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# The Symbolic Creation of Cultural Performance at the Walnut Valley Festival

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THE SYMBOLIC CREATION OF CULTURAL PERFORMANCE AT THE WALNUT  
VALLEY FESTIVAL

THE SYMBOLIC CREATION OF CULTURAL PERFORMANCE AT THE WALNUT  
VALLEY FESTIVAL

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Sociology

By

Maggie Colleen Cobb  
University of Arkansas  
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, 2009

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University of Arkansas

## ABSTRACT

Through two years of ethnographic fieldwork and 19 interviews, I synthesize symbolic interaction and a sociological framework of culture to examine the ways in which the Walnut Valley Festival is created and experienced as a unique form of cultural performance, one that is always shifting in response to the emergent cultural creation and reception of attendees. No work to date combines the dimensions of both production and reception of music festivals as a unique form of cultural performance. In bringing back the oftentimes ignored affective dimension in cultural studies, I use Griswold's (2004) metaphor of a cultural diamond, examining the definition of the situation and the creation and reception of the Walnut Valley Festival as an always evolving cultural object. In this case, the cultural object of importance is the festival as an emotional cultural performance.

With little exception, most cultural studies focus upon the cognitive aspects of festival that render it meaningful. This work reveals how, through the emotionality of music and narratives, strong feelings of *affective nostalgia* are produced which render the festival deeply meaningful to participants. Intense feelings are produced during performances that involve the ritualized playing of music where attendees experience heightened emotionality, oftentimes difficult to articulate. Through the ritualized performance of music (arguably the most important aspect of the festival to many attendees) and the resultant feelings of *affective nostalgia*, individuals evoke the past, reflect on the present, create and receive "idioculture," and increase the cultural efficacy of the festival as a meaningful, emotional, and "remembered" event that is continuously created and recreated throughout the years.

This thesis is approved for  
Recommendation to the  
Graduate Council

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Manny; the heart and soul of Comfortable Shoes Camp.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Walnut Valley Festival is a music festival that takes place in Winfield Kansas. The festival is a mixture of both American bluegrass and folk music and home to between 13,000 and 20,000 attendees who flock to the festival site each year. It is also home to the national guitar, autoharp, and dulcimer championships. Songwriter contests such as, “campground songs,” “songs for a better world,” “songs about Winfield,” “songs for children,” and “songs of humor” also take place within the festival, and contestants are often festival goers who work arduously for months writing, revising, and practicing. The festival, also known as “Pickers Paradise” or simply “Winfield” to attendees, takes place in September; however, some attendees arrive as early as August to secure their place in line for “Land Rush” (a metaphor used for the official entry into the campgrounds). A favorite saying within the festival is “Welcome Home” as members are reunited with their “festival families” from past festivals and gatherings. One can hear greetings of “Happy Winfield!” as attendees roam the streets inside the campgrounds, offering tidings similar to those you would hear during traditional holidays like Christmas, Thanksgiving, or Halloween.

The festival scene includes the actual festival site (the Winfield rodeo grounds) where the main performances take place. Thousands of attendees watch performances by popular bluegrass or folk music bands on one of three large stages. For example, the main stage includes bleachers under a pavilion that allow the audience seating and shade during performances. The other stages require that audience members bring lawn chairs or blankets. In addition to the performances, attendees may also browse the numerous booths with arts and crafts, music, clothing, and instruments, or attend guitar, dulcimer,

or fiddle workshops. Attendees may also enjoy a wide variety of festival food such as funnel cakes, cotton candy, pizza, ice cream and espresso from local coffee vendors. Festival memorabilia, such as guitar picks and bumper stickers are heavily sought out by attendees at the visitors' center.

The festival site is located between two camp ground communities, known as the Walnut Grove and the Pecan Grove. These large campgrounds surrounding the festival are where members set up "home" for their stay at the festival. Smaller groupings or camps within the Pecan Grove and Walnut Grove have names such as "Rat Camp," "La La Land," "Comfortable Shoes," "Oz Tin City Limits," and "Our Grass is Blue," and are established at the festival with playful props and creative make-shift signs. These unique camps are set up in the same geographic location from one year to the next as part of a festival tradition that hinges upon member's early arrival for "Land Rush." Musicians can be found wandering from camp to camp to participate in "jam" sessions with other musicians. Often musicians will start spontaneous jams in the middle of the dirt roads within the campgrounds. Indeed, the term "Pickers' Paradise" refers not so much to the performances by professional musicians, but rather, the music produced by participants camping within these two campgrounds (see Appendix A for map of festival grounds).

Now in its 39<sup>th</sup> year, the festival maintains a website, complete with a discussion forum, and a newsletter to keep attendees up to date with Winfield "news." Winfield serves as a pilgrimage for devotees of this temporary musical community, accompanied with playful rituals and a rich tradition of festival life.

## **A. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND STUDY PURPOSE**

Combining ethnographic observation and auto-ethnographic reflection (Ellis 2001) with interviews of festival attendees, I focus upon how festival culture is created, shared, and understood by festival participants. In order to accomplish this, I draw from both the sociology of culture (Fine 1979; Griswold 1994; Schudson 1989) and symbolic interaction (Blumer 1969; Hewitt 1989, 2007; Mead 1934) to explore how individuals interpret and shape their experiences at the Walnut Valley Festival. In addition, I borrow from Turner (1969) the definition of festival as “cultural performance” where individuals participate in constructing alternative communities, sometimes challenging the structure of every day dominant culture (e.g., egalitarian play versus hierarchical work). Festival, for Turner, provides a place for heightened emotion and experience as well as a connection of the past and present through ritual. Informed by the above framework, the specific research questions that guide my study are as follows:

1. How do attendees of the Walnut Valley Festival understand the festival (i.e. cultural performance) and construct a shared definition of the situation?
2. What are the observable cultural components (e.g., rituals, artifacts, rites of passage, props) created and made available to festival attendees?

## **B. STUDY SIGNIFICANCE**

With few exceptions, there is little research that examines music festivals as a specific cultural performance (Turner 1969) and a site for shared definitions and/or situated identities (Hewitt 1989). Most studies of music festivals focus upon the attendees themselves. For example, Bauman, Sawin, and Carpenter (1992) provide an



ethnographic study of a folk festival focusing on the perspectives of the participants themselves, while Eder, Staggenborg, and Sudderth (1995) follow a similar pattern in discussing identity, reasons for attendance, and conflict amongst participants at the “National Women’s Festival.” Other works examine the function of festivals, such as Snell (2005) who illustrates how festivals can provide a transmission of learning, but does not focus upon the actual cultural performance. Finally, Solli (2006) investigates differences in social class and “rootedness” found among Norwegian country music festivals. Thus, no work to date combines the dimensions of both production and reception of music festivals as a unique form of cultural performance.

While there is much written on the history and revival of both bluegrass music (Adler 1982; Artis 1975; Cantwell 1984; Carney 1980; Smith 1984) and folk music (Feintuch 1993; Nusbaum 1993; Rosenberg 1993), research concerning cultural performance within festival enclaves is lacking, as is research surrounding the creation and maintenance of shared understandings, or the definition of the situation, within these festival enclaves. Moreover, most studies give little attention to the role of music in creating shared definitions of the situation among musicians.

However, two relevant studies to my topic are found with Kotarba, Fackler, and Nowotny (2009) who borrow Fine’s (1979) concept of “idioculture,” focusing upon both place and music scenes, and Gardner’s (2004) examination of “portable” communities,” focusing upon how they are created, used, and understood by festival attendees at bluegrass festivals similar to that of the Walnut Valley Festival. Other researchers have examined the production of music within bluegrass communities focusing on the actual performance and reception of bluegrass music (Tunnel and Groce 1998).

The Walnut Valley Festival can be viewed as a cultural performance with accompanying rituals, props, and rites of passage, where shared definitions of the festival are created and passed down through narratives and music that create affective ties among attendees. In this research, I draw from symbolic interaction and employ a sociology of culture framework to reveal how the festival is always being created and recreated through emergent social interaction. Describing the festival as a cultural performance, I reveal that cultural production is neither solely created for or by those who attend cultural performances. Rather, cultural performance is where both meet and are understood.

In chapter two, I examine empirical studies of festivals and present a theoretically informed conceptual framework for this study. In chapter three, I outline my methodological framework and in chapter four, I provide the findings of this research, drawing upon ethnographic description and interviews. Chapter five includes a discussion and conclusion section with suggestions for future research.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Despite the difficulty associated with conceptualizing culture, interestingly enough, even those who attend to the notion of its ambiguity share a common epistemological stance: culture *can* and *should* be studied. This critical idea arguably constitutes the main assumptions of seemingly divergent approaches to cultural studies. The continuum of perspectives within the sociology of culture ranges from a highly deterministic, macro approach to the production of culture (Peterson 2004) to a much more micro, agency driven production of culture (Fine 1979). The history of the sociology of culture includes neo-Marxist's interpretations of "culture industries," post-structural views that examine "cultural codes" and "classification schemes," as well as dramaturgical perspectives that emphasize the agency involved in the selection of various available meanings.

For some, culture is external and we either acquire or learn culture that is somehow "out there." This can be thought of as cultural determinism and the sociology of culture includes studies that make this assumption. However, empirically speaking, culture and social structure are "mirror images" of one another. In other words, we can identify structural arrangements such as rules and established patterns of social life and we can study the expressions of these arrangements and the ways in which individuals and groups participate and/or change these, revealing that "culture often forms a seamless part of our worlds" (Hall, Neitz, and Battani 2003:10). More importantly, while few sociologists would deny that structural forces influence culture, symbolic interaction informs us that culture is experienced. As Hewitt (1990:70) suggests, "culture invites and impedes action" but it does not "dictate."

Although there is some polarity surrounding the issues of cultural production and reception, there are those who tend to fall between the two poles of determinism vs. agency (Griswold 1994; Schudson 1989). In this case, the study of culture is also a study of cultural objects and their linkage to various social worlds. For the purposes of this study, I examine the Walnut Valley Festival, emphasizing how cultural performance is created and experienced at the festival in a context of leisure, how the festival itself constitutes a cultural object in linking production and reception, and how festival culture is understood through a dynamic process of creation and maintenance of shared definitions of the situation (Fine 1979; Turner 1969). I begin with an organizing framework provided by Griswold's (1994) description of the cultural diamond.

## **B. THE CULTURAL DIAMOND**

Griswold (1994: xiv) employs the metaphor of a "cultural diamond" by which to

investigate the connections among four elements: *cultural objects* – symbols, beliefs, values, and practices; *cultural creators*, including the organizations and systems that produce and distribute cultural objects; *cultural receivers*, the people who experience culture and specific cultural objects; and the *social world*, the social context in which culture is created and experienced.

The "cultural diamond" informs this ethnographic study in that the Walnut Valley Festival encompasses all facets of the diamond. Griswold's work is informative because it highlights the linkages between the four cultural dimensions that work together to ensure a holistic approach that is balanced between structure and agency.

Griswold (1994) asserts that in order to fully grasp the various components of culture, one must understand the different linkages between the four dimensions. In order to isolate and analyze a cultural object, in this case the Walnut Valley Festival, it is

necessary to identify and analyze the different characteristics of the object, and how it is similar to other cultural objects within a culture, yet entirely different from others.

In other words, in order to understand the Walnut Valley Festival as a cultural object, it's important to grasp first, the social context in which the object is situated.

### **C. CULTURAL DIAMOND: SOCIAL CONTEXT**

Festival illuminates the difference between pure leisure and empty, anomic free time characterized by differing degrees of self-expression and role constraint within a social context. Samdahl (1988) provides a theoretical definition of leisure that attempts to lessen the gap between what constitutes leisure and what is simply empty or anomic free time. Drawing from symbolic interaction, Samdahl (1988:29) argues that

meanings come to mediate between the individual and the environment. Those meanings, or shared definitions of the situation, are the source of the freedoms and constraints which regulate individual action.

Accordingly, “with the combined effect of reduced role constraint and reduced self-objectification, leisure should offer an increased opportunity for true self-expression”(p.30). For example, the festival can be differentiated from work and routine life where roles are regulated and self-expression is constrained by a variety of workplace norms and bureaucratic structures.

Similarly, in his ethnographic account of bluegrass festivals, Gardner (2004) postulates the importance of having a “place” in which to escape the stress of a rapidly modernizing society. Gardner argues that the rural location of bluegrass and folk festivals provides a “symbolic break” from daily life where participants are freed from daily responsibilities and are given the opportunity to freely play, fantasize, and express themselves. According to Gardner (2004:iii),

participants use the festival site as a space in which they can reclaim and reconnect with a slower, simpler, and perceivably more authentic style of living that they find increasingly difficult to create in their home environments.

Attendees at the festival create portable communities by modeling festival discourse around themes oppositional to urbanization (e.g., place, community, cultural memories, and inclusive community). Both Samdahl (1988) and Gardner (2004) present leisure as somewhat compensatory to work life and modernity. The Walnut Valley Festival is similar in that it provides a “place” for attendees, constituting the first dimension of the cultural diamond, but as this study reveals, it is far more than a “symbolic break” from urbanization and work.

#### **D. CULTURAL DIAMOND: CREATOR**

As Griswold notes, it is necessary to investigate the producers of the cultural performance/object, such as who formed it and why. According to the first Walnut Valley Festival program, the initial Walnut Valley Festival was held in 1967 when an ambitious group of self-proclaimed “bluegrass nuts” attending Southwestern University in Kansas “begged” the college for 3,200 dollars to begin the creation of the festival. The festival planning committee was “by no means a group of expert folklorists but rather a group of highly interested students who wanted to know more about the rich and oftentimes neglected culture in which we live” (Walnut Valley Festival program). While Griswold focuses upon the origins of a cultural object, this study will reveal that creators are not just the originators but the participants as well.

#### **E. CULTURAL DIAMOND: THE CULTURAL OBJECT**

The cultural object under investigation is the actual event, the Walnut Valley Festival. Just as a diamond can change shape depending on the angle from which one

views it, the festival experience shifts continually during the event. To understand how the Walnut Valley Festival as a cultural object “works” for attendees at the festival, I apply aspects of Schudson’s (1989) notion of cultural efficacy. Schudson (1989) provides five dimensions to examine the effectiveness of a given cultural object: *Retrievability, rhetorical force, resonance, institutional retention, and resolution*. While much of Schudson’s (1989) examples refer to the media, these dimensions are also applicable to discussing cultural objects of a different nature. For example, *retrievability* refers to the accessibility of a cultural object to participants. According to Schudson (1989:169), “If culture is to influence a person, it must reach a person.” He uses the example of advertising agencies placing ads that are most likely to be seen by people who are in the market for the product being advertised. In other words, “Cosmetic ads appear more frequently in *Vogue* than in *Field & Stream* because more cosmetic purchasers read *Vogue* than read *Field & Stream*” (Schudson 1989:160). For this study, retrievability can be considered in reference to geographic retrievability (how close or how far the Walnut Valley Festival is for participants) and economic retrievability (whether or not a participant can afford to attend the festival.)

The second dimension of efficacy is rhetorical force, or that which makes the cultural object powerful and memorable. Schudson defines rhetorical force as, “that indefinable quality of vividness or drama or attention-grabbing and belief-inducing energy [that] cannot be defined, even in part” (p. 165). He raises the question, “Even if a cultural object...is within reach, [or retrievable], what will lead someone to be mindful of it? Even if it is in view, what will make viewing it memorable and powerful?” (p. 164). It would appear that this cultural dimension does not lend itself to a simple observation but

may result in a number of criteria. Recurring themes of rhetorical force within the Walnut Valley Festival emerge, offering insight into the cultural mechanisms that render it memorable and powerful and keep participants engaged in the festival throughout the years. I will address these specifically in chapter four.

According to Schudson (1989), for an object to have rhetorical force it “must be relevant to and resonant with the life of the audience” (Schudson 1989:167). He argues that audiences both attend to and perceive in ways that are selective. A cultural object’s ability to *resonate* with its audience is heavily reliant on individual interests. With respect to the Walnut Valley Festival, people attend the festival because they are interested in what occurs at the festival, or become interested in the festival because they attend.

The fourth component and least applicable to this study is Schudson’s (1989) claim that a cultural object must have *institutional retention*, or be associated with sanctions. Schudson (1989) argues that, “[Culture] exists not only as a set of meanings people share but as a set of concrete social relations in which meaning is enacted, in which it is, in a sense, tied down” (Schudson 1989:170). He uses the example of the institutional support of teaching Homer’s epic, the *Iliad*, in public school systems instead of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which is a comparable epic to Homer’s. Schudson (1989) argues that “There are sanctions...for not knowing Homer,” such as failing high school. This is what he refers to as “tied-down, institutionalized culture” (p. 170). At first glance this dimension appears inapplicable but there is evidence of retention or “tied down” aspects for those who regularly attend through informal, personal, internalized, and emotional sanctions. As my findings reveal, these occur when a seasoned Walnut Valley Festival participant is/was unable to attend the festival for whatever given reason.



The fifth and final component of efficacy is *resolution*, or the ability of a cultural object to effect the future actions of participants. According to Schudson (1989:171),

Some elements in culture are more likely to influence action than others because they are better situated at a point of action or because they are by nature directives for action. An advertisement is a cultural text of high “resolution” in that it normally tells the audience precisely what to do to respond.

The Walnut Valley Festival includes some evidence of resolution in so far as attendees are directed by the program as to what constitutes folk and bluegrass music, appropriate camp behaviors, what to purchase, and how to conduct themselves.

Contestants are guided in precisely what to perform, how long, and the order of the contests. Some camps send out songs for fellow campers to learn for the upcoming year, directing musicians in what to attend to for the next festival. This dimension is also evident in the utilization of the Walnut Valley Festival website, reading the Walnut Valley Festival newsletter, and purchasing Walnut Valley Festival products and merchandise.

Examination of the social context and cultural creators of the Walnut Valley Festival combined with description of the festival as a cultural object provide a model for illustrating the festival. But these components alone would fall short of the goal of understanding a cultural performance without the last dimension of the cultural diamond metaphor; that of reception.

#### **F. CULTURAL DIAMOND: RECEPTION/AUDIENCE**

Whereas Griswold might examine the audience of a cultural object as those who receive it (e.g., the reader of a book, the consumer of a product, the viewer of a painting), reception and audience at the Walnut Valley Festival is far more interactive, resulting in both continuous reception and co-creation. In order to understand the reception of the

Walnut Valley Festival culture, I draw from both Turner's (1969) definition of festival and Fine's (1979) definition of idioculture. For Turner (1969), ritual is a crucial live component, or "moment of experience," one that offers *liminality*, described as a temporary break in the rules and structures of routine life. Turner (1969) argues that there are five "moments of experience" that set festival apart from normal, routine life. These include: 1) *a perceptual core of more intense emotions than what would be in routine life*; 2) *clear evocation of past experiences*; 3) *revival of feelings associated with past events of symbolic or emotional importance*; and 4) *generation of meaning by linking the past and present*. Finally, the experience is completed when 5) *expressed and communicated in such a way that the audience can develop an understanding of the performance*. This compliments a symbolic interactionist view that festival is not only shaped through the use of ritual, but received and understood by participants. Turner's (1969) work also provides insight into the affective dimension of festival, one that is often overlooked by many sociologists who study culture. In defining cultural performance through heightened emotional experience, Turner (1969), like Durkheim, illuminates an important affective component surrounding cultural reception at the festival, one that emphasizes the importance of emotionality in terms of the creation and maintenance of strong social bonds.

The "moments of experience" that Turner refers to also depend upon the smaller groups that participate in the cultural performance of festivals. While not speaking to festival culture in particular, Fine (1979) coined the term "idioculture" to describe "a system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and customs shared by members of an interacting group to which members can refer and employ as the basis of further

interaction” (p. 734). Fine (1979) describes five “filtering elements” that may be employed within any group to explain the

selection and continued salience of any given item within a group’s idioculture: that the item may be seen as *Known*, *Usable*, *Functional*, and *Appropriate* in terms of the group’s status system, and *Triggered* by some experienced event. (P. 738)

In other words, events or rituals that occur at the Walnut Valley Festival must be known to members of the group, usable in so far as they can be mentioned and understood within the group, congruent with the goals and needs of group members, and consistent with “patterns of interaction”(p. 741). In addition, these cultural objects and/or events should produce some sort of response within the group. Fine (1979) suggests that it is through differing configurations of these five “filtering elements” that one can account for the creation of “idioculture.” According to Fine (1979), all groups, as they share experience, will create culture, and as Turner (1969) suggests, the meaningful aspects of this process are connected to ritual and heightened emotional experience.

Combined, these works inform my examination of the Walnut Valley Festival, highlighting the linkage between each facet of a cultural phenomenon. I assess the efficacy (Schudson 1989) of the cultural performance (retrievability, rhetorical force, resonance, institutional retention, and resolution) and the various ways Winfield, as a cultural object/performance, “works” for attendees at the festival. I describe the “moments of experience” that are revealed during the festival, the heightened emotions that accompany them, and identify the applicable components of “idioculture” (Fine 1979). Finally, as I will demonstrate, these dimensions of the “cultural diamond” are not mutually exclusive but rather complex and dynamic. I turn next to symbolic interaction,

in which I discuss the process of creating a shared definition of the situation at the festival.

