Following the Rainbow Trail:
The reproduction of an alternative intentional community

by

John David Woodall
B.A., Honours, Trent University, 2005

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Abstract

The purpose of this research project was to investigate how the Rainbow Family of Living Light has, for the past thirty years, continued to reproduce itself. In doing so, I provide an explanation for why one cohort of young adults continue to actively participate at Gatherings. The data were collected through on-site observations, participation in informal focus groups and eight in-depth interviews with young adults at the National Gathering in Colorado (July 2006) and the British Columbia Regional Island Gathering (August 2006).

I argue that the research data suggests that for the young adults interviewed, active participation at a Gathering provides an opportunity to participate in the construction of a community, as well as validating their individual identity. I further argue that the relationship between the individual's identity and the collective identity of the Family is far more symbiotic than is usually acknowledged within the literature.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the members of my committee both for their flexibility and for their willingness to support me as I explored this world of alternative cultures. I would like to particularly thank Dr. Sean Hier who demonstrated great patience and perseverance as he read and re-read chapters. My natural inclination is to be just a storyteller. Dr. Hier had the difficult task of encouraging me to be a social scientists. I am grateful for his assistance.

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And last but certainly not least, thank you to members of the Family who agreed to share with all of us their stories.

Dedication

To my Family

1. Introduction

On a cool July evening, high up in the mountains of Colorado's Routt National Park, a young woman plays a Celtic harp. Scattered on the hillside around her are about 15 to 20 people quietly listening to the clear soft notes and the haunting melodies. Some of the listeners are young adults attending their first Gathering. Other listeners are members of an older generation who have gathered on similar hilltops many times before. The listeners' lifestyles range from those who travel across the continent on freight cars or by hitchhiking, to university students, and those who work full time and use their annual vacation time to be here. In between the songs, the people praise the music, ask questions about the harp, talk about the stars that are just starting to become visible and tell their stories of how they came to be in this enchanted spot. After a while, the young woman stops playing, puts her harp away and wanders off to some other campsite or kitchen to share her music.

Twenty feet away from this group, under a structure made of thick upright posts and three huge plastic tarps, is a kitchen containing two raised stone fire pits, tables and benches. Several large pots sit on one of the stove-grates. Some of the pots contain boiling water, tea or coffee, while other pots contain the beginnings of a new soup or the remnants of the soup served less than an hour ago. Ten feet away from the main cooking area, approximately fifteen individuals sit around the other fire pit talking and playing songs on their guitars. There is laughter, quiet stories and a sense of kinship amongst these travelers who have found the benches, at least temporarily, too comfortable to leave.

To the outsider, the constant movement of people in the kitchen, their actions only partially illuminated by fire light, might appear chaotic. Nevertheless, there is a purpose to all of the activity. The cooks watch the pots, adding ingredients or stirring, making sure that nothing burns; the fire trolls maintain the fire, adding three-foot logs when needed, and the water ogre and his helpers carry what seems like an endless stream of five gallon water pails from the well line. Some of the people in the kitchen are just passing through, stopping for a bowl of soup, or a cup of coffee, or some clean drinking water. Some of the wanderers will stay for a while, glad to have the company, the food, and the good music. Others will drift off into the night to sample the fares of another kitchen somewhere down the hill. However, many of the people around the fires and on the hillside listening to the harpist are permanent residents of this kitchen, or at least as permanent as anything is at a Gathering.

This is the National Gathering of the Rainbow Family of Living Light (hereafter referred to as the Family). More specifically, within this Gathering in Colorado, this is the area known as the Instant Soup Kitchen. It was one of many kitchens, or as an interviewee suggested, one of the many tribes, at the Gathering. For a brief moment in time, the Instant Soup Kitchen was a unique place. It was a place of joy, a place of service, and for many during that ten-day period, it was home. However, this kitchen was only a small part of what a National Gathering is. Each kitchen, each little camp nestled in the pines, had its own story to tell, and each person who had passed through would tell that story from a different perspective.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how the Family has, for the past thirty years, continued to reproduce itself. In doing so, I provide an explanation for why one cohort of young adults continues to actively participate at Gatherings. The data were collected through on-site observations, participation in informal focus groups and eight in-depth interviews with young adults[1] at the National Gathering in Colorado (July 2006) and the British Columbia Regional Island Gathering (August 2006). While the informal focus groups and the observations provide important background information and context, the conclusions contained within this thesis are mainly derived from the interviews.

This research project is informed in part by the epistemological orientation of Actor-Network Theory (ANT). ANT suggests that active groups or organizations are not stable social organizations, but rather are dynamic, constantly evolving collectives comprised of individuals who, guided by similar life experiences, decide to gather with like-minded persons. Latour (2005) argues that to understand groups, social theorists need to trace the associations between the participants and the commonalities of their experiences. More importantly for the purpose of this research project, Latour (2005) contends that the actors must define their own social worlds. Listening to the voices of the participants in the sample and responding reflexively to them enabled me to understand their reasons for participation. This, in turn, enabled me to glean insights into the reproduction of the Family.

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[1] For the purpose of this research, young adults are defined as individuals between the ages of 18 and 30.

The research data indicate that young adults choose to participate at Gatherings in part because of the opportunity to search for and to express their spirituality; because of their love of nature; and, most importantly, because it gives them a sense of purpose. Participation in a Gathering allows them to be part of building a community. All of the individuals interviewed expressed an interest in both developing and living in a community. The active engagement of young adults at a Gathering in community building is consistent with the findings of Vromen (2003) and (Barnard, Campbell, Smith, and Embuldeniya 2003) who have argued that young adults are as involved in their community as older generations were, but that their involvement takes place in non-traditional venues.

The interview strategy of listening to the actors' voices also allowed for a clearer understanding of how alternative collectives maintain their collective identities and reproduce themselves. These alternative collectives, focused on challenging the "dominant cultural beliefs and ideologies" (Goodwin and Jasper 1999:35), are often ignored in the academic literature. Research has generally not recognized or been responsive to the continued existence of alternative communal environments[2] or to associations such as the Family. Historically, many of the comments from social theorists of such groups has been at best dismissive (Kebede 2001; Shimazono 1999). Without an understanding of the strategies and informal structures that maintain and reproduce the collective, it is not possible to determine if or where such communal groups as the Family can be located along the social action

[2] Communal environments is used through this text as a generic term to include all communes, intentional communities or any other environment which people choose to live together, regardless of the length of time of the commitment to do so.

continuum[3]. Without such a placement, such groups or associations can continue to be ignored by the social theorist. The comments from and observations of the participants were useful in developing fresh insights into the workings of such associations and may thereby revitalize the discussion of alternative communal associations.

The research data also provide some indication as to why there are some limitations on the Family's capacity to reproduce itself completely. According to some active Rainbows, up to fifty percent of first time attendees do not return to attend another Gathering. If all participants always returned every year, participants at Gatherings would not be counted in the thousands, but rather in the millions. As this is not the case, the discussion as to why some people do not return may be as important as why so many do return. The individuals interviewed all had a strong sense of what it meant to "get it"[4], that is, to belong to the Family. Their voices provide useful direction in developing an understanding of why many individuals do not return.

The observation and interview data demonstrate that some of the young adults participate in a Gathering for different reasons than those who attended the early Gatherings in the 1970s. The "older generation", as they described themselves in the small group discussions, were active in part because the

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[3] The social action continuum includes all movements, organizations and collectives that have the specific purpose of creating change through a social action or activity.

[4] "Getting it", a term that originated with one of the individuals interviewed, is not a conceptually clear term. However in all of the conversations both informal and informal where that term was used, there was an immediate recognition that some individuals "got it" or understood what the Family was or could be and that others did not. While the Family may mean different things to different people, "getting it" would appear to mean internalizing the values and the personal experiences at a Gathering so that they become integral to one's lifestyle.

Gatherings provided a sense of belonging to a culture that they had helped to create. A cornerstone of that culture was a strong oppositional stance toward the State, both in terms of the Viet Nam war and of a general dissatisfaction with the prevailing culture and values (Berger 1981; Bookchin 2002). The young adults interviewed for this study were more inwardly focused on personal self and spiritual growth, as opposed to leading or at least being part of a political revolution. As noted in Chapter Three, somewhat paradoxically considering the perceptual versatility of the Family, the older participants sometimes wondered if the Family would continue to reproduce itself in a way that they would recognize.

In the rest of this section, I will discuss the theoretical rationale for the research activities undertaken, and some of their implications. Included in the discussion will be a description of the data collection and analysis process. The section will conclude with a brief discussion of the complexities and inherent difficulties I encountered being an active participant in the Family as I conducted the research.

In Chapter Two, I provide a detailed description of the research site, the activities of the participants within that area, and a brief history of the Family. These descriptions of the Family and its history provide a contextual background to the discussion of the findings in Chapters Three and Four.

In Chapter Three, I have discussed the role of oppositional consciousness in the development of the Family's collective identity. I argue within this chapter that the collective identity of the Family, which is critical to its reproduction, is in part formulated by its historical and ongoing oppositional stance against the American

government. I also note that there are a number of activities that allow for the validation of individual and the forming of collective identities. Included in this chapter is a brief discussion of why some individuals do not come back.

The discussion in Chapter Four directly answers the research question of why young adults participate at a Gathering. In this chapter, I suggest that there are a variety of reason for their participation, including a search for spirituality, environmental issues, and the need to participate in community building.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the location of the Family within the social action continuum, focusing specifically on intentional communities. I suggest within this chapter that the traditional understanding of intentional communities can be expanded so that the Family can easily be located within this new inclusive framework.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 *Theoretical Perspective*

The Family is a dynamic, constantly evolving collective. Not only does the location of the Gathering change every year, but the participants and their contributions to the Gathering also change. Because it is in a continual process of re-association and re-assembly, this collective cannot be easily explored, understood, or quantified. Maffesoli (1996:76) argues that these type of tribes or micro-groups are inherently unstable since individuals are "free to move from one [association] to another". The instability of this "tribe" is further magnified because there is no common reason for participation. The individuals who form the Family choose to gather because of, and as part of, their individual life experiences. These

experiences, as noted by Maffesoli (1996:6), are shaped by both "membership in a multiplicity of over-lapping groups" and the different roles (personas) that the individual assumes within each of those groups. Those individual experiences, along with the environment in which they gather, shape the collective interactions at a Gathering (Latour 2005).

The primary purpose of the research is to understand how the Family reproduces itself. This task is achieved by examining why young adults choose to participate. The critical question becomes not how the individual fits into the world as defined by the researcher, but rather how individuals continually re-create their world through a process of negotiation (Latour 2005). It is, therefore, vital to allow the participants not only to tell their own stories, but also to define their own social world. Actor-Network Theory (ANT), because it allows for, and in fact demands, both multiple ontological realities and changing centers of control (Lee and Stenner 1999:92), is a useful epistemological orientation to guide an examination of the Family. The need to accept multiple ontological realities is not only useful because each individual needs to tell their own story, from their specific perspective based on their life histories, but also because the Family has a multiple of versions as to how it was created. As confirmed by Mol (1999:75), if it is accepted that ontological understandings are historically, culturally and materially located, then there must be acceptance of multiple ontologies. That is, the individual version of the association's history will be different because it is shaped by the individual's history.

Placing the voice of the actor in the forefront of the data gathering process, along with the reading of the available literature, has had direct implications for the entire research process. For example, after listening to a number of individuals, the original research objective was further developed and modified to reflect the content of their narratives. By listening to participants' voices, it became clear that their life experiences, while in some cases significantly different, had common threads that needed to be fully explored. The revised question, "Under what conditions do young adults choose to become involved in the Rainbow Family?" reflects their discussion of the emotional journeys undertaken to become participants at a Gathering. This process of listening to actors' voices to determine the research question is in direct opposition to sociologists such as Alford (1998), Babbie & Benaquisto (2002) and Lewis (2003), who suggest that designing the research question occurs only after an extensive review of the literature and well before entering the field. While Actor-Network Theory has been characterized by some as a moralistic project of the peaceable enfranchisement of the "missing masses" (Latour, 1992, in as cited Lee and Stenner 1999:92), it is perhaps a bit presumptuous to suggest that the Family is either part of the missing masses needing enfranchisement or that this project has a moralistic objective. Nonetheless, ANT does provide a way to allow the voices of some of the Family, particularly the voices of young adults, to be heard.

The research methodology also provides a platform upon which to base the analysis of the interviews. The data obtained through the eight open-ended, semi-structured interviews and on-site observations were not reviewed within the context

of a previously completed review of the literature, as is traditional, but rather the literature was reviewed after an analysis of the interviews. The voices of the interviewees were listened to within the context of their environment and culture, not filtered through the text of the theorist. By looking for similar themes articulated by a variety of social scientists, including sociologists and anthropologists, the words of the actors are validated, as opposed to the actors' voices validating previously established theories.

The general structure of this project is based on Alford's *The Craft of Inquiry* (1998). He argues that "every good work" (p.2) combines elements of the three paradigms of inquiry: multivariate, historical and interpretive. Alford uses the term multivariate to refer to those arguments that use a fixed number of variables to develop explanations of specific sociological phenomena; the term historical to mean the analysis of the sequence of activities or events to understand the context of sociological phenomena; and the term interpretive to refer to those arguments that use data to explain the cultural or symbolic significance of phenomena for actors. Alford argues that in any particular work, one of the three paradigms will be foregrounded or have primacy both in terms of theory and data collection, while the other two will be of less importance, or at least, less focused upon. The latter, then, are situated in the background providing symbolic support for foregrounded assumptions. Alford does not suggest that the backgrounded paradigms should be ignored. In fact, he makes it clear that the best research frequently is that which uses all three. Alford, like the advocates of ANT, sees the need to look at the research

question and environment from a holistic perspective that allows for the inclusion of multiple factors.

This thesis is informed by a foreground interpretative argument. That is, the data are interpreted by understanding the cultural and symbolic meanings of the actions and voices of the individual actors. Frequently, the context in which those voices can be best understood is both historical and cultural. For example, specific sections of the thesis refer to the 1960s and the student protest movement. While this information is important to develop the historical context in which the Family evolved, I have assumed that that historical and cultural background knowledge is available to and understood by the reader. There is, however, a constant interchange between the individual's and collective history of the Family, and an interpretive understanding of their lives and the Family's place within it. In fact, Latour's (2005) insistence on the need to listen to the voices demands such an approach.

Of the three paradigms, the multivariate component of the research is the least utilized. In fact, I make little or no reference to the issues of class, gender or race. Nevertheless, they are an important rhetorical part of the background assumptions. Rainbows are overwhelmingly of European ancestry, and like many social or cultural protesters, they come from the middle class (Flack 1972; Pichardo 1997; Zablocki 1980). The issues that the Family discusses, and the individuals' capacity to be free enough to protest, or to participate in those activities that can be located within the social action continuum, are partially influenced by their class position.

While it may be troublesome for the traditional academic reader, the avoidance of a traditionalist theoretical perspective is intentional and grounded in the research agenda, as described by Latour (2005). Any attempt to use a traditional theory would limit a full exploration of the Family. For example, the literature on intentional communities, commitment and participation are explained either through a rational choice perspective or because of a spiritual charisma (Smith 1999). Initiating a research project in which the data can be only viewed through either of those two lenses limits actors' capacity to define their worlds. If their voices are truly to drive the research project, they must not be restricted or confined either by research assumptions about their world or by theorists' interpretation of their reality. It would also be contrary to the Family's principles, values and history to apply any such theoretical logic to their voices.

The methodology chosen, and narrative style of writing used, is firmly rooted in the traditions of Elliott Liebow (1967) and Nels Anderson (1923). Like the work of those authors, the research project investigates a culture that has been discussed or acknowledged in only a limited way within the academic literature. It does so by examining the process by which actors' identities are created and reproduced. As such, the participants' social worlds can only be appreciated and discussed when I attempt to understand the significance and meaning of the actors (recognizing that for Latour (2005), actors can be both animate and inanimate objects). It is, therefore, important to enable the reader to develop an appreciation of both the animate and inanimate actors. To that end, the thesis not only contains a

detailed description of the Gathering site, but it also utilizes extended quotes from the participants.

The data collection procedures developed were based on previous experiences at a Gathering in West Virginia in 2005, numerous B.C. Regional Gatherings, and the Quebec World Gathering in 2004. Data were obtained in two stages. The majority of the data were collected during the first phase at the National Gathering in Colorado (hereafter referred to as the National). Additional data were obtained during the second phase of the research while at the B.C. Family Vancouver Island Regional at Gold River (hereafter referred to as the Regional).

1.2.2 Interviews

A total of eight young adults were interviewed. Five participants were interviewed at the National Gathering in Colorado in July and three participants were interviewed at the Regional Gathering in British Columbia in August. During the initial stages of the kitchen sites being developed, I had worked with all of the individuals interviewed. All of the interviews occurred after I had been on site for a minimum of six days. The interviews at both Gatherings were spread out over a four to five day period.

A few demographic characteristics were consistent within the interview sample. The participants were all white, they all came from what appeared to be middle class homes, five out of the eight came from intact families, and all had finished high school. Six of the interviewees were from the United States and two were Canadian. At least half of the interviewees had entered a post secondary

education program and all were self-sufficient. All of these characteristics are consistent with the findings within the intentional communities and social movement literature. In general, that research has shown that those who are engaged in protest, specifically those who are protesting the usurpation of their cultural world by the state or capitalistic forces (Schehr 1997: 145), are more likely to come from the middle class (Day 2004; Zablocki 1980), be better educated (Kanter 1972; Sargisson and Sargent 2004), be from an intact family[5] (Zablocki, 1980), and not be an immigrant or of Asian or African heritage.

Because of my intense involvement with the kitchen at the National Gathering (discussed below) and my involvement with the kitchen at the Regional Gathering, I had the ongoing opportunity to observe some of the most active individuals in the kitchen, many of whom were between the ages of 20 and 30. The individuals selected to be interviewed represented a range of individuals in terms of their activities, intensity of service, the number of Gatherings that they had attended, and their level of skill. The one common factor was that they had all been active participants in working at the kitchen sites. The interview sample is not representative of all of the individuals at the Gathering. Because of limited resources, I chose to interview only a small sample of participants. The sample selection was purposive; I wanted to speak to young adults between the ages of eighteen and thirty who had worked hard at creating and maintaining the site. While I spoke to and observed others who see a Gathering as an opportunity to experiment with drugs or to stay up all night to party, their reasons for attending

[5] This information is somewhat dated and may not be as useful as it was in 1980.

were outside the scope of the research project. Therefore, I did not interview any of those individuals, and they were not part of any of the discussion groups in Colorado.

Availability was a critical component in the sample selection. Previous experience in interviewing individuals at the Quebec World Gathering in 2004[6] had suggested that it was not sufficient that individuals express interest in the research; they also needed to be accessible at the agreed upon time. At Gatherings few individual wear watches and most function on "Rainbow time."[7] Setting fixed appointments is problematic. At the National, given the size of the site, limiting the sample population to individuals living in the general area of the Instant Soup Kitchen ensured that I could find them. This was less of an issue at the Regional due to the smaller size of the Gathering.

The core questions (see Appendix A) remained consistent throughout all of the interviews. These questions were, however, expanded at succeeding interviews. For example, the phrase "get it" was used by one of the participants to distinguish those who understood how and why the Family worked on a very personal level and those who did not. That phrase not only resonated within me, but the concept also proved to be an effective part of all future interviews. Similarly, the use of the word "tourist" that emerged from an interview to describe those who were just

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[6] I attended a World Gathering for eighteen days near Maniwaki, Quebec in August of 2004 to collect data in preparation for my honours thesis.

