


AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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disciplinary Studies in Communication, Sociology and Political
Science presented on January 22, 1991.

Title: Earth First!: An Ethnography of Communication

Redacted for Privacy

Abstract approved:

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Mary Jane Collier

This study examined the culture of Earth First!, an environmental activist movement. The study was limited to two groups of Earth First! in the Northwest, Corvallis and Eugene. The goal was to discover what it is to be a communicatively competent member of Earth First! The method used to address issues surrounding communication competence was ethnography of communication, which is a way of describing a culture through its language. Dell Hymes' descriptive framework was used to aid in answering questions about communication competence.

I was a participant observer in this culture for eight months, resulting in the discovery of three important themes that serve to describe communication competence within Earth First! The first was the theme of movement versus organization, participants stressing the importance of being a movement and not an organization. The second

theme was the identification of the enemy. Members devote a great deal of time on talk that identifies who the enemy is for Earth First! The third theme was the use by cultural members of humor in their talk. An examination of these three themes resulted in a description of communication competence within Earth First!

EARTH FIRST!: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION

by

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A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies

Completed January 22, 1991

Commencement June 1991

APPROVED:

Redacted for Privacy

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Redacted for Privacy

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Date thesis presented January 22, 1991

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Without the guidance and enduring patience and enthusiasm of Mary Jane Collier, the road to the completion of this project would have been much longer and rockier. The encouragement given me by Richard Mitchell was invaluable, as was the support from Glen Dealy and Frank Ragulsky. I would especially like to thank my parents, for all the chicken enchiladas.

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EARTH! FIRST! AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

Earth First! is an environmental activist movement which started in 1980 with five persons who were "tired of people abusing the earth." As one member put it in an article in Newsweek, "We feel like there are insane people who are consciously destroying our environment and we are compelled to fight back" (Foote, 1990, p.24). The idea was conceived in New Mexico, but the first official demonstration was at the Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River.

The roots of Earth First! are similar to the story line of The Monkeywrench Gang, by Edward Abbey (1976), in which four people go camping together and end up pledging to take direct action wherever necessary or possible, to save the earth from destruction by the human race. Ed Abbey's gang incinerate billboards, pour sugar in crankcases of bulldozers and demolish a highway bridge. Earth First!ers, with a copy of The Monkeywrench Gang in their back pockets, set their sights on similar, if less flamboyant, activities such as sitting in trees, spiking trees (driving metal spikes into trees to deter loggers from cutting them), and staging demonstrations and guerilla theater, or "street-theater-type protest" (Vanderpool, 1989, p.15) to voice their opinions about the destruction of the earth. The lyrics of a song by one of the co-founders called,

"Monkeywrenchin'" made its way into an article in Smithsonian

You grab a wrench. I'll get the Karo syrup
Picks and shovels and wire cutters, too
Iron filings and sugar for the gas tank
Then I'll show you what we're gonna do
(Parfit, 1990, p.184).

In 1981, Earth First! made its public debut by gathering on top of the Glen Canyon Dam in Arizona for a rally. The rally featured the unfurling of 300 feet of black plastic from the top of the dam, appearing from a distance to be a monstrous crack in the edifice (Kane, 1987). In 1983 in Northern California, Earth First!ers hugged redwoods to save them from the chainsaws of Georgia-Pacific Company workers (Berger, 1986). In 1989, Southern Willamette Earth First!ers built a spotted owl's nest in Senator Mark Hatfield's office in Salem to protest proposed legislation that would limit the public's power to appeal timber sales. (field notes, 11-89)

Since the inception of Earth First! numbers and contact locations have grown considerably. The Earth First! journal lists 125 different contacts, all over the United States and reaching as far as Pakistan, Australia, Korea and Spain (2 February, 1989). If journal subscriptions are any indication, Earth First! can claim to be at least 10,000 members strong (Malanowski, 1987, p.569). The journal is the only link between different groups; there is no central office or officers. If someone wants to fight for the earth in a particular area, he or she can get a few people together, stage a demonstration and they can call themselves Earth First! This loose organizational structure leaves room for a variety of active participants.

There are no particular demographic trends: Earth First!ers

come in all ages, all sexes, and represent all occupations. During my eight month involvement with Earth First! I came in contact with many college students, some high school students, many parents, a fourth grade teacher, a woman who worked for a law office, a couple of ex-loggers and a computer programmer, to name a few.

This structure, or lack thereof, makes the philosophy of Earth First! difficult to pin down. The movement consists of many people, each of whom offers a slightly different philosophy. To illustrate, there is a division within the movement regarding the subject of "monkeywrenching." Monkeywrenching is property destruction, the goal of which is to halt or merely call attention to what the monkeywrenchers see as earth destruction. Earth First! doesn't officially endorse the practice, but there are those who are associated with the movement who feel that it is an appropriate way to fight for the environment. Dave Foreman, one of the co-founders of Earth First!, approves of monkeywrenching. "I believe monkeywrenching is an extremely moral way of resisting the industrialization of natural places" (Kane, 1987, p.100).

Aside from this split, there are uniting phrases that continue to be evoked by members. The name itself, Earth First!, suggests a philosophy, including "direct action," and "no compromise in defense of Mother Earth." In Newsweek, one Earth Firster had this to say about the philosophy, "The one thing we have in common is an absolute conviction that the earth comes first. How you go about defending the earth is up to you" (Foote, 1990, p.25).

In Oregon, Earth First! groups rally around the issue of the

ancient forests. Ancient forest, also called old growth, is forest land that has not yet been forested. Old growth trees are enormous; they are sometimes 200 to 300 years old. Some environmentalists agree with a Forest Voice article which claimed that only 5% of the forest that existed when the first settlers arrived in the Northwest is left (September, 1989). The Forest Service named the spotted owl as the indicator species for the old growth forests. The welfare of the old growth eco-system is determined by the welfare of the spotted owl population. If the spotted owl is declared endangered, then much of the remainder of the old growth would be off limits to the timber industry. Focusing on the spotted owl is one way Earth First! has sought to delay timber harvests. The issue is an emotional one, as Oregon's economy is largely dependent on the timber industry, and limiting any aspect of that industry threatens many thousands of jobs. The Oregonian reported that "owl conservation efforts could result in the loss of 20,000 jobs by the year 2000" ("Goldshmidt pleads..." 21 July, 1990). In an earlier story, private timber companies said that protecting the owl would reduce their timber harvests by up to 50% ("The impact of the spotted owl decision..." 24 June, 1990).

A day in Oregon seldom goes by without news bearing on the old growth issue such as another mill closure, latest findings on the spotted owl or a controversial Earth First! demonstration. A few sample headlines from The Oregonian will illustrate: "Owl listed as threatened; timber industry plans fight" (23 June, 1990). "Special report: The impact of the spotted owl decision" (24 June, 1990). "Controversial Earth First! makes impact: The fringe environmental group enjoying more attention than ever" (3 July, 1990).

"Goldschmidt pleads state's economic case: The governor urges task force to consider timber interests in forging a plan to protect the spotted owl" (21 July, 1990).

Public reaction to Earth First! has been mixed. In my experience discussing Earth First! with others I have found some who believe that Earth First! members are heroes, righting environmental wrongs, and making up for the passivity of the mainstream environmentalist groups such as the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society. "Many mainstream environmentalists, impatient with their own leadership, are defecting to the radical ranks" (Foote, 1990, p.25).

But others with whom I spoke feel Earth First!ers are eco-terrorists, that they care more about old rotting trees than people, and that they do not truly understand the timber issue. Many who feel this way are somehow involved in the timber industry, but some environmentalists are of a similar mind. "They are outlaws; they are terrorists; and they have no right being considered environmentalists," said Jay Hair, president of the National Wildlife Federation (Malanowski, 1987, p.569). That reaction is typical of a number of Oregonians; in discussing the issue one man told me that if he saw someone on the street wearing an Earth First! tee-shirt he would walk up and punch him. Then there are reactions similar to Cecil Andrus, Governor of Idaho, who considers Earth First! just "a bunch of kooks" (Malanowski, 1987, p.569).

National media sometimes paints a romantic picture of Earth First! as the gutsy environmentalist underdog, or David up against big industry's Goliath. A good example is the concluding paragraph

of an Esquire article on Earth First!:

At worst, these new radicals are guilty of dancing along the boundaries of inspired lunacy, inciting the masses by invoking the rabid poetry of untamed nature--the same crime, of course, for which the unconverted once dismissed a wild-eyed radical named John Muir. (Kane, 1987, p.106)

The public's awareness of Earth First! continues to grow; they have been the subject of such national television programs as 60 minutes, Donahue and Prime Time Live. During my own involvement with Earth First!, I have also experienced many different reactions from various people when I tell them what I am studying. Some are positive and others are outwardly hostile, but I can always count on a genuinely felt personal reaction to the issues that Earth First! represents.

This study looks at one chapter of Earth First! whose members meet in both Eugene, Oregon and Corvallis, Oregon. Meetings are typically held every other week, or more frequently if there is an upcoming activity. From these meetings spring ideas for other activities, actions, demonstrations, fund-raising, etc.

These radical environmentalists who call themselves Earth First! are an example of a culture. The group shares certain symbols and meanings that set them apart from other environmentalists and other members of society in general. They can be called a "radical" activist movement because of their sometimes unorthodox means of accomplishing goals, often frowned upon by other environmental groups. "Radical environmentalists' militancy brings them into direct conflict with the mainstream movement. More moderate groups deplore their tactics" (Foote, 1990, p.25). Indeed, in Ecodefense: A Field Guide to

Monkeywrenching, Dave Foreman writes, "It is time to act heroically and admittedly illegally in defense of the wild, to put a monkeywrench into the gears of the machinery destroying natural diversity" (Kane, 1987, p.100). This radical environmentalist culture is the focus of this study.

Activist groups are an important part of society. They stimulate new modes of thinking and serve as a catalyst of change. As environmental issues continue to grow in importance, Earth First! continues its attempt to change people's attitudes about the role of the environment in our world. Whether or not they succeed in changing the status quo where the environment is concerned will remain to be seen. As co-founder Howie Wolke says, "If nothing else, we aim to light a fire under traditional conservation groups" (Malanowski, 1987, p.570). Meanwhile they provide a fascinating subject for study.

