for state parks when we all have summer homes!

Before this protest each week, we all met at a coffee shop on Nicollet Avenue. At the coffee shop we would chat for awhile, compliment each other on our billionaire costumes, and joke about what a struggle it was to find such fancy clothing. I was always dressed among the nicest because I came from work, which meant my clothes were not satirical in the same way the clothes of the other women were, as many of these women did not usually wear long dresses or lots of jewelry. Scout joked at the first Billionaires protest about how she found her costume at Goodwill and how she asked her husband, who she says wears overalls most days of the year, for fashion advice.
As more participants arrived, we started to practice what we might say and looked over
the handouts. The handouts mirrored the performance in that one side was satirical with slogans
like “The Billionaires Won!” (used when the government shutdown ended and the Democratic
governor was not able to increase the taxes of the wealthiest) and the other side had “serious”
facts describing the wealth inequality in America under the heading “Or... Why You Should
OPPOSE the Billionaire’s Agenda!” On some days the participants sang a song as well while
they walked down the busy street. If this was the case, the participants would rehearse the song
inside the coffee shop before we left. After this, we would leave the coffee shop and stroll along
the street for about an hour. As we neared an hour, people would begin to leave. Unlike other
protests, there was no meal to conclude the event. Many participants did return to their cars
together, however, and often in the next few days there would be some exchange via email over
that week's protest, usually occurring when the videos from the week were posted online. The
videos are posted on the UpTake website, a public site, but they are also often included in the
blogs of the activists or in emails between the activists, indicating their place in the memory of
the protesters. The sharing of the videos creates what resembles another performance. There is
also an aftermath to this “performance” in that those in the videos have an opportunity to engage
with the comments they receive on their blogs and the website.

Schechner's seven phase performance sequence is a helpful analytical tool for explaining
this protest because it speaks to the “theatrical” aspects of the performance. We might
understand the training and workshops as necessary to have occurred prior to the arrival of the
participants at the coffee shop. All of the participants had already undergone many years of self-
guided “on the job” training as activists and they were informed on the issues motivating the
protest. Protesters had also put thought into their self-presentation through their consideration of
costumes and props. In the coffee shop, the participants rehearsed. There was discussion about the “script,” the “repertoire” of “one-liners” to shout at those who passed by. People might practice their delivery or begin talking in their Billionaire voice. As we rehearsed the song, the songwriter, a member of the group, would guide the rest of us in making the lyrics fit with the tune and others would comment on our singing in order to improve our pitch. When we left for the street, people acted as if the performance had begun. There was conversation about “breaking character” and playing up the satire such that the message of the protest was effectively conveyed. We might discuss to the side, as if we were off-stage, the moments at which it might be appropriate to “break character” if a passerby seemed to be missing the satire.

Though this protest did not include a meal at the end, which Schechner associated with the cool-down phase (1985:19), we could think of the leisurely return to cars as a cool-down. At this point, the participants considered themselves off-stage after the show. Finally, we might think of the review of the videos as the aftermath.

The analyst of this protest could also benefit from using Turner’s model of social drama. Though this model does not explain the rehearsal and training elements of the protest as well as Schechner’s, it does offer the benefit of explicitly placing the event as a challenge to authority (Turner 1982:70). It also allows us to think about multiple overlapping social dramas. In one social drama the government is responsible for the breach, and the protesters are participating in the crisis. In another social drama, the participants in the protest break social norms by parading in costume on a public street during lunch on a regular day of the week, and immediately there is a crisis. As Turner said, “peace becomes overt conflict and covert antagonisms become visible” (1982:70). The normalness of lunch on a spring or summer day is disrupted and political tensions are brought to the surface. It becomes clear in the faces and behaviors of everyone on
the street how they feel about the breach; sides are taken. Next, both participant and audience partake in the stage of redress. Protesters “break character” to show that they are joking, participant and passerby engage in debate in order to feel out each other’s political views, some on the street stop and ask questions, some who are passing by make a visibly conscious attempt to ignore what is happening. These choices are made such that protester and audience can leave the protest feeling like everything is “ok.” Finally, the participants dissipate, begin to remove their costumes, and start talking in a normal voice. They return to their “regular” lives, but some things might have changed. A person who was walking by on Nicollet during lunch on Thursday might recognize in the grocery store one of the participants and act negatively toward them. Or a member of the “audience” might have been so persuaded by the performance that they join WAMM, the Woman Against Military Madness, the organizer of this protest. Furthermore, the videos and memory of the protest continue to complicate the group’s return to society after the breach of the protest.

Before we consider other aspects of the performances of the Twin Cities Group, it should be noted that both Turner and Schechner believed that the elements of the “rehearsal process” are related to the facilitation of communitas. Turner even argued that the intention of the “disciplines and ordeals” of “the rehearsal process” are “aimed at generating communitas” (1982:119). Thus, understanding the Twin Cities Group as participating in performances also allows us to make the discussion of communitas presented in the last chapter more nuanced. The facilitation of communitas is not just a byproduct of so many hours spent together or a pleasant social side effect, but rather a strategy for the production of the best performance. This is not to suggest that communitas is intentionally used as a strategy by members of the Twin Cities Group, but several members of the group emphasized to me the importance of trust in protest,
especially in actions where your performance/breach might lead to jail or prison time in the aftermath or redress.

**Space, Liminality, Performance**

The relationship between liminality and performance extends to explain other social phenomena. One particularly helpful example in this thesis is the connections between liminality, performance, and space. Victor Turner suggested that there is a spatial component to liminality, but other scholars have expanded on this notion. Turner wrote that “the passage from one social status to another is often accompanied by a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another” (1982:25). This suggests that the liminal period is not only a stage in time between two social statuses, but is also a spatial transition. Farha Ghannam has expanded on this idea in her study of urban mobility in Cairo. Ghannam argued that the streets, the spaces “between different areas of the city” are liminal (2011:790). Her study focused on the liminality of mobility and its “spatial and temporal aspects that generate possibilities for the transformation of bodies and identities” (2011:792). Another scholar, Ron Eyerman, considered the connections between space and performance. He argued that in social movements, and the members of the Twin Cities Group would definitely say that they are participating in various social movements, involve acting which “calls attention to the place and space of movement,” the “corpordality, presence, and the pre-discursive” (2006:193). Eyerman pointed out that it is the performative aspect of social movements that calls attention to space. A brief survey of the locations used by the Twin Cities Group shows the centrality of specific spaces such as sidewalks, streets, skyways, and bridges. These places are constructed with “in-betweenness” in mind. They are meant for passing through, not for stopping. What does it mean
that the Twin Cities Group utilizes these spaces for its performances? Perhaps the choice of
these locations speaks to the affinity between liminality and possibilities for social change. In its
desire to challenge social structures and authority, the Twin Cities Group utilizes liminal spaces
where those passing by are not locked into the structures it has left or is approaching, rather it is
prepared for possibilities and change.