[7] While all time is relative, the term Rainbow time refers to the practice of setting workshop or meeting times in relation to other events such as meals, which themselves seldom happen at regular times. It is also a phrase used to suggest that there is no rush for something to happen.

passing through the kitchen without any engagement proved a useful concept in other interviews.

The interviews, which were semi-structured and open-ended, lasted approximately an hour. All but two of the interviews occurred in a single session. The interviews did not occur in a controlled environment. There were interruptions from either adults or children curious as to what was going on, calls for meals, drumming, ants crawling over the interviewees and on one occasion a garter snake attracted our attention for more than a few minutes.

All interview tapes were transcribed within a week of returning to Victoria. During the transcription process, key themes started to emerge and were recorded. When the transcriptions were completed, I read through them a number of times to obtain familiarity with basic content, and later to highlight and extract significant statements while ensuring that the context was maintained. Key themes were identified and clustered into specific categories (see Appendix B). Specific note was made of those themes that were consistent across the majority of the responses. Relevant quotes reflecting the themes were managed using a specially designed database.

1.2.3 Informal Focus Groups

At a Gathering, there is generally ample opportunity to participate in small group discussions. The topics of discussion can range from international politics to how to convert a bus to run on bio-diesel. The size and composition of these groups can vary, as can the length of a focused discussion on any one topic. On four

occasions during the primary observation phase, I was able to direct the discussion of a group to the activities of the kitchen, and to ask those within the group about their impression of the site and the work that had been done. The responses provided verification of my observations and on occasion added clarity to my descriptions. My participation in such small groups also provided the opportunity in a relatively non-intrusive fashion to inform or remind individuals that I was doing research.

This use of informal, pre-constituted groups, and the flexibility and holistic design of the research process, allowed me some unique opportunities to gather additional information and to extend the scope of the research. On three occasions while in Colorado, I was invited to be part of a small group of individuals who had attended the first Gatherings in the early 1970s. Access to these individuals, while not restricted by gatekeepers in the normal sense of the word, is difficult in that they are a tight knit group of individuals who frequently keep to themselves. These discussions, while unplanned, provided historical data that was useful in developing a clearer understanding of how the Family has been able to reproduce itself. The stories that they shared provided valuable background information that not only allowed me to better understand the origins of the Family, but also proved valuable for drawing some comparisons between those older individuals and the present cohort of young active Rainbow participants. Their comments were particularly relevant in the Chapter Six, in terms of examining the differences in reasons as to why various cohorts participate.

Field notes were made as soon as possible after the discussion. The use of a notebook would have been far too disruptive within these informal groups. As well, many of the conversations occurred after sunset and note taking would have been difficult.

1.2.4 Observations

The ethics of participant observation require that individuals whose activities are being observed should not be identifiable unless they have given explicit consent. As consent was obtained only from those who were interviewed, the ethnographic data was collected utilizing Fine's (2003) recommendations that specific patterns of group behaviour, not the actions of individuals, are what should be recorded. Therefore, the descriptions of the site and the activities, while detailed, do not describe specific individuals.

The process of observation started as soon as I arrived on site, and continued until I left. However the majority of the observations were completed within the first six days, before the interviews were started. Observations were recorded in three formats during both Gatherings. First, whenever possible, brief notes (sometimes just two to three words descriptions) were jotted down in the field journal. Secondly, once a day, either just before dusk or in the early morning, the short notes were used as cues to develop those thoughts more completely. Thirdly, there were a few occasions when there was the time to take those extended notes and to develop them further into tentative conclusions or preliminary findings.

The description of the site has two specific purposes. First, it is important to situate the described activities within a unique physical location so that the reader can better understand the interactions. Secondly, the physical site influences, and in some case creates, the interactions. For example, if there were washrooms with hot running water, there would be significantly less work to do, and the culture of creating a community out of nothing would be significantly diminished. The environment and the objects within that environment are as important as the individuals who move through it.

1.3 Role of the Insider

In spite of the significant amount of discussion within the literature, there is not a consensus as to the legitimacy or the effectiveness of the insider's role (for a more detailed discussion see Grigg, Endacott, and Harvey 2004; Kluckholm 1940; Labarre 2002; Reinhardt, Boerner, and Horowitz 2006). It has been argued that an over-rapport with the subjects may result in the analysis to being "flawed by…..partial perspectives" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996 as quoted by Brayboy& Deyhle, 2000:165). Other researchers, such as Schwalbe (1996), and Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) argue that one needs to be a full participant to understand the meaning of the activities that are being observed. It is my position that my insider role provided a unique opportunity to observe the activities and to understand the subtle nuances that would have not been accessible to an outsider. Both Schwalbe's (1996:34) quote from a participant, "You've got to dance naked to grasp it", and Westhues (1972:14) statement "In this way we came to know the counter culture ideology through the eyes of those who call it not ideology but truth" support this

position. Snow and Anderson (1987: 1338), arguing from the traditions of Anderson and Liebow suggest that understanding the objects that constitute those worlds is best done from a position of "intimate familiarity with the routines and situations that are part and parcel of those social worlds". It may be that an observer from a distance is better able to look critically at an activity, and to determine the relationship of that activity to other activities. That outside observer however will not be able to determine how it feels to be part of that activity. In observing cultures or social movements where rituals and activities have evolved over time to encourage and maintain participation, such gaps in understanding the feelings or the process may prove to be problematic. Brayboy's and Deyhle's (2000:165) insistence that it is the "lack of distance that has enhanced" their research is equally as true for this research. As noted by Wolf (1991:21), it is only by seeing the world through the eyes of the participants that we can " render intelligible the decisions they make and the behaviours that they engage in."

I had not, before arriving at the site, intended to become a member of the Instant Soup Kitchen crew. While in previous years I had participated in the work of that and other kitchens, I had not limited my time to one specific area. However, because I arrived a few days earlier than normal during the set-up and construction phase of the Gathering, and because I have specific skills that were needed, I quickly became involved in building parts of the kitchen structure. During this time, I had the opportunity to meet some of the individuals that I would later interview. Three days after I arrived, the water system was completed. For much of the next eight days, I became the water ogre – the person who assumes some responsibility

for ensuring that the kitchen had sufficient water and that the water source did not become contaminated. While I visited other kitchens, took part in the July 4th morning of meditation and prayer for world peace, and visited with friends at other sites, my home base was Instant Soup Kitchen. My tent was there, and it was there that I felt the most comfortable.

My involvement in the process of creating and maintaining the kitchen structure allowed me access to key individuals who otherwise would have been far less accessible. It would have been highly unlikely, for example, that Mary [8] would have found the time to sit down for an hour-long interview, or would have been as open if we had not worked together. My role of water ogre allowed me to be part of the crew while at the same time being slightly distanced from them so that I could observe the interactions. While within the Family there is no hierarchical position or status attached to those who work hard, my willingness to work and to share specific skill sets with younger participants gave me a measure of credibility that would not have been possible if I had been less involved. My involvement, however, was never a ploy to gain access. It was always based in my genuine pleasure at being involved and in providing service to my Family.

The research environment was made more complex by the fact that I have an intimate and relatively long-standing relationship with the Rainbow community and with the political and philosophical ideals attached to it. In general, for all research conducted by a participant-observer, it can be challenging to learn from the individuals while not imposing upon them an *a priori* definition of their world

[8] All names referred to in the report are pseudonyms.

(Latour 1999:20). This becomes even more problematic for an observer who was an active participant before the research is initiated. Not only did I need to avoid, as the researcher, the temptation to assist the individuals in defining their world, but I also needed to insure that I did not impose my personal vision of that developing world upon the individuals being interviewed.

My role as an active participant also caused some ethical dilemmas. There were a number of conversations outside of the interviews in which an individual shared information that was interesting and would have added substance to that individual's profile or to his/hers comments during the interview. Nevertheless, some of that information could only be perceived as being deeply personal and not for general dissemination. Similarly, I overheard conversations that contained information that might have been useful for this project. Following the lead of Schwalbe (1996) who did not report on intimate conversations, I chose neither to record that type of information in my notebook nor to use it in this report. These omissions were specifically related to sexuality, drugs and/or intimate personal relationships outside of the Gathering. Consent was never assumed nor asked for during these conversations. Researchers such as Murray (2003) and Schwalbe (1996) have argued that telling people once that research is being conducted within the environment may be sufficient and that constantly interjecting reminders that the research is ongoing is disruptive to the process. That would seem to be far too low of an ethical standard. If I had been an outsider, without a connection to some of the individuals or to the Family as a whole, I might have made a different decision in some of the cases to use the information. Knowing that the Family

would have access to the research project put additional pressure upon me to ensure that no identifying or personal information was recorded without consent.

1.4 Readership

It is acknowledged that for the research project to be perceived as being legitimate by the social sciences community, it "must be couched in the language used by members of the intellectual community" (Alford 1998:33). The report, however, does have another potential readership that has traditionally been unresponsive to the academy. In spite of the fact that there are numerous members of the Rainbow Family who have a post-secondary education, the role of the intellectual within the Family is underplayed, and participation in academia is not overtly respected. Individuals interviewed or who took part in the general discussions as to the purpose of this research were politely interested in my attending university as a mature student. They were far more excited by the fact that that I had received a scholarship and was using part of the funding to attend a Gathering and to spend my time reading and writing about the Family - not because of the potential gains to the Family, but rather because it appeared as if a Family member had created a clever swindle against the system[9]. Nonetheless, those who participate at Gatherings are an equally important readership. To that end, a commitment has been made to all participants in the research that the thesis will be

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[9]Berger (1981) in discussing the reaction of some of the individuals he spent time with at a commune who were sceptical of why a sociologist would be interested in them mentions the ambiguity created by their (subjects) de-evaluation of the researcher's role in combination "with their apparent affection" (42). At the Quebec Gathering preparation for my undergraduate honours thesis, close brothers and sisters appeared to delight in introducing me as their documenter. Berger, Bennett Maurice. 1981. *The Survival of a counterculture : ideological work and everyday life among rural communards* Berkeley: University of California Press,. reports a similar response from some of the subjects who knew him well

published on a website. At present, the thesis proposal is available on the website[10], along with two other research projects on the Family.

[10] http://www3.telus.net/public/dwoodall/

2. Context

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the historical and physical context in which the study took place. The majority of the data were collected during the first six days of the research process. However, as an active participant in the Instant Soup Kitchen environment, additional observations were made throughout my twelve-day on-site stay. The anecdotal information was collected while participating in the informal focus groups comprised of older Rainbows.

2.1 Historical Context

Alford (1998) identifies history as one of three research paradigms that should be included in any research project. The history of the Family, both in terms of its creation and its continued evolution is generally undocumented formally and it is seldom discussed at a Gathering. Nonetheless, their history is "important in the development of a culture and in the collective memory" (Jasper 1996:202). The Family was shaped by the political environment of the 1960s, and its evolution continues to be shaped by current events such as the war in Iraq, and by the activities that have taken place in previous Gatherings. In the following section, I will present a brief history of the Family with specific attention paid to the development of an oppositional consciousness that is critical for the development of a collective identity.

One reason why there is so little discussion of the origins of the Family is that the facts are not clear. Indeed a consequence of the anarchistic nature of the Family and

its opposition to formalized structure is the lack of documentation[11]. As is true with other oral histories, it is difficult to be sure of the sequence of the original events and activities. The problem is further compounded by the fact that many Rainbows only use their first names or their Rainbow names which may change from Gathering to Gathering. Therefore, the key players are not always identifiable.

In his book on the Family, Niman (1997) describes the political and social changes that were occurring within the protest movement towards the end of the 1960s. The large but generally peaceful demonstrations that had been the primary protest strategy for much of the 1960s had become less effective. Many of the organizers were emotionally and physically exhausted after years of protest activity. There was a split in the movement between those who wanted to become more aggressive and assertive in their strategies, and those who wanted to remain non-violent in their actions. Some individuals left the movement because of these concerns, and others left because they felt it was time to do something else. Some student protesters became involved in either the social services or in academia (Pichardo 1997; Shekart and Blocker 1997); others were reabsorbed into mainstream middle class life. There were, however, some individuals who were still committed to alternative lifestyles. These individuals, together with Vietnam veterans embittered over the war, were still active in their search for alternative

[11] I have been informed that in the attic of an old farmhouse in Montana, there are a few boxes containing newspaper and magazine articles as well as personal writings from some of the early participants. These boxes comprise the "archives" of the Family. To my knowledge this boxes have not been catalogued or accessed for a number of years. It could be a rich resource to develop a social history of an entire culture and generation.

communal experiences that would heal the country and that would provide a new and better way for communities to develop.

For many Rainbows, the Family was first formed in Colorado in 1972. However, it was not the first time that large numbers of individuals interested in alternative living and culture had explored the possibilities. While the Woodstock Festival held on the farm of Max Yasgur near the Bethal, New York in the August 1969 is perhaps the best known gathering of that decade, various groups, mainly in the western states, had been congregating for some time. For example, there are references both on the various websites[12] and in Niman's book (1997), of a large gathering just west of Boulder, Colorado either in 1968 or early in the summer of 1969. While there is no specific information available, it is clear that by the summer of 1969, there were a number of individuals discussing the need to have a large Gathering, not for the music, but rather to pray for world peace.

Two separate groups assumed primary leadership for the planning of this gathering. The Marble Mount Outlaws who were "led" by Barry Plunker was a group comprised mainly of anti-Vietnam activists who had assisted draft dodgers and deserters to escape to Canada. The other group, led by Garrick Beck, was comprised mainly of craftspeople who called themselves the Temple Tribe. Both groups had deep and intimate connections not only with the protesters of the 1960s, but also with the Beat generation of the previous decade. There are, for example,

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[12] There are a number of websites managed by members of the Family. True to the de-centered and anarchistic nature of the Family, the managers of these websites are all clear in stating that they do so as individuals, not as representatives of the Family and that the sites are not official Family websites. However the site that is generally recognized as being the most useful and the closest to an official site is welcomehome.org.

still individuals coming to Gatherings who were part of the movement in Greenwich Village and later moved to the Haight-Ashbury part of San Francisco and who were active in the Digger movement. Some of the members of these two groups or tribes had impressive connections. One example is Garrick Beck, whose father was the famous Julian Beck, director and founder of New York's Living Theatre. Others had parents who had been communists and members of the "old left" and were, therefore, raised in families and communities who were active in the search for alternate political, cultural and social experiences. Many were individuals had active participants in the protest movements, and had been trained in the art of consensus building. They had come to accept, amongst other things, that any formal leadership would be destructive to the movement, and that while it was a time-consuming process, consensus was always possible[13]. They wanted and believed that it was necessary to "reinvent democracy and daily life with new forms of decentralized, non hierarchical organizations" (Goaman 2004, as cited in Graeber 2002:62).

Many of those who attended the first Gatherings were individuals who had traveled across the United States a number of times. Many had extensive connections with protesters in various parts of the country. They were a generation who had read Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, and acted out the stories told by Ken

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[13] See Polletta Polletta, Francesca. 2002. *Freedom is an Endless Meeting : Democracy in American Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. For a detail discussion of this process as it was used in the student protest movement. While Schehr Schehr, Robert C. 1997. *Dynamic Utopia: Establishing Intentional Communities as a New Social Movements*. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey. suggests that new social movements learnt the process of consensus building from the feminist movement, in fact the Women's Movement learnt the skills from the student protest and civil rights movements of the 1960s

Kesey in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test.* They were also a generation that had rediscovered Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Many had participated in alternative community experiments that were at least initially anarchistic in design. Collectively, they were individuals who had clearly and loudly rejected the middle class values of their parents, and who, for the most part, had made a commitment to live outside of the society in which they had been raised.

In the summer of 1970, the Temple Tribe and the Marble Mount Outlaws joined together to host a free music festival near Portland, Oregon. It is reported that 75,000 people attended the Vortex Festival. The experience was invaluable for developing the expertise required to create the first Gathering. The skills of many people were required, including those Vietnam veterans who showed the long hair protesters how to set up the first-aid clinics (CALM[14]) and other infrastructure resources. As Niman (1997:32) notes, although no one event can be labeled as the precursor to the first Gathering, this music concert "acted as a catalyst to bring many would-be Rainbows together". For eighteen months after the festival, various individuals traveled throughout the United States distributing information and invitations to join both the celebrations and the prayers for world peace. Approximately 20,000 individuals attended the first Gathering in Colorado. It was never intended to be an annual event. The next year someone called for a Gathering

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[14] "The CALM staff is made up of volunteers representing a broad range of healing modalities. Among the group are found licensed medical doctors, chiropractors, acupuncturists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, certified homeopaths and naturopathic doctors, lay and nurse midwives, EMTs, social workers and mental health counsellors, massage therapists, herbalists, Native American shamans and other spiritual healers".(http://www.infolation.com/calm/)

in Wyoming, and it happened with very little planning. It is reported that, as people left the Wyoming Gathering, someone had posted a sign reading"next year in Utah". The Gathering did happen there the following year, and there has been a National Gathering every year since.

The history of the Family in its early days is described on one of the websites as "a diverse and decentralized social fabric (that) began to weave itself from threads of hippie culture, back-to-the-landers, American Indian spiritual teachings, pacifist-anarchist traditions, eastern mysticism, and the legacy of Depression era hobo street wisdom"[15]. The inclusion of American Indian spiritual teachings is an important aspect of the Family's history. While it is outside the scope of this research project, many Rainbows are convinced of the validity of certain Native American, mainly Hopi, prophecies. One in particular states:

> When the earth is ravaged and the animals are dying, a new tribe of people shall come unto the earth from many colors, classes, creeds, and who by their actions and deeds shall make the earth green again. They will be known as the warriors of the Rainbow (Welcome Home 2006)

Niman (1997) titled his chapter on the Family's connection to such prophecies "Fakelore". He suggests that there is ample proof that such prophecies are fabricated and most have no basis in Native American tradition. Nonetheless, for some in the Family, such beliefs are an important aspect of a Gathering.

While I did not have chance to talk to Garrick Beck and Barry Plunker, I met them both in Colorado on July 4th on a hill above the main meadow just after the silence was broken by the children's parade. While both men have a special

[15] (http://www.welcomehome.org/rainbow.html).

status amongst their peers, neither use their position to exercise power or control. The older Rainbows that I spoke to that day talked about the epic trips across the United States in old buses, about the conflicts with state and federal authorities, about the struggle to develop methods of decisions making, and about the failures. They spoke of the times when different experiments did not work or when certain hygiene or cooking practices led to sickness. However, most of the conversations were about the good times, the excitement of protesting at the site of a nuclear power plant, a Republican convention, or creating alternative culture fairs wherever they went. It was a conversation filled with memories of picking fruit to have gas money, of stopping in isolated places and creating swimming holes for members of their caravan, and of vehicles breaking down and living on the parking lots of shopping malls until the bus was fixed. There were also occasions where their anger and frustration was evident as they talked about how they had been treated, the dangers they faced from the police, and times when they thought they were going to lose their children to the authorities. It was also a time when at least one Vietnam veteran remembered his anger and his hurt. And like all people who are older, they talked about the generations who follow them and wonder if they will be able to keep the flames of protest alive.

The largest Gathering of the Family is the National in the United States. There are however, other national Gatherings. In 2006, on the various internet sites, invitations were posted for Gatherings in Panama, Russia, Turkey, Spain, Mongolia, Jerusalem, England, Belgium and Thailand as well as numerous regional Gatherings in the United States and Canada.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of participants at any one event. For large Gatherings, such as the National, counting individuals would be difficult. The estimates that are published in the press come from police information and are at best approximations. For example, an Associated Press report from July 4, 2004 suggests that over 16,000 people attended the National Gathering in the Modoc National Forest in Northeastern California (Thompson 2004). In Jackson, Montana in 2000, there were an estimated 22,000 members of the Family camping in a National Forest. The last two Gatherings, one in West Virginia in 2005 and the other in Colorado have had slightly reduced numbers. With more Rainbows in the western United States, Gatherings in the east usually attract fewer individuals. Some Rainbows wonder if the cost of traveling may be a factor.