## **G. SYMBOLIC INTERACTION**

Hewitt (1989) asserts that a symbolic interactionist's view of culture is one that emphasizes the importance of meaning and the interpretation of meaning as a key component of human activity. Similar to Fine (1979) Hewitt views culture as an environment of social objects, or human constructs, which reflect and shape individuals during their interaction with those social objects as well as other individuals in their cultural environment. Hewitt (1989) argues that culture provides a sense of "likeness" that is the foundation for identification with others. In other words, culture provides an environment in which individuals can identify with others through shared systems of meaning. Not only do individuals identify with others in a culture through the interpretation of meaning, but also use culture as a mirror in which to construct perceptions of identity and community.

Hewitt's (1989) conception of culture largely reflects the main assumptions within the theory of social interaction. The focus of symbolic interaction is distinctly grounded in the examination of individuals as agents of action, as well as the meaning of symbols that are produced through social interaction. According to Blumer (1969), there are three dominant assumptions within symbolic interaction. To begin, we act on the basis of the meaning that things have for us; these meanings arise out of social interaction. We then internalize and modify these meanings through interpretation, or in other words, we think through the meaning of things. We then can use, understand, and rely on meaningful symbols, and in the process, become "human" through social

interaction. Lastly, because humans are conscious and reflexive, we are able to shape our actions and interactions in ways that enable us to make decisions about how to interact with ourselves and others.

According to Hewitt (2007:73), a shared definition of the situation is “an organization of perceptions in which people assemble objects, meanings, and others, and act toward them in a coherent, organized way.” The attendees of the Walnut Valley Festival create and share a definition of the situation that lends insight into the conduct that is to be expected at the festival, who might be present at the festival, how the festival is located in relation to other social situations, what can be expected to happen at Winfield, and the goals to be pursued by other members attending the festival. Without a shared definition of the situation, we are unable to anticipate the actions and reactions of others, and are thereby confused about how to conduct our behavior. Hewitt (2007) asserts that the reality of the definition of a situation is collective rather than personal; individuals construct a “hypothesis” about what is to be expected in the situation through observing the actions of others, and this hypothesis is confirmed when individual actions fit with those actions observed. Once this process is established, the definition of the situation becomes real and meaningful to participants. But how does this definition of the situation get constructed by attendees?

Hewitt (1989:156) understands situated identity as a “set of linked perspectives” that form a shared definition of the situation, in which there is widespread agreement on appropriate responses to the situation. A definition of the situation provides attendees at the Walnut Valley Festival a social object, the festival, in which to orient their action while the roles of other participants provide the perspectives necessary to order action in

a way that is intelligible to other attendees. Hewitt (2007) uses the metaphor of a map that says “You are here” with an arrow pointing exactly where one is standing in an effort to describe how the definition of a situation is used as a platform in which to view ourselves and others, where we act and react on the basis of shared meaning.

In conclusion, symbolic interaction provides critical insight into how participants not only receive a cultural object but also how they create and maintain a shared definition of the situation in which to organize actions and responses at the festival. Through the maintenance of the definition of the situation, attendees are able to order and understand action in a way that is congruent with others in the situation. Participants at the Walnut Valley Festival share an understanding of the context and the purpose of the festival, which is situated in an environment that emphasizes leisure time, music, friendship, and a deep sense of community.

## **H. EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

This section of the literature review examines studies of festivals that relate to either the Walnut Valley Festival or employ one or more of the theoretically informed perspectives mentioned above. For example, Solli (2006) explores the history of country music in Norway, Norwegian country music festivals, issues of class within Norwegian country music, the comparison between country music and jazz, and the construction of Norwegian identity through the use of country music. According to Solli (2006), the allure of country music in Norway reveals underlying social and cultural issues such as a desire for a sense of place and a response to displacement in a rapidly modernizing and globalizing world. Country music, Solli argues, appeals to festival goers as nostalgic, reminiscent of the “Wild West.” Accordingly, attending country music festivals provides

individuals with the opportunity to appreciate their past without being caught up in the past. Solli (2006) concludes that for Norwegians, the vast circulation of country music exemplifies the concept of rootedness, not necessarily in a geographic location, but in the tradition of country music itself.

The concept of rootedness is also evident in Gardner's (2004) study of bluegrass festivals. Gardner (2004) asserts that the newly revived interest in bluegrass is associated with traditional American "roots" that are strongly related to cultural memories of Old Appalachia. Gardner's (2004) ethnography explores the growth of bluegrass music and festival life, as well as how participants within bluegrass festivals perform place, identity, and community. By focusing on the vocabulary of motives for attendance at bluegrass festivals, Gardner (2004) explores the ways that attendees utilize the festival site as a way to express a perceived "authentic" identity in a rapidly modernizing society. Place, community, simplicity, and identity are recurring themes at bluegrass festivals. Thus, Gardner concludes that the festival provides a retreat for those who need a break from the modern working world while also providing participants with an inclusive, intimate, and simple form of community or sense of "place" that ties participants together within the community, confirming identity and providing a sense of nostalgia surrounding values lost in modernization. According to Gardner (2004), this nostalgia is produced through the creation of traditional value systems associated with Appalachian life such as authenticity, simplicity, stability, intimacy, kinship, and family. The collective adherence to these accepted values is the social glue that helps maintain such a tightly knit community found at bluegrass festivals.

Both Solli (2006) and Gardner (2004) view festival as a site for rootedness in a seemingly rootless society. Their critique is similar in that both view festivals as providing traditional music and “old time” values that serve as a form of compensation, or “symbolic break,” from an overly routine and modernized society where meaningful connections are difficult to find. These works provide the context for festival experiences and why they become meaningful to those who attend. Another recurring theme in Gardner (2004) and Solli’s (2006) work is the capacity of country and bluegrass music to provoke strong feelings of nostalgia.

In her study of senior citizens that participate in Yiddish sing-along nights, Gvion (2009) suggests that individuals participate in leisure settings as a way to “position themselves in their past and present lives” (p. 51) through strong feelings of nostalgia produced through the singing of traditional Yiddish songs. Gvion (2009) posits that “through organized leisure, it is possible for various groups to propagate folklorised versions of their culture and practice their liberty by opening up new spaces for the articulation of particular pasts with the dominant culture” (p. 52). Because leisure activities generate strong feelings of community, promote both collective and personal identity, allow individuals to appropriate personal meanings to cultural phenomena, and also allow for the creation and recreation of cultural knowledge (p. 53), leisure settings provide groups with a social world in which individuals share and recall a situated past, one that offers an opportunity to assign meaning to their present circumstances as well as their culture. Gvion (2009) suggests that it is through nostalgia that individuals construct and interpret their own versions of the world (p. 63), where feelings of community belonging, collective identity, and personal identity are experienced and reified through



the summoning of collective memory. Just as Turner (1969) reminds us, the emotionality of cultural performance is evoked through the synthesis of the past and the present, and Gvion (2009) provides a foundation in which to understand how, through nostalgia, the connection of the past and present can be used to construct and experience unique versions of the world.

Similar to Gvion's (2009) work that examines the formation of collective identity through organized leisure settings, in their ethnography of the "National Women's Music Festival," Eder, Staggenborg, and Sudderth (1995) explore the possibility of creating a community founded on collective identity and shared values through the leisure setting of a women's festival. The aim of this particular festival is to create an ideal temporary community that is safe for lesbians who may not experience a shared definition of the situation in their everyday lives. The authors combine interviews with the analysis of programs from festivals past and find that for the majority of women who attend, the festival provides a release from everyday life, wherein their sexual orientations are still challenged and seen as controversial. The authors find that festival attendees also attempt to create a community that they would like to see exist within the larger society. The personal becomes political for attendees, wherein alienation and isolation within society at large can be temporarily suspended. Although the ideal is shared among attendees, the result, for some, is further alienation. The authors discuss the implicit efficacy of the festival and provide suggestions for ways to enhance its inclusivity for all women who attend.

Kotarba, Fackler, and Nowotny (2009) discuss various Latino music scenes and their relationship with the production, experience, and performance of Latino music

within Houston, Texas. Their ethnographic study examines the emerging scenes of rock en Espanol, gay Latino dance music, and professional soccer supporters' music as a site for cultural production through Latino music scenes. They utilize the concepts of scene, idioculture, and place to describe the various ways in which members of these Latino music scenes make sense of themselves and their everyday experiences, finding that for participants, the music scene provides meaning through shared language and identity. Their findings indicate that music scenes result in the creation of idioculture, or the production of culture on a micro level, providing solidarity and a sense of rootedness against a backdrop of political change taking place within their communities. Similar to the above works, Latino music scenes provide participants with a perceived sense of authenticity and temporary sense of place.

Snell's (2005) examination of music festivals differs from the above works in that Snell explores the role that outdoor popular music festivals play in musical teaching and learning within the community. Snell (2005) concludes that the unique, informal, outdoor setting of music festivals provides an immersion for attendees through extended stay at the festival (a few days to a few weeks), camping, and the backdrop of a natural environment. Participants describe the festival as a unique, unstructured, and valuable personal and musical experience. In Snell's (2005) examination of the "Other Minds" music festival located in Ontario, participants are provided with an ideal location for learning music within a community context. In addition, Snell (2005) concludes that these outdoor festivals promote the works of local artists, performers, and musicians through exposure to a variety of different musical genres. While this work does not include a symbolic interactionist framework it can easily be applied to symbolic

interaction where shared definitions of the situation create a learning environment for participants against a backdrop of unstructured musical experiences. Amateur musicians are provided a context in which they can affirm their identities. Similarly, the Walnut Valley Festival includes an informal teaching and learning environment where attendees take active interest in teaching new members of the festival how to play instruments. The learning of an instrument at the Walnut Valley Festival could be considered a rite of passage in which new members are “initiated” into the community. Moreover, the festival provides seasoned musicians with an opportunity to hone their skills with other talented musicians at the festival, something that may be in short supply in their “real lives.”

Bauman, Sawin, and Carpenter (1992) depict the Festival of American Folklife as a means of modern cultural production, where cultural values and products are displayed to the general public. Unlike other folklorists who primarily focus on the larger political aspects of the festival, Bauman et al. (1992) narrow their attention to understanding and interpreting the perspectives of the festival participants themselves, finding that participants are consistently active in the festival culture. In other words, participants are constantly revising their performances, interpreting their participation within the festival frame, and adapting to definitions and demands associated with the festival that are inconsistent with their personal identity. Second, in taking their participation seriously, participants’ egos and reputations are constantly at stake. Attendees consistently evaluate themselves based on comments from other participants, their own personal obligations, perceived goals and attitudes, and the reactions of the audience. This study provides evidence of the importance of a shared definition of the situation as well as the issues that

arise as situated identities are created. It also serves as a reminder that cultural performances are dynamic; participants at this festival understand that their reputations are at stake based on their performance, and use role taking as a mechanism for determining appropriate lines of conduct.

In summary, this literature offers broader, ethnographic depictions of pertinent concepts of festival such as shared definitions of the situation, a sense of release from the everyday constraints of life, the importance of inclusivity, an opportunity for acquisition of skills, participation in a leisure subculture, the use of nostalgia in assigning meaning to the present, and the creation and reception of idioculture. Combined, these works add insight into both cultural creation and cultural reception at the Walnut Valley Festival. With the exception of Gvion (2009) and Turner (1969), few focus upon the import of affect in creating meaningful social worlds through organized leisure. Emotion is one element of allure that is missing in many of these studies of festival. Both Gvion (2009) and Turner (1969) remind us that affective ties are an important part of creating and experiencing community as well as a shared definition of festival, where music and ritual play a large role in producing the emotion involved in the creation of cultural performance.

### III. METHODS

*How is it possible to imagine such a [cultural] “system” except by first arresting that all too well-known form of transcendent critique that holds tension, density, and texture at bay in favor of the generalization, the exegesis, the finalizable system that makes sense of things in a recognizable frame of types and causes and elements? (Stewart 1996:21)*

#### A. BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

As a musician and a sociologist, I chose this topic of study in order to combine my interests as well as to further my understanding of cultural creation and reception within a unique and vibrant social world. In addition, I have attended numerous music festivals and find that they contain many of the elements described in the discussion presented in the previous chapters. In this way, ethnography highlights the importance of “starting where you are.” According to Lofland et al. (2006), fieldwork builds upon “researchers’ personal connections to the world(s) around them, seeing those connections as avenues for potential research” (p. 9). They add:

The naturalistic or fieldwork approach to social research fosters a pronounced willingness, even commitment, on the part of the investigator to orient to these kinds of personal concerns...Starting where you are can ease your access to certain research sites and informants. It can also increase the odds that you will be able to maintain the engagement and commitment that field research requires. (P. 9)

In this respect, I employ a combination of sociology, music, and festival in an effort to better my understanding of these various interests in connection with the Walnut Valley Festival. I am also reminded of a powerful quote from Harriet Martineau concerning the importance of sympathy when conducting research. She writes, “A sociologist that lacks sympathy is like one who, without hearing the music, sees a roomful of people begin to dance” (quoted in Lengermann & Niebrugge 1998:34). My

hope has been to generate an understanding of the “music” people dance to in the cultural performance of festival.

## **B. GAINING ENTRY INTO THE WALNUT VALLEY FESTIVAL**

Gaining entry into the research setting proved relatively simple. Like all participants at the festival, getting into the festival was as easy as buying a ticket and packing up the car. As a musician myself, developing an interest in the world of folk and bluegrass music was as simple as casually attending my first “picking party” where musicians gathered at a friend’s home to play music and enjoy each other’s company outside of the festival. After attending my first “picking party,” I was introduced to other musicians who regularly attend the festival.

Shortly after my introduction into picking parties, I was invited to attend the Walnut Valley Festival, which I did in September of 2009 as a wide-eyed “virgin” (a term used by campers to identify those who are first time attendees). I was invited to camp within the “Comfortable Shoes Camp” a ready-made community in which to set up my Winfield home. I began learning to play the guitar and developed a relationship with other members of Comfortable Shoes, and by the time the festival concluded, I was left with a sense of intentional community, as well as a fascination with the festival, and how it “worked.” When I returned in September of 2010, my “virgin” status had dissolved and I became a known observer to the camp enclaves.

## **C. GROUNDED THEORY**

I utilized a grounded theory approach to my data analysis of the Walnut Valley Festival. Although I had a great deal of theoretical backing to guide me in my ethnography of the festival, I employed initial and focused coding to allow the data to

breathe, so to speak. The importance of grounded theory lies in the ability to let the interviewees and observations retain fluid movement in spite of a theoretical framework. My aim was to allow the cultural world of the Walnut Valley Festival, along with its participants, to guide my understanding and writing of this research. I borrow from Charmaz (2006:23) to elaborate upon the utility of an emergent theoretical framework:

Grounded theory methods move ethnographic research toward theoretical development by raising description to abstract categories and theoretical interpretation. Grounded theory methods preserve an open-ended approach to studying the empirical world yet add rigor to ethnographic research by building systematic checks into both data collection and analysis.

In an effort to understand the ways in which attendees at the Walnut Valley Festival develop a shared definition of the situation, as well as to investigate observable cultural components created and made available to participants at the festival, a qualitative project is the most appropriate methodology. This reasoning follows Charmaz's (2006:15) assertion: "let your research problem shape the methods you choose...Choose methods that help you answer your questions with ingenuity and incisiveness." In order to develop an understanding of the Walnut Valley Festival as a cultural object in which participants create and share meaningful experience, I chose to immerse myself in the social world of the Walnut Valley Festival. As Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995:2) argue, "immersion gives the field worker access to the fluidity of others' lives and enhances his [her] sensitivity to interaction and process."

#### **D. SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION**

Primary data for this study included transcribed interviews, ethnographic observation, and transcribed fieldnotes of the festival. I used a purposive, criterion sample (Babbie 2010; Patton 2002) to choose participants for this study. The sample was

purposive in that I intentionally selected participants based upon the number of festivals they had attended and the location of the attendee. The number of festivals attended by participants played a significant role in understanding the culture at the Walnut Valley Festival; attendees who were “veterans,” or attendees who had attended the festival more than once, had a certain embeddedness in the culture at the festival that provided important insight based on their extensive knowledge of the rituals, artifacts, festival language, etcetera, gained through the years they had attended. Attendees who were “virgins,” or new to the festival, and “weekenders” (those who had only attended during the “official” festival) also played an important role due to their limited knowledge of the festival, which provided fresh insight into the newly experienced world of the Walnut Valley Festival. Location within the festival (i.e. Pecan Grove or Walnut Grove) was also an important criteria for my sample, as there is a difference between how campers experience the festival based on which grove attendees chose to camp in.

I interviewed 19 participants that represented the criteria mentioned above. Most were veterans although I did interview two virgins and provided auto-ethnographic reflections (Ellis 2001) on my own “virgin” status. Most of my discussions with virgins at the festival took place as informal, casual conversations that were typically spontaneous and not recorded. I specifically focused more on veteran attendees due to their extensive knowledge and embeddedness within the festival culture. Also, due to the differences between the two larger camps, the Walnut Grove and Pecan Grove, I interviewed participants staying within both camps. Because there were so many camp enclaves within the two groves, I necessarily limited my interviews to a few camps. Ten of my interviews were conducted with members from Comfortable Shoes Camp, one



interview with multiple attendees camped in the Walnut Grove, and the rest of my interviewees were located in various camps throughout the Pecan Grove (KAAA Camp, Stage 5 Camp, and Chicken Train Camp). All of my interviewees were white, nine were female, 10 were male, and all of them were from the United States, with the exception of Paul, who lives in France. Finally, because the festival is composed of not only musicians but also audience members who are not musicians, 14 interviewees were musicians who played regularly in the campgrounds and five were with attendees who simply enjoy listening. In an effort to understand the Walnut Valley Festival as a cultural performance, the distinction between attendees who are musicians and attendees who are not musicians provided important insight into how the culture at the festival is understood as a cultural performance, one that is continuously created and received by attendees.

Interviews were open-ended, audio-taped, conversation style, and lasted approximately an hour, although some lasted two to three hours (see Appendix B for open-ended interview guide). Again I borrow from Charmaz (2006) who provides an understanding of the importance of a conversation style interview:

Most essentially, an interview is a directed conversation; intensive interviewing permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience and, thus, is a useful method for interpretive inquiry. ..The interviewer seeks to understand the topic and the interview participant has the relevant experiences to shed light on it. (P. 25)

These “directed conversations” took place in the interviewee’s camp setting, or wherever the interviewee felt most comfortable engaging in open conversation with me. Interviews were formulated to probe for insight into the creation of a shared definition of the situation, as well as how members utilize, interpret, and contribute to the cultural performance of festival.

While interviews were limited based on the specific criteria mentioned above, my ethnographic observations included the full festival grounds. Intense observation at the festival played a critical role in identifying important rituals, rites of passage, artifacts, and creative, hand crafted props developed by attendees. I employed the use of recorders and video cameras to capture interviews, stories, songs, the environment of the festival, and observable dialogue among attendees. The data generated through the aid of these additional devices was not fully transcribed but rather, served to jog my memory while writing fieldnotes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and other conversations and dialogue were captured and placed into fieldnote excerpts throughout my findings. For supplementary data, I examined sources such as several Walnut Valley Festival programs, the daily “newspaper” entitled the “WVF Voice,” the official Walnut Valley Festival web-site, several websites dedicated to established camps such as Rat Camp and Comfortable Shoes Camp, attendees’ personal video footage from festivals past, photographs taken by myself as well as other attendees, and internet videos of the festival to further understand different components of the festival that render it a cultural performance.

## **E. ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Following my grounded theory approach into the social world of the Walnut Valley Festival, I coded my interviews, field notes, and overheard, captured conversations according to grounded theory practice. Charmaz (2006:43-45) asserts that:

Qualitative coding, the process of defining what the data are about, is our first analytic step...Grounded theory coding generates the bones of your analysis. Theoretical integration will assemble these bones into a working skeleton. Thus, coding is more than beginning; it shapes an analytic frame from which you guide the analysis.

I began by developing a form of initial coding, where I started to name certain phrases, lines, and segments of my data, and followed this with a much more selective form of coding, where I used initial codes to manage large amounts of data and looked for similarities and differences. During initial coding, I attempted to remain as open as possible to all possible theoretical directions that I might have gained from the interpretation of my data. In the second, more selective phase of coding, I applied focused codes in order to “pinpoint and develop the most salient categories in large batches of data” (Charmaz 2006:46). It was through the process of focus coding that I uncovered important themes such as perceived authenticity, the importance of the affective dimension in culture, and the significance of nostalgia in generating shared understandings through heightened emotions. Because debriefing is an important check and balance to coding, fieldnotes, and interviews, after the generation and application of my coding scheme, my thesis advisor and two of my colleagues provided a peer debriefing of my coded interviews, field notes, and the final product (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Some themes that were discovered encompassed one or more codes. For example, affective nostalgia encompasses a variety of conditions, such as talk of the past, displayed emotions, talk of the magic of music, tales of tears from performances, and other sentiments that were sometimes difficult to articulate (see Appendix C for a list of applied codes). Also, I employed a great deal of memo-writing throughout this study in an effort to capture ideas and, in a way, converse with myself about important or interesting things that I found or thought of at any given moment throughout the research process (Charmaz 2006).

Through the use of coding and memo-writing, I was better able to identify certain recurring themes and patterns prevalent in my data (see Appendix D for line by line coding and memo writing). Charmaz (2006) suggests that grounded theorists often invoke the stories of respondents to help in the illustration of certain points rather than a complete depiction or representation of respondents' lives. Stewart (2006) also lends interesting insight into the importance of stories when examining cultures.