The way the Twin Cities Group chooses to negotiate and even control space indicates the
kind of possibilities the group is hoping to create for those witnessing protest events. Colin
Counsell and Laurie Wolf noted the importance of controlling space in order to shape the
interpretations of those who are observing that space: “to control symbolic space is effectively
to control the audience’s reading of the event, and hence the meanings that may be discerned
there” (2001:156). Similarly, Kurt Iveson noted that “finding” an “audience” requires the
“construction” of “a scene through which ideas, claims, expressions and the objects through
which they are articulated can circulate to others” (2007:3). Several constructions of space used
by the Twin Cities Group utilizes the “public”/”private” dichotomy, a dichotomy which Iveson
sought to complicate (2007:8). One example of this is the way in which the Twin Cities Group’s
presence in a space emphasizes the space’s “public” nature and simultaneously its significance to
the authority being challenged. This use of space corroborates Iveson’s claim that the very
occupation of “public” space is a political action (2007:7) because it challenges the tendency
towards restricting access to public space (2007:4). Alternatively, the occupation of “private”
spaces, like the entrance to a privately owned building, may be used to critique the
“private”/”public” dichotomy by converting private spaces into public sites of struggle.

Though protests might be designed to make spaces public or emphasize what is already
perceived of as their public quality, this does not always result in increased mobility for the
protesters. In fact, the group’s emphasis of the public nature of a space may actually decrease its mobility by attracting the attention of guards or police officers. Even more clearly, the attempt to make what is perceived as a “private” space “public” quickly results in a blocking of its access to specific sites as the protesters are asked to leave, escorted off the premises, or arrested. Iveson noted this in his discussion of alternative ways of negotiating these “private” spaces through visiting, a form of entry which might allow for some form of protest that does not so harshly challenge the aspects of the space which seem to make it “private” (2007:78). An example of this is provided by some members of the Twin Cities Group who called for a new weekly protest to replace the ATK vigil after the ATK headquarters moved. These activists suggested that those who participated in the ATK vigil should organize a meeting each week with a different representative of someone in the group. The activists would set up these meetings in the appropriate ways such that they are invited into the “private” offices of their representatives as guests. The activists informed me that they would then work for peace and justice by engaging in conversation with their representatives. This kind of protest is in sharp contrast to previous demonstrations of these same activists in their representatives’ offices, during which they occupied the offices and refused to leave until they were arrested. It is important to note, however, that to my knowledge this alternative form of protest, where the activists enter as “visitors,” is not widely used by the group and was not supported by the previous ATK vigil participants as a replacement for the vigil.

Iveson’s analysis of space in protest allows us to engage not only with the ways in which the Twin Cities Group critiques the “public”/”private” dichotomy, but also the ways in which the group members negotiate symbols and “design elements.” Like Iveson describes the reinterpretation of the Forecourt mosaic in the Parliament House in Canberra as a testament to
the mistreatment of the Aboriginal rather than a celebration of their importance in Australian history (2007:60), the Twin Cities Group reinterprets the liminal spaces it uses. Whereas orderly sidewalks, bridges, skyways, and streets are symbols in our society of the great progress of our nation, the Twin Cities Group uses these spaces to illustrate the corruption, lies, and injustices in our country. Additionally, the “design elements” (Iveson 2007:58) of these spaces are also inverted. Whereas these spaces are intended for constant motion from one place to another, the Twin Cities Group may use them for stopping, resting, and even hosting an event. This disrupts the social understanding of what these spaces are for which further draws attention to the protest. Finally, the “design elements” of these liminal spaces are used such that the flow of traffic facilitated by spaces like sidewalks and bridges assists the activists’ work. These places require that those who pass by engage with the protesters by negotiating the space around them in order to avoid running into them.

A Thick Description of a Special Demonstration

One can begin to see the different elements of performance and social drama and issues of space, liminality, and collective memory in the work of the Twin Cities Group in a detailed description of a demonstration on January 9, 2012. At about eleven in the morning, the group began to slowly gather in Government Plaza in downtown Minneapolis. Despite the fact that many Minnesotans joked about the relatively warm weather as a heat wave, it was chilly enough that few people were around. The few who were in the square were bundled and walking briskly toward the city hall or the government center. The meeting place for this demonstration, Government Plaza, and its emptiness are significant for the group because only a few weeks earlier, the square had been filled with participants of Occupy MN. The government’s success in
removing the protestors from the square, whether because of displeasure with the protest or out
of concern for their safety during the cold winter, was recent and the frustrations of the protestors
and concerns about how this would affect the movement were still fresh.

This particular protest was also significant for its reaching beyond those most involved in
what I have called the Twin Cities Group. The first to arrive in the square that morning were an
acquaintance of an avid vigil participant and someone from Occupy who had come to film the
event for the movement’s local website. As people arrived they stood hesitantly around the large
square unsure exactly where to meet and if the other people in the square were there for the
demonstration or just sitting. When more people arrived, those lingering in the square began to
approach the center. People introduced themselves by their first names and talked about the
weather, the current location of the Occupy participants, and why they were there. Though
many who came for this demonstration were seasoned activists who knew most of the other
activists in the area, there were a few new people as well. Some of the new people were
acquaintances and others were affiliated with Occupy, but there was not the same comfortable
and communal feeling as there is in many of the other vigils. I believe this is because this protest
was not a routine event, so unlike the vigils that occur every week, there was not the sense that
this was a large group of friends coming together like usual. Also, this event drew in peace and
justice workers from all over the Twin Cities area. Thus, while some vigils only attract those
who live in the area of that vigil, this demonstration included people from many different
communities.

The organization and publicity of this protest was the work of another well-regarded
activist in the area named Charlie. He stood in the center of the group greeting people and
answering questions. He was soon being interviewed by a local videographer who contributes to
an international citizen-powered news source. This videographer routinely films demonstrations, protests, and vigils, so many in the group know him well. Like all of the activities of the Twin Cities Group, another group was responsible for organization. This demonstration was organized by Charlie, a frequent participant in vigils in the Twin Cities area, but Charlie organized the protest as an activity of a torture-focused subgroup of WAMM.

