Community communication: Exploring the "rhythm" of togetherness

Jolane Flanigan
The University of Montana
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COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION: EXPLORING THE “RHYTHM” OF TOGETHERNESS

by

jolane flanigan

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Community Communication: Exploring the “Rhythm” of Togetherness

Director: Betsy Wackernagel Bach

ABSTRACT

In the United States, community is a sought after but vaguely defined concept. This study begins with the formulation of a definition of community grounded in communication studies and drawing on sociology and Tribes literature. Upon penning the definition, the focus shifts towards research helpful in answering the driving questions of this thesis: “How and why do individuals come to and continue to identify with a community?” and “How are communal bonds formed and maintained?” Identification research, which is born in organizational communication, was teamed with ethnographic perspectives and methods to arrive at an answer.

The context of this study was the Missoula drum and dance community, which includes those who use hand drums to play rhythms (primarily African and Afro-Cuban) and those who dance to these rhythms. The drum and dance community was chosen because it was seen as being a viable context as it adhered to this study’s definition of a community. Additionally, because hand drumming has been used as a community building activity, this context also provided an opportunity to assess the effect(s) of drumming on the identification process as well as the formation and maintenance of communal bonds.

It was found that individuals come to identify themselves as members of this community through inducement strategies similar to those found in the organizational communication research. In essence, members share the unifying symbol of the hand drum as well as the symbolic sequence of a “drum language.” Members value inclusivity, share the common goal of engaging in rhythm, and rely on others to accomplish their needs. In a departure from current studies in identification, “identification via antithesis” was not supported in the data. However, a new category, termed “accessibility,” was discovered. In addition to the data collected pertaining to identification “inducement strategies,” it was also found that the community enacts a ritual of “rhythmic communication” that serves to create and maintain communal bonds.
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we can start a company pouring footings.
CHAPTER ONE:
RATIONALE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Most, whether single or partnered, long for continuity: a stable circle of family members—or friends who feel like family—that they can count on through good times and bad. But community is no longer a given, and the old forms do not fit current realities. If people want community today, they have to find new ways to create it for themselves.


But that is not the whole story. It could not be the whole story, for the culture of separation, if it ever became completely dominant, would collapse of its own incoherence. Or, even more likely, well before that happened, an authoritarian state would emerge to provide the coherence the culture no longer could.


The predicament of community in American life is nowhere more conspicuous than in the clash and incongruity, and therefore also the shallowness, of its rituals.


It seems almost daily that I hear a conversation, read an article, hear on the radio, or otherwise encounter the word “community.” It is incorporated into our language in many ways: “community gardens,” “community theater,” “community meeting,” “our community.” People talk about the lack “of community,” their desire for “a community,” and the erosion of “community” in the United States. A recent political brochure left on my door step assures voters that the candidate, involved in several community activities, is “committed to the community” and would solicit community involvement in the decision making process” (Head, 1999). It seems that “community” has become a popular, albeit ambiguous, concept in United States culture. It has become one of the many cliches used to win votes (as in political brochures), to sell everything from food
(as in “your community grocery store”) to houses (as in gated communities), and to entice potential employees to join the XYZ company (as in “we are a community of workers”).

But what does it mean to experience community in the United States where the national focus is increasingly based more on individualism than on community-ism? As Kemmis (1990, 1993) suggests, people once banded together, putting aside personal differences, in order to accomplish the tasks of living—the example he uses is community barn raising. But the days of community barn raising (i.e., needing others’ help) has evolved into our current state of technological advancements that “make our lives easier” by helping us to do more with less human help and the power of the dollar that enables us to pay others to “raise our barn” while we go about the business of our own, separate lives. It seems ironic, then, that the need for community is still very much real—an observation made by Peck (1987) in his lecture tours across the United States. He notes that “the one constant I have found wherever I go... is the lack of—and thirst for—community” (p. 57). So, if the days of needing others (to raise our barns, for example) are gone, what then is the impetus for individuals¹ to seek out membership in a community? Scholars from various disciplines—sociology, anthropology, political theory and community psychology—have helped and continue to help to piece together an answer to this question. In addition to these fields, it is the field of communication studies, with its perspectives on cultural communities and identification, that helps to provide a focus for this current investigation into the nature of community in the United States.
Beginning to address "community" through a communication perspective requires four primary steps. These four steps provide the foundation on which this study is built. The first step is to review communication research that speaks to the concept of community. The second step is the development of a definition of community, drawing from communication research as well as other disciplines. The third step is establishing a framework that will provide a lens through which one may understand both the nature of a community and how members come to identify with the community. Finally, a community must be selected (that adheres to the definition of community), which will be the context of this study.

Communication Research and the Concept of Community

Two areas of current research in communication studies shed light on the study of communities: ethnographic research and the study of rhetoric that emanates from a community. Communication ethnography focuses on the study of speech communities as cultural units of society. The ethnographic approach establishes the importance of forms, symbols and meanings in defining the boundaries of a cultural scene, or, in this case, a community (see Carbaugh, 1996, for a treatment of this approach). Stated concisely, symbols are seen as that which identifies a person with a specific group. (In Carbaugh's 1996 treatment, the artifacts, words, phrases, etc. that identify a person as a basketball fan, for example.) Forms are the communicative actions that enact an identity (cheering at a game). And, therefore, shared meanings are conveyed through these symbols of identity and the forms used to enact them. From this perspective, we can deduce that community can be defined partly by individuals sharing a similar identity as seen symbolically and as played out through a form of action.
Thus, an important aspect of “cultural communities” that is revealed through ethnographic research is the “communal function,” or how “people constitute communal identities with their communication” (Carbaugh, 1995, p. 282). According to Philipsen (1987), there are three communicative forms that serve to strengthen communal identities: rituals, myths and social dramas. Philipsen (1987) sees these forms as an integral aspect in the process of affirming a communal identity and in striking a balance between individualism and community-ism. In other words, rituals, myths and social dramas are communication forms enacted by individuals that establish a sense of community. Because this study focuses on understanding how and why individuals come to seek out and affirm communal identities, it is important to explore each of these forms in more detail.

A ritual is “a communication form in which there is a structured sequence of symbolic acts, the correct performance of which constitutes homage to a sacred object” (Philipsen, 1987, p. 250). A ritual, then, can be seen as an established series of actions or activities that, when performed and understood by community members, serves to celebrate and honor that which the community membership holds as a sacred aspect of their community. In essence, a ritual is “a form used to affirm a sense of shared identity by providing a culturally prescribed ordering of behavior which members can follow” (Braithwaite, 1997, p. 423).

Myths, in comparison to rituals, are somewhat less structured communication forms. As Philipsen (1987) defines it, a “myth is a great symbolic narrative which holds together the imagination of a people and provides bases of harmonious thought and action” (p. 251). Myths lend coherence to the community as they propagate within the
community stories that resonate with members and that provide a sense of communal values and beliefs tied to, and evolving from, the community’s history. For community members, myths aid in the process of negotiating the communal identity by enabling them to “see their own acts as conforming to a pattern which is implicit in the patterned stories of the heroic figures of their [community’s] past” (Philipsen, 1987, p. 252).

Finally, social dramas occur when members of a community in some way challenge the culture of that community. They “consist of a dramatic sequence in which social actors manifest concern with, and negotiate the legitimacy and scope of, the group’s rules of living” (Philipsen, 1987, p. 252). As Philipsen (1987) points out, social dramas unfold in four phases: a breach, a crisis, a redress, and a reintegration. In the first phase, there is a breach of the culturally prescribed way of doing things. The process of members’ acknowledgement of and attending to this breach is termed a crisis, which is the second phase. During the third stage, the redress, the violator will work to nullify the damage that occurred during the breach. The final stage includes the reintegration of the violator, or the acknowledgement by community members that there is “a schism or moral dissensus” (Philipsen, 1987, p. 252). Social dramas, then, become communal activities that serve to (re)define the community’s boundaries and violator’s membership in the community.

While there is the potential to add other communicative forms, these three forms “provide heuristic tools from which to identify particular communicative practices and identify the diverse ways the communal function of communication is socially practiced” (Carbaugh, 1995, p. 283). Thus, identifying the rituals, myths, and social dramas in a community becomes a method of better understanding how community members enact
their communal identities. With an understanding of how these forms are seen as maintaining a sense of community among members, I turn now to a review of how communication ethnographers have studied community and, later, how rhetoricians have contributed to the study of community. These studies provide not only interesting accounts of various cultural communities, but they also prove a more thorough understanding of how communication scholars have addressed the concept of “community.”

Ethnography of Communication

Ethnographers, who study communicative phenomenon in a variety of community contexts, provide us with valuable insight into the nature of community. Philipsen, in a pioneering ethnography, studied the value of talk in a community he called “Teamsterville” (1975). His study points to the importance of “talk” in establishing and maintaining rules of communication within a particular speech community. From this seminal work, communication ethnographers have continued to study cultural groups in a variety of contexts. Carbaugh (1996) has looked at social identities in the United States while other ethnographers have studied more specific cultural groups such as Vietnam veterans (Braithwaite, 1997), inner-city youth (Novek, 1995), and women in service industries (Wendt, 1995). Katriel, while focusing on Israeli culture, also informs this study of community by providing an exemplar of ethnographic research that captures “experiences of solidarity and community” (1991, p.4). Of special interest to this project are two studies that address “community” as a focus of their research. First, the work of Della-Piana and Anderson (1995) examines how a community service organization both constructed the word community and shaped their organization through the use of the
word community. Second, Rohrbauck-Stout (1993) assesses the influence of communication on community building and socialization processes in the Seattle music scene. Both of these studies of "community" provide interesting data that expands our understanding of the nature of community in the United States.

Rhetoric and Community

While the study of speech communities borrows from concepts held within rhetoric to assess how language works to facilitate unity (or lack thereof) among individuals and to create and maintain power and identity (Rafoth, 1990), looking more specifically at the field of rhetoric yields additional insights into the study of community. Rhetoricians, demonstrating how both the written and the spoken word define and maintain the boundaries of communities, help to clarify a definition of community. For example, Scheibel (1995) discusses how a surfer culture establishes and maintains territory as well as affirms cultural identity through the writing of letters to popular surfer magazines. In terms of establishing a definition of "community," the important part of his analysis is the extent to which myths, resonating within a community, serve to "create meaning, construct reality, both solve and reveal social problems, and reify culture" (p. 254). Additionally, rhetorical scholars have illustrated the importance of understanding and accommodating cultural differences when performing the role of rhetorical critique (c.f. Ono & Sloop, 1995; Philipsen, 1986). Rhetoricians, through their methodological approach and their focus on the rhetorical function of symbols, inform this study by expanding the way in which a cultural community can be viewed and studied.
Toward a Definition of Community

Upon understanding the ways in which communication research has approached the study of community, it is important to use this understanding to develop a definition of community that reflects a communication perspective. A formulated definition will serve to ground this study as inherently related to, but focally separate from, cultural communication studies as this study aims to assess (a voluntary) community as a studied concept not a context. As we first attempt to draft a definition, we soon realize that defining the word “community” is not an easy task. And once an agreeable definition is developed, one that will stand the critique of colleagues, a further challenge can be found in the actual study of the community—made more challenging by its complex nature. This complexity is compounded by permeable, nebulous boundaries making it difficult to assess who belongs to the community and the degree of member identification with their community. As Lyon (1987) points out, “Community is a word with many, some say too many meanings” (p. 3, emphasis in the original).

To begin, I will present definitions taken from sociology and Tribes research in education, both of which have developed useful definitions of community, and add to them the elements gleaned from the communication research delineated above to formulate a workable definition of community from a communication perspective. First, a sociological definition of community:

Community is a dynamic whole that emerges when a group of people participate in common practices, depend upon one another, make decisions together, identify themselves as part of something larger than the sum of their individual
relationships, and commit themselves for the long term to
their own, one another's, and the group's well-being.

(Shaffer and Anundsen, 1993, p. 10)

In addition to this sociological definition of community, Tribes research, with its focus on the establishment of a community (within the educational environment) and not on assessing a preexisting community, provides an additional perspective on the definition of community. Because Tribes is a pedagogical philosophy that may not be familiar to some, it is helpful to offer an explanation of Tribes before presenting a Tribes definition of community. Simply stated, Tribes is "a democratic group process" which creates "a positive environment that promotes human growth and learning" through the creation of a community (Gibbs, 1994, p. 21). The Tribes view, then is that:

Community is the esprit that happens when many minds
and hearts come together to work toward a common good.
Community happens through inclusion and the appreciation
of individual differences.... The possibility for
community...depends upon the assumption that
interdependence and connection to others is key to human
development, learning, and the accomplishment of task.

(Gibbs, 1994, p. 82)

Combining and substituting communication theory provided earlier with the definitions above, we can arrive at a view of community that both reflects a
communication perspective and includes elements that are traditionally not seen as communicatively salient. Thus, for purposes of this study, community will be defined as:

A community is a group of people who share a mutual understanding and use of common group symbols of identity and enacted forms of these identities—ritual, myths, and social dramas. And who identify themselves a part of something greater than the sum of individual relationships and who see themselves as committed to their own, the other’s and the group’s well being. Members do not have to share the same physical space to be a part of the community, but members do have to include other members in communal activities.

This definition of community can be conceptualized as the verbal, nonverbal, and other symbolic forms (e.g., the “artifacts”) of communication among people who share a common knowledge and understanding of them. The members of a community understand the rituals and myths that serve to maintain and create their community and they (re)create community boundaries through the experience of social dramas. Furthermore, a community can be seen as made up of people who are engaged in interpersonal relationships with the other members of the community. Finally, in this definition, there is focus among community members on the inclusion of others (e.g., current or possible community members) in both the community as a whole and in the activities engaged in by community members.
From a Definition of Community to the Identification with Community

While this definition provides a tool that is useful in the classification of groups as communities, it does not address a crucial element—how members come to see themselves as a part of the community. Thus, an integral aspect of understanding community is understanding who identifies with a community and who does not. As political theorist, W.J.M. Mackenzie (1978) asserted, “those who share an interest share an identity” (p. 124). Moreover, he asserts that coupling shared interests with a shared space (with the use of long-distance communication devices, not necessarily a physical space) enhances a sense of mutual [political] identity. It becomes apparent that in order to understand the full nature of community, we must understand in more depth the concept of member identification with a community. This is where I turn to the study of organizational communication for insight into the nature of identity and identification.

Toward Understanding a Community Identity

Cheney and Tompkins (1987) define identity as being “what is commonly taken as representative of a person or group” (p. 5, emphasis deleted) and identification as “the appropriation of identity” (p. 5, emphasis deleted). Thus, we can see identification as a process (Cheney, 1983a, 1983b) where one continually defines and redefines one’s identity in the context of an organization by “borrowing” identity from another, or from a group of others (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). However, identification can also be seen as a product that is positively correlated to the level of commitment one has to an organization (Sass & Canary, 1991). This, then, begins to address the full nature of identification and its impact on the individual. Paraphrasing Burke (as quoted in Cheney & Tompkins, 1988, p. 4), as one begins to identify with another, she can be seen as both
an individual and as a part of the other(s). Thus, in terms of a community, we can say that as an individual begins to identify with the community, they gain a community identity, but it is at the expense of (some of) their individuality. As Cheney and Tomkins (1987) point out, through the use of Sennett, "a social bond is both a source of individual identity, a ‘connection,’ and a constraint on action as in ‘bondage;’ identification-commitment limits one’s possibilities by linking her to particular groups, goals, and values" (p. 11, emphasis deleted).

A Lens through which to View Identification with Community

With a theoretical grounding in the definition of “identity,” I turn now to the establishment of a framework that provided a theoretical lens through which to assess identification in a community. Of importance for this pursuit was Cheney’s (1983a) essay, *The Rhetoric of Identification and the Study of Organizational Communication*. In this essay, Cheney identified three strategies and several tactics used in organizational messages that influence identification. These strategies and tactics form the basis of an expanded framework offered by DiSanza and Bullis (1999, p. 357) which I used as a theoretical framework. This framework, building off of Cheney’s important work in organizational identification, offered a more recent and complete lens through which to view how a person comes to identify with a community. While DiSanza and Bullis (1999) focused on organizations and not communities, I believed that the way in which a member comes to identify with a community was similar to the way in which a person comes to identify with an organization. The framework presented by DiSanza and Bullis (1999) was modified to reflect the study of a community and was presented as broad
categories that provided a guiding, but not restricting research tool. The framework is as follows:

Members are linked to the community.

Members are linked to a community through the use of shared symbols and artifacts as well as messages that (1) express concern for the member, (2) demonstrate shared values and goals, (3) illustrate a mutually beneficial relationship between the community and the individual, and (4) that advocate community benefits and activities.

Recognition of members

A member’s contributions to areas (e.g., organizations, political causes, etc.) outside of the community may be recognized by those within the community as well as those who are outside of the community. Likewise, a member can receive recognition by being a part of the community that is praised by either those within the community or those who are outside of the community.

The united member

Members use the assumed “we,” which is illustrative of their common bond. Members also acknowledge their common bond via “identification through antithesis,” which occurs when members unite against a common enemy.

In addition to this framework, which aided in the assessment of how members come to identify with their community, I analyzed communication forms—such as rituals, myths and social dramas—within the community that shed light on the nature of the community by illuminating how the community enacted their communal bonds. As the ethnographic research cited previously suggests, this was a critical step in
understanding the "cultural community" and was, therefore, important to address in this study.

Questions to be Answered

While the aforementioned framework provided "a systematic way of asking about and thus analyzing communication practices" (Carbaugh, 1995, p.278) within a community, it was important to delineate research questions that concisely stated what I hoped to discover during my research. For this study, I had four research questions:

(1) How do members within a community come to identify with that community?
(2) What does identification with a community accomplish for members?
(3) How is "community" conveyed to members (e.g., through rituals, myths, and/or social dramas)?
(4) What role does a member's identification with community play in their identification with larger society?