2.2 The Politics of Oppositional Consciousness

The Family's identity as a collective is in part shaped by its perception that it, as an association of individuals, is persecuted by the State. This collective identity enables the Family to claim that since all individuals are Rainbows (whether they know it or not), the Family's oppositional stance against the State benefits society as a whole. For some current Rainbows, proof of being unjustly treated by the State is manifested most obviously in the ongoing clashes between the Family and the State over the use of National Park land for a Gathering. The Family believes that it has the constitutional right to gather on public land; the federal government has consistently demanded that a permit is required before any large group of people can use these public lands. Individuals within the Family have

argued in return that not only do they have the right to be on public land without interference or the need to ask for permission, but that because there are no leaders within the Family, no one is empowered to sign a permit on behalf of anyone else. The more politically astute members of the Family are also concerned that if they start to sign permits, the Family will then be obliged to follow whatever other rules the Forestry Service chooses to impose.

The United States Federal Government has, in recent years, assembled a National Forest Incident Team in response to each National Gatherings. It is an intimidating response. For example, in 1999, the National Forest Service reported a budget of $500,000.00 to respond to the Rainbow Family National Gathering (National Forest Service 1999). The National Forest Incident Team in 2006 responded to the Rainbow Gathering in Colorado by sending forty-two officers, including six officers on horseback, to be on site for the twelve to fourteen days that the Family was gathered (Agriculture 2006). The reported cost for this intervention was $800,000.00 (Lipsher 2006a). The number of officers attached to the Gathering does not include the fifteen officers from the local sheriff's office or other nearby law enforcement offices (Lipsher 2006b). Some of the Incident Team members are individuals drawn from other jurisdictions, who have had extensive experience with the Family at previous Gatherings. Long term Rainbows expressed to me a number of times that the level of intervention on the part of the law enforcement officers (LEOs [16]) continues to increase every year in terms of both the number of officers

[16] LEO- Law Enforcement Official The Rainbow Family has contact with a number of enforcement agencies including the Forest Service law enforcement officers (LEOs) and resource advisors, local and state police as well as public health authorities.

and the aggression they demonstrate in carrying out their orders. Individual Rainbows have argued that such a level of engagement is not only unnecessary, but that having armed LEOs on site violates the sacred nature of the Gathering. Given the level of noise, the use of drugs and the late night partying, the LEOs might quite rightly question the degree of spirituality present in some of the areas of the site including the trade circle.

After years of confrontation, it is difficult to understand why the Forestry Service continues to attempt to enforce the "no Gathering without a permit policy". The interference from the LEOs during the time of seed camp makes it difficult to create the needed infrastructure to ensure that the site is safe in terms of both fire prevention and hygiene. For example, in Colorado, it appeared as if key organizers and those who were setting up the kitchens were being targeted with "camping without a permit citations" and other forms of harassment. Those that arrived early were expressly forbidden to either dig fire pits or latrines in a clear attempt to discourage the construction of the necessary infrastructure. By the end of June, just over 200 citations had been issued, charging participants with illegal camping (Lindsay 2006). It was later reported in various newspapers that a total of six hundred tickets were issued for the period of the Gathering (Squires July 30, 2006). It is not clear if some of these would have been for illegal parking or other similar offences. Court dates were set within a few days of the citations being issued. The court hearings were in a hastily set up court in the village of Clarke. The majority of

the individuals were allowed to plead collateral forfeiture[17] and were fined $40.00. The tension between the State and the Family starts well before the Gathering. As soon as the general location of the site is announced through various websites, the local press, with information given to it by State and Federal authorities, present an image of a Gathering that is both inaccurate and alarming for the residents of the area (Wittmeyer 2006)[18] . Unfortunately, the Family does little to combat these initial reports. The first arrivals come well in advance of the main group of Family who come early to develop the site. These are often perpetual travelers who may not present the Family in the best light. Some of these individuals may look and act exactly as the information in the press releases indicate. These individuals, sometimes referred to as "drainbows" by other members of the Family, may be involved in panhandling, using local emergency resources, and, on occasion, shoplifting. As well, some of first gatherers in the area, when talking to the media, may either exaggerate the numbers of people who will attend or are more assertive in demanding their right to gather. Stating that 60,000 people may arrive and that they believe that this area is their home[19] does little to reassure the business owners

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[17] This plead allowed the individuals to pay a fine, have no criminal record and to be allowed to go back on the site.

[18] While the Family might bring money into the community in terms of purchasing supplies and gas, they also cost the community money. The local medical clinic in Steamboat Springs estimated that they incurred over $100,000.00 in unrecoverable medical bills, and hundreds of dogs were vaccinated for free after an outbreak of parvovirus Lipsher, Steve. 2006c. "More Than 500 Cited." in *The Denver Post* Denver Co.. The restaurants and motels in the area might have been the only real beneficiaries because of the influx of law enforcement personnel, all of who needed places to eat and sleep.

[19] The traditional greeting to newcomers coming up the trail, or while they are setting up their tent is "Welcome Home". While no Rainbows truly intend in making the Gathering site their permanent home, it does become their home for a few weeks. This comment concerns local residents if it is not explained carefully.

and townspeople.

Throughout the early days of the Gathering the degree of tension, real and imagined, increased. On at least one occasion there was a significant confrontation between the gatherers and the authorities, which may have involved rock throwing, and the officers being surrounded by perhaps as many as two hundred Rainbows Oming[20] (Brennan 2006). The officials left the site because of this pressure with the Rainbows claiming moral victory, and the LEOs using this protest to confirm their worst opinions.

When I arrived on June 26, Forest Service staff were at the trail head observing the chaos of cars, trucks and buses being unpacked. There was, however, no contact with LEOs and we did not receive tickets for entering the area[21]. To my knowledge, no one else that day receive a ticket either. At other times if there was a roadblock set up, Rainbows were given a choice. They could turn around and camp somewhere else, or they could proceed to the second roadblock where they were issued a ticket. One of the individuals interviewed chose to camp somewhere else for the night and to go into the site when the police were away. Another individual chose to proceed on to the second roadblock as an act of protest knowing that she would get a ticket. From these accounts, it could be clearly argued that the State, by allowing for such a clear choice, was doing its best to avoid confrontation, and therefore, the responsibility for the issues lies squarely with the Family. Certainly,

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[20] A meditative chant used at Gatherings usually before a meal or at the start of a council

[21] This may have been in part because some of the Federal and State police were in court and the others were preparing to arrest someone, and therefore not having to cross a road block may just have been good timing. I heard of no one with Canadian license plates receiving a citation.

by using National Forest lands, the Family leaves little choice for the State but to respond.

On June 26, as I entered the site for the first time, there was a great deal of shouting from both behind me on the main trail and in front of me. A number of armed and black gloved LEOs were heading down the trail towards the main circle area, and at least fifteen of them were coming towards me, escorting a handcuffed individual off the site. Surrounding the officers was a group of very vocal, young Rainbows, some of whom had bandanas[22] over their faces. There were yells to form barricades or to link arms to prevent the officers from staying on the trail, while others were yelling for a more passive resistance, and still others yelling to let the officers through. The officers were allowed to leave. A rumour circulated later in the week that the individual under arrest had thrown a rock at a LEO and hit him in the face or the leg, depending which information one heard.

This incident was the last serious confrontation between the Family and the LEOs, the LEOs' presence was felt everywhere. While the Family has a legitimate concern about having armed, black gloved officers on site, some members of the Family are equally as assertive in terms of verbal and body language. For example, amongst some Rainbows there is frequently little attempt to distinguish between the armed LEOs and the unarmed forest service staff who were there to ensure that the risk of forest fires was minimized. Depending on where one was visiting, the degree of concern or paranoia varied greatly. Throughout the Gathering, but more

[22] There were some Rainbows who later suggested that the individuals were only wearing the bandanas because the trail was so dusty. This would seem to be somewhat disingenuous.

noticeably along the main trail near the trade circle and up past the information booth towards the main circle, whenever LEOs were seen on site, people yelled "6-up!". If they were on horseback the phrase was "6-up on giddy-up!". Down along the main trail, and up through the smaller trails leading to other kitchens, this cry would be picked up by others and it would follow the officers wherever they went. The constant tension perpetuates a sense of paranoia of the State that may not always be legitimate. For example, on one afternoon a large helicopter circled the upper hills. A number of individuals assumed that it was the LEOs observing what was occurring and taking pictures. In fact, it was the fire jumpers' helicopter making sure that smoke that had been noticed was coming from a legitimate and approved fire pit[23]. Rumours of individuals being intimidated and of confrontations being intentionally accelerated continued to circulate throughout the Gathering. Stories of Rainbows being assaulted as they were arrested, while seldom confirmed, had a sufficient ring of truth about them that tensions in some areas remained high. A number of times I overheard the statement: "the police are not your friends". The tension between the law enforcement system and some Rainbows and "proof" that the State was anti-Rainbow continued long after Gathering. For example two young males were arrested for trespassing when dumpster diving[24] on the way to

[23] The forestry service had, using GPS systems had marked all approved and permitted kitchens on their map so that they had recognized. They therefore could ignore smoke coming from specific locations. Specific people within the Gathering assumed the responsibility of monitoring the fire situation and ensuring that private campfires were not allowed. The public health teams used a similar system.

[24] Dumpster diving generally refers to going to grocery stores and taking food that has been thrown into the big dumpsters behind the store.

the Gathering and were sentenced to six months in the local jail (Standford 2006) [25]

By June 28, there were well over three thousand Rainbows on site and it was far too late for the authorities to prevent anyone from participating. The road blocks were stopped and the LEOs shifted their priorities to the rehabilitation of the land (Fong 2006). The Family interpreted this change in attitude somewhat differently. They suggested that once the local officials realized that they had been misled by the federal response team, and recognized that there were people at the Gathering who were equally as concerned and skilled at dealing with both the hygiene and the fire issues, that there was less localized support for confrontation. The older members of the Family like to tell tales of local officials who have joined them in civilian clothing for meals or the celebrations of July 4th.

Other participants remained negative in their comments in spite of the reduction in confrontations. The discussions continued to be framed by an "us against them" dialogue by referring to the court process as "kangaroo courts"; by people being told that it was acceptable to lie to the LEOs , and by the suggestion that the courts were the enemy. While some of these individuals in the past may have had strategies such as passive resistance to deal with volatile confrontations, it was clear from the observations I made on June 26 as I was entering the site that at least some of the younger Rainbows would prefer a more physical response. It may be a failure of the older Rainbows in that they have not spent enough time teaching the younger ones about politics and the fine art of protesting, or it may be that the

[25] The two individuals were released within a few weeks of the sentencing due to a local public outcry as well as numerous letters from across the U.S.

active protesters no longer believe in those tactics. A similar division across generational lines in terms of tactics was present at such protests as the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle, Quebec or Milan when the generally younger "Black Bloc"[26] used more aggressive techniques to make their point than did the mainstream protesters.

In discussions with many Rainbows, it was difficult for me to relate to the American situation. Some participants were sceptical of the fact that, in Canada, there is little if any police presence at a Gathering. The negative energy of the confrontational attitude and the resulting tension was uncomfortable for me and I avoided being on the main trail where this tension was most prevalent. The two Canadian interviewees from the Regional Gathering did not raise the issue of gathering on public land or protest in general as important issues.

2.3 Physical Context

As noted in the Introduction, the research project is in part inspired by Latour's recognition of the importance of both animate and inanimate actors. The environment and the objects within an environment are as important as the individuals who move through that it. The physical site in terms of its location, the topography of the site and the structures built by Rainbow participants influenced, and in some case created, the interactions. Therefore, a significant portion of the initial data collection process focused on the physical structures or geographical landmarks of the research site. The following section specifically reports on my

[26] Black Bloc are affinity groups that are frequently comprised of anarchists, and other anti-capitalist groups. They are known for their use of vandalism against property during protests, and the wearing of bandanas over their faces

observations and conclusions drawn from those observations. Additional information about the site as a whole and other specific areas within the Gathering is available in Appendix D.

The National Gathering site was located at an approximate elevation of 9,000 feet in the Routt National Park in the northwest corner of Colorado. The location and the geography of the site affected the Gathering in a number of ways. The elevation presented specific challenges to those who either had heart or lung difficulties and/or who were use to living at much lower elevations. It made breathing difficult and the dry air caused rapid dehydration. These medical issues prevented some individuals from traveling from kitchen to kitchen as they perhaps would normally have done. The rough terrain and narrow mountain paths also precluded access to a number of the kitchens by those who had mobility difficulties, most specifically those who used wheelchairs.

The camping conditions are, at best, basic. There are slit trenches with limited privacy for outhouses and only cold water to wash with. The food, while varied and frequently delicious, can be very basic and is generally only available twice a day. If they are active participants, Rainbows will perform hard physical labour. During the ten to twelve days that they are there, they might spend time digging some of the three-foot deep, fifteen-foot long slit trenches, or perhaps the deep holes used for the grey water[27] or the compost pile. Others may spend hours dragging in long tree trunks and cutting them up into three-foot lengths to create the cords of firewood needed to meet the seemingly incessant demands of the cooks.

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[27] dishwater

The participants who work in the kitchens may spend four or five hours cooking over a hot, frequently smoky fire. It can all be hard work, and can prove difficult for the majority of the Rainbows who do not live in rural areas or who do not have a lot of experience with these activities or skills in these areas.

A Gathering cannot be seen simply as camping in the woods with friends. It is partially that, of course, but unlike the thousands of individuals and families across North America who go camping for one or two weeks every summer, the National Gathering is not a holiday in the usual sense. This is not just because the conditions are more rustic, but also because they are involved in activities that transcend the normal camping experience. This is not a vacation; this is a way of life. It is something that they think about throughout the year. It is something that sustains them, it creates and confirms an identity and it allows them to be part of building a community.

2.3.1. Instant Soup Kitchen

It is important to distinguish between the Gathering as a whole and the individual kitchens[28]. While the kitchens receive infrastructural support such as water and food from the larger collective, each one operates on their own in terms of when and what they serve and how the kitchen is organized. The National cannot be viewed as a single unit; it contains far too many smaller entities that are unconnected to each other. Individual kitchens are connected to the Family as a whole in a similar way that affinity groups are connected to social movements - for brief periods they have a commitment to work towards a common goal. The

[28] Appendix C contains observational data on the Gathering site and two other kitchens.

individual kitchens may utilize the resources such as the water system and the main food depot, but they are not accountable to a large group. Any attempt to formalize the connection between kitchens would be resisted amongst the Family as a blatant attempt to create a hierarchy. However, the Family's anarchistic resistance to structure exists primarily at the macro or superstructure level. At the micro or kitchen level there is a structure. A kitchen could not produce a consistent level of food if there was not some sort of informal organization. For example, the "new kitchen" discussed in Appendix C did not demonstrate the level of sophistication of structure of the other kitchens. Consequently, it was more chaotic, and the food was less consistently prepared. However, the informal structure that exists within established kitchens is not one that is based on entrenched hierarchical positions, but rather on the knowledge that comes from experience as to what works best, on the skills of the available participants[29], and the commitment to listen to each other and to share that knowledge and those skills.

The Instant Soup Kitchen was almost a twenty-minute hike from the main circle area. Scattered throughout this area and along the trail up to the kitchen were tents and small campsites. The kitchen site was located in a large meadow surrounded by low hills covered in trees. Because this kitchen was further away than any other full kitchen, there was a sense of not only being far removed from Babylon[30], but also from the rest of the Gathering.

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[29] Kitchens may be more or less elaborate from year to year depending on who is able to be involved in the set up.

[30] Babylon is the term used to describe the world outside of the Gathering

The kitchen area, including the two fire pits, was covered by two large, forty by twenty foot tarps securely tied to the post and beam structure. The posts and beams, some of which were twenty feet long and six to seven inches thick, were held together using only binder twine, hemp string and rope. In fact, thousands of feet of twine were used to lash together this complex structure designed to not only provide shade or rain protection, but also to stand up to the strong winds. It is a complicated and highly skilled process to create a structure out of dead tree trunks and large plastic tarps that ensures both stability and prevents the all too common problem of having tarps collect water in the middle due to uneven construction or sagging. During the 12 days that I was there, the kitchen continued to grow and be refined so that at the peak of activity, hundreds of people a day could be fed. The structure also provided shelter for a large number of individuals during a hailstorm, and acted as a venue with a stage for a five-hour concert with over one hundred and fifty people in the audience. The kitchen not only provided some sort of soup twenty-four hours a day, but it also provided filtered water for drinking, herbal tea and, frequently, cowboy coffee[31]. Directly related to the existence of the kitchen was the constant need for "shitters"[32] to be dug every day or so, an activity that took a number of people two to three hours to do.

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[31] Cowboy coffee is made by gently placing the correct amount of ground coffee in a pot of water and waiting for it to boil. It is done when the coffee sinks to the bottom. The trick apparently is to not stir in the coffee.

[32] There is a difference between latrines and shitters in the language of the Family. Latrines are structures that have at a minimum, some sort of seating arrangements, whereas shitters are long deep (approximately 3-4 feet) slit trenches.

The site was never static. The kitchen structure - as impressive as it was - was always a work in progress. It continued to grow in size through the addition of tables or benches. Less than thirty-six hours before the dismantling of the site, people were still adding improvements to the general area. For example, three or four first time Rainbows, with gentle instruction from a seasoned camper, built a washstand large enough to hold the three large bins of water used to rinse, wash and sterilize dishes, the five-gallon pail containing warm water and bleach for hand washing, and a drying rack for the washed, unclaimed dishes. Someone else turned the initial bench into a couch with a slanted back and an attached guitar stand that held up to seven guitars safely. Also built were two more log benches around the second fire, and a new cooking table that was strong enough for the bakers to knead their bread on. Two additional tarps were added to provide shelter from the sun and the occasional showers[33]. However, perhaps most impressive was the stage used for the talent show held on the evening of July 3. A member of the core kitchen group had assumed the responsibility for building the stage and had hitchhiked to the Gathering with a large, ten by ten foot painted mesh backdrop. A large fire pit was dug that incorporated seating for ten to twelve people. The dirt from the fire pit was used to build a dirt mound twelve by eight by two feet high for the actual stage, a tarp was suspended from the post and beam frame, and log benches were placed for

[33] The Rainbow Family and the Forestry people both wanted rain. While it is perhaps unusual for people camping to want rain, it was universally recognized that the forest was far too dry and a day's rain would have been immensely beneficial. During the 12 days I was there, it only rained 2-3 times for less than 30 minutes each time, and hailed once.

seating. The stage area was finished only a few hours before the almost five-hour show began and the process of dismantling it started a day later.

All of the labour is freely offered, and all of the food[34] is free. Many of the individuals who eat there will perhaps after the meal get some fresh water and then will move on. However, for those individuals who chose to make this kitchen their home base, the level of participation was very high. At the beginning of the talent show, one of the focalizers[35] asked every one to sit down, and then asked everyone who had done something to help in the kitchen to stand up. At least two thirds of the one hundred and fifty people did so. It should be noted however that the range of support varied from someone occasionally getting fire wood, to someone cooking breakfast eight days in a row, or from playing music[36] to doing daily food runs that meant carrying the food up from the main area down below.

The food at Instant Soup was plentiful, made with great care and enthusiasm. Those who volunteered to cook were careful about their own and others' personal hygiene and ensured that, whenever possible, there was water for people to wash their hands before eating, clean warm water with which to wash their dishes, and clean drinking water. The kitchen is well known for both the goodness of its food and the fact that it is open 24 hours a day. The 2006 version of Instant Soup also had a reputation of being a peaceful place with a mellow "vibe".