When Rihanne, an especially well-regarded and well known activist in the area, arrived in the square with a large box full of uniforms, people began to change into prison jumpsuits and hoods. The concept for this demonstration was that all those who participated would don matching prison jumpsuits and hoods distributed by the organizers and march from Government Plaza through Minneapolis’s elaborate network of skyways to the University of St. Thomas School of Law. The law school was the end destination because the demonstration was meant to challenge not only our government’s use of torture and the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, but also the legal memo written by John Yoo and Robert Delahunty, a University of St. Thomas professor of constitutional law at the time of this demonstration. The demonstration was intended to illustrate the hypocrisy of an institution of higher learning employing a man that the Twin Cities Group believes to be responsible for the torture of many.

In order to send the right message to the citizens of Minneapolis and the University of St. Thomas School of Law, Charlie had made careful plans about how the demonstration should be carried out. All of the participants were to wear the same prison jumpsuit and hood. We were to walk in pairs in a slow-moving line that would pass through skylines, public buildings, and even a few businesses in order to get to the law school. Charlie emphasized to all of the participants how important it was that we remain quiet and stay in formation. He said that our silence would be more effective than any talking and that we needed to evoke the image of torture victims from
Guantanamo in the minds of onlookers in order to have our desired impact. We were also all given signs to wear on our fronts and backs that had real information about victims of torture for which the United States is responsible. These bright yellow signs with plain black print briefly told the stories of men and women who were beaten, raped, humiliated, and murdered. The language was graphic and the anecdotes were poignant.

Once at the law school, we were supposed to browse the library and look for a few books. We were all given slips of paper with information on what books we should look for. The books were written by John Yoo and Professor Delahunty and focused on the subject of torture. Charlie was clear with us that we might not make it to the law school. There would be opportunities to risk arrest, but it was clear that no one wanted to get arrested. Wherever the demonstration ended, we were supposed to meet on the sidewalk outside of the law school for a vigil.

After Charlie finished addressing the participants, we began the slow march into the government building. Though we were all supposed to look alike, we did not look quite the same. Not everyone wanted to wear the hoods or jumpsuits because of the cold weather or their personal preference, though I believe the impression of Guantanamo detainees was still strong. As we ascended the escalators of the government building, a site of many protests and demonstrations, people watched. We had been attracting attention, of course, from the beginning of the gathering in the square, but the effect of the costumes and the performance clearly resonated with onlookers. At the same time, it was also almost painfully clear that many were intentionally ignoring the presence of such a large group of people, around thirty, in costume in the narrow spaces of the skyways. As we marched some stopped to watch, but many, especially
those in business clothing scurrying to their next destinations, passed without even appearing to
glance at the demonstration.

Security personnel quickly began to follow the slow progress of the demonstration and
there was obvious anxiety about where we were headed. At one point, several security guards
decided to completely close down a skyway in front of us, to the displeasure of many busy
people, only to discover that we were not intending to use that skyway. After about a half an
hour of marching through the narrow glass hallways that connect downtown buildings and hang
over streets and through the businesses and building hallways that lie in our path, we reached the
University of St. Thomas School of Business. It was necessary that the demonstration move
through the business school in order to reach the law school library. A security person and a
business school employee were waiting at the entrance into the business school. We were
immediately told that we could not enter and those who crossed the line would be arrested. We
stood for a few minutes listening to the debate between Charlie and the business school
employee. As the discussion became more heated and the employee threatened arrest, several of
the participants decided to leave to begin the vigil on the sidewalk in front of the university.
This move was motivated by a desire to avoid arrest in this situation and to meet those who
would be joining the group for the vigil portion of the event. I left with this contingent but I
heard that someone was arrested at the business school. This surprised me and made me
question the accuracy of this rumor, because usually the decision to get arrested is carefully
planned ahead of time in this group and I was not aware that anyone was planning on making
such a move.

As people moved from the building of the business school to the sidewalk in front of the
law school and others arrived, the participants of the demonstration formed a clump on the
sidewalk. We attracted attention from those walking by and in cars because of the costumes, but the message of the vigil was clarified for onlookers by signs that were brought over in Rihanne’s car. The signs were large colored cloth suspended between two long wooden sticks, about six feet long each. They were painted and had messages about the immorality of torture and Professor Delahunty’s involvement. After only a short time on the sidewalk, we were greeted by an employee of the law school, Doug, who works in publicity and public relations. He knows many who were involved in the demonstration because many of the participants in this demonstration also protest at commencement each year. The conversation began as an airing of grievances against the public and the student body who, the peace workers argued, were not given adequate opportunities to hear criticisms of Professor Delahunty’s memo. Doug argued in response that the peace and justice workers in the Twin Cities would be in agreement over the great majority of the legal work of scholars and students from the university. The voicing of complaints turned into bargaining. Doug argued that no productive conversation between the university and the peace workers would be had until the peace workers stopped protesting at commencement. Rihanne responded that she would stop participating in the commencement protest if the university would sponsor an event that allowed for real dialogue between Professor Delahunty and lawyers who disagreed with Delahunty’s memo. Many participants of the demonstration agreed.

When Doug came to speak to the peace activists, the protest changed from a line of people with signs in costume facing the street to a circle with Doug in the center. This change in shape marked a change in intended audience. Though the demonstrators were still interested in reaching those who drove by in cars, of course, the focus of the demonstration had changed from trying to get the attention of those passing by to an attempt at a serious dialogue with a
The circle allowed for everyone to face Doug but also resulted in some turning their backs toward the street. Hoods were lowered and people were so close together that the large signs were covering each other. Smaller signs were lowered completely. After those at the vigil offered to make a bargain and Doug did not respond with an agreement, the peace workers concluded that Doug was either not interested in bargaining, or not in a position to make such a decision on the college’s behalf. Doug was officially given the contact information of someone in the group, though he already had the contact information of many there that day, for the purpose of continuing a conversation about a forum should the university be interested. After this the demonstration began to slowly disperse. Signs were rolled up and stored in Charlie’s car. Hoods and prison jumpsuits were returned to Rihanna who would be taking them that day to a national protest in Washington D.C., where hundreds of protestors would where jumpsuits and hoods on a march. About half of those who had demonstrated on the sidewalk retired then to an Indian restaurant on the block.

