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Modern Day Utopia: An Examination of Internal Social Control Among "Rainbow Family"

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MODERN DAY UTOPIA: AN EXAMINATION OF INTERNAL SOCIAL CONTROL
AMONG THE “RAINBOW FAMILY”

MODERN DAY UTOPIA: AN EXAMINATION OF INTERNAL SOCIAL CONTROL
AMONG THE “RAINBOW FAMILY”

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master’s of Art in Sociology

By

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East Central University
Bachelor of Science in Sociology, 2009

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ABSTRACT

This thesis employs ethnographic fieldwork and interviews to examine internal social control, ideological embeddedness, and resistance to mainstream culture and ideology in a utopian, counter-cultural group called The Rainbow Family of Living Light. Combining theoretical perspectives on emotions and re-integrative and dis-integrative shaming with symbolic interaction, I examine the experiences of Rainbow during a national Gathering in the summer of 2010. Through interviews and observations, I illustrate the rituals, organization of camp, stratification based on work, and solidarity building activities, that Rainbow Gatherers create to resist mainstream ideology and culture. Further, I show that they Rainbow Gatherers redefine deviance in significant ways and promote ideological solidarity to achieve integration and membership in their perceived utopian community. Finally, I demonstrate how this group uses elements of internal social control to manage behavior defined by the group as deviant. Suggestions for future research are provided.

This thesis is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council

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I hereby authorize the University of Arkansas to duplicate this thesis when needed for research and/or scholarship.

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Ashleigh McKinzie

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Finally I would like to thank my dear friend, Mama Wanda, for her help in gaining entrée into this group and leading me to other attendees. Also to my interviewees, who allowed me talk to them; this ultimately led to expanding my understanding of the social world of the Rainbow Gathering.

DEDICATION

This is for my late father, Bruce Robinson, who always told me that I could accomplish my dreams. I will forever miss your easy smile, corny wit, and ability to make people laugh. You continuously serve as an inspiration to my work; you sought to make the world a better place and used your occupation as a conduit to do so. May I never lose sight of that goal in my own work.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Some say we are the largest non-organization of non-members in the world. We have no leaders, and no organization...I think it's safe to say we're into intentional community building, non-violence, and alternative lifestyles. We also think Peace and Love are a great thing, and there isn't enough of it in the world. www.welcomehome.org ("Unofficial" website of the Rainbow Gathering)

The Rainbow Family of Living Light is a nomadic group of hippies and new age travelers who come together once or more a year to gather for camping, drumming circles, music, dance, communal living and collective prayer for peace. Thousands travel to what is called the "Rainbow Gathering" each year. They meet on national forest land, setting up camps of various names with alternative activities such as meditation, yoga, emotional healing, instrument making, arts and crafts and other new age workshops.

Smaller groups meet at regional meetings at various times throughout the year. The stated purpose is the same for the larger Gatherings which are estimated to include as many as 25,000 men, women and children. According to Niman (1997), decisions regarding where to meet are made by the loosely organized Rainbow Council, which consists of anybody or anyone who wants to come. Though the journey to arrive at a Gathering is seen by some as a scavenger hunt, websites associated with the Rainbow post where the event is located and opening the invitation to anyone.ⁱ The Gathering takes place the week of Independence Day. However, it is reported that some come many months earlier to the event to set up kitchens, dig latrines ("shitters"), and set up camp security and other amenities.ⁱⁱ The culmination of the event is the morning of the Fourth of July, during which Rainbow gatherers are encouraged to meditate in silence all morning, followed by a period in which the participants hold hands in a large circle and

silently pray, “om”, and meditate for peace. The silence is broken when a large group of children are paraded into the center of the circle, and a celebration follows.

The inspiration for the National Gathering came from another non-commercial festival that took place in Oregon in 1970, the Vortex Festival.ⁱⁱⁱ Although if you ask some Rainbows, they will tell you that the Rainbow of Light has always been, therefore there really was not a starting point (Niman 1997). However, many anti-war protestors, “back to the land hippies” and peace movement participants who attended the Vortex festival agreed upon the need for a consistent Gathering. Rainbow founders met at this festival and began to develop the idea for what they envisioned the future Rainbow Gathering to be. Although there were no “official” plans for a second Gathering, the success of the Gathering in 1972 inspired continued Gatherings and 2010 marks the Gathering’s 38th year.

Young and old, upper and lower class, people of various race and ethnicity attend the “Gathering” which is surprisingly well organized for group that prides itself on “disorganization,” as illustrated in the following website article that reads:

There are no rules of conduct for participation in the Rainbow Gathering. There are several suggested safety and practical guidelines (e.g. sanitation guidelines), but they only address the logistics of a large group camping the woods, and are only the minimum guidelines necessary to make the Gathering safe for all participants. Most of the guidelines are not written down but are passed on by word of mouth.^{iv}

This article also states that the few guidelines that are “written down by consensus of the The Gathering Council” are not enforced. Rather, there is “no official mechanism or policy of enforcement if individuals refuse to comply with the guidelines.” Needless to say, the pronouncement of “no rules of conduct” has led to a public image problem for

Rainbow Gatherers. Media, law enforcement, and members of local communities meet the Gatherers with trepidation, and have come to label Rainbow gatherers as marginal members of society who are at best, deviant in their lifestyles and at worst, criminal (Niman 1997). The stated absence of social control for such a large Gathering invites sociological investigation and raises the question: how can an alternative Gathering of such a massive number of people exist for 38 years in the absence of internal social control?

A. Statement of the Problem

Drawing upon participant observation and in-depth interviews, I examine the social world of the Rainbow community, especially the construction and understanding of social control and deviance. Specifically, I want to understand how Rainbow events are constructed so as to inhibit or facilitate various forms of behavior. The research questions that guide this study are:

- 1) What do Rainbow Gatherers define as appropriate or deviant behavior?
- 2) What, if any, internal social control mechanisms are present at the National Rainbow Gathering?

To address these questions, I interviewed eleven attendees (“elders” as described by associated websites and newer attendees of the Gathering). These interviews were combined with participant observation research conducted at the National Gathering, in July of 2010, which took place in the Allegheny National Forest.

B. Study Significance

Although there has been much research on alternative communities (Ferrell 2006; Neumann 1993), communes (Amster 2003; Miller 1985; Westhues 1972), and counter-

culture groups (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2008; Goodman and Tavory 2009; Halnon 2006; Hunt 2008; Moore 2007), research on the internal mechanisms of social control in alternative communities is scarce (for exceptions see Amster 2003 and Niman 1997). Currently, there are few sociological works that focus specifically on Rainbow Gatherings. My intended purpose for this study is to contribute to a sociological understanding of internal social control in temporary “intentional communities.” Finally, a deeper understanding of the internal social control of the Rainbow Family should inform those interested in the study of social control and deviance of other alternative communities.

In chapter two, I review previous works and introduce the theoretical orientation that will guide this study. Chapter three includes an overview of data collection process. In chapter four I provide the findings from the interviews and observation and a summary of the analysis. Finally, chapter five provides a discussion and conclusion along with limitations and suggestions for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Framework

This section focuses upon both theoretical and empirical works of identity and deviant subcultures (counter-cultures). Insights from these studies guide my understanding of the social world of a Rainbow Gathering. I begin with an examination of the sociological tradition of symbolic interaction as a general theory, Cooley's understanding of the "looking glass self," and shame. Next, I examine theories of shame (Scheff and Retzinger 1991 and Shot 1979) and shaming (Braithwaite and Makkai 1994). Finally, I provide a review of previous works surrounding Rainbow Gatherings or similar alternative groups.

B. Symbolic Interaction

In all of our daily interactions, we carry with us a social identity. This identity mirrors who we are in general and who we are in a particular situation (Hewitt 2007). This understanding developed from the tradition of symbolic interaction. George Herbert Mead (1938), Charles Cooley ([1902] 1964), and Herbert Blumer (1969) all contributed to the theory of symbolic interaction which is premised on the understanding that our identities are only possible through social interaction with the use of symbols or gestures in mutual communication and the ability to role play (Mead 1938). It is through interaction with the "generalized other" (Mead 1938) and our "looking glass self" (Cooley 1902) that we form these identities and learn to perceive how we are judged, either confirming or challenging our identities. According to Blumer (1969), the three basic tenets of symbolic interaction are as follows: First, we act reflexively towards objects grounded in the meaning that those objects have. Second, the meaning of objects is achieved through interaction with others. Third, this meaning of an object is not

inherent in the object itself nor inherent only through interactions. This meaning is only found in the interpretation process. That is, we communicate with ourselves based on the interactions that we have with other people (p. 2-5).

Symbolic interaction informs my study because it lends itself to a sociological observation of everyday interactions in order to reveal how identities are maintained, created, or undone. Rainbow gatherers are especially aware of their marginalized public image and may interact in ways that negotiate their perceived “spoiled” identities (Goffman 1963). This raises the question of internal social control as Rainbow gatherers negotiate their “discreditable” image (Goffman 1963). But how do members of an organization that boasts being the “largest non-member organization in the world” with no rules interact in such a way as to guide its members toward a shared identity of “Rainbow Gatherer,” absent of rules of conduct? This leads to an examination of internal social control which draws upon theories of shaming that I will argue, influence the actions of Rainbow Gatherers.

C. Shame and Shaming

Cooley, who is associated with symbolic interaction, is also a forerunner of the sociological theory of shaming. One of the first to theorize about this, Cooley ([1902] 1964) explains that three things occur when we view our “looking glass self.” First, we imagine ourselves as others see us. Second, we perceive a type of assessment from those with whom we interact. Finally, this perceived assessment results in certain emotions that an individual experiences. These feelings or emotions, Cooley argues, are pride and shame. Both have significant effect on internal social control. If an individual realizes that an act (of any kind) goes against “public consciousness,” then there is the potential

for feeling shame. Conversely, when a person does something that facilitates a positive reaction, pride is generated and social bonds are solidified. According to Cooley, this foundation of social control is generated as people view themselves through the “looking glass self” and through interactions, they experience feelings of pride and shame (Turner and Stets 2005:107).

Individuals continually self-monitor their feelings. Even in times when we are alone, we are still vulnerable to the perception of others and their positive or negative evaluation. This monitoring of ourselves is “virtually continuous” (Turner and Stets 2005:154). Scheff and Retzinger (1991) take this one step further as it relates to recognized shame and pride. Pride is a social emotion that results in intact bonds with others. Shame, however, threatens the bond. Recognized shame is shame that is acknowledged and dealt with, and thus can repair social bonds and increase integration into community. Scheff (1988) then describes unrecognized shame and the negative repercussions that come with it. For example, when shame is unacknowledged or suppressed it may result in anger and violence which weakens social integration.

For example when referencing Shot’s (1979) affect control theory, Turner and Stets (2005) add, “Social control is thus self-control because negative emotions push individuals to change their behaviors” (p. 108). Ahmed et al (2001) confirm this in their discussion of “imagined gossip” and shaming as a general deterrent. Exposure to shaming of real or imagined wrong, allows us to think, “I would hate that to happen to me” (p. 31). Shame provides motivation to self-monitor and comply with social expectations. Shot (1979) also focuses on shame as an internalized emotion and posits that social control is impossible in the absence of internalized shame (guilt, shame, and

embarrassment). On the other hand, Braithwaite (1989) identifies shaming as an activity that can be applied in various ways as a mechanism of external social control. Thus, while Shot focuses upon the internalization of shame, Braithwaite examines its application from external forces.

Braithwaite provides an alternative by focusing on society's shaming response to deviance and whether those responses are effective. Braithwaite theorizes that the ways most societies shame deviants is harmful and does not lead to repaired social bonds. Braithwaite uses shame and different types of shaming as his core concepts. He posits that shaming exists on a continuum. At one end of the continuum there is re-integrative shaming wherein an individual experiences a type of "positive shaming" and is re-integrated into the community with stronger social bonds and solidarity. At the other end is disintegrative shaming that result in stigmatization. Stigmatization can perhaps be viewed as the way we traditionally deal with deviance (Braithwaite and Makkai 1994). Braithwaite finds this stigmatization harmful because it explicitly labels the offender as deviant and constructs a "barrier" between the larger group and the so called deviant. Thus, the offender is less likely to be integrated and more likely to involve themselves in a criminal "career" (Turner and Stets 2005:112).

Re-integrative shaming includes shaming while upholding respect for the individual. Degradation ceremonies in which the individual is encouraged to apologize withdraw from labeling the person as deviant and instead, label the act as deviant. This allows the person to maintain a status of non-deviant. An example of a ceremony that permitted the individual to apologize is the "Truth and Reconciliation" process employed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa. In this process, individuals who were

labeled wrong doers were encouraged to stand before those that they had offended and apologize (Krog 1998). The idea of separating a person from the master status of deviant can be seen in the statement, “the act you committed is deviant, but you are a member of this community” (Turner and Stets 2005). Conversely, disintegrative shaming results in stigmatization and labeling the person as deviant. This creates a master status of deviant (Braithwaite and Makkai 1994).

In more recent work by Ahmed et al. (2001) and Turner and Stets (2005) several key concepts dealing with re-integrative shaming are mentioned. Shame by definition is a secondary emotion (Scheff 1979) that humans feel when they do not live up to social expectations. Shame can occur when we know we should conduct ourselves in a certain way and violate that social expectation. At what point and in what manner the individual feels the shame is informed by the type of shaming that occurs. For example, according to Ahmed et al (2001), internalized shame is most effective because it is self-motivating. It is the most fundamental shame an individual feels as soon as the (deviant) act is committed. It is perhaps the most basic way that shame is conveyed. A child steals a cookie from a cookie jar and immediately feels the socially constructed emotion that he or she learned from past experiences. The child knows that his or her guardian will be disappointed and internalizes that emotion. In other words, simply the idea of having one’s reputation soiled can serve as a deterrent for some activities.

Direct confrontation is considered the least effective way of shaming because with direct confrontation comes the possibility of stigmatization. Stigmatization is undesirable because it is disintegrative. Labeling the person as deviant decreases the likeliness that he will re-integrated into the society. However, the Braithwaite and

Makkai (1994) claim that stigmatization can be lessened with positive affect (e.g., a hug or a handshake). Beyond that, shaming is more effective when it is done for the purpose of social bonds. For example, shame that is imposed by someone within one's own group is said to be more effective than shame imposed by strangers.

In this section I have provided a theoretical overview that informs my observations of social interaction at a Rainbow Gathering. In addition, during interviews with Rainbow gatherers I find that shaming occurs often and is revealed in the on-going interactions and activities at the Gathering. Combined, these theories illustrate that it may be plausible that internal social control is maintained through an affective model of shaming. This may allow members to maintain their belief that they are a Gathering of freely autonomous individuals who purportedly gather, in part, to demonstrate their opposition to a mainstream culture that is bound by rules. Shaming may inform how Rainbow gatherers negotiate the paradox of group life and their claims of individualism. I turn next to empirical works of similar alternative communities.