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[34] Some food is brought in as people arrive, but most of the food is purchased with either the funds from the Magic Hat, or by private financial donations.

[35] Focalizer is the term used by members of the Rainbow family to describe those individuals who have accepted responsibility for specific tasks whether it be the running of the kitchen for a meal, managing the food orders, calling a council meeting or arranging a work party. The title is temporary, and does not assume any power or authority over any other individuals.

[36] The playing of music is considered a service as it makes the cooking experience more enjoyable.

The kitchen was vegan and tried to be as organic as possible, although this became difficult as fresh vegetables arrived without any specific labels on them. Through a private donation, this kitchen traditionally arrives with boxes of soup mix from which the kitchen gets its name. However, this supply did not last long and by July 1, most of the soups were made from scratch. As well, out of an oven built of rocks, clay and a steel drum, came various types of bread, cookies and a delightful strawberry/rhubarb dessert. On the night of the concert, sometime around 2:00 in the morning, the cooks served sushi to those who were still up. During the last two to three days of the Gathering, there was a separate pancake operation at the second fire pit and pancakes were generally available throughout much of the day.

The water for the kitchen came from a spring at least a kilometer away. Large sections of one-inch irrigation pipe and fifty foot rolls of ABS pipe were laid out on the ground and joined together with clamps and in many cases, with duct tape to form a water line to the various kitchens. It is a time consuming task to maintain this system and on a daily basis, the water crew came by regularly to make sure that water was still flowing. While the spring was located high in the mountains and would have normally deemed safe to drink, all water was either filtered or boiled for twenty minutes before it was offered as clean drinking water.

Instant Soup is unique in that it is an open kitchen. Unlike other kitchens[37], there were no barriers or bliss rails[38] that separated the kitchen crew from the rest of the site. The second fire that was used occasionally for cooking, but more often as a

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[37] See appendix D for a fuller site description

[38] Bliss rails are counters or poles set between the kitchen area and the rest of the site to keep people who are not working out.

place to sit around, was only ten feet away from the main cooking area. There were benches built around this fire so that guitar players and others would feel free to join the kitchen. The clean water and the herbal tea tables were, unlike other kitchens at the Gathering, in the kitchen, not outside of it. The inclusiveness of the kitchen makes it friendly and accessible; it also makes the kitchen appear very chaotic. However, it is far easier to have people develop a sense of belonging and participation when there is a place to sit and visit with old or new friends within the general kitchen area. It is also easier to engage them in the ongoing task of supporting a kitchen.

Within this environment, the commitment towards each other and a way of life is in part reflected by the way individuals interacted with each other. The participants, for example, usually used good manners. Even when the kitchen was at its most chaotic and the cooks almost overwhelmed by the number of individuals wanting soup, coffee, or drinking water, they said please when they needed something and thank you when they got it. People were gently asked for assistance, no one was pressured to give it. Perhaps equally as unusual, there was very little swearing. Even when the core working group was comprised mainly of males, unless someone bashed a toe, the general conversation was remarkably free of profanity. While good manners are the general norm in most kitchens, the lack of swearing is not. For example on at least one occasion during a morning circles at Kiddies Village, the focalizer reminded others to be careful about their language because of the children present.

The primary core of workers at Instant Soup for the first four days that I was there was comprised of six older men ranging in age from forty to seventy and ten to fifteen younger adults, both male and female. Many had been to a number of Gatherings and all had come early for the express purpose of building this kitchen. It was a relaxed and a friendly group that worked hard when they needed to, and took time to enjoy the music and the conversation when no one felt the pressing need to build. There was also a high degree of mutual respect evident amongst this core group. There were no obvious leaders or followers. The work was done based upon who was there and what their skills were. The fact that the younger people frequently did much of the heavy lifting was a reflection on their stronger backs, rather than any subservient position on a hierarchical order. Designs and techniques for the construction of the main structure, the tables and benches was a collaborative process with no one individual assuming total control. It was not unusual to have one individual or group start a project, and to have another group complete it a day later. A new builder was encouraged to modify the plans to meet their vision or their needs.

When the kitchen became busier, and there were more people involved, it was this core group that provided much of the direction and who generally asked others for assistance. The newer volunteers, while they were always willing to work hard in getting more firewood, or carrying the five-gallon jugs from the water station, took less initiative and more frequently stayed for only a short period of time. An exception to this was the pancake crew who evolved on their own with minimal support from the kitchen staff, and stayed with the production for extended

periods. The core group gradually grew, but by July 3, it was relatively stable. After that time, while there were new people coming into the kitchen and assisting, only a few came and stayed for any length of time. By July 5 some of the core group had already left, needing to get back to their jobs or because a ride to their home city was available.

A final difference between Instant Soup and other kitchens was that in spite of the fact that there were people around 24 hours a day, there was very little drumming around the fire or in the general area. As discussed in a previous paper (Woodall 2005), drumming is an integral part of a Gathering. Instant Soup never developed a reputation for a drum circle and therefore drummers did not come. The complicated rhythms and the power of seven to eight djembes drums add much to the energy of a kitchen. Nevertheless, it is a raw energy that is both generated and consumed by the drums. It sometimes is difficult to remain focused on a task within the kitchen when the drums take over. In all likelihood, it was because there were no drums that the kitchen developed a reputation for being a peaceful and gentle place.

All of this activity and all of the construction is only for a ten-day period. By July 7, it was time to take the structure down, and by July 9, every rock had been put back into the forest where it had come from, and the cut poles were either burnt or carried far back into the forest. All the binder twine, all of the paper, all of holes would have disappeared. The Family's commitment to walk lightly upon the land means that except for the clean-up crew's reseeding of the paths that had been

created by thousands of foot prints, the site would look as if no one had camped there, much less built solid structures and fed hundreds of people at a time.

There were some general exceptions to the willingness of people to get involved either on their own or when asked. The young adults who were dressed in old, sometimes ragged clothing, and who had the appearance of being homeless or street youth were generally less inclined to stay around for any length of time. Most of those individuals stayed down on the lower trails where there was more activity, and if they came up, it was only for short periods. There were of course exceptions to this rule, but generally those who were there at the start of the kitchen were the most consistent in their presence throughout the 12 days. It was also interesting to note that while there are a large numbers of Rainbows with dreadlocks, and in fact, many people see that hairstyle as representative of being "hardcore Rainbow", only one or two of the core working group of individuals in kitchen had dreads. For the most part, individuals with dreads did not stay very long. In fact, most of the active core workers in the kitchen were relatively clean cut and would have fitted into Babylon without notice. In general, it appeared as if there were two groups of individuals who ate at the kitchen; those who if possible, came early and stayed as long as they could, and who recognized that there was a cost to belonging, and those who have not yet realized that participation has both a price and benefits.

3. Reproducing the Family - the Creation of Identity

For over thirty years, the Family has been able to reproduce itself both by maintaining part of its core membership, and by attracting new, younger participants. In the following chapter I will suggest that this ongoing reproduction has been possible for two interrelated reasons. First, the Family has maintained a collective identity that encourages inclusiveness. That is, the perceptual versatility of the Family has enabled it to attract and accept individuals from a wide range of cultural beliefs and lifestyles. Secondly, the Family's collective identity is partially based on the belief that the Family has a legitimate oppositional stance against the State. Their conviction that the State is opposed to them, and that some parts of society have rejected them, has encouraged the development of a culture of oppositional consciousness that separates them from the world they call Babylon and reinforces their individual identity.

While the perpetuation of an oppositional consciousness is critical for the Family to maintain its collective identity, the identity work that occurs among the young adults who are active participants is equally important. The development of individual identity is not a linear process but rather an interactive one. That is, the act of participation initiates the process of validating the life choices of the individual, and therefore, confirms the individual identity. I will propose that the formation and validation of the individual identity that occurs through the process of participation is an important component in the continued evolution of the collective identity. Therefore, it is critical in the reproduction of the Family. I argue that the relationship between the individual's identity and the collective identity of

the Family is far more symbiotic than is usually acknowledged within the literature. Whereas traditional social movement theory (see Polletta & Jasper 2001; Morris & Braine 2001) would suggest that the collective identity of a movement could exist separate from the individual identity, within the Rainbow Family and other similar social-cultural collectives, one cannot exist without the other.

Finally, I will suggest that, while the Family has been able to reproduce itself, it has not replicated itself. That is, the Family, in terms of numbers, activities, politics and philosophies, has remained relatively consistent for the past three decades. But the rationale for participation may have shifted significantly within that time. Using the data collected from the interviews and the informal focus groups, I will demonstrate that the young adults interviewed are more inwardly focused than those who gathered in the early days of the Rainbow.

3.1 Oppositional Consciousness

Morris and Mansbridge (2001:1) define oppositional consciousness as "a constellation composed of principles, ideas and feelings" of historically subordinated groups. They further argue that historically subjugated groups identified through categories such as race, gender, or class have extensive stories and experiences that provide a collective sense of mutual deprivation and abuse. Whether or not a specific individual has actually experienced that particular condition is irrelevant. If they can be classified because of their race, gender, or class as belonging to that group, they can lay claim to the experience and act with and on behalf of their collective group. This collective oppositional consciousness not only empowers individuals to act, but it also binds them together so that they

come to "care so much for the welfare of another, a group or a cause that you experience its good as your own" (Mansbridge 2001:245). That is, the oppositional consciousness allows individuals or groups to assume the anger or the frustration of a subjugated group, and to act on those feelings whether or not they have ever experienced the deprivation or discrimination. Associations or social movements that are not comprised primarily of subjugated or discriminated against individuals need to adopt a persona that allows them to assume the role of such people. While in some social movements the process of assuming this persona may be a conscious, somewhat manipulated act, it is unplanned within the Family.

The Family does not easily fit into Morris and Braine's (2001) discussion about how the ideal types of social movements generate an oppositional consciousness. The Family is neither a liberation movement nor an equity based movement (although there are some Family members who would argue that they are, in the broadest sense of the word, both of those things). It is equally as difficult to label them in the traditional sense of the definition, a social responsibility movement. It is in fact difficult for the members of the Rainbow Family, the majority of whom are white and middle class, to lay claim to any form of oppression. The persecution that the American Family members discuss in terms of the refusal of Federal authorities to allow them to camp within a National Park could be interpreted as an attempt to manufacture a legitimate claim to oppression. Such a process would not be unique. Morris and Braine (2001) effectively demonstrate that some protest groups and social movements, such as environmentalists, have already established collective identities and injustice frames

and that their identity as ""environmentalists"" is fully chosen rather than imposed by a dominant group" (ibid, 21). While Taylor and Whittier (1995:163) argue that all social movements produce culture, alternative social movements that do not have a specific issue, a sense of oppression, or a clear task need to devote more energy to creating a separate culture. The Family have laid claim to the inherited histories of previous outcasts such as vagabonds and hobos. By portraying themselves in a similar light, and by labelling of the other world as Babylon, they have created a separateness from other parts of society and a culture of oppositional consciousness. By the constant re-creation of the State and in particular the National Forestry Service as being the oppressors, Rainbows can continue in their collective role as claiming to be rebels, noble outlaws, and the sole remaining defenders of alternative cultural values.

For the Family, the harassment at a Gathering by the LEOs legitimizes its sense of persecution and oppression. The notion of the State opposing their existence is deeply embedded in the minds of the long-term participants. For some of the older Rainbows that I spoke to, the events of the late 1960s and 1970s developed this perspective, and became the defining moments of their lives. For example, on July 4, as some older Rainbows were talking, it became clear that the protest demonstrations of the late 1960s and early 1970s against the Vietnam war, nuclear power plants or at Republican conventions, and the occasional resultant arrests, were cornerstones of their individual and collective identities. It was these protests that in many ways defined who these people were, and in, some cases, are. One individual noted that after an arrest, she mentioned to one of the original

focalizers of the first Gathering that she was now a criminal. She was quickly reminded that " no, they weren't criminals, they were outlaws". As the group talked, it became clear that that they had seen themselves as being outside the mainstream of society, refusing to follow the rules of that society when they perceived a wrong. Participation at a Gathering provides for these individuals a validation of the persona that they had constructed. The retelling of stories about specific events from twenty-five to thirty years ago strengthened and confirmed their relationship with others from that time and enhanced the collective identity [39].

For the younger Rainbows, the LEOs' blockade, the ticketing of brothers and sisters, and the stories of arrests continue to provide a rich field for their discontent and encourages participation in a collective response to the perceived oppression. As one interviewee noted:

> *It kind of makes me feel good, it is like I can come and be part of something that is for something in creating something, and at the same time I can stand up and say, very silently really, that our rights are being violated.*

There was also a sense amongst some of those who were interviewed that participating in a protest connects them to the past. Tom, in a discussion of that connection to the past and the relationship between the older and young members, said:

> *You guys are still fighting for the same thing that you were, that you still have the same values that you believe back then as you do now ,at least most of you do, and you guys are realizing that we're going*

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[39] The Viet Nam war and the protests against it are still very much part of the consciousness of the older participants. As part of the July 4 celebrations, there is a special remembrance of the POWs still unaccounted for, including a black POW flag raised within the main circle.

> *to show you guys something one day, and you guys actually believe it.*

Mark confirmed this view:

> *I think my generation would have been completely lost if it weren't for the generation that proceeded it, that truly started the revolution or however minor it might have wound up being, but in the end it opened up a lot of people's eyes. So no I don't envy you. I am thankful that it was there. I am thankful that that whole movement happened, 'cause I see it still moving*

Not all of the individuals interviewed were comfortable with the aggressive style of protest. For example, when talking about the protest activity on June 22 when Rainbows with bandanas over the faces surrounded the LEOs and were alleged to have thrown stones at the officers, Susan said:

> *The best way that I can relate to it is misguided anger, they all... I look at them as how I felt, as a teenager, someone who realizes that something is weird about the way our society works, it is unjust, it is not fair, and it could be so much better um but they don't really know how to channel that in a positive way and they don't really maybe are not really educated enough it is just sort of instinctual feeling and they can't even really express it in anyway maybe except by anger and by force.*

Other Rainbows made similar comments, expressing a sense of sadness that the days of simple and joyful protest were a thing of the past. Nonetheless, the belief that the State, and in some situations the community (Wittmeyer 2006), is opposed to the Family supports and confirms the belief that all Rainbows are unique in their "outsiderness" . As will be discussed below, this "outsiderness" is an important factor in the creation of both the collective and individual identities.

3.2. Identity Work

While oppositional consciousness provides a basis for the collective identity, some Rainbows engage in other activities that verify membership, create bonds and confirm a sense of separation from the rest of society. The growing of dreadlocks or wearing of atypical clothing may be one way that the identity of the individual and the collective is established as being different from the rest of society[40]. Specific rituals may as well provide some of the accouterments of a cultural consciousness that allows the members to feel sufficiently different so that there is at least some risk of persecution because of those differences. The drumming, the free form dancing around the fires at night, the kitchens and the trade circle all play an important part in reinforcing a culture that needs to be different to maintain its identity and thereby reproduce itself.

However, activities alone are not sufficient to create a culture that is self-sustaining. To reproduce themselves, associations such as the Family also need to exhibit other informal strategies that encourage ongoing participation. The validation of the individual identity through the unconditional acceptance of an individual, their values, and their experiences allows the Family to continue to attract new participants. It is through this validation of identity that the Family can continue to reproduce itself and change.

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[40] See Edmonds, Ennis Barrington. 2003. *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers*. New York: Oxford University Press. and Maffesoli, Michel. 1996. *The time of the tribes : the decline of individualism in mass society* Translated by D. Smith. London: Sage. in their discussion of the Rastafarians and the punk culture respectively for a discussion of the importance of hairstyles and clothing in the creation of bonds amongst specific cultural groups

Polletta and Jasper's (2001:285) definition of collective identities as an "individual's cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution", while useful, has some limitations inherent in their understanding of the purpose of such identities within movements. Polletta and Jasper's (2001) approach to understanding the process of collective identity development is restricted at least in part by their need to explain or rationalize gaps in both resource mobilization and new social movement theories. They therefore see collective identities as objects that can be designed, built and manipulated to enhance recruitment, maintain membership and develop protest strategies. In spite of the fact that, as noted below, Polletta and Jasper (2001) recognize that identity building activities such as story telling can happen spontaneously, they have not envisioned the possibility that the development of a collective identity is an organic process, outside of the control of any one individual or group of individuals. Social theorists such as Summers-Effler (2002), Hermanowicz and Morgan (1999), and Edmonds (2003), however, have focused more specifically on the creation of collective identities. They argue that collective identities are created and maintained by the repetition of ritualized activities. The purpose of these activities are in part to create an emotional energy, a communitas, or a sense of collective effervescence (Carlton-Ford 1992) that sustains the collective and that such activities can occur without the process being planned or manipulated.

3.2.1 *Unconditional Acceptance as a Tool of Identity Development*

The Family has made the claim that the only membership requirement is that one has a bellybutton, and even that requirement can be waived. It is frequently

said that everyone is a member of the Family; some just do not know it yet. The Family's unconditional acceptance that everyone within the Gathering is part of the Family, that if one wants to, one can belong, is a powerful message that reinforces both the individual and the collective identity.

This acceptance of the individual, of his or her behaviours and whatever level of participation the individual is prepared to offer, fulfils two specific functions. First it provides an opportunity for the individual to cross over into a new culture without fear of being judged. The individual, by being free to participate in whatever activity they wish, at whatever level they feel comfortable, is allowed to experiment with new behaviours and interact with participants who would be outside of their typical experiences (Purkis and Bowen 2004:2).

Secondly, by accepting and embracing the sense of the individual as being unique, the Family remains flexible and enhances its perceptual versatility. Kebede (2001), in his discussion of social-cultural movement,s argues that such strategies are critical for movements such as the Rastafarians who must remain flexible to maintain membership. Other social movements theorists have noted that when a movement's collective identity and the individual's identity are no longer in line with each other, the movement's membership can start to decline (Polletta and Jasper 2001). The Family has been able to reproduce itself by accepting almost all beliefs[41] and thereby staying consistent with the beliefs of the participants.

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[41] While the Family does not reject people or their philosophical beliefs, I have only ever meet one individual at a Gathering who was an avowed Republican.

The unconditional acceptance allows for, and encourages, the individual to explore and develop an individual identity. In the words of Richard:

> *But because of the over-arching and embracing of the Rainbow way of life and of acceptance, it really played into the part on me exploring myself, my sexuality, my openness, the way I approach people, really had a huge impact on me and is one of the things that kept me coming back for more because I knew that this...I didn't need to go and pay a $1,000 for a week at Esalen Metaphysical Centre of Understanding to take a workshop in this, that or the other, whereas I could come to a Rainbow Gathering and create that workshop, create that space for myself, kind of a Petri dish of self exploration.*

It is difficult for many individuals who come to a Gathering to recognize this unconditional acceptance. Moreover, for others it scares them. The transition for some of the individuals interviewed was neither instantaneous nor was it particularly easy:

> **Mary:** *At the first gathering I totally didn't get, like all of the love really scared me, you know I grew up with a dad that couldn't say I love you to me and yeah so it scares the shit of me and I didn't get it all but I knew that there was something here for me*

Amongst the individuals interviewed, understanding and believing in the unconditional acceptance of the Family was a critical factor in their returning to another Gathering.

3.2.2 *The Importance of Identity Validation*

The Family's acceptance is more than just an unconditional welcoming to a Gathering. It is a validation of the individual, their life experiences and their values. The process of acceptance also weaves into the fabric of the collective identity those life experiences and values. That is, the process of acceptance not only allows for the assimilation of the individuals into the association, but it also allows for the

assimilation of those individual experiences into the collective identity. In the following section, I focus on this process of validation utilizing the comments of the interviewees.