This narration illustrates the parts of a performance Schechner identified and the parts of a social drama about which Turner wrote. The participants trained for the protest in their peace activism and came with knowledge of the legal support that allows for torture at the hands of United States personnel. The workshop phase had been handled by Charlie ahead of time. He had identified based on his experience with protests and Minneapolis, and what he thought to be the best choreography, costumes, and language. Very little rehearsal took place when the participants assemble. The participants put on costumes and Charlie gave instructions. When Charlie gave the word, the performance started. The performance was liminal in multiple senses. The participants wore costumes, which Turner (1967) associated with the liminal, and their faces
were covered. Everyone was dressed alike. The choreographed march by twos with hands behind backs was unnatural for "regular" society, emphasizing a separation between the protesters and the rest of society. Eyes were cast downward, which highlights the separation between the liminal participants and the rest of the world. The performance was intended to allude to prison, especially Guantanamo Bay, the ultimate liminal location, a place that is separated from society by protections, mysterious, secret, and meant to be a location inbetween regular life and some unknown point of reaggregation. Finally, the march was a slow, silent trudge in the skyways marking the protest as inbetween.

Victor Turner's understanding of social drama is useful for explaining the police surveillance and the threats of arrest that occurred during the protest. After the breach occurred, the entry of the costumed participants into the skyways over the downtown, crisis ensued. The police responded by attempting to prevent the protestors from using certain skyways and monitoring the progress of the procession. The protestors were not deterred from their purpose and they continued until the business school. At the business school redress occurred. Charlie, the police, and an employee of the business school negotiated. Eventually it was determined that in this act of social drama, no compromise could be reached, and the result was schism. The schism was manifested in the protestors leaving the building. On the street, the performance was repeated. This time, the performance phase of Schechner's sequence and the crisis/redress components of Turner's social drama were altered by the multiple audiences. On the street those driving by in cars constituted one audience. The signs pointed at them and the performers faced them until Doug arrives. Those walking on the sidewalk constituted another audience, but they became a part of the performance as they walked through the cluster of costumed participants and signs. Their reactions were a part of the performance itself, just as those Schechner

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9 This was Charlie's goal, but in the end not everyone was dressed exactly alike.
described, who passed by the window of the Squat theater company’s performance space. The stage of the theater company’s stage was between the window out to the street and risers on which the audience sat. Thus, those on the street were the backdrop of the performance and their looks into the performance space were a part of the show (Schechner 1985:303). Doug became another player in the show. He was at once audience, because the performance was in some sense intended for him, and performer as he negotiated with the participants.

A final note on this narration pertains to the concept of memory. This story includes examples of the recalling and creating of memories for the future. As the participants gathered in Government Plaza, the connection between this protest and Occupy MN was solidified. When the participants negotiated with Doug, the discussion centered on a string of past protests that had been tied to this protest by the theme, intended audience, and “cast.” Finally, when the participants packed up the signs and the costumes, they were being prepared for another protest, with a similar aesthetic, that would be tied to this protest.

Using the concepts of performance, social drama, and space, one is able to unpack the multiple meanings attached to the different elements of the protests, vigils, and demonstrations of the Twin Cities Group. These tools also help us understand the multifaceted nature of change. Change is not limited to criticism and the suggestion of alternatives or even the facilitation of making those alternatives a reality. In the Twin Cities Group change is enacted through modeling an alternative way of being, one colored by a sense of communitas and liminality, that critiques the unjust and violent structures of society. It is to questions related to change, the multidimensional ways of seeing activism and its goals, that the next chapter will turn. These questions will build on this chapter’s discussion of performance, social drama, and space by highlighting the implications of performance and space.
Chapter Six: Peace and Justice Making

“Last night I had the strangest dream I never dreamed before
I dreamed the world had all agreed to put an end to war
I dreamed I saw a mighty room, filled with women and men
And the paper they were signing said they’d never fight again

And when the paper was all signed and a million copies made
They all joined hands and bowed their heads and grateful prayers were prayed
And all the people in the streets below were dancing round
While swords and guns and uniforms were scattered on the ground.”

-Ed McCurdy, 1950

This thesis has addressed the notions of liminality, communitas, and ritual in order to develop an understanding of the way the Twin Cities Group constitutes itself while engaging society at large. These theories are all connected in the way the Twin Cities Group understands social change. Looking closely at the intersection between these different concepts allows us to capture an interesting meaning of social change that both presents a critique and challenge to existing inequality, and offers a new modality and alternative vision of society. Through fostering communitas and cultivating a group of equal and unified individuals who share a strong commitment to issues of peace and social justice, the Twin Cities Group seeks to undermine simplistic assumptions about effectiveness of protest and linear ways of engaging the public.

The Question of Effectiveness

Thus far this thesis has not addressed the question of whether the activities of the Twin Cities Group are effective in creating change, such as that signaled by significant shifts in public opinion, policy change, clear increases in awareness, etc. For many involved in the Twin Cities area peace and justice community, this is the central question relevant to the activities of those who routinely protest as a part the Twin Cities Group. In my time with the group, I heard criticisms of the routine protests, vigils, and demonstrations of the Twin Cities Group from many
of those involved in peace and justice with whom I spent time: John, seasoned organizer; Dana, freelance writer; Professor Zander; Norm, founder of a series of peace-oriented educational programs; Regina, nonprofit founder; and Kyle, writer. They ask about the effectiveness of such activities: if a protest has been occurring for years, do people still notice the protesters or have they faded into the background? Do the vigils make anyone in the “audience” reflect on their own political behavior? Do political leaders in the area respond to the daily activities of the Twin Cities Group? Though many of these critics might participate periodically in larger scale demonstrations or protests, they view the daily vigils as ineffective or even “depressing,” in John’s words, because of the age of the protestors and small number of participants, which seems to dwindle over time.

Whether these criticisms have merit is beyond the focus of this project. The consideration of questions of protest effectiveness might be of paramount interest to a potential participant, but in an ethnographic project of this nature, evaluating the success with which the Twin Cities Group makes changes in society is perhaps impossible. Certainly to answer such a question one would need extensive data about the population of the Twin Cities area, especially information about those who frequent areas where the Twin Cities Group vigils routinely. This kind of information has not been considered in this project and, I argue, is beside the point.