Yet despite itself ethnography remains always allegorical and prompts us to say of any cultural description not 'this represents, or symbolizes that' but rather, 'this is a *story* about that.'" (P. 74)

According to Bailey (2007), "Creating stories provides researchers...with yet another way to analyze and present data...Field researchers can gain insight into a setting and participants by organizing the data in such a way as to create a compelling story" (p.159-160). In writing the ethnographic tale of the Walnut Valley Festival, I use an active tense because my goal is to present my findings in such a way that the reader can experience it as I did, watching the parades, the rituals and traditions, and noticing both the "dance" and the "music" as they unfold throughout the story.

#### IV. FINDINGS

The questions that have guided my research include: 1) How do attendees of the Walnut Valley Festival understand the festival (i.e., cultural performance) and construct a shared definition of the situation?; and 2) What are the observable cultural components (e.g., rituals, artifacts, rites of passage, props) created and made available to festival attendees? Recall the diamond has four points; the *social world* might be thought of as the web of social relationships or the backdrop that influences both the creation and the experience of the festival. The *object*, or the festival in this case, is a “shared significance embodied in form” (Griswold 1994:4). The *creator* or creators are those who conceive of the object and put it into form. Finally, the *audience* is a term used to describe those who experience the cultural object (i.e., the festival attendees). It is important to note that none of these categories are mutually exclusive. This is especially true for object, creator, and audience. Therefore, as I provide the ethnographic tale of the Walnut Valley Festival, what becomes evident throughout is that the festival is a dynamic and continually shifting process that embodies all points of the diamond. Thus, the findings below are not presented separately but rather encompass all facets of Griswold’s (2004) “Cultural Diamond,” although I emphasize certain aspects more than others as I begin the story of the Walnut Valley Festival with “Land Rush,” and conclude with “Leaving Home and Back to ‘Real’ Life.”

## **A. LAND RUSH OR “WELCOME TO STUPIDVILLE!”**

We drive to Winfield, Kansas with the monotony that only the roads of Kansas can provide. We had heard that due to rain and thunderstorms, Land Rush had been postponed from Thursday until Saturday. Given that Zac (my boyfriend and appointed Winfield companion) and I are already packed and rearing to go, we decide to go ahead and come on Wednesday in spite of the infamous Kansas weather. After all, I want the opportunity to experience the famous ritual of Land Rush, and arriving a few days in advance gives me a couple of days to experience the pre-Land Rush community.

There are two popular rituals at the festival that take place before the Walnut Valley Festival officially begins: “Line Rush” and “Land Rush.” For weeks prior to the festival, some attendees may camp in either the Pecan Grove or Walnut Grove, but must pack up and vacate the campgrounds to line up for “Land Rush,” the official day of entry into the festival grounds. Line rush begins on August 26<sup>th</sup> at seven a.m., and vehicles “rush” to leave the campgrounds and get in line on 14<sup>th</sup> street just outside the festival site. The image has been likened to bumper cars and numerous “fender benders” are reported as participants hurry to secure their place in line. During Line Rush, campers re-enter the festival grounds but are directed to a holding area, a large grassy field on the perimeter of the fairgrounds. Here, they unpack and set up camp again while waiting for Land Rush, which occurs usually seven to 10 days before the official festival begins.

Many attendees often arrive weeks or even months in advance to obtain a place early in line. As attendees pass through the main gates one by one, they are provided with a number that corresponds to their place in the line. The lower the number, the sooner the vehicle will be allowed to enter, or for some, *re*-enter the campgrounds and

secure a site either in the Walnut Grove or the Pecan Grove. This is of the upmost importance to participants, especially for established camps who have camped in the same geographic location within the campground year after year. As one camper, who had experienced Land Rush for the first time, notes, “People are very territorial.” Another responds, “Oh, extremely. That’s what they are doing in Line Rush; it’s to get their territory.” Elvis, a seasoned camper, vividly recalls the territorial spirit among campers. One year, a group of campers who arrived at the festival earlier than members of Comfortable Shoes Camp (i.e., Elvis’s camp) unknowingly took the traditional spot of the established camp. Unfortunately, because other campers arrived first, there was little Elvis could do about it, and for the first time in twenty-five years, Comfortable Shoes Camp was forced to move; “You know, this is Land Rush, first come... They run us off pretty much. It about got violent... We was about to get into a physical confrontation or move.” Monty, another veteran camper from Comfortable Shoes Camp, quickly adds, “The established camps that have been there for years know where the established camps are; we’re not going to run over and grab Camp Stillwater’s space or anything like that, you know. They’d probably kill us!”

This being the case, the number that one acquires during Line Rush carries a certain degree of status among festival goers. It certainly marks one’s dedication to the festival experience, if only because of the time it takes to secure a low number. It doesn’t take me long upon entering the fairgrounds to discover the excited “number one” recipient. A tall, energetic female, “number one” didn’t arrive until August 26<sup>th</sup>, which happens to be the first day the festival staff will honor lines. The festival booklet as well as the website clearly state that “no line will be honored prior to seven am on August

26<sup>th</sup>.” That being said, a large number of people had decided to form a line prior to the 26<sup>th</sup>, and had lined up in the grass outside of the fairgrounds. According to “number one,” there were a ton of people anxiously awaiting the removal of the barriers into the fairgrounds; many were on bicycles and golf carts in an attempt to drive through the line and be number one in Line Rush, and subsequently Land Rush. The key is that these particularly zealous campers had formed a line prior to August 26<sup>th</sup> and, as a result, the festival staff ignored it. Our sneaky “number one” however, showed up at exactly 6:59 am on the 26<sup>th</sup> mounted atop her noble bicycle, and pedaled herself along with two other members of the Walnut Grove into the fairgrounds. She had won the race for number one and also acquired spots two and three.

She talks excitedly about how everyone is upset with her not only because she cut in front of an enormous line (people who care so much about Winfield that they would arrive a month in advance), but also because she took the first three slots. The conversation was so animated that eventually we drew a crowd of her friends as well as other attendees, and we continue to talk about her strategy, how upset people are, and how she had “followed the written rules...so there!” Everyone seems very proud of her accomplishment, especially those who camp with her. Other campers are angry with her for breaching an unspoken code of ethics because she received more than one camping spot when she should have taken only one. Later, Irene, one of our Land Rush neighbors, and I joke that next year attendees would approach Line Rush galloping on horseback, and I heard veteran Comfortable Shoes Camp member, Garth, make an aggravated comment about how Line Rush has turned into a bicycle race.



Despite what Zac and I understood to be an early arrival, we are number 444 in line. As we approach the main entrance, I notice that there are two lines and two staff members directing traffic into two separate columns. As we enter through the main gate, a woman adorned in a bright yellow rain jacket approaches to take our tickets. We are welcomed with an excited “Welcome to Winfield!” and we talk casually about the unfortunate, yet unsurprising, weather as she takes our tickets and our camping fee. We then ask her how to navigate this expansive “RV jungle,” telling her we have friends here that we want to meet (although finding them within the sea of recreational vehicles seems impossible). I ask her if there is an order to all this and she responds by saying “oh, yeah!” She then realizes that we have never attended Line Rush or Land Rush at the festival and gave us a breakdown; she provides us with a number to hang on the rear view mirror, and tells us to drive to the two signs that say either ‘P’ or ‘W’ for Pecan Grove or Walnut Grove. From there, two WVF staff members would be waiting with golf carts to show us to our designated place in line amongst the endless serpentine of just about everything with two to four wheels.

It happens just like she said it would: we pull up behind the painted sign that read ‘P’ and follow the golf cart through the narrow, winding paths created by rows and rows of campers. We weave in and out and in and out of campers and RV’s until a man wearing a brightly colored “staff” shirt and driving the golf cart tells us to pull up behind another truck, which has the number 443 hanging proudly on its rear view mirror. After spending a considerable amount of time maneuvering the truck and camper into our designated space, we begin setting up what will be our home for the next few days as we listen to our neighbors quietly pick an old bluegrass tune next to our window. I can hear

excited calls of “Welcome Home!” ringing throughout the now densely packed field as attendees are reunited with friends and family. Laughter and song fill the air despite the dreary weather and swampy circumstances. As one attendee notes, “You really hear a lot of laughter here, besides music.” Another camper agrees, saying, “If you just sit here and listen, you’ll hear people laughing all around you, you know. There’s just...laughing.”

The prevalence of humor and play flourish both during Land Rush and the festival in its entirety. During an interview with Matilda, a talented autoharp player who camps in Comfortable Shoes Camp (a 29 year veteran of the festival and proud holder of spot number 219), explains,

There is a core group of us people that come early. What we call this early thing, when you come that early, is Stupidville. And you know Rick [the grounds manager]? Rick is the mayor of Stupidville. We’ve got buttons and shirts and everything. [Interview “Matilda” 9/10/2010]

Mitch, Irene’s jovial husband, yells from the background, “He wore a hat last year that had two bills going out there that said ‘Mayor of Stupidville.’” “Trust me,” Matilda continues, “He’s the mayor of everything. You might call him the god! He’s the one who put Land Rush off for two days. That was his decision.”

For many attendees, this period before Land Rush marks an important part of the festival experience. Some attendees remark that this time before entering the actual campground is in fact their favorite part of “Winfield” (i.e., what participants call the Walnut Valley Festival) experience, as if there are two festivals taking place; the official festival and the community created while waiting for Land Rush. Two veteran attendees have told me the story of a couple that comes and camps in the Pecan Grove before Line Rush even begins and leaves the fairgrounds the day of Land Rush. They are allowed to

remain in the campgrounds after August 26<sup>th</sup> because they will leave before Land Rush begins. For them, this time before Land Rush *is* the festival experience.

While some campers hold their spot in line by parking and leaving their vehicles in the holding area prior to Land Rush, most participants stay and camp in order to participate in jam sessions. This speaks to the bustling community that is created before Land Rush, one that quickly dissolves upon entering the main campgrounds, replaced by smaller camp communities and enclaves. Land Rush, however, is a time for meeting new people. In a casual conversation, Lonnie, a veteran attendee, describes Land Rush as a “culture of its own.” David another camper adds, “You don’t know anybody that’s parked next to you, unless you drove in together. So, that’s a whole separate community.”

Land Rush campers are also delivered copies of the “WVF Voice” (the daily festival “newspaper”) that are designed specifically for this period before Land Rush. The editor, Leonard, explains that those camped out before Land Rush may not receive press releases or information that would normally be available on the web page or local newspapers, so they print extra copies to keep campers up to date on changing events (like the postponement of Land Rush, for example).

What is particularly striking about Land Rush is the amount of time appropriated by participants. Attendees simply do not want to wait for the festival to begin and as a result, some literally come *months* in advance. The sheer number of attendees that participate in Line Rush and Land Rush testifies to the emphasis on lengthening the experience as much as possible. Some campers describe saving up sick days and vacation days all year to be able to attend the festival for longer than the weekend, and

others remark that it is the only vacation they take every year. Some overcome enormous obstacles to make it to Winfield every year, and still others take leave of their busy lives, leaving jobs, spouses, and responsibilities behind. Irene tells me that had she and her husband owned their RV instead of a little tent, their daughter would have been born at Winfield 28 years ago, which would have made Irene and Mitch festival veterans for a straight 29 years.

What makes Winfield so compelling to participants that they would allocate such an immense amount of time to the experience? Overwhelmingly, the answer is the music, “family,” and community. Dylan, a seasoned veteran camper in Carp Camp, says it best,

Well, I love music. I love the people here. You know...it's like we have a family reunion every year. And, it's the family that, you know, you like to hang out with. You know, they are either people who play music or like music or cook good or do something... And, coming to Winfield for three weeks is enough time to really get away. You know, I drive out here in a Volkswagen bus... it takes awhile, you know, so when I'm cruising it's like all the stuff in Tucson slowly goes away. I get into New Mexico and I can feel Kansas calling. [Interview “Dylan” 9/14/2010]

After a couple seconds of quiet contemplation, Matilda finally concludes,

It has to be the community, the fellowship; it has to be the fellowship. And, you know, it's so cool because these are the friends...I mean, you meet them here and you see them once a year, you know, and it's just so cool. We've come here so much it is like coming home... So, I'm riding two trucks down the road, you know and my Winfield experience includes all the camaraderie and all the friendships and everything, but my autoharp experience is the musical experience that also would envelop those things, but also envelops all the music. [Interview “Matilda” 9/10/2010]

Dan, camp mayor of Comfortable Shoes, also likens the experience to coming home. After a moment, Dan says through a big smile, “Gosh, it's the people. It's the friends. There are people I see here, only here once a year, and it's like you come here

and it's like you never left. It's a feeling of home." Diane, a friendly, upbeat camper in Chicken Train Camp, and also creator of the Winfield ritual "Sing into the Can," explains that for her, Winfield is a,

Tossup between [music] and the people. Over the years, we have met so many people and "Sing into the Can" just helped me meet more people and, it's like a reunion...family reunion. But, I remember, our first year we came we were just like, I think our mouths, our jaws, were just hanging open, you know. And, at that point, I just remember thinking to myself, "I can never *not* go again," you know? It was life changing. I would absolutely put that as life changing, and it's because of the friends and the people I met here (her emphasis). [Interview "Diane" 9/12/2010]

Monty, a seasoned veteran camper and talented musician, echoes the feelings of many campers like Diane, Dylan, and Matilda when he says,

It's a family reunion... It's like check your beliefs, your politics, your religion at the door and accept this communal happening. And of course the music. I play better at Winfield than I do the rest of the year. It's just because you are so inspired by other musicians and good players and beginners and singers. [Interview "Monty" 7/15/2010]

Later, Monty said that he refuses to even "pick up a newspaper" at the festival; this period of time, for him, is a means of getting away. Elvis agrees adding, "You so forget all the rest of your crap. You leave the rest of your life behind." Paula, another veteran camper of Comfortable Shoes Camp, suggests that meeting new people plays a large role in making the festival so enticing. In a great illustration of what some campers call the "Winfield Spirit," Paula states,

Meeting new people and realizing that we all have something in common, which is like love for one another. This place – I've never met people who are nicer. I mean, I'm serious...complete strangers – If I was having a heart attack, I know I would be taken care of. Especially in our camp...I love Winfield...And music. I mean I can't say that I don't come for the music, because that's why I come; the experience of playing with others and seeing my friends. [Interview "Paula" 9/9/2010]

Almost every single attendee that I talk to remarks that the draw of the festival is community, music, or a combination of both, which is exactly what is created, maintained, and experienced during the time before Land Rush. The large amounts of time allotted to the experience, even before official entry into the campgrounds a week before the festival begins, is spent in an effort to lengthen the amount of time in which campers can experience powerful feelings of community, camaraderie, friendship, and a deep, rich love for music.

In his study of various different bluegrass festivals, Gardner (2004) suggests that Land Rush serves as a ritual that marks the transformation from “space” to “place.” Whereas “space” represents the “physical, natural, built environment,” “places” are physical spaces that are “imbued with meaning and productive of human relationships” (p. 49). Before Line Rush, “Stupidville” is just another empty, muddy field; however, as soon as Line Rush begins and attendees gather in the field to await Land Rush, this “space” becomes much more significant. It becomes an important “place” in which participants create a “layered interactional network of sensations, feelings, and sentiments that unite [their] experiences with the physical, sensual environment to create a meaningful sense of being or feeling ‘at home’” (p. 49).

Gardner (2004) suggests that participants attend bluegrass festivals as a “symbolic break” from their daily lives, where a rapidly modernizing, hurried society underscores important “old time” values such as kinship, authenticity, simplicity, and rurality. When probing as to why participants continue to return to bluegrass festivals, Gardner found that many attendees felt the festival was an opportunity to flee the “real world” that is traditionally represented by an overload of work and responsibility.

The festival provided [attendees] with a space where they could create novel forms of community, engage in intimate and inclusive social interaction, and return to a place that was considered simpler and more authentic than their increasingly complex and technologically driven modern environments. The festival also provided an alternative to “home” since they felt better integrated into the rituals and traditions of the festival camp than their home communities. (P.75)

In a world that seems to turn a little too fast, Winfield is created and re-created in response to attendees’ search for *meaning* at a time that often seems fragmented and devoid of real depth. Solli (2006) also suggests that country music provides individuals in Norway a “place” to “root” themselves in a society that is constantly undergoing change and flux. Many suggest that it is during “unsettled times” that individuals actively seek out meaning (Gardner 2004; Schudson 1989; Swidler 1986), and “at moments when society is in flux, more people are searching the skies for cultural leadership” (Schudson 1989:174). Symbolic interaction reminds us that it is through continued interaction, as well as the rituals and traditions that interaction affords, that Winfield becomes a rich, meaningful “place” that allows individuals to express their “true” identities in a community that emphasizes relationships, music, creativity, and play in spite of a world of restrictions, responsibilities, work, and obligations. As Gardner (2004:150) also notes, the ritual transformation of “space” to “place” that occurs during Land Rush is illustrated by the various ways attendees physically construct their representative “places,” or temporary homes, during the period before Land Rush, as well as after they have officially entered the campgrounds.

Attendees transform “space” into what feels like a “built” community, or a small self sustaining village, always bustling with music, conversation, and “Winfield spirit.” Participants creatively construct their “homes” in their respective places in line, much

like they do within their camp enclaves once they move into the campgrounds during Land Rush. On the day before Land Rush, I take advantage of the gorgeous weather and decide to take a “walkabout.” I record the experience in my fieldnotes:

I’m still blown away by the amount of campers here – when Paula arrived, they had reached approximately 500. I noticed that most people had campers or RV’s; there are really very few tents here right now. Of course, there are a few colorful exceptions. There are tons of revamped school busses and decked out VW busses as well as a lot of great, creative make-shift housing like homes made out of vehicles, tarps, and wood. Many people have their camp totally decked out – I suppose Zac and I are one of them (we did, after all, bring our impatiens and aloe vera plant). Some people have made porches and extra rooms with tarps; there are flowers for decoration, Christmas lights, large mats, carpets, and tapestries. And music is *everywhere*... Everywhere I looked there was a jam! Bicycles, too, are rampant – it’s probably the best way to get around in Winfield – there is so much space to cover it’s hard to see it all on foot. Many of the bikes I’ve seen since I’ve been here are modified to accommodate instruments or have large baskets on the front and back for carrying supplies while on the move. Some bicycles I’ve seen have two wheels on the back for extra support and can actually carry quite a bit of stuff or even an extra person. Not everybody is on a bike, though. There are people wandering around everywhere today. It is nice out and people got out from underneath their tarps and canopies and enjoyed music and friends with the sun on their face. It’s starting to feel more and more like Winfield. [Fieldnotes 9/9/2010:8]

Setting up one’s home for the festival represents a physical illustration of how participants literally construct or build “place.” Here the division between Winfield and the “real world” becomes a visible reality and where festival, or what Abrahams (1982) calls a “fantasy world,” provides attendees with the opportunity to experience “times out of the ordinary” (p. 163). It is during these extraordinary experiences that participants “escape the mundane pattern of everyday existence to find a more fundamental reality, a sense of meaning and belonging” (Barthel 1997:12). After Land Rush, the process begins again within the campgrounds as attendees once again turn “space” into “place” imbued with meaning, tradition, and ritual.



And finally the long awaited day of Land Rush arrives! Two days late (due to renowned Kansas weather) is better than never. True to tradition, the ritual starts at approximately seven, although no one really has a time piece at Winfield, except for Mayor Rick, of course. They start moving the Walnut Grove first (something one veteran Pecan Grover thought was terribly “unfair”), and there is rumored to be around 500 vehicles moving into, what some campers call, “Hollywood.” My intense excitement begins to wear off when it occurs to me that this is a “hurry up and wait” situation. Although it seems like forever, it really doesn’t take long at all. While I was expecting muddy chaos, Land Rush, as it turns out, is very systematic and efficient. The WVF staff knows exactly what they are doing and are surprisingly calm, cool and collected. Attendees are up and ready to go at seven a.m., know what to do, where to go, when to go, and how to go about it. I watch as campers methodically drive out of their lines and onto the main road that leads into the campground, dismantling the “RV jungle” one vehicle at a time. I watch as the long, winding lines continue to slowly and purposively unravel without a hitch, with the exception of the unrelenting mud (many rigs had to be pulled out with tractors). After the Walnut Grove has moved out, they start moving the Pecan Grove in, and one by one many happy campers find their way “home,” honking and shouting all the way.

## **B. PICKERS’ PARADISE: “IT TAKES A VILLAGE!”**

We follow the camper in front of us as we slowly drive through the sludge to one of the main roads and excitedly enter the Pecan Grove. As we drive to the traditional spot of Comfortable Shoes Camp, people are buzzing about everywhere setting up their respective Winfield villages. People wave and shout out greetings as we drive by,

honking the horn to signal our happy arrival. We slowly pull our camper up on the perimeter of Shoes Camp where a small valley serves as a border for one end of the camp. As one veteran Shoes camper notes, “Our territory has almost always ended where the fall begins into the little valley over there. The edge of the valley is ours.”