As adolescents, the individuals interviewed had one experience in common. They all felt, at various stages in their development, as if they were outsiders, that they were not part of the mainstream either at their school or in their community[42]. That is not to say that they were loners or without social networks, but rather that the individuals they spent time with, and the activities they engaged in, marked them as being different from many of their peers and placed them, in their minds, on the fringes of their society. Their sense of being difference was consistent, and with one exception they responded to it in a similar fashion.

Only one individual, Richard, disliked the sense of being different, of not being part of the in-crowd. Therefore, he created a persona so that he could be accepted:

> *In high school .... I strived to be part of the in crowd, I strived to be accepted. I strived to be noticed. I strived to make an impression upon people's minds – whoa who's that guy and what is he doing. Um I want to be his friend, I want to go out with him, or I want to be his boyfriend type thing*

He achieved his insider status at least in part by being the supplier of drugs to the in-crowd. Other interviewees were more comfortable with their previous social position, and took some pride from it.

> **Joyce:** *I was a freak. (Laugh) oh yeah that is where it started ...you are right (laughter) – that's true I mean the pot culture has a lot to*

[42] It is recognized that other young adults who participate in a subculture, may have a similar sense of being different than their peer group while in school.

do with it um you know the kids that smoke pot vs. the kids that drank

Interviewer: *that is an interesting distinction*

Joyce: *That was the kind of people that I hung out with –the pot smokers and all of them listened to the Dead and talked about the Rainbow Gathering and so like I knew about the Rainbow Gathering for years and years before I ever really considered coming because it had always sounded so hard core living in the woods for a week or you know I am use to my showers and my stuff...*

Other interviewees such as Patricia not only were comfortable with the sense of being different but worked hard at maintaining that separation.

Interviewer *when you were growing up and going to grades 6, 7, 8, 9, those key adolescent, and preadolescent years were you part of the in-crowd?*

Patricia *(laugh) is anybody? I guess there were young people who were part of the in-crowd. I wasn't and I discovered pretty quickly that I didn't want to be. I progressively did everything that I could to be different.*

Patricia's and Joyce's success at retaining an individual identity that was different than some of their peers at school is not unique. Hemmings (2006), in discussing the work of Foley (1990) and others, examines how the environment within high schools can strip away the ethnic identities of non-white students and replace it with a white middle class identity. Her research suggests that some students are able to be both successful within the traditional school milieu and are able to maintain their ethnic or cultural identity (p.130)[43]. The young adults interviewed appear to have been equally as successful at navigating the school

[43] See Hemmings for a detailed discussion of how adolescents navigate the complexities of schools and the " fluidity of cultural production"

system while retaining their sense of being different. For example none of the Rainbow interviewees was a high school dropout. All had managed, as had Hemmings' (2006) students, to meet the requirements of that hegemonic middle class environment, while maintaining a specific identity that was not part of that environment. They did so in part by spending time with people outside of their peer group who were experimenting with other lifestyle choices and by "hanging out" with older adults in the community. For example, Joyce and Sam, one from Montreal and the other from San Francisco, both attended drum circles in their home cities as their first introduction into alternative cultures.

Most, if not all, adolescents experience the pressure to conform to their peer group and to the expectations of the society around them. However, unlike many young adults who pass through a rebellious adolescence to eventually become reconnected with their communities, the individuals interviewed have remained in that social location in between the roles and customs assigned to them as adolescents, who are allowed to rebel in minor fashion, and their anticipated roles as responsible adults in the community. For some Rainbows, the choice of remaining in this state of "outsiderness" (Turner 1974:33) is conscious and ongoing. Given that the choice to be different may have long-term consequences, the critical question then becomes: what sustains this choice? As Joyce and Sam attended drum circles in their adolescence to connect with people who had similar philosophies and desirable lifestyles, the young adults interviewed continue to look for experiences that confirmed the value of their life choices. The Gathering, more

than any other experience throughout the year, does that. The very act of attending a Gathering validates those life choices and therefore confirms the individual identity.

For those Rainbows who have chosen their clothing or their hairstyle to be a visible component of their lifestyle, this validation needs to be stronger than any possible condemnation. This is partially achieved by the celebration of being deviant. Some of the Family have always seen themselves as a participants in a type of circus and in fact take great delight in entertaining the locals by their outrageousness. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Britain, used the phrase "Anarchist traveling circus" (Goaman 2004:163) to describe the traveling band of protesters that follow various world, economic or European meetings. Many of the stories told to me by the older generation of Rainbows contained anecdotes about arriving in a small town in their old buses and entertaining the locals as they rested, repaired their vehicles or earned money before moving on. The embracement of being different and of challenging legal and cultural values shapes the Family's collective identity. Unlike some of the homeless men discussed by Snow and Anderson (1987), the individuals interviewed do not appear to want to distance themselves from the labels that are attached to them by the general public. They, in the terminology used by Snow and Anderson (1987:1355), "embrace" their identity, suggesting that there is a consistency between that and their concept of their imputed social identity imposed upon them by the outside culture. They demonstrate that acceptance by freely declaring that they are an old or a young

"hippie"[44], or the way that they dress, or by their activities. In fact, they are inclined almost to feel sorry for, and sometimes angry with, those who just do not understand. As Joyce said somewhat passionately:

> *People don't even understand what it is but it is just love... it is just (big sigh) it is so important that people understand how intelligent that love is, and how stupid evil is. It just makes more sense than our current paradigm. And this is where we need to be if we want to survive. We can't keep getting all of this shit that we don't need to distract ourselves from the pain of not being in contact with our Mother Earth and each other. It is fucking ridiculous what we are doing out there.... this is the essence of what we need to bring back with us... because we are the Rainbow Family and we are the ones that recognize that and that is a beautiful thing. But at the same time you know we are the warriors of the light and we have to carry that energy out to the people who don't understand that they are brothers and sisters and that we are all one beautiful spiritual family.*

This sense of being different is not only confirmed within the Gathering, but by the media and others outside of it as well (Squires 2006). This fellowship of the common experience of being different, of being unique both in terms of values and lifestyle, is essential to the development of a communal sense amongst the participants (Andelson 2002). It supports their individual identity while at a Gathering and more importantly it supports their individual identity when they are not with Family.

> **Susan** *[a] Gathering takes you through the year... places like this rekindle my hope in humanity. It reminds me that there are so many underground worlds, so many amazing people, working in concert and also as individuals to help humanity through this time.*

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[44] The American Rainbows seem far more comfortable with this label than do Rainbows from Canada in that such self labelling is far more prominent at a National than at either at a Gathering in British Columbia or Quebec. It is interesting to note that Snow and Anderson (1987), when interviewing some homeless people, met some individuals who labelled themselves as "old hippies" and then went on to talk about the Rainbow. Snow and Anderson confirm that, in their view, the Gathering clearly acted as a "kind of identity reaffirmation ritual" (p.1355)

3.2.3. *Maintaining the Identity*

Identity work is a process of creating a persona, a social self that will endure. Snow and Anderson (1987:1348) define identity work as "the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self concept". They suggest that most adolescents create an identity that is reflective of adult society, and that, while they rebel against specific components of that society, they still aspire to be part of it. However, for six out of the eight individuals interviewed there was no indication that they ever attempted, as later adolescents or as young adults, to create what Hemmings (2006:133) refers to a "true enduring self" that would easily fit into world that Rainbows call Babylon. Those six individuals had found or created lifestyles that allowed them to function within Babylon, but did not require them to make uncomfortable compromises to their values. Both of the individuals who had had jobs and lifestyles that would reflect a more normalized existence discussed some of the tensions inherent between the two lifestyle or personas. For example, Sam, when discussing the difference between his previous life as a skilled trades person and his present nomadic lifestyle said:

> *the stability is definitely safe, comfortable. It's having a good cushion to sit on in the bank, or having a nice apartment and a good job when you can.... You are still free to do whatever you want but you still have to get up in the morning to go to work. Whereas now I don't know, I sit here and see a bunch of people sitting around the fire, there is no stress about anything, there is no thought...if I feel like doing something I get up and I go do it. Right now I am living out of pure choice... everything that I have been doing has been my choice, my decision. I have come here because I want to, I am still here because I want to be here. Everywhere I will be going is going to be because I want to go and maybe at one point I will decide I*

> *want to have an apartment, I want to have a job, but I don't want that right now.*

Or Richard, an elementary school teacher, relates:

> *During the year and half I have seen a different model than I have ever seen before and I have seen what other people were able to do with their lives through their art, through business, through investing and now I have applied to another teaching job and part of that scares me because of going back to the structure. There is a little tension there.*

The claim of being different, of being outside of mainstream society and of welcoming that difference, is supported and reinforced by the Family. The feeling of "outsiderness" creates within the Rainbows a fertile ground for the development of the individual identity. As noted in the discussion of oppositional consciousness, much of the Family's collective identity rests with their need to perceive themselves as being different. The scope of this research project is far too limited to engage in a discussion as to whether or not individuals attending a Gathering were greater or lesser levels of isolation than their adolescent peer group. However, I suggest that what is critical is the recognition that not only did they feel different in adolescence, but that some of those feelings continued into adulthood. More importantly, the individuals continue to make lifestyle choices that may isolate them from the mainstream. Susan, for example in discussing the need to be free to attend a Gathering and to be able to absorb all that a Gathering had to offer said:

> *It is kind of interesting to me to see how all of these folks who kind of let go rather than planning and charting their course to what they were going to do and be when they grew up, kind of let go and allow the universe to show them the best way that they can plug in and are learning to sustain themselves in ways like that don't, what I consider to be prostitution really of my greatest resources, my time.*

Actively participating at the Gathering and therefore feeling part of the Family reconfirms for the individual the lifestyle choices they have made in Babylon. It confirms for them that what they believe in, and what they feel, is legitimate.

> **Patricia:** *I was told my whole life that an anarchist society is not possible, that people can't be free and live in this beautiful communal way and that we have to live in society, we have to like go through the 9-5 you know...so it was very empowering and exciting and it catalyzed, catalyzed years of travel and magic and beauty.*

The validation they receive by attending, and by actively participating, empowers the individuals to continue in those beliefs and thereby strengthen their individual identities.

> **Joyce:** J*ust receiving these affirmations- really just taking it in and just walking through the woods coming in, it is like hearing we love you, we love you....I mean I am in a place where I am really respected and open to that and I just start crying cause it is like- God - like nowhere else in the world is some random guy going to come up to you and walk you like miles through the woods so your wagon won't tip over.* (Joyce had used a small wagon to transport her belongings to the kitchen area).

All of individuals interviewed were strengthened by the knowledge that they are not alone. They are reassured that while in some parts of their lives they may feel isolated, there are others who are like them. Their participation perpetuates a sense of uniqueness which in turn enhances the culture of oppositional consciousness. The realization that they may have more in common with some of the people present at the Gathering than with others in the outside world allows them to identify with the collective even when they are not present within the collective, and makes them want to return the following year.

3.2.4. *Storytelling Rituals and Identity*

There is at a Gathering, a ritual that takes place usually whenever people meet for the first time. They tell the stories of how they got there, the troubles they had on the road, some of the great rides they have had or other events that happened along the way. This ritual establishes their symbolic right to be at the Gathering, and their symbolic differences from the people who are not at the Gathering. This type of activity is well noted within the literature. What Schehr (1997) refers to as identity work and Fine (1995:128) refers to as a "bundle of narratives" are activities that create or reconfirm the Rainbows' perception of themselves. Tom was very aware of the story telling and its place within the rituals of the Family.

> *When you are trying to tell your story or sell your story so to speak you are judging yourself almost. I am good person, I did this, I did that. It is habitual, when it comes in here. It has not worn off yet, but I think if we were to do this for a month, the only thing we would talk about would be getting water, and getting grass and maybe some dreams that we had, some aspirations in life.*

Polletta and Jasper (2001), in discussing the formation of collective identities within the civil rights movement, describe the importance of the personal stories told by the participants of the 1960 civil rights lunch counter sit-ins. The individuals, by sharing these stories, enabled the new members to feel a part of something that initially may have seemed overwhelming. While the personal stories told by the Rainbow travelers are not as socially significant as the stories told by civil rights activists, they perform the same function of building an identity, a cultural history. Snow and Anderson (1987) discuss storytelling as well, but in general suggest that for the homeless men they spoke to, their stories may not have been entirely true. Those researchers, in the course of their year-long research

project, were able to develop a sense of which stories were simple embellishments upon the truth and which were fantasies. Given the limited amount of time I had available, I was not able distinguish truth from fiction with either the tales of the first Gatherings or the more recent traveling stories. However, I heard stories of the earlier days of Gatherings from a number of sources, and there was a consistency within all of them. While it is entirely likely that the stories of the protests and the cross-country trips have been romanticized during the last thirty years, it is difficult to judge to what extent. In terms of the stories that the younger Rainbows told, there was no sense that they significantly embellished their stories. However, like the men on Tally's Corner (Liebow 1967), it would not have been an acceptable practice for me to challenge an individual's story. Regardless of the truth of these stories, this identity work of story telling both reaffirms the participants' perception of themselves (Snow and Anderson 1987: 34) and adds to collective's identity.

There was, within the core group at the Instant Soup Kitchen, relatively little story telling. This may have been in part due to the number of individuals who knew each other well. However the working together to build a community created a sense of belonging and communitas, and therefore there was not a need to use other strategies to engender that sense of belonging to the collective.

Within the Gathering, and for the Family in general, the link between the collective and individual identities may be more important than is identified by most social theorists. The interconnection between the validation of the individual's identity and the creation of the collective identity is critical. Both are interdependent upon each other. The collective identity is not, as Polletta & Jasper

(2001) remind us, simply a collection of individual identities. However, the individual identity is confirmed and validated by being at a Gathering, at the same time as the collective identity is shaped and constructed by the participants, particularly the ones who are active. There is a symbiotic relationship between two types of identities.

3.3 Why Some Do Not Come Back

The attendance numbers, in spite of the continued participation of succeeding cohorts of young adults, has remained relatively consistent at both the National in the United States and at the various Canadian Regionals. They are not, however, always the same individuals. This observation was confirmed by older Rainbows who have suggested to me that up to fifty percent of the people at a Gathering are there for the first time. This would suggest that a large number of individuals do not return. To understand how an association of individuals such as the Family reproduces, understanding why people do not return may be as important as understanding why they do.

When the interviewees were asked why they thought people did not return, a number of possibilities were suggested. For some the financial cost of attending becomes prohibitive, and for others, changes in occupations or professions make attending a Gathering for a week difficult. There was also an awareness that as people's lifestyles change, attending a Gathering may become less attractive. A few of the individuals interviewed acknowledged that while they could not imagine forgetting the Rainbow way, there could be a time when attending a Gathering might become less important.

Mary: *I actually see myself pulling away from this but I am still so attached to it that I don't know how I can miss a year.*

The Rainbows that I spoke to were also very much aware that there were large numbers of individuals walking around the various kitchens who were not "plugging in" to the life of that kitchen. Some of interviewees spoke of their first Gatherings where they were overwhelmed by the experience and yet felt very alone and sometimes afraid. For some, in spite of being surrounded by people, they as newcomers felt isolated. They could not believe that when people yelled out "We love you!" that they actually meant it. As noted previously, unconditional acceptance is not always easy to accept or believe. Patricia was particularly sensitive to this issue as she had spent some time the previous day with two French-speaking sisters from Quebec and they had talked about how they loved being at the Gathering but they had not made any real connections.

Mary's story of how she became connected during her third Rainbow Gathering is particularly instructive in understanding how people get involved. As she was walking around, someone called her over to a kitchen and asked what she was doing. When she said to him that she was just helping out wherever she could, he responded by saying "That's all fine and good but if you just stay here [at this kitchen], you'll meet friends you will know for a lifetime". For Mary, it turned out to be true. She did make friends with people she now considers her Family. Mary was the first person interviewed to use the phrase "getting it". There are people who "get it", that is they have internalized the belief that by being active they start a process of belonging.

Within the social movement literature, there is some discussion on the generation of an emotional state that enhances participation. For example, communitas is used by Turner (1974) and Kamau (2002) to describe the strong emotional connection between people who outside of this emotional state would never relate to each other. Schwalbe (1996:73) refers to communitas as

> the kind of communitas desired by tribesmen in their rites and by hippies in their "happenings" is not the pleasurable and effortless comradeship that can arise between friends, coworkers, or professional colleagues any day. What they seek is a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person's being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared.

Communitas, as used by Turner (1974), Kamau (2002), and Schwalbe (1996), is not the mechanical solidarity described by Durkheim, where such positive feelings are created for the good of the society, but rather because it is something that is pleasurable to the individual. All of the individuals interviewed identified that participating in Gatherings made them feel good. It would be easy to dismiss the indefinable or at least un-operational-ness of such "warm and fuzzy" feelings. It is important however to recognize that this sense of emotional well being and comfort with the activities and individuals within the environment is critical for the establishment of communitas within a community.

The sense of belonging and feeling good about it allows for barriers to be broken down, and for people to interact with individuals who they perhaps normally would not have (Purkis and Bowen 2004:2). For example, Turner (1974:205) discussed the case of an Indian sociologist of the Brahmin caste who was on a pilgrimage with women from a lower caste. The process of being on a long

pilgrimage generated feelings of communitas between all of the participants until the sociologist was on an intimate level relating to the other women, most of whom she would not have ever spoken to in the course of her daily life[45]. Tom may have expressed best or at least the most simply, the sense of communitas that one can feel at a Gathering:

> *..it is a joy in the sense that we can all get along, it is also a joy in the sense that we can learn because we are getting along. We can actually open our ears a bit and not be screaming from the other side of the fence but talking inside the circle.*

This sense of intense belonging is a requirement for communitas to occur. Those who were interviewed, while not using the word communitas, were intuitively conscious of its existence. They were aware that to fully "get it", one had to experience that sense of shared belonging. Those who do not "get it" may not have experienced the sense of communitas. Therefore they have missed the experience of being part of the collective identity which would support them while living in the outside world and which would draw them back the following year.

3.4 Differences Between Older Members and Young Adults

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, while the Family has been successful at reproducing itself, it has not replicated an exact duplicate. Some of the older Rainbows miss the early times. Yet as both Latour (2005) and Maffesoli (1996)

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[45] Her fellow travelers, recognizing that the emotions being generated were specific to the activity, questioned her as to whether or not she would treat them the same when the pilgrim was over. Similarly, when visiting friends at the Saturday market on Salt Spring Island, I sat down with some of the individuals who had been at the Gathering at Gold River. Included within this group were some train riders and others who lived on the margins of society. I had spent a number of hours with them in the trade circle at the Gold River Gathering over a ten-day period. When I sat down, they only partially jokingly asked me if I was still talking to them. They were clearly aware of how temporary the feelings of belonging could be.

note, associations are not stable social organizations, but rather dynamic and constantly evolving, sometimes unstable, entities. Reflecting upon the differences between the older members and the young adults interviewed provides some understanding as to the difference between reproduction and replication.

Older Rainbows and those Rainbows who are young adults have much in common with each other. They are both committed to creating a temporary community that cares for and supports everyone. They all believe somewhat passionately in the capacity of the collective to work together by consensus, and in the need for the collective to avoid the dangers of a hierarchical power structure. They are generally committed to protecting the environment, and most have an eclectic definition of spirituality. There are, however, some differences why the two groups participate. In general, the older group was and continues to remain, more outwardly focused, while the young adults spoken to appeared to be focused inwardly on themselves, their issues, and their own personal development.