Perhaps the important questions in an ethnographic study of the Twin Cities Group are not about the effectiveness of the group’s activities in affecting change outside of the group, but rather relate to the meaning of change. What is change? Who defines it? How do we know when it has happened? Through a focus on the shifting meanings of change, I argue that the source of disagreement over the effectiveness of the daily vigils and protests of the Twin Cities Group is a difference in understanding change.
It may be tempting to frame the differences in the meaning of change for the Twin Cities Group, and its meaning for the Twin Cities Group’s critics, in terms of a dichotomy between an external and internal orientation to change-making, a focus aimed at creating the greatest impact outside the group versus a focus on the activities and internal conditions of the group in order to create change. Though this binary might capture some aspects of what appears to be a difference in understanding between the Twin Cities Group and its critics, the amorphous and interconnected nature of both groups and their shared interest in enacting broad social change and building relations in the peace and justice community illustrates the limitations of this dichotomy. Furthermore, the way in which the Twin Cities Group strives to model peaceful and justice behavior, and interpretations of domestic and international events, for society suggests that the Twin Cities Group actually collapses the distinction between internal and external orientations to change making by doing both simultaneously.

Appreciating the differences in meaning ascribed to change in the Twin Cities peace and justice community requires an analysis of the criticisms of the daily vigils, protests, and demonstrations of the Twin Cities Group. Whereas the Twin Cities Group members emphasize their ongoing presence, rain or shine, over long periods of time, those who chose not to participate in these daily activities showed a preference for thoughtful periodic events that are strategically planned to yield the most change. Though, as mentioned above, I have heard and continue to hear criticisms of the daily activities of the Twin Cities Group from a variety of different people, I will focus mostly on the comments of my friends John and Dana, who lived in the Twin Cities area and were active participants in the peace and justice community though they did not participate in many of the routine protests or vigils, and my friend Beck, an experienced
organizer who is not from or connected with the Twin Cities area but who I frequently talked with about my research.

John and Dana were two incredibly helpful connections for a young student in an area she did not know, with an interest in talking to people about peace and justice work. John was in his 60’s and Dana in her 50’s. Both are white and middle class. John is now retired, but he used to work as an organizer for a teacher’s union. Now he is an avid blogger and reader. John also used to be president of the Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers (MAP). Dana is a freelance writer, but she used to be a journalist. While I was in Minnesota, I met with John and Dana at the same lunch spot every week, a routine which made us quite close. Each week, we would arrive separately at the restaurant, a homey eatery with a reputation for its good food, wonderful cinnamon tea, and kindness to veterans. I would come from work and John and Dana would usually drive from home or from running errands. As soon as we were seated, often in a booth in the noisy, yet quaint and light-filled dining room, conversation would begin. John frequently arrived with a blue reusable grocery bag filled with articles, books, and pictures, many of which he kindly gave to me for my research. Even as I write this, I sit in a pile of articles, printed blog posts, newspaper clippings, Time magazine articles, printed emails, and photographs. Like John’s grocery bag, conversations between John, Dana, and I were filled with details, interesting asides, poignant personal stories, and jokes.

The story of how I met John illustrates his contentious role in the Twin Cities area peace and justice community. During my seven months in Minnesota, I interned at a small nonprofit interested in reconciling Americans and Iraqis. I went to the MAP meetings, hosted every other month, first as the guest of the Executive Director of the nonprofit I worked for and then as her representative. These meetings were fairly informal and took place in a church in downtown
As mentioned in a previous chapter, the structure of MAP meetings changed while I was in the area from a model where everyone had the opportunity to briefly share about their organization to one where several informal conversations about different peace and justice issues were convened inside a large room and at the end, the group would come together to discuss possible actions (the “Open Spaces” model). John was once president of MAP, but when I came to the Twin Cities, John’s term had long passed and it was clear that he was working hard to challenge the other members of MAP, many of whom are members of the Twin Cities Group, to expand their understanding of what it means to be a peace and justice worker. It was also clear that he was succeeding in “being challenging,” a reality which John often likes to joke about. In fact, John sees himself as one whose responsibility is to stir up the group, especially those he describes as “career protesters.”

In the first MAP meeting where the new Open Spaces model was tried, John was one of the seven who volunteered to organize a conversation. He wanted to talk about how the peace and justice community in the Twin Cities could make sure that President Barack Obama would get re-elected despite his shortcomings. He acknowledged in his conversation proposal that he knew this would be an uncomfortable topic because most, if not all, at the meeting are critical of President Obama’s actions. No one came to John’s conversation circle initially, but after some time, the Executive Director of the nonprofit I was working at went over to talk to him. He told me later that he is sure that Regina only came to talk to him because she felt sorry for him. The next MAP meeting, John proposed another uncomfortable topic: respecting veterans while remaining critical of war. This time I was the only person in his conversation circle. Though the other conversation topics proposed, like starting a revolution or supporting a constitutional amendment about corporate personhood, were much more in line with what John believes the
Twin Cities Group is interested in, John feels these are uncomfortable conversations that must be had.

John and the people John introduced to me expressed similar concerns about the isolated nature and idealism of those who participate in routine vigils and protests. John was well aware that his concerns were apparent to the Twin Cities Group and that he had a reputation for challenging the group. He describes himself as a “solidarity disrupter” and “bur-under-the-saddle activist” located on the “ragged edges” of the Twin Cities Group. John often critiqued the lack of communication between those in the Twin Cities Group and those in the “audience” of their performed demonstrations and vigils. He did acknowledge, however, that this lack of communication may not always be intentional, and that this seems to be a trend in other aspects of society as well: politics, community groups, and economics seem more polarized than ever before. John told me one afternoon at lunch with Dana, “In almost all contexts, I see people in a circle talking in. I visualize people turning their chairs around and talking out.” John traces this development in the peace community through recent history, arguing that during the end of George W. Bush’s presidency, people were disillusioned with war and it was thus easy to engage people who were not already involved in peace and justice communities. When Barack Obama was elected, John argues, society became less interested in getting involved in the peace movement. This led to a shrinking of the peace movement. John believes that this should serve as motivation for peace and justice workers to try to connect with people outside their community, but he instead sees a trend towards increasing the passions of the group by silencing opposition to their ideas. John told me that this has caused him to “back away” because he thinks it is not helpful for him to contribute to the “anger” of the group. Interestingly, in a conversation between John and Dana over lunch one afternoon, Dana noted that this trend
towards polarization suggests that “any compromise is weakness” and that people’s passions are about “theater” more than “sincerity.”