One way to study a group such as this is to look at their culture from the perspective of a native; hence my eight month involvement with Earth First! My goal was to discover what it takes to be a competent member of Earth First! To be considered a competent member of a culture, it is necessary to learn how to communicate appropriately and effectively. Key issues in communication competence are the norms or communicative rules the group establishes, the patterns of talk that occur over time, and the purposes they serve for the group. Saville-Troike (1982) elaborates:

Interaction requires the perception, selection and interpretation of salient features of the code used in actual communicative situations, integrating these with other cultural knowledge and skills, and implementing appropriate strategies for achieving communicative goals (p.24).

In addressing these issues, I must look closely at the culture of Earth First! In this study I concur with Collier and Thomas (1988), who define culture as "an historically transmitted system of symbols and meanings (and norms)" (p.6). In addition, they state that "culture can refer to ethnicity, gender, profession and any other symbol system which is bounded and salient to individuals" (p.6). People who climb mountains (Mitchell, 1983), the Boy Scouts of America (Mechling, 1980), Chicagoans living in the Near South Side (Philipsen, 1975), are all examples of cultures which were the subjects of studies.

In addition, culture is a process; it changes over time and is continually being created by its members. There's a danger in judging another's culture and making assumptions about their validity, their civility, or their sensibility. Stepping inside that culture may reveal that the meanings, beliefs, and values make perfect sense. Validity is the extent to which a researcher is correct in making a claim about that which he or she is studying. Using the respondent's perspective in looking at culture makes validity a much more attainable goal. In looking at communication competence, it is essential to consider contextuality. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) state that, "Appropriate interaction must comply with the contextually generated normative expectations of the conversants" (p.365). So participant observation is imperative if a researcher is to understand the norms or behaviors "in situ."

Maintaining a particular way of talking is an important way for the culture to identify itself. And as Collier (1989) states, "Culture is...emergent in the discursive text and in the conduct of the interlocutors." (p.291). This facilitates the overall goal of

this cultural study, which is description of cultural competence. According to Collier and Thomas (1988), cultural competence "is recursive with cultural identity; a person is a core member of a culture to the extent that he or she coherently articulates and understands symbols and norms" (p.10). A researcher can identify cultural competence, or communication competence by measuring the discursive text of a culture, looking for normative patterns, expected outcomes, and recurring themes. According to Collier and Thomas (1988);

Cultural systems or subsystems can be analyzed in terms of the rules which covary with patterns of action. When these norms or rules are the focus of the study, emphasis is on the "how to" of coordinated activity, ie., the motions to make or avoid in order to get by (p.6)

The descriptive framework, described later, enables the researcher to look closely at and measure these aspects of a culture.

The notion of cultural competence, or "What does one need to know to do cultural membership?" (Collier and Thomas, 1988, p.10), is an important one. The study of cultural competence has an effect on conceptions of identity, acceptance, credibility, and success within a movement, and as such is a worthwhile endeavor with broad implications.

Studying the culture of a group like Earth First! is important because they are a unique group whose overall philosophy is not easily defined. This is also one of the reasons I chose Earth First! as the focus of my research. This study looks at the communication of the Earth First! culture, from the perspective of a member and participant in that culture. The normative aspects and the recurring themes of the

talk are the focus. What follows is a discussion of my approach to these issues.

THEORETICAL JUSTIFICATION

In choosing Earth First! as a subject of study, there were many research options available, including quantitative methods. I deliberately decided to do qualitative research because of the nature of what I was studying. A study whose goal is to discover communication competence within a culture would best be served by an approach that employs the insider's perspective. The result is what Geertz (1973) would call "thick description," the analytical, interpretive, evaluative account of culture that ethnographers seek in their research.

As interworked systems of (symbols), culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly--that is, thickly--described (p.14).

A qualitative approach to research reveals specific ontological and epistemological assumptions. My assumptions about "being" are based on an actional theory, which contends that people create meaning, and make choices based on ever-changing situational rules. Who you are depends largely on who you are with, and what you do as a result of that influence. Epistemologically, I have certain assumptions about how individuals come to know. Knowledge is not something "out there" that can be discovered outside the individual. Knowledge, as with notions of being, arises out of interaction between people and is ultimately contextual and inter-subjective. As Max Weber writes, "All knowledge of cultural reality, as may be seen, is always knowledge

from particular points of view." (Weber, 1949, p.81) If individuals come to know through their interactions with others, then researchers can only come to know through an emic approach to what they study.

My approach in this study can be called an ethnography of communication, which has roots in ethnographic anthropology and sociolinguistics. Ethnography, or "writing culture," focuses on the routine everyday life of the culture instead of on one specific event. This focus reveals the ongoing patterns of the culture over time, as opposed to a journalist focusing on one phenomena or unique characteristic of the culture. An ethnographer attempts to describe membership within a particular community from the native's point of view.

Early linguists attempted to describe language without too much concern for the context in which it existed. Later, Powell (1889) among others (White, 1880; Sapir, 1949) acknowledged a general relationship between culture and language. In Introduction to the Study of Indian Languages (1889), Powell writes:

It has been the effort of the author to connect the study of language with the study of other branches of anthropology, for a language is best understood when the habits, customs, institutions, philosophy--the subject matter of thought embodied in the language--are best known (Saville-Troike, 1982, p.6).

In order to understand the language better, Powell proposed understanding the context of the culture. But his focus was on the mechanics of the language, and how to speak the language correctly. What was missing was a description of a culture based on its language, using language as a starting point from which a richer understanding of the group could come.

Dell Hymes was the first to stress that there is not only a relationship between culture and language, but that the two are inseparable. He felt there needed to be a research approach that accounted for that relationship. The result was the ethnography of speaking. Ethnography of communication is the description of a culture through its language and communication competence. Saville-Troike notes, "communicative competence refers to knowledge and skills for contextually appropriate use and interpretation of language in a community." (Saville-Troike, 1982, p.26) Hymes' definition includes knowledge of and demonstrated ability to carry out appropriate conduct in particular contexts. (1972)

Communication competence can be a problematic term, implying that competence is a continuum and an individual can be called "incompetent." In this study, I use the term to mean having the knowledge of what to do and say in certain situations, and demonstrating that ability consistently, but not continually. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) stress the importance of the contextuality of communication in order to conceptualize and measure competence, reflecting the idea that competence is not a "cross-situational" trait. There will be some situations in which a particular individual will behave more competently than in others. If a member violates a norm of the culture, that does not mean he or she is incompetent and can no longer be considered a member of the culture. The focus of research should be discovery and description of overall competence over time. If a member has knowledge of what the norm is, and has demonstrated the ability to comply with it on other occasions,

his or her cultural membership is still intact. The issue may be unclear because competence refers to the knowledge and skills one must have to be a member of the culture, but incompetence implies a judgement about an individual person. The key issues for me as the researcher were the overall communication patterns and consistency across various contexts.

Procedures

During my eight months of contact with Earth First! I attended a variety of events, including meetings, nonviolence preps (workshops focusing on nonviolence theory and practice), demonstrations, banner-making parties, old growth hikes, one tree-climbing workshop, a public law conference in Eugene (with a focus on the environmental movement), and Earth First! information tables at events such as the Eugene Celebration, Earth Day. Meetings outnumbered other events. These were typically every other week, lasting anywhere from 45 minutes to 3 hours. Situation permitting, I would take notes during the event or soon thereafter. My descriptive framework was patterned after that offered by Hymes. Eight aspects are highlighted.

Scene-	the physical setting where the talk occurs and the cultural definition of the scene.
Participants-	the actors in the scene for talk and their role relationships.
Ends-	the purpose (s), outcomes, and goals of the talk.
Act Sequence-	the relationship between what is said and how it is said.
Key-	the tone, manner or spirit in which the

talk occurs.

Instrumentalities-	the particular channel, language, dialect or speech variety in which the talk occurs.
Norms-	the normative aspect of the interaction among the participants and the normative aspect of the interpretation of the talk.
Genre-	the cultural category of talk.

The framework guided what I observed and the way I categorized what I observed. For instance, when I heard one woman saying, "Earth First! is a movement, not an organization," I also noted where we were, who she was in relation to the others who were there, why she said it, what effect it had, how she said it, and norms evident in her conduct.

My field notes included everything I saw and heard and felt. I wrote down who was there, why they were there, what was discussed, and what the goals and results of the discussion were. The next step was to put these notes into the descriptive framework. For each event I categorized what I had written according to the components of the descriptive framework. When I had attended a number of events, I began to look for patterns in what had occurred. Were there some topics that were consistently brought up? Were there certain participants who said the same kinds of things in particular situations? Was there a consistency in the manner in which different topics were discussed? As I began to tentatively answer these kinds of questions, subsequent framework notes became helpful in either supporting or disconfirming my answers.

My approach was in essence hermeneutic; I interpreted the information I was receiving throughout my involvement with Earth First!, then I consulted my field notes to see if my interpretations

were reliable and valid. It is a circular process of interpretation, the data is translated by the researcher, the researcher then goes back to the data for confirmation, and so on.

To illustrate, I noticed that much time was spent in meetings discussing who the target would be for a demonstration and that the target was described as enemy. Further meetings validated this as a communication pattern within the culture. My next job was to go back through my notes to discover other patterns associated with discussing the enemy. Do certain participants discuss the enemy more frequently than others? Does there seem to be an appropriate way to discuss the enemy? How does a member learn what is and is not appropriate?

As a result of my analysis, three themes stood out as being the most crucial for this group. The last step was, then, to describe these themes, using actual members' utterances to support my claims about communication competence. This circular process of interpretation and verification enabled me to describe communication competence within Earth First!. The hermeneutic analysis also increase reliability and validity.