Once the campers and trucks are in place, the work begins! Setting up a camp like Shoes Camp is no easy task; it takes a lot of work, and more importantly, a lot of working together. The entire perimeter of the camp, which encompasses approximately 250 feet, is sectioned off by campers, an enormous white RV (playfully named “Moby Dan” by Shoes campers), and gigantic army tents. These army tents are provided by long time veteran, Elvis, who some participants call, “the camp leader.” Bob, a seasoned Shoes Camp member, credits Elvis for “bringing the nucleus of the camp,” and in my personal experience, I simply cannot see the camp functioning if, for some tragic reason, Elvis wasn’t able to attend the festival. He supplies the army tents, the shower, the camp parachute, and every tool imaginable. One hot, sunny day, Monty, good friend and band mate of Elvis, remarks, “[Elvis] is definitely the camp leader in my mind,” and then jokingly adds, “If it ain’t broke, he’ll fix it anyway!”

Elvis’s army tents function as the kitchen (complete with refrigerators, enormous tables, a sink, and most everything one might have in one’s kitchen at home), the “mess tent” or “breakfast kitchen” (which encompasses another refrigerator, giant table-like cast iron skillets, and a cast iron smoker for making breakfast). The mess tent is also used for jams in the rain or storing instrument cases. The other three army tents serve as a suite sized room for two Shoes campers, the “lodge” (another large, closed area in which

attendees can congregate), and the shower room (complete with a fully functioning, walk-in, fiberglass shower).

Other campers are vital to the make-up of Shoes camp as well. For example, Barb and Rachel, co-leaders of the kitchen, bring most everything needed for cooking – utensils, pots and pans, herbs and spices, large bowls, homemade breads and canned goods. Rachel and Barb do the bulk of the planning and cooking of evening meals which feed the entire Shoes Camp family. Without them, the tradition of sharing evening meals together would be lost. Many campers would agree that Barb and Rachel spoil fellow Shoes members with organic, exquisite cuisine. Each meal, they set out a large jar near the food and ask that those who can to contribute. Somehow they manage to stretch the dollars enough to feed an entire camp of up to 90 twice per day. “Mayor Dan,” along with camp volunteers, cooks what one camper calls a “Thanksgiving Breakfast” every morning for the entire camp. Mayor Dan brings all the equipment in the mess tent, like the enormous, antique griddles, which are vestiges of WWII. When breakfast or dinner is prepared, someone rings an iron triangle as a signal for meal time and campers are always quick to line up. Afterwards, volunteers rotate washing dishes each morning and evening.

Although there are certainly key players in terms of the actual construction of Shoes Camp (like Elvis, for example), *everyone* plays an important role as part of the Shoes family. Many campers bring fresh vegetables and fruits from their gardens, extra chairs, tables, silverware, plates, and lights. Volunteers get ice (which often involves chasing down the ice truck), run errands, pick up trash, and take turns watching children. The whole camp comes together to ensure that everyone in Shoes Camp has everything

they could possibly need. As mentioned earlier, Paula is particularly drawn to the “Winfield Spirit.”

You know, you might be wandering up to a camp and be like, “Man, I’m starving! Do you got anything to eat?” and somebody would be like, “Hey, we got some hotdogs right here, do you need to grab one real quick?” You know, it’s just - I’m not used to that. I didn’t come from an environment where people take care of each other. [Interview “Paula” 9/9/2010]

Other campers also mention the “Winfield Spirit.” In telling me a story about an angry camper (an unusual state of mind at Winfield), Irene assures me that this woman’s behavior was “*not* in the Winfield spirit,” (her emphasis) and during the same conversation, Mitch says that he is drawn to the festival by the “spirit of the place.” I am also taken with the “Winfield Spirit,” and write about it in my fieldnotes after only a few short days in camp.

There is an overwhelming sense of community here; I’ve noticed several illustrations of not only sharing everything, but at times sacrifice. Jackson stood by where we had plugged in for electricity to ensure that it wasn’t unplugged. If it weren’t for him, we wouldn’t have electricity. Absolutely everyone here has helped to construct the camp; unloading and setting up the tents, parachute, kitchen, Dan’s grills, refrigerators, showers, etc. Just today, the examples seem endless, and certainly non-exhaustive: we let Florence borrow one of our extension cords, a lot of people have brought food from their gardens at home (Dan and his wife Lisa brought a ton of enormous Shitake mushrooms that are now drying in the sun), everybody in camp is helping everyone else set up tents and campers, Zac and Jan traded beer for cigarettes and she’s letting him use her bike, everyone has acknowledged and consoled Jan for her husband Mike’s absence, Mama Cass helped Paula pay the customary food fee for the week, I let Jimmy borrow my capo last night, Mama Cass borrowed some electrical tape, the simple act of playing music together and taking turns, Elvis lost something important and everybody around was looking for it, Mama Cass bought pizza for anyone in the near vicinity, Lacy took Paula to the store, mother and children share toys with each other’s children and offer ideas, advice, comfort, and babysitting. This place is a *total* functioning community – these people have known each other for years. They have children and grandchildren that camp with them. The work, the helpfulness, the sharing, the music, the food, the family, and the friendship, with all of the encouragement and welcoming it enjoys, all come together to form this meaningful connection. [Fieldnotes 9/11/2010:21]

As the above excerpt illustrates, “Festivals continue to be, perhaps above all else, a technique of celebrating plenty by engaging in a spotlighted display and a sharing of goods and of energies with all of the community” (Abrahams 1982:176).

### **C. THE PECAN GROVE: “WHAT HAPPENS IN THE GROVE STAYS IN THE GROVE!”**

After the major work is done in Shoes Camp, the atmosphere shifts back to leisure and play, but the excitement is still palpable throughout the Pecan Grove as other camps continue to trickle in. Participants are everywhere setting up camp, some as intricate and expansive as Shoes Camp, while others are only a few tents and a creative camp sign made out of cardboard. Children are laughing and playing in the grass, musicians find their way into a long awaited Winfield picking circle, and camp parachutes are being hoisted in the air, providing vast amounts of shade for the musicians gathering underneath.

Leisure plays a large role in generating the “Winfield Spirit,” as well as the shared definition of the situation at the festival, or in other words, “leisure can be viewed as a distinctive pattern of perceiving and relating to ongoing interaction” (Samdahl 1987:29). Griswold (1994:14) informs us that “both cultural objects and the people who create and receive them are not floating freely, but are anchored in a particular context,” and in the case of Winfield, the context is one of leisure.

During my own leisure time at the Winfield, I decide to go on a stroll to check out all of the other camps in the Pecan Grove (a lofty goal)! As I wander around through the winding dirt roads of the grove, I see people relaxing in fold out chairs talking casually with friends and family, musicians are sitting in circles singing and playing freely with

others, laughter is as prevalent as music, and I really notice the absence of time as well as the absence of constantly ringing cell phones, computers, and technology in general. I can feel the breeze blowing through my hair as I wave to other campers as I walk by bidding joyous “Welcome Homes!” and “Happy Winfield’s!” It seems as if everyone I walk by is already a friend. As I meander around, I notice how intricate some of the camps have become in the short amount of time since Land Rush.

Nearing the end of the week of the “official festival,” the Pecan Grove becomes so packed with campers, RV’s, tents, makeshift housing, furniture, and props, that it becomes nearly impossible to navigate the campgrounds without using one of the main, dirt roads that winds throughout the Pecan Grove. While on my walkabout, I am stunned by the lengths some campers go to when creating their own, unique villages. The Pecan Grove is packed with bikes, scooters, golf carts, enormous tents (with multiple rooms and closets!), mind blowing campers and RV’s, VW busses, parachutes, tie-dye tarps and tapestries, refrigerators, grills, ovens, fire pits, creative camp-name signs, lazy-boys and other types of furniture, lamps, fans, air conditioners, intricate flags, blow up yard ornaments (such as the large penguin at Penguin Camp), Christmas lights, little bridges connecting camps, tiki torches, carpets, televisions, improvised canopies, props (OZ Tin City Limits has the entire cast of the Wizard of Oz), and many vehicles are parked to where they showcase hilarious bumper stickers or are cluttered with bumper stickers from festivals past. One camp has an entire living room set up under a large canopy complete with a big screen T.V. and multiple couches for watching football games (something Zac excitedly reports upon arrival). Daina from Chicken Train Camp tells me that on a number of occasions they tried to bring out live chickens, but the attempt always

somehow ended in morbid failure. Another camp, La La Land, showcases an enormous peace sign made out of Christmas lights that hangs over the camp like a beacon. One camp has constructed an entire medieval village, complete with castle-like buildings and games. Yet another camp has hung a gigantic, life-size, fork in a tree directly above a prominent “fork” in the main, dirt road. Below are a few pictures that showcase the creativity of two camps within the Pecan Grove.



Camp names also represent this type of playfulness and creativity, like “La La Land” and “Flaming Duck Fart.” Although playful, many camp names also reflect a shared identity, such as “Our Grass is Blue,” “Stillwater Camp,” and “Comfortable Shoes” (what Elvis’s late wife, and beloved Shoes member wanted to name her first

album). Also, the tradition of the camp site decorating contest, which some camps take very seriously, pays homage to the importance of creating a temporary community at Winfield. Festival attendees appropriate their space and provide “identity markers,” (Hedbigge 2001) creating an intricate, colorful, and elaborate “vernacular village” (Gardner 2004:10) that becomes “a significant draw to festival participants in their own right” (p. 41).



Participants use creative camp site construction to purposefully shape an unflinching sense of “place” in which they have an important role in maintaining. Through the construction of campsites in the same geographic location from year to year that involve “core” members of “festival family,” attendees are able to “recover elements of



individual sovereignty that they find lacking in many sites of consumer culture and public life” (Gardner 2004:130). Established camps such as Comfortable Shoes, KAAA Camp, and Buzzard’s Roost, become, over time, a marker for personal and collective identity, where individuals can “express their individuality and solidify their identity as being part of something unique” (Gardner 2004:53). As cultural “emblems” they “explode with meanings for they are invested with the accumulated energies and experiences of past practice” (Abrahams 1982:161). Thus, campsites become meaningful because attendees continue to actively participate in their creation and maintenance throughout the years. In this way, campers’ creativity plays a large part in the appropriation of cultural objects when setting up home at the festival. Gardner (2004:150) suggests that campsites at bluegrass festivals are places of “complete unbridled creative expression.” Once created, these enclaves play host to jams (impromptu playing among musicians), parades, contests, picking circles (circles of musicians that take turns initiating a tune), visiting, and jovial activities. Combined, these activities lay the framework for the “The Musicians’ Festival.”

#### **D. “BAND CAMP FOR GROWN-UPS”**

*“Band Camp for Grown – Ups”*

There isn’t any place in the world, I don’t think, that can get this mix of people in this small of an area and have as much fun as we do, especially the week before the festival. The week before the festival is always better for the musicians, because, my God, the music is just astounding. [Interview “Bill” 9/14/2010]

Dylan, another Carp Camp member jumps in, adding, “And there’s no distraction!” Many campers have remarked that they never or rarely attend the main stages during the official festival, and most of the musicians I talk to say they prefer playing in the campground with other campers who aren’t “distracted” by “cumbersome

professional musicians” on the main stages. This, too, speaks to the notion of the “musicians’ festival” as opposed to the official three day Walnut Valley Festival. Jacob, a young musician who has attended WVF with his parents for years, wrote a song that is now a favorite among Shoes Campers. The lyrics include, “I just play to play. That’s why they call it play,” referring to why he is a musician.

When asked what their favorite Winfield tradition is, most all of my interviewees have trouble selecting a particular memory; many jokingly remark that it is an unfair question. One veteran camper, Lonnie, who has always been a “weekender,” compares the week before the festival to Marti Gras.

You know I was walking around last night thinking, you know, this is like Mardi Gras. Midwest Mardi Gras, because people are running around in silly costumes and they’re doing funny things, and they’re fixing these huge meals and getting stupid and having fun, you know, it’s similar. Isn’t it? I really got to experience that this year, because last year I missed Land Rush and Line Rush. And I did both this year, and it was like a totally different thing, everything. Everything felt differently to me. [Interview “Lonnie” 9/17/2010]

It is during this period of time where the tradition of play is expanded. All throughout the week, campers have endless opportunities to engage in creative, “silly,” play in the form of rituals that take place year after year within the campgrounds: the Rat Camp Band Scramble, the golf cart parade, the Beer Garden’s dessert contest, Shoes Camp’s Comedy Jam, Oz Tin City Limit’s Beatles’ night, Carp Camp’s Parade, KAAA’s Chick Pick, prom night, marshmallow golf tournaments, a ukulele parade, “songs-you-can’t-sing-for-your-mother” contests, and more. I focus on two to illustrate how the ritual of play is extended beyond music to adult creative fun: The Rat Camp “Band Scramble” and the Carp Camp “(Hat) Parade.” Both rituals coincide with one another on the Wednesday before the official festival begins.

On Wednesday morning, attendees who want to participate in the “band scramble” sign up and are placed into random bands, typically with people they don’t know (hence the term “scramble”). These bands then write songs according to the theme (this year it was Alice in Wonderland), and try to include the word “rat” wherever possible. The scrambled bands then perform in front of the judges (usually Rat Camp members who are jokingly bribed by contestants) and the audience, who then votes for the “Peoples’ Choice Award.” Band Scramble winners are awarded a famous Rat Camp Band Scramble button, a spot on the notorious Stage 5, and winners also receive acknowledgement in the “WVA Voice.” The Band Scramble performances are punctuated by a variety of costume contests which are also related to the annual theme.

Underneath the peak of Rat Camp’s famous parachute is a clearing that holds the “performers” and in the front of this clearing, there is a large podium for Gary, who organizes the scramble. On the podium, Gary tapes pieces of paper for each band, which provides the band’s name and the songs they are going to sing. While the theme may change each year, the jovial atmosphere never does. Below are a few visual images of the Rat Camp “Band Scramble,” illustrating the lengths campers go to in order to create the festival atmosphere.





Just after the “scramble” begins, we hear drums and a Celtic tune from down the road, which signals the arrival of the Carp Camp parade. The parade originates from Carp Camp in the Walnut Grove and winds through the main dirt roads of both groves, making a “pit-stop” during the band scramble to “play a few tunes.” One veteran attendee that loves to participate in the parade every year told me that if one wants to march in the parade, “You gotta wear weird shit...and they’ll be playing weird shit so bring you guitar and beat on it or whatever!”

The parade is led by Grand Marshal Dylan, who wears a tall grateful dead hat, tie-dye clothing and is carrying some sort of a long scepter that he raises up and down to the beat of the music. Behind him are approximately one hundred people, all wearing crazy hats, glasses, and costumes. They march in from the road, between campers, and make their way underneath the parachute where they all gather in the clearing. People sing and clap as the parade, sometimes also referred to as the “hat parade,” performs for the gathered crowd. After playing their tunes, they all march out in the direction that they came in to cheers and shouts from the crowd.

After Carp Camp makes their exit, the band scramble takes up right where it left off with tunes that are written or appropriated with theme. Two songs this year included, “I was born a wandering rat” and a revised version of a bluegrass song, titled, “Whiskey for Breakfast” changing the lyrics from “lord preserve us and protect us, we’ve been drinking whiskey for breakfast,” to “we’ve been eating cheese balls’ for breakfast.” The crowd loves it! Other bands play songs entitled “Intoxicated Rat,” a song about a beaver trap, and a song with the lyrics, “what happens in the grove, stays in the grove.” Few of the songs match the theme but no one seems to care.

What surfaces from these two important traditions can be put into one word: silliness. The experience is extraordinary, in so far as the crowd of adults, parents, grandparents, and children participate fully in play and invest enormous time and energy to create this temporary space of heightened emotions, humor, and frivolity far removed from their mundane jobs, responsibilities, and ordinary life challenges. As an observer I find I am drawn into the collective mood that makes the “Winfield Spirit” come to life. Grown adults are growling, shouting, riding each other on piggy-back, rolling on the ground, dancing, laughing, screaming out into the crowd, joking, clapping, and it lasts for hours with constant interaction between the crowd and the performers. It’s truly just laughable fun and contagious, explaining why some campers refer to Winfield as “band camp for grownups.”

Similar to Gardner’s (2004) notion of festival as a place of escape, festival also serves as a place constructed for the purposes of play. Adults are rarely provided an opportunity to freely play, be silly, and reinvent themselves. Turner (1982) suggests that

Play is thought of as divorced from [an] essentially “objective” realm, in so far as it is its inverse, it is “subjective,” free from external constraints, where any and

every combination of variable can be “played” with (P. 34)... During “play,” individuals “play” with elements of the familiar, and in the process, create unprecedented combinations of familiar elements (P. 27).

During play, cultural objects are “made of common materials torn apart and put back together in ways that remind us constantly of the process of recombination” (Abrahams 1982:166). Events such as the “Band Scramble” and “Carp Camp Parade” illustrate the creative agency of participants as they reinvent social roles through performance, creating a heightened emotional atmosphere where “the player, like his costume, appears to be always on the verge of coming apart, going crazy, going wild” (Abrahams 1982:172). During play, “self-made groups...celebrate their sense of coming together just for the fun of it” (p. 175). When explaining the draw of the festival, many interviewees used the word “fun” to describe their experiences. Indeed, “fun” is in vast supply at Winfield.

#### **E. STAGE FIVE: “THE PEOPLES’ STAGE”**

Some rituals at the festival, like the parade, scramble, and comedy jam are rituals of play, whereas other important rituals, such as playing music together during jam sessions and Stage Five, could be considered rituals of performance that don’t necessarily include “play” in the traditional sense.

For example, Stage 5, located beneath the lofty trees of the Pecan Grove, sits on the back of an old, green pickup truck. Upon following the main dirt road that winds through the grove towards “Main Street,” and then taking a left next to “Beer Garden Camp,” campers arrive at what is often called, “The People’s Stage.” As I search for Randy and Sharon, the creators and hosts of Stage Five, I find Randy sitting in his fenced off campground directly behind the stage. Like Shoes Camp, it’s an intricate and creative

camp, and the first camp to win the camp decorating contest in the Pecan Grove! There is a big purple and yellow sign that reads “Stage 5” made of old Crown Royal bags, and is strung up on the side of a huge yellow school bus. The school bus along with several other campers and RV’s are lined up, creating a wall at the back of the camp. The camp is completely closed off by a brown picket fence that runs around the perimeters of the camp. The back of the actual stage is directly in front of the bus, also surrounded by fence, and next to the stage is a large white canopy complete with several chairs and instrument holders (the backstage area for performing musicians). The stage itself is built on the bed of Randy’s truck that he’s owned for many years. On the bed of the truck are large, tall wooden walls that create a “boxed in” effect, decorated with what Sharon calls a “gypsy theme,” complete with large colorful tapestries that hang on the walls of the make-shift stage.



Stage Five was just declared an “official” stage by the festival, but unlike official stages one, two, three, and four, Stage Five carries much more intrigue to campers. Many campers include Stage Five when recalling their favorite Winfield memories, and musicians especially seem to find Stage Five a particularly important “place” at the festival: for musicians, performing on Stage Five is a status marker that represents talent,

skill, and an ability to perform. For non-musicians, it has become a favorite place to hang out and hear incredible music. The allure of Stage Five is a prominent theme in almost every interview and casual conversation. When I ask Randy and Sharon about what make Stage Five so important to campers, they suggest that it is because, unlike the main stages in the fairgrounds, Stage 5 can be considered the “Peoples’ Stage.” Randy vividly recalls the reason he and his wife, Sharon, started Stage 5 so many years ago.

The original idea of this, and still is today, is that this is a place for amateurs, people that are never going to get an opportunity to play up there [at the main stages]. It gives them an opportunity to get up on stage and play before their peers and other people that are out here. And we’ve had some of the acts from up there come down and play, but by in large, it is all about the amateurs and the people that never get an opportunity to go up there [main stages] and play... There’re always people out there that are either beginners or, just starting to play music and it gives them an opportunity to play in front of people, where it might be their very first time to play in front of people. It’s about the music and it’s about the people who are doing that and, you know, our people with day jobs that just love music. [Interview “Randy” 9/13/2010]

Sharon quickly adds,

Yeah, it’s not about being some killer musician back home. If you like to play and you want to play, sign up and play...Kids and kazoos and spoons are welcomed here, too.... And it’s fun to play for your peers. It’s a little nerve-racking. It makes me nervous as heck to get up there because there are all these hot pickers and people out there. But I want to share, too. This is what I know how to do. And it may not be really hot and I’m not looking for a contract to record, I just want to share what I know how to do...There are people here that will love to hear you. [Interview “Sharon” 9/13/2010]

Donna, creator of KAAA Camp, Chick Pick, and a member of the Stage Five “crew,” shares similar thoughts about the draw of Stage Five.

Well, because it’s a place for - the world is full of talented musicians that never, ever get known, discovered, or heard by anybody. And, the campgrounds are full of those kinds of musicians and everybody has the desire, anybody with a talent, has a desire that they want to share it. And this gives them the opportunity to share and share with other like-minded people that have a common love for the music. [Interview “Donna” 9/15/2010]



Many interviewees and other veteran attendees echo this same reasoning behind the importance of Stage Five. Similarly, Mayor Dan suggests that “[Stage 5] and the Pecan Grove are all about home guys,” and Paula, who has played on Stage 5 many times, says that she likes Stage 5 because “it’s for the people that aren’t professional, [that don’t] play on the main stages.” Like Paula, Natalie, a veteran of KAAA Camp, also contrasts Stage 5 with the main stages.