These questions were seen as both the catalysts for undertaking this study and also as guides that aided in the focusing of my energy during data collection. With these questions in mind, I turn now to a more specific discussion of the process in which I embarked to select a community that became the context of this study. I begin this discussion by addressing how others have studied identification and community. These studies, whose foci are different than my own, nonetheless provided a context into which I situated my study.

Identification and Community: In search of a context

Communication scholars who have studied identification and community have generally taken a more macro-community perspective. For example, Schlesinger (1993)
examines how Europeans navigate the tension between a collective, European identity and nation/state identities. Similarly, Ferguson (1993) assesses how Canadians and U.S. citizens (re)define national identities and Puddifoot (1994) argues that community identity in an English town is primarily related to family ties and a sense of belonging to the specific geographic area. In addition, Chavez (1994) offers an interesting account of how undocumented immigrants will choose to stay in the United States if they perceive themselves as being a part of a local community. While not a study focusing specifically on "identity," Chavez's account can be viewed as an example of how an individual's identification with a community influences her/his choice of living environment.

These studies offered insight into how individuals both navigate communal identities and how these communal identities effect an individual's sense of belonging and place. However, the intention of this study was to assess, on a more micro-community level, how individuals come to identify themselves as being a member of a community. So, while these studies provided fodder for the contemplation of community, I felt compelled to take a slightly different tack and to seek out a community that was more a product of individuals seeking it out and less a product of where individuals lived. The desire to study such an intentional (i.e., voluntary) community stemmed largely from my desire to understand why people seek out communities. In the following section I explain the process of finding a community-context and then offer a description of the chosen community.

Finding a Community

When choosing a community for this study, it became important that a group was selected that not only adhered to the definition of community and/or that defined itself as
a community, but that also could be classified as an intentional community. Fulfilling these criteria were seen as being necessary prerequisites in order to successfully come to an understanding of community as understood by community members. In choosing a community, then, I conducted some preliminary research that involved looking through the community pages in the local telephone book, an alternative organizations' directory, and several area newspapers, as well as engaging in various conversations with members of Missoula community organizations. From this preliminary research, I compiled a list of four possible communities: the Missoula drum community; a group of women who have formed an environmental organization; a group of women who meet weekly to cook dinner; and the Missoula Urban Development (MUD) organization.

In order to select a community, I first assessed whether or not these four possibilities conveyed messages that they were, indeed, a community—either through their mission statements, public forms of communication such as flyers and brochures, or through statements made during conversations. From this query, I eliminated MUD because their mission statement mentioned the forming and maintenance of community only as a secondary goal. I next eliminated the environmental group for a similar reason. Choosing between the remaining two communities forced me to look more deeply into how I was going to answer the questions posed above. Upon completion of this analysis, I chose the Missoula drum and dance community for reasons articulated below.

First, having been a member of the Missoula drum and dance community since September 1998, I believed the community fulfilled the two criteria mentioned above. The members of the community that I had been in contact with not only referred to themselves as a community, but the flyers that emanated from the community advertised
community drum and dance activities. The second criteria, to study an intentional community, was also fulfilled. Members did not live in the same area and many did not live in the same town. Therefore, the members of the Missoula drum and dance community purposefully came together with the intention to drum and/or dance in a group.

Second, as indicated by the fourth research question, a goal of this study was to assess how a member’s identification effects her/his identification with larger society. Studying the Missoula drum and dance community offered a unique opportunity to assess this question on two levels. The most obvious level being how the Missoula drummers relate to larger society (e.g., Missoula, the United States, etc.) The second, however, I found somewhat more intriguing—how the Missoula drummers and dancers related to the larger society of drummers and dancers (e.g., drummers and dancers from other U.S. cities, or countries). There was, then, the potential to assess the extent to which one community identifies with another, similar community.

There is a third reason that the Missoula drum and dance community offers a unique research opportunity. As stated in the third research question, it was important to assess how community is conveyed to others. According to the research previously cited, there are rituals, myths, and/or social dramas enacted within communities that communicate the nature of the drum and dance community to others and that work to maintain a sense of community. In addition to these rituals, myths, and social dramas, studying the Missoula drum community also offered an opportunity to understand the impact of music on the creation and maintenance of communal bonds.5
I am not the first to take an interest in how music influences communities, others who have assessed music oriented communities have studied the Grateful Dead and their fans, Deadheads, (Dollar, 1999, Lehman, 1994), the Seattle “grunge” music scene (Rohrbauck-Stout, 1993), and country dancing (Flinn, 1995). Whereas these scholars offer a picture of communities centered around, but not actively engaged in the making of music, Rogers (1994) presents an intriguing foray into rhythm, as encountered in drum circles and world beat music. In his analysis, Rogers (1994) asserts that rhythm works to establish order—in individuals, social groupings, and the earth. Coupling the works of these academicians with the works of Hart and Stevens (1990), Hart and Lieberman (1991, 1999) and Redmond (1997) who provide both an historical and spiritual account of drumming and drum music, it becomes clear that music is a powerful bonding agent that deserves more time and thought. In other words, I perceived a need to explore that aspect of music that contributes to community building. So, when presented with an opportunity to study a community whose primary activity is the playing of and dancing to music the choice seemed clear.

But there is one final reason that I chose the Missoula drum and dance community. Previous research that I had conducted as well as comments made by community members indicated that drumming is not only gaining in popularity (c.f., Cushman, 1993; Johnson, 1996) in this country, but people are also using drumming in community building activities. For example, professionals are meeting not to discuss profit margins, budget cuts, pension plans and the most recent technological advances, but to come together in a common rhythm—to participate in community building through drumming (Cushman, 1993; Johnson, 1996). Even gang members are drumming to “ease
tensions between [their] rival[s]" (Cushman, 1993, p. 46). As Johnson (1996) points out, drumming as a tool to create a sense of community among individuals, has, in effect, "become the Nineties answer to the Sixties happening" (p. 42). So, because drumming has been used as a community building tool, there is a certain appropriateness of studying this community as a context for this study. In addition, due to the increased interest in the U.S. in drum music, I felt there was a certain timeliness to this study.

In summary, the Missoula drum and dance community not only fulfilled this study's criteria for a community, but it also offered unique opportunities that the other reviewed communities did not offer. Having established the process underwent to select a community, I turn now to the next crucial step—a more thorough discussion of the community.

The Missoula Drum and Dance Community

According to one member of the Missoula drum and dance community, African and Afro-Cuban dancing and drumming were first taught in Missoula in 1982 (interview 1). From this time and coinciding with the national trend, the community has steadily grown and with this growth, smaller subcommunities have developed. In the most broad sense, the Missoula drum and dance community membership consists of those who drum and/or dance in the variety of community activities. An eclectic mix of people—professionals, laborers, and those who are not job attached; young children, teens, twenty- and thirty-somethings as well as older adults; men and women wearing flowing, loose-fitting clothes next to those wearing button-up shirts and slacks—this larger group is bound together through the shared desire to engage in rhythmic activities (drumming and/or dancing). However, this larger community can also be viewed as consisting of
smaller subcommunities that differ in perspective and focus—the primary difference being between those who drum and dance to self-created rhythms (Full Moon drummers and dancers) and those whose focus is on learning and performing traditional dances and rhythms (Traditionalists). It would be possible to study each subcommunity as an intact community, but because rhythm acts as a unifying goal (as will be discussed in the findings section) these two subgroups will be addressed as parts of the larger Missoula drum and dance community. In the following pages, then, the Missoula drum and dance community will be discussed in terms of (1) the Full Moon drummers and dancers, (2) the members who play traditional rhythms, and (3) the nature of the community as a whole.

Full Moon Drummers and Dancers

Once a month, community members meet for approximately two and a half hours at the Full Moon drum circles to play their drums and to dance to the music that is being made. Started in the early nineties primarily by the Drum Brothers, these gatherings are open to all that want to attend—whether people want to drum and dance, or watch and listen. During the warmer months, the gatherings are held outside in a small island park sandwiched between a river and a large irrigation ditch, accessed by a footbridge. However, when the weather is too cold and/or rainy, the gatherings are held in a local church. In both the outdoor and the indoor gatherings, drummers sit or stand in a circle (or as close an approximation as space will allow) and dancers generally occupy the space in the center of this circle, although some choose to dance outside of the circle. Indoor drummings have a more ceremonious feel as there is an altar with candles, sage, and musical instruments at the center of the circle that is not found during outdoor
drumming. Regardless of location, however, the Full Moon circles tend to attract a
diverse mix of people, some who attend every month and others who attend sporadically.

Do to the "organic" nature of these gatherings, there is always a different mix of
drummers and dancers; although there is a core group of drummers and dancers,
approximately ten, who regularly attend. There is, therefore, a wide range of experience
levels attained by the drummers and dancers attending Full Moon circles—some
members have taken lessons, while others are content to play, or dance, what they feel.
The focus, therefore, is more on drumming or dancing in a way that is indicative of
personal expression. There is no right way to express oneself—the point is to drum or
dance so as to be an active part of the community.

The "Traditionalists"

In contrast to the Full Moon circles, those who engage in learning and performing
traditional rhythms are more focused on accurately drumming and/or dancing the parts of
traditional rhythms. There are three subcommunities represented by this category that
both teach and perform traditional rhythms: Unity dance and drum, The Drum Brothers,
and a collection of Afro-Cuban drummers and dancers. In addition to these three, there
is also a group that is primarily a performance group: LEDA (Les etudiants de
l'Afrique). Both Unity and the Afro-Cuban collection focus on not only learning and
teaching traditional rhythms, but also on traditional dances. For these two groups, the
focus is on learning and performing rhythms as they would be performed in their cultural
contexts—with no separation between dancers and drummers. In other words, the goal is
for drummers to play traditional rhythms for dancers who are dancing traditional dances.
The Drum Brothers, on the other hand, primarily focus on teaching and learning rhythms without the traditional dances.

Because it is important to the community members belonging to these subcommunities to learn traditional dances and/or rhythms, they will bring to Missoula instructors who are master drummers and dancers. As with other community classes, the classes offered by these masters are open to anyone wanting to attend. Classes usually last from between one and a half to two hours and are attended by anywhere from three to thirty people. In these classes, drummers are, once again, seated in a (semi) circle with the focused attention on the instructor. Dancers, during their classes, will form rows of three to five that progress in a series of dance steps across the floor until space no longer allows for forward motion. At this time, dancers, maintaining their row, will assume their original position on the floor until the other rows have performed this step at which point the cycle repeats—usually with a new dance step.

In addition to these classes, some community members will travel away from Missoula to attend drum and dance workshops. For example, at this writing, one member of the Afro-Cuban collective is studying with a master drummer in Cuba and three members of Unity drum and dance are in Hawaii attending a drum and dance workshop. Here again, the focus of these members is on learning and performing traditional rhythms and dances.

The Missoula Drum and Dance Community

Having offered a description of the two primary subcommunities, the Full Moon drummers and dancers and the “traditionalists,” it is important to offer an overall picture of how these subcommunities come together to form the larger Missoula drum and dance
Generally speaking, members in the drum and dance community have a "home group," or a specific subcommunity to which they belong. While there are those who attend Full Moon drummings and who are a part of the "traditionalist" group, there is very little crossover between members of the four "traditional" subgroups: LEDA, Unity, the Drum Brothers and the Afro-Cuban collective. In other words, members of these groups have formed tight groups of drummers and dancers who both prefer to drum and/or dance with that group and who feel a sense of loyalty to that group. Several drummers spoke of an interest in "crossing over" but have not done so because they did not want to offend the instructors and other members of their home group. They see crossing over as placing them in a tenuous position that may make playing in their home group uncomfortable (interview 8).

Even with subdivision in the community, members still both come together and recognize the benefit of the subcommunities that have formed. The time when members can be seen coming together is when there is a visiting master drummer or dancer. During these occasions, members from the various subcommunities attend classes together and often perform together. Members of the Missoula drum and dance community talk about these events as a time for the various groups to come together.

Members not only recognize times when the drum and dance community comes together, but they also talk about the benefits of having subcommunities. For example, Full Moon drum circles are talked about as being where many novice drummers and dancers begin their experience with the community. The "traditionalists" are seen as offering a variety of different experiences for members of the drum and dance community as well as those in the larger Missoula community. For example, Unity...
teaches African rhythms and dances while the Afro-Cuban collective also offers Cuban and Haitian rhythms and dances. As one member of the Missoula drum and dance community explains, “The larger community needs to have smaller communities in order to be healthy and diverse. Within subcommunities, you need to have cohesion in order for people to be satisfied. But in the larger community, there is the challenge and difference that creates growth” (interview 2).
CHAPTER TWO: 

METHODS

As Larkey and Morrill (1995) point out, the study of identification, as a process, is best understood by the use of "processual methods—such as ethnography and longitudinal analysis of organizational cultural artifacts" (p. 200). Additionally, Duck (1993) suggests that scholars focus their energy more on the process of communication instead of the fixed results of the communication itself. In light of these perspectives, I employed ethnographic research methods, which enables researchers to study processes and to obtain rich, reportable data. In this section, I will discuss the specific research methods employed in this study: participant-observation, interviewing, print and web site analysis, and data coding. In the last portion, I will address the issues of reliability and validity.

Before turning to a discussion of data gathering and analyzing techniques, it is prudent first to address the weaknesses and strengths of my membership in the community and how they may have colored my observations. To begin, there were two potential weaknesses that I contemplated before I began this study in an effort to mitigate their effect. First, because of my involvement with the drum and dance community, it could be argued that I would be biased in my findings. While I think any biases a researcher may have should be assessed, I do not believe my membership in this community presents a significant issue on this account. As Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) point out, "It...[is] critical for the ethnographer to document her own activities, circumstances, and emotional responses as these factors shape the process of observing and recording others lives" (p. 11). They see the separation between a researcher's data
and a researcher's reactions to that data as problematic because it implies that the data is and should be objective, which devalues ethnomethodological approaches to research and discovering knowledge. Conversely, recognizing the subjective nature of collected data ensured the recognition that research findings were "contingent upon the circumstances of their "discovery" by the ethnographer" (p. 12). Adopting this perspective, then, enabled me to focus on the contextual nature of my observations, which in turn enabled me not to discount my responses but instead to situate them in terms of the observed situation(s).

Emerson, et al (1995) also assert that "[it] is critical to document closely [the] subtle processes of learning and resocialization as they occur" (emphasis in the original, p. 13). Since, to a degree, I had already been "enculturated" into this community I, to some extent, was not able to obtain data as a naive researcher. However, this weakness is diminished for three reasons. First, as Braithwaite (1997) points out, "culture, particularly as manifested in talk, is open to investigation by anyone because it is formed through shared and observable interaction" as opposed to "a mental set which is knowable only to an insider" (p. 429, emphasis in the original). Since the methods of this study include participant observation in public gatherings where culture is inherently being communicated to others, I was able to observe, participate in, and record the cultural practices of the drum and dance community. Second, I had several journal entries that, while not written from a "researcher's perspective," did offer insight into my initial interactions with the drum community. Finally, collecting interview data from newcomers to the community helped me to supplement my experiences as a researcher in the community.
While there were some weaknesses of being a member of the community, there were also some strengths. Because ethnographic fieldwork necessitates immersion in the field of study, it was important to have “full access” to the community. Since I was (and am currently) a member of the drum and dance community, gaining this access was a mute point (a boon also addressed by Braithwaite, 1997). In addition to having full access to the community, my membership also negated the pitfalls of being a transient researcher. As Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) explain, researchers, who are not a part of their studied group, have a field experience that is “colored” by their “transience” in the setting and their orientation to the people and events they study as objects of study, which can negate their “realness” (p. 4). They assert that, “In these ways, research and writing commitments qualify ethnographic immersion, making the field researcher at least something of an outsider and, at the extreme, a cultural alien” (p. 4). Obviously, as a member of the community, these “qualifying” factors were not an issue. In fact, this opened the possibility of obtaining more thorough, richer data—both because I had the ability to (more) accurately understand the data and because members of the community seemed to trust me to accurately represent them. Having explored the strengths and weaknesses with which I entered the field, I turn now to addressing the specific data gathering and analysis techniques I employed, beginning with being a participant-observer.

**Participant-Observation**

I spent 5 months conducting field research, generating approximately 60 hours of formal data collection (approximately 15 hours in Full Moon activities and approximately 45 hours in traditionalist activities such as drum and dance classes and
performances). As a participant-observer, I was able to observe and experience how the community members identify themselves with the community—not just how I identify them as members of a community. Indeed, a strength of this method is an "immersion in others' worlds in order to grasp what they experience as meaningful and important" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p.2). Another strength of being a participant-observer is that I would be able to focus on the "everyday" talk of the community, as Duck (1993) suggests, and therefore, I would be able to build a more comprehensive picture of the Missoula drum and dance community.

As stated previously, I have been a member of the Missoula drum and dance community since the fall of 1998; however, my formal field research began in December 1999. Entering the field as a researcher/member and not just as a member necessitated a shift in roles from a drummer/dancer to researcher/drummer/dancer. No longer could I attend drum gatherings for the sole purpose of enjoying myself and those around me. My role as a researcher meant that I needed to execute two tasks: (1) I had to expand my knowledge of the community by gaining access to the subcommunities that I had not yet experienced and (2) I had to begin writing field notes. In the following paragraphs, I will explicate these two points and in so doing describe my role as participant-observer.