D. Empirical Works: Deviance, Solidarity and Social Control in Alternative Subcultures

Unfortunately, there is scarce literature on internal social control within marginalized groups such as Rainbow gatherers but research is available on what constitutes solidarity in similar groups. In this section, I review six studies relevant to my topic. I first review two ethnographic studies that examine deviance in alternative communities (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2008; Hunt 2008). Next, I summarize two ethnographic studies that focus on sub-culture as a form of resistance (Halnon 2006;

Moore 2007). Finally, I review two ethnographic studies that focus on the Rainbow Family (Goodman and Tavory 2009; Niman 1997).

Hunt's (2008) study of "Jamband" culture reveals that music fans who travel to live music concerts such as the Grateful Dead, constitute a subculture that shares an "ideological embeddedness and behavioral-relational involvement" (p. 359). Hunt defines ideological embeddedness as the respondents' self-rated likeness with five fictional characters (leaf, rain, moon, river, and star) that symbolize diverse ranks of embeddedness within this subculture. The respondents were asked to identify with the characters on a scale of one to seven. Hunt defines behavioral-relationship involvement as the number of shows (concerts) the respondent attends and the number of roles (deadhead, drinker, drug user, environmentalist, festie, hippie, rainbow person, Rastafarian, raver, stoner, tourrat, vendor, and wharfrat) they associate themselves with in this subculture. Hunt hypothesized that:

Both ideological embeddedness and behavioral-relational involvement will be related positively to the evaluation of sub-cultural roles and negatively to the evaluation and potency of four authority roles (capitalist, nark, police officer, venue security officer. (P. 362)

Hunt's findings reveal that Jamband listeners re-affirm other qualitative sub-cultural studies. Her work also shows that members of deviant subcultures are involved at differing levels based upon the definition of social concepts within that group (p. 373). For example, the definition of a social concept for a novice member of a subculture is not the same for an aged member of a subculture, thus affecting their level of involvement and influencing their view of sub-cultural roles. In addition, Hunt found that members of the Jamband subculture shared a negative view of outside authority, such as police and

security guards and had a positive view of otherwise deviant roles within this subculture (e.g., pothead, or rainbow person).

Hunt's findings suggest that members of this subculture see themselves in opposition to mainstream society that allows them to rate members of their deviant subculture positively, measured by ideological embeddedness and behavioral relational involvement. It is apparent, that the Jamband members encompass other groups like Rainbows and members of the Grateful Dead. This within group study informs my research by showing two things. First, that these subcultural groups do have an oppositional stance toward authority figures. Second, this subculture also prides itself on egalitarianism and equality (similar to the "believed" power structure of the Rainbows) found in the roots of this counter cultural movement.

Anderson and Kavanaugh (2008:182) focus on drug use within the rave subculture and Electronic Dance Music (EDM) scene which they define as a "peripheral cultural collective." Anderson and Kavanaugh argued that drug use was one, but not the only source of solidarity within this community of young people. The authors found that drug use did indeed have an impact on the feelings of solidarity between the ravers. However, the results were much more complex. For example, recreational drug use altered the event, allowing rave attendees to participate for longer periods of time. Shared pleasurable experiences of drug use provided solidarity, both during the rave event, and beyond. Friendships that emerged while on drugs extended outside the event itself into other avenues of life. .

Anderson and Kavanaugh's study is relevant to my study in two ways. First, recreational drug use of substances, such as LSD and psychedelic mushrooms, occur at

Rainbow Gatherings. It could be that Rainbow Gatherers share similar experiences while on drugs that socialize them into the group. Second, the solidarity that is formed while on drugs informs shared meanings that emerge such as perspective toward social control within the Gathering, definitions of what constitutes a “drainbow” (a negative term used among Rainbow Gatherers to describe someone that does not work), and larger attitudes toward authority both within and outside the subculture.

Other research that focuses upon alternative subcultures as a form of resistance to the mainstream culture include Halnon’s (2006) ethnography of the heavy metal music scene as a utopian expression of humanity and Moore’s (2007) examination of punk music. Halnon’s research, reveals that although many in mainstream culture view heavy metal music as a form of mutiny against the political agenda of the day, heavy metal music can also be seen as a utopian expression of humanity and a cultural text of egalitarianism. Halnon employed a combination of four years of ethnographic research at heavy metal concerts, interviews with concert goers, the majority of whom were white males (teens to twenties), finding that “heavy metal carnival is a proto-utopian politics of resistance against an alienating society of spectacle and nothingness, practiced in liminal space that gave pause to everyday life” (p. 36). Accordingly, heavy metal concerts provide attendees with a sense of renewal. For example, one attendee described the feeling of the festival as a positive free feeling, stating nothing could “piss him off” (p. 43). Halnon’s findings inform my observations as the Gathering proves to be similar, in that the Rainbow Gatherers perceive their Gathering as distinctly utopian. Niman (1997) calls these efforts a resistance to “Babylon.” This is a biblical reference to the worldly

city of Babylon, adopted by the Rastafarians to describe oppressive, mainstream, and white society, and also adopted by the Rainbows to describe mainstream culture.

Resistance through music scenes and subcultures is also found in Moore's (2007) study of the punk rock scene in California from 1995 through 1998. Moore describes punk music as having a "do-it-yourself" ethic. This implies that while other forms of music are produced through webs of hierarchy and corporation, punk is produced through self-made record labels, spreading information by word of mouth, and self-marketing. Moore finds that punk is indeed a form of cultural production that allows its members to resist corporate capitalist culture. According to Moore, the punk music scene provides participants with the opportunity to express resistance while forming communities of solidarity. In addition this study found that production of culture still plays an important role in "meaningful practice and social struggle, despite the oligarchy of the multinational media conglomerates" (p. 469).

Two studies have been conducted on Rainbow Gatherings. First, Niman's (1997) book, *People of the Rainbow: A Nomadic Utopia*, describes Rainbow Gatherings as a traveling community that has experienced a longevity of utopia without the prerequisite conditions typically found (e.g., sectarian memberships, charismatic leaders, and ideological conversion). Niman describes the Rainbow community as a combination of a variety of alternative lifestyles, including those mentioned above. In addition, Niman attributes the Rainbow Family's success to its non-sectarian "attempts to attract a diversified multicultural membership" (p. 207). Niman challenges the marginalization of Rainbow people, focusing upon land stewardship, conservation, and community relations. Niman claims that Rainbows are especially sensitive to their carbon footprint,

leaving no trace of having been there and that the national Gatherings have a significant positive impact on the rural communities through commerce and interaction with locals. He describes Rainbows as a group of hard workers who are dedicated to seeing their utopian vision come to fruition. They involve themselves in work at kitchens, hauling firewood, seed camp, and clean-up after Gatherings. Niman describes a long list of pre-Gathering activities that must be accomplished for a Gathering of this size to be successful.

Similar to Anderson and Kavanaugh (2008) and Hunt (2008), Niman explores the use of alcohol and illegal substances at Gatherings and its influence upon the Rainbow community. Niman implies some degree of social control when he distinguishes between marijuana and LSD use and “harder” drugs, indicating there is a shared understanding among the Rainbow family of what is allowable and is not. For example, alcohol use is seen as problematic and disruptive of an otherwise utopian atmosphere. Niman acknowledges that “A Camp” (a camp that is located on the periphery where alcohol use is prevalent) may serve as a buffer or a holding area for those who attend simply for recreational drug and alcohol use.

Niman describes orientations to authority among Rainbow gatherers similar to that of Hanlon (2006) and Moore (2007). For example, when officials enter the area, Rainbow camps will announce their arrival to other campers in order to caution others that officials are on the premise to warn the other gatherers to put away their drugs. Other forms of resistance to authority are exemplified by the use of screaming, “I love you!” over and over again to authority figures and forming “om” circles around police and

forest service personnel as to deter them from coming into the Gathering and making their rounds.

Niman attributes media coverage to the deviant labeling of Rainbow gatherers, describing intermittent abuse by authorities. While the Rainbow Family resists external social control and labeling by outsiders, Niman identifies internal labeling of “rainbows,” those who do not contribute to the communal lifestyle. “Rainbows” who do not work, Niman argues, “miss the point of the Gathering” (p. 90). However, Niman does not provide an explanation of how this philosophy is disseminated among gatherers. Niman defends the Rainbow community by concluding that the success of this group is threatening to government “because it is a model of true participatory democracy, government by the people” (p. 214). Niman’s work, while relevant to my research, is uncritical and obscures the inherent contradictions of this unique non-member organization, instead opting for an over simplified description of Rainbow Gathering as that of a large group of like-minded individuals who come to pray for world peace.

A second study of Rainbow Gatherers was conducted by Goodman and Tavory (2009). Specifically, this work focused upon a Rainbow Gathering in Israel and examined the “social situations in which solidarity and individuality are formed, and the ways in which their multiple uses frame their meanings.” (p. 262). The overall goal of this work was to map out the situations in which communal solidarity and individuality could both be practiced. They found that there was a relationship between creating solidarity within the Rainbow community whilst displaying individuality.

The Rainbow Family in Israel differs slightly than their North American counterparts. They are focused more on Neo Pagan and New Age spiritualities which has

its beginnings in the 1980's (for Israelis). Similar to Niman, Goodman and Tavory found within this group, a celebration of self as well as a deeply rooted tradition in communal living. In addition, they found that the Israel Rainbows gatherers were equally entrenched in the ideology against "Babylon" and their identity irreconcilably opposite to mainstream society. Their findings suggest that Rainbows experience a "solidarization of the individual," meaning that through activities within the group such as the "talking circle," individuals were able to express themselves (p. 278). In addition, they found that most gatherers defined themselves as a "collection of individuals." This study informs my understanding of the shared philosophy found at the Gathering but as I demonstrate, solidarity is achieved not just through the encouragement of individual expression but by some degree of maintenance (i.e., internal social control) on the part of Gatherers.

In this chapter I have identified my theoretical framework that guides this study, that is, a symbolic interactionist informed examination of shame. I also have reviewed a collection of studies on alternative communities pointing to the social cohesion and deviance that is found within the groups. As the above studies indicate, alternative communities and subcultures arise out of mainstream society for a variety of reasons. Some are nomadic, e.g. Deadheads and Rainbow Gatherers, while others involve a local scene, as exemplified by Moore and the local punk rock scene. Interestingly, these studies indicate that deviance becomes a vehicle for social cohesion in alternative groups and resistance to mainstream culture. These examples point to alternative communities rising out of a need for a symbolic substitute to mainstream society. Interestingly, what constitutes deviance within alternative communities can be very different than that found in mainstream society. A closer examination of what constitutes appropriate or deviant

behavior among Rainbow Gatherers is needed in order to understand the longevity of such a group. My study builds on these works to provide further insight of alternative communities, examining not only their shared philosophy but the actual activities that exist to maintain social order and the experienced solidarity.

III. SETTING AND METHODS

A. Epistemological Stance

In order to answer my research questions, “What do Rainbow Gatherers define as appropriate or deviant behavior?” and “What, if any, internal social control mechanisms are present at the National Rainbow Gathering?” I employed the use of a qualitative research design. I chose in-depth and conversation style interviews and observations for studying this subculture because of the rich empirical data that can be accessed using this method (Flick 1992). Intensive interviewing implements the use of open-ended questions and attention to “ordinary conversation.” This provides the researcher with “rich, detailed material that can be used in qualitative analysis” (Anderson, et. al 2006:17). This in-depth approach allows the researcher to understand *many* aspects of a social world that cannot be accessed through surveys or self-administered questionnaires. It permits a detailed account of the social world of a Rainbow Gathering and a tool for understanding the social control that is utilized. Combining intensive interviews and ethnographic observation is a vital tool for interpretation of a social world.

B. Background for the Study

Anderson, Lofland, Lofland, and Snow (2006) describe “starting where you are” as a helpful methodological approach to any study. This requires two things: “an intellectual curiosity about a topic and access to settings and people from which one may collect appropriate data” (p. 9). I chose this study based upon my own interest in alternative communities and ideologies. I am the daughter of a Pentecostal minister. Growing up in a traditional Christian home where spirituality and ideology were made

explicit, I was exposed to a protestant religious approach, but it was not one that emphasized egalitarian principles.

In the summer of 2004 I attended a Phish concert with a friend and found it to be an egalitarian atmosphere. For example, as we walked through the “lot” (an area where vendors sell beer, tie-dyes, and all sorts of memorabilia associated with this group) people kept asking me if I was a part of the “family.” “Are you family? Are you Rainbow?” I inquired of my friend what this was all about. She informed me that “Rainbows” were a marginal group of the new age hippie movement and that they come together every year and camp on national forest land to pray for peace. The implied message was that this group was both spiritual and egalitarian, a very different view from what I had been exposed to growing up. After I began my graduate work in sociology, I chose to study this group and received permission to conduct this study in December of 2009 by the University of Arkansas, Institutional Review Board.

Because the Rainbow is open to anyone that wishes to participate, a “gatekeeper” is not necessarily an issue for my research. However, entry into the social world was aided by a personal friend who has been going to the Gatherings since after their inception in 1972. She agreed to be a key informant and provided insight and other contacts for me to interview. She also served as a partial gatekeeper by putting others who had been hesitant to be interviewed at ease and locating those who would have been hard to access without introduction. She provided helpful advice as I prepared to attend the Gathering in 2010 where I immersed myself in the world of the Gathering through ethnographic observation. My role as a researcher was only disclosed during interviews. However, it would have been possible to “pass” as a newbie. Through Wanda, I was able

to participate as a more seasoned gatherer. Terms and vocabularies exclusive to Rainbow were made known to me before I attended. For example, in Rainbow-land, “lovejoy” is sex, “zuzu” is treat, “ticket” is toilet paper, “magic hat” is money collection, and “six up” is a cop. Knowing terms such as this provided some insider status for my role as researcher

C. Sample

The interview sample is purposive and included snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is simply inquiring of an individual that possesses certain qualities and characteristics relevant to the research to list or name other people they know that have experience in the area of the research (Anderson et al. 2006:43). However, the sample was also limited to those who have attended a Gathering within the past two years. I chose both “elders” of the Rainbow Family and those new to the Rainbow Gatherings in order to capture the socialization of Rainbow Gatherers and their knowledge of internal social control. The male to female ratio was approximately even. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed for coding purposes. All interviewees were provided confidentiality and given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym prior to the interview (see appendix A for informed consent).

