

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Kristin Leigh Morgan Pickering for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology presented on August 30, 2002.

Title: An Anthropological Response to the Call for Cultural Midwives Based on Three Case Studies of Communities.

Redacted for Privacy

Abstract Approved

Courtland L. Smith

The ecological crisis, recognized by scientists as well as an increasing number of lay people urges a response from a variety of disciplines. The consideration of sustainability requires the help of a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, which can contribute an ability to identify cultural patterns that impede cultural change towards sustainability, skills to describe culturally appropriate responses to situations, and capabilities to cultivate changes in lifestyles as aspired to by the group. I tell the story of three groups focused on sustainable communities. I narrate these with a postmodern approach. In the case studies, I combined techniques from applied anthropology (rapid appraisal, participant observation, focus groups, and interviews) with postmodern techniques (consideration of context, shared authority, multi-vocality, and co-creative ethnography).

This study explores the effectiveness of facilitating changes through the use of anthropology and empowering participants so they can continue to make changes. The study also explores the effectiveness of combining applied and postmodern techniques. One example of this, and the hallmark of the project, is the photographic, co-creative ethnography, which, representing the work of one local group, invited imagined future sustainable lifestyles, and continued to build community bonds between participants. The collaborative ethnography engaged individuals in the ethnographic process, inviting them to contribute their voices and images.

In the case studies, I explored questions such as what are cultural obstacles to living a sustainable lifestyle, what specific cultural strengths can foster an ecological identity, and what can applied anthropology offer non-governmental organizations working on similar topics? I also explore emic definitions of what is the community, what are its needs, and what is sustainability? Further,

objectives include reinvigorating community bonds, testing the assumption that public participation in the process is more effective than a process dictated by an outside expert, and exploring the dual role of participant and researcher. I compared the two local case studies of communities of interest in community and sustainability with a national organization working similarly towards sustainability.

After analysis of my research questions, I discuss the potential for the applied anthropologist as midwife based on my experiences with the case studies. The applied anthropologist attempts to respond to local level concerns and issues about the environment and reducing human impact, while building community. The action-oriented approach is similar to that of a midwife, which facilitates empowerment of the community involved to birth a more ecological identity. The approach has eight phases (recognition of a need, contact, dialogue, definition of needs, definition of the community, developing a plan of action, implementation, and evaluation), which provide opportunities for changes to occur in the behaviors and beliefs of the participants. The approach incorporates systems thinking to comprehend complex situations and to bring systematic approach to the process. The applied anthropologist as midwife fosters development of a sustainable community identity through the unique process.

©Copyright by Kristin Leigh Morgan Pickering
August, 30, 2002
All Rights Reserved

**An Anthropological Response to the Call for
Cultural Midwives Based on Three Case
Studies of Communities**

by
Kristin Leigh Morgan Pickering

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

**in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of**

Master of Arts

**Presented August 30, 2002
Commencement June 2003**

Master of Arts thesis of Kristin Leigh Morgan Pickering presented on August 30, 2002.

APPROVED:

Redacted for Privacy

Major Professor, representing Applied Anthropology

Redacted for Privacy

J. M.
Chair of the Department of Anthropology

Redacted for Privacy

J. M.
Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Redacted for Privacy

Kristin Leigh Morgan Pickering
Kristin Leigh Morgan Pickering, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the support of my husband Andy, my two daughters, Althea and Inanna. The help from my extended family gave me time for this work. To a patient advisor, Professor Court Smith, I say thank you for encouraging me to birth my thesis at a comfortable pace, and allowing me to focus on my family during the labor. I appreciate Professor William's challenge to explore accurately new realms of thinking. Finally, I continue to feel inspired by Joanna Macy's work, and cultural midwives in any form.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER ONE. MOVING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE CULTURES	1
CHAPTER TWO. THEORY OF MY APPROACH	11
THE APPROACH	11
THEORIES REGARDING THE NATURE OF REALITY AND INTENTIONAL CHANGE	13
ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY AND THEMES	16
CHAPTER THREE. METHODOLOGY OF MY APPROACH	25
CHAPTER FOUR, THE CASE STUDIES	33
INTRODUCTION	33
NORTHWEST EARTH INSTITUTE	33
Background	33
Evaluation	36
Findings	36
COMMUNITY FROM WITHIN GROUP	40
Background	40
Evaluation	45
Findings	48
LUNAISSANCE SUSTAINABILITY CIRCLE	52
Background	52
Evaluation	58
Co-creative Ethnography	62
Findings	75
Focus on Indicators	79
Systems	88
CHAPTER FIVE, ANALYSIS	103
CONTRAST WITH GLOBAL ACTION PLAN'S ECOTEAMS	103
Background	103
Evaluation	111
Findings	112
QUESTIONS	118
Effectiveness of the Applied and Postmodern Techniques Combined	118
Role of Anthropologist	119
Role Of Participants As Change Agents	121