Conducting field research, which culminated in full field notes, was an integral aspect of this study and because I wanted to understand the whole community (i.e., all subgroups) I needed to extend my research beyond my preexisting membership in the Full Moon subcommunity. Discovering these other communities was a somewhat serendipitous event—at least at first. As the story goes, I was leaving campus on a dark winter evening contemplating what method I should use to find those drummers and
dancers who were in the community but who were not affiliated with the Full Moon drummers and dancers. Walking past a campus building, I heard the familiar call of the drum. Following its sound, I found myself outside of a closed door waiting for the drummers to exit. During this waiting period, I noticed two signs on a bulletin board advertising two separate drum and dance groups—Unity and the Afro-Cuban collective. Taking the contacts’ names and numbers I left and later contacted these groups. Once I had contact with these heretofore undiscovered groups, I discovered other members through both field observations and interviews where I asked members if they knew of other members/groups in the community whose names I did not already have.

Before I began my research in these subcommunities, I first gained formal permission from each to conduct research while participating in the activities. Gaining permission from the Full Moon subcommunity was a two-part process. First, I talked to the (unofficial) leader who suggested my second step, to ask during the period of general announcements if anyone minded that I conduct research during the gatherings. It was at this time suggested that if anyone was uncomfortable they could either talk to me or the (unofficial) leader. As no one voiced any opposition, I commenced my research in the Full Moon subcommunity. In a similar fashion, I also contacted the leaders of the “traditional” subcommunities and asked if I could conduct research during gatherings. Again, there was no resistance and I began to conduct research in these subcommunities as well.8

Upon gaining access, I began to attend the various gatherings held by members of the community. During these gatherings I adopted the “participating-in-order-to-write” approach to writing field notes. Using this approach I made both “mental notes or
“headnotes” to include certain events in full fieldnotes, [and I]... also [wrote] down, in the form of jottings or scratch notes, abbreviated words and phrases to use later to construct full fieldnotes” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, pp. 18-19). This approach enabled me to navigate the tension between full participation and (more) vivid jottings and field notes. In other words, I was able to remain in the scene and make mental notes that would later be written in the form of full field notes, or I could choose to make jottings that would later be expanded into full field notes.

When I did choose to make jottings they took two forms. First, I would remove myself from the scene and write my jottings in private. Private jottings, when possible, were preferred because there is less a risk of alienating, biasing, or making uncomfortable the other members attending the gathering. However, there were occasions when open jotting “fit” into the context of what I was doing in the scene and were, in these cases, utilized. For example, during a Full Moon drum circle, I had a notebook out taking the names and phone numbers of members who consented to being interviewed. During the announcements, several members made interesting statements and I was able to inconspicuously jot these statements into the pages of my notebook.

These “headnotes” and jottings were used, after existing the scene in the process of writing field notes. My first field observations paid more attention to my initial, overall impressions of the gatherings and my interactions with other members. In these beginning impressions I paid particular attention to acquiring data that captured the essence of both the scene and the members who were participating in it. As my research progressed and as I began to see certain trends within the community, my “headnotes” and jottings began to focus more on “key events or incidents” that either affirmed a
surfacing trend, or that ran "counter to [my] expectations" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p.27). Throughout the process of field research, the primary goal of my observations and subsequent field notes was to capture in vivid detail the scene as experiences by myself and as I perceived others experiencing it. In other words, I not only recorded my observations, but I also recorded my perceptions of other members' experiences in the scene.

Upon occasion, I found a field observation wanting of further explanation. On these occasions, I would note in the text of my field notes that I needed either more field research, or the issue clarified through an informal or a formal interview. For example, during one dance class, a drummer explained how a dancer and a drummer communicated through the accentuation of a slap-note (field notes 2/21/00). Since I was not sure I understood this concept, I dedicated a portion of a formal interview with this drummer to seeking clarification.

Interviews

In addition to field research, I also deemed it important to conduct interviews (approximately 50 hours). Since there is little talk within the community pertaining to how and why members first came to heed the call of the drum, interviews were necessary to solicit this information. Therefore, interviews were designed to obtain data pertaining to the first two research questions: (1) How do members within the community come to identify with a community? And (2) What does identification with the community accomplish for members? As already mentioned, interviews were also used to check my perceptions as a researcher. In the following pages, both the participants and the structure of the interviews will be discussed.
Participants

I formally interviewed 37 members of the Missoula drum and dance community in a total of 35 interviews as two pairings of community members desired to be interviewed together (interviews 11 and 25). Interviewees were selected from each subcommunity (17 interviewees who were primarily Full Moon drummers and dancers and 20 interviewees who were primarily traditionalist) and attention was paid to interviewing drummers and dancers who ranged in amount of time spent in the community. No member who I asked declined to be interviewed although one member had to attend to an emergency during the scheduled interview time and, due to time conflicts, another interview time was not scheduled. Because I felt it was important to interview all members who wanted their voices recorded (pun intended), I interviewed two members past the time when I “officially” ceased to interview (because I was hearing repeat data). Interviewees were contacted by telephone to set up an interview time and place, which was by interviewee preference. At this time interviewees were asked if the interview could be tape-recorded. All interviewees consented to be taped and all interviews were taped, except one, which was not taped due to a tape recorder malfunction.

Interview sequence

As indicated previously, interviews were conducted in an environment chosen by the interviewee. Time was also spent in the beginning of each interview offering a brief explanation of the study, answering questions, and informing interviewees that they could, at any time, stop the tape recorder, erase an answer, and/or take the tape if they felt uncomfortable with an answer they had given. Interviews were designed to be semi-
structured, which is to say that there was a general list of questions, but was not a
structured interview where there is “little room for variation in responses except where
an infrequent open-ended question is used” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 363). The order in
which I asked questions, the phrasing and frequency of follow-up questions used, and the
time varied for all interviews. However, since part of the purpose of conducting
interviews was to obtain data in order to answer the first two research questions
mentioned previously, all questions, in various forms, were asked of each interviewee. In
general, though, questions were put to the interviewee with the most innocuous questions
first and the more “sensitive” questions toward the last.9

To decrease the likelihood of misinterpretations, I employed three methods while
conducting interviews. First, I jotted down, in the text of my hand written interview
notes, nonverbal cues used by the interviewees. These nonverbal cues were noted when
they were seen as important details that would help to establish meaning and context
during the transcribing process. For example, during one interview, the member touched
his heart to indicate where he felt the music (interview 2). In another interview, I noted
that the interviewee seemed to be telling me what she/he thought I wanted to hear
(interview 26).

The following two strategies were employed to curtail what Whyte (1982)
referred to as three factors that “may cause serious misinterpretation of the
[interviewee’s] statements” (p. 115). These were “(1) ulterior motives... (2) the
interviewee’s desire to please... [and] (3) idiosyncratic factors... [such as] mood, wording
of the question, individuals peculiarities in the connotations of words and extraneous
factors, such as a baby crying, [and] the telephone ringing” (emphasis in the original, p.

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115). The first of these two strategies was asking for clarification on words used by the interviewee. This was done when I either did not understand the use of the word, or when another member had used that word and I wanted to assess the extent to which there was agreement in meaning. For example, during several interviews members used the word “energy.” Both because I was not sure of its meaning as used by the members of the community and because I was not sure whether or not the members understood this word in the same way, I asked the interviewees to define the word. To ensure that I had understood their definition, I then offered an example and asked if this was an agreeable way of understanding the concept. This process of definition followed by example(s) continued until there was a sense of mutual understanding.

In the second of the last two strategies, I asked follow-up questions designed to address the same topic from a different perspective. This strategy was used when I was not sure of the overall meaning of the interviewee’s response, when I thought that the interviewee might have misunderstood the question, and/or when I felt the interviewee might be trying to tell me what I want to hear. For example, in a discussion with one member we were talking about the drum’s ability to aid in the formation of connection between members. The interviewee had earlier in the interview stated a dislike of learning set rhythms because they interfered with her/his ability to express inner feelings, which were the basis of the connection between drummers (and dancers). Because this member was a drummer in one of the “traditional” subcommunity classes, this response seemed contrary to her/his actions. Upon inquiring as to why she/he wanted to learn structured rhythms, I discovered that this member also felt that the connection could be made by “locking” into the rhythm with the other drummers (interview 17).
Printed and Internet Materials

In order to obtain a more accurate and thorough perspective of the Missoula drum and dance community, I also analyzed written messages and documents that directly related to the community. For example, I analyzed flyers, brochures, newspaper articles, web sites and other tracts either that emanated from the community, or that were written about the community. Flyers and brochures typically advertised upcoming workshops taught by either a Missoula drum and dance community member or a visiting master drummer or dancer. For example, one flyer advertised a drum workshop with Fred Simpson, a master drummer, that was open to beginning, intermediate, and advanced drummers which culminated in an “informal performance of workshop participants” (LEDA, 1999). The newspaper articles that were written about the drum and dance community were not generally written about the community as a whole, but rather they were written about the subcommunities (e.g., the Full Moon drummers and dancers). Therefore, these articles served to expand my understanding of the subcommunities more so than the community in its entirety. Finally, I also monitored the Drum Brothers’ web site (drumbrothers.com) throughout the course of my research.10

The printed materials for this study were collected in a number of ways. First, I signed up to be on the Drum Brothers’ mailing list, which provided me with brochures advertising their upcoming events, and the Full Moon e-mail list, which kept me updated not only on Full Moon happenings but also on other events that the Full Moon subcommunity members offered. I also collected flyers and brochures that advertised the arrival of master drum and dance teachers. These materials were collected either at the actual event (e.g., drum class) or they were obtained from community members during
other community events or casual conversation. Newspaper articles were obtained in two fashions. First, I searched local newspapers’ databases and, second, I talked with established community members who recalled articles that were printed about the community.

In analyzing these messages, I focused on how the community works to maintain its identity, how the community communicates this identity to “others,” and how the community responds to these “others” in order to further solidify their identity. While not the primary data analyzed in this study, these print sources were used to supplement and validate the data collected during field observations and interviews and provided a more rich understanding of the process of community member identification. As such, flyers, brochures, and newspaper articles were included as data in the findings of this study.

**Coding**

Field notes, interview transcriptions, and print and internet sources were analyzed on two levels: (1) assessing the gestalt of the data taking into account the context from which the data were obtained and (2) coding data using both open coding and categories of the descriptive framework previously outlined. In the initial analytic process, data were read to achieve an understanding of the communication event. Here, I focused on achieving an understanding of the events I observed, the interviewee’s total message, and the general meaning of the documents. In this step it was important to gain insight into the context in which data were acquired in order to assuage the risk of misinterpreting members’ (or the documents) statements. Once I had a more general understanding of
the data and the context, I then began the coding process beginning with open coding and ending with using the framework to code data.

Open coding

Since the framework used in this study was the product of studies conducted in organizations, and not communities, I was mindful of the possibilities of additional categories as well as non-applicable categories. To this end, I used open coding methods by analyzing my field notes "with an eye toward identifying events described in the notes that could themselves become the basis of categorization" (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 152). As I read the data (field note, interview transcription, document) for a second time, I performed a line-by-line analysis noting the concepts present. As this process continued, themes began to emerge that were noted with references to other data sets. The purpose of this form of coding was to ensure that I would not neglect data that was not represented in one of the categories of the framework, and therefore my focus was not on developing specific categories, but rather to identify prevalent trends and important themes. This process proved beneficial as some categories were added to the framework that might have been missed otherwise.

Framework

Data were also coded according to the categories of the descriptive framework. In this process, data was analyzed to assess its relevance to the categories present in the framework and to develop subcategories and connections between data sets. During this process it was necessary to return to the literature on identification, specifically the work done by DiSanza and Bullis (1999) in order to bring to the foreground important categories that had been obscured by my (re)presentation of their work as a condensed
framework. Additionally, there were themes discovered during open coding that were included in an expanded framework. In the following paragraphs, the categories of the revised framework are presented with an explanation of the evolution of the framework.

In the first category, **members are linked to the community**, there was substantial support for each of the five subcategories presented in the original framework. In the first subcategory, members being linked through the use of *shared symbols and artifacts*, I initially included references made to a shared “drum language,” which I saw as a symbolic sequence. However, because I began to notice the overwhelming amount of data pertaining to the drummers and dancers sharing this rhythmic language, I came to see that this phenomenon was not only a shared “drum language,” but was also a part of a ritual enacted by the community members. Reaching this understanding, I chose to include a second section of my findings dedicated to the explication of this ritual. The other four subcategories included messages that (1) expressed concern for members, (2) demonstrated a shared value and goals, (3) illustrated mutually beneficial relationships, and (4) promoted community benefits and activities. Each of these categories were well supported in the data.

The second primary category, **recognition of the member**, was initially constructed to include both member’s contributions outside of the community and their contributions within the community. While the recognition of their contributions inside the community was well supported, evidence of the community’s recognition of members’ outside contributions was found to be lacking. Subsequently, this subcategory was omitted from the findings section.
The third primary category, the united member, included both the “assumed we,” which indicated a communal bond and “identification via antithesis,” which indicated members uniting against another or others. In this category it was found that members did not “unite against others,” but since members simultaneously saw themselves as different than non-drummers and dancers and as a part of the larger culture that consisted of these non-drummers and dancers these findings were reported. Additionally, members by and large hesitated to “assume” that they were similar to each other on any ground other than they were drummers and dancers. So, while the “assumed we” was not extensively used in this community, I again chose to include this category because the data indicated a level of “we-ness” as understood by the community members.

In addition to these initial three categories, two more categories were added. One, an invitation to membership, was included in DiSanza’s and Bullis’s (1999) categorization scheme. The second, accessibility, was an added category that arose from the data. Both of these two were added to the initial framework so that important and interesting data, which was understood while open coding and that pertained to how and why individuals come to identify with a community, could be systematically reported. While an invitation to membership was discovered by DiSanza and Bullis (1999), accessibility is seen as a new category of the identification process.

Reliability and Validity

The relevance of establishing reliability and validity (concepts originating in quantitative research methods) in ethnographic research is sometimes questioned. Janesick (1998) for example, argues that “it is time to question the trinity” of reliability, validity and generalizability (p. 50). She suggests that validity can be established by
having community members read one's work, that reliability "in the traditional sense of replicability is pointless" (p. 51), and that generalizability limits our thinking of the role of research in the social sciences. Others, however, maintain that it is important for ethnographers to present a case for both reliability and validity in their studies (see LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). In this section, then, I aim to present a case for both the reliability and the validity of this study, although I acknowledge the importance of Janesick's (1998) argument.

Triangulation

To begin, in this study my aim was to acquire a broad range of data sources. Field notes were taken in a variety of contexts—Full Moon drum and dance circles, instructional classes (both drum and dance), performances (given both by myself and by others), workshops (both taught by community members and visiting instructors), and "spontaneous" drum gatherings. Interviewees ranged in subcommunity membership, length of time spent in the community, and in socio-economic factors (age, gender, occupation, etc.). Analyzed documents included web sites, newspaper articles, flyers, posters, video footage, and e-mail messages. This form of triangulation serves to enhance both the reliability and the validity of this study. However, other measures were also taken. I turn now to a more detailed discussion of, first, reliability and, second, validity.

Reliability

There are three issues related to reliability that I would like to address: (1) the process of choosing interlocutors and interviewees, (2) describing the scene where data were obtained, and (3) members' interpretations of my observations. First, as I mentioned previously, my goal in obtaining interviews was to represent all
subcommunities as well as to capture the process of identification in its various stages (i.e., interview members who are varied in their levels of experience with the community). Similarly, I also wanted to interact in the field with a variety of members, and not just those who I previously knew or those who gravitated towards me as a researcher of our community. I, therefore, sought to observe the community as a whole by focussing on interacting with the full range of members attending the studied community events.

Second, since reliability is concerned with replicability of the study, it was important for me to present thorough and rich descriptions of the community as well as the scenes of data collection. An effort was made to record not only the surface characteristics of these scenes, but also the “social and interpersonal contexts” (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 39). For example, early on in my field research I noticed that some “traditional” members talked about traditionally made drums (made by carving one piece of wood into a drum) in a way that suggested the inferiority of drums that were made using several pieces of wood, glued together to form a drum. At first, I simply thought this was a difference between the “traditionalists” and the other members of the community, and to a degree I believe that it is. However, as time in the field past, I also began to reach a greater understanding of the underlying interpersonal issues that may color such statements made by community members. Said more bluntly, the Drum Brothers, who make “nontraditional” drums, are seen by some “traditional” community members as being different than and existing outside of their (sub)community. Therefore, attributing “nontraditional” drums to the Drum Brothers may color some members’ thoughts on “the best type of drum.”
Finally, I also enlisted the help of community members to check my perceptions of community happenings. This step, which helps to establish internal reliability, can be understood as a way for a researcher to gain multiple viewpoints from various other observers. One example of this technique occurred during a class where one drummer left the room explaining that the rhythm that was being played was wrong and that she/he could not play it that way (field notes 3/20/00). Because I had recently talked with this member about the importance of a “tight rhythm,” I was concerned that I might have somehow caused this reaction. Turning to a dancer, I explained this fear. During the ensuing conversation, the dancer explained that the drummer may be upset because her/his mentor who could be seen as a leader of the group (i.e., one who helped keep the rhythm tight) was away studying in Cuba. This other perception was recorded in my field notes, along with my own perception, and served to enhance my understanding of a rather unusual event—the exiting of a drummer during a dance class.