Anderson et al (2006) point to the combination of participant observation and intensive interviewing as essential components in analyzing social settings in qualitative research. Further this project uses techniques of triangulation described by Guba and Lincoln (1985), in which I use multiple methods and multiple sources to ensure that my “findings and interpretations will be found credible” (p. 305). Combining observation

with interviews is one way to achieve this but drawing from supplementary data, such as websites and produced materials also assist in strengthening credibility.

The venue for participant observation was located in the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania. The camping area was approximately five miles by five miles in area. There were estimated to be as many as 20,000 gatherers in attendance. As we were coming into the area (which has no markers—we had some of the locals in the area lead us in to the site), we noticed the heavy police force. There were federal officers, local officials, and Forest Service Personnel. I attended the Gathering for eight days, in July of 2010, collecting fieldnotes and interviews, resulting in 72 hours of observation and 80 pages of fieldnotes. The location was not announced until two weeks prior. By the time I attended, I had conducted six interviews with attendees. I was an “unknown observer” (Adler and Adler 1994) during the Gathering, taking an active role in participation through camp kitchens, workshops, and observing the daily activities of attendees. I took jottings in the field but expanded my fieldnotes each evening when I returned to camp. My role as a researcher was only disclosed during interviews.

Finally, supplementary data for my study includes internet website content hand-outs supplied by interviewees. YouTube videos posted by attendees were perused for photos and perspectives of the Gathering from those who attend. Blog sites were examined as well as the “unofficial” Rainbow webpage. In addition, I obtained the “Rap 107 and 701,” which is the list of “rules” that one is expected to adhere to while at the no rules Gathering. These supplemental sources of data added to my understanding of the normative stance of those who attend the annual Gathering.

Data Analysis

Fieldnotes and interviews were transcribed and analyzed using a grounded theory coding approach (Charmaz 2006). According to Charmaz, grounded theory “generates the bones of your analysis” and this allows the researcher to “define what is happening and grapple with what it means” (p. 45-46). I applied initial coding which allows the researcher to see where the cracks exist in the data and assess the fit of the data to my research question (Charmaz 2006). In the focused coding phase, I categorized themes. Some of the themes I found did include apriori codes such as reintegrative and disintegrative shame and ideological embeddedness informed by my readings. Other themes that arose from the data included categories such as nostalgia, spiritual elements, evidence of paradoxes among gatherers, and an underdog mentality.

While I did not provide “member checks” by having Rainbow Gatherers read my work, I did employ the “peer debriefing” technique, suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1984). In order to achieve this, my thesis supervisor read fieldnotes and my transcribed interviews to both challenge and come to agreement over codes and themes. This approach assists in creating greater validity of findings. Finally, I engaged in memo writing, which Charmaz describes as “the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers...memo-writing constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process” (p. 72). I used the memoing technique to further explain concepts, terms, and definitions. For example, after I coded for ideological embeddedness, I then described what mechanisms, phenomena, and interactions for example, promote and maintain ideological embeddedness in the Rainbow Family. I also used memo writing as a way to think about some of the links in my findings. This documents spontaneous

ideas, informed by both theory and data, and served as a liaison between coding and the actual construction of my findings.

IV. FINDINGS

As with all ethnographies, the difficulty of description and organization is choosing what to leave in and what to leave out. There is much more to the “Rainbow Gathering” than will be presented here. For the sake of organization, the findings below are presented as three thematic categories. Each section will highlight the paradox of “Rainbow” subculture. These include: 1) Organization of a Non-Organization; 2) Deviance Redefined, and 3) Shared Ideological Resistance.

In the first section, Organization of a Non-organization, I describe the location, organization of the camps and the rituals and activities that are found at the Gathering. Included in this section is a description of the various rules of conduct that are available and in some cases, imposed upon campers at the Gathering. This section will also reveal the social hierarchy primarily based on the importance of working among Rainbow gatherers. Combined, these provide evidence of an, albeit loosely defined organization.

Deviance Redefined will illustrate the techniques of internal social control found at the Gathering, reflecting the moral judgments made toward certain groups or individuals who violate the rules of the Gathering. Also revealed in this section is how activities that are deemed deviant in mainstream culture are accepted among Rainbow gatherers. Deviance is redefined and a new vocabulary for deviance is made available. For example, alcohol use is frowned upon but opiates and hallucinogens are condoned. Here, I will describe both the marginalization and shaming that occurs, along with a brief auto-ethnographic discussion of internalized shame to reveal internalization of social control.

Shared Ideological Resistance draws upon a variety of gatherers' perspectives that reflect ideological embeddedness and solidarity among campers, e.g., the importance of work, a shared wish for world peace, staunch anti-consumerism, various types of spirituality, and environmentalism. I will also describe the somewhat combative solidarity and resistance to external social control agents and traditional authority figures (e.g., police).

A. Organization of a Non-Organization

It is actually unorganized organization. Everyone just comes in and flops their stuff down and that is where it is. There is not like race for the best thing or whatever, those people, I mean it is called a Gathering of Tribes, so people are in their own little tribal groups travelling together. (Interview, Mama Horse, December, 2009)

Well, they say it is like unorganized organization. And there is not supposed to be like leaders, things are decided by majority rule, kind of, I mean that is the idea sort of. But there are people though, that are very influential, you know? (Interview, Nasaj, November, 2009)

In July of 2010, my travel companions and I made a twenty hour car drive across the United States to the Alleghany National Forest in northeast Pennsylvania.^v The location of the Gathering is not announced definitively until approximately one month before the Gathering. We knew the general direction, and we set out on what might be called a “treasure hunt.” Luckily, we stopped at a small gas station in northern Pennsylvania to get some water and use the restroom. We were heading out the door and I noticed that the shelves were completely bare. I knew that the Gatherings could bring in tens of thousands of participants, so I asked the gas station attendant if the Gathering was close. He informed me that we were only about twenty miles from the Gathering, and we needed to take a right on the road adjacent to the gas station.

We drove approximately five miles on dirt and gravel roads. After cresting the top of a hill we came to what we thought was the “Welcome Home” entrance area with information but realized after looking at the scene it was “A” Camp (Alcohol Camp). Alcohol bottles littered the area and men and women approached our car immediately, asking for money. We drove a few miles further and found the “Welcome Home” area and parked. The rest of the trip would be on foot, as the main camping was in the valley below. We loaded as much as we could carry on our backs and made our descent to the heart of the National Forest. The trails to the main camping areas were nothing short of dangerous, especially with a full load on our backs. After hiking, two miles going almost directly downhill, we decided on “A” campsite and started to organize our belongings. Our camp would become our home for the next seven days.

When I woke up the first morning, I felt I had been transported to another time and place. Tents replaced homes, a mountain stream replaced plumbing, and internet and TV entertainment were replaced by a host of activities and drumming. The main hub of the Gathering of more than 20,000 people is located in a large open meadow and is called, “Main Meadow” or “Main Circle.” This is the site where a mass feeding occurs twice a day and it is where the peace prayer takes place on the Fourth of July. It is also the location for the main drum and chant circles, a large watering station, and information. From Main Circle, camps and kitchens spread out for miles with little rhyme or reason.

Throughout the Gathering a vast array of diverse people are visible. “Main Meadow” or “Main Circle” consists of concentric circles from the center of the meadow that stretch all the way to where the grass becomes tall again. It is the main hub for

hanging out and talking. It appears to be the place that attendees showcase their individual differences. For example, many people fly flags, dance, play music, hula hoop, and drum. The image that comes to mind is that of a dirty hippie fashion show. Gatherers display all sorts of clothes, exquisite scarves and head wraps, jackets, tights, hats, and buttons, nudity, and nipple pasties. Some wear clown costumes. Some are cross dressers. Others wear punk or “Gothic” style dress with black attire and spiked hair. Race and ethnicity are also diverse. As I look through the crowds it appears that approximately seventy percent of attendees are white. Gatherers smoke tobacco and marijuana. Different “kitchens” bring down their food in huge vats and soup pots. To get served, gatherers hold out their plates (also known as “bliss”) and servers bring the food or sometimes individuals form haphazard lines for being served.

Walking toward the main meadow, I observe a variety of themed camps, such as yoga workshop camps that instruct participants how to do yoga. Another camp, tucked in the woods on the other side of Main Meadow, “Tea Time,” is known for serving tea twenty-four hours a day. They have many varieties of tea, from Georgia Peach to spiced chai. One particularly interesting camp is known for its “challenging monogamy” theme. Religious camps, such as “Jesus Kitchen,” provide campers with prayer meetings and church services. “Clean camps” (those dedicated to sobriety) provide refuge for those who want to come for spiritual or political reasons but don’t want to participate in drug use. Some camps are also designated specifically according to sexual orientation. For example, there is a camp exclusively for gay men and another for lesbians.

Some campsites are far more elaborate than others. For example, some use downed limbs for shelves and countertops, and many of the kitchens have intricate mud

ovens. Campers use rocks from the river, stack them, make the frame for the structure, use mud to seal the oven, and then use hollow sticks to blow into the oven to feed the fire. The kitchens are separated from their serving areas by elaborate wooden hinge systems and gates. Some camp kitchens have what appear to be entire cafes set up in the pine trees in the woods. Others are more reminiscent of typical primitive camping, such as our camp which included two tents, a tarp that covered each tent, a fire pit, and water jugs to douse the fire. We were surrounded by thick woods and downed mulch. The smells that permeate the air both night and day are a combination of human waste, food, body odor, campfire, essential oils and marijuana. The beating of congas and djembes can be heard throughout the meadow and the woods both day and night.

B. Rituals

The most prevalent activities during the Gathering are music, rituals, and workshops. Although the music is overwhelmingly a primitive type, we did run across a rag tag bluegrass band, several walking musicians strumming guitars, a variety of drumming instruments, chanting, and singing. The deep base sounds of the drumming circles reverberate throughout the forest and can be overpowering. One specific kitchen is designated a “drum free” area, as to allow the natural sounds of the acoustic instruments to carry. Walking to Main Meadow (located approximately one and one half football fields from my tent), I would often come upon as many as fifty drummers in a circle, as the following image illustrates.^{vi}



A stage is located on one of the far sides of the Gathering that is called the “G-Funk” or “Granola Funk Stage.” This stage showcases singer-songwriter night, the Gong Show, and talent night although most of the performances are various types of drumming.^{vii} According to interviewees this stage is decorated from exclusively downed materials from the woods. One year the G-Funk stage was constructed to look like a pirate ship. This year, it is a dragon; its mouth, the performing area, and its eyes made from disco balls.

The rituals can range from staged weddings to themed activities that take place from year to year. The peace prayer is the main ritual. As we woke up the morning of the Fourth of July, there was not complete silence, but more of a low murmur. The only sounds were that of people waking and making preparations for the day. Occasionally someone would stop and quietly ask for directions or information. My companions and I tidied up camp and packed away the last few things for the day. Not sure when the prayer circle would begin, I asked our neighbor if anything was happening in the

meadow. “It is happening right now,” he explains, adding “you should get down there.” We finished securing camp and headed to Main Meadow.

People form circles around the center of the meadow in much the same way as they do during the twice-daily mass feeding. The only difference is everyone is standing and most are holding hands. A few appear to be meditating by themselves, but for the most part, everyone has linked hands. I stand to the sidelines to take it all in. Some have their hands raised into the air. Others have their hands clasped together in front of them as if to pray. Thousands of voices resonate, “oming” in different octaves, melodies, and harmonies. Eventually standing to the sidelines is not an option, as more people link hands. As I look around me, the energetic force of the collective sounds and felt solidarity is palpable. Clean lines appear on faces as tears wash away the dirt of the week. Suddenly a man in the middle of the circled meadow calls out, “Hear oh now, the Hopi prophecy. If we do not heed this warning, we will all die by 2012.” A woman standing ten people away from him begins to cry out, telling the crowd to listen to his divination. A few people behind us shout, “Silence!” An older man, on the opposite side of the circle, calls out, “Speak only if you must, otherwise hold silence to the tradition.” This quiets down the two that were yelling. As the shouting subsides, children and their parents from “Kiddie Village,” a camp for families, begin to parade around the circle and then make their way to the center of the meadow. Approximately 500 are in the procession and children are wearing costumes, such as fairies, superman costumes, and Darth Vader. After the majority of children are in the middle of the circle, a man holds up an infant and shouts, “Our future!” This is followed by thousands of people who erupt

in joyous celebration, clapping, howling and shouting. The following is an image of the July 4th prayer circle.^{viii}



Weddings appear to be another tradition at the Gathering. One evening, while sitting around our campfire, a man and woman come walking toward our campsite. They introduce themselves as having just “got hitched.” “Patches,” is wearing a top hat and tuxedo vest and his new bride, “Stitches,” is wearing what appears to be an old wedding dress. They explain that they have just taken LSD to celebrate their wedding. The couple is accompanied by an entourage of well-wishers. According to several interviews, weddings are a common occurrence at Rainbow Gatherings.

Consumption of LSD (acid), hallucinogenic mushrooms, marijuana and other illicit drugs is a defining characteristic of the Gathering and is not concealed except in the presence of police and the forest rangers. For example, each kitchen sets out “wish lists” that list items the kitchens wants/needs in exchange for feeding the gatherers for free. One wish list read: Creamer, Paint, Ax, Pots and pans, Coffee pot, Tobacco paper,

Marijuana, Cinnamon, Sugar, Pills! Many of the items at the top of wish lists are psychedelic drugs. During interviews and observations, there was also evidence of drug use. This ranged from observations of enlarged pupils to explicit drug reference. I provide a more detailed description of drug use in the next section.

Another especially important ritual is communal meals provided by various “kitchens” as described above. Located in Main Meadow, the feedings occur around ten am and five pm after a large conch is blown to signal campers that the feeding is to begin. Hundreds of hungry campers are served by representatives from kitchens throughout the forest with large metal or wood caldrons containing food. Campers form circles around the food servers and hold up their plate up to receive food as the servers make their way through the crowd. The scene reminds me of a refugee camp, as the following fieldnotes illustrate:

The outstretched hands displayed dirty fingernails, scars, and other signs of road weary travelers. Or perhaps signs of those that just gave into the lifestyle for a week. After looking at the dirt and grime on those gathered to eat dinner, I looked at my own hands and feet. They were completely covered in dirt and grime as well. I thought to myself that we had become integrated. At this point, there was nothing to really set us apart from the others...Everyone just seemed so happy. There were reunions all around. It was not uncommon to hear, “I haven’t seen you since...so good to see you, have you seen so and so?” There were people there playing with their children and their animals. Occasionally you would observe a group of people that were in a reunion with another group of people. They hadn’t seen each other since, “the last time,” and there were tears and hugs and of course the constant, “I love you”. There were people running around with their dogs, people doing yoga in the grass, meditating, singing...occasionally you would pass someone or a band of people playing some bluegrass or the blues on a stringed instrument. (Fieldnotes June/July 2010:105)

In addition, some of the individual kitchens will traditionally host theme nights. One example is “Lovin’ Ovens” Pizza Night. One this evening, the kitchen makes dozens of homemade pizzas and it is said to be some of the “best food” in the Gathering.