These criticisms seem specifically to target the communitas and liminal aspects of the Twin Cities Group’s activities. In fact, when I told John I was writing about communitas in the Twin Cities Group, he told me he thought that was the worst part of the group, that the tightly knit nature of the group prevents them from staying connected to the rest of the world. These criticisms also illustrate the differences in understandings of change between those in the Twin Cities Group and John and his friends. Whereas the Twin Cities Group, as described in the chapters on communitas and liminality, view the facilitation of horizontal solidarity and the use of performances as important components of peacemaking, John and his friends specifically highlight these aspects as barriers to the effectiveness of work to create transformation in society. Dana’s comment that the trend towards polarization reveals an interest in theater more than sincerity suggests that theater and sincere, thoughtful attempts to make change can be antithetical. Moreover, John’s criticism of the building of internal passions as a strategy for change seems to challenge the intense solidarity of communitas and its possibilities for facilitating change. It must be reiterated, however, that whatever tensions exist between the Twin Cities Group and its critics, they are all interested in the same peace and justice issues and mostly they agree. Thus, we can think of the tension between these two amorphous groups as a tension related to what should be emphasized in peace and justice work, rather than …

Similarly, over glasses of grape juice in a small living room covered with family photos, John’s friend Norm described to me his qualms with the Occupy movement and his vision of successful change making. He compared the dwindling attendance at Occupy events to the dwindling numbers at one of the weekly Twin Cities Group vigils. He found this trend
“disturbing” and suggested it was because these projects are not “focused enough.” Furthermore, Norm told me that he thought more people would be involved in Occupy if the movement could reach out to those who did not want to “pitch tents” every night. Thus, whereas members of the Twin Cities Group highlight their long-term participation in vigils in all sorts of circumstances, Norm notes that this kind of attitude towards making peace might alienate potential participants. His comments illustrate a general focus on getting specific results. This is not, of course, to suggest that members of the Twin Cities Group are not also interested in results. Norm, however, emphasizes this at the beginning of our conversation about how to best make peace. In fact, he describes his discovery of the power of results-driven work as the key point at which he became an activist, and a successful insurance salesman. He told me, “you’ve got to put yourself in Wakiki,” noting how visualizing the results of your hard work makes you successful. He also quoted to me from Ted Turner’s book, *Call Me Ted*: “early to bed, early to rise, work like hell, and advertise.”

These criticisms indicate subtle, but important, differences between the way the Twin Cities Group and its critics approach change. Whereas the Twin Cities Group emphasizes passion, gnosis, and solidarity, John and his friends highlight connections and strategies. Similarly, Beck, a student of sociology and a distinguished organizer who I routinely discussed my research with, questioned my descriptions of the activities of the Twin Cities Group. She asked about press releases and framing strategies and described the wonderful potential of “organizations of organizations” like MAP. Her questions are indicative of her interest in the effectiveness of the vigils and demonstrations I participated in and about the reputation of the Twin Cities Group in the Twin Cities area.
I am also left with questions about the group’s peace and justice work. Though I appreciate the group’s understanding of injustice and peace work and I am sympathetic towards their method of facilitating group solidarity in order to model peace and justice, I find that I am not attracted to using this methodology in my future activism. Perhaps this is because I also understand the need to create the most change with the least amount of time protesting, or perhaps this says something about my generation in America. Mostly, I have questions about what is and who are being excluded by the Twin Cities Group’s choices in their protests, vigils, and demonstrations. The group is also aware of which perspectives and people are excluded by their values, evidenced by their frequent discussion of the lack of younger people at their events.

**Relevant Theories of Social Change**

Perhaps we could describe views of social change as existing on a continuum from revolutionary approaches on one end, to more subtle attempts at working within a system to make changes where there are opportunities. Neither of these two extremes adequately describes the Twin Cities Group. In fact, both ends of the spectrum seem relevant. The group’s inclination towards revolutionary approaches is apparent in the explicit calls in the Twin Cities peace and justice community for revolution. Indeed, at Minnesota Alliance of Peacemaker meetings, a frequent conversation suggestion is about the need for revolution and how to best go about sparking one. Karl Marx’s discussion of revolution is helpful for interpreting these explicit calls in the group, though Marx’s understanding does not describe every iteration of revolution. In Marx’s and the Twin Cities Group’s conceptions, revolution must occur as the result of problematic social structures. For Marx, however, the problematic structures are articulated in terms of the division of labor and private property. For “a popular revolution” to
be successful, they argue, the evils of these structures must be embodied in a class that will be destroyed by another class in revolution (Marx 1978: 63). Though discussions of economic issues are relevant to the structures the Twin Cities Group sees at fault, these are not highlighted as the primary causes of society's woes. Additionally, the group members neither focus on class tension nor do they break down society into a bourgeoisie and a proletariat.

The previous chapter included a discussion of the possibilities a liminal period generates. That the possibilities made available in a liminal period or space might allow for social change has been suggested by a number of scholars, including Victor Turner (Howard-Grenville, Golden-Biddle, Irwin, and Mao 2011; Hoffman 1986; Ghannam 2011). In addition to elaborating the ways in which liminal situations generate possibilities, Turner also related liminality to revolution, a radical mode of social and political change. He argued that revolutions are liminal because of their "initiatory overtones" and place between structures. Turner even suggested that though relating liminality to revolution may not be using liminality in the literal way van Gennep intended, the metaphorical usage allows us "to think about global human society, to which all specific historical social formations may well be converging" (1982:45). Thus, Turner made the point that the specific understanding van Gennep had of a literal liminal period as a part of a rite de passage may be a "foreshadowing" or "premonition" of an abstract liminal phase, like that which exists in revolution (1982:45). In a place or time outside of structure, change is possible, perhaps in the form of revolution or in the form of a more subtle alteration of discourse.