Validity

“Although the problems of reliability threaten the credibility of much ethnographic work, validity may be its major strength” (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 43). Establishing the validity of a study is, however, still an important task. There were two primary steps taken to ensure the validity of this study: (1) collection of data in a variety of contexts and (2) checking the accuracy of observations with members of the Missoula drum and dance community. First, as stated earlier, my goal was to collect data from a variety of situations in each of the subcommunities. This helped to ensure the generalizability of my findings to both members of the Missoula drum and dance community and, to an extent, members of other drum and dance communities.
In addition to collecting data from a variety of scenes, I also checked my perception throughout the data collecting and coding processes by asking members, in formal and informal interviews, if they agreed with my perceptions. In this way I sought to ensure the accuracy of my findings. For example, many members use the word “energy” when talking about drumming and dancing. Concerned that I may not understand the community members’ use of this word I asked for members to provide a definition. Throughout the course of interviewing the definition was refined and rechecked until I was comfortable that I had captured its native meaning. Additionally, as I began to code data and organize my findings I again asked members to provide their opinions and thoughts. On one occasion, for example, I was beginning to understand that “rhythm” was the tie that bound community members together and that playing and dancing to rhythms was a ritual that celebrated these communal bonds. However, I wanted to check to ensure that this was a view held by members in the community. I decided to ask members their thoughts on “rhythm” as well as their thoughts on the ritual enactment of rhythm. Interestingly, not only did the members I spoke with see rhythm as a tie that binds, but I also received a brochure in the mail advertising for a rhythm and drum building retreat, which stated that “[t]here will be evening circles celebrating our community and the [rhythmic] music we create together” (Drum Brothers, 2000).
CHAPTER THREE:

FINDINGS

There is a tension that exists in writing an ethnography between the pursuit of an objective (i.e., scientific) account and the acknowledgement that one of the goals of ethnography is to capture a subjective voice that is situated in a specific scene. In the previous chapter, I addressed issues of reliability and validity as a way to establish my "objective" researcher-voice. However, in an effort to navigate this tension successfully, I here endeavor to present my findings in a manner that seeks to capture the subjective nature of this study. In other words, it is my aim to (re)present to you, the reader, not only my researcher-voice, which somewhat silences my community-voice, but also to (re)present my community-voice. It is my hope that this (re)presentation will illustrate to you some of the reflexive processes I underwent in attempting to capture the community members' voices.

Reflexivity, according to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), "involves the recognition that an account of reality does not simply mirror reality but rather creates or constitutes as real in the first place whatever it describes" (p. 213). In other words, an ethnography not only attempts to capture a reality as experienced by subjects, but it also creates a reality for readers. This is a powerful role played by the researcher—one that necessitates a careful and reflexive approach to gathering, coding, and interpreting data. As I performed the tasks of a researcher, I frequently reflected on both discovering objective reality and understanding my personal biases. These reflections are recorded in
field notes and interview notes, on the poster boards that litter my office that contain the reworking of my framework, and, ultimately, in the writing of my findings section.

Yes, the writing of my findings section. I realize that this may be a somewhat unorthodox method of (re)presentation, but it is nonetheless valuable and important as I wanted to portray to the readers of this manuscript the feelings and thoughts that I had as a researcher and community member. My goal is to enable readers to understand my objective researcher voice and my subjective community voice. And, when these readers are Missoula drum and dance community members, I wanted them to feel I was being as candid with them as they were with me during our interactions. One final perk of presenting my findings in a nontraditional manner, is that you, the reader, will become more familiar with the Missoula drum and dance culture because I have opted for a structure that reflects the African and Afro-Cuban drum and dance gatherings in this community.

Lest I take too much credit for creativity and ingenuity, I must mention here those who have also chosen to write in somewhat nontraditional fashions. These scholars have provided both inspiration and validation. The first that comes to mind is Rogers' (1994) dissertation, which is an intriguing and intelligently written assessment of drumming and world beat music, rhythm and discipline. Interspersed in his writing are "interludes" (sections dedicated to pertinent quotes), song lyrics, and personal narratives. In addition, Jones (1998) offers a narrative of her struggles with navigating the tension between the objective and the subjective in her ethnography of a feminist music scene. This narrative uses full text e-mails, poems and personal thoughts to establish her argument. Finally,
Benson (1981) writes a narrative reminiscent of journal entries to relate his experience with a political ad campaign.

As important and inspiring as these works are, it is Carbaugh (1999) who put into words what I wanted to accomplish. As he states, "What I seek to offer is an ethnographic narrative... organized more specifically to suggest [the findings of my study]" (p. 253). In this article, Carbaugh navigates the tension between listening as a communication form and writing for (primarily) academicians. I, too, feel a similar tension. On the one hand, I am charged with writing about something that is largely non-oral communication—language is not the key ingredient, rhythm is. And, on the other hand, I am to write a thesis, which is inherently academic. My solution is to work with this tension, to hold on to it as I would my part of a played communal rhythm, and create something that is larger than the parts; academic language and rhythmic language combining to create an expression that is both academically sound and communally understood. There are two key concepts of the drum and dance culture that I will use to bring this (re)presentation to life: soloing and "the break."

In summary, then, the majority of this chapter will be my researcher-self presenting the findings of this study in light of my framework. However, on those occasions when I believe it is important to let my drummer/dancer-self speak, I will "solo." Soloing is a term used to refer to either a lead drummer playing a rhythm over the top of the other drummers who are holding the base rhythm, or a (lead) dancer who is "solo" dancing to the rhythm played by the lead drummer. When one solos, they are departing from the set rhythm and dance and, therefore, they are offering a unique expression of their self. As one drummer stated, "if you're a soloist, you're telling a lot
(about yourself) because that’s your sound” (interview 8). In a similar way, when I solo in this paper, I will be expressing my community-voice. And, just as when drummers and dancers solo, my voice will be supported by those holding the rhythm, the members of the community who provide the base (i.e., the findings) from which I speak.

While soloing will enable me to include my community voice, “calling a break,” will provide a means for me to communicate to you, the reader, that I am moving from one aspect of my findings to another. In drum-talk, a break is a short musical phrase played by the lead drummer that communicates to the other drummers and/or the dancers the tempo of a rhythm (and sometimes the rhythm itself) that is about to begin or that a change in the rhythm is about to occur. For example, the lead drummer will play a break to begin a rhythm that sets the tempo for the drummers and dancers. Additionally, a break will be played that indicates that the rhythm may change or the dancers may alter their dance. In this paper, my breaks will be short phrases that signify a change in the topic at hand and that shed light on what is to follow. Basically, these breaks will be subtitles for the different sections of my findings.

Now, before we begin, it is important to note that the findings of this study are divided into two sections. In the first section, I answer research questions one, two and four: (1) “How do members within a community come to identify with a community?” (the gestalt of this first section), (2) “What does identification with a community accomplish for members?” (the accomplishment of goals) and (3) “What role does a member’s identification with community play in their identification with larger society?” (addressed in the “united member” section). The second section will address the third
research question: “How is ‘community’ conveyed to members (e.g., through rituals)?”
by offering an explication of a ritual of (rhythmic) community communication.

(BREAK) Identification: A Call to the Drum

This section will explore member identification with the Missoula drum and dance community. As both a process and a product, identification can be seen in the transformation (process) from individual to drummer/dancer (product). While not necessarily a linear process, it is represented here in that fashion—beginning with a call to the drum and continuing through the (adjusted) categories of the framework adopted from DiSanza and Bullis (1999).

(BREAK) The call to the drum: a symbolic process

    go-do, gun, go-do
    go-do, gun, go-do
    go-do, gun, go-do— gun, g’do,g’do,g’do, go-do, go-do
    (come, come, come listen to the sound of my drum)

I was meeting a friend… and I heard these drummers… and I really liked it. I sat down on a bench for awhile, about a half a block away [to listen]…. I get back home [to Missoula] and I walked by the Drum Brothers’ store… and I walked out with an Ashiko. (interview 14)

There’s sort of a closeness in that you can go to any of the drumming events in Missoula and if you have a drum, you’re suddenly a part of the
community and people don't question who you are and where you learned it. (interview 12)

Perhaps it is the sound that the drum produces that first calls to people, but it is the drum that enables that sound to be made. So it seems appropriate that both the drum and the rhythm it produces are symbols with which the members of the drum and dance community identify. In its original cultural context, a drum was a form of (long distance) communication. In the context of this community, the sound of the drum is a beacon to others that, "There are drummers here." Drummers and dancers resonate with this sound, they understand the power of its language, and they feel somehow connected to it. Many times, the sound of a drum acts as a call for others to drum and dance. As when one member explained, "I was intrigued by the [sound of the] drum circles. And then I finally got up the courage to ask for a pair of bongos... then I started to play in the circles" (interview 17). Spontaneous drum circles are an example of this call to rhythm. These gatherings begin with just a few people playing together, but as the sound travels, it reaches other drummers who grab their drum and head for the circle. During an outdoor rehearsal, for example, after half an hour of drumming the once empty hills surrounding the venue had amassed a collection of people many of whom held drums or other percussive instruments (field notes, 4/8/00).

It is not only the sound that calls to other drummers—it is the drum itself. There are two aspects of the symbolic nature of the drum: the type of drum and the adornment of the drum. In the Full Moon drum circles, there exists a wide array of drums. Some drummers come with frame drums, others djembes, ashikos or doun-douns, still others come with congos or bongos, some carry dumbeks. While these drums have their own
language,
they are played together in the circle. The identifying symbol for the Full
Moon subcommunity is a drum played with hands or a stick usually made of wood and a
stretched skin. However, some Missoula drummers and dancers, those who have a desire
to learn the language of their drum (e.g., the “traditionalists”) will often identify more
with a drum that is from the same cultural context as their own. For example, a drummer
of African rhythms may see a stranger carrying an African drum and feel comfortable
striking up a conversation with them (interview 27).

Drums are not only a symbol of community membership, they are also symbolic
of their owners. This point is expressed by a drummer who states, “It’s totally my drum.
It’s heavy wood. It’s got feathers from [my significant other]. It’s got purple embroidery
thread. It’s totally my drum. The drum is an outward expression [of me]” (interview 18).
Glancing around a circle of drummers, one can see how drummers have personalized
their drums. The metal hoops used to secure the head to the wooden base on many hand
drums are wrapped in various colors of fabric and thread; bells, feathers, fetish bags, and
other meaningful objects hang from the drum. As an expression, indeed an extension, of
self, each drum is respected—not only by its owners, but also by fellow drummers. One
member spoke of this respect as extending to a respect of one drummer for another.

“There’s a whole new concept that I’ve learned through drumming. You respect another
person’s space, their eyes, their voice, their hands, their way of seeing things. [I]f you
honor your drum, you [will] honor me” (interview 13). Just as the drum is respected by
its owner, so do the owners respect others’ drums as symbols of rhythm and as
personal artifacts.
SOLO

My call to the drum occurred when I was quite young, I don’t really remember exactly how old I was, but I couldn’t have been older than ten. I constructed a drum out of an old coffee can, an inner tube, and some wire. I played it quietly so as not to be heard because I didn’t think it was something a young girl was supposed to do. Later, I stowed it in my closet where it remained until I threw it away when I purged all that was representative of my childhood as I transitioned into my teen years. I didn’t think about that drum again until the fall of 1998 when I attended a weekend drum retreat. In the opening portion of our evening drum circle I recalled my childhood drum and subsequently related it’s story to the drummers seated around me. As I told the story, I explained that learning to play the drum was a step towards reclaiming the voice of that ten-year old girl, before she got tangled up in the “shoulds” and “should nots” of our dominant U.S. culture. (Lest this statement sound like I just stepped out of an inner child workshop, I meant it then and I mean it now—playing the drum enables me to express that which I cannot otherwise express and it celebrates that part of me that I once oppressed.)

It is ironic that at the same retreat where I remembered my first drum, I was participating in the process of building an ashiko, which became my third drum—after the tin-can drum and a dumbek I had purchased because it was not made using animal skin. This ashiko became a clear symbol of me and my calling to the drum. The skin I chose was the one that felt the most comfortable in my hands. (No small feat for a vegan.) I also chose fabric to wrap around the hoops that was symbolic: a rainbow pattern that represented my belief that humankind should be united in our differences, a
pattern of hands with hearts on the palms on a blue background reminded me that I will
never touch my drum with anger, and a twining of red and orange to represent the healing
power of the drum.

One final aspect of the symbolic nature of the drum is the different languages that
they speak—an African djembe is played differently than a Cuban conga; similarly, an
African rhythm is different than a Cuban rhythm. As one drummer asserts, “There’s a lot
of different kinds of drumming and there are a lot of different styles of drumming”
(interview 6). When drummers begin to learn the language of their particular type of
drum (i.e., learn traditional rhythms), they begin to be able to not only recognize when
another is playing a familiar rhythm, but they also are able to speak the rhythms orally.
For example, a drummer or dancer familiar with a rhythm can ask a drummer to play that
rhythm by vocalizing a serious of sounds: “gun, go-do” becomes the three notes—bass,
tone, tone. Thus, drummers who are familiar with such symbolic sequences share a
common language and form of communication.

(BREAK) A shared value and the attainment of goals

Any one who is interested, I’ll teach and when I give a
performance I invite anyone (interview 1).

They may have different drums, percussion instruments,
and emphasis [goal], but I think the point of forming this
circle and having a sense of community, for however long,
is present (interview 5).
Missoula drummers and dancers share a reverence for inclusivity—a prominent value held within the community. It is important to the members of the community to ensure that all who want to drum and/or dance have that opportunity. Statements expressing the desire to be inclusive can be found on flyers produced by members of the community. For example, a flyer for a West African Drumming Workshop declares, “Classes for all levels of drummers!” (LEDA, 1999) while another flyer states that drums will be available to those who wish to take a workshop, but who do not have a drum (LEDA, 2000). Similarly, a community dance workshop maintains this theme by opening its doors to “all levels of dancers” (LEDA, 2000). During Full Moon drummings, there are not only extra drums placed in the center of the drummers that others are invited and encouraged to play, but there is also dance space available in the center of this circle. These acts, as rhetorical statements, epitomize the value placed on including others in the drum community.

The notion of inclusivity extends beyond initial access into actual participation in the circle. At Full Moon drummings, basic rhythms are taught that enable members to comfortably become a part of the rhythmic circle. During workshops, instructors will not teach the next part of a rhythm until all members can drum the first part together (field notes, 4/9/00). Similarly, dancers, regardless of training, are encouraged to dance in both Full Moon circles as well as in classes and performance workshops. These examples demonstrate the emphasis on ensuring that all are included in the process of playing a rhythm.

Members, having been included in the community, maintain membership not necessarily because the members share the same reason(s) for drumming and dancing,
but because membership makes it possible for them meet their needs (i.e., accomplish their goals) by being participants in the creation of rhythms. It is, therefore, necessary to explore the role that other members play (no pun intended) in the goal acquisition process of a community member. However, it is more logical at this point to explore the various goals that community members possess and then to address "rhythm" as the tie that binds. There are five primary reasons that individuals maintain membership in the Missoula drum and dance community: (1) the desire to create, experience and perform music; (2) energy and its effect on spiritualism, health, and meditative practices; (3) expression; (4) community; and (5) the desire to explore an aspect of another culture.

As Fredric Lieberman states, "No human society, present or past, has lacked music. Music is therefore one of the very few human universals, which puts it on the same level as food and sex" (Hart, 1999, p. 7). It is not surprising then that many community members heed the call of the drum because it fulfills a desire—often a life-long, heretofore not actualized desire—to create and experience music. "I wanted to feel what it was like to make music," explains one drummer (interview 8). For individuals who have not or who are unable to invest the time necessary to "make music" with other instruments, the drum provides an opportunity for immediate satisfaction because, "as long as you can count, keep a steady beat, you can make music" (interview 22). As members of the community, dancers also share in the experience of music making—they speak of live music's ability to "get inside you...and propel you along" (interview 24) and their movements are visual manifestations of the music that is made. In addition, dancers can influence the rhythm being played by the lead drummer through a form of
nonverbal communication just as the drummer can influence the dancer's movements through the sounds created by the drum.

Some members of the Missoula drum and dance community extend their desire to participate in the music making process to the level of performing for an audience. As one drummer eloquently stated, "You could play music on your own, but it's a whole lot more fun to play music with other people and then it's a whole lot more fun to play music in front of people who are jumping up and down, saying, 'YEAH!'" (interview 27). It is clear that, for these members, adding an audience to a drumming and dancing event adds to their enjoyment of playing or dancing to the music. Some drummers view performing as not only increasing their enjoyment, but as a fundamental aspect of the music. In other words, the music played is "for dancers and parties and crowds and strangers and parades" (interview 23). Whether it is because of the increased enjoyment or because the nature of the music is seen as being created for an audience, some drummers and dancers are members in the community because it enables them to perform in front of an audience.

A second goal of community members is to experience the positive effects of the energy that is created when drumming and/or dancing. "Energy" is an indistinct term used by community members that has a variety of meanings. Energy is typically used in the sense that we are "bodies of energy," but energy is also seen as a feeling of well-being and happiness that can either be experienced by oneself or can be exchanged with others. Some drum because it helps boost their bodies' levels of energy, in much the same way a child's level of energy is increased by the consumption of a handful of sweets. One drummer spoke of this aspect of drumming in terms of the rhythm's ability
to "super-charge [one’s] energy" (interview 22). Thus, drummers and dancers see "energy" as a product of the rhythm making process.

An example of how members experience the energizing properties of rhythm is offered by one drummer, "I think your hands feel so neat on the drum. Like, they’re just bouncing right off and you feel so light and this energy is just flowing through you" (interview 18). Interestingly, members also speak about the exchanging of this energy—either between drummers, between dancers, or between drummers and dancers—as increasing the overall energy. "It feeds the spirit. When you get dancers and drummers exchanging energy... it’s a really positive thing" (interview 6).