I think a lot of people like it because it’s unexpected, you know, you don’t know what you are going to see there, and it’s a little more casual, it’s not so structured like the other stages are. And then it’s open all night long, and so, when everything else is shut down, you can still go there and see a band that might be awesome. [Interview “Natalie” 9/15/2010]

Although the importance paid to the Stage Five tradition seems to be mostly imbedded within the larger context of community, welcoming, encouragement, and “sharing” experience (i.e., something very different from the “professional” and “scheduled” environment of the main stages), some participants offer other reasons why Stage Five is a favorite. Many suggest that it is simply the large audience, and others say that it is an audience full of incredible musicians that makes Stage Five so exciting. Sharon, Monty, and Paula all remark on how nervous they are when playing on stage five because it isn’t a typical audience; “It’s not like playing in a bar,” Monty says. Jack adds, “When you are playing on Stage 5 you are playing in front of the Pecan Grove, and most of them are pickers. So it’s a different privilege.”

Some interviewees assure me that it is the quality of the music and sound on the stage, while others suggest it is a great place to party, because there are no restrictions on alcohol like up at the main stages. Also unlike the main stages, Stage Five continues until around three o’clock in the morning, providing participants an opportunity to enjoy

the music, the party, and the community well into the wee hours of the morning. Elvis remarks that “You can sit out there and watch, and drink, and smoke and it’s not like up there where you have to check you liquor at the gate,” and Matilda adds, “A lot of us don’t go up there, so it’s down there in the camp and everybody can take all their refreshments with them, so to speak. And that’s a huge draw, too.”

Another interesting (and nerve-racking) aspect of Stage Five is that oftentimes, especially on Friday and Saturday night when Stage 5 is really “jumpin’,” musicians will find themselves playing before or after a famous, professional musician that just finished a set on one of the main stages; an unheard of opportunity for musicians with “day jobs.” For example, Monty had the opportunity to play after Beppy Gambetta, a world famous flat picker, who had performed on Stage One earlier that evening. He turned it down, saying “I’m not playing *after* him!” Donna also remarks on this unusual and exhilarating aspect of Stage 5.

Where else do you have a stage where you have, you know, little Billy No-Name over here, playing at this time, and over here you have Tommy Manuel playing? You know, they are getting time on the same stage. And, you know, it’s time these people will never get the chance to experience on the same stage. [Interview “Donna” 9/15/2010]

Stage Five provides participants with an unusual opportunity to showcase their stuff, but the atmosphere around Stage Five, for audience members, is consistent with the overarching context surrounding leisure, play, and authenticity at the festival (i.e., being able to bring alcohol and chairs, interacting openly with the performing musicians, and choosing to attend a stage within the campground as opposed to the fairground). For musicians, Stage Five is also an outlet for both performance and encouragement from the audience or community. Like many traditional rituals and traditions that take place at

Winfield, Stage Five is created by the campers, for the campers. Many attendees never or rarely visit the main stages in the fairgrounds, and instead, choose to be the “camp dog” and play or listen to music produced by campers within the campground. Stage Five gives participants the opportunity to enjoy the same music on stage that takes place in the campgrounds, where campers can enjoy a beer and stand three feet away from the stage, cheering their friends and family on.

When I finish my interview with Randy and Sharon, Randy gives me a 2011 Stage Five pick; a treasure to most campers. Rumor has it that only individuals who get to play on Stage Five are awarded the privilege of a Stage Five pick, but Randy and Sharon assure me that anyone that wants one can have one. Still, true to the excitement surrounding the beloved stage, I run through the winding roads of the Pecan Grove back to Shoes Camp waving my new, pink pick in the air. My news is met with astonishment and stories of Stage Five from festivals past. Later, Donna from KAAA Camp gives me another pick so I can have matching “Stage 5” earrings, like hers. Like many Stage Five picks that campers collect throughout the years, my treasure will never know the guitar. Rather, it’s an important souvenir.

Although the concept of “authenticity” is debated in the literature, what is important here is attendees’ search for meaningful and perceivably authentic modes of expression. Stage Five, like other components of the festival, provides this outlet for attendees. As Grazian (2004) argues,

authenticity, like beauty, can truly exist only in the eye of the beholder... the search for authenticity is rarely a quest for some actual material thing, but rather for what consumers in a particular social milieu imagine the symbols of authenticity to be. (P. 34)

Similarly, Barthel (1997) suggests that the W.I Thomas theorem aids in understanding the debated nature of the existence of authenticity; it does indeed exist, because people believe that it exists.

Others, such as Eastman (2010) perceive authenticity as a form of identity work, where “things that people do.... [are seen] as strategies of action that provide meaning for themselves and others” (p. 53). In his study of underground country musicians, Eastman (2010) found that “authenticity” meant staying true to oneself and the music, as opposed to “selling out” to commercialized record companies. Attendees at the festival view their activities in a similar vein, often preferring stages in the campground over the “structured” performances that take place on the main stages, that is, when they can tear themselves away from the music being played in various different campsites throughout the campground.

#### **F. “IT’S LIKE A FAMILY REUNION”**

When asked about the draw of the festival, out of nineteen interviews, over half say that Winfield is like a family reunion. One veteran camper of Shoes Camp, Gerald, tells me that Winfield is meaningful to him, because “It’s like getting to spend time with the family you choose, instead of the family you didn’t get to choose.” Interestingly, the notion of a “family reunion” at the festival has a double meaning for many campers.

Leonard, editor of the “WVF Voice,” says it best,

The festival is a family affair, and yes when I say “family” I say family from the standpoint of – people bring their children and maybe now, their children are bringing their children so it becomes a family reunion. But, also family from the standpoint that, you go out into these campsites, and these people aren’t necessarily blood relatives but they have maybe come from Minnesota, and Kansas, and Texas, and Arkansas and they have kind of formed a little group and now that’s the family for whatever campsite they call themselves, and that’s part of the family thing too. [Interview “Leonard” 9/15/2010]

Many camps include generations of relatives, while others provide a different sort of family. For some campers, watching little ones from other camps grow up over the years provides a type of meaningful, “family” experience. Natalia, a veteran camper since the seventies and mother of Winfield “youngin’s,” feels that watching young kids grow up at Winfield is a special part of the experience. She reminisces, “Now, you are seeing the little ones bringing their kids, and you’re seeing men out of little kids that used to kick hay bales. It turns into this vast tribal history.” Another camper, Diane (who has no children or relatives in camp), tells me a story about a little girl who visits their camp every year; now she’s in junior high school, and part of their “family.” Many attendees remark that they “only see people once a year at Winfield,” or, “we run into to people, we don’t know them by name at all, but we know ‘em when we see ‘em.”

A vast number of attendees bring blood relatives to the festival every year, and in some camps, there are up to three or four generations of family that have attended throughout their life time. Two proud parents of seven children, Mitch and Irene, say that “For us, it was a real family thing, because we’d have four generations out here, you know. The grandparents would be here.” Sharing the experience with family at the festival serves to solidify the community within camp enclaves, and often provokes powerful memories of the festival. Monty vividly recalls the emotion he feels when watching his son, Jason, play music with others’ children that have also grown up at Winfield.

It’s just like, ah, yeah! I know how he’s feeling or what he’s feeling. And then to hear them do our songs and we do their songs...what could be better than that? And it’s happening all over, you know, as much that goes on in our camp, it’s multiplied, and all these camps, especially the established ones, are just having all

these little camp traditions and little soap operas and little deaths and weddings and divorces. [Interview “Monty” 7/15/2010]

Like Monty said, one can serve as eyewitness to countless rituals performed at the festival that are typically reserved for emotional, family occasions. Two veteran campers, Wallace and Alicia, were married forty-two years ago at the festival (before Winfield was even recognized as a festival) and have been coming every single year since. During my second stay at Winfield, I heard several different stories about couples who were married at the festival, two that actually took place while I was there.



Unfortunately, not all of these rituals are reserved for happy occasions; many camps perform rituals every year in honor of campers that have passed away. When

Manny (central cultural creator and icon of Shoes Camp) passed away, Monty and Elvis both put his ashes in their instruments, a musical tribute to a beloved, old friend. After their good friend Carolyn passed away five years ago, KAAA camp began performing a ceremony every year in her honor. The first year she passed, the camp had a ceremonial fire where they placed Carolyn's ashes, and every year, after they close down the fire, they collect some of the ashes and put them away, so that "she is always with us." I heard another story of a woman who brings her husband's ashes to Winfield every year, and other camps have unique ways of remembering festival family and friends who have passed away over the years. Chicken Train Camp celebrated the life of one camper by drinking the last bottle of "apple pie" that he had made, a drink he was famous for, and held a camp toast in his memory.

The emphasis on family, both blood relatives and "festival family," speaks to the deep sense of community felt at Winfield. As many interviewees say, the entire festival is a "family reunion," and, for me, the best way to illustrate this type of profound connection is through writing about my experience with my own "family"

## **G. COMFORTABLE SHOES CAMP**

When asked about the beginnings of the camp, many long time veterans of Shoes Camp laughingly exclaim, "I'm old! I can't remember back that far!" or offer another comical remark about how long they've been Shoes campers. Oftentimes, I was directed to Sandy, a veteran Shoes camper who, years ago, compiled a "Comfortable Shoes Camp History." The history includes excerpts from Manny, Elvis, and Monty, as well as other central members of Shoes Camp, who talk about when they came and who they came with "back in the day." Thanks to Sandy's hard work, and several conversations with

Monty, Elvis, David, and other long time Shoes camp veterans, I discover that twenty-five years ago, Manny attended his first Winfield, and with him came the beginnings of Comfortable Shoes Camp. Sandy recalls that “Manny was very good at creating community, wherever he went.” When I told her that, after all the wonderful stories I’d heard about Manny, he seemed like a sort of mythic character, she jokingly responded, “I think he dropped out of the electric Kool-aid Acid Trip and landed in the Ozarks!” With Manny, came friends of his who brought friends and family who also brought friends and family. As Monty recalls, “you just kind of trust people that if they’re going to invite somebody to camp with us they’ll be cool,” and thus, Shoes Camp grew and grew to be the large family that it is today (see Appendix E for pictures of Shoes Camp).

Thanks to the perseverance of many “virgins” (first-timers who have to fulfill a variety of “virgin duties”) and Mayor Dan’s leadership, the 2010 “Comfortable Shoes Census” includes ninety campers. The “census,” as I all too vividly recall, was a “virgin duty” of mine when I attended for the first time in 2009. It involves tracking everyone down in Shoes Camp, and asking them to sign their name if they are already in the census, or, if they were a virgin or skipped the year before, having them provide their name, address, and email address. A seemingly easy task; yet, to a “virgin” who doesn’t know anybody, approaching people with the census always feels like an interruption. Looking back, the “census” was a perfect opportunity to meet everyone in the camp, something that seems suspiciously obvious to me now.

Although the terms “virgin” and “virgin duties” are universal at Winfield, Shoes Camp pays particular attention to virgins. In camp, every so often, you can hear someone yelling out “virgin!” which is usually abruptly followed by a virgin who seemingly pops



out of thin air. Common virgin duties around camp include the census, helping with breakfast or dinner, washing dishes, carrying instruments, grabbing beers, and basically anything one thinks of in a moment of need. Of course, it's all in good fun, and most every camper cheerfully recalls memories of their virgin year. Paula's virgin duties involved spending all day taping "Comedy Jam" flyers on porta-potties throughout both campgrounds, and Zac found himself picking up all the trash in camp and helping Mayor Dan with breakfast. If a virgin is particularly efficient at their duties, or simply a new camp favorite, they are sometimes bestowed the title of "Virgin of the Year." In Sandy's history, Erin, a veteran shoe's camper, tells the story surrounding her "Virgin of the Year" title.

This is the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of my Virgin year. I was 'Virgin of the Year' in '02 –I think because I opened a Sunday evening bottle of whiskey and dropped the lid in the fire. This became the Ceremony of the Gauntlet—we had to drink it all. [www.shoescamp.com]

In a lot of ways, one's "virgin" year serves as a sort of rite of passage or initiation ritual for Shoes Camp, as well as the festival at large. This year, Mayor Dan approaches me and asks if I want to do the camp census again, and then jokingly adds, "Because you loved it *so* much." I quickly respond that I am more than happy to "pass the torch" to another unsuspecting virgin, and he gives me a big hug; I am family now.

Another traditional ritual that reinforces a deep sense of family and community are the daily meals that Shoes Camp shares together. As leader of the breakfast kitchen, Mayor Dan provides the camp with a "Thanksgiving Breakfast" every morning that usually includes a combination of bacon and sausage, eggs "how you like 'em," biscuits and gravy, hash browns, fresh cut veggies, and pancakes. When the bell rings, signaling breakfast time (the only vestige of a time table in camp), campers stagger to the

kitchen/mess tent, talking casually about the night before or the day ahead. We stand in line, buffet style, and shuffle along collecting our breakfast until we are met with Dan at the end of the line, sweating over a hot griddle and taking orders for eggs. After preparing plates and chit-chatting in the mess tent, we disperse throughout the camp in small clusters, enjoying the shade, the food, and the company.

Like Mayor Dan, Barb and Rachel are the heart of the dinner kitchen at Shoes camp. After two years at Shoes Camp, I am amazed at the amount of time both women spend preparing fresh, home-cooked meals for the camp. Like breakfast, dinner meals are elaborate and delicious; not typical camping food. Both Zac and I, and probably a handful of other campers, admit that we eat much better at Winfield than we do at home. We have fresh salads with bread and butter, chicken and chicken soup, succotash, mashed potatoes, gumbo, chili, burritos, curry, beef stew, and fresh pasta with vegetables. Similar to breakfast, dinner is served buffet style on a large, rectangular table placed directly outside the dinner kitchen tent. This year, long time Shoes veteran, Garth, constructs a small sign that reads “Stage Ate,” (there are seven actual stages at the festival), that sits propped up against the dinner table. What’s interesting about the tradition of camp meals in Shoes Camp is that it doesn’t necessarily hold true for the majority of camps at the festival, although some camps have fully functional kitchens and camp meals as well. When I ask Barb why she thought camp meals were an important part of Shoes Camp, she responds

There’s just something about eating together, and it’s the saddest part of our society right now is that families don’t eat together. And I don’t know, hopefully some of the young people in this camp will take that home with them, and realize how important it was for everyone to eat together and share the day together.  
[Interview “Barb” 9/13/2010]

“Eating together” symbolizes something akin to the sacred; a ritual that marks family time, simplicity, and coming together; things Gardner (2004) would suggest are lost in a modernizing society where emphasis on community continues to decline. It seems as if Barb is not the only one who appreciates the connective properties of sharing meals together; several Shoes campers have told me about the “formal dinners” that Brook, a veteran Shoes camper, had organized a few years ago. The formal dinner took place twice, and required Shoes campers to “dress nice” (one year Monty wore a t-shirt with a tux on it) and eat a “fancy” meal together. From what I gather from the stories, several long tables were set up in the large, common area in camp, (complete with flickering candles) and the whole Shoes family sat down together and enjoyed their meal. Unfortunately, due to logistical issues such as bringing enough tables, the formal dinner was a ritual that only took place twice, but continues to be a favorite Winfield memory for many Shoes campers. Interestingly, when I ask about the draw of the festival, many Shoes campers include “food” into their responses, something unique to Shoes Camp. Not all Shoes campers mention food; however, every single one of them mentions music.

#### **H. “THE MUSICIANS’ FESTIVAL”**

When I ask Bob, veteran Shoes camper and talented musician, about the difference between other music festivals and Winfield, he responds by saying, “this is a musician’s festival.” Music makes up the very heart and soul of Winfield. As Donna jokingly reminds me, people don’t keep coming back because they hate music. As noted earlier, most attendees, when I ask why they come to Winfield, respond with either community or a deep, rich, insatiable, emotional, and passionate love for music. When I

ask for clarification on what the music means, many individuals find it difficult to articulate.

After a few moments of quiet contemplation, Bob says quietly, “it’s just part of my soul,” and veteran Pecan Grover, Tom, suggests that music is powerful because you could literally *feel* music, but admits that it is difficult to put into words. In a similar vein, Mayor Dan suggests that “music tingles that part of your brain that feels good.” For some campers, like Paula, music serves as an alternative form of communication or expression, where feelings are more easily communicated through song. The most common response is that music is the one, true universal language, and because all cultures share music in some form, it provides the largest common denominator, or connective tissue, between cultures and individuals. In helping me try to describe this quality of music, Zac, an avid construction worker, suggests that “Music is like the bonding agent.”

According to Kotarba (2009), music can be thought of as playing an important role in the transformation of “space” to “place.” He quotes Cohen (1995) to suggest that “individuals can use music as a cultural map of meaning” (p. 313). In the context of Winfield, music carries immense meaning to participants, and not just those who play instruments. Symbolic interaction informs us that ritual is a vehicle through which meaning is created, reinforced, and exaggerated. Jam sessions, or what some refer to as picking circles, are but one illustration of how musical rituals, or rituals of performance, serve to create a meaningful sense of “place” for attendees.

Like most campers at the festival, Shoes members fill most of their time either playing music or listening to music. There is almost always a jam (a group of musicians

playing together) going on somewhere in Shoes Camp. At nights, the jams held at Shoes camp under the parachute grow to massive proportions, sometimes attracting large groups of onlookers on their nightly walkabouts. Shoes Camp is also home to some very talented and well known musicians at the festival, and every once in a while, some professional musicians have been known to spend their evenings jamming beneath the chandelier of Christmas lights that serves as a beacon for Shoes Camp.

Consistent with other egalitarian qualities of the festival, picking circles and jams are structured in such a way as to provide every participant an opportunity to play a song. The musicians participating in the jam typically, but not always, sit in picking chairs (hard seated chairs with no arm rests) and form a circle, the size of which depends on the number of musicians involved (see Appendix E for an example of a small picking circle in Shoes Camp). Instruments that are typically present in the circle include guitars, banjos, mandolins, fiddles, basses, and the occasional washboard, but other instruments are typically welcome (Elvis plays trumpet, Paula plays clarinet, and “Cello Bob” clearly plays cello). I have been told, however, that no trap sets or electrified instruments are permitted in the circle (or at Winfield for that matter), and Sandy, a talented pianist, suggests that to really be a part of the group, “You need to play a stringed instrument.” In fact, every musician in camp plays a stringed instrument (Elvis also plays banjo, and Paula also plays guitar, mandolin, and bass).

The ritual of picking circles brings with it a host of shared understandings surrounding playing music together at the festival. One night, in the wee hours of the morning, Monty shares with me the “Ten Jammandments,” a playful (yet true) list of guidelines for appropriate jam conduct. As he reads them aloud, we have a hearty

laugh and talk about how accurate they are despite their comic value, and he lets me borrow them so I can copy them into my fieldnotes. Later, I find myself reading them allowed to Shoes campers under the parachute in the middle of camp, and it is met with laughter, stories of “jam busters,” and talk of unspoken truths.

THE TEN JAMMANDEMENTS BY CHARLIE HALL AND ROBERT ROSENBERG:  
FROM THE FOLKNIK JAN/FEB 2002

1. THOU SHALT TUNE THY INSTRUMENT -There are too many good cheap tuners around not to do this.
2. THOU SHALT LISTEN- If you can't hear the lead instrument or vocalist, then consider yourself too loud.
3. THOUGH SHALT PASS- When handing off an instrumental solo, try to follow a pattern either clockwise or counterclockwise. If you want to skip the next solo or pass it on to the next picker, be sure that the next person is aware of the handoff. No one wants to start his or her solo in the middle of a song.
4. THOUGH SHALT WELCOME OTHERS – Open up the circle if others want to join. The jam can't be too big if people are polite.
5. THOU SHALT SHARE IN THE SELECTION – Open up the choices of songs to the pickers around the circle. Don't monopolize the jam.
6. THOU SHALT TRY NEW STUFF – Once in a while a participant may suggest original material or one that is out of character with the jam. This is A-OK (refer to Jammandments #2 and #4)
7. THOU SHALT LET OTHERS KNOW WHEN YOU ARE NOT JAMMING – Bands may sometimes be rehearsing and may need to exclude non band members from jamming. If so, an explanation would be nice for the would be jammers.
8. THOU SHALT NOT RAID – Don't interrupt an active jam by calling musicians away to begin another jam. (Bob's note: Also, don't raid and take over a jam by having your full band suddenly decide to sit in on a jam and end up playing all your own songs.)
9. THOU SHALT KEEP THEM RHYTHM STEADY – Errors in rhythm are most difficult to overcome. Avoid adding or dropping beats. Play quietly if you can't keep up and pay attention (refer to Jammandment #2.)
10. THOU SHALT NOT SPEED – Do not start a song too fast for the others to play. Once everyone has had a turn to lead, then one may announce that the tempo is about to increase.

What makes the “Ten Jammandments” so funny to participants is that every “Jammandment” represents an unspoken truth that has, at one time or another, been breached by another participant in the circle. I am reminded of Adler's (1982) work surrounding humor in bluegrass where, oftentimes, things are “seen by all to be

humorous precisely because it is all so necessary and familiar” (p. 24). Failure to comply with the “Jammandments” simply makes one undesirable to play with, and these individuals are thus awarded the title of “jam buster,” “jam hog,” “circle jerk,” or “circle jack,” among other creative nicknames for those who misinterpret the definition of the situation pertaining to picking circles. The “Ten Jammandments” illustrate a humorous and playful way of showcasing shared understandings, but other prevalent “unspoken rules” are often told through stories.