“New York” camp’s “Champagne and Bagels brunch” is another favorite. According to Blue, one of my interviewees who is a Lebanese woman in her forties that often dresses in saris and matching pants, this event occurs annually on the Sunday that proceeds the Fourth of July. Many bottles of champagne are carefully brought in and out of the Gathering (as to not have any broken glass), and are served with bagels. Blue brags that this event is so wonderful because they have a variety of bagels, cream chesses, and jellies.

Another daily ritual is “trade circle” and is best described as a bartering system.

Um, Trade Circle can be just about anything, anything, anything...from chocolate bars to hemp necklaces, um peoples’ shoes, tie-dyes, they can just roll out hemp and jewelry and things like that, patchwork clothes, any kind of hippie thing you could think of, and all on the trade system, and uh, I’ve seen people make fatty (cool) trades for a rock they found in the creek, you know? (Interview, Wanda, December 2009)

It appears that the more transient members trade “hippie” things: clothes, jewelry, stones, gadgets, scarves, head wraps, and glass pipes for essential items that are needed for daily survival such as batteries for headlamps, medicine and food. There are the most exquisite handmade jewelry, glass pipes, and clothes that are displayed on the tapestries, tarps, and threadbare blankets. It was not uncommon to see two young people completely naked next to their stuff.



A gatherer with his wares at trade circle^{ix}

During one trade circle, I watch as a middle aged couple try to trade a sweatshirt for money. They had wandered into the Gathering and decide to stay the night but did not bring proper attire for the evening cool. They are insistent that the young man trading the sweatshirt take twenty dollars. He vehemently refuses. The transaction is finally made complete when the couple trades a pack of cigarettes for the sweatshirt. The bartering of wares is another ritual that expresses Rainbow gatherers' resistance to mainstream culture.

Interestingly, this is another way that the paradoxical nature of the group is expressed. There is a strong "no money" rule, and from the above scene the rule is closely followed yet it is also ironic because the items brought for barter were purchased at one time or have been accumulated from trash bins or given as gifts. Several conversations took place regarding purchasing of drugs as well. Some campers questioned whether dealers would not be willing to accept cash for drugs and there were rumors that some in fact, did. Also interesting, at Information^x there is a donation "magic

hat.” Magic Hat is the one instance where money is allowed. It is the Rainbow way of saying “donation” box, and money use is not looked down upon if you make your donation to magic hat.

Free workshops are available to campers that encompass differing ideologies and life styles. Campers can attend workshops on how to do yoga, create sustainable living, establish landed communities (e.g. communes), challenge monogamy (it is the belief of some attendees that monogamy is a Western notion and should be discarded), or learn prayer and meditation techniques. Jeeves, a man in his early thirties, tells me this about the workshops available: “oh yeah, there is yoga, there is always yoga. Warriors of Light set up a yoga camp every year. You know, there is a guy that used to go every year and he did the “stop smoking through hypnotism”” (Interview November 2009). Signs for the workshops are posted at “Information.” Information is ramshackle wooden structure to the east of Main Meadow that contains information about events, medical emergencies, and the main watering station. Signs are also randomly posted on trees throughout the miles of forest. One morning, I decided to go to a workshop on sustainable living. It was three miles from our camp, and I couldn’t cajole any others from our group to go with me, so I made the trek alone. The workshop was to be held at the “Reading Rainbow Library.” Under a large tarp held up by logs, the “library” was little more than some Dr. Seuss books and a couple of dictionaries. I sat for two hours awaiting the workshop with little discussion of sustainable living. Instead, gatherers pass around a marijuana joint, and trade stories of their transient lifestyle. Although the sustainable living workshop never materialized, my husband encountered one as he was out walking one morning. He was stopped by a naked woman. She invited him to come over to her group and talk

about “challenging monogamy.” He saw several other nude women sitting in a circle, trading advice and “how to dos” of open relationships. He jokingly explained he opted not to attend.

C. Social Hierarchy and Work

Behind the scenes of all the activities, are those responsible for the logistical work that must occur before and during the Gathering. An enormous amount of preparation goes on behind the scenes for such a large Gathering to take place. From building stages, digging latrines, setting water systems, organizing kitchens, posting rules, facilitating workshops, staging parades, etc. These activities provide evidence of the organizational structure of Rainbow, pointing to the paradoxes of creating a temporary utopian Gathering. In her work on utopian communities, Kanter (1972:95) argues that working “emphasizes joint effort, with all members, as far as possible, performing all tasks for equal reward. The important thing for the community is not who does what work, but that the job gets done” (quoted in Niman 1997:87). At Rainbow, however, those who come prior to the Gathering to set up the main camp, the stages, the kitchens, fire pits, etc., also carry status for their participation in creating the event.

There are certain times before and after the Fourth of July where “Council” (a loosely organized group of Rainbow devotees) gets together and makes communal decisions ranging from locale for the next year to how to deal with certain issues that have presented themselves. Although the collective sentiment is that there are no Rainbow leaders among this “unorganized” and “utopian” group, there is evidence of some organization to the event and there appears to be a social hierarchy present.

There were many examples of what I call Rainbow celebrities or “influential elders.” These are often individuals who have been coming for decades and are part of the original vision for Rainbow. Others are those who are integral in the logistical work that surrounds making a large Gathering work. Perhaps the most visible of the “influential elders” is “Grandfather Woodstock,” who looks to be in his seventies. He and his wife are among the few people allowed to camp in Main Circle, pointing to their status among the Rainbow gatherers. His ramshackle structure built around his wheelchair is decorated with flowers, pictures, cards, and old dirty tapestries. There are pictures of their adventures through the years. The pictures are attached to a stick that is right beside the hut. There are probably twenty pictures. Of particular interest are several pictures of the two of them with Yoko Ono. Grandfather is usually naked save a long patch work trench coat and top hat. His wife is said to be in her nineties. They are always present at the main activities in the meadow (the feedings, drum circles, and Fourth of July prayer). Grandfather is surrounded by younger Rainbows who appear to be biding their time to get a word with this revered figure.

Robbie is another “influential elder” and has been involved with Rainbow since the late seventies. He is also allowed to camp in the Main Circle. His camping spot is surrounded by young adults talking about intentional community, swapping stories, and hanging on his every word. The elder category is one of the most fascinating categories present. It appears that they wield much respect and awe from younger campers. Whether they have been going to the Gatherings for a long amount of time, or they are just elder members of the community is not always clear. They are also socialization

agents. They are said to try to imbue younger members with the principles of the Gathering, so it might continue in its existence.

“Kitchen moms,” “high holy hippies,” and “elders” all have an elevated status. The kitchen moms (or dads) are the people who organize various kitchens and provide the itinerary for the food that is going to be served. High holy hippies appear to be the leaders or wise members of the Gathering. According to Blue, a Rainbow who has attended twenty Gatherings, “High holies are the relational (public relations) people between gatherers and leos (law enforcement officers).” The name itself appears to reflect a certain prestige (Interview, October, 2010).

There is a certain amount of deference that is expected when you are served food from a kitchen. For example, one evening we went to “Tea Time” kitchen to get a cup of tea. The kitchen worker asked us what flavor we wanted and rattled off the names of the teas that they were serving that day. My husband, overwhelmed from all the choices, asked the kitchen worker to pick for him. She responded indignantly, “I just spent all that time telling the names of the tea, and you are going to ask me to pick for you? Okay that was rude!” Another day, we went to Kiddie Village to get a cup of coffee. We approached the serving area and politely asked for some coffee. The woman huffed and puffed and told us that we needed to get there early if we wanted coffee, and that we were wasting her time. It may be that the work of being a Kitchen Mom is challenging because they cannot control who and how many will approach them in a given day for food or drink. But Kitchen moms appear to serve as gatekeepers as well. Gatherers also cannot just help themselves. The cooking area is sequestered away from the serving area, and there are explicit rules about hand washing, plate washing and general

sanitation. Kitchen moms reprimand those who get too close to the cooking and/or do not have clean hands or a clean plate. Below is a picture of a kitchen.^{xi}



A social hierarchy also exists around work which is considered to be very important for the community at the Gathering. This work can be picking up trash, hauling water for a kitchen, offering to help clean a kitchen after a meal is served, and Gathering firewood. The term “bliss” has several meanings at the Gathering. One definition of bliss is eating utensils but it is most commonly used is to describe “hanging out.” Those who do not work and help out are labeled a “bliss ninny.” Accounts of “bliss ninnies” range from humorous to disrespectful. Nasaj, an interviewee, says, “I mean it is nice to pitch in and like help if you are getting fed, and maybe get the kitchen some wood. Well there is a term called bliss ninny. A person that doesn’t do any work” (November, 2009). Several of my interviewees mention the importance of work. Acorn says this about the importance of work, and how crucial it is for integration into the community:

Rainbow People are from that, and all work is voluntary and the economy is a goods economy, everything is done on mutuality, so if you are going to get involved in a kitchen, you know, the way kind of earn respect from people is get in and start helping, and that is what makes the whole thing work, and nobody is there to tell anybody what to do, but uh, you get a hell of a lot more respect, and you meet people and people are a lot more open, and friendly and talkative when you are helping and working and things come your way. (Interview December 2009)

Jeeves also tells me of the rewards of helping out at the Gathering. He says, “Yeah, oh it is so rewarding to plug in and help someone out. There is so much work that needs to be done, you know?” (Interview November 2009). As Niman (1997) notes:

All Rainbows are expected to work, regardless of their status within the Family. However in reality there are “Drainbows” who don’t pull their weight, and don’t have to since the Family does not require anyone to work...To come to a Gathering and not work, to be a Drainbow, is to miss the point of the Gathering. (Pp. 87, 90)

Large kitchens will typically have a “bliss pit” that facilitates “blissing.” This is generally a large fire pit where gatherers can “kick it” (e.g. play music, “trip” on psychedelic drugs, or chat with other attendees). So it appears that blissing is tolerated, as long as someone does not do it all the time and does their share of work.

Below the social status of bliss ninnies, are a variety of negative terms given to those considered by the majority of Rainbows as deviant. These are “panhandlers,” “drainbows” or “schwag hippies.” The term “schwag hippie” is analogous with drainbow, and is also applied to someone that steals or does not shoulder their share of work. During an interview, I asked a Rainbow attendee to define a “drainbow.” She describes a drainbow as someone who wants to have sex, be fed, and not work.

Oh hippie mama, come back to my tent with me, that gets really old and annoying, and also, just if you are known not to help out, but just eat food from a kitchen, that really pisses a lot of people off, because they put a lot of effort into

feeding everybody and they really need some help. (Interview, Mama Mia, November 2009)

The term is nebulous because some seem to think a “rainbow” is someone that steals from the local merchants and causes a smear on the Rainbow name. Others liken “rainbows” to panhandlers. Regardless, it is a very negative term and implies laziness and lack of character. Even below rainbow and schwag hippie, is the “A” camper (“A” stands for alcohol camp). The “A” campers, from some accounts, are not even part of the Gathering. Another label “members of the wrecking crew” appears to be synonymous with “A” campers and “rainbows”.

In sum, there is a social hierarchy present among Rainbows. From the bottom up, there are “A” campers (“rainbows,” “schwag hippies,” and “members of the wrecking crew”), “bliss ninnies,” “kitchen moms,” “high holy hippies,” and “elders.” Revolving around almost all of the categories is the theme of worker versus someone who does not work. The stratification that exists is indeed counter to their stated purpose, but not surprising. Without the presence of work, the entire structure of Rainbow would topple. Further, just to subsist in a forest ten miles from civilization in addition to being two miles down the side of the mountain requires a large amount of logistical work. As a researcher, I found much of my time had to be devoted to camp work. Each morning we made a fire, fetched water for our coffee, and then set out to find breakfast from a kitchen. Finding a kitchen with breakfast could take several hours, hiking miles through the woods. After a meal, it is not unusual to offer to do something for the kitchen which includes more work such as gathering firewood, water, or taking the trash to a designated collection point.

In addition to the stratification present at the Rainbow Gathering, and as the above application of terms to non-workers implies, there are also rules present at an event that promotes itself as a “no rules” utopia. This heightens the paradox. The entire Gathering is fraught with rules of conduct, rules of sanitation, rules of environmental awareness, rules of sexual conduct, rules of reciprocity, rules about parenting, rules about pets, rules about drugs and alcohol use, and rules concerning defecation. The dissemination of these rules is accomplished through interpersonal communication, self-proclaimed gatekeepers, elders, and hand-made signs riddled throughout the forest. Trails are littered with signs that provide information about Shanti Sena (self-proclaimed peacekeepers), communal fires, information, posts about CALM (Center for Alternative Living Medicine), posts about trash and recycling. One sign admonishes gatherers “not to do stupid shit.” As we descended down the main trail on the first day we encountered many who conveyed rules to us as well. We were told that we couldn’t have a fire by “Tarren,” a veteran camper. We were told by other people hiking down the mountain that we needed to “police our camp,” where the filtered water was located, and where “not to camp” (near the water). Some of the posted rules are simply stated while others incorporate humor in the message. One reads, “Next burger 16 miles.” The nature of these rules is such that it is presented with a payoff. “Recycle: Take your trash to designated collection points (your mother would approve)!” Another reads, “No alcohol beyond this point” at the entrance of Welcome Home. Others direct where to camp, encourage campers to “use the shitter” (a slit latrine used for defecation), and to “hold silence the morning of the peace prayer.” In addition, they pass out a newspaper that is titled, “The Rainbow Guide,” that gives a

full listing of the rules in addition to other contact information. These illustrate a normative stance of what to do and not do if one is to be considered a true “Rainbow.”

D. Deviance Redefined

In this section, I address how Rainbow Gatherers redefine what is deviant and create a new vocabulary to describe their definition. Some of their definitions are synonymous with mainstream culture’s definition and are accompanied by similar reprimand. Other definitions of deviance are redefined and accompanied with differing constructs of shame. Rainbows also have a term called Shanti Sena (peacekeepers), those who participate in internal social control, another paradox for a non-organized, no rules group. I also describe, through a brief auto-ethnographic description, how shame can be internalized.