While some community members’ focus is on energy in its pure form, others see the energy of drumming and dancing as a part of their spiritual, healing, and meditative practices. The members who talk about the connection between drumming and dancing and spiritualism can be divided into two categories: those who began drumming as a part of their preexisting spiritual practices and those who began drumming and, in turn, realized its spiritual element. The first of these two categories is exemplified by one drummer who, upon beginning the study of shamanism, bought a frame drum (interview 15). This category illustrates how drums have been used in spiritual practices, because, in part, of the rhythms ability to connect members "with a universal energy, both internally and externally" (Redmond, 1997, p. 13). In this case, the drum is a necessary tool used by its practitioners to form a connection to "universal energy," or spirituality.

For the latter category, however, spiritualism seems to be a product of the rhythmic connection to something bigger than the (individual) drummer that provides a "complete feel[ing]... that fills up some kind of space" (interview 14). Whether this
connection be to rhythm, people in the community, or to “the natural world” (i.e., the rhythmic, organic world) (interview 6). Those who attend the Full Moon drummings, for example, become attuned to the rhythmic cycle of the moon as well as other natural cycles that are celebrated such as solstice and equinox or even the heartbeat. These celebrations as well as the presence of an altar in the center of a circle serve to create an element of spiritualism.

However, even without these trappings, a sense of spiritualism is inherent within the energy that is created by the rhythm—even if it is not the focus. As one drummer explains, “I’d say it (the spiritual-ness) sorta [sic] happens, but I don’t focus on it” (interview 12). Some explain this quality of rhythm as bypassing the logical, thinking portion of the brain and going directly to a deeper level—a spiritual level. Interestingly, this spiritual connection is maximized when those drummers and dancers who are engaging the rhythm maintain their connection to that rhythm. In other words, they do not deviate from the rhythm that is being created. “Locking in... it gets to the spiritual thing.... There’s a real power to the music” (interview 28).

**SOLO**

This seems a thick process, so analytical and exact. It seems to contradict my experience with drumming and dancing, which is more “feeling” oriented. However, I am reminded with this writing that I first heeded the call to the drum because it was a way to reestablish a form of spiritualism and inner strength that had suffered while I was in a relationship with a chemically dependent person. Actually, it was during the time I spent at a rehabilitation center with this person, that it was suggested we make a promise to do something for ourselves (the friends, family and significant others of the chemically
dependent). My promise was to start drumming. Having remembered this, my initial reason for drumming, I feel compelled to acknowledge the personal benefits of this thick writing process. Nonetheless, its rhythm is slow and I yearn to write faster. I want this section, where I delineate the different goals represented in the community, to be completed so that I may talk about the shared goal: rhythm. But then that just illustrates where my current passion lies...

Related, for some, to the spiritual aspect of drumming, members also drum for its healing qualities. The connection between drumming and healing is centered around the vibrations formed during the playing of a drum. For members of this community, these vibrations are healing due to the effect they have on the body's energy. Some understand this healing as occurring when the “polyrhythmic beats break down the barriers of the brain [thus] changing [its patterns]” (interview 4). Others see these polyrhythms effecting “the vibration of the body” (interview 3). Regardless of where the members feel its effect, the rhythms, experienced by these members as a form of energy, are seen as somehow positively effecting their overall well-being and health. For example, during one interview, a dancer spoke of recovering from cancer aided by the power of the rhythms (interview 30). Another member relates his story:

I know that when my wife needed to have surgery, a couple members of the Drum Brothers came and had a drumming for her. And she brought the Drum Bother’s CD to the surgery and even though she couldn’t hear it, the doctors were quite impressed by it. And they felt that somehow
this aided in her surgical process and recovery. (interview 5)

In addition to these two examples, some members of the community utilize the healing power of the drum in their work as vibrational healers. One member offers an example of how the drum may be used in healing practices by describing how the vibrations created by the drum has the ability to relieve congestion (interview 10).

The energy that is created through rhythmic expression can thus be seen as effecting spiritual and healing practices, but rhythmic expression can also alter members’ energy and thereby induce a meditative state. This meditative state is described as occurring when a member is in another realm or reality where time and the stress of life do not exist. As one drummer explained:

I think I’m looking for the space where you get lost in the rhythm. Where you disappear inside the music. I like trance-like states... the nature of being out of body, so to speak. The captivating potential and experience... of being possessed by the drumming. You move into the spaces between the notes and you become a part of the whole rhythm. I would describe that as a release, except I don’t feel like I’m any longer in a place where I feel like I need a release. It’s just another alternate, nice space to be in. (interview 31)

Again, as with the spiritualism and healing aspects mentioned above, this meditative state is a result of the rhythm’s effect on members’ energy. In this instance,
however, it is the steady, continuous, and cyclical nature of the rhythms that account for its ability to induce meditative states. As articulated by one drummer, these rhythms “are not based on a typical Western structure where the song has a separate beginning, a bridge to a solo in the middle and then a bridge back out to a resolution and the end. These songs are cyclical in nature. There will be a base melody that will repeat over time infinitely” (interview 23). Thus, these cyclical rhythms can induce a meditative state that, like other forms of meditation, work to alleviate stress—in effect, they help to “calm” members’ energy.

A third goal, or reason for drumming, is the ability to communicate that which cannot be communicated through traditional verbal and nonverbal communication. In other words, drumming is seen as enabling the drummer to express emotions and feelings to others through the drum and, for dancers, through movement. For some, this expression is a form of release where they can place their “negative energy,” for example, into their drum (or dance) instead of into a person (interview 13) or where they can release the “positive energy” that “is flowing through [them]” when drumming or dancing (interview 18). For example, one drummer recounted a story of how, if she was upset with her husband, she would drum and he would know by how she was playing that she was upset (interview 15). For other Missoula drum and dance community members, drumming and/or dancing enables them to tap into their creativity, which is in turn expressed through their drumming and/or dancing. Interestingly, drumming and dancing not only enables members to be expressive, but it also has the ability to evoke emotions. An example given by drummers is a traditional African war rhythm, doun-doun ba, which, when played correctly, evokes feelings of strife and aggression (interview 29).
Drumming and dancing, then, not only gives voice to feelings and emotions, but it is also seen as a tool to evoke certain feelings and emotions.

The desire for community is another reason individuals seek membership in the Missoula drum and dance community. Some members see drumming/dancing as an activity that they can experience with others who have similar interests. The drumming and dancing events become a social outlet for those who “don’t go to bars...or sports events” and who may want an environment that is “fun for kids” (interview 10). Drumming and dancing, as activities that necessitate social interaction (due to the nature of the creation of rhythm) but do not require talking, therefore, become an easy community in which to belong. In addition, due to the ease with which most learn to drum and/or dance, it is an activity that couples and families can do together and with other people—thus enabling the creation of a more diverse, multi-generational community. As one member stated, “I think on one level or another [we] have that need [to fill] the void that was left when we got out of the tribal system” (interview 9). The Missoula drum and dance community fills that void for its members.

A final expressed goal of members in the community is to explore an aspect of non-Western culture. Since the drums and the (traditional) dances are not indigenous to United States culture, participation in this community offers members an opportunity to experience an aspect of another culture, specifically African and/or Afro-Cuban. For some, an initial interest in these other cultures brought them to the community. A dancer explained that “I'm really interested in Africa. I've been focused on Africa for a long time...[since] my father taught African law in Africa” (interview 24). Others develop their desire to learn about the African and/or Afro-Cuban culture after they begin
drumming because they realize that the drum (or dance) is “tied to the African [or Afro-Cuban] culture” (interview 21). The majority of this cultural learning takes place in classes and workshops where the meanings and origins of rhythms and dances are explained, however, there are times during the Full Moon drummings when a member will introduce a rhythm as being “from Africa,” for example.

In a community where the members have such a diverse range of reasons/goals for maintaining membership, it may seem unusual that there is indeed a sense of community. That is until one understands that there is a tie that binds these differing goals together—rhythm. As one drummer explains, “You have to work together—it takes a team effort [to make this music]...[we] have a common goal” (interview 23). To illustrate how rhythm is “the tie that binds,” each goal outlined above will now be related to the concept of rhythm. First, rhythm is the product of musical creation and is that which is performed by those who value performances. The energy that is created by drumming is a product of rhythm that positively effects spiritual, healing and/or meditative practices. When one expresses themselves in a drum and dance circle, their expression is enabled through adding to a rhythm, whether it be by drumming or by dancing. The communal connections that are formed are based on sharing rhythms and, since the drum and the (learned) rhythms are not Western, they enable members to access another culture. Simply stated, the Missoula drum and dance community has a shared appreciation for creating and celebrating polyrhythmic music. It is the tie that binds and, even in times of conflict, it is what brings members together.16 In the following sections, rhythm will be further explored in terms of its role in the creation of facilitating mutually
beneficial relationships and, therefore, an environment in which members feel safe expressing a marginalized part of their selves.

(Break) A Mutually Beneficial Relationship

I think the purpose [of drumming and dancing] is that it allows people to be in the time, in the moment—without past or present or future, or role or behavior [dictated by] society. It’s like the art of being in the moment. They are completely alive in that moment (interview 11).

As stated previously, the nature of the traditional African and the Afro-Cuban music is polyrhythmic and requires a group effort—members playing different pieces of the rhythm—to play it correctly. It seems obvious, then, that the desire to play this music lends itself to the establishment of a group of people, or community, who can help bring the music to life. However, many of the members of the Missoula drum and dance community also enjoy creating their own rhythms and do not play traditional rhythms. For these members, their desire to create a group rhythm is no less real. In either case, members are “working together to make something really nice” (interview 19) that is described as being something that is bigger than one member. As has already been stated, rhythm is necessary for the attainment of goals. Therefore, other community members are needed—they help to produce a rhythm and, therefore, help others to achieve their goals.

Community members also rely on others to perform their roles as drummers and dancers. For example, dancers need drummers’ rhythms in order to dance. Drummers
rely on dancers to provide a visual expression of the rhythm they are drumming, which can heighten their experience and push them to another level of drumming. As one drummer explains, when “the dancers are so excited it almost look[s] like you could see stuff going into the floor and coming into our drums so we could play faster and harder. I would have never been able to play as fast if they weren’t dancing so fast” (interview 8). Drummers and dancers also benefit when other members can play their rhythm or dance their part without deviation. This provides a solid foundation for novice drummers to play their part, and, since dances are designed to fit with the rhythm, this also helps the dancers to understand how the movements fit with the rhythm. Additionally, soloists rely on others to maintain a steady rhythm (i.e., hold their part) that supports their solo. This steady rhythm also provides a foundation that they can reconnect with as their solo comes to a close. Most generally, community members need each other in order to actualize their goals and in order to effectively play their part.

Break: Community Benefits and Activities

It is partly the rhythm and the consistency of the beat. I think it goes back to that meditative quality that people are letting go of inhibitions during this time. They are concentrating on the music. They’re concentrating on the rhythm that’s going on. I think that as you’re letting things go, then you’re also able to let other things come in. And people will tend to be more open and accepting because they’re not worried about what other people are going to
think because everybody's there, opening up at the same
time (interview 19).

You have an opportunity to be a part of something that's
really special—the music scene. It gives me an opportunity
to mingle with those musicians... and to seek out and
search out new friends (interview 6).

A clear benefit of community membership is the affirmation of community
members' voices. Being a part of a "larger whole" that is working together to play a
rhythm helps to establish communal ties between members and facilitates an attitude of
acceptance. Coupled with the community's desire to be inclusive, the pursuit of rhythm
becomes an instrument in the creation of a safe environment that benefits members of the
community. It is interesting to note that some members also believe that it is not only the
pursuit of rhythm, but rhythm's inherent ability to create a more open, accepting
environment. As one member explains, drumming helps to put you in a "state of mind"
where members "start having fun...[and] start loosening up a little bit" (interview 7).

For members of the Missoula drum and dance community, this safe environment
is one that is accepting of the members' idiosyncrasies. As one member states, "I can
be myself...I can be exactly the way I am and nobody is like, 'Whoa!'—it's totally praise
and honor" (interview 4). It is within this community environment that members find an
acceptance for parts of themselves that they may not feel comfortable revealing to larger
society—whether it be an artistic nature (e.g., making music and/or dancing), the primal aspects of themselves (e.g., sexuality) or their physical appearance (e.g., "overweight" and/or "aged").

The Missoula drum and dance gatherings, then, become “a socially sanctioned place to be different than normal.” The gatherings are places where members can express themselves freely (interview 2). For some, the community enables them to express their musical side and/or their dance side. One dancer asserts that in the community, “there are no regulations (of what you can and cannot express)” (interview 25). Members also talk about the drum’s ability to effect the non-analytical and primal side of the brain—the center of “the libido and the sexual energy” (interview 20). For many members, the dancers’ interpretations of the drummers’ rhythms, in other words, their movements, are seen as sexually stimulating. “The dancing is quite uninhibited and it’s sexually attractive,” affirms one drummer (interview 31). Membership in the community, then, enables individuals to feel less inhibited in not only their musical expressions, but also their sexual/sensual expressions. In addition, members find this environment accepting of these expression—no matter what the exterior body may be... even if it is not easily placed into the culturally specified and stereotypical categories of youth and beauty. For example, dancers do not have to have the “perfect dancer’s body” (interview 24) and age is not a factor. One sixty year old drummer talks about the freedom she/he feels from larger societal constraints (i.e., the images that society maintains for what it means to be “older”) placed upon older people when she/he carries her/his drum with her (interview 21).
Freedom. It wasn't until college that I first began to recognize all the ways in which U.S. culture constrains an individual's freedom to express, and, in fact, be an individual. It seems a bit peculiar that in a country that is increasingly becoming more individualistic the value of being an individual, or being counter to society, still is labeled deviant. I suppose that if I was being fair I would have to admit that individuals who are counter to traditional U.S. society are more accepted today than, say, in the 1950s. For me, however, I love that I can drum and dance with reckless abandonment—without worry that I will feel the pressure to conform to societal standards. As I interviewed my fellow drummers and dancers, I continually heard the reoccurring theme of "freedom." It wasn't until this interviewing process that I began to understand that a part of my involvement in the community was because I could slough off the societal constraints I felt. I could, if I chose, attend gatherings and express a part of myself that is not validated by our traditional society. I could dance. I could drum. I could feel.

In addition to the benefit of being able to exist in an environment that is safe and accepting, there are also various activities in which members can participate. Full Moon drummings are community events open to the public where anyone can participate free of charge (although a $1 to $2 donation is asked for to pay for the rental of the venue). There are also advertised workshops where members can build a drum (e.g., the Drum Brothers' drum building workshops) as well as learn techniques and rhythms for drumming and dancing. Performances are also given by community members as well as visiting drummers and dancers and are events frequented by community members. In
addition to these programmed activities, there are also informal drum gatherings. These can occur outdoors (for example in parks or on the University campus) or they can take place at a community member’s house. Interestingly, the workshops that are organized by community members are some of the few times that members from the subcommunities gather together.

(Break) Expressed Concern for Members

We all talk to each other, we all help each other. When there’s a crisis, we all pray for each other... help each other with healing vibes. We respect each other. (interview 15)

Members of the Missoula drum and dance community express concern for others in two ways: via “traditional” oral communication and via symbolic gestures. Members, when expressing concern for others through oral communication, generally do so as individual members and not as a collective. During classes, workshops, performances, and other gatherings, members can be seen giving supportive hugs.

Drummers and dancers also demonstrate their concern for other members through symbolic actions. For example, at Full Moon drummings, there is time set aside for each member to “bring their name into the circle.” During this time, a “talking stick” is passed around the circle and members take turns sharing their names and, if they choose, they can also share any hardships that are effecting their lives or their family’s lives. One drummer explains the “talking stick ritual” as “a time for introspection and to share that introspection. Some of us have suffered personal losses...” (interview 5). This is an example of how members listen to and support one another.
Another symbolic action illustrating members' concern for others is the practice of drumming for others who need spiritual, emotional or physical healing. During these gatherings, drummers (and dancers) will focus their energy on the member in need while they drum (and dance). While perhaps not completely altruistic, drummers and dancers also express concern for others who are struggling to play a traditional rhythm or with a dance move. As stated previously, it is important to have others playing their part in order for the rhythm and the expression of that rhythm (dance) to sound and look right. So there is personal incentive to help others to learn, but that does not negate that members help others to learn their part and thus to become part of the group. As stated earlier, inclusion is a community value and therefore this action is concern for an individual's membership in the community.

(Break) Recognition of Members

They are here to celebrate the rhythm of the seasons with a rhythm of their own making. They are here to honor the rhythm of life: in and out, off and on, back and forth. It is not a polished performance. But it is magical nonetheless.

(Devlin, 1999)

As explained elsewhere, “recognition of members' outside contributions” was not well supported as a category of the framework. However, evidence can be found for the “recognition of members as part of the community.” This recognition can take the form of internal praise or external recognition. Internal praise can be either oral or nonverbal. Orally, members will give positive comments to others about their drumming or dancing,
or that the rhythm that was created was enjoyable and fun. For example, a novice dancer may hear, "You looked great...you're a good dancer" (field notes 4/9/00). Also, an instructor will tell the students that they sound good and members attending Full Moon drummings will erupt in a cacophony of praise for each other after an enjoyable rhythm has been played. Another example of this type of praise was observed during a Full Moon drumming when a member of the community was recognized, in front of the group, as improving her/his skills and as being a member of a performance group (field notes 3/18/00).