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Obstacles to Change	122
Support of the Groups	123
The Decline of the Groups	123
Public Participation	125
What The Applied Anthropologist Could Offer GAP and NWEI	126
THEMES COMPARED AND CONTRASTED	128
CHAPTER SIX, DISCUSSION OF ANTHROPOLOGIST AS MIDWIFE	129
CHAPTER SEVEN, CONCLUSION	152
REFERENCES CITED	154
APPENDICES	160
A Invitation Letter for Community From Within	161
B Building Community From Within Vision Statement	162
C Creating Your Own Community From Within Group	163
D New Moon Sustainability Group Ideas List	165
E March Report to the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle	166
F The Barter Network	167
G Barter Currency and Buy Less Cards	168
H Indicators, the Categories	169
I Interviews with Community From Within Group	170
J Interviews with Lunaissance Sustainability Circle	174

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. The only clothesline in the neighborhood	65
2. Daughter's carpool	65
3. Bike commuter	66
4. Carpooling	66
5. Barter exchange	67
6. At the Ecovillage in Poland	67
7. Walking to School	68
8. Family as symbol of sustainability	68
9. Laundry detergents	69
10. Walking	69
11. Recycling bins	70
12. Canceling junk mail	71
13. Installing low flow faucet	71
14. Installing low flow shower head	72
15. Disposing of high flow shower head	72
16. Buying local produce from CSA	73
17. Composting	73
18. The waste our future generations face	74
19. The leverage point of time	94
20. Systems drawing of the approach	132

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR CULTURAL MIDWIVES BASED ON THREE CASE STUDIES OF COMMUNITIES

CHAPTER ONE MOVING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE CULTURES

Many scientists agree that negative human impact on the environment is reversible in some situations if people change their behaviors. The Union of Concerned Scientists states:

Scientists have become increasingly concerned over the rapid decline of the earth's biodiversity—the erosion of our natural wealth. Extinction is a natural process, but biologists estimate that human activities have increased the rate of extinction on earth one hundred times or more. Both species and natural habitats are threatened by habitat destruction, such as clear-cutting, and by pollution, invasive species, overexploitation, and climate change (<http://www.ucsusa.org/environment/biodiversity.html>).

People have an opportunity to slow the damage so that some ecological systems can reestablish and regenerate. Some people understand this and indicate they are willing, but are having difficulty altering behaviors and the corresponding beliefs that support those behaviors. The beliefs are culturally based, such as the concepts of convenience, that more is better, that time is money, and that Americans are consumers.

A trend is developing in which educated, upper middle class Americans with liberal values who emphasize environmental concerns indicate they want to decrease their impact on the environment. I base this on self-assessment corroborated by anthropological and sociological research on observed sets of behaviors (Ray and Anderson 2000). Since the end of the twentieth century,

Americans have been forming environmental discussion groups. The voluntary simplicity movement was at the leading edge of that trend. Since then groups such as Global Action Plan (GAP) and Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) began their efforts to foster the spread of discussion groups in 1989 and 1993 respectively. GAP states that as of “1997, over 40,000 people have participated in GAP’s adult and youth programs” (Gershon 1997:105). NWEI says, “as of May 2000, the discussion courses have been offered in 140 communities in 39 states” (Roy and Roy 2000:12). Middle class Americans feel limited and ensnared in the momentum of a culturally prescribed lifestyle. The preferences for actions with less environmental impact arise from extensive reading about environmental degradation, combined with a subculture of thrift and responsibility and an ethic absorbed from Native American cultures (the preservation of resources for the next seven generations). The problem emerging involves how to act upon that knowledge and those beliefs. The related questions include why do people find it difficult to make their intended changes and what discussion groups can provide people in terms of fostering change in beliefs and behaviors. I take these questions a step farther with my research and ask: How can anthropology help?