## **I. STORY TIME**

A relatively new ritual for Shoes Camp is “story time” with Jack. Almost every night after dinner, campers gather under the large parachute in the middle of camp, some sitting with children on blankets laid in the grass, others reclining in chairs sipping red wine, for Jack’s famous “story time.” Jack, a mandolin player and short story writer, sits in a chair holding a few sheets of paper, and reads, in his deep animated voice, one of his colorful, comical Ozark tales. Everyone in camp loves “story time,” and we all sit together in the clearing as Jack reads aloud in his best hillbilly accent, pausing every so often for effect, but also to give us time to laugh. When he finishes, we all clap excitedly. Like the notion of a “family reunion,” story time at the festival has more than one meaning. To me, “story time” represents another one of Jack’s wonderful stories, but it doesn’t take me long to realize that the festival, in and of itself, is one, large “story time.” In my fieldnotes, I mention the word “story” thirty two times, mostly used in the context of “So and so told me a story about...” Stories are told about the time a camper was arrested at the festival for smoking pot, a camp named “Glitter Gulch” that made an

entire city out of glitter and cardboard, and the “flood year,” or the year Winfield was held at the lake.

My first year, all the stories I heard seemed like inside jokes, something I couldn't relate to as an “outsider.” But now with my virgin year out of the way and as a member of Shoes Camp, I bring my own stories. When I hear stories retold, I understand what they mean, who they refer to, why they are funny or poignant. I have my own stories about the tornado that hit Winfield in 2010 near our camp, about the noisy, out of tune fiddle player, about the nutty, hippy fellow nobody really wanted in camp. I hear about the time that a tree limb fell on Jason's tent or the time a propane tank blew up in an attendee's camper down the road and I feel as if I had been there somehow. I know who Manny is, I know about the rotten banana Elvis put in Brandon's sock, I know that one has to “pack for two seasons” at the festival, I know of the “Ten Jammandments,” and I also know “never curse the Kansas wind.”

For a new comer, stories are an excellent resource for shared understandings that aren't necessarily discussed out right at the festival. For example, after all the stories that are told about drunk interlopers, I understand that it is okay to drink at the festival, but not okay to get belligerently drunk. All the stories that are told about the festival staff, the Winfield police, and a camper's arrest, teach me that marijuana is permitted at the festival as long as it remains out of sight. After hearing Mayor Dan's frustration with a camper who had agreed to cook breakfast and never showed up, I know that everyone is expected to help with camp duties, because “it takes a village.” I know now that banjo jokes are told throughout the festival to illustrate that, oftentimes, banjos are loud and out of tune. Stories that are told about “jam busters” and those who “monopolize the circle”



are perfectly represented in the “Jammandments,” which renders them funnier to insiders. It is through these stories that I learn the “do’s and don’ts” of festival life; always connect a splitter when hooking up to water so other campers can hook up to water too; never camp in an established camp’s traditional spot, don’t ever rope or section off a camping spot, when the ice people yell “ICE!!!,” start running because they’ll drive on by without stopping; Stage Five picks are reserved for those who play on Stage Five; the Pecan Grove is the hippies and “granolas” and the Walnut Grove is reserved for the conservatives and non-partiers.

As illustrated above, stories play an enormous role in the creation and maintenance of the definition of the situation as well as the creation and transmission of idioculture. Consistent with a symbolic interactionist approach to cultural creation, Fine (1979) suggests that because meaning arises through social interaction, cultural creation is inextricably tied to groups and group life. Through continued interaction, groups create idioculture, or shared meanings, that they can refer to and use in various other interactions. The applicability of Fine’s (1979) filtering elements (e.g., that items must be known, usable, functional, appropriate, and triggered) needed for the creation of idioculture become extremely apparent at Winfield. It is evident that many cultural objects, shared understandings, and rituals at Winfield are vastly *known* by veteran campers (“Band Scramble”), *usable* in that they can be understood by others at the festival (“Virgins”), *functional* in that they are consistent with needs and goals of other members (even if just to provoke laughter or entertain), *appropriate* in that they are consistent with patterns of interaction (no drums or trap sets!), and *triggered* in that they elicit a response from other group members (Hey remember when...?). There seems to be

little doubt that individuals within camp enclaves have indeed created idioculture at the festival, but what is interesting is the degree to which idioculture compliments the notion of a shared definition of the situation at the festival and how these shared understandings are created and received through nostalgic narratives.

## **J. AFFECTIVE NOSTALGIA**

The phrase, “Remember when...” seems to have an important meaning at the festival, and often elicits deep emotion through connecting the past with the present. This feeling of nostalgia provides a powerful foundation for community, as even I experience in my short two years at the festival. The collective memories of participants, the ability to say yes and provide another story when asked “Remember when...”, draws attendees together through past, shared experiences that serve to make the present all the more meaningful. Indeed, Gardner (2004) suggests that one reason “place” becomes so meaningful is that “it has the capacity to be remembered and to evoke what is most precious” (p. 51). He suggests that attachments to meaningful “places” can be attributed to the memories and narratives people have about those places. Also, Gvion (2009:58) informs us that narrative provides a sense that the “past is not lost forever,” and that through narrative, individuals are capable of assigning meaning to the past as well as the present, something Turner (1969) would consider an important aspect of cultural performance. For Gvion (2009), experiencing nostalgia and appropriating meaning go hand in hand, where a situated past becomes accessible and verbalized through narrative. Neither narrative nor nostalgia necessarily represent a reality, but rather, a filtered reality or what Barthel (1997) describes as a combination between fantasy and what actually took place.

Here nostalgia takes on an interesting quality; one doesn't necessarily have to experience something to feel nostalgic about it, and likewise, stories reflective of nostalgia typically represent what Gardner (2004) calls "convenient" or "glorified versions" of the past. Similarly, Gvion (2009) adds that nostalgia is but one way that individuals create colorful versions of their own worlds. During a story about how everyone met Manny, Sandy mentions feelings of "nostalgia" to describe why a core group of friends moved to remote parts of the country;

A little bit of a nostalgia feeling I think; a nostalgia for a life that sort of doesn't exist. Well, it's just a life in community, isn't it? And thinking that you can create that...recreate the feelings of – that I had – that I would have *liked* to have had" (her emphasis). [Interview "Sandy" 9/17/2010]

The theme of memory and nostalgia run deep throughout Winfield. Gardner (2004) borrows from Bellah et al (1985) in suggesting that "real communities" can be thought of as "communities of memory" or "communities of nostalgia" which rely on "key elements of tradition, ritual, a strong sense of...identity or place...and a collective memory of its residents' shared past" (p. 61). Here, Gardner (2004) submits that festivals are actually created as a result of the rapid decline of "communities of memory." For Griswold (1994:5), memory is explicitly tied into the definition of a cultural object, which always elicits "emotions and memories" from the past.

Turner (1969) suggests that meaningful cultural objects used in cultural performances are highly emotional precisely because they connect memories, or the past, with the present. Likewise, Schudson (1989) suggests that the "retrievability" component of cultural efficacy is directly tied to memory, or how cognitively retrievable the cultural object is. Furthermore, Fine (1979) submits that cultural content is created through "remembrances" or what he terms "known culture," and the notion of an item as

“triggered” directly implies a memory of something that can be brought up again over time in effort to make sense out of the present. Combined, these works reveal that nostalgia, or what Abrahams (1982:174) terms a “sentimental back look,” plays a role in the formation of meaning, the creation and maintenance of idioculture, the strengthening of community, and to some extent, the degree to which Winfield, as a cultural object, “works” for participants.

Although stories are an important vehicle for the creation of nostalgia, music and song contribute to these deep, emotional sentiments as well. There are many songs that are sung at Winfield throughout the years that evoke memories or emotions from festivals past. For Paula, hearing Monty’s “Porta-Pottie Shuffle” or Jason’s “I can’t I’m Going to Winfield” makes her feel like she is at the festival, like she is finally home. For many campers, favorite memories include certain jams or songs that were played with specific people, or nights under the stars where the music was so beautiful it couldn’t be put into words. Mayor Dan recalls lying in his RV listening to a group of musicians play “Yesterday” by the Beatles’ where the music was “indescribably beautiful,” and Mama Cass recalls a memory of listening to Beppy Gambetta on the main stage, tears streaming down her face. Monty remembers a jam with Elvis’s late wife Tammy, a beloved and dearly missed member of Shoe’s camp, where they played “Moon Dance” under a full moon with a flute player, and the ritual of Chick Pick finds most women in tears after a young girl sings “Somewhere over the Rainbow” for her parents. These intense feelings of nostalgia are involved in the creation of the indescribable, yet deeply felt, emotionality of music or as I describe it, *affective nostalgia*; the deep emotional response elicited through linking the past and the present through musical ritual. When song and memory

are reunited at the festival, the result often takes the form of a powerful experience where emotions from the past are rekindled, summoning affective nostalgia in the present.

For Turner (1982), cultural performance is the finale of an emotional experience, where linking the past and present in “musical relation” provides the very foundation for establishing and discovering meaning. Turner (1982) suggests that

an experience is incomplete...unless one of its “moments” is “performance,” an act of creative retrospection in which “meaning” is ascribed to the events and parts of experience...Experience is both living through and thinking back. (P. 18)

*Affective nostalgia* is created through the linking of the past and the present (e.g., Turner’s “moments of experience”) through musical ritual, where music and memory work together in reconstructing the past and reflecting on the present. Many of Gardner’s (2004) interviewees, like many of mine, made reference to a “spiritual vibe” (p. 207), or what Mayor Dan labels an “aura.” Interestingly, Schudson (1989) uses the word “aura” when describing “resonance” or that indescribable quality within cultural objects that makes them memorable or powerful. For attendees, music resonates, or creates a spiritual aura, providing music with emotional, nostalgic properties. Gvion (2009:60) suggests that, through song, individuals are able to remember times they haven’t lived in, where participants share a collective memory through music. Unique and re-created versions of traditional songs allow for the linking of the past and present, where singing allows for the reconstruction of “selected pasts.”

Turner’s (1982) term, “spontaneous communitas” is closely related to *affective nostalgia*. According to Turner (1982), spontaneous communitas represents

moments when compatible people – friends, congeners – obtain a flash of lucid mutual understanding on the existential level, when they feel that all problems, not just their problems, could be resolved, whether emotional or cognitive, if only

the group which is felt (in the first person) as ‘essentially us’ could sustain its intersubjective illumination. (P. 48)

I suggest that it is the powerful emotion of *affective nostalgia* that provides music with what Schudson (1989) might term resonance or rhetorical force. I also submit that it is through experienced *affective nostalgia* at Winfield that attendees appropriate meaning to the festival, strengthen community ties, and experience a perceivably more authentic, emotional performance in a world where “communities of memory” may be seen as a mere vestige of the past. It is the affective nostalgia produced in the campground through participants’ continued involvement that provides “the musicians’ festival” with all of the emotion and meaning it enjoys. As mentioned previously, many campers find the “musicians’ festival,” with all the music, ritual, and playfulness it provides, to be much more enticing than the performances on the main stages, which I suggest relates to the ability of music played within the campground to produce affective nostalgia. When I ask the question, “Do you ever go to the main stages to watch the “big names” perform?” almost every single one of my interviewees, as well those that I engage in casual conversation, admit that they never or rarely visit the main stages, and prefer to play or listen to music produced in the campgrounds. Many respond by saying, “I used to go up there a lot more than I do now,” suggesting that over the years, a lot of campers have shifted their attention to “the musicians’ festival” as opposed to the official festival. Disappointedly, Mitch and Irene say that the music played on the main stages “isn’t what it used to be,” and in a similar vein, Bill, creator of Carp Camp, remarks that “I rarely go to the stage shows because the musicians here [in camp] are better.” The music, stories, friendship, and family in the campgrounds provide attendees with such intense feelings of community and nostalgia, that “being the camp dog,” as David remarks, may provide

participants with an ability to “stay true to the music” and the community. Paula suggests that the people who put on the Walnut Valley Festival have no idea that attendees in the Pecan Grove “come for the Pecan Grove” and not the main stages. Some campers suggest that this may be but one difference between the two campgrounds.

## **K. WALNUT GROVE VERSUS THE PECAN GROVE: A TALE OF TWO CITIES**

From the moment I arrived at the festival my first year, it became relatively clear that there exists a playful, joking rivalry between the two campgrounds. In fact, there is actually a large geographic separation between groves, where the main, paved road that leads out of the fairgrounds and onto Main Street separates the two campgrounds completely. One veteran camper, Josh, jokes that “you need a passport to go over there!” But truly, venturing over to the Walnut Grove, what some have called the “RV Jungle” or “Hollywood,” is quite the trek, depending on where one is camped in the Pecan Grove. After walking to the main paved road, there is another little gravel path that goes over a enormous hill, which also contributes to the geographic separation, and upon coming down the hill on the Walnut Grove side, directly next to the main festival site, a whole sea of neatly arranged campers and RV’s becomes visible. When I venture over to the Walnut Grove on one sunny day, the difference between groves is exactly how my interviewees and fellow campers describe.

The first thing I notice is that it is much, much quieter in the Walnut Grove. There are a few jams taking place here and there, but certainly not like in the “rowdy” Pecan Grove. Also, there aren’t near as many tents in the Walnut Grove; most campers are staying in large campers and RV’s perfectly arranged in tidy rows, where little gravel

and dirt paths lead to various different camps. Unlike the cram packed Pecan Grove (especially later in the week), there is plenty of room between camps, a perfect amount of open space for attendees to navigate the campgrounds easily. However, similar to camps in the Pecan Grove, campers position their RV's and campers in such a way as to create a little open common area for campers to gather and play music.

The creative camp construction is still present in the Walnut Grove; most camps have signs, props, and fun artifacts, and some are the most intricate camp sites I have seen at the festival. Earlier, I had heard that campers in the Walnut Grove typically won the "Camp Decorating Contest," and now, as I wander through the camps, I understand why. For example, Crab Camp has constructed a wooden dock surrounded by blue "water" made out of Christmas lights. Although the scenery is noticeably different in the Pecan Grove, there are a couple of camps that look a little more like Pecan Grove camps. These camps stick out in the campground with their many tie-dyed tapestries, and a couple of camps I run across are mostly tents.

While walking around, I happen on a beautiful and complicated hammer dulcimer jam, and I am suddenly intrigued, because I haven't noticed any hammer dulcimers in the Pecan Grove. I notice that a man playing the piano (another instrument I haven't seen in the Pecan Grove) is actually playing with sheet music, while the women playing the hammer dulcimers play in perfect unison. It seems almost like a rehearsal of sorts. Monty tells me that a lot of camps in the Walnut Grove actually have "home work," or music sent out to camp members to learn before coming to the festival. Later, I find out that Carp Camp, a large camp in the Walnut Grove, will also provide campers with "home work" on occasion. I had also heard that oftentimes, jams or picking circles are



scheduled in the Walnut Grove, where a piece of paper or dry erase board will list the time and place of the jam, with a list of songs that were going to be played. Unless it's a special jam like "Beatles' Night," for example, Pecan Grovers don't really schedule jams or give "home work"; picking circles remain a spontaneous occurrence. That's not to say that people don't work on songs or practice before the festival, they just don't typically assign music to be learned by the campers.

When I ask about the difference between groves, many interviewees suggest that the music was different or that the "mind-set," or what Todd calls, "The Tude," [attitude] is the prevailing difference between campgrounds. Paula suggests that the Pecan Grovers are the "wild children" and that there is a social difference between groves, where the Walnut Grove is compiled of "folks who have money." Mitch jokingly remarks that the difference between groves is the same difference that exists between republicans and democrats, and Sandy suggests that marijuana is absolutely not tolerated in the Walnut Grove. Monty insists that the music is different and that "you better have your chops if you want to play over there," meaning amateur musicians aren't quite as welcomed in the Walnut Grove as they are in the Pecan Grove. Similarly, Bob mentions that the music is more "traditional" and "structured" in the Walnut Grove, and Todd jokes about the time he and a friend played a Frank Zappa song that was met with obvious disapproval by surrounding Walnut Grovers.

Interestingly, when I ask Walnut Grovers the same questions, I receive many of the same responses. The music is more "polished" in the Walnut Grove, and the atmosphere is more "family oriented." Campers in the Walnut Grove, although they also enjoy the traditions and rituals the "musicians' festival" has to offer, seem to place more

emphasis on the official festival that showcases the big names in bluegrass among various other events and activities. Pecan Grovers, on the other hand, are a rowdy bunch, and place much more emphasis on partying than members of the Walnut Grove. I've heard several stories about campers that ventured into the Walnut Grove after 10 o'clock, and were met with total darkness and abrupt silence. While the Pecan Grove is absolutely notorious for staying up and jamming all night, the Walnut Grove is known to shut down much, much earlier. For Pecan Grovers, the night life and "street jams" in the campground make the Pecan Grove a favorite place for those who welcome musical variety, beginners and professionals, and possibly, a little partying and jamming into the wee hours of the morning (and sometimes, all night!)

#### **L. NIGHT LIFE AND "PORTA-POTTIE JAMS"**

When I ask Monty what one of his favorite Winfield rituals is, one of his responses is "porta-pottie jams." Confused, I ask him what "porta-pottie jams" are; certainly people don't play music together in a porta-pottie, although Matilda tells me that fourteen teenagers had piled into a single porta-pottie one year. Monty tells me that "porta-pottie jams" are street jams that take place next to a porta-pottie at night, because porta-potties are always illuminated by large street lights and musicians can see each other and what they are doing. Also "porta-pottie jams" usually take place because one musician needs to go to the restroom, so his musician friend is left waiting outside the porta-pottie entrance, instrument in hand. After a while, another musician would wander up, which is the perfect makings for a jam. The person in the porta-pottie would then wander out of the stall to a full blown jam session right by the door.

The night life at the festival, especially closer to the end of the week, is especially active. As the evening progresses, the excitement begins to build in the Pecan Grove, as musicians and friends venture out into the streets to wander around the grove and participate in street jams, beckoning other musicians to join. Sometimes, street jams will become so large that the group of jammers, onlookers, and dancers literally block off the street, making it impossible for others to pass through. Many campers have glow sticks and light up jewelry, Christmas lights, flash lights, and all sorts of creative and bright lighting displays so that, at night, the Pecan Grove begins to light up with brilliant, twisted colors that flash and stream through the darkness. Music can be heard absolutely everywhere, at times clashing with jams taking place only a short distance away. Camps have fires roaring, people are laughing and shouting delightedly, and occasionally, one may witness the intoxicated camper who falls asleep standing up (a story Mayor Dan, Jason, and Cello Bob tell me).

The stages in the Pecan Grove really pick up at night as well; the audience attending Stage Five is so large that walking across the area in front of the stage becomes impossible. Fine Time's Stage and Stage Seven are also usually hopping, drawing large groups of campers that dance around in front of the performers. Golf carts covered in Christmas lights drive in masses down the dirt roads of the Pecan Grove creating a colorful, moving, mini light show. Campers are milling about everywhere, playing music, singing, telling stories, and laughing wildly. Many campers suggest that the night life in the Pecan Grove is one of their favorite aspects of the festival, one that is almost entirely absent in the Walnut Grove. Like Paula said, campers in the Pecan Grove come for the Pecan Grove, because, after all, "what happens in the grove stays in the grove!"

## **M. THE (OFFICIAL) WALNUT VALLEY FESTIVAL**

The *official* Walnut Valley Festival begins on Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup> and includes performances by professional bluegrass or folk musicians on one of three main stages, musical workshops, a craft fair, music contests, multiple food vendors, and a store in which to purchase Winfield memorabilia. In 2010, the Walnut Valley Festival program includes thirty-one professional bluegrass and folk musicians that play at various times between Thursday and Sunday (the schedule is provided in the festival booklet), on one of the three main stages in the fairgrounds. Stage One is considered the most prestigious stage, followed by Stage Two and then Stage Three. Professional musicians are scheduled to play at various times on two or more of the stages. Some campers are provided the opportunity to play on one of the main stages, like when Mama Cass won the songwriting contest, and had the honor of playing with Monty, David, Paul and Peter on Stage Two (one of David's favorite Winfield memories).

The festival is also home to several different hands-on, musical workshops taught by well-known musicians in the bluegrass and folk world. These include workshops surrounding ukuleles, finger style guitars, new songs, fiddles, songwriters, hammer dulcimers, and autoharps. Also, the Walnut Valley Festival holds what is boasted as one of the best craft fairs in the country. The festival booklet suggests that individuals from twenty states come together to provide more than 100 displays of "paintings, jewelry, wood items, glass, metalwork, baskets, pottery, weaving & spinning, leather, herbals & soaps, children's items, and food related items" (2010 WVF booklet). Many campers in Shoes camp, such as Patti, Mama Cass, Monty, and Elvis collect Winfield mugs provided each year by the "potter" at the craft fair. Many other campers browse the

crafts, picking up home-made reminders of their time at Winfield. Several people that I've talked to, such as Mitch and Karla, have successfully sold their crafts in the craft fair, although Mitch admits that, after a while, "it started to feel like work."