As stated earlier, “A” is for alcohol and is not allowed at the main Gathering. Although a highly contested aspect of the Gathering at times, it remains a feature of the event. “A” camp, as it is named, is an area where alcohol drinkers must reside if they wish to consume alcohol while at the Gathering. “A” campers can be seen as having “spoiled identities” from “blemishes of individual character,” e.g. alcoholism (Goffman 1963:4). As Goffman notes, these individuals have a shared “discredited” stigma (p. 4). It appears that some (not just “A” campers) Rainbow gatherers perceive themselves as marginal members of society. Following, “A” campers might suffer from double stigmatization. First they are stigmatized members of society, and second they are stigmatized members of the Rainbow Gathering.

Alcohol is considered a deviant activity in the main areas of the Gathering. It was hugely looked on with contempt and reprimand. In fact, most of the deviance that would

be labeled as such in society-at-large (violence, theft, and rape) is said to occur in “A” camp. In a personal interview, Blue is unable to hide the contempt that she feels toward “A” campers. She explains:

And I have seen them break each other’s legs, black each other’s eyes, bust out people’s windshields, their own friends you know? I have seen them take a bat to each other, take a bat to each other’s vehicles, end up each other in the hospital. And the weird thing is the next day they are friends, walking around hand in hand black and all over the place, like, “well that was last night, got any money for booze today?” (October 2010)

Rainbows consistently describe “A” camp as the area that “hardcore” alcoholics reside. It was this feature of “A” camp that could make moderate drinkers forget about their alcohol and resist drinking during their time at the Gathering. One camper explains, “I drink every day, but fuck “A” camp! I would rather camp on the edge of the Gathering so I can drink my alcohol with no worries. You won’t find me in “A” camp” (fieldnotes, June/July 2010:105). Like Blue, most feel that banning alcohol and “A” campers from bringing their booze in the Gathering is essential to the smooth functioning of the event. Still others feel that the use of alcohol diminishes the spiritual elements of the Gathering by bringing in belligerent attendees or that the presence of a big, raucous, and sometimes violent party attracts those that could prove to be trouble for regular gatherers. Robbie appears ambivalent when he speaks of “A” camp; even he recognizes them as deviant. “There are just all kinds of violence over there, they are kind of a, what can I say, I was going to say a thorn in our side, but they are our brothers” (Interview, July 2010).

Jeeves says this about “A” camp: “In a lot of ways it is good, because it acts as a filter” (Interview, November, 2009). By a filter, Jeeves is referring to “A” camp as a way to “weed out” some of the campers that might prove to be trouble for the rest of the gatherers. A younger interviewee, Mama Mia, says this about “A” camp, “Well there is

“A” camp, and that is alcohol camp and all, well typically the meaner people hang out there. You see a lot of old men getting drunk from sunrise to sundown” (November 2009).

After hearing these comments, my companions and I decided that we wanted to go “A” camp for an interview and observations. We approached the information booth with some vodka that we would give “A” camp to earn their trust. I tell the information booth worker, “Yeah, I have a half gallon of vodka that I wanted to kick down to “A” camp, and I was wondering the fastest way to get there?” His focus sharpens. “Just leave the alcohol with us, and we will make sure that they get it.” I sense his irritation but respond, “No, I want to take it to them. We bought it on our way in. It is really cheap stuff and there is no way that we are going to drink it. What is the quickest way to get there from here?” He responds, “Well, there is no quick way, you have to go back to Welcome Home and then hike several miles, but please don’t go to “A” camp. You are liable to get shanked or raped.” Two men, other information workers, join in the conversation. A middle aged man in a safari hat adds, “No, sister, “A” camp is not the place for you. They really aren’t even Rainbow, in my opinion. All they serve is to deter the local drinkers and gypsies from coming down into the Main Gathering” (Fieldnotes June/July 2010:111).

As the above conversation illustrates, “A” camp is both deviant and a geographic filter that serves as a holding pin for other stigmatized groups. There is a definite evocation of “us” and “them” and a shared perception among Gatherers that that this is where the bulk of deviance occurs. My fieldnote observations of our arrival reflect my own discomfort with “A” camp:

As we were driving into the Gathering, there was a giant banner on the left side of the road that read 'Welcome Home.' We slowed as the people milling around the front began to approach our car. The people I saw were mostly men. A man with few teeth (and the ones that he did have are rotten) came to our window. "Do you have any money for our kitchen?" This stood out as a red flag to me because there is not supposed to be any monetary exchange inside the Gathering. As he neared closer, I could smell alcohol on his breath and I then noticed that the crowd that was gathered all had some sort of drink in their hand. I told him, "We spent all of our money in town to get here, sorry man." He backed up and told us to come back if we had some money to give him. The scene surrounding what was "A" camp was haggard. The men that were surrounding the area were in tattered clothes and a few of them were noticeably drunk. By the swagger and slurred speech it was apparent. (Fieldnotes June/July 2010:136)

Ironically, while alcohol use is deviant, some drug use is completely tolerated.

At Rainbow, it is perfectly acceptable to go tumbling down a mountain without a stitch of clothing while "tripping" on massive amounts of psychedelic drugs. It is also acceptable to smoke marijuana at any time of the day or night. During all interviews conducted at the Gathering, marijuana or hashish was present. Further, many of the conversations with attendees center on drug activity. People walking past our campsite proudly claim they had just "dosed" or that they were on their way to smoke DMT (a highly psychedelic substance found in South American plants). One evening, as the day gave way to night, a young man and his girlfriend plopped down in folding chairs at our campsite. He has a large backpack full of psilocybin mushrooms and announces that he is chemistry undergraduate and has been experimenting with cross breeding different kinds of mushroom spore prints. Casper, a young man with long blonde dreadlocks and an extensive rock and glass pipe collection, camped to the north of our spot, passes by our campsite on three occasions and enthusiastically tell us, "We are heading down to Main Meadow to drum and dance...we just took some ecstasy! Yeah!"

While alcohol is a legal activity, it is deviant at Rainbow and while drug use is obviously illicit, it is considered an acceptable form of “blissing” and is often associated with spiritual or emotional release. Mainstream norms surrounding substance use are flipped upside down. Rainbows repeatedly talk of magic or spiritual experiences during drug consumption. For example, Mama Horse, a woman in her thirties who had only been to one Gathering said this about the drug usage:

It was Fourth of July night and I was really whacked. I was on a lot of acid and um, there were just lots of dancing around me and drumming. I was sitting down, and there were just these people with these sticks with like strings on them, and they would dip them in this bubble stuff and make these ginormous (combination of gigantic and enormous) bubbles. With the visuals and the light, and the moon, I have never seen bubbles like that, it has always stuck with me, like, I have never been able to make them look like that again, it must have been something that I was on, but I swear man, I remembered those bubbles. (Interview, December 2009)

This participant states that she will never again have another experience like that. All interviewees mention something about drug use. There are also items set up in various locations that could be considered enhancers for the drugs. One might see random streamers hanging from a tree. At night during the drum circle, there are hand held lasers that shine into the woods. Some of the dancers are naked and spin fire in contorting motion. One evening, during main feeding, a man comes down the mountain with iridescent blue angel wings attached to a cape. He swings the wings back and forth, and the fabric appears to change color. So although some of the things that might enhance the drug experience at more commercialized events aren't present (e.g. impressive light or laser shows), they have their own form of entertaining those that are on drugs.

In the case of defecation, one might say that mainstream norms are stretched to the edge of tolerance. Whereas Americans go to great lengths to adhere to the norm of modesty in bathroom behavior with closed stalls in public restrooms and closed doors in homes, this shifts significantly at the Gathering. While it is true that in Rainbowland, it is not okay to “shit” anywhere, as it threatens the safety of all campers, communal bathrooms are the norm. Large slit latrines are dug and campers are admonished to use “shitters.” If campers are caught doing their “business” somewhere other than the shitter, serious reprimand can follow. Some lesser offenses include not following stated environmental rules (recycling, not defecating in appropriate areas, use of tree limbs that are still attached to the tree), sexual misconduct (crudely approaching someone that is naked), and a list of others. Again, these are conveyed through interpersonal communication, the “Rainbow Guide,” and signs placed throughout the forest. An important aspect of the interpersonal communication includes shaming ceremonies.

E. Shame, Duct Tape and Total Removal

Braithwaite’s (1989) descriptions of disintegrative and re-integrative shaming techniques are present at the Gathering. Although I did not witness any obvious disintegrative shaming, this does surface in interview data and will be presented below. Again, Braithwaite (1989) describes re-integrative shaming as “expressions of community disapproval, which may range from mild rebuke to degradation ceremonies, [and] are followed by gestures of reacceptance into the community of law-abiding citizens. Gestures, he explains,

... [W]ill vary from a simple smile expressing forgiveness and love to quite formal ceremonies to decertify the offender as deviant. Disintegrative shaming (stigmatization), in contrast, divides the community by creating a class of outcasts. Much effort is directed at labeling deviance, while little attention is paid

to de-labeling, to signify forgiveness and reintegration, to ensuring that the deviance label is applied to behavior rather than the person, and that this is done under the assumption that the disapproved behavior is transient, performed by an essentially good person. (P. 55)

It did not take long, after arriving at the Gathering, for us to experience a shaming ceremony. We set up our camp and decided to go to Main Circle to check out the drum circle and find some clean water. Before we made that decision, we recognized that we had an arduous journey into the site, and decided to drink wine to take celebrate getting in and hiking down the treacherous mountain. We knew the rules concerning alcohol consumption, but thought that we would keep it close to our tents and make sure not to go over our respective limits. The next excerpt is a scene that occurred after we got to the drum circle:

We did not yet know where the watering stations were, so we stumbled in the darkness for a few feet, murmuring about how we needed water. A man (couldn't make out any features in the night except that he had two water jugs hanging from rope, and you could make out the water jugs because they were translucent and caught the light of the fire). He asked us, "You need water, brothers and sisters?" We were all a little apprehensive about the water situation because of the germ aspect of sharing water bottles albeit water jugs. "No", I responded, "we are looking for a place to fill ours." "Well, our kitchen is over there, Flavor Jammers, and we have a watering station, or the big watering station is close to Information." He stepped closer and let out a sigh and a small whistle. "Really wish you guys could experience the whole thing". "What do you mean, sir?" I asked. "First of all, call me brother, and second of all, we really discourage alcohol consumption in the main Gathering. You can't experience it when you are intoxicated. You need to come back to Main Meadow tomorrow when you are sober, and leave your beer can at "A" camp. You can't truly experience Rainbow when you are drunk." I politely shoved my sprite can in his face, and told him that I we had had a couple of glasses after we set up, but we knew the rules concerning alcohol, and wouldn't dream of bringing it down to Main Meadow. He calmly replied, "Well that might very well be soda, but you stand out with the alcohol smell like a beacon. It was very obvious upon approaching you guys that you ya'll had been drinking. Come back to my kitchen tomorrow, don't drink, experience the *fullness* of Rainbow, and we will be more than happy to help you guys with the water." We thanked him for the advice. He responded, "Loving you guys, welcome home." (Fieldnotes, June/July 2010:94)

In the above excerpt, the individual both chastises us for wrongdoing, while maintaining that he loves us, that he knows that we could do better, and provides a place for us to receive help the next morning. The man does not label us as deviant, only the alcohol consumption. We did not drink again that week while we were at the location. And indeed, one of my companions describes how she internalized the shaming incident.

A fellow graduate student, “M,” says this during a recorded interview:

Yeah it was, and I felt like uh, I felt really reprimanded. Even though he was really friendly, I felt like I was five again. I felt like, oh god, I am so sorry. I feel like the hand of Rainbow is going to descend from the sky, all the sudden I felt like the biggest piece of shit. (Interview, M, June/July 2010)

Clearly this incident invoked guilt but also a resolve to not drink again so in this case at least, it appears to have been an effective tool of social control for the Rainbow Family and may have served as a deterrent to anyone who witnessed the interaction. After the incident by the drum circle, I recorded my own experience. “The rules, however, were so salient to us that we didn’t want a repeat of what happened the first night next to the fire pit.” The rest of our time at the Rainbow Gathering, we took great care in following the posted rules and rules conveyed through communication. We internalized the no alcohol rule and followed it because we did not want to experience sanction again. The above is illustrative of both the re-integrative shaming technique but also our own internalization of external social control.

. Shot’s (1979) affect control theory maintains that it is impossible for agents of social control or community to monitor all behavior at all times. Therefore, it is the reflexive process of role-taking that causes a person to internally monitor their actions. Shame is particularly important to Shot’s theory because “it attacks people’s general

identity or transsituational conception of themselves as a certain kind of person” (Quoted in Turner and Stets 2005, p.108). In turn, “shame motivates individuals to avoid situations and persons where this emotion is aroused...” (p. 108). We had experienced the re-integrative shame from the man by the drum circle. We still felt like a part of the community, but we also self-monitored our actions to comply with the rules that were stated as to avoid future shame.

Another similar experience was narrated in one of my interviews. Wanda is a middle-aged woman with long graying hair, quick wit, and easy smile. She has been involved with Rainbow Gatherings since the seventies. Wanda shares a story of a public shaming of a young man that needed to be “calmed down.”

Well, he was slamming his naked self into trees, and would just back up and splat right into trees because he was convinced he could go inside the trees and experience the tree from the inside and he was just going to keep doing it, and uh, when we tried to like sit him down or whatever, he was like a good sized guy, he wasn't trying to hurt anyone, but he was going to hurt himself, or someone...They were going to knock him out or knock out their [own] teeth, so we got a carpet you know, and got him, and got his feet out from under him, and it just takes a matter of a couple of people to...leave their head out you know? Yeah, and I actually had the kid introduce me to his girlfriends' parents [at a later date]. “You know this woman loves me so much, she once rolled me up in a rug.” (Interview, Wanda, December 2009)

So although this might seem to be a severe act under ordinary circumstances it represents the efforts among Gatherers to self-monitor those who have violated the rules. Apparently, the young man was “tripping” on acid or something and was going to harm himself or others which would then involve either calling in the authorities or taking him out of the Gathering all together. What is most striking about this story is the participant's attitude when he introduces Wanda to his girlfriend's parents with, “This woman loves me so much, she once rolled me up in a rug.” This activity might be associated with

“Shanti Sena” (peacekeeping). Often if a troublesome situation occurs, campers can call out, “Shanti Sena” and other gatherers will come to the aid of the person in trouble. This model of internal social control may help explain how the Gathering has managed to experience such longevity.