It was clear in all of the conversations with those who attended the Gatherings in the early 1970s and who have continued to maintain the connection, that they see themselves as people who have a responsibility to create change in the world. They see themselves as both individuals who had a responsibility to call attention to those issues that needed changing, and as revolutionaries who were prepared to put their lives "on the line" to effect that change. The story discussed above where the term "outlaw" as opposed to "criminal" was used to describe someone who had been arrested in a protest, is a clear indication of how strong their belief was that they were outside of the law in their "rightness" to effect change.

However, these individuals were not advocating for this change to occur for themselves personally. In fact, they had already made those changes. They believed the world needed to change so that everyone would benefit. It is worth noting that for the first Gathering, Congressional politicians were invited to attend, as were ambassadors from the United Nations.

The young adults interviewed were aware of the original protests and were still interested in those issues. However, the younger participants did not articulate as clearly a need to change the world. While they are committed to the creation of community, it is a community for themselves, as opposed to something for all humanity. It may be that they are more cynical about the possibility of change and somewhat more accepting of the inevitability of the crash of society, but there is not the sense of optimism that change is possible[46].

> **Mark**: *It is all going to come crashing down eventually, and I want to be there to watch it happening cause it is going to be a beautiful thing.*

None of the individuals interviewed focused their dialogue with me on the need to change the world so that it would be a better place for everyone. They were actively aware of the environmental issues and of the injustices that existed both in the United States and in the rest of the world. They were committed on a personal level to interacting with that world in a fair and just way. However, they did not talk

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[46] Individuals who had been to a World Gathering have remarked to me that the European Rainbows more frequently discuss the inevitability of a worldwide revolution happening after a cataclysmic event, and that it will happen reasonably soon. One of the individuals interviewed had been to a Gathering in Egypt that was labelled as a World Healing Retreat, which is a concept much closer the original Gathering's vision.

about an imminent change in the same fashion as did the older Rainbows, many of who still believe that the revolution will occur.

The change in focus was also apparent in various Rainbows' discussion of spirituality. There are large numbers of young and older Rainbows who believe in the inherent spirituality of a Rainbow Gathering. However, they do not talk about spirituality in the same way. When the older Rainbows talked about the spirituality of the Rainbow, the discussion was focused on healing the planet, helping a Vision Circle[47] make a good decision or praying for world peace, whereas when the younger Rainbows spoke of spirituality it was usually related to their own spiritual journeys. For example, older participants have always perceived the Om that is done before a meal, or on July 4, as a prayer for world peace. At the Regional Gathering in Gold River, a large group of individuals were asked what the Om meant to them. Of the approximately ten individuals who responded, all of them talked about their own growth or their own connectedness with the earth or some form of supreme deity. None of them mentioned world peace. Joyce's comment about the importance of her spirituality is telling. "Everything to me starts internally, so I would have to say that it starts with my spiritual path ." For Joyce and for the other young adults, starting from the internal was a consistent practice.

A similar degree of inward focus can be noted in the younger adults' perception of the State and its role in trying to prevent the Gathering from

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[47] Vision Councils are called to deal with a number issues including choosing the next year's Gathering site, to discussing who will take responsibility for various activities to talking about people's vision of how the Family is evolving. Vision councils always occur in a circle, with a talking stick or feather used to designate who is speaking. If Vision councils come to a conclusion, it always through consensus.

occurring. The older Rainbows, many of whom had been active participants in the protest movement in the 1960s believed strongly and have a vested interest in the belief that the State was and is the enemy. It was clear that in their minds that the politicians and the capitalists are responsible for the chaos and the state of the world both in terms of social justice and the environment. While they had many stories of how their personal lives were impacted by the State, they were generally able to use those stories to demonstrate how those actions were indicative of how wrong the system was and is. For the younger participants their stories are not just far more likely to be about themselves, but as well, they do not use them as effectively to demonstrate how dysfunctional they perceive the present system to be. While some may actively protest at specific events that deal with issues that affect them, there does not appear to be an externalization of the issues.

The young adults' inward focus in respect to the environment, spirituality or the state of the world should not be construed as an indicator of lack of passion. They were passionate about their beliefs. They had all made some sort of commitment to be active participants in the process of creating a communal environment. Some of them had worked very hard. If their commitment and values are similar to the older group and their capacity and willingness to work hard is also equivalent, the question as to what causes the difference in focus becomes highly relevant for the Family's continued growth. Arnett (1998:5), a psychologist who has done research in the area of the transition from adolescence to adulthood, provides some partial answers. Arnett argues that during the thirty-five year period between 1970 and 2000, the boundaries of when adulthood is achieved has extend

by at least four years and those boundaries are far more flexible than previous. Whereas in 1965, individuals were considered by themselves and society generally to be adults by age twenty-one, according to Arnett's research, individuals now may be in their late twenties before they feel they have achieved such status.

While further research would be required to confirm this, it is possible that the individuals who were part of the protest generation of the mid and late 1960s saw their responsibilities to the community and to society somewhat differently because developmentally they were adults. Most of the individuals interviewed were still in the Arnett's (1998) transition stage of emerging adulthood and therefore perhaps were not ready to look at the wider society. Perhaps significantly one of the individuals that I spoke to, but did not interview, expressed concern that he was almost thirty and felt as if he should be "settling down". His concern was that he would feel like and appear as if he was "selling out" if he made some changes in his lifestyle so that marriage and a family would be possible. Again further research is required but it would appear possible that individuals who are in the latter stages of emerging adulthood may experience some tension as they struggle with their current individual identity and the new expectations of adulthood.

Regardless of why there is a difference between to two cohorts, the difference may prove significant for the future of the Family. If the Family is not able to maintain the belief that they have a responsibility to change the world, it may lose its capacity to maintain a culture of oppositional consciousness. If it cannot demonstrate another way of humans interacting with each other that can be

extended to all people, it may lose one of its primary reasons for existing. If there is a lessening of the strong sense of oppositional consciousness that has for so long formed a base for the Family's collective identity and if the younger Rainbows see only service as something that they give to each other as opposed to everyone, then this communal group may not be able to reproduce itself as successfully as it has for the past thirty years.

The older Rainbows occasionally discuss these concerns. There is frequent mention of how much the Gatherings have changed. No longer does everyone attend the main circle for meals or more importantly for the celebrations, mediations and prayers of July 4. There are those who say that more and more people only come for the party in the woods. There is recognition, however undefined or subtle, that things are not the way they use to be. That complaint however is not unusual when elders are speaking of the younger generations that follow them.

In the above chapter it has been suggested that the Family engages in activities that facilitate its reproduction. However I need to be very clear that these strategies are not overt nor are they orchestrated by an individual or a group of individuals. In my experience there has never been any conversation as to recruitment or retention strategies. The lack of hierarchical structure, or formal organization precludes the development of such strategies. Any such attempt would be defeated by the anarchistic values of the association.

4. Why Young Adults Attend Gatherings

It is seldom easy to get to a Gathering. For example, all but one of the individuals interviewed had traveled hundreds, if not thousands of miles to be there[48]. Many of participants have, year after year, put their outside lives on hold to be involved for two or three weeks every summer. Some leave jobs to be there, others leave relationships and one individual interviewed missed an important family wedding to be at this Gathering. Rainbows face the risk of being charged, perhaps even being arrested for attending, and given the dangers of hitchhiking, perhaps some even risk their lives. For all of the Rainbows interviewed, they had planned to be there; it was neither a whim nor was it an accident. For all of them, it was something that they needed to do.

In this chapter, I will present and discuss some of the reasons for attending that the eight individuals interviewed shared during the hour long dialogue. Utilizing data collected from interviews, I will present three consistent responses from the young adults as to why they were active participants at the Instant Soup Kitchen. The interviewees were clear that they participated for spiritual reasons, because of a concern for and an appreciation of, the environment, and most importantly, because there was a desire to be part of the process of community building. I will also argue that the desire to the community forms a fundamental rationale for those individuals to participate at a Gathering.

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[48] The individuals came from a variety of states and provinces including Florida and California, Quebec and British Columbia,

4.1 Spirituality

A high level of spirituality is always present within a Gathering. This spirituality is demonstrated by activities that reflect what Schehr (1997:153) refers to as a "post-modern spiritualism, at once traditional and contemporary". The Family has incorporated Native American, specifically Hopi legends, and new age mysticism into their rituals. Within this eclectic definition of spirituality are multitudes of formal and informal religious and spiritual strands, which range from Eastern religious teaching through to the use of crystals and the Mayan Calendar, from the long established rituals and practices of Judeo-Christianity to those newly created for those who follow Wicca. Native American rituals have a special significance for many Rainbows. A number of non-native Rainbows have participated in Lakota Sun Dances and bear the scars on their chests. Sweat lodges are common at many Gatherings, and at the Regional Gatherings in both British Columbia and Quebec, First Nation Elders come and conduct ceremonies. This range of spiritual beliefs and practices is consistent with the findings of Shimazono (1999). Shimazono argues that movements in the post-industrial age that focus on either self-transformation or the transformation of civilization through symbolic protest are likely to be engaged in a wide range of spiritual practices. Members of the Family have used their belief in the spirituality of the Gathering to fight their court cases by arguing that American citizens have the right to worship where they choose[49].

[49] Some of the older Rainbows, when they see armed LEOs walking through the Gathering will yell out "no guns in church".

Some of the young adults interviewed had personal spiritual reasons for attending a Gathering. While only one individual, Joyce, consistently spoke of the spirituality at a Gathering, others demonstrated a strong belief that part of being at a Gathering was the opportunity to grow spirituality.

> ***Joyce:*** *Everything to me starts internally, so I would have to say that it starts with my spiritual path and you know because I believe in experience, my internal reality creates my external reality on all levels. I wouldn't have gotten to Rainbow had I not gone through an internal revolution of connecting to my spirit through a particular workshop at a particularly crucial time in my life, and experiencing grief welling up from a core in me and energy coming out of my body. You know I had never experienced these things before and I believe in them but hadn't experienced then, so the belief comes first and then the experience comes along to prove it*

> ***Sam:*** *There was a Gathering in Sinai which was the 1st World Healing Retreat. It was really very spiritually based. It was meant to sort of bring back, it wasn't like the Rainbow crowd, there was no drugs, no alcohol as usual, no fires, raw food diet, salads in the morning, it was very,.... very strict if you can call it like that. But it was just it was healing the body and the mind and the soul, there was a lot of meditation that was done, a lot of yoga, a lot of spirituality based things, a lot of emotional release and when I went to that Gathering I sort of changed a lot there*

A fundamental component of Rainbow spirituality is the belief that at a Gathering all things are possible; that if you ask for it, it will be manifested. It is not uncommon to hear someone say that he/she wished for something to happen and it did, or perhaps more inexplicable for someone in the kitchen to wish for a specific food or spice, and the next person arriving at the Gathering drops off the wished for item. As Patricia said:

> *Just like the magic of Rainbow.... The way that like people have these awkward strange directions, sometimes no directions at all and you can stick out your thumb and say I am going to Rainbow and*

> *you can be picked up by that Rainbow ride you know and you can say to the universe, this is what I need and (someone) will come right into like walk over to your friend's tent and hand it right to you. Like the veil is thinner, the illusion of the physical reality.*

While there is of course no proof that events occur, or items arrive because they were wished for, it remains part of the mythology of the Family that it is possible.

> ***Sam:*** *[I] lean more towards the spiritual side 'cause it is something I am starting to get more attuned to, feeling the synchronicities of life and the wonderful things that just come to you... the famous quote ..... good things come to those who do good things. I have seen a lot of really great things come my way just for no reason. Magic seems to happen and the right thing comes at the right time and you get the right offer or get the right thing brought to you.*

The consistent level of spirituality, while it does generate a collective effervescence or charisma, is not directed towards one individual. There is never a sense that an individual, a group, or a specific faith is attempting to benefit from the activities or rituals. In fact the broad acceptance of all spiritual beliefs acts as a unifying force, instead of being potentially divisive. The collective effervescence that is created by the spiritual activity is diffused back into the collective[50]. The level of spirituality enhances the Gathering experience and confirms that the Family is special.

> ***Mark:*** *You know it gives me a sense of spiritual oneness with everything that you just can't get in Babylon or anywhere else that I've seen.*

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[50] Carlton-Ford, Steven L. 1992. "Charisma, Ritual, Collective Effervescence, and Self-Esteem." *The Sociological Quarterly* 33:365-387. However others, such as Zablocki (1980), and Hermanowicz and Morgan (1999) discuss in some detail the importance of the collective effervescence that can be generated by rituals. While Carlton-Ford (1992) has argued that most frequently that emotion is directed to empowering or benefiting a specific individual, Zablocki (1980) and Hermanowicz and Morgan (1999) have suggested that such energies can be redirected back to the collective thereby enhancing all of the collective.

4.2 The Environment

The Family has, since the first Gathering, had a commitment to walk lightly upon the land. Even the National Forest Service has acknowledged that the clean up that some Rainbows undertake after the Gathering is impressive. The passion for living as one with nature is part of the Family's utopian vision. There are frequent conversations about the desire to live permanently in such settings. This is of course, not a sustainable vision as the Family depends too much upon the resources of Babylon. Nonetheless, all of the individuals interviewed expressed a commitment to the environment and a passion for living "in the woods". For most of them, experiencing nature had been a life long passion, but was something that they had had limited opportunities to do.

For a number of the interviewees, one of the original attractors to a Gathering was the opportunity to camp in the "middle of nowhere". Attending a Gathering was, as Tom noted when he was discussing a late night walk in the woods, an opportunity to experience adventure and perhaps to feel as if he belonged in an earlier time:

> *Here we are lost in the woods, there is just miles and miles of dense forest, and miles and miles of paths……, and I felt like a pioneer, I felt like a Lewis and Clarke encountering new cultures, new tribes and it was good.*

All but one of the individuals interviewed had spent most of their formative years in urban or semi-urban areas. Most of them continued to live in those areas as young adults. The opportunity to be alone in a natural setting and to be safe, provides an almost irresistible attraction.

> ***Mary:*** *I really loved the freedom [to] be able to be alone in the woods.*

The desire to be away from the cities and to live in a more natural environment is a powerful inducement to attend a Gathering. There was a sense among the individuals that I interviewed that part of the bonding process at a Gathering was related to the belief that the majority of participants have a special affinity with nature.

> ***Richard:*** *I just always feel this call to be outside to be out in the woods, to be near a river. And I would always meet certain individuals who [I] felt connected with so whenever I would meet individuals I tended to be attracted to people who were back packers, rock climbers.*

4.3 Why Do They Labour, What Are the Rewards?

I have suggested in this and the preceding chapter that some of the individuals may participate at a Gathering because there is the opportunity for identity validation, for spiritual growth, and to live and work in a more natural setting. However, an active participant works hard. As noted in Chapter Two, some of the jobs that need to be done are difficult, time consuming and dirty. If an individual only came for identity validation, a chance to commune with nature, or the opportunity to enhance their spiritual life and awareness, they would not necessarily need to commit to working so hard. All of the benefits mentioned above could be realized in some measure without contributing labour.

During the interviews, I explicitly asked all of the individuals why young adults such as themselves were willing to work so hard, completing tasks such as

digging slit trenches, or perhaps even worse filling them in, when in Babylon they or their peers would not consider doing such work. The young adults interviewed were very aware that a critical question in my research was why young people would engage in such labour when there was no obligation to do so. Their answers were consistent and clear, and can be divided into two major themes.

4.3.1. Providing Service to Their Community

The literature on intentional communities and social movements has generally looked at participation in the kinds of activities defined by the Family as "service", either in terms of what rewards are promised as a result of the activity (rational choice) or because one is expected to do so. For those who attend a Gathering, neither rationality nor social norms provide a reasonable explanation for why individuals labour willingly. There is no external reward system at a Gathering. While people will say thank you for the food or for the firewood, or "thanks for your help digging the shitter", it is a quiet thank you and seldom is anyone's work acknowledged in a public way. If an individual attempts to take credit for their activities and to assume some additional status because of it, they are ignored. Other than the personal satisfaction of knowing something was done, there would not appear to be a reward for performing a task. While individual self-gratification may be a suitable reward for some activities, it would seem insufficient for getting up early to cook breakfast for hundreds of people for eight days in a row, or following the water lines for miles every day.

All of the individuals spoken to both during the formal interviews and during the informal group discussions recognized the value of providing what is

sometimes referred to as "service". Service to the Family includes a broad range of activities, some of which require dedication and commitment over an extended period, while others, such as playing music for the people working in the kitchen would seem to be less onerous and certainly more fun. However, the Family values the gifts that people give. Service is not just doing your share of the labour, or taking your turn. It is doing the labour joyfully. It is said within a Gathering "if what you are doing is not fun, stop doing it". The service therefore enhances the experience of being there. It gives pleasure to those that are doing the labour. It is part of the process of creating a communitas amongst the active participants that both engenders a collective identity and the desire to return.

> ***Joyce:*** *You know that when we all just give from our hearts and trust that the bigger picture will be taken care of and just offer ourselves in service to each other. How light the work becomes and how what miracles we can create when there isn't this fear in the way of [there] not [being] enough.*

There was a general consensus that what happened in a kitchen at a Gathering was unique. That what occurred there in terms of people being willing to contribute so voluntarily, could not happen anywhere else.

> ***Mary:*** *First of all it feels good to work for me. I don't enjoy just sitting around and smoking pot. Because I feel like it is really valuable. I feel like this concept is a concept that is a way of Gathering which I don't find anywhere else.*

The intentional community literature discusses in some detail the complexities of ensuring that critical activities such as food preparation or the development of infrastructure occur (See Kanter 1972, 1972; Zablocki 1980; Brown 2002). In many, if not most, intentional communities, there are expected levels of

service. Schedules of work are clearly laid out and there is frequently an attempt to balance out the harder jobs with those that are more enjoyable. Individuals who chose not to contribute their labour are generally not allowed to stay. The Family has no such expectations of labour. In part, it does not need to demand that labour be done because it is only a temporary intentional community and participants are flexible in their expectations. Nevertheless, 15,000 to 20,000 people do need to be fed, and there are supplies that need to be carried for miles and at the end of the Gathering, and the site needs to be cleaned up. There is clearly an expectation that someone will do it, but that generalized expectation is not reduced to the individual level.

Hundreds of people attend a Gathering and do either very little or nothing. The young adults I spoke to never expressed anger, even when directly asked, that they were doing all of the labour. They instead expressed almost a sense of sadness that the non-active participants did not yet understand the value of service. As Joyce said in talking about the tourists [51]:

> *Why are they different than me? Because they don't understand that there is a um that there is an infinite abundance available to them... they are not filling themselves with the infinite love of spirit.*

It is not possible, given the relative short time of a Gathering, to predict how long such unconditional giving could be sustained. Munro-Clarke (1986:95) has stated that anarchistic communes "rely heavily on the generosity of individuals while providing no institutional support for the generosity". There is, in all

[51] "Tourist" is used to describe someone who walks through the Gathering, being fed, hopefully having a good time, meeting many very nice people, and having the opportunity to learn about a different way of life but never becoming part of the community.

likelihood, a finite amount of time for which a Gathering could rely on non-structured volunteer labour[52].

4.7.2 Building a Community

The second consistent theme emerging from the question "why do you work so hard?" was that the respondents like being part of building a community. They found it exciting and rewarding to assume responsibility for building something from nothing.

> ***Tom:*** *I had never been a part of something that started like that and grown to something like this, never in my life have I experienced it, on any level.*

The young adults liked the responsibility of being encouraged to create something. They enjoyed being free to express their creativity without the fear of judgment or criticism.