Out of all the interesting activities that take place in the main festival site, contests seem to have captured the most attention, possibly because Shoes camp is home to several talented contestants. In 2010, Matilda places third in the autoharp contest, which is met by much congratulations and excitement from fellow campers, who are always ready with support and encouragement. The Walnut Valley Festival is home to the autoharp contest, the mountain dulcimer contest, the mandolin contest, the old time fiddle contest, the flat pick guitar contest, the hammer dulcimer contest, and the bluegrass banjo contest. Paul, a superb guitar player from France, and member of Shoes Camp, often enters the flat picking contest. One year, the camp members decorated a t-shirt for Paul, with all their names on it, stating he was their flat-picking champion! Mama Cass states that, for her, just "attempting to play backup rhythm with Paul while he's practicing for the contest is a festival highlight." One of Bob's favorite Winfield traditions happens to be the contests, and watching all the very young, talented musicians that compete. He remarks excitedly, "you can see incredible things in any of those competitions!" Similarly, Bill, from Carp Camp, also admits that he favors the competitions and recalls that "one night we had five or six national mandolin champs, and they were all under twenty!" On a different note, Matilda enjoys competing in the contest, because it showcases her instrument. One sunny afternoon while relaxing in the shade, she tells me, "I don't do the championships to win. I do it to uplift and bring forward the autoharp."

Like many festivals, the Walnut Valley Festival is also host to a great number of food vendors, from nachos to turkey legs, and all the festival memorabilia one could ask for. Like the contests, festival memorabilia is another aspect of the “official” festival that captures camper’s interest. CD’s, t-shirts, sweatshirts, picks, bumper stickers, jewelry and countless other items are sold in the main fairgrounds, and many campers have traditions that involve purchasing an item every year at Winfield. For example, Paula, Mitch, and Holly all purchase a Winfield t-shirt each year, and Holly admits to having more than she could wear every day at the festival, even when arriving for Line Rush. Bumper stickers are also prevalent at the festival, and many guitar cases and vehicles are enveloped in what could only be described as Winfield bumper sticker wall paper. Like stories and music, memorabilia purchased at the festival plays a large role in connecting the past to the present, and maybe even more importantly, provides a clear symbol of a potent memory that individuals can take home to cherish until the next festival. I have two Walnut Valley Festival bumper stickers and one “Girls Gone Winfield!” bumper sticker (a souvenir of “Chick Pick”) stuck onto the side of a large bookcase in my home and each time I walk by it, I smile, and think of my “Winfield” home.

#### **N. LEAVING HOME AND BACK TO “REAL LIFE”**

The final Saturday night spent within the Pecan Grove is arguably the climax of the festival, as it is the night before many campers will make the trip back home. As a result, the Pecan Grove is up all night, vibrating with music, yells, and laughter. The next day, however, always begins in exhaustion, and the experience of leaving friends and family for another year is just plain sad. The camp wakes up slowly and people eventually begin shuffling around, tearing down their tents and packing up their

belongings. Campers begin to leave one by one, and they make their rounds around camp, hugging necks and bidding their goodbyes. Jason and I talk shortly about how much homework we both have to do and Paula is extremely anxious to get back home and catch up on her work, too. The feeling of “the real world” or “real life” feels strangely personal to me now, as I abruptly feel overwhelmed with things I have to do when I get home. Elvis, Monty, Rachel, Brad, David, and several others (including myself and Zac) work on taking down the army tents, which is not an easy task, and disassembling the kitchen, the shower, and taking the parachute and chandelier from the tree tops. Eventually Shoes camp and the Pecan Grove begin to, once again, look like a large open field, void of the sights and sounds of community, family, and music. The excitement is gone, and what remains is a dark sense of reality; we have to get back to our responsibilities, and, frankly, nobody wants to. The same thing is happening in the various different camps in the Pecan Grove; campers are packing up their vehicles, tearing down tents, and embracing as they say their goodbyes. For the final time, the community comes together to take apart what they had worked so hard to put together, and once the camp is torn down, our home goes back to a being a park.

After Zac and I help tear down camp, we too, go around saying tearful goodbyes and thank everyone for another great experience before finally piling into the truck. While we are pulling out, I wave out the window to my festival family, yelling loudly, “See you next year!” As we drive down the dirt road, I eventually lose sight of what was Comfortable Shoes Camp, and I continue waving goodbye to other campers in the grove as they, too, are bidding us farewell.

When we get to the end of the main, paved road out of the campgrounds, a man in a yellow jacket hands us the 2010 Walnut Valley Festival bumper sticker, and while smiling, says, “We’ll see you next year!” As Zac pulls out of the campgrounds and onto Main Street, I begin to think of all my new friends and experiences at the festival. Zac and I immediately begin telling each other stories, all of which we had already heard or told each other, and we laugh as we begin our pilgrimage back to reality. I think about the music we had played together, the deep sense of community, the support and encouragement I received there, and the friendships that I will always cherish. I begin to sense the gravity of a “family reunion” as I think about the joy the next festival would bring, and how incredible it will be to see these people again, build our village, play music, and catch up under the our favorite shade tree about the years events. Now a member of Shoes camp, and a veteran attendee, I arrange all my new guitar picks in a special drawer when I return home, post my 2010 bumper stickers underneath my 2009 bumper sticker, and prop up my Comfortable Shoes Camp button and Chick Pick button against a row of books, so that I can both remember and anticipate the excitement of next year.

## **O. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Drawing from observations, interviews, and personal experience, I have described the components and activities of the festival that render it a cultural performance (e.g., heightened emotional moments elicited through the linking of the past and present). I have also described prominent rituals (e.g., “Stage Five,” “Rat Camp Band Scramble,” “Carp Camp Parade,” and “Jams,”) as well as props (e.g., cultural objects appropriated during creative camp construction), traditions (e.g., sharing meals together, “virgin



duties,” and “porta- pottie jams”), and festival language (“Stupidville,” “walkabouts,” and “jam busters” ). Through the above ethnographic tale, I have attempted to identify those aspects of the Winfield experience that encompass Griswold’s (2004) cultural diamond metaphor; *social world* (leisure,) *creators* (campers), *cultural object* (festival,) and *receivers* (campers). I have also identified Fine’s (1979) components of idioculture as well as their applicability, and have attempted to illustrate various dimensions of cultural efficacy (Schudson 1989) as they apply to the festival as a cultural performance (*retrievability, resonance, rhetorical force, institutional retention and resolution*).

Similar to Fine’s (1979) filtering elements necessary for the creation and maintenance of idioculture, Schudson’s (1989) dimensions of cultural efficacy have a broad range of applicability at the festival; the cultural object is evidently retrievable (both cognitively through “remembrances” as well as geographically and economically) for those that come every year, as they have clearly “retrieved” it, some for decades. For many long time veterans of the festival, monetary and geographic retrievability is merely an obstacle worthy of overcoming. For example, Paul travels from France every other year, and others have borrowed money or gone into to debt to attend the festival. Winfield must carry *rhetorical force* and *resonance* for participants as many veteran attendees continue to return throughout their lifetime. It makes sense that attendees continue to participate in and respond to things they perceive to be meaningful, powerful, and alluring. Both *rhetorical force* and *resonance* are interrelated with Turner’s (1969) notion of cultural performance as highly emotional and reflective, which pays tribute to the importance of the affective dimension of the festival as an “effective” cultural performance. Institutional retention is less applicable but some aspects are prevalent at

the festival. For example, Paula fears that if she was not able to attend the festival, she would let other attendees down, and as a result, she would feel enormously guilty.

Gardner (2004) also mentions the prevalence of guilt felt by veteran attendees who were unable to attend their traditional festival. Finally, Winfield also carries *resolution* in that people continue to come back, purchase memorabilia, learn new songs, or in other words, the festival encourages further action from participants.

Embedded within the overarching context of leisure, play, and perceived authenticity, there is also a prominent emphasis on creativity, camaraderie, and of course, a deeply felt sense of community. The apparent reduced role constraint and increased self-expression characteristic of leisure settings allows attendees to construct “places” to play, reminding us that ritual can be “both earnest and playful” (Turner 1982:35).

Moreover, through ritual, situated identities become meaningful to attendees. Hewitt (1989:156) suggests that in order to develop an understanding of situated identity, one must view the “situation” (or in this case, the festival) as a set of “linked perspectives” that provide participants a common ground through shared definitions of the situation. He elaborates by saying, “The situated experience of personal continuity is essentially equivalent to a sense of emerging and ongoing *meaning* provided by orderly and expected events in which the person has a hand” (p. 156). In this way, the creation and maintenance of the definition of the situation at the festival plays a role in not only the abundance of meaning produced and received there, but also in how individuals develop and experience a sense of identity that is situated in the context of Winfield.

In their ethnography of the “Folklife Festival,” Bauman, Sawin, and Carpenter (1992) remind us that shared understandings are always shifting and evolving as

participants evaluate their performances as well as the performances of others. Consistent with the fluid movement of the facets within Griswold's (2004) diamond, shared understandings are shaped through social interaction and are thus always subject to reinvention. I have suggested that these shared understandings surrounding the context of the festival as well as the "insider knowledge" (i.e. idioculture) produced through festival experiences are passed down to virgins and new comers through nostalgic narratives and musical rituals. But insider knowledge by itself is not enough to render Winfield a *meaningful* cultural performance. Thus, Fine's (1979) notion of "idioculture" falls short of capturing the meaningful components of small group life. In the absence of affective nostalgia, idioculture, as a concept, is lacking. Sociologists who study groups miss the mark if they do not take into account the affective ties inherent in group life, for this is the glue that binds.

With little exception (Gardner 2004; Gvion 2009; Turner 1969, 1982), most studies focus upon the cognitive aspects of festival that render it meaningful. But as I have shown, intense feelings are produced during performances that involve the ritualized playing of music, where attendees experience an atmosphere of heightened emotionality or "moments of experience" (Turner 1969). I have suggested that it is *affective nostalgia* that connects the past and present and provides music with its deeply felt emotional properties that are oftentimes so difficult to articulate. What Gardner (2004) might describe as the "spiritual" property of festivals, what Turner (1982) might describe as a form of "communitas," and what Durkheim (1912) might describe as "collective effervescence," I have termed *affective nostalgia*, an emotional by-product of

synthesizing the past and present through narrative and the performance of music. In an earlier work, Turner (1969) points to music specifically, stating

it is even more fascinating to consider how often expressions of *communitas* are culturally linked with...stringed instruments. Perhaps in addition to their ready portability, it is their capacity to convey in music the quality of spontaneous human *communitas* that is responsible for this. (P. 165)

It is through the ritualized performance of music (arguably the most important aspect of the festival to many attendees) and the resultant feelings of *affective nostalgia*, that individuals evoke the past, reflect on the present, share emotional experience with other attendees, and as a result, create and receive idioculture, increase cultural efficacy, and shape the festival as a meaningful, emotional, and “remembered” event that is continuously created and recreated throughout the years.

## V. CONCLUSION

Winfield, I have discovered, is an evolving cultural object; campers appropriate an enormous amount of time and energy creating and recreating the festival each year. While my overall focus has been on the cultural object and its reception, it is worth returning to the social context in which it takes place. If the “real world” represents work and responsibility, the festival, situated in a leisure context, allows individuals to relax, play, and freely express themselves through festival, music, and ritual. The “rootedness” Solli (2006) refers to *is* achievable at Winfield and as Gardner (2004) suggests, festivals *do* allow participants to “perform their ‘real’ selves through perceivably more authentic performances of identity” and “symbolic breaks” from “real life” (p. 12). And as Gvion (2009:53) posits, personal and collective identities *are* connected through leisure, where personal meanings become instilled in cultural practices.

Consistent with Gardner (2004), I too found that individuals create and attend festivals to “enact their longings for place, community, and “authentic” personal identity” (p. 7). Indeed, Winfield looks and feels like the reverse of contemporary society in some ways. For example, there is absolutely no sense of time. The only exceptions to this are when one wants to see a performance on a stage, watch a competition, take place in a work shop (all of which have scheduled times), or when campers eat loosely scheduled meals, like in Shoes Camp. The only other way to tell time at the festival (unless one has retained their time piece; however, most attendees don’t have one) is by a drastic change in temperature signaling night fall, or when one suddenly realizes its dark outside. Otherwise, the joke is that we are all on “Winfield time.” Also, other than shared understandings that represent mostly humorous aspects of approved festival behavior (e.g., the “Ten Jammandments” or becoming wildly drunk) attendees are mostly free to fill their time how they please. Winfield positively echoes with laughter and frivolity. The atmosphere is *care free*, feelings many individuals, including myself, haven’t felt since the follies of childhood. Interestingly, Baudrillard (2004) suggests that

The guiding model for free time is the only one experienced up to that point: the model of childhood. But there is confusion here between the childhood experience of freedom in play and the nostalgia for a stage of social development prior to the division of labour. In each of these cases, because the totality and spontaneity leisure seeks to restore come into being in a social time marked essentially by the modern division of labour, they take the objective form of escape and *irresponsibility* [original emphasis]. (P. 155)

Winfield is affectionately called “band camp for grown-ups” or “pickers’ paradise” because it is fun, and as a site for “play,” perhaps Winfield is reminiscent of childhood. The “Band Scramble” is particularly illustrative of the tendency of playful rituals to influence and mimic childish behaviors at the festival. Vocabularies

participants employ highlight the youthful nature of many of the traditions and rituals that take place at Winfield. As Harriet Martineau explained, “Leisure, some degree of it, is necessary to the health of every man’s spirit. Not only intellectual production, but peace of mind can’t flourish without it” (Quoted in Lengermann et al. 1998:39). Similarly, Mitchell (1988) suggests that “Society without play grows stilted and stunted” (p. 57). Following this desire for leisure, attendees create a “place” to “enjoy their kind of music and briefly live the lifestyle associated with it with little concern for the expectations of others” (Bennett et al. 2004:9-10).

Because Winfield is, in important ways, a “symbolic break” from contemporary society, this study directs us to consider culture in general and the never ending search for meaning and perceived authenticity, or what Turner (1969:15) describes as “the perfect expressive form [of]...experience.” Festival becomes a site for such expression, resulting in “liminality” and temporary anti-structure. Turner (1982) writes,

When implicit rules begin to appear which limit the possible combination of factors to certain conventional patterns, designs, or configurations, then, I think, we are seeing the intrusion of normative social structure into what is potentially and in principle a free and experimental region of culture, a region where not only new elements but also new combinatory rules may be introduced.... This capacity for variation and experiment becomes more clearly dominant in societies in which *leisure* is sharply demarcated from *work*, and especially in all societies which have been shaped by the Industrial Revolution. (P.29)

Social hierarchies are dissolved in a place “betwixt and between” the perceived “real world” and the festival world. What’s important in terms of cultural studies, however, is the cultural environment that “limits” creative expression, and as a result, inspires such “variation and experiment.” Schudson (1989) reminds us that the power of a cultural object “is a property not only of the object’s content or nature and the audience’s interest in it but of the position of the object in the cultural tradition of the society the audience is

a part of” (p. 169). In other words, Winfield or “Pickers’ Paradise” as it is often called, cannot be extracted from its context. For those who attend year after year, the festival may come to represent a response to a society seemingly void of free time, one that offers the opportunity for creative play and silliness and becomes all the more meaningful over time. This is not to claim that individuals can’t find and experience these relationships, opportunities, and emotions in their everyday routines, but as Gardner (2004) suggests, this degree of connectivity may now be in short supply, rendering the festival a favored alternative to “home.”

#### **A. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

As with most ethnographies, findings from this research are not generalizable to other settings outside of the Walnut Valley Festival, although this was not my aim. Music festivals do appear to share many of the same characteristics, but previous research reveals that each festival shares its own unique sets of traditions and rituals that are specific to that particular setting. Some researcher’s may view my use of auto-ethnographic reflection (Ellis 2001) within this study as introducing researcher bias or the loss of objectivity. If so, I am guilty as charged; through immersion into this social world, their stories became my stories over time.

Another possible limitation of this study is that half of my interviews were conducted with members of Comfortable Shoes Camp, and may not be representative of the experiences of all attendees, although the majority of my interviewees outside of Shoes Camp shared similar feelings about the festival. On a similar note, two studies could be done on Winfield: one on the Pecan Grove and one on the Walnut Grove. There is little doubt that participants experience the festival differently based on which

campground they reside in. Although I briefly discuss aspects of the Walnut Grove, most of this study took place in the Pecan Grove and the majority of my interviewees camped in the Pecan Grove. Also, this is where I camped for both years at the festival, and as a result, much of this research is limited to the festival as it is experienced by Pecan Grovers. It would also be useful to examine these festival performances as they are experienced by participants who stay for much shorter periods of time (like locals, for example, who come to see performances on the main stages and then return home directly afterwards), as their experiences are certain to differ significantly.

I also did not include in this research discussions of race, class, or gender, all of which could have an effect on how participants experience the festival. As a researcher, I observed that the vast majority of participants were white and most musicians were white males, something that Gardner (2004) also notes in his study of various bluegrass festivals. I also observed that many women who weren't musicians accompanied their spouses who were musicians. It could be that this influences how the festival is experienced for men and women, pointing to important differences in interpreted meaning. More interviews with non-musicians might provide insight into other aspects of the festival that I was not privy to, although almost all of my non-musician interviewees agree with musicians that the significant draw of the festival is music and community. Comparisons of this festival with purely "bluegrass" festivals may glean important lifestyle differences, such as the absence of night life activities and alcohol consumption. Comparisons of other types of festivals would be insightful as it may speak to subcultural differences among a variety of festival cultures. Because culture serves as a lamp as well as a mirror, it would follow that different sub-cultures would



create various “places” as a response to specific cultural concerns. Winfield is but one of these places.

Another interesting study would involve the comparison between “musicians’ festivals” and music festivals. After attending both “musicians’ festivals” as well as music festivals (where music is not a participation sport), I can safely say that the experience is drastically different depending on which kind of festival one attends. It is truly an entirely different world, especially for musicians. This opens up a host of other questions: how is the experience emotionally translated differently for musicians versus non-musicians? How does the absence of musical participation effect the festival community and what, then, is the draw of the festival when one takes out the variable of playing music?

If the above theorists who study culture are correct in asserting that cultural creation does occur at the micro level in situated social contexts, and that culture has a certain degree of efficacy, is capable of being created as well as received, and *can* and *should* be studied, then an important component to cultural studies should include evidence of the emotionality of cultural performances. While I did not set out to discover affective nostalgia, it appears that affect, group emotion, and ritual serve as a bonding agent, or the connective tissue, for tight knit communities such as Winfield.

Research on group emotions remind us that groups “are emotional entities,” (Barsade and Gibson 2010:81), and that “affective influences abound in groups” (Kelly and Barsade 2001:99). Moreover, “emotional heat” is created when individuals bring their personal emotions together and as a result, emotion becomes group oriented “beyond the tendencies of group members” (Barsade and Gibson 2010:82). They define

group emotions as having a variety of characteristics, such as “powerful forces that dramatically shape individuals emotional response,” or “feelings and expressions,” and they also suggest that group emotions serve as an “interpersonal glue” (p. 81). Affective nostalgia may be akin to “emotional heat” in that participants often freely admit to heightened sense of emotion during musical ritual. In bringing emotion back into the sociology of culture, we better understand how communities create intense feelings of solidarity, enforce social norms, develop a sense of moving forward together, and are deeply affected through participation in group life (Barsade and Gibson 2010). This is something that should be considered for future researchers.

In conclusion, this study opens up seemingly endless opportunities for future research. Although I’ve briefly discussed contemporary issues surrounding things like group emotion, affective nostalgia, and leisure time, how these relate to culture in a broader sense is a question worthy of investigation. Thus festival participants in different cultural environments may create and experience festivals differently. In this way, a comparative case study among various different festivals may assist in shedding light on important cultural factors that appear relatively consistent across social boundaries. For example, what do the Walnut Valley Festival and The Burning Man Festival have in common? How and why are they different? Do all festivals provide affective ties such as observed here? Do they serve as an escape or “symbolic break?” If this is true, then what are people escaping from? Or better yet, what are they moving toward?