RESULTS

Introduction

My results section is a discussion of three major themes I identified in my research. The first is the value Earth First! places on being a movement and not an organization. A new member learns how to talk about Earth First! as a movement, and why it is such a vital aspect of who they are. For this portion of my study the most useful areas of the descriptive framework were, "participants," "ends" and "norms." The second theme I found vital to this culture is how they identify the enemy, or who it is that they are fighting in this "war against 'greedheads' and 'eco-thugs'" (Foote, 1990, p.24). The third theme is humor and how it is used by Earth First!, the "key" being the important aspect of the talk, or "the tone manner or spirit in which the talk occurs." Dave Foreman once called Earth First! the "comic relief" of the environmental movement (Kane, 1987, p.101). I discovered how this comedic spirit is expressed by Earth First!ers, and why this is an important part of who they are.

Movement versus Organization

From the descriptive framework, focusing on norms and participants, a theme that became clear was that Earth First! places great importance on the notion that they are part of a movement and

not an organization. For instance, in one meeting two different people were corrected when, during the course of talk, they referred to Earth First! as an organization. (field notes, 10-21-89) It is the responsibility of the more experienced Earth First!ers to guide the newer members' talk so that it complies with this norm. This is a critical issue; this way of talking is how these environmentalists define themselves as a group. Of interest is how they express what it is to be "a movement," the language resources available to them for this expression, and why so much emphasis is placed on this fundamental characteristic.

Movements are discussed frequently by members of Earth First!, most commonly at meetings when there are newcomers present who want to know what Earth First! is all about. Veteran members refer to Gandhi's liberation movement in India, the civil rights' movement and the anti-Vietnam movement. Through their talk, one can see that Earth First! interprets a movement as having some very distinct characteristics. For Earth First! a movement is a decentralized group of people who are committed to one ultimate goal. Such a commitment is expected to become a way of life for them. Earth First!ers define themselves as a movement by expressing these characteristics-- decentralization, commitment to one goal, and the movement as a way of life-- through their talk. These characteristics become communicative norms that begin to describe competence.

Explicit Expressions of Being a Movement

The idea of being a movement is one of the first things a newcomer learns when he/she becomes involved with Earth First! It is continually stated outright usually by people who have had a lengthier involvement. In explaining to a newcomer that the purpose of the present meeting was "organizational," a woman was corrected by an older Earth First!er, "there are no 'organizational' Earth First! meetings; we're a movement not an organization." (field notes, 10-2-89) In a different meeting, another veteran attempted to explain his reasons for not wanting Earth First! to endorse the environmentally focused organization, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG): "Earth First! is a movement, not an organization." (field notes, 2-21-90) His opinion, which will be addressed in more detail in a later section, stemmed from the fact that OSPIRG is a highly organized entity. One frustration a Eugene Earth First!er expressed toward the media was how many times she had tried to explain that Earth First! is a movement, and the next day she would read in the paper, "The Earth First! organization today..." (field notes, 4-8-90)

A distinction must be made here between being an organization and being organized because for members the terms are used differently. There are some within Earth First! who feel they are one and the same. To illustrate, at one point in a particularly lengthy meeting, I suggested deciding specifically what it was that we wanted to do in the upcoming activity. Another Earth First!er expressed disapproval, saying he disliked "planning and organization," and would rather let

things fall into place. (field notes, 10-9-89) Interestingly, I never again saw him at an Earth First! gathering during the remainder of my involvement. The few who agreed with my suggestion are those I consider to be the key participants within the movement; they initiate activities, they shoulder more responsibility than others, and they motivate others easily. The difference between being an organization and being organized is vital, and using the terms appropriately is an indication of communicative competence within Earth First!

There are numerous examples of this sort where someone is corrected concerning Earth First!'s movement status, or someone emphasizes that status to make a point. These are all cases in which the theme of movement versus organization is stated explicitly, usually by a veteran Earth First!er, and a newcomer learns how to talk about Earth First! as a movement.

Implicit Expressions of Being a Movement

Before any activity, Earth First! holds what is called a nonviolence prep, which is designed to teach people about, and prepare them for nonviolent confrontations. At both preps I attended, all three of the movements referred to earlier were discussed as examples for Earth First! to emulate. No such comparison was made with other environmentalist organizations, which would appear to have more in common with Earth First! People who attend these nonviolence preps come away with knowledge not of how groups such as the Sierra Club or the Wilderness Society operate, but of how a movement such as the civil rights' movement or the liberation movement in India achieved

its goal. The woman who led the prep quoted Gandhi, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they crack down on you, then you win." (field notes, 4-8-90) She was making the point that Earth First! is now in the phase where "they" are cracking down, so if Gandhi was right, victory is imminent for Earth First!

Earth First! is not an institution that endures because it is an institution/organization, but a movement that endures because of the nature of the issue on which it focuses. Earth First!'s conception of a movement as being identified by members' allegiance to one goal is supported by member's talk. Throughout my involvement, when there were no upcoming plans to organize, weeks would go by without a meeting. Only when there was a threatening timber sale to protest or an opportunity to get some public attention (Earth Day, for instance) did members feel the need to call a meeting. Earth First! didn't take part in activities which were not directly relevant to the issue of the ancient forests. This is why the debate about whether to occupy an office in Eugene became an issue in several Earth First! meetings. Those who had reservations did so because to them an office suggested institutionalization, a sense of permanence that may take precedence over the day-to-day fight. (field notes, 9-12-89) The practical benefits of occupying an office finally won, but the issue of saving the old growth remains the focus of the group.

An organization implies a formalized situation where there are regularly scheduled meetings and activities that members attend at particular times and then at other times turn to other interests, different organizations, or a career. To Earth First!ers, a movement

is more all-consuming; many participants devote all of their time to the cause. For those involved with Earth First!, environmentalism is a way of life; some are jobless, and some are even homeless so that they are more able to be ready to defend the earth when the need arises.

One new participant at a meeting told the group that before pointing the finger at others, "you must look at yourselves first," and then talked about using recycled paper, staying away from pre-packaged foods and environmentally dangerous products. (field notes, 10-30-89) There was a long silence and the tone was tense. This man obviously did not realize that being involved with this movement meant those present had already accepted environmentalism as a way of life. His comments were met with silence and I inferred that many of the longtime Earth First!ers took offense at his accusations. If the situation were reversed, with a longtime Earth First!er addressing the same subject with a newcomer, the comment may be appropriate, in order to teach what was competent and expected.

On a different occasion, during a meeting which was attended by many non-Earth First!ers, a veteran was asked what some of the characteristics of Earth First! are. Among other things, she said that Earth First!ers try to act as "models of right living." (field notes, 10-23-89) A discussion of an Earth First! entry in a parade during a meeting brought reminders from veterans not to use a fuel-burning truck for the procession, and to seek out recycled paper for the posters. The reminders were well-received; the speaker was a longtime Earth First!er, and his comment was not accusatory.

Implicit examples of the theme of movement versus organization

are not always so broad; at one meeting, a newer member got several laughs from the most experienced members present when he asked if, "someone should take minutes?" (field notes, 9-29-89) In this case, the idea of someone taking minutes was too suggestive of a formal organization to be appropriate at an Earth First! meeting.

Part of being a competent member of Earth First! is understanding the importance of being part of a movement and not an organization, and expressing that in appropriate ways, both implicitly and explicitly. But just as important is understanding why being a movement is so much more valued than being an organization. This understanding renders the language resources comprehensible to the participant, and sheds some light on the communicative norms.

Anti-Organization Talk

The five men who started the Earth First! movement had all had previous experience with environmental organizations and found that for the most part they were accomplishing very little. Earth First!ers think that the more organized, or bureaucratized an environmental group gets, the further away it gets from the real issue, the environment, the trees, and the wildlife. Mike Roselle, a co-founder, had this to say about large environmental organizations:

Mainstream environmentalists are out of touch. They've never seen this old growth. Most of them are in D.C., doing lunch in their designer khakis and working out their retirement bennies. The problem is, the environmental movement isn't a calling anymore, it's a job. They think wilderness is some Disneyland you check into after you shut down your computer and lock up the condo. (Kane, 1987, p.106)

With a definite anti-bureaucratic attitude, these men created a movement that would run counter to all that they found abhorrent in formalized organizations. Where other organizations passively fought environmental degradation, Earth First! would take direct action, where other organizations had rigid guidelines that suppressed the human element, Earth First! would let the individual set his/her own guidelines in every situation.

This anti-organization attitude is expressed in many ways in the groups I worked with. In general meetings a decision making process known as consensus is used. It is taught at all Earth First! nonviolence preps, and commonly described as an "anti-authoritarian" process. (field notes, 10-2-89) The procedure ensures that everyone present has a say in the decision, and that there is no one who leads the meeting, only a facilitator, who makes sure everyone is heard from. A handout Earth First!ers are given at nonviolence preps describing consensus uses words such as, "diversity," "flexibility," and "contradiction." (field notes, 4-8-90) Another important anti-authoritarian aspect of consensus is that any one person can block any decision that the group is about to make. Decisions are rarely blocked, but members are well aware that the option is there.

Another way this attitude is expressed is through remarks about large organizations. One immensely popular poster made by an Earth First!er for Earth Day has a picture of the earth with a red slash through it, underneath which it reads, "Earth Free Zone- 50,000 Corporate Sponsors Can't Be Right." (field notes, 4-11-90) Its popularity is a result of the belief that anything huge corporations

support cannot be beneficial to the earth, as money is typically their "bottom line."

As mentioned earlier, Earth First! was at one time asked by the environmental group OSPiRG to endorse them as a campus organization. Some of the newer members thought this might be a good idea, having heard that OSPiRG had done some environmentally positive things. Without arguing the merits of their accomplishments, one veteran argued vehemently against it, saying that OSPiRG is a "super (hyper) organization." She went on to say that they are very "hierarchical," and "intense;" they have a manual for running meetings, and they are told by their central headquarters what projects to undertake. (field notes, 2-21-90) The argument implied was that a group that bureaucratized could not have any personal feeling toward the environment they claim to care about. Earth First!ers would argue that there is no human element in an organization like that. After that, everyone agreed that Earth First! should not give OSPiRG an endorsement.