Sang Hyun Lee supported this argument with an analysis of the way in which Turner built on van Gennep's conception of rites de passage. Lee argued that Turner extended Van Gennep's notion of rites de passage to "a general theory of social change" by elaborating on
each of van Gennep’s phases such that they could be applied under broader circumstances. Lee explained that whereas van Gennep’s understanding of separation, liminality, and reaggregation was meant to describe rites of passage, Turner broadened separation to mean “the departure from social structure,” liminality to describe the stage “betwixt and between” the previous structure and the structure towards which society is changing, and reaggregation to mean the “reincorporation into structure with a new identity or with a new perspective on the existing structure” (2010:5). Conceptualizing liminality as a theory of social change is useful because it allows us to think of the group’s liminality-generating communitas as a strategy for promoting change. Despite this, Lee’s argument certainly has limitations. For example, Turner (1967) suggested that though the liminal period is characterized by possibilities that might allow for change, it may also be interpreted as the source of all structures such that the structures of society may be replicated rather than challenged by the transition through a period of liminality. We might understand, however, a new perspective to be an example of social change based on Lee’s statement that reaggregation may be merely a reincorporation with a “new perspective” (2010:5). This understanding may be even more satisfactory for analyzing the Twin Cities Group. If we can broaden our understanding of social change to include shifts in perspective, we can approach the work of the Twin Cities Group in new ways. Rather than searching for ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the group’s desire to make change, we can focus on the constitution of the group as part of the activists’ vision of social change and a broader engagement with the rest of society. Furthermore, the support of one’s fellow activists is important because it allows each peace and justice worker to continue their work and feel supported, even in times when the group or peace activism as a whole is receiving negative attention.
Group Formation as a Strategy for Society Change

Facilitating the solidarity of a group can be a strategy for critiquing society. Some members of the Twin Cities Group even state this as an explicit strategy for change. One participant, Noah, wrote the following in an email about potential future activities after the end of the ATK protest: “the immediate objective of protesting the activities of a particularly obnoxious part of the military/industrial/political establishment is to nourish a local peace and justice group that will keep trying to arouse public opinion and action.” It is no surprise then that many members of the Twin Cities Group are involved with a special project of OccupyMN called the Whealty Human Village project that aims to create a community. One of the leaders of this project, Tania, told me when I was introduced to her by a member of the Twin Cities Group that the goal of this project is to create an alternative community that is truly healthy and challenges the rest of society by its contrary existence.

Thinking of social change as beginning with the facilitation of the group allows us to understand the vigils of the group in new ways. The authors of Contesting Patriotism: Culture, Power, and Strategy in the Peace Movement described the significance of peace protest for the group doing the protesting. Lynne M. Woehrle, Patrick G. Coy, and Gregory M. Maney (2008) wrote that a bystander merely hearing short chants and seeing slogans on posters is unlikely to be persuaded to change their view, but the dissemination of a fully-formed alternative discourse might convince an undecided person. Thus, people who work for peace and justice might struggle to create change by promoting alternative understandings, by creating a communitas that is by its nature and ideals in opposition to the rest of society. The Twin Cities Group’s modeling of peaceful and just behavior and interpretations of events can come in the form of communitas which becomes a way of life. This hints at the utopian social models Turner described in his
analysis of ideological communitas. As Woehrle, Coy, and Maney argued, “participation in creating and changing discourses in a society can be a political act” (2008:5). These scholars explained that the dissemination of “oppositional knowledge” is useful for creating social change. In order for this to be successful, peace and justice workers must “systematically” (2008:5) present alternative interpretations of social situations along with a critique of mainstream discourse. Though there are certainly individuals and groups in society with significant control over the media, which Woehrle, Coy, and Maney argued makes the media a “site of contestation” (2008:5), no one entity controls all of the discourses present in the media. Rather, multiple discourses could be accessible to the public.

The desire to facilitate the development of the group or increase the sense of communitas can be understood not only as a move to make changes within the group, but also as an interest in creating an environment that energizes each group member to become more active in changing their communities. From this perspective, the Twin Cities Group becomes a “support group” for its members that keeps them inspired. This is especially necessary in light of the negative attention the group periodically receives. This kind of support group is related to the “movement halfway houses” that Aldon D. Morris wrote about in his book, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. Morris defined a movement halfway house as “an established group or organization” that is focused on generating social change through education, skill sharing, support, networking, and inspiration. These groups are “only partially integrated into the larger society” because those involved in the halfway houses are focused on finding the best ways to create change in society (Morris 1984: 39). Like the movement halfway houses, the Twin Cities Group functions as a community that inspires its participants to create social change and helps activists connect.
The language participants in Twin Cities Group’s activities use to describe the group illustrates the similarities between movement halfway houses and this group. In an email exchange about the future of the ATK vigil participants, Sandra wrote that she “would like to see the Circle\textsuperscript{10} continue in some form for a regular vigil, since the friendships and encouragement are so strong and so inspiring.” Another Twin Cities Group event sparks similar language. Every year Peacestock (formerly Pigstock) is held on a small farm in Wisconsin. The event is a day long, though some go the night before and camp. The day is filled with speakers, presentations, music, eating, and discussion. In 2011, the year I attended, the speakers were Cynthia McKinney, Ray McGovern, and Daniel Ellsberg. At the ATK vigil following the 2011 Peacestock during the circle part of the vigil, several people talked about Peacestock. Charlie said that he, like others, is “just carrying thoughts and smiles” around after his experience at Peacestock. Several others in the circle commented on how they enjoyed Ray McGovern’s statement that it’s ok to be disgusted with what is going on in the world, but never discouraged.

Though there are similarities between the movement halfway houses concept and the Twin Cities Group, there are also points where the two differ. Morris emphasized the spatial separation between movement halfway houses and society, but though there may be times when the group does choose to separate themselves from society, like Peacestock, this does not appear to always characterize the Twin Cities Group. Additionally, the Twin Cities Group cannot be defined exactly as a movement halfway house because Morris (1984) characterized the movement halfway houses as a part of the generation and development of new ideas, like new protests or demonstrations, not the management of existing projects. Despite these points of departure, the comparison is productive because it is another example of ways in which the

\textsuperscript{10}In email exchanges after the move of the ATK headquarters, those who had participated in the ATK vigil began to refer to themselves as “the Circle.”
group generates broader change through cultivating itself and emphasizing solidarity and support. Thus, my experience leaving the Twin Cities Group is parallel to those who leave movement halfway houses. I was rejuvenated and excited to start my own projects for enacting social change. Moreover, I felt expected to begin work as an activist. Morris emphasized that education from a movement halfway house is meant to be put into action and that a “diploma” comes in the form of the completion of an action to change society (1984:145). Similarly, I have the sense that I was given the opportunity to participate in so many of the Twin Cities Group’s events not just so I could write about it as a student of anthropology, but so that I could also take what I learned and become an activist in my own community.

**Constituting the Group to Engage Society**

The notion that building community in order to create change is a strategy of the Twin Cities Group is by no means a simple suggestion. When the Twin Cities Group learned that the ATK headquarters would be moving to Arlington, VA, there were many emails exchanged about the interpretation of the move, implications of the move for the future of the protesters involved in the fifteen years of vigils, and plans for what would be the last vigil. Conversations from these emails illustrate the nuanced tension between the value of the group itself and broad social change. Of course, this tension only exists to a point. All of the vigil participants are in agreement that the group is valuable and that broad social change is desirable. The tension emerges in the prioritizing that occurs in decisions about the future of the group and interpretations of the past.