Another interviewee, Blue shares her general stance for how to deal with wrongdoing. For this long-term attendant, it is the “love factor” that is the proverbial glue that keeps the Gathering intact and offenses to a minimum. Blue explains she prefers to,

...talk to them, try to find out where their problem lies, and love them up, you know, like, but you know everybody wants to be loved, everybody needs to be loved, and one of the secrets known by the Rainbow people is that we are made of love and we are love. (Interview, Blue, October 2010)

Using “love” as a way to administer social control creates a sense of community similar to that of family get together or integrated church group. Campers constantly say to each other, “I love you” and shouts of “Welcome Home” echo throughout the Gathering day and night, along with offerings of food, water, hugs, and drugs. While packing in and out of the Gathering, several attendants happily offer to carry our heavy loads, picking them up and carrying them sometimes for a hundred feet or more.

However, there are circumstances that require harsher mitigation. This did not come from my personal observations, but rather internet content and interviews. Several interviewees mention the use of duct tape as a form of social control. If someone is “way out of hand,” they might be duct taped to a tree until the situation is resolved. Cynthia, Blue, Robbie, Jeeves, and an “A” camper during a group interview all talk about how duct tape is used to resolve more serious offenses. Cynthia tells me that when someone is

violent, “they will like duct tape them to a tree. And sit with them and watch them for a couple of days and not really let them go anywhere or do anything” (Interview, Cynthia, October 2010). Blue shares a story of an “A” camper who was out of control from cocaine and crack. “People [Gatherers] won’t have that. I have seen people duct tape people because of you know somebody that had a meth lab. And they dismantled the meth lab in the woods.” For Blue, this mode of reprimand is a good internal approach to social control of deviance, “You know, duct tape the people!” (Interview, Blue, October 2010)

Another important part of Braithwaite’s (1989) theory describes why this mechanism is effective at a Rainbow Gathering. Braithwaite writes about the increased impact that re-integrative shaming can have on a community, state, or nation that has some aspects of communitarianism and interdependencies. Interdependencies are characteristic of relationships that highly rely on each other at the personal level. Braithwaite (1989:85) writes that “aggregation of individual interdependency is the basis for societal communitarianism.” Braithwaite then says:

For a society to be communitarian, its heavily enmeshed fabric of interdependencies therefore must have a special kind of symbolic significance to the populace. Interdependencies must be attachments which invoke a personal obligation to others within a community of concern... Thus, a communitarian society combines a dense network of individual interdependencies with strong cultural commitments to mutuality of obligation. (P. 85)

Because communitarian societies have characteristics of higher interdependencies, the re-integrative shaming is not only imposed by the state, but can be carried to a personal level by others. Braithwaite suggests, “Communitarianism is the societal characteristic most critical not only for fostering shaming, but also shaming that is re-integrative” (p. 97). As demonstrated above, much of the logistical work is

dependent on interdependencies. One way this occurs is to trade wares, crafts, knowledge, and basic necessity items without money. The Gathering is a highly communitarian experiment that proclaims a utopian dream to the outside world.

F. Redefined Agents of Social Control

When trouble arises, Shanti Sena or peacekeepers, come to the aid. There is no admission to this group, and all are invited to participate. The way that this group works is by voluntarily taking on the role of “peacekeeper” and diffusing certain situations. One of the signs posted in the forest reads, “Shanti Sena, peacekeepers, want it, be it!” In sum, if a problem or altercation is occurring, the group or individual will yell, “Shanti Sena,” and those that feel like that they can be involved in this process will come to the rescue. As Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock (1996:127) note, “[internal] policing may be especially vigorous in subordinate groups if the identity at stake is one that aids group survival in the face of a hostile society.” I did not see any evidence of this occurring while at the Gathering, but interviewees mention it often as the following illustrate:

Shanti Sena is you, it’s me, it’s everybody who participates in keeping the peace, and that is what Shanti Sena is the “peace police” and typically speaking, if someone is having a problem of some sort, they can call Shanti Sena and folks will put down whatever they are doing and come. It is just whoever can hear that call. (Interview, Wanda, December 2009)

In the case of the meth lab offender mentioned above, it was the call of Shanti Sena that led to his apprehension:

When you hear Shanti Sena called in the woods this means, um, anybody who cares to be a protector of righteousness, show up now! So, uh, of course they called out Shanti Sena on the dude and everybody kept showing up and people duct taped him. (Interview, Blue, October 2010)

So it seems that Shanti Sena is called when there are serious problems and this may take the form of punishment and disintegrative shaming. Finally, it appears that when other options have been exhausted, total removal of the offending participant can occur. This seems to only occur when someone has done something that is really serious, or keeps up wrongdoing after reprimand. Blue and Robbie tell me that they picked up a hitch-hiker on the way to the Gathering, only to find out that the individual they picked up had been removed from the Gathering for stealing and panhandling over and over again. Cynthia tells me that one year they found out that they were harboring a child molester. Rather than get the authorities involved, a group of people took it upon themselves to drive the individual hundreds of miles away from the Gathering. I also heard stories of rape, child molestation, murder, other violence, and serious theft. Jeeves explains, “There have been a lot of people killed at Gatherings. There have been a lot of rapes that have happened...” (Interview, November 2009). Blue collaborates by saying, “I knew of a guy once who molested a little kid” (Interview, October 2010). I do not think this “total removal” is evidence that shaming does not work or is not present at the Gathering. Rather, these serious offenses would be met by serious consequences in society at large. So, it is not at all surprising that this group of serious perpetrators would be removed from the Gathering.

It is interesting to note the incredibly large police presence that is there, and the minimal occurrence of allowing the police to intervene in serious situations. There is a large sentiment of distrust toward the police, and many of the more serious problems are still overcome by Rainbow attendees. Consider the following excerpt from Robbie:

Well, go to Shanti Sena meeting and you will be able to find some Shanti Sena people, but what goes on, well for instance, once we had a murder suspect, and

cops said “we are going to come in after this guy.” We said, “Now wait a minute give us two hours,” and they gave us two hours. What happened was there were cops all over the place, and they had his description and his picture, and they located him at main circle. And one of our guys was a Niko master, uh Amazing Dave, and Dave sits down next to this guy and he says, “say buddy, we know who you are, and we know that the cops are looking for you and we know that you are wanted for murder. Now you can come out with us, and if you come with us, we will find you a lawyer, and we won’t desert you and we will be with. Your choice is to do that or you let the cops take you. And he thought about it, and he said, “Okay.” (Interview, Robbie, July 2010)

In this instance the police apparently worked with the Gatherers. This is not to say that the police are not there, in force, writing tickets and taking people to jail. However, most of the offenses against the Rainbow Family that held true to their definition of deviance (e.g., alcohol consumption, reckless attitude toward environmental rules, and sexual misconduct) coincide with society’s definition of deviance (serious crime) and seem to be largely controlled by attendees.

G. Shared Ideological Resistance and Solidarity

In Hunt’s (2008) work, she identifies ideological embeddedness and behavior-relational involvement among Jamband participants, such as the Grateful Dead. This is also described by Fine and Kleinmann (1979:13) as *centrality* referring to the “degree of commitment to the population segment...as a dimension of subcultural identification.” Similarly, I find that the very nature of the Gathering promotes a high level of ideological embeddedness to their counter-culture and in turn promises that a greater level of solidarity will be attained if the participant adheres and accepts the overarching ideology.

Resistance is revealed through a variety of gatherers' perspectives that reflects ideological embeddedness and solidarity among campers, e.g., a shared stated desire for world peace, staunch anti-consumerism, various types of spirituality, and

environmentalism. Moore (2007) describes resistance to mainstream music in punk rockers “do it yourself work ethic” which refers to getting the word on the streets about punk music as opposed to corporate music. Halnon (2006) also found that heavy metal music scenes are a proto-utopian resistance to mainstream society. Similarly, participants at the Rainbow Gathering view themselves as staunch anti-commercialists. This is shown through a variety of activities, namely the trade circle and rejection of the use of money.

Finally, an especially illustrative component of combative solidarity and resistance to external social control agents is found in interactions between Rainbow Gatherers and traditional authority figures (e.g., police). Thus, the findings here are similar to these studies, resulting in a shared ideological resistance. I will describe these processes below in more detail.

Through inter-personal communication vis-a-vis conversation, a sense of solidarity was promised if the dominant ideology of Rainbow was accepted and promoted. We were admonished several times through the week to call people “brother” or “sister” instead of “ma’am” or “sir” because we are all part of the Rainbow Family. We were told in several instances to help out in the kitchens and in return, we would get fed some of the best free food available. Repetitive greetings such as "love you" and "welcome sister" or "welcome home" are abundant and heard hundreds of times throughout the day. The metaphor of family is used in greetings to illustrate or encourage solidarity among gatherers.

Ideological embeddedness is also promoted through conversion stories and myths and each ended with the same outcome: somebody that was integrated in mainstream

society would stumble upon a Gathering, find the “love” that they had been missing their whole life, and become totally embedded in the Gathering forever. Like religious conversion, one leaves the secular world of isolation and finds a “family” where they feel wanted and loved. Wanda tells a story of a young man who converted to Rainbow.

The kid showed up early in a taxi cab and he had taken a cab several miles out into the wilderness by a riverbank and got out of the cab in slacks and Italian shoes, with a suitcase and he was a black kid in the middle of Missouri, down on the riverbank and the cab drove away. He had never slept outside, he had never been camping, and he had certainly never been down on the riverbank in the South. He was from Long Beach and he was petrified, literally, but was there because he thought he should be there, and the weekend went on and he met some folks from Arkansas and this and that, and he went away with them. And the next year, when it was time for these folks to get together, I was out there and here he comes talking about “Jah love, and this good food, come and wash your hands” and he is just singing and it is all lovely. (Interview, Wanda, December 2009)

The degree to which most of the attendees feel like Rainbow is the answer to life-long searching is prevalent among interviewees. Jeeves relives a personal experience, “I mean like, I hated everybody. I didn’t think there was anybody out there that was worth whatever you know? And so like, yeah, and so going to Gatherings just like ah, I found [what I was looking for]” (Interview, November 2009). At every turn versions of this same story are told. Sometimes it would involve a cop, a forest ranger, or a CEO. The end of the story was the same: the protagonist had found in the Rainbow Gathering what they were searching.

Another way that ideological embeddedness is promoted is the whole-hearted socialization of attendees to have a negative view of government and mainstream society. As Turner and Killian (1987) write that “...developing a sense of grievance or injustice is more a collective than an individual process” (p. 267). Rainbows borrow the term “Babylon” from the Rastafarian tradition to describe “outside” society. This was often

done through tales (or myths) of police misconduct, brutality, and trying to incite a riot. Markovsky and Lawler's (1994) network theory proposes that "solidarity building dynamics are heightened [by] conflict with another group" (Turner and Stets 2005:229). There is ample evidence of clashes with police on the web. I found approximately twenty YouTube videos posted by Rainbow Gatherers for just the past two years that depicted police as abusive of their power. Russ, covered in tattoos and large plugs (holes that are used in extreme piercing) in his ears tells me this about the police. "They [police] don't like us whatsoever. They have a really, really a deep thing against us. It is really bizarre. Even when you go over their heads to the administrators, [it is no different]" (December 2010). Hunt's (2008) study depicts similar findings with the jamband subculture, revealing that police and authority figures were evaluated negatively.

These shared sentiments foster deeper integration into the community and helps to build this group's solidarity. In addition, conspiracy stories can be heard throughout the Gathering. One specific rumor involves a specific task force that was created by the government to police the Gatherings. Blue shares this during an interview.

The Government considers the Rainbow people to be the third largest threat to the demise of the United States government. So the Senate formed a specific task force that has nothing else to do but find out when the next Gathering is, where the next Gathering is, go and monitor the people. (Interview, Blue, October 2010)

During a group interview, a man tells me that the Department of the Treasury has created a task force that dresses up in National Forest Service uniforms, but their job is to police the Gatherings, as Rainbow gatherers are a threat to the government.

These two things taken together (myths and conversion stories) serve as a way to socialize new attendees and reaffirm the counter-culture ideologies of older attendees.

The strong anti-commercial sentiment, the bartering systems, use of illicit drugs, professed “love” and ideological orientation for “peace” combined with negative views toward authority figures point to Rainbow as a counter-culture. The definition of counter-cultures defined by Battini et al (2003:249) is “subcultures that become defined in opposition to dominant culture.”

Anderson and Kavanaugh (2008:185) found that taking drugs illegally “reinforced rave’s group solidarity and oppositional identity, as drug use often relieves the feeling of being immobilized by mainstream institutions.” Rainbow gatherers take drugs and promote resistance to mainstream culture through a variety of activities and redefine deviance to accommodate this. Robbie explains,

Why do I come? Because I love you. I love everybody I see, I can’t help it, I even end up loving people in town, and it is this. I am a battler, and this is the closest I have seen to my principles through the years. We have free use of one’s consciousness and substances. No use of money, no militarism. (Interview, Robbie, July 2010)

Drug use for Robbie is explicitly seen as a way to oppose mainstream society. However, evidence of drug use as a political statement was difficult to obtain, frankly, because many individuals had trouble forming a coherent thought while on drugs. We were often asked if we had drugs. We were told that others had drugs if we wanted them. I wrote in my fieldnotes about the prevalence of psychedelic drugs.

It actually took a few days to really notice, but as I did notice and hear people talk about it (as those that we came to know and visit became more comfortable with us), it became more evident that the “spacey-ness” (meaning the lack of motivation from most of the gatherers, and the will to do nothing but walk around and meander aimlessly) that was present was probably due to mass consumption of primarily LSD. We heard through various conversations that the LSD was prevalent. It was just impossible to pin down, “G”, for example. Every time I saw him, he was wide eyed and jumping around topics in his conversation, indicative that he was having trouble articulating his thoughts. The first couple of

days, I heard tidbits about “paper, L, LSD acid, boomers,” and definitely marijuana or “nug” as referred to at the Gathering. There was no doubt after visiting a drum circle late night that some people were under the influence of drugs. The dancers and drummers were waving their arms and legs in all sorts of ways dancing to the beat of a different drum. Another dead giveaway was the extent to which many people’s pupils were dilated. (Fieldnotes, June/July 2010:106)

Whether all view drug use as an oppositional stance to society is unclear. It is also not clear that drug use alone creates the solidarity of Rainbow. Most do view drug use as an important release from everyday life, and as illustrated earlier, some find their drug use at the Gathering an especially positive and memorable experience. In this way, they reflect an oppositional stance. However, three interviewees are more ambivalent about drug use and say they attend the Gathering for other reasons, mainly spiritual. It does appear that for some participants the Gathering has a sacred quality.