Other remarks that support this distrust of organizations are made in reference to groups such as the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and the Audubon Society. In one meeting at which people were introducing themselves and sharing why they were there, a good number of people expressed feelings of being "fed up" or "frustrated" with "traditional environmental groups," and they wanted to try something else. (field notes, 10-2-89) As stated earlier, that frustration with traditional groups is what gave birth to the Earth First! movement. Here, competency reveals itself in agreeing through

talk as well as action that large organizations do not accomplish much and lack the personal feeling of a movement like Earth First!

The importance of being identified as a movement as opposed to an organization can be expressed with anti-organization talk, such as the decision making process, or by remarks revealing distaste for large organizations, as outlined above, but another way of talking about it which has practical purposes is by referring to accountability. In a large organization with elected officers and governing by-laws, deciding where to point the finger would be much easier than in a loosely structured movement where there is no one to take ultimate responsibility for the group's actions. And in a group for whom monkeywrenching is a common way to voice opinions, (for instance, protesting the building of a new road in a stand of old growth by pouring sugar in the crankcase of a bulldozer, rendering it useless) this loose structure is the most practical.

During a nonviolence prep, an ex-logger was arguing with the leader about the practice of tree-spiking, and how it gives Earth First! a bad reputation. She explained to the logger that Earth First! is a movement, not an organization and, "everyone in the movement is not accountable for the actions of one in the movement." (field notes, 4-8-90) Individuals in the movement rarely even know what others in the movement are up to, unless they are specifically told. This also helps individuals to increase their own legal safety, as key Earth First!ers have in the past been threatened with conspiracy charges.

The more people at a meeting, the fewer topics there are that can be discussed. The leader of one nonviolence prep gave us this

advice about planning activities, "if you want to talk, take a walk." (field notes, 12-9-89) Another respected Earth First!er told me never to plan any monkeywrenching with anyone unless I had known him/her for at least a year. (field notes, 10-5-89)

Large organizations concern Earth First! not only because of accountability in legal issues, but a concern about infiltrators as well. Both of these concerns are talked about often, and in many contexts. In discussing someone's suggestion that Earth First! make stickers that would read, "this product is NOT earth friendly," no one ever said directly what they would be used for, though everyone knew that the target would be Fred Meyer which has a line of "Earth Friendly" products which, according to Earth First!, are not. One man said sarcastically, "we want to put them on our own products, to remind us (that the product is not earth friendly.)" (field notes, 2-21-90) There was an enthusiastic newcomer there who kept trying to press the group into saying exactly what she should do with the stickers, but she was met with a sarcastic evasive answer every time.

The experienced members are the most careful about what they say. Newer participants are the ones who typically have to be corrected, or chided, or shut down with sarcasm because of what they say. A suggestion by a newcomer to give out the stickers at an Earth First! table for Earth Day, was countered by an older woman, "I think you need to be more paranoid." (field notes, 2-21-90)

At times even experienced participants need to remind each other what is appropriate to talk about in certain groups. In deciding how to transport the necessary materials to make a spotted owl's nest in

Sen. Mark Hatfield's Salem office, one man said, "well, we could use our truck, but it's being used for-" His mate quickly interrupted with a hard look, "for something else." (field notes, 8-29-89) I assumed that disclosing just what the truck was being used for was inappropriate for that particular group. A new window display in a Eugene cutlery shop featuring a huge stuffed cougar merited this deliberate understatement by an experienced Earth First!er, "it deserves some comment." (field notes, 10-5-89) Deciding how much to tell people over the phone about an upcoming Earth First! activity is always a debate. A learned Earth First!er knows how to advocate indirectly and avoid assuming responsibility for acts of property destruction or monkeywrenching. This is a result of fear of personal implication and also fear of infiltrators.

Motion-Oriented Talk

Another vital aspect of the movement sentiment for Earth First! is the notion of movement itself as a category of talk. Those involved with Earth First! talk not only of being a movement, but also in terms that suggest movement, motion or action.

For example, the activities planned during the meetings are always called "actions," regardless of how much physical activity they involve. In describing to an outsider what Earth First!'s unique characteristic is, an Earth First!er will answer that they are a "direct action" movement. At a large meeting one veteran Earth First!er explained to a newcomer why Earth First! is so different

from other environmental groups, "some of our actions have resulted in at least some kind of delay in the timber industry, we are focusing on direct action." (field notes, 10-2-89)

In addition to being the overall goal of the movement, direct action describes the sound of much of the talk within Earth First! as well. A discussion of Muir Day, "an occupation of endangered forests on federal (Forest Service and/or Bureau of Land Management) land near Eugene" (field notes, 4-11-90), included many motion oriented remarks. One woman shared her vision of Muir Day as a "very mobile thing," occupying one area for a while then moving on. (field notes, 4-11-90) Another woman saw the demonstration as "an ongoing thing." A longtime Earth First!er admonished, "remember, it's not a party, it's an action." (field notes, 4-11-90) I heard a younger woman saying to another woman that she felt guilty because she did not know how long she could stay with the action, and she was reassured that, "at least you're doing something." (field notes, 4-11-90) After about a half hour of sharing visions of Muir Day, one man stood up and said, "Let's just get there, we'll figure everything out when we're up there, let's just get there!" (field notes, 4-11-90)

The attitude of the talk in all Earth First! contexts is motion, activity; as long as passivity is avoided, forward motion is being achieved. Nothing is worse for an Earth First!er than losing that forward motion and becoming inactive. That was the argument one man had at a general meeting against Earth First!'s involvement in too many issues, "we need to worry about spreading the group too thin, losing

momentum and focus." (field notes, 8-29-89) A tree climbing workshop at Mary's Peak (a small mountain outside of Corvallis) seemed to one Earth First!er to be, "much better out here doing something instead of sitting at the M.U.(Memorial Union)." (field notes, 4-15-90)

People are constantly reminded, again by those with longer involvement, that Earth First! is action-oriented. A suggestion by someone that we write letters to our congressmen about a particular timber sale was shot down by the facilitator, "wrong group, wrong group!" (field notes, 8-29-89) For Earth First!, letter writing is a much too passive way to express an opinion. Earth First! will always opt for direct action like physically blocking a road to a timber sale ("Protesters block logging.." 1989, p.1), to indirect action like writing a letter protesting a particular sale.

In meetings, I discovered passive and active topics, the latter being much more common. Passive topics include fund-raising, the staffing of an information table, even debates on environmental issues. These discussions last longer than active topics, people tend to get bored with the subjects, and there is more conflict among participants concerning these issues. Two meetings in November illustrate this well. The last topic of one of the meetings was whether or not we should have an office. The group discussed how much it would cost, what the advantages and disadvantages would be, and how we would get people to staff the office. During the meeting I wrote in my field notes that people seemed bored, quiet, some were reading the paper or other things they had brought. The other meeting I referred to (which was the next meeting) ended with a discussion of a skit Earth First! would perform at the Eugene Celebration. In my notes I wrote

that, "People are so much more animated that at the last meeting, the atmosphere is lively, jovial, positive- a much different way to end a meeting." (field notes, 11-2-89)

Active topics typically begin, "What should we do for..." At this point in every meeting, people seem to come alive, envisioning the upcoming action. "We could have someone dress up as Smoky the Bear only carrying his own bloody head!" (field notes, 10-2-89) "Let's chain ourselves to the doors of Wendy's so no one can get in!" (field notes, 4-15-90) "The front of our shirts could say, 'We love Hatfield,' and the backs could say, 'don't clearcut our future.' No, that's not the same number of letters." (field notes, 11-5-89) Earth First!ers are in their element planning for an action. Such planning allows them to let their individual creativity and anger flow, and feel good because they are doing something.

Brainstorming is a process which generates new ideas for activities. The guidelines for effective brainstorming include saying anything that comes to mind, not making any evaluative comments about the ideas. Members toss out a multitude of rough ideas while someone writes them down so they can be discussed later. A newcomer is sometimes overwhelmed by the energetic tone during an 'active' discussion, but soon learns how to jump in and add his/her own suggestions, the more outrageous the better.

In addition, motion is expressed by the presence of the exclamation point after Earth First!, wherever the name appears. It was obviously done consciously by the co-founders, and it seems to indicate some urgency to the appellation, making it look more like a

call to arms than just a name.

Individualistic Talk

Earth First! can also be heard expressing this theme of movement through talk that is individualistic. The importance of individuality is stated most frequently at general meetings, where veteran participants try to explain to newcomers what Earth First! is all about. One woman activist said to a group, "Earth First! is what each individual makes of it. There is no one way to go about saving the earth, but hopefully everyone will find what they are looking for." (field notes, 10-2-89) At a different meeting one man offered, "Earth First! is a way for me to express my own anger at the destruction of the earth." (field notes, 12-5-89) "Earth First! is what you make it; you do whatever you feel comfortable with," said another woman. (field notes, 4-8-90) The same woman argued at a banner-making party against people who had said they didn't feel comfortable speaking their minds to those in the timber industry because they were not up on the latest facts. "Bullshit!" she said, "You care; your own emotional response is as valid as any other!" (field notes, 4-11-90)

Each individual is respected for his/her own view and contribution; no one person is any more highly valued than another. Even one of the first Earth First!ers, Dave Foreman, who is thought by many outsiders to be the leader, is just another individual to insiders, doing whatever he can to protect the earth. One nonviolence

prep instructor said of Dave Foreman, "I don't agree with some of what he says...actually I don't agree with much of what he says." Even Dave Foreman agrees, "I'm not important to Earth First! in its day-to-day functioning." (Vanderpool, 1989, p.15) But the media continues to portray Earth First! as an organized, hierarchical group, "and like we do everything Dave Foreman says." (field notes, 4-8-90)

At an Earth First! information table one enthusiastic student asked the longtime Earth First!er with whom I was sitting where he could contact the leader, Dave Foreman, because he was interested in "joining up with Earth First!" The tone of the woman's answer was firm, almost suspicious, "I don't know Dave Foreman, but if you want to get involved, get involved, come to a meeting." (field notes, 4-18-90) Someone already involved with Earth First! would know that Dave Foreman has nothing to do with any local Earth First! groups. This emphasis may be due to the fear of legal implications; if everyone is just doing his/her own thing, then no one is responsible. It may also be a reaction against the rigidity of formalized organizations, and the suppression of human expression that is sometimes the result. The lesson here, as one member puts it, is that "If you are a sheep, Earth First! is no place for you." (field notes, 6-21-90) "We are not Ed Abbey clones." (field notes, 10-2-89) "It's not like our principles are written in stone." (field notes, 4-8-90)

The lengthier the involvement with Earth First!, the more important individuality becomes, and again, veterans are usually the ones to convey this value to less experienced participants. In discussing Earth First!'s Muir Day, the "last stand for the endangered ancient forests," a longtime Earth First!er stressed the

fact that, "Earth First! is not your mother, Earth First! will not feed you, clothe you, or tell you what to do next." (field notes, 4-11-90) There is always an attitude among Earth First!ers of self-sufficiency and self-reliance especially when it comes to actions. The members came together because of their dedication to a common goal, but they remain individuals, taking care of themselves and thinking for themselves.