> ***Richard:*** *I love building, trying to create foundations, cause I feel like I have vision and when I am strong and my mental state is stable, I feel like I have lot to contribute as far as vision and direction to a village. For me it is an experiment of what I am capable of, because at Rainbow where are you going to find, I mean people here are very receptive, they are very open, and they have come here to for the most part, the people who are here at seed camp to contribute, to work, and I want to see what I am capable of. I want to, I want to, if is a process of discovery and self-exploration.*

For most of those interviewed, being involved in the kitchen, either in the actual construction or in the day-to-day activities, provided a positive counter balance to their lives in Babylon. In the global economy, most of the individual interviewed work as expendable fodder for the ever growing service sector. For

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[52] Regionals in Canada sometimes last for well over a month with no apparent signs of the breakdown of the willingness to provide some service.

many young adults there is a marked decrease in job stability, and many of the new jobs that are being created are within the service economy. There is limited employee/employer loyalty or job satisfaction, and for many young adults there is a limited potential to exhibit leadership skills or initiative (see Bernhardt, Morris, Handcock, and Scott 1999 for a detailed discussion). Only one of the individuals interviewed (she worked with pre-school children) expressed any job satisfaction. For the most part, the young adults interviewed appeared to be part of a generation which has been denied the opportunity to create something of lasting value. The desire to be part of the process of building something that they can be proud of is something that the majority of the individuals mentioned as being important to them. Building, being part of a community fulfils that desire to be part of something.

> ***Tom:*** *When you encounter a new kitchen or a new tribe, people pick up on the vibe or the overall tone of what's going on. If you see people getting along, and being o.k. with each other you are going to want to gravitate towards that, you are going to want to know the reason why or maybe not right away but you are going to want to experience that for yourself. When I came up here, this specific kitchen, right now it is huge, probably one of the biggest kitchens around because there has been so many of us that have helped out - built so much, when I first got here there were a few tents and a little table ...I met you...you remember?*

Patricia recognized that her sense of community was different from that her parents. She wants a closer community, one that is like a Family. Speaking of her mother and father, she said:

> *The irony is that the community they live in, is not even one that is sacred to them, and the interactions that they have are even ones that are you know kin, kin for a lack of a better word. They have been in the same place for the last 25 years, 24 years… I don't want*

> *to be meeting new people every day, and having to regain connections. I want to know the same people.*

More importantly, Patricia wants to be with people to whom she feels an intimate connection with.

The active participants also knew that participation was the best way of meeting people. As noted in Chapter Three, some of the young adults had, as adolescents, felt separated from their peer group. Participation in the kitchen was a good way of developing a sense of belonging. Richard was perhaps the most purposeful about the reasons why he came early to build:

> *Sometimes I feel a little social anxiety and a way that I have learned to overcome that social anxiety is by maybe a conversation by a campfire is intimidating for me, but chopping wood with a brother isn't intimating for me. And I know within the process of chopping wood there is going to be conversation some mutual, there is common task and I find that through working with people I establish bonds and friends and I make friendships and ah working brings me out of my shell so to speak. And ah so yea, that through work when I go around the campfire later on in the evening, when I look around the camp fire, I will have some common experiences that I have shared with 1,2,3,4,5 other people. And that makes me feel good that, that we put our time into something to making the community a little bit better.*

Others expressed similar thoughts as to the significance of working hard beside people who had a common vision. They all recognized that such activity enhances the sense of belonging.

Conclusion

The data discussed above clearly indicate that there are a variety of reasons why individuals participate actively in the kitchen at the Gathering. While the sense of spirituality and a passion for the wilderness are important to attract people, I

believe that it is the sense of belonging or communitas that is generated through participation that is the critical reason. Those who do not participate within a kitchen or elsewhere at a Gathering for an extended period remain a tourist. Those who do not "get it", or and therefore miss the experience of being part of the collective building process ,do not experience the communitas that will support them while living in Babylon and that will draw them back home the following year.

5. Intentional Communities and Anarchism – Locating the Family

As noted in the Introduction, the academic literature has generally not recognized or been responsive to the continued existence of alternative communal environments or social movements. In fact, such associations or groups have frequently been ignored, or else dismissed as being irrelevant (Kebede 2001; Shimazono 1999). For example, in spite of the fact that, as noted elsewhere, the Family has been the object of intense observation and harassment on the part of the State, and it has been highly visible at various times (if for no other reason than that once a year fifteen to twenty thousand people congregate in one area), there is only one academic publication listed with the U.S. Library of Congress that discusses the Family as its primary focus. Maffesoli (1996) and Schehr (1996) have argued that mainstream or conservative social theorists have ignored those collectives that focus on cultural change, and that exist without hierarchies in part because they are unable to understand the degree or the extent of the social change that occurred in the later half of the twentieth century. This lack of understanding may explain in part why the Family has been generally ignored within the literature.

The purpose of this chapter is to locate the Family along a social action continuum, utilizing both the research data and the intentional community literature. I have used the term "social action continuum" to include all movements, organizations and collectives that have the specific purpose of creating change through a social action or activity. Locating the Family is important because it may provide a means to legitimize such associations and therefore encourage more comprehensive research projects. I will, as part of the discussion, argue that the

traditional understanding of an intentional community (IC) is inadequate for the discussion of current intentional communities and that a more inclusive definition that has room for such communities as the Rainbow Family is required. Specific attention will be paid to who participates, how their commitment is measured, and what defines the success of the community. The Family, similar to the student protest movements of the late 1960s, does not easily fit into a traditionalist understanding of either social movements or intentional communities. As Roszak (1968:xi) stated:

> It would surely be more convenient if these perversely ectoplasmic *zeitgeists* were card-carrying movements with a headquarters, an effective board and a file of official manifestos.

The discussion and final placement of the Family along the continuum will be in part grounded by Kanter's (1972) and Zablocki's (1980) seminal work on the development of intentional communities that occurred in part as a response to the 1960s counter-culture movement, and more recent work done by Brown (2002) and Sargisson and Sargent (2004) on modern ICs. The conclusions reached, however, are shaped primarily by the observations made at the site and by the comments from the participants. As noted in both the Introduction and in the methodology chapter, it was the voices of the actors who guided this research by defining the world that they were living in. Until Colorado, it had not been obvious to me whether or not the Family fitted comfortably with an intentional community framework or in fact anywhere along the social action continuum. However, by paying close attention to the actions and the words of the participants, it has become clear that the Family, or

at least a specific kitchen at the Gathering, functions as an intentional community for a brief period every year.

The Family has always, since the first Gathering, presented itself as an organization with no organization; as an entity that has no structure. It takes some pride in announcing that it is "the largest non-organization of non-members in the world" (Welcome Home 2006). During both the interviews and the informal focus groups there was frequent mention of how magical a Rainbow Gathering is, and that part of the magic lies in its spontaneous creation. A Gathering is an event, in the minds of many Rainbows, that occurs outside of the control of any one individual or group of individuals. Many Rainbows believe that a Gathering is something that just happens without any significant planning. This somewhat utopian vision has evolved in part out of a philosophical commitment to a form of anarchy that encompasses a life style opposed to authority and that is anti-ideological and anti-political. Many Rainbows, especially the older ones, believe that the Family is part of a social and cultural revolution. That revolution, while it is yet to be defined, will be one that at the very least will avoid the organizational structure of capitalism by ensuring that hierarchies and elites do not develop. The passionately held conviction in the capacity of the Family to take care of itself without a structure is one of the most deeply held beliefs of those who attend Gatherings.

The reality of a Gathering, however, is significantly different. While it is true that most of the individuals arrive at a Gathering with little preparation, a Gathering only occurs because some individuals are willing to assume

responsibility (focalize) for specific activities and others are prepared to follow their directions. To have a Gathering that is attended by 15,000 people requires planning, forethought and a long-term commitment on the part of a number of people[53].

Clearly, there are two different perceptions of how a Gathering occurs. One is that there is no structure and therefore a Gathering is manifested because people wish for it. The second is that there must be some form of formal or informal structure that maintains the Family's capacity to feed and keep healthy thousands of people. However, it is only by accepting that the Family has some sort of structure, that it becomes possible to locate it along the social action continuum.

5.1 Intentional Communities – Definition

ICs are not new phenomena. Zablocki (1980:31) states that for the past 300 years there has been within the continental US, at least one documented communitarian organization in existence[54]. Zablocki (1980:43) notes with some surprise how few members living in communal situations are aware of this history. His surprise is understandable. While Brown (2002:153) has argued that in the past, some communities may have existed in isolation from other communities or society in general, she notes that virtually every community or society in the world

[53] For example, planning for the next Gathering starts July 7 at the Vision Council where it is decided in what one region the Gathering will be held the following year. During the Thanksgiving weekend there were two-day meetings in that general area where people volunteer to act as the bankers or as scouts. A spring council is held to discuss the reports from the scouts and to deal with other organizational issues.

[54] See Zablocki (1980) for a brief but comprehensive review of the history of the growth of ICs both internationally and with the United States (pp.19-57).

today exists within a framework of larger communities or societies[55]. This lack of interest on the part of commune members in the history or in the literature of Utopia is reflected amongst Rainbows at a Gathering. Historically, authors and theorists - from B.F. Skinner, Heinlein and Bellamy to Fourier, Owen and Saint-Simon - have either used or had others use their writings to create a model of community life (Sargisson and Sargent 2004:258). However, in spite of the fact that authors have written of their Utopian visions for at least the past 3,500 years[56], and more specifically the Utopian genre has been well established since the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, I have never participated in a conversation at a Gathering on the topic of Utopian literature. Similarly, while some of the individuals interviewed stated that one of the reasons why they came to Gatherings was to learn how to, or to meet with those who want to, create a permanent community, there is relatively little discussion of the rich history of communal living within the U.S. or Canada.

There are a number of possible reasons for why there is reluctance to connect with either the past or the present in terms of expertise. In his discussion of a commune's unwillingness to get advice from an experienced organic farmer as to specific practices, Zablocki (1973) suggests that the culture of the commune is to distrust any knowledge that they themselves have not gained through their own

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[55] In the past 10 years the use of the internet to engage with others may have significantly increased some participant's awareness of other current communal situations.

[56] Manual and Manuel argue that the dream of Utopia, at least within the western world, is remarkably similar in spite of arising from different cultures including from a "Sumerian poem inscribed sometime before 1500 BC (which) "tells of the purity and peace of the mystic land of Dilmun" (36), to the Hellenic period describing utopias in some detail specifically in terms of organization and rational structure to the slightly more current literature of Moore and Bacon.

experiences. He further argues that this belief stems from confusion about the difference between hierarchical authority figures and those who have authoritative knowledge about a particular subject. It may also be that the lack of discussion of European and American literature and history in part reflects the wider rejection of the values associated with those cultures. Or, finally, it may be, as Bookchin (1986: 196) notes when quoting from Marx's *Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, that one can not use the "poetry" or the forms from the past to create revolution. That is, a culture based on the need for fundamental political and cultural revolution needs to generate its own examples and methods. The re-telling of the old stories that was noted when the older Rainbows met may be a subconscious attempt to create the Family's own collective memory that is separate from previous histories or cultures, and that contains valuable information necessary for the Family's future.

In spite of the rich legacy of writing within history and literature, the social theorists' definition of intentional communities has been surprisingly narrow. Academics have traditionally limited their understanding of an IC to include a collective household in a single location with a limited membership (Kanter 1972:2 ; Kanter 1973:xiii; Zablocki 1980:7). However, within the last decade, the definition of an IC has started to expand. The Fellowship for Intentional Community, a web-based directory of such communities, defines ICs as "an inclusive term for ecovillages, cohousing, residential land trusts, communes, student co-ops, urban housing cooperatives, and other projects where people strive together with a common vision" (2006). Dan Questenberry (1996:35) stated that "an intentional community is a group of people living cooperatively, dedicated by intent

and commitment to specific communal values and goals": Christian (2003: xvii) says in a much simpler fashion: "We're longing for a way of life that's warmer, kinder, more wholesome, more affordable, more cooperative and more connected" .

In a comprehensive manual on how to create intentional communities, Christian (2003:xvi) suggests that ICs are not limited to those groups that live in the same house or on the same property. He suggests that for an entity to be considered an IC, the individuals need only to live near enough to each other so that they can be in frequent contact. Andelson (2002:131) stretches the definition even further by stating "I take communal to signify a sense of shared identity of fellowship felt by a group of people". Clearly, from the perspective of those who reside within communal environments, ICs are not limited to traditional structures. The focus is on shared values, and a commitment to a way of life. By extension, the place where that sharing occurs can be less important than the process of sharing.

Shenker (1986:10) suggests that the word "intentional" is a critical word for understanding what an IC is, in that intentional communities

> have emerged as a result of a number of people consciously and purposefully coalescing as a group in order to create a set of aims.... These aims are not partial: they attempt to create an entire way of life, unlike organizations or social movements, they are intentional communities.

Shenker's (1986) and Christian's (2003) comments form a valuable platform upon which to base a discussion of the similarities between ICs and a Gathering. By focusing on lifestyle changes, purposefulness, and commitment as opposed to property and exclusivity, the definition becomes more inclusive and relevant to the

communal environments of the post-industrial society. By clarifying that an IC can be focused more on the process of living together as opposed to the physical locality, there is room along the social action continuum for communal environments such as the Family.

5.2 Commitment

Kanter (1972, 1973) makes the assumption that the greater the sacrifice the individual makes (as demonstrated by what the individual has given up, or what labour they perform), the greater their commitment is to remain within the IC. While Kanter (1972, 1973) is undeniably correct in her assertion that commitment is a critical factor in determining longevity of the IC, her work is less useful in examining how commitment is generated in alternative communal environments. Her assumptions do not reflect the dynamic and ever changing nature of ICs (Andelson 2002). Kanter, for example, appears to ignore the possibility that participation and labour is not a sacrifice but is something that is given with joy. Kanter (1972, 1973) does not recognize the importance of the collective effervescence that can be generated by the activity and then is returned to the participants, nor does she identify the long term bonding effects and the collective identity validation of communitas. None of the Rainbows interviewed, in spite of some long-term commitment, or the amount of resources it took to get to the Gathering, expressed any sense of having given up something that was more important or made significant sacrifices.

Within a Gathering the commitment is not to a physical structure or a location but rather to an ideology that focuses on a non-hierarchical consensus

based decision making process, utilization and innovation of non-violent conflict resolution, and race and gender harmony. Their commitment is re-enforced by seeing the benefits and the enactment of those values and principles. While commitment is harder to measure in a temporary communal environment, the fact that some individuals have attended annually for thirty years would suggest a certain degree of commitment, as would the fact that people travel thousands of miles across the continental U.S. to participate. The Rainbows, unlike the IC members discussed by Kanter (1972, 1973), are not bound to the IC by cost or by sacrifice, but stay involved because the act of participating confirms who they are.

5.3 Intentional Communities – Who Joins

I did not attempt within this research project to determine the demographics of those who participate at a Gathering. The very lack of a formal structure and the lack of homogeneity within the Family make it challenging to place it or any of the participants into discrete categories, either in terms of types of behaviours, reasons for attending, or benefits of participation. However, as noted in the discussion of methodology in the first chapter, the sample was reflective of what of other research has indicated on the subject of who participates in protests over the usurpation of their cultural world by the state or capitalistic force in terms of class, education, and ethnicity.

The data collected at the National in Colorado and at the Regional in Gold River provided a number of reasons as to why the young adults were active participants, including the desire for personal growth, the desire to belong to a community and for some of the individuals, to protest. These findings are consistent

with the findings of other researchers who have suggested that people join an IC to either fulfill psychological needs including personal growth and belonging (Andelson 2002; Berger 1981; Touraine 2004), or as a form of protest (Brown 2002; Maffesoli 1996; Plath 1972). While the literature on intentional communities does not directly address the symbiotic relationship of collective and individual identities, there is some discussion of the fact that individuals who choose to join for emotional or psychological reasons may do so because it feels as if it is the right thing to do, and that living communally fits into that individual's perception of who they are (Polletta 2002: 205).

Given that the young adults felt partially isolated from their primary peer group during parts of their adolescents, it is possible that some individuals participate to reduce that sense of isolation. Roszak (1968:201) confirms this possibility in citing Martin Buber's suggestion that joining may not be as much related to the issues connected to the complex socialist restructuring of society, but rather to deal with "the most intimate of all resistances- resistance to mass or collective loneliness". For the anarchists, desiring to live without the state, or for those who have chosen to look different, choosing to live in an community that supports his or her values may be the only choice there is (Taylor 1982:3).

There were as well other consistencies with the comments of the young adults interviewed, and the findings of more radical social movement and intentional communities social theorists (Andelson 2002; Kebede 2001; Pitzer 1989; Shimazono 1999). Specifically within the discussion of cultural-moral movements as defined by Goodwin and Jasper (1999), Shimazono's (1999) research

findings of the Japanese new spirituality movements and Kebede's (2001) work on the Rastafarians demonstrates that such movements have both a protest component (in that they contest the cultural codes of the society) and a spiritual component. This perspective provides a unique understanding as to why people participate in such associations as the Family. While people may participate at a Gathering for a variety of reasons, for some at least, it is the specific combination of both spirituality and protest that makes communal environments such as the Family so compelling for some individuals.

5.4 Redefining Success

Kanter (1972, 1973) and later Zablocki (1980) argued that only ICs that last for at least twenty-five years could be called successful. While both authors accepted that ICs functioned differently from, and outside of mainstream society, both researchers assumed that such ICs could be evaluated using the same definitions of success that other groups such as community churches or organizations would use. Within Kanter's (1972, 1973) definition of a successful IC there is little or no room for ICs whose existence evolved from a protest at the symbolic level of existence. Consequently, she ignored those that did not meet her standards, including the newer communal experiments of the late 1960s.

More recently, however, Kanter's (1972, 1973) work has been seen as somewhat rigid. Schehr (1997) argues that Kanter is wrong to suggest that success should be defined in terms of longevity. Sargisson & Sargent (2004) go as far as to suggest that her (Kanter's) work on the identification of success in terms of

longevity was a "myth of scholarship" (xiii). Sargisson and Sargent (2004) further argue that the measure of success should the "extent to which the community satisfies its members, even for a time" (140). That is, success depends on whether the members, no matter how brief their stay, have their needs meet by participating in that community. The success of any community must be in large part judged by how it supports the individuals who chose to live within that community. As Henry Demarest Lloyd, an American social reformer in a speech at the turn of the last century about intentional communities said:

> Only within these communities has there been seen, in the wide borders of the United States, a social life where hunger and cold, prostitution, intemperance, poverty, slavery, crime, premature old age, and unnecessary modality, panic and industrial terror have been abolished. If they had done this only for one year, they would have deserved to be called the only successful "society" on this continent, and some of them are generations old. All of this has not been done by saints in heaven, but on earth by average men and women.
> (as cited in Sargisson and Sargent 2004:163).

The Family does meet the needs of at least some of the participants. This is proven in that they come back year after year. The Family may not meet everyone's needs (it does not have to, to fit the above definition), nor does it even need to meet all of an individual's needs. Sometimes it may be sufficient to be better than anything else available. As Mary noted when talking about a friend:

> *I think part of why he has been coming back is because it is the first time he has felt accepted for who he is. Even here its funny because he doesn't fit in,.. .. .. but somehow he feels accepted here.*

ICs that only last a short period are not necessarily failures if they have had a lasting effect on not only the surrounding community but also the communities to which the members go back. The concept that an IC, even as it disintegrates, has

the capacity to influence the community at large, redefines the meaning of success. Success is not how long something lasts, it is what impact has it had. This argument would suggest that the examination of participation in such communal environments is not limited to individualized or small group internal protests, but rather it should be seen as part of an overall, ongoing process of protest. It expands the value of such ICs as a form of protest, or as agents of social change. As Goodman and Goodman (1960) noted when discussing the intentional communities of the nineteenth century such as Brook's Farm:

> the very transitoriness of such intensely motivated intentional communities is part of their perfection. Disintegrating, they irradiate society with people who have been profoundly touched by the excitement of community life, who do not forget the advantages but try to realize them in new ways (109).