Internal praise that is nonverbal is also apparent in the community. During occasions when drummers and dancers are either performing or practicing set rhythms, it is customary for the dancers to offer thanks to the drummers at the end of the gathering. This is usually done in a two-part gesture where the dancer touches her/his chest and then the floor in front of each drummer. Regardless of how it is performed (since there are slight variations) this gesture thanks the drummers for their role in supporting the dancers' efforts. Another form of nonverbal praise can be observed at Full Moon drummings when one drummer will match another drummer's rhythmic pattern. For example, during one gathering, a drummer was playing a rhythm, and across the circle another drummer could be seen watching this first drummer, until her/his hands started to move in a like pattern (field notes 4/15/00). This action recognizes another's contribution and effectively validates her/his expression. In other words, the member is praised for playing a rhythm that is enjoyable.

External recognition of community members is also present in two forms: media recognition and crowd approval. The local media occasionally runs stories about
community groups. For example, an article in the local newspaper discussed the Full Moon drum gatherings. The article states that "they are here to celebrate the rhythm of the seasons with a rhythm of their own making. They are here to honor the rhythm of life: in and out, off and on, back and forth. It is not a polished performance. But it is magical nonetheless" (Devlin, 1999). Media, in its recognition of the community (groups), effectively praises community members by acknowledging that which is good about the community. This form of acknowledgment is also seen during performances where the crowds that gather praise the drummers and dancers through applause. Here again, the praise that is directed towards the group as a whole still effects members who recognize their role in creating that which is being praised.

(Break) The United Member

I would say [larger society] views it that way (a "hippie thing" for example). It's their problem, not ours.

Personally, I don't like to draw lines, I just see that they haven't awakened that part of themselves (the rhythm part), but it isn't a big division. (interview 9)

Well, I could say in a sense that we don't have anything in common besides drumming. When you get to know someone a little better and you talk to them, sometimes you find you have a few things in common...[being] liberals...religion, the environment, [being] open to different ideas. (interview 21)
Members of the Missoula drum and dance community do not necessarily see themselves as united against a "common enemy" (e.g., larger society). Rather, they see themselves as a part of the larger United States culture who have acknowledged the integral role that rhythm plays in the lives of all people. To community members, rhythm is seen as being an inherent aspect of humanity in that both bodies and the environment contain rhythmical cycles, "everything has rhythm: your heart, your brain, the wind, the earth" (interview 15). The separation between drummers and dancers and those who are not is, however, seen as being a product of our cultural upbringing. As one drummer explains, "It feels natural to drum...to experience rhythm. Babies gravitate to drums, but we're trained [in this culture] not to 'do that' (drum). [We are therefore] rhythmically inept...we are alienated from rhythm" (interview 28). The separation can be viewed as being the difference between those who have, regardless of societal conditioning, come to appreciate the many aspects of rhythm and those who do not. This, however, is not seen as a permanent separation because everyone is welcome to participate in the community.

It has already been suggested that the Missoula drummers and dancers are a diverse group of people who share rhythm, but do not necessarily share all other goals that members strive to obtain. So when addressing the question of who the "we" is, one must take this diversity into account. Again, the common thread is that "we" drum and/or dance to rhythms. This, of course, necessitates a certain amount of separation from larger society (as discussed in the benefits of the community section) because larger society is seen as including those who are "terrified of drumming" perhaps because of
"the rhythm's acting on some primal part of ourselves" (interview 10). The call to the rhythm can be seen as, in some cases, a slow progression from "other" to "we." For example, one drummer who began attending Full Moon drum circles by sitting outside of the circle and quietly drumming, eventually moved to a position in the circle.

And so the "we/them" distinction becomes one of "we" existing, at least while in the community, somewhat outside of the "everyday American paradigm that [people] have to go to work, earn money, feed kids, get married, go to school..." (interview 26). The flip side of this coin is the separation that is seen as coming from (some) members of larger society. As one drummer explains, "A lot of people in our society just assume [that] when I'm walking down the street with a [drum] that I'm coming from a hippie drum circle, or I'm going to smoke a joint with some hippies. You get that a lot" (interview 6). In this way, members of larger society are (sometimes) seen as viewing community members as being somewhat deviant in their behavior. However, even though this division is occasionally felt, it is not focused on by community members who prefer to see themselves as people who drum and dance and not people who exist outside the realm of larger society.

(Break) An Invitation to Drum and Dance

When I first started out, I liked drumming, I liked to drum, but I was not within the family yet. And that's why I try to encourage the people who go way in the back and who are afraid like I was... we're not going to bite... come on up and be a part of the family. (interview 15)
Perhaps it is because of the need for more than one person to create the complex rhythms that are desirable or perhaps it is to share the power of the rhythms with others, regardless, members of the Missoula drum and dance community often extend invitations to individuals to join the community activities. One drummer who desires to bring more people into the community owns “a lot of drums... so that [she/he] can get other people involved” (interview 15). During Full Moon drummings, members often extend invitations to the audience members to “pick up a drum” and start drumming. Still others come to the drum and dance community because their friend and/or family member was involved in it. One drummer recounted a story of how she/he first came to experience the drum community because her/his partner had been a dancer in the community (interview 11). While not all members come to the community at the invitation of others, for a significant number the invitation was the first step in their process of moving from individual to community drummer/dancer.

SOLO

In the final analysis, I can say that it was my dear friend, Fish, who first introduced me to the drum. Of course I had always wanted to drum but never felt that I could. I was girl. I was a Christian. Drums were for boys. Hand drums were for pagans. The first day that I actually mustered the courage to touch a drum was a rather rainy and gray day. I found myself in Fish's apartment, perched on a stool with an ashiko between my legs, a headset that was playing drum music on my head, and a tentative and shy smile on my face. He told me to play... to just make any sound that I felt like making. I wouldn’t do it. We read poetry. We read Doctor Seuss. Slowly, I began to feel the rhythm in these verses. I think it was this rhythm and the persistence of Fish that finally
broke down the barriers. Finally, my cerebral, analytical mind gave way to creativity and expression.

(Break) An Accessible Community

The Missoula drum and dance community can also be seen as being accessible. This accessibility is in three areas: the ease with which people can be a part of the rhythm (either through drumming or dancing), the portable nature of the drum, the availability of “gifted” drums. To address the first area, drummers and dancers speak of the ease with which they can become a part of the rhythm. For dancers, the dances are seen as being able to be performed by anybody. One dancer affirmed this point by recounting a story about a “disabled” person being able to perform (some of) the dance’s movements (interview 30). Another dancer compares African and Afro-Cuban dancing with other (Western) dances that require “too much ability and training” and where you “have to look really good (physically)” (interview 24). Drummers express similar views on the ease with which they can be a part of the rhythm. One drummer explains that “the first time you try it, you succeed. It isn’t like playing the trumpet... there are nice sounds right from the beginning” (interview 21). In this way, people do not have to be experts to gain membership in the (rhythmic) community, and there is not an excessive time requirement to learn how to make enjoyable sounds with the instrument—a boon for many members.

The second way in which the community is accessible is in the nature of the drum itself. The drums used by the community members are portable enough to be carried by the members. In addition, there is only one piece—the drum—and there is no assembly required to play it. One drummer provides more detail on this point by explaining that
she/he “sold [her/his] drum set [because] it was too noisy, too loud, too big. [But] a month later [she/he] decided to build a drum” (interview 20). Because of its portable nature, members are able to attend various community gatherings without the inconvenience of moving cumbersome equipment.

A final aspect of the accessible nature of this community is the availability of drums for those who do not have the means to acquire them. It has already been mentioned that drums are available during Full Moon drummings and workshops, but here it is important to point out that this availability of drums functions to enable individuals to experience and access the (drum) community. One member suggests that because she “kept being gifted a drum” during Full Moon drummings, she/he became enamoured with drumming and now regularly drums (interview 13). Because of the ease with which individuals can experience the rhythmic community, many begin to regularly attend community gatherings and thus become community members.

(BREAK) Communicating Rhythmically: A Ritual of Communal Communication

In the above section, the concept of member identification with the Missoula drum and dance community was explored. Through this exploration of member identification, one can begin to understand how and why an individual may come to relate to (i.e., identify with) the community and the effect their identification with the community has on their identification with larger society. The following section looks at how members enact a ritual of non-oral community communication by engaging rhythm either through playing a drum that helps to create the rhythm or through dancing to the created rhythm. This ritual assists in the formation and maintenance of communal bonds and can be seen as an integral step in the process of moving from individual
(drum/dance) expression to a community exchange of expressive (drum/dance)
conversation. In this process, members move from individual to a member of the
community by learning the language of the drum, rhythms, through enacting the ritual.
Before explaining this communication ritual as a process of learning that strengthens
communal bonds, it is important first to explain the ritual of rhythmic communal
communication.

(Break) Toward the Creation of Something Greater than One: A Community Ritual

According to Philipsen (1987), a ritual is “a communication form in which there
is a structured sequence of symbolic acts, the correct performance of which constitutes
homage to a sacred object” (p. 250). Using this definition to explain the ritual enacted by
members of the Missoula drum and dance community necessitates addressing three key
areas: (1) a sequence of activities that (2) carry symbolic meaning and that (3) serve to
honor that which the community deems important. Each of these three points will be
discussed in more detail in the following pages, but briefly this ritual can be seen as (1)
members adding their part to a community rhythm that (2) connects each member to the
others and that (3) works to create “something greater than one”—a community.

This community ritual begins with the engagement of rhythm. Traditionally, Full
Moon drummers will be situated in a circle and Full Moon dancers are located in this
circle, or in some cases, they will choose to dance outside of the circle either because
space will not allow for their expression inside the circle, or they are more comfortable
with a more private expression. In those groups who practice and perform traditional
rhythms and dances, the drummers will play together more or less in a line facing the
dancers who are occupying the space that is the center of the stage, venue, or rehearsal
area. These formations ensure that drummers and dancers can hear and see each other, which facilitates the non-oral communication (i.e., drumming and dancing) and enables the enactment of the ritual.

The sequence of activity commences as a drummer begins to play a part of a rhythm. In the Full Moon circles, this often begins with a moment of silence from which a sound will emerge. This sound could be a member’s voice, a bell, the soft clacking of a pair of sticks, or a rhythm (very often a heart beat) played quietly on a drum. From this first sound, the chorus of members’ (drum) voices will begin to emerge as each member begins to play their part of the rhythm that is being created. Throughout the evening, the rhythm will metamorphose many times. The tempo will change and members will adjust the patterns they are playing on their drums to accommodate the changes, or, in some cases, to lead a desired change in the rhythm. Similarly, dancers will adjust their movements as dictated by the changes in the rhythm(s) being played. This activity can be seen as a sequence of smaller actions in two ways. First, each member will alter her or his rhythmic part as desired and according to the group rhythm and, second, each member’s part is seen as an integral piece of a musical sequence that is the rhythm.

For those members who perform traditional rhythms, there is more structure in the rhythmic sequences and therefore the parts that are being played. Each traditional rhythm has a traditional dance and each traditional rhythm and dance has set parts to be performed. Engaging in these rhythms, then, becomes a more precise organization of members’ parts. To this end, traditional rhythms are started with the lead drummer playing a break. This enables all members to begin at the appropriate time, which makes it possible to correctly perform the rhythms. Regardless of members’ foci, the important
first step in enacting the ritual of rhythmic communal communication is for members to participate in the sequence of activity that brings either a created or a traditional rhythm to life.

The *symbolic meaning* of the engagement of rhythm is clearly articulated by members of the community who see the act of performing rhythmic parts as a tie that binds members together. The performance of these rhythmic parts is analogous to "traditional" oral communication as we have come to know it in the United States culture and serves to unite members in a shared rhythmic conversation. As a form of communication, rhythmic expression and creation (i.e., performing a rhythmic part) can best be explained as a nonverbal language that can be "spoken" by participating in its production. The ability to express oneself through the language varies according to the level of knowledge of rhythm. For those who have acquired a working vocabulary (i.e., learned traditional rhythms), their ability to express and to communicate with others is increased. For any level of drummer, however, the ability to communicate and therefore to connect with others is present as long as their rhythmic voices are engaged in the conversation, which is the performance of rhythm. The language, then, is the sequence of notes (for drummers) or movements (for dancers) that, when combined, form musical phrases, rhythms, and ultimately harmony.

This rhythmic language will be explored extensively in the following section, but for now, suffice it to say that it is seen by members of the Missoula drum and dance community as useful when traditional oral communication is either insufficient or undesirable. As one drummer explains, "I feel more comfortable communicating with people with music than I do just sitting down... I’m not one for small talk, but I can sit
there with [others] and play drums for hours” (interview 22). Another aspect of this type of language is that it has the ability to transcend differences among people. Whether these differences are language barriers, as in this example offered by one member: “you can take a bunch of people that don’t even speak the same language and pretty soon someone starts a beat and someone falls in and pretty soon they’re all kinda [sic] talking with their drums” (interview 9), or whether they are interpersonal differences of opinion or perspective. One drummer eloquently articulates this last sentiment:

I can agree with you, no matter what you say. I can agree with you, but I have a different experience and a different point of view and I’m referring to my experience and you are referring to your experience and it’s harder for me to communicate my experience in words. But, if we were both drumming, then we would both be referring to the same rhythmic viewpoint. (interview 26)

Participating in the performance of rhythm, then, becomes a form of non-oral, communication that is shared by community members. In sharing this common language, community members can reach a level of understanding and mutual agreement that (sometimes) cannot be reached through traditional oral communicative means. This level of understanding and shared rhythmic language aids in the formation of communal ties in the same way that speech communities are united in their shared, idiosyncratic languages. In essence, as members perform their rhythmic parts, they are engaging in a conversation that is seen as creating a rhythm and that serves to enhance communal bonds.
SOLO

Sometimes when I'm sitting in a drum circle, or dancing in a drum circle for that matter, I will look at those who are around me—usually, it's an eclectic mix of young and old, blue-collar and white-collar, male and female. I wonder what we have in common. Why are we gathered together and why do we seem to get along? (I guess these questions are the reason I embarked on this journey of academic discovery.) The easy answer is that we share a common goal, to make music/rhythm. Now, however, when I look around the circle, I smile because I understand. We are different, but we share a common language and understanding and in a culture that doesn't necessarily speak this language it's easy to form these small, intimate sub-groups that serve to fill the void left by being an anonymous member of our individualistic culture. I think it must be similar to go to a foreign country and congregate with those who are English speaking. For now, however, I am comforted to know that as I move away from the Missoula drum community, another community of drummers and dancers awaits my arrival.

Members of the Missoula drum and dance community view the act of engaging rhythm as creating something larger than any one member could create—playing one's part in connection with other members honors this larger creation, rhythm, and the community. As was stated previously, the polyrhythmic nature of the rhythms is such that no one person could create them. Whether drummers are playing a part of their own creation or they are playing a part of a traditional rhythm, they are still just playing one part of the whole sound. Similarly, whether dancers are performing their own interpretation of a dance or they are performing a traditional pattern of movements
designed to accompany a traditional rhythm, they are, nonetheless still a part of the whole rhythmic expression. In this way, dancers and drummers rely on each other to perform their part so that the wholeness of the rhythm may come to life. This expression, then, is “greater than what just one person can do” (interview 27). There is, therefore, a “connection that... is bigger than each [member]” (interview 29). When drummers and dancers perform their rhythmic parts, they are working to create something larger than them and this act pays homage to both the rhythm and the community of members who are working to create it.

In exploring the concept of creating something larger, there is the recognition of a deeper level of connection created through the performance of rhythmic parts that can be described as “harmony.” In the literal sense, harmony is a product of all the parts coming together. For example, in the Full Moon drum circles, which tend to be geared more towards the creation of personal rhythms, members bring a variety of percussive instruments that, when their sounds combine, produce an harmonious sound. In the (correct) performance of the traditional drum rhythms, the harmony that is created gives rise to melody, which some describe as being produced by the interaction of the sound waves that the instruments produce (field notes, 3/19/00). Metaphorically, harmony describes the relationships between members who are engaged in the rhythm and the act of dancing or playing an instrument becomes an expression of a member’s voice that is “harmoniously” twining with the other voices represented in the circle. There is a sense of (metaphorically) “bringing together...the highs and the lows,” or, in other words, the quiet and the loud, the soft and the hard, the gregarious and the shy.
I am reminded here of a time when I attended a drum class, tired and tentative in my abilities. As I was playing my part in the rhythm, the instructor told me to play louder. This was not an unusual comment for, by this time, I had heard it several times. Frustration slowly gave way to understanding as I looked at my drum and then at the instructor’s drum. Mine was considerably smaller. Perhaps it was because I had spent the day focused on thinking about the symbolic nature of drums, but it occurred to me that there was a fundamental difference between the instructor and me. I am relatively shy, especially in situations where I do not know what I am doing. The instructor, on the other hand, seemed to be much more comfortable and outgoing... at least in drumming situations. I now understand the importance of matching drum voices when playing set rhythms—no one playing louder or softer than her/his rhythmic partners. But still, during Full Moon drummings, I will often pick up my dumbek (a much quieter drum) and play with reckless abandon because I am shy because I do not know how to play a rhythm that will fit with the group and I know I won’t be heard. During Full Moon drummings, this “harmonious” existence is accepted. When playing traditional rhythms, however, the harmony must come from playing one’s part in accordance with the others.

(Break) The Ritual as a Form of (Rhythmic) Community Communication

Having explored this ritual of community and how rhythm, as a non-oral language, is seen as enhancing communal bonds, it is now appropriate to explicate the language component that is embedded in this ritual. In this presentation, rhythm is seen as a form of community communication. More specifically, this communication is seen
as a process of engaging rhythm through drumming and/or dancing that has three primary aspects: (1) expression of self to others, (2) connecting with others, and (3) increasing rhythmic vocabulary, which enhances members’ ability to connect with others. In this way, the rhythmic communication can be seen as strengthening members’ communal bonds as they express (aspects of) their selves and as they listen to the other members’ expressions that is enhanced by learning the more intricate aspects of rhythm, or the communal language. Each of the above three aspects will in turn be discussed in the following sections.