Decisions are made either individually or by smaller groups known as affinity groups. Newcomers learn of affinity groups at nonviolence preps. Veterans stress the importance of affinity groups to the success of the movement. At preps they are spoken about in a serious tone, so that new members learn not to take the responsibility of being part of an affinity group lightly. According to a handout from a nonviolence prep, an affinity group is,

...usually 5-20 people who have been brought together at a nonviolence training or have other ties such as friendship, living in the same neighborhood, working together or have special concerns or interests. It may exist only for the duration of one action or may continue functioning as an ongoing group. It is an autonomous decision making body within the guidelines of the consensus process and the nonviolence codes. Mostly, an AG is a source of support. (field notes, 4-8-90)

Affinity groups are an important part of Earth First!. They provide the solidarity and security that a large organization might, but allows for the individuality of those involved. Members of Earth First! are not expected to conform to any standard; the choice of what to do is still up to the individual. An affinity group is where like-minded people can get together and plan an activity, and as long

as everyone within this smaller group cooperates and communicates openly and frankly, it can be an effective way to accomplish goals.

In one case, an affinity group decided to conduct a nonviolent demonstration, but one of the group said he was not sure he could suppress his anger if he were being attacked. The other members of the group got together and mutually decided that he should find another affinity group. (field notes, 4-8-90) Another example of an affinity group took place in jail after an arrest, when one of the group was being held for more serious charges. The rest of the group took off all their clothes, and sat in the middle of the cell, saying they would stay there until the charges were dropped. (field notes, 4-8-90) In this situation the affinity group provided the solidarity sometimes needed in times of conflict.

While individuality is rewarded, a newcomer also learns that if in an affinity group, he/she needs to be open and flexible with the group, so "if someone wants to throw rocks or something, you can talk to that person and say hey, we're not into that this time; maybe you could get some other people together." (field notes, 4-8-90) Instead of being blindly loyal to the ambiguous entity that is Earth First!, members are loyal to the individuals they are working with within Earth First!

Summary of Movement Theme

Participants in Earth First! see themselves as contributors to a movement, not an organization. Using the descriptive framework, paying special attention to participants, ends, key, and norms, I found that this notion is critical for Earth First!'s self-definition and identity. Older or more experienced Earth First!ers talk about being a movement, talk in terms that suggest movement, and talk in terms of individuality, which is vital to a movement as well. This is the language that less experienced Earth First!ers hear constantly, and in all settings, from planning meetings to banner-making parties. The outcome of this way of talking is that everyone involved with Earth First! comes to understand what Earth First! is and what it is not, and learns what is appropriate for both their own communication and their actions within the movement.

Often this theme is stated explicitly, when describing Earth First! or when correcting someone who has referred to Earth First! as an organization. Newer Earth First!ers are often corrected by the older ones until they learn more about Earth First! and how to speak about its structure, or lack thereof. Newcomers must also learn that speaking of Earth First! as a movement, not an organization does not mean that Earth First! lacks organization. I found that the most organized participants are typically the ones who guide the movement in their area. Those who equate being organized with being an organization, and abhor both equally, are floaters who drift in and

out of the activities without having any real credibility or influence within the movement.

Newcomers learn of the movement versus organization distinction implicitly as well. They hear participants compare Earth First! to movements such as the civil rights' movement and the liberation movement in India, but not to organizations such as the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society. They hear participants talk of environmentalism as an all-consuming way of life that doesn't stop when the meeting or demonstration is over. That participants recycle and boycott styrofoam and walk instead of drive is just as important as their contribution to Earth First!

Neophyte activists quickly learn to think of Earth First! as a movement and to speak in those terms. Along the way, veterans communicate to them in many ways why this aspect of Earth First! is so meaningful to the participants. Understanding why being a movement is important to Earth First! gives meaning to the linguistic norms for the newcomer; the norms become comprehensible.

The first way of talking about being a movement which reveals a purpose is anti-organizational. Any talk that reveals distrust of large organizations or bureaucracies is appropriate in any context. These can be heard as snide comments about timber industry organizations, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, Weyerhaeuser, or about other environmentalists who Earth First! believes have sold out to bureaucracy such as the Sierra Club or the Wilderness Society. A more subtle form of this anti-organization attitude is the decision making process Earth First! employs. It is called consensus, and is described by Earth First!ers as an anti-

authoritarian process. Newcomers learn that everyone must have a say in the decision and everyone's views are respected and welcome while remarks to the contrary are quickly corrected by others.

Part of the reason for talk targeting large organizations is the concern about accountability and infiltrators, as some of Earth First!'s activities fall outside the realm of legality. Earth First!ers know never to speak in terms of advocating or even knowing of illegal activities within the movement.

Anti-organization is highly valued and serves to reinforce Earth First!'s status as a movement while making a statement about large organizations in general. Not only does Earth First! talk about being a movement, but their language connotes actual motion or action.

Earth First!ers consider themselves a direct action movement, which may account for the movement found in their speech. This focus on direct action is part of what they feel separates them from other environmental groups. Earth First! believes these groups are too passive for the most part. The emphasis is on doing and going, not contemplating or waiting. Newcomers learn the language of action throughout their involvement with Earth First! In meetings, there are passive and active topics, the latter being upbeat, almost frenzied brainstorming sessions for upcoming actions.

Veteran Earth First!er's talk is anti-organizational and action-oriented; equally important is talk that centers on individuality, as it reflects opposition to the lack of the human element in bureaucracies. With newcomers listening closely, the longtime Earth First!ers speak in terms of independence, creating experience, and

being self-sufficient within the movement.

All this talk of movement versus organization serves to identify to the world and to themselves who Earth First! is. The entities they run up against in their fight are typically highly organized, with centralized power and an eye on profit. That is one reason Earth First! takes such pains to ensure that they in no way resemble Weyerhaeuser, Georgia-Pacific, the Forest Service; they are expressing their opposition to these organizations. Earth First! places great value on being clearly distinguished from the big corporations it finds too bureaucratic and dehumanizing, as well as from the environmental organizations it finds too passive.

In the Northwest, Earth First!ers accept the estimate that there is only five percent of the old growth left, which explains their focus on action, in their tactics and in their language. For Earth First!, it is nearing the time when it will be too late for the ecosystems they have devoted so much time to saving, so they feel they must act quickly as a movement. This feeling of urgency comes across in whatever they do and say, and is part of communicative competence within the culture.

Identifying the Enemy

Earth First! spends a great deal of time discussing the "enemy," or who it is that they are targeting with their activities. Various parts of the descriptive framework- participants, ends, scene, key and instrumentalities- demonstrated this important aspect of communication competence. To be an Earth First!er is to understand who the enemy is and is not, and how to express that. Examples of this theme were found in meetings, especially during the brainstorming for possible actions, and also in casual conversation between Earth First!ers. As with the expression of movement, it is typically the more experienced activists who communicate to newer members what the parameters are for talk about the enemy. The tone during talk about the enemy is often times joking, poking fun at those they are fighting against. The exception to this occurs when a norm is violated, when someone mistakenly identifies the enemy, or when someone's talk begins to resemble that of an enemy. In these cases the tone becomes more serious, demonstrating the importance of this category of talk for Earth First! Generally, the references to the enemy reveal an aversion to a characteristic that they represent. For instance, Weyerhaeuser is characterized as an enemy because it represents greed. Other businesses or individuals may be seen as enemies because they represent ignorance.

Greed

By far the most important target is greed, or valuing money or power more than the environment. Oregon Senator Mark Hatfield is an appropriate target for Earth First!ers to express that which they are fighting against. His Salem office was the focus of an action in November, when Earth First! decided to build a spotted owl's nest in the middle of it. (field notes, 8-29-89) At a public law conference in Eugene, an Earth First!er from Southern Oregon gave a slide presentation on the old growth issue and whenever he mentioned Hatfield's name, a loud hiss came up from the audience (which was predominantly Earth First!ers). (field notes, 3-2-90)

The dedication of an animal research lab at the University of Oregon by Hatfield and Governor Goldschmidt merited a lively brainstorming session and this comment, "feathers and sawdust fit nicely into a briefcase." (field notes, 10-5-89) When the difficulty of nonviolence was being argued at a banner-making party, a veteran reminded the group to be mindful of who is being targeted and, "let that guide your nonviolence." To which someone else added, "yea, the people I'm against are the Weyerhausers and like Hatfield... now if Hatfield were to come..." The rest of the group chuckled in agreement and understood that he would have trouble being nonviolent toward Hatfield if he came to the action that was being discussed, because Hatfield is a true foe. (field notes, 4-15-90)

Earth First!ers believe Hatfield has sold out to timber interests, and his actions have little to do with a concern for the environment. He is thought to be concerned only with his political career, which

for Earth First! is a form of greed. His Earth First! nick-names are "Hatchetfield," and "Hatfield." His support of the legislation that restricted the public from appealing timber sales is Earth First!'s main bone of contention. This anger is expressed on many Earth First! banners: "End Hatfield's War on Trees," "Hatfield's Rider=Destruction," or more bluntly, "Fuck The Rider From Hell," this last one an underground favorite among members.