Many times around the drum circle and in certain camps, there are spiritual undertones. It is not uncommon to see a participant bowing in prayer. During a yoga workshop, the instructor tells his participants to “open up their hearts to others and their minds to consciousness.” New Age ideologies, spiritual breathing techniques, and energy healing abound with the fevered chanting and drumming, at times reminiscent of Native American rituals. At other times, attendees can be heard speaking in tongues and prophetic utterances. One day, a man of Nepalese descent approaches our camp carrying a large staff and indicates that he does not speak English. He hugs all of us, and leaves us, murmuring chants and prayers. On another occasion, an interview with an attendee is interrupted by a colorful young lady that tells us that she has “divine interaction with nature.” She asks us to “stop what we are doing” and “send energy” out to an endangered species of hawks residing in the Alleghany National Forest. She prays for all of us then

exits. Finally, during my interview with Wanda, she describes the July 4th prayer as follows:

It is very absurd and beautiful, and then the food and the drumming and the dancing and you know, that is what you go for. The “om” that takes place in that circle, and then you get ten thousand people whose hearts all beat together, uh....(starts crying). (Interview, December 2009)

Overcome by the memory, Wanda describes what Durkheim (1912) might liken to a collective effervescence or the sacred, adding, “and the whole thing just gets lifted.”

Drawing upon Durkheim, Turner and Stets (2005) write, “the origin of religion, and hence the most primal form of social solidarity, comes from interactions and heightened sense of emotion that is expressed as the power of supernatural forces” (p. 72).

Durkheim accentuates the importance of sacred symbols to arouse emotion. For many, the prayer circle is the ultimate experience of shared solidarity. Wanda also explains, “So I would say that the level of spirituality at the Gathering makes the difference to me, I literally saw real natural magic and spiritual things happening” (Interview, December 2009). Indeed, while I was in Main Circle watching and participating in the peace prayer, I was overcome with emotion and began to weep at the sight of thousands of people with linked hands praying for world peace. My mind wandered to modern global crises; I found myself participating and praying as well.

Anderson and Kavanaugh (2008) draw upon Maffesoli’s (1996) notion of “postmodern tribes” to discuss subcultural identities:

Contemporary society is characterized by the presence of “tribes” that resist the social norms imposed by the rationality of late capitalism. In these tribes, prior frames of reference and identification such as social class, occupation, locality, and religion have been abandoned. Instead, forces of emotional renewal are the newly emergent bases for solidarity that reinvigorate social life with vitality and effervescence. (P.185)

A great majority of attendees speak of Rainbow as having a spiritual tone, and most of them still attend but several believe the spiritual component has given way to more hedonistic behavior. For example, Jeeves had been involved with the Gathering for about ten years but now feels like the Gatherings are changing:

The nineties were really like the end of it, I feel like I came in on the tail end of it. I watched it disintegrate. I heard at last year's Gathering they were passing bottles of whiskey around main circle. You would have never had that back then; it would have caused a lot of furious anger with people. I mean it is getting bad, you see people walking around with the shakes all the time. There are people fucking basting themselves with alcohol. People shooting alcohol, I have seen people mainlining. (Interview, Jeeves, December 2009)

Mama Mia only went to two Gatherings, but still contrasts her second experience with her first and describes the second in such a negative light that she actually left the Gathering. "I went to the one in Arkansas, but I didn't have the same feel as what I was used to at the Colorado one, and I didn't get the loving vibes from it, so I stayed about an hour and then I went home" (Interview, November 2009). Similarly, Cynthia feels the "vision" of Rainbow is deteriorating.

The first year I went, was my favorite year...there didn't used to be even "A" camp, because they didn't use to have that problem. The last Gathering I went to just burned me so bad with the people that were just purposely [not contributing]...I mean they lived their life just contributing as little as they can where ever they go. I didn't see the Rainbow spirit anymore. I just saw some many people looking for a free ride where ever they go, including the Rainbow, and I just think the original [vision is lost]...there is always going to be people with good intentions and good vision coming to the Gathering or else it just won't happen anymore, because those are the people that are going to keep it going. There are just way too many people that are not on that path that are coming to the Gathering. I think it has just killed the whole purpose of it. (Interview, Cynthia, October 2010)

One of our camp neighbors tells us, "Things are so different now, not bad, but different. I mean you have people coming in here by way of GPS. And the cops! They are here in force...it is different from the early eighties" (Fieldnotes June/July 2010:134).

Those gatherers who do not engage in drug use do not outright chastise drug use, but some do say that heavy drug use and alcohol are now an area of concern.

Russ has been sober for eleven years. For him, coming to Rainbow is a refuge and an opportunity to spiritually renew his self. According to Russ, heavy drug use has become an issue. “There is among the younger generations, there is a little bit heavier drug use going, and the elders are concerned with teaching and passing on the ways” (Interview, Russ, November 2010). For Gatherers such as Russ, Cynthia, Mama Mia and Wanda, drug use is not the only thing that attracts attendees to Rainbow Gatherings, nor the only thing that builds solidarity. Other subcultural themes are appropriated and used as a way to distinguish the ideologies of Rainbow from mainstream society. For example Native American practices such as sweat lodges, communal Council meetings (in which a feather is used to notate who can speak and participate), and a shared Native American Hopi prophecy can be found as well.

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. (Old Native American Prophecy)^{xii}

Rainbow Gatherers liken themselves to “warriors of the Rainbow.” There was one example of a negative case, perhaps pointing to some self-criticism among Rainbows. At least one Rainbow gatherer views the appropriation of Native American philosophy and practice as problematic. In a personal interview, Acorn accuses Rainbows of finding “token” Hopi Indians to back up their claim while the majority of Hopi Indians have no idea about the Rainbow Family and their ideology. Acorn adds, “There are claims about the Hopi myths, they have found a couple of Hopi people from

the Hopi tribe, that have said, 'Yeah, you are guys are what this prophecy [is about].' The Hopi people, the traditional tribal and their government leaders, are very offended by that" (Interview, December 2009) But Acorn also admits that "I mean rainbow is almost, most people consider it a spiritual gathering, and it has a spiritual face or whatever you want to call it. There are all different...cultures you know?"

Acorn, who no longer attends, may be the exception to the rule as most embrace their counter-cultural identity through Native American philosophy, strong anti-commercial sentiment, bartering system, and anti-capitalist structure. Nasaj, a thirty year old man with dreadlocks explains, "I think that is what is cool; it like opens people's eyes to like there is more than life and the American Dream. You can like live for yourself. I mean that is the idea, though, that is a whole [other] thing" (Interview, November 2009).

Some are more literal in their stance. On one occasion, "M" and I walk into a tipi to interview a proclaimed Rainbow elder. He has several small sticks and is making a small structure that resembles the beginnings of fire pit and asks everyone that has come into the tipi to give him a dollar bill to impale. He tells us that he enjoys torturing dollar bills. His actions appear to suggest that, for him at least, money is capitalism and capitalism is indeed "Babylon." Interestingly, there were ample dollars available for his ritual but there is also evidence that Gatherers share this ideological opposition, meaning whatever society considers important, Rainbow gatherers (to a large degree) abandon.

H. Summary of Findings

As these findings suggest, Rainbow gatherers redefine deviance, and resist mainstream ideology. From the organization of camps to descriptions of the rituals, kitchens, and mass feedings the communal life of the Rainbow Gathering surfaces along

with the paradox of a utopian event. Shaming occurs and internal social control combined with solidarity building is prevalent. Deviance is redefined and through my observations and interviews, I find that Rainbows often flip-flop what is considered deviant and create a vocabulary to do so. Resistance to mainstream society is demonstrated through a variety of activities that reflect an ideology that is not consistent with society at large. Drug use, communal living, anti-consumerism, and new age spirituality reveal this as well.

Before I turn to the conclusion, I offer the following reflections of my experience. Many of my close friends attend the gathering each year and some were interviewed for this project. My aim has been to reveal their “truths” and not impose a reality upon them. As a sociologist, I have tried to walk between the worlds of description and analysis, allowing the voices of those studied to come through, or as my mentor suggests, I have tried to “show, not tell” about the world of Rainbow. Thus, while my research goal was to identify the paradox of Rainbow Gatherings and better understand the internal social control of such a large group, I also am intrigued by Rainbow culture and by what I experienced as episodes of a sacred quality, especially during the prayer circle. I was struck by the generosity of others, the welcoming vocabulary, the strong sense of environmentalism, and the repeated phrases of love and community. This has led me to the conclusion that perhaps the Rainbow counter-culture is not a political or social movement, but it does reflect the longevity of ideological resistance to mainstream society and perhaps a spiritual collective sentiment for some. When Jerry Garcia, of the band, Grateful Dead, was interviewed in Rolling Stone about his experiences during the sixties, he responded, “For me, the lame part of the sixties was the political part, the

social part. The real part was the spiritual part.” (As quoted in Epstein 1998:126)

Similarly, Sardiello (1994) found that for “Deadheads,” not only was a subcultural identity promoted, but “at the heart of this value system is a set of values that has spiritual connotations” (As quoted in Epstein 1998:126). Therefore, it may also be true for Rainbow Gatherers that through communal rituals, social reality can be given a sacred quality.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A. Discussion

I began this project with two very specific questions. What is considered deviant and appropriate activity to Rainbow Gatherers? I show that there are specific re-definitions of deviance for this counter-cultural group. Not only are some of mainstream society's definitions for acceptable behavior considered unacceptable at the Rainbow Gathering (e.g. alcohol consumption), but others' are the reverse (e.g. nudity and drug use). As I have demonstrated, this speaks to their resistance to mainstream ideology and culture.

The second question was informed by my theoretical overview and to a large degree, shaped my interview guide. What, if any, social control mechanisms are in place as to inhibit or prohibit certain kinds of behavior? As I show, there are certainly different types of social control present at the Gathering (internal, external, re-integrative and dis-integrative), and it appears that this contributes to the longevity of this group. However, as I near the end of this project, there are some reflective questions that I pose from this research. The first is: What does this study provide to future sociological/criminological endeavors? Second, does the existence of such groups like Rainbow (or others reviewed in the literature) point to any societal considerations? Third, what does this group provide to the participants? Below, I will provide some possible answers to these larger issues before moving to directions for future study and limitations. For example, how does this study speak to social control theory at large? How and why could it be important in that respect? This work may have implications for other groups that experience external social control.

To begin, critiques of Braithwaite that are articulated in Turner and Stets (2005) *Sociology of Emotions* revolve around the notion that this theory would be hard to implement on a societal level. Turner and Stets (2005:114) write:

At a more micro level, Braithwaite's theory – for all of its naiveté – does highlight the importance of shame as a mechanism of social control, but it also holds out a communitarian utopia that appears difficult to achieve once societies become large and complex.

Braithwaite's theory does seem, however, to apply to Rainbow Gatherings. Shame, especially re-integrative shame, appears to be an effective tool of social control. This may be due to the seemingly shared ideologies of Rainbow counter-culture, but it may be effective for other groups as well, both voluntary and coercive. While critics seem to imply that shaming is more effective in micro-settings, the large mass of the Rainbow Gathering may point to its potential effectiveness for society-at large and re-integrative shaming may remain a feasible option for our current judicial system.

Further, Braithwaite (1989) argues that one of the best places to see re-integrative shaming at work is within a loving family and that, "family life teaches us that shaming and punishment are possible while maintaining bonds of respect" (p. 56). To a large degree, it appears that Rainbows see themselves as a part of a large, at times dysfunctional, loving family that depend on one another.

The issue of internal social control as posited in Shot's (1979) affect control theory also has important implications for this study. As she mentions, it is impossible to monitor all behavior all the time. The utility of this theory for my research is it appears there are other mechanisms of social control occurring at the Gathering besides what Braithwaite talks about. As demonstrated in my findings, we found ourselves engaged in

self-monitoring our behavior as to comply with stated rules. Further, after the shaming incident from the man around the drum circle that occurred the first night that we arrived, the degree to which we were self-monitoring our actions increased. So perhaps this issue of social control exists on a loose continuum at the Gathering. Whether external social control occurs first followed by internalization of stated rules of contact to avoid shame (affect control theory), or the rules are internalized and then reinforced by external social control is not necessarily clear. What is apparent, albeit in the absence of a clear indication of which comes first, is a synergy of both external and internal social control.

The existence of groups like Rainbow also poses another conversation. Why, sociologically speaking, do some groups adopt collective oppositional identity? Rainbow recreates norms and places emphasis on communitarianism in a society at-large that they believe has abandoned such endeavors. They reject notions of mainstream society such as the “American Dream” and corporate society, creating a collective oppositional identity that reflects these sentiments (Mason-Schrock and Schwalbe 1996). As evidenced in my findings, it appears that Rainbow gatherers share a perceived stigma, also contributing to their oppositional identity work. Mason-Schrock and Schwalbe write:

To resist the stigma imposed by a dominant group, members of subordinated groups must engage in oppositional identity work. This is a matter of trying to transform discrediting identities into crediting ones, that is, to redefine those identities so they come to be seen as indexes of noble character rather than flawed character...Oppositional identity work often involves the subversion of a dominant group's identity codes. [S]ubordinated groups not only resist their devaluing at the hands of the dominant group, they create themselves as people, individualistically and collectively. (P. 141)

Rainbow gatherers appear to do this via a plethora of rituals and activities. They place emphasis and “noble character” on those who work hard, resist mainstream ideas and enforce rules to demonstrate these shared values. Rainbow elders and those with a celebrity status are often those that are known for resisting mainstream society for decades. In other words, they are respected for “walking the walk and talking the talk” of oppositional identity.

So what is the attraction of groups like Rainbow? Some critics are worried that we are losing a sense of community (Bellah et al 1985). It could be argued that in our modern society, ties and social bonds have given way to individualistic needs. It is not hard to imagine that the illusory images of times past, such as the neighborly, cheerful, involved citizens of past decades have been replaced with images of isolation where peer groups reflect ties of necessity rather than solidarity (Putnam 2000). Perhaps membership to groups like Rainbow provides its members with a sense of renewal and community that celebrates individualism but ties them together through ideological resistance. This could in part help explain membership to this group (and others).