When the group learned that the headquarters would be moving, the participants in the weekly vigils immediately concluded that a large event must be planned for the last vigil. It was
decided that the last vigil would also celebrate Gandhi’s birthday, on September 28, 2011.

Twelve vigil participants also decided to risk arrest, signaling the significance of this protest, by blocking the doors of the building. Though everyone appeared to be interested in making this particular vigil a larger performance, there was some disagreement about the degree to which the event should be publicized. Noah suggested that the group draft a press release and highly publicize the vigil in order to create an educational opportunity:

Recognizing that some of our group have expressed some anxiety that our protest plans may become known to our "opponents", I suggest that everything about this last action should be as widely publicized as possible. Rather than worry about what response the ATK folks might make if forewarned, I think we should immediately encourage all of our allies and potential allies to attend and, agreeing to comply with our nonviolent principles to be reviewed before hand [sic](including passing out our pledge), be a larger support group or actually join the civil disobedience group. In the same light, I think we should begin right now informing the media everywhere of our intentions and inviting their attendance.

Noah’s proposal was met with opposition, however. Bran was concerned that increased media coverage of the vigil would prevent those who wanted to get arrested from achieving their goal of blocking the doors and thus, preventing them from making their desired statement to ATK. Though he acknowledged that he certainly wants to increase the participation of the larger community in peace activities like this vigil, he argued there is no reason to publicize the event:

i see NO reason to notify the media with a pre-action press release. in the past several years they have shown no interest and the result will be atk and the police will then be prepared. i plan to personally contact several members of the media before the action, have a press release available at the vigil and will send out a press release after the action. i would like to be arrested at their front door and not on the road to the parking ramp entrance. i might even reconsider my participation if there are police present due to our actions. i guess my goal for the day is to eventually 'symbolically' block the doors and business as usual for atk. and quite frankly, recent history has clearly shown that highly publicized street events do NOT result in any meaningful turnout, hence it's not a goal for me.

11 This is another example of the way in which certain spaces have different connotations, discussed in chapter five. Bran sees the front door area as an important space for ATK whereas the driveway is less significant. Thus, his arrest at the doorway is a bigger challenge to ATK than his arrest on the driveway.
It is clear from these two email excerpts that Noah and Bran have similar hopes for the peace movement in general, but the disagreement between the two illustrates the complexity of work for social change. We might read Noah’s proposal as an indication of his desire for an approach that is focused on engaging the larger Twin Cities community: Noah wants the group to direct its attention to making change in the larger community by increasing the press coverage of the protest and increasing the participation of new participants. Bran, on the other hand, expresses faith in the Twin Cities Group alone to make a strong impression on ATK. This exemplifies the degree to which the Twin Cities Group’s modeling is neither an internal or external project, but rather involves the group working to create meaning through demonstrations.

Even after ATK moved, there was a desire expressed by some for the group to remain committed to a routine meeting in order to continue modeling through communitas to promote change. Noah is quoted earlier in the chapter saying “the immediate objective of protesting … is to nourish a local peace and justice group.” Because this goal does not change with the move of the ATK headquarters, Noah believes those who were committed to the vigil should continue their activism together in some form or another. This opinion is echoed by others in the community. Sharon reports by email that in a meal after a protest it was decided that those previously committed to the ATK vigil should participate in an action together every two weeks. Ted emailed the group with a calendar of events related to peace and justice in the Twin Cities area and suggested that those interested in going to an event should contact him and they can form a group.

On the other hand, there are those who do not feel it is necessary to find a new set of activities for those who were involved in the ATK vigils. These past participants emphasize the importance of maintaining the group’s identity rather than expanding it to include a whole
variety of issues. In an email to the group, Bran asks about the reasons for continuing to meet together as the ATK past vigil participants: “Why does AlliantACTION need to fold or morph into anything? It was what it was. And what it was, is what brought us together.” Though this opinion definitely expresses the value of the group, it does not recognize the value its continuity as essential for the continuation of peace work. Perhaps this is because even without the ATK vigil, most, if not all, of those who participated in the vigil will continue to see each other at other peace and justice related events in the region. Additionally, Bran might wonder about the purpose of protest without a clear goal when there are other issues of injustice to be addressed. Regardless of any conflict around the future of AlliantACTION participants, that this conversation has even occurred illustrates the importance of the communitas created by this weekly vigil.

Despite the differences in opinion on what AlliantACTION should do in the future, there is a universal desire in the group to commemorate and honor what the group was. In one of Bran’s emails about the future of the group he writes

I guess I like to compare it to a school closing. There will never be any more graduates, but for those that did, THEY WILL ALWAYS BE ALUMNI. And I think alumni groups get together for various reasons all the time. They don’t fold into another school. They are what they were.

Many vigil participants talk about the wonderful experiences they had as a part of the vigil. Bran is currently attempting to capture these experiences by collecting stories from those who participated in the vigil for the purpose of making a film. The desire to commemorate this vigil may also be read as a desire to facilitate the solidarity of the group, even if these desires do not coincide with an interest in the continuation of AlliantACTION events. Because those who participated in this vigil will likely continue to see each other at events, paying tribute to what the vigil was contributes to the memory of the Twin Cities Group as a whole. As discussed in
the previous chapter, adding to memory facilitates the growth of the group through the continual remembering of past events and association of present and potential future events with past memories.

Memory is just one factor that contributes to the sense of liminality and communitas in the Twin Cities Group, a sense which relates to the way the group creates an alternative way of being. This alternative is a different way of doing business that re-imagines the future and the present not only through discourse and performance, but also through the enactment of values. This way of modeling peace and justice allows the group to engage society, critique and challenge authorities, and provide a potential alternative for those who watch their protests to the oppressive and unfair structures of society. Discussing the possibilities for change that emerge from modeling is particularly relevant in light of the popularity of recent “occupation” movements like the January 25th Revolution in Egypt’s Tahrir Square or the Occupy movement across America. Regardless of which group of people uses the techniques of social change discussed in this thesis, there is certainly more work to be done considering the unique relationship between Turner’s notions of liminality and communitas and the struggle to facilitate change through modeling alternative ways of being.
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