(Break) Expression of Self

Rhythm is seen as having the ability to effect drummers’ and dancers’ state of mind. As one drummer explains, rhythm has the ability to “change brain wave patterns...and [bring about] a different state of consciousness” (interview 26). This state enables a more free expression of feelings and emotions, which are in turn expressed through drumming and/or dancing. As drummers engage in the process of creating a rhythm and as dancers engage in the process of bringing this rhythm into the visual realm, they are creating personal expressions. As an auditory experience or a visual display, these rhythm-based expressions are able to be observed by others. In this way, drummers and dancers are “voicing” to others their personal experience by performing their part of the rhythm that is being played.

When a member is engaged in this level of communication, the focus is on giving voice to feelings that are either evoked by the rhythm, or that are present within the drummer and dancer and are integrated into their rhythmic expression. This form of communication is seen as coming from “a deeper level” of self (interview 13), or, in
other words, as being a more intimate sharing than common every-day conversations (interview 16). This would tend to make sense as what is being communicated is feelings and not thoughts.¹⁹

In this aspect of rhythmic communication, communication is seen as being primarily unidirectional—a drummer or dancer expressing to others, but not necessarily listening to others' expressions. As such, members “don’t have to focus on what others are doing...[they] can just focus on what’s going on in [their] own mind” (interview 17). This disconnected form of expression is oftentimes (but not always) disconcerting to other members who are more focused on engaging the rhythm conversationally. One such drummer aptly articulated this viewpoint. “There are some people who are more interested in expressing themselves than in connecting to others [through rhythmic conversation]. There are some demonically individualistic drummers and dancers” (interview 31).

Those who do not find “demonically individualistic drummers and dancers” bothersome see their expressions as being an integral part of the rhythm and therefore an integral part of the collective voice. However, even these drummers will speak of the ways in which they attempt to engage these drummers and dancers in the rhythmic conversation. For example, during one Full Moon drumming, an individual was playing a part that did not fit into the rhythmic conversation of the group. Essentially, they were playing louder and faster than the rest of the drummers. After this “thunder drumming” continued for a time, the group facilitator brought the rhythm to a slow close by leading the group in playing consistently quieter and slower until the rhythm stopped for lack of momentum. During this closing, the individual continued to express and did not alter
her/his drumming. Finally, another member of the circle quietly reached out and touched the individual’s drum, at which point she/he stopped playing (field notes 1/22/00). Interestingly, this drummer, having attended the past four Full Moon drummings, is now an active participant in rhythmic conversation.

Still other drummers will attempt to assuage the effect of “demonically individualistic members” by focusing their energies into creating a tight rhythm that pulls individual’s expressions into alignment with the overall conversation (interview 31). As the most accessible level of the of community communication, expression is seen as a fundamental and base part of the rhythmic language present in the ritual of community outlined above. However, most members engage the rhythm at a level of connection, which will be discussed in the following section.

(Break) Connection

Connections between drummers, between dancers, and between drummers and dancers can be seen as occurring when members are engaged in a shared rhythmic expression. Drummers can connect in a rhythmic “conversation” by playing parts of a rhythm that fit together in such a way that no one drummer, except a soloist, is speaking (playing) over the top of another’s expression. Similarly, dancers leave (physical) room for others to express their selves. This is often referred to as not infringing on another dancer’s “line.” The conversation between drummers and dancers occurs when a dancer’s movements match the rhythm that the drummers are playing and vice versa. As was noted above, “it’s really hard to connect with someone who’s out of beat” (interview 14). So, an integral part of creating a connection through rhythm is listening to others’ expressions.
Listening to others can occur in three ways: (1) feeling the rhythm, (2) hearing the rhythm, and (3) seeing other members' nonverbal communication. Feeling the rhythm can be explained both literally and viscerally. Literally, drummers will sometimes place their hands on their drum to feel the vibrations that are being created by the rhythm until they can play a part that will fit into the rhythm (interview 17). Other members feel the rhythm in their body, which can be observed through movements of a part of their body, for example tapping their foot or swaying to the pulse. Feeling the rhythm can also be a visceral feeling of the rhythm's energy effecting a member's body. One member refers to the connection that is made with others as being because one is “aware of other people’s energy and being aware of the rhythm. It’s just feeling it and letting it pulse through you... you really have to open yourself up to feeling other people’s energy” (interview 18).

Listening also takes the form of experiencing the audible sounds that are created by the rhythm, which enables members to connect with each other by adjusting what they are drumming to suit the shifts in the rhythm. As one drummer explains:

... when you’re truly listening and drumming in a circle that builds upon listening and drumming part of it is responding—you fill in... sometimes you’re playing one part that just feels right and all of a sudden this space opens up and people tend to move into those spaces. (interview 10)
Drummers of traditional rhythms also address the aspect that, even though the parts of the rhythms stay the same, the tempo may vary and, therefore, they have to constantly listen in order to maintain the connection to the others through the rhythm.

In addition to the drummer's need to listen to the rhythm that is being created, dancers also must listen to the rhythm so that their movements can be seen as both connected to and expressive of the rhythm. In the case of those who play set rhythms, the dancer's primary focus is on the sounds created by the lead drummer because it is "the lead drummer [who] is talking with the dancer" (interview 16). Even in those who do not play traditional rhythms, a connection can be made with the dancers because, as one drummer points out, "if you know you're doing something to make someone dance, there's a connection there" (interview 11).

One final way that members enact rhythmic community communication that helps to form a connection with other drummers and dancers is by seeing the nonverbal actions of others. In drum circles, drummers will often look around the circle and, when they feel a connection to the rhythm that was brought about by another member, they will focus their gaze on that other member. Many times, the two drummers will focus on each other and exchange a smile, a head nod, or some other nonverbal communication that indicates that this connection is felt. One drummer suggests that she/he "just likes to smile" when she/he "looks up and catch[es] somebody's eyes and [they're] in sync."

Drummers and dancers also learn that it is necessary to watch each other in order to know when to alter the rhythm. There are various and idiosyncratic nonverbal gestures and patterns that each drummer and/or dancer has to indicate their desire to change the
rhythm. It could be a part played on the drum, as in a break, or an accentuated slap on the drum head, or it could be a look from a dancer directed towards a drummer.

(Break) Increasing One’s Rhythmic Vocabulary

Thus far, rhythmic expression and connecting through the sharing of a rhythm have been examined in terms of their role in the ritual of community communication. Summarily, and according to this rhythmic community, expression of one’s self is an important aspect of the formation of communal bonds as long as members are listening to each other. This process of listening and expressing manifests itself in a rhythmic and personal connection between members who are engaging the rhythm. The third and final component of this ritual is increasing one’s rhythmic vocabulary by learning traditional rhythms. Generally speaking, this learning process takes place in class environments and group rhythm sharing/playing sessions. While it would be interesting to analyze “the ritual of learning,” the primary focus of the current discussion is how the learning process effects members ability to communicate in the community through the rhythmic language. In this way, learning traditional rhythms and dances are seen as enhancing members’ versatility in rhythmic expression and, therefore, increases their ability to connect with other drummers and dancers. In terms of the current discussion, this third aspect is addressed as a product of learning the rhythms and not as the process. In other words, in the following section it will be assumed that the drummers and dancers know the traditional rhythms and dances—the focus will not be on the learning process, but on how the learned traditions effect the rhythmic conversations.

There are two aspects of learning traditional rhythms that enhance a member’s ability to engage in rhythmic conversation: (1) an increased ability to express oneself
through rhythm and (2) an increased ability to connect (i.e., make conversation) with others. When a member begins to learn traditional rhythms and dances, she/he also learns playing techniques and dance steps, which in turn helps members to more readily express themselves in both creating rhythms and playing traditional rhythms. One drummer suggests that with “learning more [she/he] can keep the time and clear [her/his] head and be able to explore whatever is inside of [her/him]” (interview 17). As this drummer points out, learning traditional rhythms serves to enhance members’ rhythmic attunement in such a way that it will enable members to maintain a rhythmic connection to others while simultaneously expressing inner thoughts and feelings. A community dancer echoes this point with the following statement:

> It takes awhile learning one specific move over and over again before you can just let your body be with it. It’s like you work your butt off before you can get to a certain level of freedom. [For example,] there are moves that are very specific to West African dance that are in my body and I can just do them. (interview 30)

Becoming more comfortable with movement, whether it is a body’s movement or the movement of a member’s hands, makes it possible for members to integrate these movements in their rhythmic expressions. But, as one member points out, “you don’t stick to the technique class, you go beyond that [to personal expression]” (interview 11). At this level, it becomes important to understand how the performance of one’s rhythmic part works in the broader conversation of rhythmic partners. In other words, members learn the rhythmic parts and understand how they work together in order to be able to
“expound on [her/his part] when it is [her/his] turn to do that” (interview 27)—whether it be through a drum or dance solo embedded in a traditional rhythmic expression or the creation of a personal rhythmic expression.

The second aspect of learning that aids in members’ abilities to rhythmically converse with other members is the increased ability of members to connect with these other members. This increased ability to connect can be born of a greater understanding of rhythm, which makes it more possible to converse with other members—even if they do not perform traditional rhythms. One member uses an analogy to explain how learning traditional rhythms helps to facilitate rhythmic conversation.

Because of studying rhythm, you start to understand the basic language. It’s like learning to speak a foreign language. When you are learning a foreign language, you sometimes say things the wrong way or you talk over other people. When you study for a long time, you can understand how to play with anybody. You develop an understanding of where not to play so that other people’s expressions can be heard. (interview 23)

In this way, learning traditional rhythms helps members to form communal bonds by ensuring that all members’ voices can be heard. However, a heightened sense of connection can also be the product of being able to immediately strike up a conversation with others who speak the same (traditional) rhythmic language. For one drummer, learning traditional rhythms became a way to actualize her/his “vision... [of] being able to walk into a circle with [her/his] djembe and jump right in” (interview 14).
One final area that learning traditional rhythms enhances communal connections is in the area of the connection between dancers and drummers. In the traditional performances of rhythm there is no separation between dancers and drummers. For example, and in other words, a Cuban dancer would not dance unless there were drummers and a drummer would not drum unless there were dancers. Therefore, the dancers' movements are designed to follow the drummers' rhythm (and vice versa). As performed in this culture, drummers and dancers who study traditional rhythms have the increased ability to connect with each other because they are each (drummers and dancers) performing integral parts to the overall rhythm.

**A Final Statement**

As members enact the ritual of community through the performance of their rhythmic parts, they are engaging in an activity that creates and enhances communal bonds. An integral aspect of the formation of these communal bonds is the element of rhythmic language that is embedded in this ritual. The three components of this language are (1) expressiveness, (2) communication, and (3) ability for members to increase their vocabulary and, thus, their ability to connect with other drummers and dancers.

**SOLO**

I've wondered why I feel this pull towards learning traditional rhythms. When I first began drumming I enjoyed playing whatever sounds and patterns came to me. Now, however, I feel more compelled to attend classes and learn the rhythmic language than to attend the less structured drum circles. I think the answer lies in my desire both to play something that sounds nice and evokes "good energy" and that helps me to form rhythmic/communal bonds with others. I learn because it increases my enjoyment of
drumming because it enables me to form connections with others. In a sense, I enact the ritual of (rhythmic) communication so that I can (later) perform the ritual more effectively.
CHAPTER FOUR:
DISCUSSION

The following chapter aims to situate this study of the Missoula drum and dance community in the larger context of academic writings on both community and identification. In addition, suggestions for future research will be discussed.

Identifying with a Community: What worked, what did not, what is new

The primary focus of this study was to assess how and why individuals choose to seek membership in a community. The means to arriving at an answer was to conduct field research looking for rituals, myths, and social dramas as well as data that either supported or extended the theoretical framework born in organizational communication and presented earlier in this manuscript. In general, members were seen as being linked to the community through shared symbols (and symbolic sequences), messages that indicated shared values and goals, expressed concern for members, illustrated a mutually beneficial relationship as well as community benefits and activities. Identification was also enhanced through invitations to membership, recognition of members as a part of the community, and because the community is accessible. Interestingly, members of the Missoula drum and dance community did not identify themselves with the community in opposition to an other, however, their use of the “assumed we,” which was reserved for “we who drum,” indicated an element of “otherness.” The subtleties of this analysis can best be explicated by a discussion of what worked and what did not in using the DiSanza and Bullis (1999) adapted framework.
What Worked

As a theoretical lens, the identification framework used in this study proved helpful in data coding and analysis. The category, members being linked to the \textit{community through shared symbols} (drums) and \textit{symbolic sequences} (rhythms), proved to be useful in understanding the roles that both the symbolic drums and the created and/or learned rhythms played in member identification with the community. It was discovered that members came to identify with the community in part because both the image of the drum(s) as well as the rhythms that were played “called” to the drummers and dancers. This was not surprising once one realized that the unifying factor in the Missoula drum and dance community was rhythm and that the drum, as the tool through which the rhythms were created, was a unifying symbol.

Data also indicated that members share the value of inclusivity and, while the \textit{goals} of members varied, the unifying goal was to engage in rhythmic expressions. Inclusivity, as a shared value enacted by members, was seen when members brought extra drums that others (e.g., non-members) could play as well as when members provided space for dancers. While members expressed differing goals (the desire to create, experience and perform music; energy and its effect of spiritualism, health, and meditative practices; expression; community; and the desire to explore an aspect of another culture), the creation of rhythms and rhythmic expressions were seen as both a common pursuit among members and as a component necessary for the achievement of the members’ goals. Thus, community members were seen as sharing both the value of inclusivity and the goal of creating rhythmic expressions.
Members' identification with the community was also enhanced due to a member's need for others in order to engage in rhythmic expression, what I termed a *mutually beneficial relationship*. In this area, a member was seen as relying on other members to create the fullness of a polyrhythmic expression. In other words, due to the polyrhythmic nature of the music, each member needed to perform her/his part in order for the entire rhythmic expression to be actualized. Because a rhythm cannot be brought to life by only one member, members relied on each other to create rhythm—the dominant goal of community members.

Community members were also seen as enjoying the *benefit* of acceptance of their individualism and the access to *community activities*. Many members expressed a sense of "freedom" that was seen as a result of the accepting environment fostered by the community drum and dance members. This freedom enabled members to express themselves in ways that they did not feel comfortable in larger, dominant society. In addition, there were many community activities, occasions for members to meet together and to fulfill their community goals. These activities included Full Moon drum circles, community dance and drum classes, classes taught by visiting master drummers and/or dancers, performances, and spontaneous drum circles.

Furthermore, *members expressed concern for others* through verbal expressions as well as nonverbal expressions. Verbally, members often offered words of support that served to encourage other members. For example, one community member was observed consoling a visibly upset dancer by listening to her/his difficulties and by offering words of understanding (field notes 2/28/00). Nonverbally, members of the Full Moon subcommunity set aside time during their gatherings to "pass the talking stick"—a time
to commiserate (among other things) with each other. Other community members
demonstrated concern for community members by drumming for those who were ailing
or in need of “good energy.”

Members’ contributions to the community were often recognized by both those
outside the community and the members of the community. Outside recognition
generally took the form of newspaper articles and audience approval of community
gatherings and performances. Members of the community also recognized others’
contributions to the community. For example, members would tell both drummers and
dancers that they performed their rhythmic part well. “You’re a good dancer” (field
notes 4/9/00) is an example of this type of recognition. The above categories of the
descriptive framework proved useful during the data collection and analysis processes,
however, there were categories that were not as useful as well as categories that needed
to be added. The following sections discuss these.

What did not work

Recognition of members’ contributions outside of the community was a category
not as helpful as the aforementioned categories in analyzing data. This category was to
include those instances where members recognized another member’s out of community
contributions. A member could have announced, during community gatherings, that
another had contributed to the restoration of a playground, for example. However, there
was no evidence of this type of member recognition in the collected data. There are
several possible reasons why this may be. First, since members of the community often
only see each other during community drum and dance gatherings many members may
not be fully informed on other members’ out of community activities. Also, since the
focus during community gatherings is on drumming and dancing, nonverbal activities, the members may not have an opportunity to vocalize to the larger group their appreciation for another’s outside accomplishments. Similarly, as a researcher, I may not have been privy to these types of acknowledgements if they occurred in more private exchanges between a small group of members. Finally, the category may not hold relevancy to this community because the focus is on rhythm related activities and not on what individual members do outside of the community.

Another category that was not useful in assessing how members come to identify with the Missoula drum and dance community was that of members uniting against a common enemy. As was stated previously, members did not talk about or refer to being different than or in opposition to others and felt very much a part of larger society. The most plausible explanation for this finding is that members, as individuals, see themselves first and foremost as members of larger society and, therefore, not separate from it. Some do see members of larger society as placing them into a category of otherness. However, these community members still see rhythm as an inherent part of all people’s existence and thus all individuals have the ability (if not the desire) to become drum and dance community members.

**What is new**

One category that was originally a part of DiSanza and Bullis’s (1999) findings, but was not included in this study’s original framework is “identification by invitation.” Many members expressed that they were invited into the community by friends or family. Because it is important to have several people to complete the rhythm and because
drumming and dancing is seen as being beneficial, members often do invite others to join the community. Thus, this category was added and addressed in the findings section.

Another category that was added, but was not a part of DiSanza and Bullis's (1999) study was the accessible nature of the community. This category was added to accommodate the data that spoke to individual's ability to easily engage rhythm, and therefore to become members of the community. This group of data was seen as different than the value of inclusivity and invitations to membership because inclusivity was seen as members' desire to include others, and invitations was seen as members actively working to include others. Accessibility, on the other hand, referred to individual's ability to integrate into the community because the focal activities, drumming and dancing, could be done by anyone.