Part of communication competence in Earth First! is depicting Hatfield as the foe in discussions, meetings, banners or other channels. If the talk includes his greed, or hypocrisy when it comes to environmentalism, then it is appropriate.

Other foes who represent greed are the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and other government supported entities that manage some part of the environment. The majority of the forest land around Corvallis and Eugene is managed by the Forest Service, so they are the target of much of Earth First!'s anger in that area. One fund-raising idea was to print bumper-stickers that mocked the Forest Service's stickers "U.S. Forest Service- Caring for the Land, Serving the People." Earth First!'s version would read, "U.S. Forest Service-Raping the Land, Deceiving the People." Another one was based on the Forest Service's "Prevent Forest Fires," but would read, "Prevent Foresters." (field notes, 10-5-89) Favorite Earth First! appellations for Forest Service People are, "freddies," taken from a movie in which Fred MacMurray plays a bumbling boy scout leader, "timber monsters," and "land rapists." At a banner-making gathering I was shown by a veteran how Earth First! mocks the U.S. Forest Service symbol by drawing a dead tree with "U.S. Forest Circus"

written underneath. (field notes, 10-19-89)

In appropriately expressing the enemy in terms of the Forest Service and other management entities there are usually insinuations of mis-management, irresponsibility, and a certain amount of greed. One newcomer asked why the group had decided to target the Oregon State University Department of Forestry in an action. A longtime Earth First!er answered that, "basically, forestry has never been practiced fairly anywhere, and our department, like others, teaches consumption and economics." Another experienced participant added in explanation, "OSU manages, or should we say, mis-manages, McDonald forest." (field notes, 10-15-89) A conversation between an Earth First!er and a forestry professor brought this complaint from the Earth First!er, "that department is teaching cut, cut, cut!" (field notes, 4-18-90)

On a different occasion, a newcomer asked why Earth First! was planning on trying to shut down the Siuslaw National Forest office (part of the Forest Service). The facilitator at the meeting said, "This forest is being cut at the fastest rate, and at last count it had only 11 pairs of spotted owls." (field notes, 10-15-89)

A demonstration at the Oregon Fish and Wildlife office focusing on the hunting of the possibly threatened cougar featured one of the most vocal demonstrators throwing a bucket of simulated cougar blood on the steps, shouting, "there's blood on your hands, now it's on your stairs!" (field notes, 9-25-89)

Others who are Earth First! targets because of their greed are those companies who don't manage the forests, but directly profit from

the cutting of them, or somehow add to their destruction. In targeting the foe it is appropriate to include any timber- and profit-oriented company which has some degree of wealth. Weyerhaeuser is one example, because they buy a great deal of forest land for clearcutting. In discussing the destruction of a chainsaw at an action by an Earth First!er, the leader of the nonviolence prep said, "it would have been different had it been some Weyerhaeuser machine, or another owned by a wealthy company," but as it was it belonged to an individual logger and was inappropriate. (field notes, 4-8-90) At the same nonviolence prep the leader was talking about the failure of tree-spiking as a tactic, "those big greedy companies still make workers go out and cut, regardless of the danger." (field notes, 4-8-90) A popular Earth First! nickname for these foes is "greed heads."

Ignorance

Ignorance is another trait that Earth First! finds abhorrent. While those who exhibit ignorance aren't as culpable as the "greed heads," they can still be targets. As an Earth First!er there are certain things a member "knows" about the issues, and anyone or any action that demonstrates the lack of this knowledge can become a target.

Typically when targeting ignorance the tone is joking, perhaps because Earth First! thinks that it is less threatening to the success of the movement than greed. During a showing of Rage Over Trees a television program about the Northwest timber issue, someone from the

timber industry said, "we will have old growth resources forever, we will never run out." This comment brought howls of laughter from the group of Earth First!ers, as all members "know" that the resource is limited, and that what the man said was not only ignorant but ludicrous. (field notes, 10-23-89) At a demonstration at Oregon Fish and Wildlife to protest the cougar hunt, the Earth First!er with whom I was holding a sign said jokingly, "the problem with having a demo in Springfield is that most of them can't read." (field notes, 9-25-89)

At a nonviolence prep one of the experienced members related a story from an Earth First! action in which she had been involved. The woman was chained to a gate so that the loggers couldn't get in to cut. One of the logger's wives yelled to her, "Have you ever worked out here?" The Earth First!er told her, "Yes, I have, I used to plant trees." To which the logger's wife replied, even angrier, "It figures!!" (field notes, 4-8-90) For Earth First!, this was a display of ignorance; what the logger's wife was arguing was completely illogical, and showed no knowledge of the issues. The Eugene cutlery shop whose owner wasn't aware that the cougar might be a threatened species and displayed a stuffed one in the window became a possible target when a member said that it "deserves some comment." (field notes, 10-5-89)

Part of Earth First!'s overall goal, in addition to deterring the destruction of the earth as they see it, is to battle ignorance and let people know that this destruction is occurring. In a general meeting one member defined monkeywrenching for a newcomer, saying "It typically sheds light on an issue." (field notes, 9-25-89) "I'm

personally into education," said one nonviolence prep leader in discussing what she contributes to Earth First! (field notes, 4-8-90) The Earth First!er whose complaint with the forestry department was that they teach, "cut, cut, cut," was told by the forestry professor he was speaking with that "you're ignorant, son." The Earth First!er was visibly offended; he shook his head, turned away from the professor, and the conversation ended. (field notes, 4-18-90)

In identifying the enemy, Earth First! uses standards of knowledge set by their own knowledge of the issues. Someone who doesn't subscribe to their version of "awareness" is ignorant, and fair game for criticism by Earth First! As a member, detailed scientific knowledge of the specific issue isn't necessary in demonstrating communication competence; one need know only what the general stance of the movement is to be able to identify the ignorant antagonist.

Non-Enemies

Equally important to Earth First! is identifying who the enemy is not. This issue came up frequently, especially when brainstorming about upcoming actions, but also when discussing monkeywrenching and civil disobedience. There are certain people or groups who may be guilty of some degree of greed or ignorance, but they are exempt from Earth First!'s wrath.

Those who may be related to true foes of the movement but are not directly responsible for the destruction are not targeted by Earth First! As a nonviolence prep instructor said, "You have to be clear

about hating the system, not the people who are merely part of the system, Gandhi said, 'I love you, but I despise the system you help perpetuate.'" (field notes, 4-8-90) When discussing materials for the spotted owl's nest in Hatfield's office, someone suggested using sawdust. A more experienced member said that although, "he deserves a mess," it wouldn't be Hatfield who has to clean it up, it would be a janitor, and that's not "the statement we want to make." So as a group it was decided that large sticks would be used instead, that way a statement would be made about the plight of the spotted owl, but the clean-up would be easier.

It is often stressed that the logger is not the enemy of Earth First! A nonviolence prep instructor told a group that, "the loggers are not the ones we're fighting," and that we all needed to work together to "unveil the real enemy." (field notes, 4-8-90) A suggestion by one member to stage a skit involving a logger chopping off the head of a spotted owl with a chainsaw was met with a negative reaction. "First of all, it's too violent, but also the loggers are not responsible and are really in a tight spot." (field notes, 9-12-89)

It is often at actions that this norm is violated, and veteran activists have to set others straight. When an independent logger's chainsaw was destroyed by an Earth First!er at an action, one veteran Eugene member said she was, "disappointed in whoever did it, because that man couldn't afford a new one, and he wasn't to blame for the decision to cut." (field notes, 4-8-90) At a different action a logger shoved an Earth First!er who was blocking the road to a timber

sale. The Earth First!er called him a fascist, and a longtime member said she had to pull her fellow activist aside and say, "hey, that's not cool." (field notes, 4-8-90) One member said of confronting loggers at an action, "it's hard to keep from laughing when they're calling you 'gay,' 'welfare-monger,' and 'commie,' but you can't demean or trivialize them." (field notes, 4-8-90)

Not only do Earth First!ers stress that the loggers and mill-workers are not their enemies, but they actually voice a desire to help them. "They are not bad people, they are regular people with families and money problems. I know they can be jerks, but try to understand what they're going through." (field notes, 12-9-89) One well-respected member said she was attempting to form an alliance with the mill-workers in the area, saying to them, "This is how we can help you, now will you help us?" (field notes, 4-8-90) This same member told the group of an experience she had at an action with some loggers. She was sitting on a gate that led into a stand of old growth with a group of Earth First!ers listening to some loggers yelling at them. She said she jumped down and said to them, "when you get your pink slip, and you will, it will not be because of us, but I'll be right there with you on the picket line. I've done it before." She said the loggers were speechless. (field notes, 4-8-90)

As far as Earth First! is concerned, the loggers and the mill-workers are being used and lied to by the timber industry, so they are not to blame for being ignorant about the timber issue, and their greed is merely a survival instinct. Southern Willamette Earth First! held a press conference early in 1990 to renounce the tactic of tree spiking because, "the timber companies don't give a shit

about the employees; they treat them like they do the forest." (field notes, 4-8-90) One Earth First!er voiced a desire to "get the loggers on our side. We want them to see that they are being used by the industry and will still wind up jobless. Let's get them to start monkeywrenching the mills!" (field notes, 10-2-89)

In the case of mill-workers, loggers and other employees who are not responsible for critical timber-related decisions, it is appropriate for Earth First!ers to show mercy and even sympathy. This is often difficult, especially in a confrontation situation at an action, so it is the job of veteran members to guide the neophyte Earth First!ers' talk as well as action. The tone of this guidance is serious, as it is a critical issue in self-definition. When one member jokingly questioned another member's "sympathies" after she said something about being fair to the loggers, the joker received a harsh look and no reply from the accused. (field notes, 9-12-89) The lesson here is that one doesn't even joke about targeting non-enemies.

Summary of Enemy Theme

For Earth First!ers it is important to recognize what they are fighting for, and equally important to recognize whom they are fighting against. The enemy as expressed by Earth First! is usually a representative for a particular characteristic that doesn't jibe with their philosophy. I found expressions of the enemy in all contexts, but brainstorming sessions and casual conversations between members contained the most identifications of the enemy. At the same time that Earth First!ers express who the enemy is, they are expressing who they are as a movement as well, so this becomes a key issue in self-definition for Earth First!