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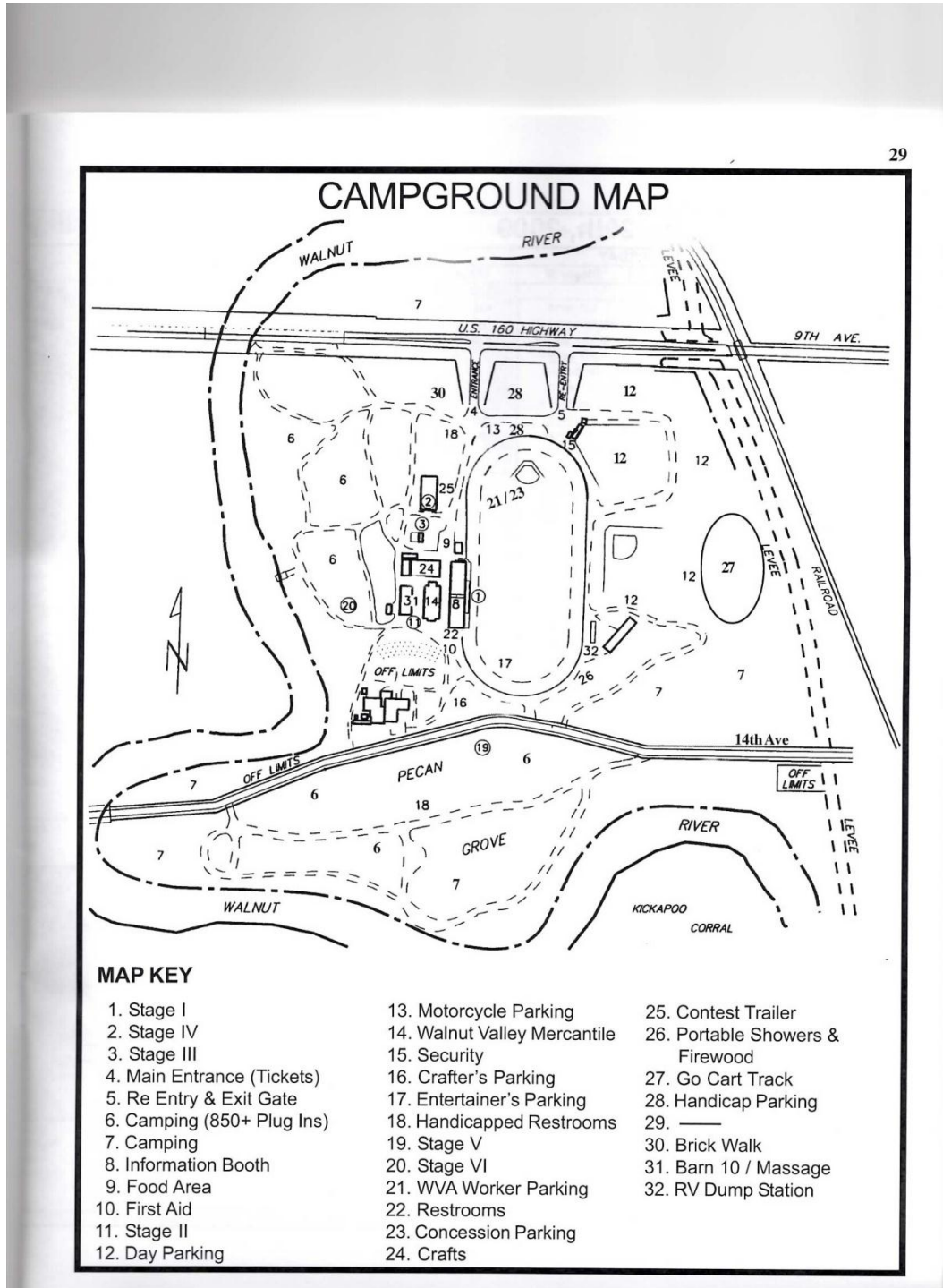
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**VII. APPENDICES**

**A. MAP OF FESTIVAL GROUNDS (Walnut Valley Festival Booklet 2009:10)**



## **B. OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW GUIDE**

It is worthy of noting that although I did adhere to the open-ended interview guide listed below (i.e., I asked all attendees the same interview questions), due to the “conversation style” nature of my interviews, these questions were not asked in any particular order (with the exception of number one, which was always the first question), but instead, were interjected when appropriate, so as not to interrupt the flow of the friendly conversation. Furthermore, I asked many questions pertaining to specific interviewees that were not included in my interview guide, but were brought up in response to something interesting an interviewee said. For example, when interviewing Randy and Sharon, I asked questions like, “How long have you been giving out Stage Five Picks? Randy, how long have you owned this truck and how did you come to turn it into a stage? Oh, you have to sign up for Stage Five – why? How did that get started?)

1. How long have you been coming to Winfield?
2. Why do you continue to come to Winfield? Or, what draws you to the festival each year?
3. Are you a musician?

(If so) a. What instrument(s) do you play?

- b. How long have you been playing and how did you learn to play?
- c. Do you participate in “picking parties” or “jam sessions” outside of Winfield? If so, how often?

(If not) a. Many attendees I’ve talked to come to Winfield to play music; why do you still come to Winfield if you are not a musician?

- b. If you aren’t playing music all the time, how do you fill your time?



- c. Do you attend “picking parties” or “jams” outside of the festival to listen to music?
4. Do you think that Winfield, as an experience, is different between musicians and non-musicians? If so, in what ways does the experience differ?
5. What do you think it is about music that draws people together in environments like Winfield? Why do you love music, personally?
6. What is your favorite Winfield tradition? Why is this particular tradition your favorite?
7. Do you ever go up to the main stages to watch the big names in bluegrass perform? Why or why not?
8. Do you participate in other festivities that the Walnut Valley Festival hosts every year, such as the craft fair, contests, or food vendors? If so, which ones and why?
9. Do you collect and/or buy souvenirs or memorabilia at Winfield each year? If so, what do you collect and/or buy?
10. Do you think that there is a difference between the way the festival is experienced in the Pecan Grove compared to the Walnut Grove? If so, what’s different about the two groves and why have you chosen to camp in one grove over the other?
11. How did your particular camp get started?
12. (For those who have created and continue to host specific Winfield rituals such as the scramble, parade, Stage Five, comedy jam, Shoes camp meals, and chick pick)
  - a. How did this tradition get started?
  - b. Why did this tradition get started?
  - c. How long has the tradition been going on?

- d. What is it about this tradition, do you think, that keep's people participating every year?
- 13. How did you become a member of the campsite you are a part of? (For example, "How did you get hooked up with Comfortable Shoes Camp for the first time?")
- 14. Do you have any family that comes to Winfield with you every year? How long have they been coming? Are they musicians?
- 15. What is your absolute favorite Winfield memory? Why is it your favorite?
- 16. (For Virgins)What has your virgin year been like? Do you have virgin duties? If so, what do they include?
- 17. (For Veterans) Do you recall your virgin year? Did you have any virgin duties? If so, what did they include?
- 18. Do you know of anybody that learned to play an instrument at Winfield?
- 19. What are some shared understandings or unspoken rules at the festival?

## C. LIST OF APPLIED CODES

### A. Cultural Performance – Turner

1. *Perceptual core of more intense emotions than in routine life.*

Such as crying, extreme happiness, becoming observably emotional, or recalling strong past emotions verbally. This is also connected with any clear, verbal differentiation between “festival life” and “real life,” as much as these perceived differences relate to participants’ emotional experience in these two spheres (i.e., I’m the happiest when I’m at Winfield, or, I’ve never been to a Chick Pick where I didn’t cry the whole time).

2. *Clear evocation of past experiences.*

Stories (“Remember when...,” or “Back in the day...,”) or anything that represents the interviewee verbally recalling the past in one way or another.

3. *Revival of feelings associated with past events of symbolic or emotional importance.*

This dimension is a synthesis of number one and number two listed above; any observable evocation of the past that elicits an emotional response (i.e., when attendees become observably emotional, or verbally recall a powerful moment that is connected to something symbolic for them, like a potent ritual at Winfield, or a particularly powerful “jam.”)

4. *Generation of meaning by linking past and present*

Talk of festivals past, what's changed and why; usually prominent in stories that explain why things are different now, or why they have decided to do things differently, and how this has subsequently worked to make their festival experience more meaningful (for example, moving from the Walnut Grove to the Pecan Grove, or "I used to go to the stages more than I do now, because..."). This is also connected with dimension two listed above.

5. *Experience is completed when expressed and communicated in a way that the audience develops an understanding of the performance.*

Because Winfield is situated in a specific context where attendees create and maintain a shared definition of the situation and share experience together over the years, there is some consensus about what Winfield *means* to people, something I have attempted to uncover in this study (i.e., understanding the festival as a time for "leisure," "play," "music," "community," an "escape," etc). In this way, the audiences understanding of the cultural performance has been presented as recurring themes throughout chapter four.

B. Cultural Efficacy – Schudson

For veterans that have been attending the festival for 20 consecutive years or more, it becomes quickly apparent that the festival is retrievable, and carries rhetorical force, resonance, and resolution – oftentimes, I applied all dimensions (with the exception of institutional retention) to veterans who have attended the festival for 20

years or more as a way to check and see if these dimensions were indeed prevalent throughout the interview, and they always were.

1. *Retrievability - the accessibility of the cultural object to participants*

Geographic retrievability (how close or far one is geographically to the festival), monetary retrievability (if the festival is affordable), cognitive retrievability (how memorable the festival is to participants).

2. *Rhetorical Force - that which makes the cultural object powerful and memorable*

This is related to Turner's "moments of experience" mentioned above. This dimension includes anything about the festival that an attendee expressed as meaningful, emotional, powerful, or alluring.

3. *Resonance - the cultural object's ability to "resonate" within the lives of participants*

This is also related to Turner's "moments of experience" as well as "rhetorical force." It also includes the degree to which aspects of the festival are included in everyday life, such as "pickin' parties," "jams," playing in a band, or hosting mini Winfield's throughout the year for friends and family.

4. *Institutional Retention - the degree to which a cultural object is associated with sanctions*

This dimension is slightly less applicable, but includes guilty emotions for not being able to attend the festival, the Winfield Police Force, the Walnut

Valley Festival Staff, and informal rules at the festival, like stealing campsites.

4. *Resolution - the ability of a cultural object to effect the future actions of participants.*

This dimension includes planning to come back to Winfield, continuing to come back to Winfield, purchasing festival memorabilia, hosting “pickin’ parties,” “jams,” or mini Winfield’s, learning to play new songs or honing skills to display at the festival, participating in the rituals and traditions at the festival each year, or participating in the “official” festival such as the craft fair and competitions.

#### C. Idioculture – Fine

Many of Fine’s dimensions speak for themselves; a cultural object must be,

1. *Known (by members of the group)*
2. *Usable (can be mentioned and understood within the group)*
3. *Functional (congruent with goals and needs of group members)*
4. *Appropriate (consistent with patterns of interaction)*
5. *Triggered (should produce some sort of response within the group)*

#### D. Affective Nostalgia

This was coded through a combination of Turner’s “moments of experience” (listed above), observed emotionality during musical ritual, difficulty describing the powerful properties of music, or verbally recalling a past emotional experience involving music (i.e., through nostalgic narratives).

#### E. Shared Understandings/Definition of the Situation

These were usually passed down through stories that I was told or that I overheard, or when I would specifically ask “what are some shared understandings at the festival?” or “what are some unspoken rules?” I recorded responses I heard regularly in my fieldnotes, keeping a list of the most popular, and if I heard the same thing from several different people, then I understood it to represent shared knowledge.

#### F. Play

This includes observed playfulness (like the band scramble) or the actual use of the word “play,” “fun,” or a comparison to something playful, like Mardi Gras for example.

#### G. “Symbolic Break” or “Escape from Modernity” – Gardner

This includes anything that spoke to Gardner’s work – the festival as “home,” “spiritual” properties of festival, festival life versus “real life,” camp site construction and perceived authenticity, and an emphasis on simplicity, rurality, kinship, and community.

#### D. EXAMPLES OF CODING AND MEMO WRITING

(Note: this excerpt begins on page two of Barb's interview. Text in italics represent both coding and memo writing.)

**Barb** – Florence will be the first person to tell you that she is not a cook, but if I say chop these potatoes, if I do one for her, she can copy anything and she's real willing to do that. Today Rachel<sup>1</sup> was feeling burned out so Florence came in and chopped all the carrots and potatoes and celery for her<sup>2</sup>. But there is always somebody who is willing to come in and chop<sup>3</sup>, otherwise it would just take too long.

1. *Barb and Rachel as co- leaders of the kitchen – Known, Usable, Functional, Appropriate, and Triggered by and for shoes campers. Meals (as well as Barb and Rachel's involvement) also carries rhetorical force (i.e., it makes shoes camp powerful to campers as well as memorable - formal night and dinner/food memories), resonance (i.e. enjoying meal time together), resolution (people bringing food from home/gardens), and possibly institutional retention, as camp members are expected to help with the process. Dinner may also represent shared understandings (dinner is at 7, bring your own utensils, help with dishes, etc). Mealtime also represents an important ritual in terms of the camp coming together to eat.*
2. *Shared Understandings – Help each other out when needed.*
3. *Community – “It takes a village!”*

**MC** – How much time do you think you spend in the kitchen each day preparing all this food for so many people?



**Barb** – Well, Dan does breakfast<sup>4</sup> so... Well like today I finished my toenails<sup>5</sup> and I had planned on doing Mexican food tonight and for some reason I thought it was like noon and so I come over here and look at the clock and it's three o'clock<sup>6</sup>. And I'm going well I can't cook beans today!

4. *Dan's breakfast is known, usable, functional, appropriate, and triggered for and by shoes camp. Like dinner, breakfast plays a large role in the camp coming together for meals. It carries a certain degree of resolution (i.e., breakfast has to be planned) and for some, meal time together signifies rhetorical force, or in other words, sharing meals together in camp may make shoes camp all the more meaningful for participants. Camp meals may also represent a type of creativity that is prevalent at the festival (i.e., you got to get creative when cooking for 100 people).*
5. *Definitely leisure – this day, Sally posted up under the large tree and did all the ladies toenails right next to a large picking circle. I think this also represents the creative and artistic nature of the group – possibly self expression?*
6. *“Winfield time” – illustrates the notion of losing track of time. The notion of “Winfield time” echoes Gardner's work surrounding feelings of escape and Samdahl's work on leisure – reduced role constraint. “Winfield time” carries with it a perceptual core of more intense emotions than in routine life, and a clear evocation of past experiences (as with Barb's story about dinner). “Winfield time” as a saying, is widely known, usable, appropriate, and triggered and is a part of the definition of the situation at the festival. Is this related to the notion of flow, perhaps? How is this type of flow different for non-musicians, as flow*

*includes the use of skill (Barb's Winfield time vs. David's Winfield time?) How might this relate to Turner's spontaneous communitas?*

**MC** – Winfield time.

**Barb** - So I'm going okay what can I fix in a hurry here, you know, so I went to the store and got four arm roasts, because it was cheaper than buying stew meat, and cut all that up and they helped chop and then you just throw it all in the pot, you know, cook it.

**MC** – Not a rough night...

**Barb** – Stew is an easy night, you know. It's not a big deal at all.

**MC** – Do you normally buy most of the food when you get here or do people donate?

**Barb** – We used to try to bring it with us but there is so much other stuff to carry. I bring all the basics<sup>7</sup>; I bring all the herbs and spices and usually olive oil and usually salad dressings. Things that I just don't feel like I can buy here easily, you know, things that would be... You know how expensive it is if you are buying a little bottle of oregano or...but at home I order all that by the pound because I belong to an herb co-op so I try to bring all the spices and herbs that we are going to use with me so that we don't have that expense.

*7. Known – Barb brings certain items every year. Definitely functional and appropriate. It may trigger reaction for some group members, especially those who participate heavily in the kitchen. This also carries with it resolution, in that Barb plans to bring certain items.*

**MC** – Right, right. I've noticed that some people bring a bunch of stuff from their garden.

**Barb** – And people do bring things from their garden, and you know, like yesterday<sup>8</sup> Amber had sent that bushel of black eyed peas with us so everybody sat around and shelled those<sup>9</sup> and it's always nicer to have fresh garden stuff then to go buy it so when we can do that we do it. It hasn't been a really good garden year for us so we didn't have much to contribute this year.

8. *Clear evocation of past experiences...*

9. *Community contribution. Camp members help each other – this is most definitely understood among camp members. It is known, usable, functional, appropriate and triggered. It carries with it resolution, institutional retention (in a way – people start talking if a camper hasn't helped at all), resonance, and rhetorical force. The notion of “it takes a village”, and the emphasis on helping each other out is HUGE.*

**MC** – Was it Dan and Lizzy who brought the mushrooms?

**Barb** – Dan and Lizzy brought the mushrooms, which was a lot. We are still trying to plan<sup>10</sup> meals around all those mushrooms.

10. *Resolution – effect future actions*

**MC** – What about all the equipment? Do you guys just come together...

**Barb** – I usually bring the kitchen just because...since Garth and I do events at home<sup>11</sup>, you know, I've got all those huge pots and things that it takes to cook for one hundred people so that usually falls on me to bring, and Dan brings his grills and the refrigerator and the big oven, but as far as just the pots and pans and silverware and plates... We've been trying over the years to get everyone to be responsible for bringing their own plates

and cups and bowls<sup>12</sup> but, you know, every year there are new people in camp<sup>13</sup> so it's kind of a hard...it's a hard thing to...so we always have extra. We always keep extra.

**MC** – And then the camp kind of comes together for clean up?

*11. Pickin' parties – might represent resonance in that aspects of the festival are incorporated into everyday life.*

*12. Shared understanding?*

*13. Camp grows larger and larger.*

**Barb** – The camp comes together for clean up, and most people are really responsible about helping and making sure that they donate money<sup>14</sup>, and once in a while...Do you remember last year when the rainbow guy came into camp<sup>15</sup>?

*14. Representative of community; it is also understood that if you are eating shoes camp food, you need to donate some money. This is known, usable, functional, appropriate, and triggered. I also think this carries with it a certain form of institutional retention – but not sanctions, necessarily. Definitely a shared understanding. This can also be representative of community in that camp members will chip in for other camp members when they fall short on money, like Mama Cass did for Paula.*

*15. Clear evocation of past experiences...*

**MC** – Dolphin.

**Barb** – Dolphin. And he opened this huge can of pinto beans and wanted to put it in my chicken soup he said you don't mind if I just dump this in the soup do you<sup>16</sup>? And I said I will kill you if you pour that in my soup<sup>17</sup>

16. *Dolphin – the notorious interloper of 2009. This represents a clear evocation of past experiences. Dolphin is also known, usable, and an illustration of what is not functional, not appropriate, but most certainly triggered. Possibly a certain degree of institutional retention (in a different form). Dolphin represents somebody that was not welcome with open arms into the community. He also represents someone who misinterpreted the definition of the situation by being excessively obnoxious – he was not familiar with the “idioculture” of shoes camp. He is typically presented in narratives of what not to do.*

17. *Storytelling – linking of past and present through narrative. Revival of feelings associated with past events (although negative feelings) and a certain degree of institutional retention. This is a good example of how some shared understandings are passed down through narrative – in this case, humorous narratives.*

**MC** – Keep your pinto beans out of my soup!

**Barb** – Keep your pinto beans to yourself. And he was real taken aback by that I know. He was obviously not used to an organized kitchen.

**MC** – Well you definitely have a system going. I guess you have to keep so many people fed.

**Barb** – Well you do, you do, but it’s always worked out, and yes there will always be years when some people don’t pay or can’t pay, but most of the time they come and tell you that and do extra kitchen duties and that’s okay, you know, we always manage. It’s not what a few people do, it’s what everybody does, you know, that makes it work. If a few people can’t contribute this year, they will next year, and we just move right along<sup>18</sup>.

18. *Everyone contributes. Sense of community. See comment 9.*

**Mc** – Move on down the road.

**Barb** – Yeah... Communal living<sup>19</sup> is...it's really kind of a new thought for Garth and I because being children of the sixties, you know, it was the big thing<sup>20</sup> and we were never into that, you know. I didn't want to share my space or my husband or any of those things that they were all sharing, but now as I get older, it's really nice to, especially in our community, to kind of live communally, because, you know, you only have to have one tractor, you only have to have one tiller, you need one person with a cow, somebody with chickens, and it just helps break up all the work, you know. It allows for everyone to be able to take a vacation and we're just fortunate that we have two kids that live around<sup>21</sup> us so that we can all share the....it's....see I understand now why communal living is such a luxury, it really helps.

19. *Communal living as a positive, luxurious experience; the importance of community in helping to get things done. Possibly represents some of Gardner's work (i.e. getting back to simplicity, possibly authenticity, the land, kinship). Getting away from rapid modernization and all that comes with it...Sandy mentions the notion of harvest time and its relationship to the time of year and location of Winfield. The notion of communal living outside of Winfield represents resonance, rhetorical force, and resolution.*

20. *Sandy mentions this same thing when she talks about "nostalgia" and the feelings of community she would "have liked to have had." See interview with Sandy.*

21. *The importance of kinship relations...Possibly represents Gardner. Barb's kids also come to Winfield when they are able, and I believe most of them are musicians – two of them certainly are.*

**MC** – Yeah, and that's here and I think it's a really special experience, and I think that the kitchen is a really large part of this community; it brings everyone together...

**Barb** – Well, it does... There's just something about eating together, and it's the saddest part of our society right now is that families don't eat together. And I don't know, hopefully some of the young people in this camp will take that home with them, and realize how important it was for everyone to eat together and share the day together<sup>22</sup>.

22. *Eating together brings people together. This resonates with Gardner's work – getting back to family and simplicity. Eating together as sacred perhaps? Is nostalgia at play here?*

**MC** – My family always did.

**Barb** – We always did too<sup>23</sup>.

23. *This appears nostalgic – connecting the past and present perhaps – or at least using the past to make sense out of the present?*

**MC** – Well, and you know, everyone is so busy.

**Barb** – Everyone is so busy and their hours are all different, and it's become so hard<sup>24</sup>.

24. *Gardner – “the problem with kids today.....” Society today makes it difficult for people to enjoy time with their family. This may also speak to Samdahl's work on leisure – at Winfield and in shoes camp, we have the time to eat together, something hard to come by regularly.*

**MC** – The dinner table is a good place to sit around and catch up and talk about things.

**Barb** – It is. It's really a good place to sit around and catch up.

**MC** – Well, so you're not a musician.

**Barb** – I'm not a musician<sup>25</sup>.

*25. Barb is a non-musician (married to a musician, Garth), with musician's for children.*

**MC** – How did you escape that?



**E. SHOES CAMP FAMILY**