Adding this category, accessibility, as an extension of the framework, indicates either an expansion of identification theory in general or an extension of identification theory as applied to the context of communities, or both. It is possible that organizational members are aided in their process of identification because they can feel comfortable performing the tasks necessary for their position in the organization.

However, research done to test this new category is crucial because the aim of this study was to assess the Missoula drum and dance community, not to extend theory to organizations. It is possible that accessibility is a category more applicable to studies of communities, than to organizations. It would certainly make sense given that communities may have more relaxed "rules" for membership (e.g., no application process, no mandated time commitment, etc.).
Taken as a whole, this study paints a somewhat different picture than related studies of identification found in organizational communication. The focus is on being inclusive, on sharing activities, of obtaining personal benefit through mutually beneficial relationships with other community members. This community is seen as being accessible to all and separate from none. The clearest difference found, however, is in the nature of the inducement used in the identification process. As Cheney (1983) points out, inducement can either be self or other inducement. And, "while an individual has the ability to identify spontaneously with an organizational target, the "move" is often encouraged by the organization in its dealings with the member" (p. 146). In the Missoula drum and dance community, however, the emphasis is on accepting and including individual (rhythmic) expression, extensive persuasive efforts to create one unifying voice could only exist in tension with this emphasis.

Thus, it seems more plausible that, while there are messages within the community that resonate with members, it is more likely that members would practice self-persuasion in identifying with these messages. In other words, whereas organizations, such as the corporations studied by Cheney (1983), actively seek compliance and dedication from their employees; voluntary communities, such as the Missoula drum and dance community, may maintain membership largely because members want to identify with the community. (Voluntary) community members will, therefore, likely gravitate towards those communities whose messages resonate with them.

Once selecting a community, a member may increase the extent to which she/he identifies by persuading her/his self that increasingly more of the messages resonate with
her/him. The members come to identify more with the community because they value membership and want to not only maintain membership, but to enhance the benefits community membership holds. In contrast, a corporate employee, whose corporate membership includes the benefit of salary, for example, may also practice self-inducement, but this practice is in tandem with the corporation’s messages that “help” the employee in the identification process.

This perspective on the identification process, as observed in the Missoula drum and dance community, helps to explain the variety of goals that community members have as well as the focus on inclusivity—the sense that “we” are drummers and dancers, but a variety of individuals first. The goal of the community is not to persuade members to come to identify with (one version of) the community, but to validate individuals’ experiences with the community. In short, the onus is on the community members to identify with the community, not on the community to persuade the membership to identify with it.

Situating this argument in the context of current writings on identification and community is somewhat difficult. Namely because those studies that focus on community and identity, as mentioned in Chapter 2, take a much more macro-level approach. The contrast drawn above between (voluntary) communities and (corporate) organizations is therefore drawn tentatively with the need of more studies of this nature to validate the claim. There are also other areas of future research that may serve to broaden the findings of this study and to enhance the understanding of this community, which is where I now turn.
A Look Towards the Future

In this section I look at research that could be conducted to increase the understanding of the Missoula drum and dance community. I first look at socialization as an area of inquiry that would broaden my presented findings. Next, I turn to areas that would be interesting areas of inquiry, but are not directly pertinent to the questions asked in this study.

Socialization

This study sought to understand the process through which an individual comes to identify with the Missoula drum and dance community. Looking at this process was fruitful in that it helped to shed light not only on identification in a community, but also offered insight into the nature of the Missoula drum and dance community. However, a more thorough picture of this community could be obtained if research was conducted pertaining to the process of socialization, or how a community (or organization) enculturates members. Whereas I looked at how members came to identify with the community, socialization research would focus more on how members come to learn/are taught the culture of the community. Focusing on the processes of learning the community’s culture, then, would broaden the understanding of the community as a whole.

In an interesting account of one aspect of socialization, Rohrbauck-Stout (1993) found that newcomers to the Seattle music scene were “anti-socialized,” which occurred when “scenesters” obstructed the socialization of newcomers. In the Missoula drum and dance community, it is more likely that the converse would be true—that members would help newcomers through a process of socialization. Looking at this process, how
members help others to integrate into the community, would help to flesh out the subtleties between self and other inducement. It may be, for example, that community members socialize newcomers in a process that can be viewed as other inducement. In other words, perhaps looking at the process of socialization as a form of inducement in a community would yield a more expanded picture of how and why a member identifies with her/his community.

Communication, voice, and critical cultural inquiries

Perhaps the most intriguing “findings” of this study were somewhat outside of its scope. (Perhaps that is why they are intriguing... because they remain largely unexplored.) Here, I will explain three areas that would be fruitful lines of inquiry in the context of the Missoula drum and dance community: emotional expression via nonverbal channels, finding a voice as a means of fulfillment/empowerment, and a critical cultural analysis of the United State’s culture.

Music as communication

As noted in my findings, drummers and dancers see drumming and dancing as a method of emotional expression. Moreover, these expressions are understood by some as being communicable to others. The notion of communicating to others emotions through a nonverbal activity (music) is both fascinating and salient to the field of communication. I am sure we can all recall music whose words, or music sans words, that resonated within us. Listening to music “speaks” to us: it makes us feel happy or sad, energetic or relaxed, thoughtful or heedless, and a myriad of other emotions and thoughts.
Music theorists Kamenetsky, Hill, and Trehub (1997) measured music’s ability to convey emotional expressiveness. Citing many of their colleagues, they assert that in the United States:

[Music pieces with rapid tempo tend to be interpreted as happy and pleasant... musical pieces with even-valued rhythms are perceived as sacred or serious compared to those with uneven-valued rhythms, which are interpreted as happy or playful. [S]taccato articulation is perceived as lively or energetic, in contrast to legato articulation, which is seen as peaceful or gentle... [and] loud music tends to be perceived as animated or happy and soft music as delicate or peaceful. (p. 150)

Thus, music theorists have articulated their beliefs that different tempos, rhythms, and levels of fluidity and volume are understood by people as carrying different messages and evoking different feelings. As communication scholars, we can take this understanding and apply it to our field—enhancing not only our understanding of music as a form of communication, but also our research efforts in the area of emotional expressiveness.

In another line of inquiry, music theorists have also addressed the theory that music is a language. In a fascinating treatment of this concept, Koopman (1997) asserts that there are two types of meaning held within music: intrinsic and extrinsic. Extrinsic meaning is symbolic meaning. For example, just as words are mere symbols of “things” (e.g. the word “tree” is not, in fact a tree), so too is music symbolic. Thus, music, like words, “derive their meaning not from their form but from a convention,” an agreement between members of a culture (p. 42). However, intrinsic meaning is the meaning found
within the music itself. In this way, the music alone carries meaning and its primary function is not as a symbol referring to something else, as in extrinsic meaning. For example, an artwork has a meaning as a piece of art (intrinsic meaning). Of course, that same artwork can also refer to something else (extrinsic meaning). Similarly, music can have both intrinsic meaning, a meaning in and of itself, and extrinsic meaning, symbolizing or referring to something else: emotions, feelings, and thoughts, for example.

A study undertaken in the field of communication aimed at assessing the communicative function, emotional and linguistic, of drumming and dancing could enhance our understanding of music as a nonverbal communication form. We would, then, reach a better understanding of what is communicated to or expressed by performers, audience members, and/or passive listeners. There is a reason why music is present in the many cultures of the world... perhaps it is because it is a mode of communication that is both necessary and irreplaceable.

Finding one's "voice"

During the Western States Communication Association annual meeting in 1999, Bedner (1999) presented a paper entitled, *The Search for a Place from Which to Speak: An Autoethnographic Account of My Struggles with Voice.* In this paper, Bedner (1999) explains, through a decidedly feminist lens, the process she went through in finding her ability to use her voice. During my field research I began to recognize the relevance of finding one's voice to the members of the community who spoke of drumming and dancing as "freedom" to express that which they did not feel comfortable expressing elsewhere in society. These community members were, in essence, talking about finding
their voice—reclaiming a silenced part of themselves, whether it is their (literal) voice or 
their bodies as tools of expression.

Conducting a study that further explores the ways in which Missoula drum and 
dance community members come to find their voice would be interesting on two 
accounts. First, it would offer a case study in the ways in which people can and do 
counter hegemonic forces that place restrictions on the ways in which we use our 
bodies—to express ourselves. For example, Bartky (1988) offers an essay weaving 
Foucauldian theory with feminist theory in an indictment of modern patriarchy. She 
asserts that social forces (in the U.S.) work to produce feminine bodies that are “a certain 
size and general configuration;...that [use] a specific repertoire of gestures, postures, and 
movements; and...that are [seen] as ornamental surface[s]” (p. 64). Coupling this notion 
with community members’ expressions, such as, “[in] African dancing you don’t ever 
have to admire the dancer’s body...[and] it’s natural movements” (interview 24), we 
begin to understand both that people do feel societal constraints on their bodies and that 
they do, sometimes, take measures to loosen these bonds. Further exploring and 
developing this understanding would offer a “test” of the post modern theories of power 
and control as relating to the body.

Second, examining the process of how community members “find their voice,” by 
listening to how they talk about this process within the community, would offer an 
interesting perspective on the concept of empowerment language. Empowerment 
language could be seen as the flip side of the “hate speech” coin—whereas hate speech is 
understood as being inherently oppressive, this form of community “empowerment” 
language could be seen as being inherently self and other appreciating. This angle, then,
would speak to the assessment of the ways in which community members help others (and self) to actualize a feeling of power.

Critical cultural inquiries

A final area of potential future research would be a critical cultural inquiry into the United States' culture. At the heart of this inquiry would not be an assessment of African and Afro-Cuban drumming and dancing as performed by (and some would say as co-opted by) people in the U.S. Rather this inquiry would be an assessment of what lacks in our culture (if anything) that is fulfilled by the utilization of and/or the celebration of another culture's musical practices. Additional questions that could be asked in this inquiry would be: Why are the majority of the drummers and dancers learning African and Afro-Cuban rhythms and not Native American drumming and dancing? What, if any, are the U.S. cultural forces that serve to marginalize this form of drumming and dancing? How are these cultural forces, if present, enacted and to what extent? In other words, studying this type of community (perhaps in areas spanning the country) can provide fertile ground on which to critique U.S. culture.

Concluding Remarks

This study began with the desire to understand how and why individuals in the United States seek out and join communities, in other words, how individuals come to identify with a community. In order to embark on this study, it was necessary to develop a definition of community, from a communication perspective, that reflected this study's focus on intentional/voluntary communities. From this definition the task turned to enhancing an understanding of "identification" as it is applied to organizational communication. Then, an understanding of how others have studied community and
identity had to be reached. Finally, a community had to be chosen that would be a viable context in which to conduct this study.

Selecting the Missoula drum and dance community was based not only on its viability, but also on the unique opportunity to study the function of music as a bonding agent between people. The findings of this study suggested that members of this community enact a ritual (a communication form that creates and maintains communal bonds) when they engage in rhythmic expression. Thus, one could say that playing or dancing to rhythms together serves to create and maintain communal bonds. It stands to reason, then, that music itself is a communication form used by members of a community that functions to form and continue communal bonds. As such, music can be studied as another cultural form that resonates within a (cultural) community. Further studies of “musical” communities (as well as non-musical communities) should be conducted as they would broaden our knowledge of how and why individuals seek out a (“musical”) community identity.
ENDNOTES

1 The term “individual” is used in this study to indicate a person with no communal identity. That is to say an individual is not a part of a collective group of people.

2 See also Rhetoric and Community: Studies in Unity and Fragmentation (1998). Edited by J. Michael Hogan, this book offers a series of essays (case studies) that seeks to understand how communities (rhetorically) define themselves and how language is used to promote a sense of community.

3 The complex nature alluded to can be seen as being similar to the complexities found in organizations, family groups, cultures, etc. The short list of some areas that create this complexity are issues of power, networks, varying levels of integration, and the interaction between the community and the dominant culture.

4 It is appropriate to mention here my previous work with the Missoula Drum community. During the spring of 1999 as part of an interpersonal communication class, I performed a two-month “pilot study.” The bulk of my research data were gathered at a two-day drum retreat, but I also conducted interviews. The findings of this study indicated (1) that drumming can be interpreted as a language and (2) that the participants did in fact see themselves as being members of the (temporary) community. Copies of this paper are available upon request.

5 My thought here was to the work of people like Arthur Hull who use drumming as a community building tool. I found it interesting to be able to more closely examine how and why drumming seems to aid in the creation of communal bonds.
"Traditional," as used in this study, refers to the rhythms and dances that are learned by community members and that are a part of the culture of the tribes and communities in such countries as Africa, Cuba, and Haiti. These traditional rhythms and dances have meaning in their cultural context, but while this meaning may be taught to Westerners the focus is on learning the rhythms and dances and not on performing them in the "traditional" manner. In other words, Westerners do not perform soli to celebrate the coming of age of (recently circumcised) twelve- to thirteen-year-old boys as it would be in its cultural context.

While the four groups that compose the traditionalists subcommunity all focus in some way on traditional rhythms, there are differences between the groups and their membership that have aided in the formation of these separate groups and that muddy the understanding of their histories. Many members of this subcommunity referred to "artistic differences," "interpersonal differences," "limited resources" (e.g., the groups "competing" for membership and audiences) and the influence of "ego" when speaking about the factioning that has occurred in the traditionalist subcommunity. Interestingly, all members with whom I spoke expressed that this conflict was unfortunate and, given that some of the long-term members of these groups once played and danced together, there may be the possibility of reconciliation. Unfortunately, exploring the nature of these conflicts is beyond the scope of this manuscript. Suffice it to say that when exploring the history of this subcommunity's groups, I obtained conflicting interview data that I attributed to the underlying tensions and interpersonal conflicts that exist in this subcommunity. (Perhaps it should also be noted that during interviews, members
were generally quite respectful of the other groups and their memberships. As such I believe stories varied because perceptions of the conflict(s) varied, not because one member wanted to paint an unappealing picture of another member or of another group.)

8 It should be noted here that I did not conduct participant-observation research within the LEDA subcommunity. Since LEDA is primarily a performance group whose members have been together for a number of years, it would not be appropriate to “seek membership” for the months in which this study was conducted. Additionally, given my rather novice level of drumming, I question whether I would have been able to be a participant-observer.

9 “Sensitive” is used to refer to those questions that dealt with the conflict in the community.

10 I should mention that I also wrote a rhetorical analysis of the Drum Brothers’ web site focusing specifically on whether or not they promoted a sense of community in the pages of their web site. Still a work in progress, the preliminary results indicate that they do promote community, although they (the Drum Brothers) seem to be somewhat hierarchically removed (due to positioning themselves as “experts”). The Drum Brothers seem to mitigate the affect of their somewhat removed (expert) personae primarily through the use of community members’ testimonials.

11 I will be exploring the “language of the drum” in the following section.

12 These goals may not be consciously addressed or recognized by each community member, however, there are positive intentions behind each member’s participation. These I refer to as goals to be acquired.
The altar consists of candles, sage, and Tibetan tuning bowls placed on a cloth. Surrounding this altar are the communal musical instruments.

Or, as another drummer suggested, “I’m in my own world” (interview 17), which suggests a more internal locus of meditative existence.

It is important to mention here that in their cultural contexts, advanced drummers can use a drum to communicate thoughts to others. Within the Missoula drum community, many myths were talked about regarding this aspect of traditional drumming. For example, one story is of an African drummer sitting underneath a tree with his student. When a man walked by, the drummer varied the rhythm he was playing. A short while later, the man returned and handed the drummer a drink. While drummers in this community may acknowledge this aspect of drumming, none feel as though they can communicate thoughts to others. As one drummer stated, “The drum languages in the traditional sense are set, full languages. You can literally have a conversation with somebody however many miles away as long as they can hear you. I don’t know these conversations, or this language. But it does have an expression to it and that’s basically what I’m learning... so far I feel I can communicate emotion” (interview 16).

During my field research I became aware of the fractured nature of the Missoula drum and dance community. While it would be very interesting to focus on the nature of the conflict and possible resolutions, it is outside the boundaries of this current project. I am not suggesting here that rhythm transcends interpersonal conflict, but I am suggesting that it might have that ability. As when members come together during workshops, retreats, performances, and other gatherings.
It should be noted that there are those in the larger community who have conflict with others based on “personality conflicts.” However, in the smaller subcommunities, there seems to be universal acceptance.

While it may seem that these are inevitable steps in the rhythm-language acquisition process, it should not be viewed as such. Many members find it comfortable to only engage the rhythm in a self expressive way, while others tend to focus more on the aspect of learning traditional, culturally bound rhythms. Having said this, it can also be said that there is a trend in the Full Moon community to enter the community as “expressive drummers” and then heed the call to learn traditional rhythms. As one drummer stated, “I started out with very unstructured [rhythms]... and [now I am] reaching that point that I think a lot of drummers reach where they’re like, ‘I really like free-style drumming and I really like these unstructured drum circles, but there’s got to be more to it than meets the eye. There’s got to be more to learn” (interview 17). This may be more of a product of our culture (the emphasis placed on climbing the ladder, to be successful in our endeavors) than a product of the community.

And, as already pointed out, engaging rhythm has the ability to bypass the thinking center of the brain.

This connection can occur between only two members, or between a larger number of members. For purposes of this discussion, however, the focus will be on a group connection. It is also important to note that drummers can connect when they engage in a conversation described as call and response—where one drummer will play a musical phrase and the other drummer will reply by playing that same phrase. Additionally,
drummers can reply to a part another is playing with a different, but rhythmically comparable part. Finally, drummers also can leave a space in the rhythm that another can fill to complete the conversation.
REFERENCES