Monetary greed is anathema to Earth First!, so anyone exhibiting greed with the power to make decisions concerning the environment is a target for them. A new member quickly learns that Hatfield and the Forest Service are the most appropriate targets in talking about the enemy. They learn this at meetings, when suggestions are made to make one or the other the focus of a potential action. But they also learn this by listening to casual conversation between members, which is typically filled with sarcastic remarks about both Hatfield and the Forest Service, referring to their greed or ineptitude or hypocrisy.

When a participant, new or experienced, makes an appropriate remark concerning this issue, he/she is rewarded by laughter, or comments of approval by the rest of the group. "Let's ask Hatfield if he really thinks it's appropriate that he speak at the Ava

Pauling Peace lecture?" (field notes, 10-30-89) This comment by a relative newcomer was well-received by the group, and from his behavior afterwards, I inferred that it made him feel more comfortable and accepted, and he was increasingly talkative throughout the rest of the meeting.

Another appropriate target for Earth First! is anyone who does not display the correct knowledge of the issues. Someone who doesn't agree that preserving old growth is necessary for the health of the planet, or who doesn't believe that jobs would be lost regardless of environmentalist's activities can be a target. Ironically, members are not expected to have a detailed knowledge of the issues since, emotional arguments among members are as highly valued as rational ones. It is only those who oppose Earth First! and don't subscribe to their particular brand of awareness who are subject to criticism. People who are involved with Earth First!, simply because of their involvement, need only have the ability to talk about outsiders whose views run counter to those of the movement to be competent. As one member said about the lack of "facts and statistics" in talk with the media or timber industry people, "you're here, you care, your own emotional response is just as valid as any other." (field notes, 4-15-90)

Equally as important in self-definition for Earth First! is the identification of who the enemy is not. As much time is spent on this issue as on identifying who the enemy is. Whereas the tone of identifying the enemy is sometimes light-hearted, poking fun at the opposition- identifying who the enemy is not- takes on a more serious tone. Those who exaggerate the claims against Hatfield are received

with laughter and maybe a sympathetic, "aw, he's not that bad." But those who mistakenly identify a logger or a mill-worker as a foe are corrected a little more sternly by more experienced participants. I found that it's not even appropriate to joke about targeting either a logger or a mill-worker, or someone who just works for the system without being in a position to make important decisions.

Earth First!ers know they are seen as a band of slightly goofy eco-terrorists, which doesn't upset them too much as long as people are aware of who they are terrorizing and why. If someone is in a position to help the environment, but they don't because of greed, then Earth First! may define them as an enemy. If someone is opposed to that which Earth First! stands for, then they are ignorant of the real issues and can be targeted for criticism. Earth First! will not fight against and never claim to fight against those it feels are being used by the timber industry, or government agencies. It is vital to Earth First! that they be very selective in their actions, even if the public doesn't see it this way. This is one way members can justify their commitment to a movement that frequently gets cast in a negative light; they know that they operate under some sort of guiding, albeit ambiguous, principles of activism.

Humor

One Earth First!er told me about a comment made by a student in a course on environmentalist groups. The professor discussed Earth First! at the end of the term, and began by showing the class cartoons from the Earth First! journal. The student said with a certain amount of derision in his voice, "you know, I think it's really telling that we're studying Earth First! with cartoons." (field notes, 4-11-90)

A former logger who came to an Earth First! prep said of an action that had taken place earlier that month, "running around in Hatfield's office is funny and all, but what good does it do?" (field notes, 4-8-90)

An article from Earth First! about new Earth First! music touched on this same theme:

From the moment of our movement's inebriate ("drunken, exhilarating, excited") inception, through both growing pains and growing opposition, we have been a tribe characterized less by our philosophies and strategems than by ineffable punk, humor and music. (Earth First! 1990, p.18)

These comments indicate an aspect of Earth First! that is very important to the movement and separates them from other environmentalist groups and their opposition. The aspect is humor. In terms of the descriptive framework, this category of talk has less to do with norms and more to do with the key, manner or tone of the discourse. Being humorous or creative is an accepted way of approaching the environmental fight. The spirit in which Earth First! talk and activities take place is more often raucously comic than sober

or dignified.

Creative Humor

Perusing an Earth First! journal gives one an idea of the humor that is as much a part of this movement as is the members' dedication to saving the environment. In the middle of one of the issues, there is an insert called, Mirth First!, which is a spoof of the journal itself. For example, there is the "Misanthrope Quiz (or, Are You an Eco-Brute?)" and the article called, "Eco-Kamikazes Wanted," which is a "modest proposal" asking people who have terminal diseases if they would be willing to stage a kamikaze-type action to defend the earth (22 September, 1990). The real journal is a collection of articles about environmental issues, cartoons, order forms for cleverly worded bumper stickers and tee-shirts, and updates on different comic and newsworthy actions around the country. One example is this action that took place in Illinois:

The protesters, some dressed as animals or trees, met with newly appointed Shawnee National Forest public relations man, Tom Hagerty. One demonstrator, dressed as a fat pig in a suit, demanded a job application to replace the obese director Rod Sallee. (Earth First! 1990, p.12)

During brainstorming sessions I found that same sort of manic creativity, the more preposterous suggestions being the most popular. Building a spotted owl's nest in Hatfield's Salem office was a well-received idea, as was the suggestion of guerilla theater in which someone would play Hatfield, and someone else would play the

Japanese buying all of Oregon's raw logs. (field notes, 8-29-89)

For Earth Day, a suggestion to build a pyramid on the Memorial Union quad with the used food service strofoam from students went over well, along with having an Earth First!er sit in a tree in the quad for the duration of Earth Day. (field notes, 2-21-90) The dedication of the animal research center at University of Oregon by Hatfield and Governor Goldschmidt had many Earth First!ers wanting to get their hands on some invitations so they could attend the dedication wearing suits and carrying briefcases filled with "feathers and sawdust."

Ideas that weren't ultimately used, but got a positive reaction from the group when they were brought up were the "puke-in," in which activists drink a particular liquid that induces colored vomiting, so that law enforcement officers would be reluctant to arrest them, and painting visible clearcuts bright colors so that passing motorists would be sure to notice the destruction. (field notes, 10-5-89)

Another idea that sparked some interest was to attend a speech by Hatfield wearing tee-shirts that spelled out something derisive toward him on the back, with the front (which Hatfield would see) spelling out, "We Love Hatfield." (field notes, 10-30-89) After much discussion the group decided it would be hypocritical, and threw out the suggestion.

These creative ideas that participants treasure are valuable mainly because of their probable success in getting the media's and subsequently the public's attention. Not much attention would be aroused by a story about Earth First! writing a letter to their congressman, but if they were dressed up as spotted owls or wolves and were singing, "Spike a Tree for Jesus," that would be an

interesting story.

Earth First! uses humor to attract attention to the critical environmental issues, but it is important to them for other reasons as well. As one member put it at a nonviolence prep, "the rate of environmental destruction is so absurd, very little of it makes sense, so why should we be all rational and somber about it? Rationality hasn't worked up to now." (field notes, 4-8-90) At a banner-making party for Muir Day, one member had this to say about her approach to environmentalism, "this is a male-dominated patriarchal society where reason rules and emotion is frowned upon," she complained, "Subvert the dominant paradigm, do what you feel." (field notes, 4-15-90)

Earth First!ers will continue to be as outrageous as they feel in their activities, expressing their emotions and keeping an eye on the television camera. As mentioned earlier, passive topics in meetings have participants falling asleep, whereas active discussion topics like brainstorming find Earth First!ers at their humorous, creative best.

Self-Directed Humor

Those members who are most familiar with Earth First! employ self-directed humor most often, although new members quickly begin to imitate what they hear. This type of talk builds on the image of Earth First! in the press which members think is humorous regardless of whether or not it is "true." It is usually sarcastic and its value comes from understanding Earth First! and the salient characteristics

of the group.

One prominent image of Earth First! is that of the anarchist band of terrorists, aiming to stop every sale of timber. Earth First! is seen as a lawless group, being hunted by the FBI and continually facing felony charges. One Eugene television station aired a news story in which a timber industry representative said of Earth First!, "they are like the skinheads of the environmental movement, neo-nazis." (field notes, 4-8-90) Some of the more recent Earth First! articles have focused on Dave Foreman's legal difficulties after having been charged along with four other members with conspiring to sabotage two nuclear power plants in Arizona and California and a nuclear weapons facility in Colorado. (Vanderpool, 1989, and Reed, 1990) Knowledge of this public conception of Earth First! continually makes its way into Earth First! talk, commonly in humorous remarks.