Conclusion

I have suggested in the above chapter that the traditional definition of an intentional community is inadequate in assisting to locate an alternative communal environment such as the Rainbow Family along a social action continuum. I have argued that a more inclusive definition would include recognition of success of the IC being based on the degree of impact the IC has upon the individuals and the community; a focus on the process of living together; and the recognition that a strong belief in specific philosophical and cultural values can engender an ongoing commitment.

In reviewing the data obtained through the interviews, the informal focus groups and by direct observation, it is clear that the Rainbow Family can easily be defined as an intentional community, using the above criteria. There is a significant

impact not only on those who actively participate, but there may as well be an impact upon the communities those individuals return to; the Family focuses on the process of living together both in terms of consensus based decision making and the sharing of resources and work. Finally, attending a Gathering can generate a level of commitment through the validation of the individual identity and communitas.

6. Summary

The purpose of this research project was to understand how the Rainbow Family of Living Light has reproduced itself for over thirty years. In doing so, I examined why young adults choose to participate at a Gathering, and how the collective identity of the Family was formed and maintained. A secondary task of the project was to locate the Family along a social action continuum so that future exploration of the Family and other similar associations could be encouraged. Data for the project was collected at the National Gathering in Colorado in July 2006 and the British Columbia Regional Gathering in August 2006 through participant observations, open ended interviews, and small group discussions.

The research methodology for the project was informed and inspired by Actor Network Theory (ANT). Integral to ANT is the understanding that the researcher must not impose upon the actors an *a priori* definition of their world using pre-conceived ideas, but rather he/she must let the actors define and describe their own social world. Proponents of ANT argue that the voices of the actors need to shape and direct the research in terms of the design of the project including the literature review, as well as how the findings are presented and discussed. As well, within the discussion of ANT is the recognition that inanimate objects need to be considered actors within the environment in that the objects within an environment shape the interactions.

The structure of the project was partially based on the work of Alford (1998) who has argued that "good" research must contain the three major paradigms of inquiry: multivariate, interpretive and historical. Given the limited scope and

purpose of this project, multivariate and historical data were generally backgrounded so that the voices of the actors could be foregrounded. However, the history of the Family and of the protest movements of the late 1960s are central to understanding both the collective identity and the location of the Family within the social action continuum and were therefore brought to the foreground in Chapters Three and Five.

The Family continues to reproduce itself in part by maintaining a collective identity that validates the individual identity of the participants. In fact, I argued that there is a symbiotic relationship between the collective identity of the Family and the individual identity of the participants. That is, the presence of the individual is what sustains or reproduces the Family, and in return, the existence of the Family at a Gathering is what nourishes the individual identity throughout the year. The individual identity could not exist without the collective identity and vice versa. This finding contravenes traditional social movement theory that suggests that the collective identity of a movement can exist separately from the individual identity. I also suggest that the Family, while it has been successful at reproducing itself, has not replicated itself. The focus of a Gathering in terms of values and activities has remained the same. However, the rational for people's participation may have changed from a vision of a revolution to reclaim the cultural world from the State or capitalist forces, to a more inwardly focused view.

I have furthermore argued that part of the Family's collective identity is based on an oppositional stance to the State, and that by maintaining that position, in part through the insistence of camping in large numbers on National Forest land,

they have created an oppositional consciousness. This oppositional consciousness allows participants in the Family to perceive themselves as not only oppressed by the State, but also as defenders of specific cultural values.

The eight young adults interviewed suggested that they were active participants at the Gathering for a variety of reasons, including the opportunity to grow spiritually, to spend time in a more natural environment, and to participate in the process of building and sustaining a community. I have suggested that this desire to build a community was the most significant reason for individuals to become involved. I have also suggested that this finding is of particular interest in that it supports the work of others who argue that young adults are interested in building communities, although they may do so in a different fashion from previous generations.

Finally, I suggested that by expanding the traditional definition of an intentional community to include those ICs that are not place based but are more focused on the process of living together. By defining success not in terms of longevity but by the impact upon the individuals who live there and on society as a whole, the Family can be located along the social action continuum as a temporary intentional community. This finding is significant as it may provide a means to legitimize such associations and therefore encourage more comprehensive research projects.

There are some limitations to this research project. The data collected was specific to one kitchen, and therefore, it can not be generalized to the Gathering as a whole. Some issues because of limited resources were not discussed. For example, I

have not differentiated between the young adults interviewed and other groups of similarly aged individuals immersed in a sub-culture. On the surface, there would appear to be little difference. The young adult's sense of separation from their general peer group, and a collective identity that creates a culture in which the association of individuals is seen as special or remarkably different is consistent with other groups, including those who labeled themselves Goth or Punk. The argument that the individuals at a Gathering have a fundamental belief in sharing and cooperation, and that they participate at a Gathering without being manipulated may not be adequate to justify the claim that the Family is unique. However, the combination of its relative longevity, its de-centered and anarchistic structure, its emphasis on spirituality and world peace and its inclusive perceptual versatility that allows for the unconditional acceptance of the individual suggests that the Family is not typical of any other association.

The Family provides a rich, untapped field for further research. Such topics as the use of rituals to generate a collective effervesce, a review of the equality of gender in terms of child raising responsibility or participation in Vision Councils, or the investigation of why other young adults, including those who are street youth, participate at a Gathering would all provide useful and interesting research areas. Such research may as well prove useful to the larger society. Pitzer (1989), in discussing why the study of intentional communities is useful, suggests that by applying such a model to both the study of aboriginal nomadic cultures and to current ICs, it may be possible to develop a better understanding as to how societies in the past have evolved. More importantly, perhaps by studying evolving cultures

that are experimenting with alternative forms of structure, relationships, and decision making, social scientists may be able provide alternatives to the larger society. A Gathering of the Rainbow Family of Living Light is a microcosm that represents that part of society that is dissatisfied with the current cultural and political environment. As imperfect as it is, the Family provides alternatives that are worth further exploration.

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Appendix A
Interview Schedule

The purpose of the open ended interview is to elicit a narrative of the individual's reason as to why they are attending the Gathering.

Question 1. How old are you?

Question 2. Where are you from?

Question 3. Why did you come to this Gathering?

Prompts: how did you hear about it?
Is this your first Gathering?
How many Gatherings have you attended?
Why did you come to another one?
What were your expectations before you came?
Have those expectations been met?
Will you go to another Gathering

Question 4. what do you do in the other world?

Prompts: Do you go to school?
Where
What courses/level
Do you work?
Where?

Appendix B

Key Themes Emerging From Interview Data

1) Spirituality
2) "Getting it"
3) Living in the woods/pioneering
4) Building Community
5) Relationships with parents/family/friends
6) Environment
7) Family support
8) Protest involvement/attitude
9) Future
10) People on the street
11) Service

Appendix C

Colorado National Site Description

The National Gathering site was in the Routt National Park, located in the northwest corner of Colorado. The mountains surrounding the site were forested by alder and pine; the meadows carpeted by sage bush. On some of the hills, large brown patches were noticeable where the pine beetle had destroyed stands of timber. It had not rained for a number of weeks. Consequently the road leading to the trailhead[57] was dusty and every time a car went by, clouds of red dirt hung in the air, gradually settling on the parked cars, or on the people that were walking by.

The parking lot was a field approximately three to four kilometres from the trailhead. While there was a pickup truck that acted as a shuttle for people and their possessions, many of the early arrivals had parked their cars on either side of the dirt road leading to the trailhead. Therefore the only road access to the site was reduced to a single lane. Because of the narrowness of the road, there were frequent traffic jams as drivers attempted to either reach or leave the trailhead area. The trailhead itself was chaotic; at the peak times just before July 4th, literally thousands of individuals arrived within a 24 hour period. Drivers of cars, trucks and old school buses competed for space, anxious to disgorge both passengers and their possessions. It was a slow process as tired travelers, many of whom had traveled for hundred's of miles, sat down and rested, and others visited with old friends just arriving. Off to one side of the trailhead there were three state forestry officials

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[57] Trailhead - the point beyond which no motorized traffic is allowed

watching the entire scene with a sense of disbelief on their faces. Just up from the trailhead there was a small parking lot with RVs and vans used by people who had decided not to camp within the actual Gathering site but to sleep in their vehicles. Some of these individuals were active in assisting with the parking and traffic control, or in shuttling people to and from the parking lot.

The path from the trailhead to the information booth near the main circle was a gentle, but constant uphill trail that took a minimum of twenty to thirty minutes to walk depending on how much was being carried and the physical fitness of the individuals. Many of the people along the trail seem to have packed far too many things without any forethought as to how they would manage their frequently awkward loads. The trail, which was only flat in two spots, meandered over two streams, crossed over on recently built bridges, past a small tepee village, some small kitchens and then went through the trading circle area to end up in the general area of the information booth. However, along this path there were numerous smaller paths leading to campsites or other kitchens. The trail from morning to dusk was usually busy with a procession of people either carrying large packs, pushing wheelbarrows and baby carriages or pulling an assortment of wagons full of personal possessions, equipment or food. In fact, there were times when the trail, with the exception of there being no snow, most resembled the pictures of the Chilkoot trail in the Klondike during the gold rush of the late 1800s. As the number of participants increased, the trail became wider so that by the first kitchens and the trading circle area, it had grown from a single person path to a roadway that was

fourteen or fifteen feet wide. The amount of foot traffic and the occasional bicycle raised clouds of dust that permeated clothing, and irritated people's lungs.

The location and the geography of the site affected the Gathering in a number of ways. The elevation which was approximately 9,000 feet, presented specific challenges to those who either had heart or lung difficulties and/or who were use to living at much lower elevations. It made breathing difficult and the dry air caused rapid dehydration. These medical issues prevented some individuals from traveling from kitchen to kitchen as they would have perhaps normally have done. The rough terrain and narrow mountain paths also precluded access to a number of the kitchens by those who had mobility difficulties, most specifically those who used wheelchairs.

At the National, the only time that most of people were together was on the morning of July 4 when we gathered for a morning of meditation and prayer for world peace. The rest of the time the participants of the Gathering were spread out over 1000 hectares of hilly, sometimes thickly forested terrain. However, within that large area there were pockets of activity. For example, there were at least 15 different kitchens. Some of them only served specific foods such as popcorn or tea and coffee, while others were large complexes designed to feed not only those who wanted food throughout the day but also to bring food to the main circle at supper to feed the hundreds of people that would gather there. Other areas were perhaps less formally developed but served as a focus point for the trading circle, CALM, or the information both. Because of the size of the site at a National, the number of people in attendance and the variety of activities available, there can be a profound

difference in the type of Gathering experience enjoyed depending upon where the individual spent most of their time.

Trade circle

The Family, outside of collecting money (sometimes referred to as green energy) in the Magic Hat[58] after a meal, does not use money and in fact discourages its use within the site. However bartering or trading is an appropriate activity, and for some people participating in the trade circle is their primary activity for much of the Gathering. The array of what was available to trade was almost endless: cloth badges, tools, knives, macramé craft items, clothing, toys, pens, musical instruments, crystals, needles and thread, rocks, shells, flashlights and batteries are common items. While some of the vendors had tents or special display areas, most of the traders had their wares on a sheet or a blanket. On some trading blankets, it appeared as if the individual had emptied out their entire backpack and made it all available for trade, while on others it was obvious that people had brought specific goods or materials for trading. The trading area extended approximately two to three hundred yards, on both sides of the main trail and sometimes down the side trails. The trail at times was crowded, with people playing guitars, drums or didgeridoos, trying to make a deal, talking to friends or just strolling along. There were children running, dogs barking and traders calling out to attract customers. Making their way through this crowd were those who were just arriving, various

[58] The Magic Hat accompanied by musicians, singers and usually a few children is passed around the circle after a meal. Individuals who have money give what they can afford. Within the Instant Soup Kitchen, the Magic Hat was just nailed to a post and on occasion people in the kitchen reminded others that it was there. The money is used to buy food or supplies.

LEOs, and the occasional local tourist who came to the Gathering out of curiosity. It was not a gentle space. It was a scene of noise and high raw energy. Many of the traders resemble those who some would refer to as "street punks" in terms of their clothing and attitude. Only a few of them reflected the image of the gentle peaceful gatherer as exemplified by many of those at Instant Soup. For many Rainbows, the trade circle would be used as a place to walk through, to visit, to do a couple of trades and then to leave for a more relaxing spot.

Kiddies' Village

The Kiddies' Village Kitchen is unique in many ways amongst the kitchens at a Gathering. It is the only kitchen that is specifically identified as having a primary mandate – that is to make sure that those with children, many of whom have chosen to camp within the general area known as Kiddies' Village, have access to good food on a regular basis. The Family as a whole is aware that moms and dads with children, especially small children, do not have the time to devote to cooking a group meal that may take 2 or 3 hours to prepare. Therefore, other people do the cooking for them and their children. The kitchen is unique, in part, because there is one individual who has been a participant at Gatherings since the early 70s, and not only acts as its primary focalizer for the length of the Gathering, but he as well owns or at least manages all of the kitchen equipment. The equipment is transported from Gathering to Gathering, and to other events in his bus. The array of equipment is impressive. It includes not only the large pots, mixing bowls and

utensils necessary to cook for such large numbers, but as well a 4X4 heavy iron grill used to cook the hundreds of pancakes.

This is a serious kitchen, the work area is structured, and there are clear rules and expectations for people working there. The kitchen area, closed off with fencing or bliss rails, is large, covering at least a thirty square foot area. The overhead tarps are tied to and supported by a strong structure made from large poles, some of which are six to seven inches across the base and twelve to fifteen feet high. There are wood-fired cooking surfaces, chopping areas and a serving line. Water, through a complex system of pipes, comes from a spring some distance away. Within the enclosed area there is space for folks to sit down and talk. However, this area is not for everyone, but rather for those who have had a long affiliation with the core group of this kitchen. On one side of the kitchen is a closed off space for the bread oven and on the other side, beside the play area is a large flat area that is used for the meal circle. It can easily hold well over a hundred people.

The focalizer of this kitchen is far more assertive than are most other focalizers about both hygiene and about volunteering. On at least two occasions that I noted, during the circle before the Om, or while individuals were waiting in line, he berated people for not assisting firewood collection or in any of the other activities that are needed to maintain a large kitchen. A father reported to me that his teenage son had been turned away from being served because he had not done any work in that kitchen. Others reported that before they were served they had to

bring in firewood[59]. This is the only time I have heard of food being denied to an individual or connected to preformed labour. Kiddies' Kitchen may be the cleanest kitchen in the Gathering. Not only is there a nail brush and nail clippers for the kitchen volunteers to use to clean their nails before chopping, cooking and serving the food, but before being served all must wash their hands at the double stainless steel sink.

Kiddies' Kitchen is perhaps best known for its breakfast that can include pancakes with homemade syrup, scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, porridge, milk and juice. However, it also does its best to ensure that there are things to eat during the day for families and especially for the children. The above menu, while it sounds complete, it is frequently only available for children and their parents. This kitchen, as do most other kitchens, follows the Rainbow tradition of serving children, nursing moms, and other parents first. It is not unusual to wait in line for some time to find that only porridge is left for the childless adults.

The general area of the kitchen is a place that is alive with children's voices. Bright colours and a gentle chaos surrounds the play area and the kitchen. Within the play area, there are swings and a perfectly balanced teeter-totter made out of logs, a children's plastic swimming pool and other various toys. Moms, and in some cases Dads[60], provide loose supervision. The children are encouraged to play cooperatively and to wander where they want. For some of the children,

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[59] In other kitchens if there is not enough firewood, the meal is late. At the Kiddies' Kitchen, that is not an option.

[60] While no attempt was taken to count the number of males and females who provide childcare, here at this kitchen and in other places, it appeared as if females were still providing the majority of the childcare.

especially those from urban areas, it may be the only time in the year that they are allowed to wander without fear or concern. Within this specific area, all Rainbows are responsible for the children. Kiddies' Village is an area where the intergenerational nature of the Family is most obvious as infants, their parents and grey haired participants all sit beside each other. Kiddies Kitchen is frequently the place that the media are shown as it exemplifies the vision of what the Gathering and the Family can and should be.

New Kitchen

At the other of the spectrum of kitchen design and operation is a kitchen that appeared to be one of the newest kitchens. It was located right at the beginning of the trade circle and reflected the noise and the energy of that environment. Because of this location, they probably served hundreds of people throughout the day. It seemed to be run by a group of young people many of who appeared to be street youth. There was a lot of yelling back and forth, pots were piled up waiting to be washed and they did not have direct access to water. Unlike the other, more established kitchens that come to the Gathering with their own PVC piping and filtering system that can be hooked up to the main pipes, this kitchen needed to have their five and ten gallon jugs filled up at the nearest spigot, some two hundred metres away from their kitchen. As noted elsewhere, a lot of water is required to run a kitchen and therefore there were constant yells for a volunteer to get more water. A roughly constructed pole barrier limited access to the kitchen, but there were

numerous points at which people could wander in and get hot water or coffee. The workers seemed to welcome most people in.

This kitchen's menu was limited to the basic - beans, lentils and rice. While I never ate there, there were reports that the beans and lentils were undercooked and the rice sour. This kitchen, if the core group stays together, and if they can keep track of their equipment, may go through a transition. They will slowly collect more equipment and, through the passing of the Magic Hat and other means, they will be able to purchase both the water pipe and the purification filtering system. As they develop better systems, their capacity to both attract cooks and volunteers and to develop menus that are more complete will improve. At the same time, they may become more restrictive in terms of access to the main kitchen area, and develop higher expectations as to hygiene and volunteer commitment. On the other hand, they may choose to remain as they are, closely linked to the raw energy that is generated by the trade circle, on the fringes of the more structured kitchens while fulfilling an important niche for the Gathering.

Water system

The water for this kitchen came from a spring at least a kilometre away. Large sections of one-inch irrigation pipe and fifty foot rolls of ABS pipe were laid out on the ground and joined together with clamps and in many cases, with duct tape to form a water line to the various kitchens. The water system is a gravity fed one. That is, as long as the source is higher than the output, water flows. The Family uses no pumps or any other mechanical methods of moving the water

throughout the system. It is not a perfect system and there were a number of times when the water pressure was too low to pressurize the filtering system and therefore water had to be boiled. The water system is expensive to set up and maintain. Thousands of feet of piping and hundreds of clamps and other fittings are needed. The filtering systems are complex , some are them are capable of filtering materials and bacteria as small as.001 microns. It also requires hundreds of person hours to find the springs, carry the pipe up the hills, connect the pipes and then on a daily basis to check the systems for breaks and other disruptions. However, the benefits of having water to cook and to wash with, and filtered water to drink cannot be measured.

There have been Gatherings where there was not good water or safe hygiene practices, and thousands of participants developed intestinal problems. Those who have experienced such events are ever vigilant to insure that safe hygiene practices are present in their kitchens and elsewhere. To prevent the spread of disease, cooks and the servers are required to wash their hands with bleach water, and every effort is made so that serving ladles do not touch the individuals' bowls, cups or mugs. At the shitters, there are bottles of a stronger solution of water and bleach for people to sterilize their hands. It is expected that people will wash the bliss ware[61], and to put it on the drying rack for others to use. These safety precautions not only appeared to have been successful as no one was noted getting sick at this kitchen, they are also

[61] Bliss ware is the term used to describe eating utensils and dishes that have been left (or lost) behind for others to use.

an indication of the Family's commitment to sustainable practices and a healthy Family.