It is also possible that community labor, such an inherent part of the Rainbow Gathering, provides individuals with something reminiscent of Marx’s notion of the “species-being,” reminding participants of the importance of being tied to one’s labor. For example, Allen (2005) quotes Marx’s suggestion that the species being is a necessary part of our realities. He writes:

The object of labor is, therefore, the objectification of man’s species life; for he no longer reproduces himself merely intellectually, as in consciousness, but actively and in a real sense, and he sees his own reflection in a world which he has constructed. (P. 69)

Communal living removes the worker from the market place and this is emphasized again and again among Rainbow Gatherers who value work and employ creative craftsmanship to their labor in their temporary community. Allen (2005), in summarizing Marx says, “This worker won’t feel the pride of the craftsman but will instead experience disassociation and depression” (p. 85). At Rainbow Gatherings, participants are directly tied to their material production through work whether it is in the kitchens, providing logistics or in the form of bartering or trading, absent the exchange of money. In some ways, Rainbow Gatherers are allowed to demonstrate that they, at least temporarily, can cut themselves loose from capitalist endeavors in favor of a community that seemingly has higher levels of interdependencies. Consider the following conversation that occurred during an interview while I was at the gathering:

[The reason we come is] to work hard and show off what we know, there is so much knowledge that is gained on the road and travelling around and living on the bare minimal. To come here and put down my experiences through my travels; this is the place where we can come together and share those stories and make those thoughts and dreams that we put together, happen. (Fieldnotes June/July 2010:187)

Events like Rainbow Gatherings may be seen as refreshing, renewing experiences for their members in which constraints of modern society are pushed away; for some this is said to be an entire lifestyle. For others, it is a week-long experience. This anti-consumer, anti-corporate and anti-capitalist ideology, combined with oppositional identity work, might help explain the attraction and membership to such groups like the Rainbow Family.

B. Limitations

Most of the interviewees for this study were found on the basis of snowball and purposive sampling. That is, most of the interviews (except at the Gathering) were friends or acquaintances of friends. Therefore, I cannot claim that the findings of this study are generalizable to other studies of Rainbow people or other Utopian groups. For example, most of the interviewees were located in a specific location (Midwestern region of the United States). Perhaps in other areas of the country, attendees have different experiences. In other words, those who travel from other countries, those who are of a different race, ethnicity, and nationality, all may have different interpretations of the event called the Gathering. While there was a large presence of ethnicities and races represented, my sample was homogeneous, and my snowball sample resulted in white heterosexual females and males. In the future, I would make every attempt to over sample for diversity. Had I interviewed other groups, I might have found that there are other hierarchies, different motives for attending, and divergent experiences based upon these differences.

C. Directions for Future Research

Future research should consider these limitations. Possible ways to deepen our understanding of Rainbow might include comparative case studies between Rainbow and other counter-cultural groups. Exit surveys, like those conducted by national forest employees could be performed as campers leave the Gathering. Extended time, arriving before and staying after the event might reveal other aspects of the Gathering not obtained in this study. Attending council meetings might better clarify the overall mission of the Gatherings. Another suggestion for future research would be to interview the

police and/or forest ranger personnel. Their perspectives may lend insight to the overall experience of Rainbow. While my observation of an enormous police presence led me to agree with some of the Rainbows' perspectives toward police harassment, this may be due to previous incidents of a serious nature and concerns for the general safety of such a large gathering. Recall the discouragement to attend "A" camp for our own safety, the attendee wanted for murder or the rapist and pan-handlers. Interviews with forest personnel may be able to speak to environmental issues surrounding the gathering. Interviews with locals can also confirm or verify the claims of Rainbows that they leave no trace and that they bring commerce to the local communities upon their arrival (another paradox of their anti-consumer ideology).

Other future research might compare national Gatherings and regional Gatherings where differences are said to be prominent. Interviewees told me that other National Gatherings (in other countries) did not have "A" camp or as much of the drug culture present. In turn, I was told that regional gatherings have *more* of a problem with alcohol use. An in-depth comparison of gatherings in different locations could perhaps assess these differences and speak to its longevity as well as possible decline. Finally, a longitudinal study of the group may explain why some Rainbow reveal they no longer attend, and why others are devotees to the group. As these suggestions reveal, this work raises more questions than it answers. However, because anyone can attend a Gathering, it provides sociologists and other researchers with the possibility to study this group for years to come.

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VII: APPENDICES

A. Informed Consent and Open-ended Interview Guide

Open Ended Interview Guide:

The interview script will begin with the following:

Implied Consent: “I am meeting today with (chosen pseudonym) who has voluntarily agreed to be interviewed for my thesis project, “insert name”. I want to thank you for agreeing to this interview and inform you that you can choose to stop this interview at any time and choose not to participate in this study. If you choose to withdraw your participation, this tape will be returned to you or destroyed at your request. If you have any questions you can contact my thesis advisor, Dr. Holyfield, at 575-3807. If your concerns are not addressed via Dr. Holyfield, or if you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board at (479) 575-3845.”

Data Collection Instruments (Interview Guide):

Below are a general set of questions that will be asked. However, the interviews will be conducted as open ended and participants will be allowed to expand on any topic related to their participation.

1. Let’s start with how you came to be a part of the Rainbow Gathering. Can you tell me about that? Probe for why, how long.
2. Do you still attend? Probe for missed gatherings and why, how long.
3. Let’s say I have never been to a gathering, could you walk me through a typical day at a Rainbow Gathering? For example, what might I see or hear or do? Probe for sights, sounds, smells, feelings, ect.
4. How exactly is camp set up or organized? Probe for who, where, camp names, ect.
5. Who comes to a gathering? Probe: categories
6. How many people come to the annual gatherings?
7. If you had to describe a typical attendee, what would that include? Probe for terms.
8. In your opinion, what is the main purpose of the gathering?
9. Let’s say you meet someone who has never heard of the Rainbow Gathering— what’s the first thing you would want them to know about the Rainbow Family?
10. Do you meet with others from the Rainbow community beyond just the large gathering?
11. What constitutes a really good gathering?
12. Do you plan your vacations around the Gathering? Is it difficult to get off of work?
13. What is your favorite memory of a Rainbow Gathering?

14. Let's talk a little about those outside the family. How do you imagine locals view Rainbow Gatherings? Gatherers? Probe for local communities, merchants, news and media, police, rangers?
15. Do you think that rangers and police have a negative view of Rainbows? Why do think that is?
16. What about inside the gatherings? Who and what would be considered a trouble maker?
17. How does the group deal with troublemakers?
18. Okay you have told me your favorite memory, now tell me about an experience that you would change if you could.
19. Of everything we have discussed, what about this gathering is most important to you and why?
20. Is there anything that I didn't ask that I should have—any advice you would give someone who is going to be coming for their first time?

APPENDIX B: Line-by-line Coding, Memoing, and List of Codes

Example of initial line-by-line coding:

*A: okay, alright, let's say that I have never been to a Gathering. Could you walk me through a typical day at a Gathering? For example, what might I see or hear or **do**?*

*M: well, there are many number of camps, and they all have their names, there is **JESUS** camp, there is Bread of Life camp, there is the Krishna **Camp**, there is Naked at Night **camp**, and there is always a stage, they build a stage and it is called Granola **Funk**, or G-Funk for short, that is where they play music, everything is acoustic, there's um, they don't really **like** flashlights and such either, so there is a lot of lamps and candles, it is really spread out so there is a lot of walking, but they always set up a trade circle, in the middle of it where everybody gathers all of their things that they are willing to trade, and they trade. It is kind of like a shopping **mall***

A: And what do you do when wake up in the morning?

*M: you wake up in morning, um, you **find** a kitchen to help out in, there's kitchens set up all over, you find a kitchen help make breakfast, um, drink some coffee, maybe some mushroom **tea**, um, there is even one camp that had marijuana chai, and all you could drink marijuana chai for **free**. And it is very important to help out in the **kitchen**, because if you don't help out in the kitchen, you are known as a **Drainbow**, so it's a lot of cooking and setting up **kitchens**,*

1. Grand Tour Question
2. Camp Names...Jesus and Bread of Life
3. Another Spiritual Tradition
4. The antithesis of religion
5. Granola—A name implying healthy, earthy, and funk
6. Normative Behavior—Rules
7. Bartering, communal living, anti-commercialism
8. Does this imply no boundaries around camp?
9. Mind-altering substances are acceptable behavior
10. Acceptable behavior among attendees
11. Normative Behavior
12. Negative term imposed by group...shaming
13. Food preparation and consumption are an important part of the community.

Example of memo-writing:

Ideological Embeddedness

Ideological embeddedness appears to be promoted and maintained in a variety of ways. It appears that the more embedded you are in this group a greater amount of “insider” knowledge is afforded. Some of the ways that it is promoted are myths, birth stories, and tales of police brutality and misconduct. Ideological embeddedness is also promoted through a new language system.

Shaming

Although both re-integrative and dis-integrative shaming appears to be present, the bulk of shaming appears to be re-integrative unless a major problem is occurring. Whether the shame that is conveyed comes from the group, chastisement from a certain individual, or interpersonal communication of the rules, it is a major element. There also appears to be some form of degradation ceremonies occurring.

Resistance to mainstream ideology

This appears to be the very “heart” of the event. Money use is largely looked down on. Inside the Gathering, only trading and bartering are acceptable. This shows resistance to outside society’s capitalistic market system. They actually give a name to outside society, calling it “Babylon.” The styles of outward appearance are a signifier of resistance. The constant and blatant drug use is another form of resistance. They construction of camps from downed materials is another way they are resisting. They reject the notion of the American Dream. They feed people in mass communal feedings. Many of the elements, that appear to define the Gathering, are in contradiction or opposition to mainstream culture and ideology.

Spiritual elements

In addition to the presence of JESUS Camp and Hare Krishna camp, there is a prayer pole, prayer and meditation workshops, a prayer for peace on the fourth of July. Many of my respondents spoke to the overwhelming New Age spiritual ideologies that are present at the Gathering. Many times we passed people that appeared to be meditating or praying. They appropriate elements of Native American sweat lodges.

List of Codes:

1. **Ideological Embeddedness**
 - a. Myths
 - b. Sayings (with both in vivo terms and use of things like “brother” and “sister”)
 - c. Birth stories
 - d. To facilitate feelings of togetherness and belonging (solidarity building goes with this).
 - e. Attitudes toward drugs
 - f. Style
 - g. Attitudes toward police and outside agents of social control
 - h. Attitudes toward Babylon
 - i. Mechanisms of social control
2. **Resistance to Mainstream Authority**
 - a. Harkening to Native American culture.
 - b. Communal, reciprocal, and egalitarian elements.
 - c. Bartering system...the rejection of capitalism.
 - d. Some of the in vivo terms are rejection of mainstream society
 - e. Deviance redefined
 - f. Mainstream society referred to as Babylon (borrowed from Rastafarians)
 - g. Use of shitters
 - h. Love as antithesis to government:
 - i. Use of downed materials to construct shelter and kitchens
 - j. Dumpster diving
 - k. A lot of interviewees didn't have normal jobs
 - l. Utopian purpose
 - m. Rejection of the American Dream.
 - n. Impaling dollar bills.
3. **Shaming:**
 - a. Shanti Sena (want it? Be it.)
 - b. Om circles and we love you circles
 - c. Duct taping people to a tree
 - d. Being totally removed from the gathering.

- e. Imagined gossip:
- f. Degradation ceremony
- 4. **Stratification based on work/work used to gauge insider vs. outsider status:**
 - a. You get a lot more out of it if you work hard
 - b. Chores are a big part of integration into the group.
 - c. Need to plug in.
- 5. **Deviance redefined**
 - a. Alcohol is not allowed
 - b. Drug use is okay in the psychedelic vein. Allow some of my interviewees (four) caution the use of such substances. Mushroom tea is okay, marijuana use is okay.
 - c. Nudity is okay.
- 6. **A camp behavior**
 - a. Alcohol induces most of the problems at Rainbow
 - b. Act as a buffer
 - c. Keep the cops out of the gathering
 - d. Meaner older people are at A camp
 - e. Panhandle you for money for booze
 - f. Shooting up alcohol, basting themselves in booze, fighting, sexually aggressive,
- 7. **Underdog mentality**
 - a. Attitudes toward cops
 - b. Tales of police brutality
 - c. Stories about police e.g. forest rangers go in before the gathering and spread misinformation about the Rainbow.
 - d. Many say there is a specific task force just for Rainbow Gatherings
 - e. Many say that millions of dollars of tax-payers money goes to police gatherings.
- 8. **Subcultural/Counter-cultural elements: borrowed from other hippie counter-cultures**
 - a. Drumming
 - b. Transient attraction
 - c. CALM
 - d. Attracts followers of Jamband subculture
 - e. Natural healing and natural remedies
 - f. There are way more that spill into some other areas of this outline
- 9. **Paradoxes**
 - a. No rules but
 - b. No money but
 - c. Panhandling is deviant but
 - d. No main purpose but
 - e. Use of money to facilitate gathering, but once inside it is a no no.
 - f. No leaders but...there are "elders"
- 10. **Microcosm of society**
 - a. Deviance is expected behavior in a crowd of people
 - b. In any subculture you are going to have people that are deviant

- c. All types of people are represented at a gathering.
 - d. Any time a gathering is that large, there is going to be deviance.
11. **Better back when**
- a. They don't say "we love you" anymore
 - b. Good core of elders don't attend anymore
 - c. Disintegrated in the 90's
 - d. Alcohol is not kept in A camp anymore
 - e. Magic Hat money goes to booze
 - f. Has become argumentative and political
 - g. Did not used to attract vagabonds and transients.
 - h. Used to not have to have A camp
12. **Unorganized Organization**
- a. A camp is on periphery
 - b. Thinks are loosely organized around Main Meadow
 - c. Structure of camp is organized somewhat around kitchens
 - d. Scout, seed, gathering, clean-up.
 - e. Information is important
13. **Rituals**
- a. Parades on the fourth
 - b. Council
 - c. Sweat lodges
 - d. Weddings
 - e. Granola Funk
 - f. Lovin Ovens and other kitchen related activities.
 - g. Trade Circle

C. ENDNOTES

ⁱ Available at <http://www.welcomehome.org/rainbow/rainbow/>

ⁱⁱ Available at <http://www.welcomehome.org/rainbow/rainbow/>

ⁱⁱⁱ For a description of the 1970 music festival in Oregon see

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vortex_I

^{iv} Available at <http://www.welcomehome.org/rainbow/sites/disorg.html>

^v I was accompanied by my husband, a fellow graduate student and her partner.

^{vi} <http://katycomal.com/spontaneousjam/drumcircles.html>

^{vii} Wanda (December 2009) explains: Well Gary Funk, who is Granola Funk, was, he is now at the World Gathering in New Zealand, he is set up a Funk Stage there, but Gary Funk was instrumental and still is.... and they sing and play guitars and they are professionals and they do this do five course meal soup kitchens.

^{viii} <http://leapingrealeyes.blogspot.com/2007/07/rainbow-family-gathering-2007.html>

^{ix} <http://americanfestivalsproject.net/2009/07/29/lost-in-a-world-of-rainbows/>

^x Location that contains information about activities that are occurring. Information is also a lost and found. It has a map key of all the camps. The central watering station is also located at Information. A more detailed description follows on the next page.

^{xi} <http://findingcreation.com/2008/02/rainbow-gathering-welcome-home.html>

^{xii} http://www.starsrainbowrideboard.org/welcomehome_mirror/rain