In discussing having two well-known Earth First!ers going into a timber sale and doing reconnaissance for a possible action, someone asked if it wouldn't look suspicious to have two "card-carrying Earth First!ers" wandering around the sale area. Someone else replied that, "the Forest Service would be more suspicious if the two weren't seen showing interest and checking out the area." (field notes, 8-29-89) One member got big laughs from the rest of the group when he jokingly wrote, "dynamite" as an agenda item for the meeting. (field notes, 9-12-89) During a tree-sitting workshop the group members were trying to outdo each other in outrageous ideas for actions. Someone said, "let's build a nuclear bomb and threaten to explode if they start cutting." Giggling, another participant said, "yea, that would do wonders for our terrorist image." (field notes, 4-5-90)

Members are sometimes reluctant to part with a negative image. When it was suggested by someone that Earth First! try to present a positive image of itself at the Earth Day activities, it became a comical battle between those who agreed and those who didn't. One man said of Earth First!'s sponsorship of an environmental concert, "now that would be something positive." To which an opponent said in mock disgust, "oh, it (positive image) rears its ugly head!" (field notes, 2-21-90)

A favorite story of Earth First!ers which is told by a woman at many nonviolence preps happened in jail after she and a group of cohorts were arrested. The group of Earth First!ers were put in a cell with a group of white supremists from Grants Pass, but when the supremists found out who they were sharing a cell with, they started harrassing the Earth First!ers and demanded to be put in another cell. The guard told them that the only other cell available was occupied by a convicted child molester. The white supremacists said they would be glad to move. The woman who tells the story said, laughing, "I guess they found rooming with a child molester to be preferable to a bunch of Earth First!ers!" (field notes, 4-8-90)

The issue of Earth First!'s legal status is popular joke material. One member who is facing tresspassing charges signs all of his notes, "the felon." (field notes, 4-15-90) An Earth First! information box at the First Alternative grocery store which was "deep sixed," prompted a tongue-in-cheek discussion of whether or not there was a plot afoot to confiscate all Earth First! boxes. (field notes, 1-16-90) During that same meeting a latecomer arrived and said,

"very clever diversion for the opposition, to put the wrong room number on the flyer." (field notes, 1-16-90)

Another popular topic is the relative poverty and/or vulnerability of the movement. When a few Earth First!ers tried their hand at writing an appeal for a timber sale, they wanted to decide how to sign the appeal for the best possibility of success. Their two favorite alias' were, "Millionaires for the Forest," and "The Rockefeller Forest Foundation," based on the fact that Earth First! is extremely poor, and these names might ensure that their appeal would be taken seriously. (field notes, 1-22-90) During an earlier meeting to write the appeal, someone suggested formulating some goals in appeal writing. One member said in mock seriousness, "to become a major force in legal defense." Another member suggested we wear Superman outfits with a big tree on the chest. In keeping with the theme someone else laughed, "we will right environmental wrongs and carry lasers!" (field notes, 1-20-90)

Summary of Humor as Tone

Not so much a rule as a common pattern for Earth First!ers, humor is an aspect of the culture that creeps into virtually everything they do and say. Granted, for those whom Earth First! puts on the spot with their activities, humor is a relative term, but it is the word Earth First!ers themselves use when discussing the values of the movement. The former logger who wanted to know the value of impersonating elk in Hatfield's office was answered in part by a veteran Earth First!er, "humor is very important to the movement." (field notes, 4-8-90)

One category of humor for Earth First! is creative humor, which is most commonly found when brainstorming for ideas to implement in upcoming actions. Brainstorming rarely involves evaluation of any sort, so the ideas can, and should be, as imaginative as possible. The talk is loud and animated during this time; members try to outdo each other with absurd ideas. There's a "deliciously dangerous" feel to the talk, people suggesting and enjoying the most outrageous ideas because they know that the most extreme ideas aren't to be taken seriously. These ideas almost always include illegal activities and would confirm Earth First!'s image in the public eye as the unfeeling and slightly unbalanced band of terrorists. But members can delight in these ideas all they want because they know the ideas will be thrown out when it comes down to making a decision.

Another category of humorous talk is heard in all contexts, from

meetings to nonviolence preps to casual conversation. Earth First! frequently makes itself the subject of humorous comments, using their public image as the source. It's necessary to have some knowledge of how Earth First! is portrayed in the media to be able to joke appropriately, but newcomers catch on quickly. Common themes are Earth First! as the terrorist organization, sought after by the FBI, or Earth First! as the penniless underdog of the environmental movement.

The purpose of much of the humor for Earth First! is to attract attention so people will begin to see what is happening to the environment. Regardless of the gains made by their activities in terms of forests saved, Earth First!ers are pleased if they at least prompt the public to think about the issues.

The value of humor for Earth First! has a more personal aspect as well. The inclusion of humor and creativity in their approach to environmental battles is their answer to the rational, scientific, serious approach that they feel has been dominant yet ineffective in the past. Instead of expressing their position with numbers and graphs, they act out the destruction of the forests with guerilla theater, they point out the irony of Hatfield supporting log exports with a humorous skit, and they sit in the trees they want to protect and heckle the "freddies." As far as Earth First! is concerned, the environmental war is not going well, and humor can be one way to keep morale going within the movement. The disappointment of minor setbacks can often be diffused with humor. "If people are having fun and using their creative energy, they're more likely to want to be

involved." (field notes, 4-8-90)

CONCLUSION

Hymes' descriptive framework enabled me to find three major patterns of talk that are critical in communicative competence and self-definition within Earth First! Most useful in this study was careful attention to participants, key, ends and outcomes, and norms. For each theme I found that the more experienced members were responsible for "teaching" newer members how to communicate appropriately. If a newcomer communicated inappropriately too often, the guidelines for communication competence weren't altered, the newcomer's talk was, or he/she disappeared from the ranks of Earth First! Talk that expresses being a movement and not an organization, talk that identifies the enemy, and talk that is humorous are all equally important in understanding the movement both from a researcher's point of view as well as the point of view of a newcomer to Earth First! Communicative competence involves understanding these themes of Earth First! and having the ability to express them appropriately in appropriate contexts.

Norms are sometimes violated. For instance, someone targets the mill-workers in a brainstorming session for possible actions. A veteran participant will then let that person know that he/she has violated a norm, either by stating it outright, or by less direct means; suggesting something else, making a joke, or simply not responding. Usually the norm violator understands why the correction was made, and alters his/her future communication, thereby achieving

competence. Participants who continually violate norms with no understanding of the violation quickly become a peripheral member of the culture at best, and are sometimes excluded from the culture altogether. One example is the man who continued to voice his aversion to organization of any kind, in philosophy or in practice. I saw less and less of this man, and his name disappeared from subsequent phone trees. It wasn't that Earth First! threw him out, or that he stormed out of the movement, it was more of a mutual understanding that the goals and purposes of his talk were not concurrent with those of Earth First!

The communicative themes I discovered support and complement each other. The importance of movement is reflected by the norm of talk that reflects individuality. The purpose of this nature of talk for Earth First! is clear; an individual is more flexible, not encumbered by a responsibility to a group of others, not as obliged to compromise as someone who is part of a formal organization. The individual is therefore capable of a swifter and broader range of action, and is more valuable to motion-oriented Earth First!

The active tone or key for talk within the group that is reflected in a preference for active versus passive topics at meetings is applied to discussions of actions and the enemy. It would be much more difficult for participants to find humor in scenes where they are discussing a letter-writing campaign or a fund-raising activity, than where they are discussing guerilla theater or some kind of demonstration. Earth First! finds constant motion or activity vital to the movement, serving as a communicative norm. This norm

complements communicative spirit of creative and responsive humor within Earth First!

The pervasiveness of the norm of movement plays a role in identifying the enemy. The emphasis Earth First! places on direct action makes it crucial to be certain of who their targets are. It's one thing to write a letter to the wrong group or individual, but chaining oneself to the wrong person's gate, or destroying the wrong property makes quite another statement. Most of the participants' suggestions for activities are either highly publicized or highly illegal. The purpose for devoting so much time on talk identifying the enemy becomes clear. The norms attached to this theme also become comprehensible.

The notion of humor as the key for much of Earth First! talk is also important in understanding the theme of identifying the enemy. It is often the means used by participants to point out to others who the enemy is. Those outsiders guilty of greed, hypocrisy, ignorance are often made fun of, as in Hatchetfield and Hatefield, nicknames for Hatfield, and Forest Circus and Timber Monsters, nicknames for the Forest Service. For the participants, poking fun at the enemy serves the purpose of demeaning them, of devaluing them. Notice that it is not appropriate to joke about those who are not enemies of Earth First! As a result there exists within Earth First! a linguistic norm which establishes the value of the mill-worker and the logger, while at the same time establishing the insignificant yet annoying presence of others such as Hatfield and the Forest Service.

Members who consistently succeed in incorporating all these aspects of the movement into their communication are invariably the

key participants in their area. Their suggestions are taken more seriously, they shoulder more responsibility, they have broader contacts within the larger Earth First! movement, and it is their way of talking that is emulated by less experienced members. It is these Earth First!ers who set the standards for communicative competence within this culture.

Together these themes present a picture of the Earth First! culture. They depict a fluid, expressive, mercurial, and mirthful movement, whose one agreed upon goal is to take environmentalism a step further, to point out destruction of the earth, and to take concrete action to stop it. The themes are all interrelated, and equally essential in portraying the nature of the Earth First! culture.

In addition to being a detailed description of communicative competence within an environmentalist movement, the results of this study also point to a broader reaching issue. With an understanding of what Earth First! is, why it was conceived, and what it stands for, it becomes clear that the movement represents a heretofore unrepresented approach to environmental issues. The members do their share of rational arguing about environmental problems, but just as important in their approach is an emotional gut response to the problems, and the system of greed and ignorance they feel perpetuate these problems.

One of the bumper stickers sold through the Earth First! journal reads, "Subvert the Dominant Paradigm." For Earth First!, the dominant paradigm is the system which emphasizes characteristics

which Earth First! would like to see de-emphasized: consumption, financial gain, shortsightedness, bureaucratic incrementalism (or "band-aid" tactics) and logical positivism. The movement sprang out of a reaction against all of these qualities. The members stress that the remainder of pristine wilderness is more important than profit. They stress that direct action is needed now to save what's left of the wilderness. And if that is saved, longterm plans need to be made to ensure the health of the environment in the future; incrementalism will create longterm environmental problems. Lastly, members stress that emotional arguments are as valid as those which are quantifiable.

The growing number of individuals aligning themselves with the Earth First! movement may mean that these views will have to be reckoned with when attempting to deal with environmental problems in the future. The most devoted members of Earth First! continually risk arrest and personal danger in their actions, which makes a very clear statement about their belief in what they're doing.

Earth First! is a vital fascinating culture which merits close study. Consistent with the anti-positivist stand, I chose a qualitative approach for this study. Ethnography looks at a culture from the inside out, resulting in rich description and reliable conclusions.

Where the quantitative researcher chooses the bait carefully and then casts out into the lake in hopes of reeling in a suitable catch, the ethnographer dons some scuba equipment and dives right in to see what's really down there. I dove into the culture of Earth First! for eight months and came to some thoughtful conclusions that are

useful not only for understanding Earth First! and environmentalism in general, but also for arguing the value of the study of culture through communication.

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