This thesis examines how communities of interest can come together to discuss and develop a more sustainable or ecological identity. This research also considers how these communities can act on their values and beliefs in ways that minimize their impact on the environment. This project follows three case studies in my personal quest for sustainable communities. Using anthropological techniques, I explore how people want to change their lifestyle, what prevents people from changing their behaviors to the extent they intend (even after their beliefs seem to have shifted), and how local groups support those individual efforts. I share the story of those case studies through a narrative and photographic, co-creative ethnography.

Afterwards, I consider how anthropology can actively help. A midwife attending to the labor of a woman birthing a child utilizes the skills of observation, encouragement, knowledge, and experience with past labors regarding when to rest, when to push, when to take emergency action.

(The first time I encountered the concept of cultural midwife was in the writing of Robert Gilman [1985]. I elaborated on his analogy). A woman begins with an egg, her egg is fertilized, and then the woman requests the midwife to become a partner in the process from the time she is sought out through the postpartum period. Similarly, a participant in groups such as the local ones I studied (Community From Within and Lunaissance Sustainability Circle) already has the seed (or egg) of interest in the subject of sustainability and change, which may have arisen from knowledge gained by reading periodicals or books. The person likely fertilized this egg with more reading, listening, or dialogue. The support groups assist the birth of the participant's personal intentions. In my research I consider how a cultural midwife can facilitate a healthy birth from the community's point of view.

I anticipate that when people feel beyond their emotional capacity, or levels of knowledge and skill, they then seek out a framework-- a support group like the aforementioned ones or a professional—to assist them in proceeding with the fertilized egg. This is where the cultural midwife may have a unique opportunity. It is not only an anthropologist who can offer these services (other professionals have necessary or complementary skills), but in my research I focus on primarily anthropology because of its expertise with culture.

Theoretically, the project is unique because I develop this process of cultural midwifery as an approach to regenerate sustainable communities and ecosystems. It intends to do this by using an active anthropology, employing a variety of methodological techniques. It draws on cultural ecology and theories of social change, while being informed by the recent trends in anthropology, from postmodernism to identity studies to advocacy work. The model has the potential to generalize so that it is accessible to other groups which encourage, foster, and support groups of Americans considering and acting on environmental and human issues that people face today. A secondary intent of the model is to contribute to current methodology because I intend to conduct a co-creative, photographic ethnography in the context of the applied project. I have discussed the

situation. Next I discuss the literature regarding the situation, as well as literature I consulted as background material for me to be a more effective participant and facilitator in the groups.

My study was a six-year quest for understanding how to encourage the proliferation of more sustainable, intentional communities. These are not necessarily residential communities, but affiliations of people gathered around specific common interests. In the data chapter I narrate this story focusing on two local groups and one nonlocal group, which all revolve around the topics of sustainability and community. They formed organically through word of mouth among informal affiliations such as friends and acquaintances. The geographic domain ranged from Charlottesville, Virginia to Corvallis, Oregon. This research began in earnest in the fall of 1998 and continued to the fall of 2001; however, a brief observation of one of the groups occurred in the spring and summer 1996.

My conceptual domain was intentional cultural change related to environmental issues. Specifically, I looked at methods of change. In what way do people in discussion groups resist the homogenization of culture that is particularly destructive to the environment? This resistance described above occurred when the myth of infinite supplies of natural resources was found to be false. In the U.S., there is a growing community of interest in how to respond to a finite supply of natural resources (because the earth cannot regenerate the resources as rapidly as people are using them) with a growing population and no quick technological fixes in sight. The three groups I have been working with are focused on intentional cultural change. The participants seem motivated by knowledge that there is a finite supply of resources, that our human actions are responsible for much environmental damage, and that citizens must take some measure of responsibility to change our own behaviors.

I focus on response strategies that emphasize the local, and the concept of community. Studying localized cultural response strategies reifies them and gives voice to them as counter to external forces. It makes them available and known, if they are reproduced in accessible ways. I chose my own locale because I wanted to reinforce this in my own community.

In my research, I consulted literature regarding community, group process, sustainability, environmental anthropology, and advocacy anthropology in order to educate myself about sustainable communities. These provided background understanding. I reviewed some of the lay literature that refers to an emerging role of culture worker or cultural midwife (Gilman 1985). I read about midwifery to educate myself about how I wanted to proceed with my study, and this assisted me in developing my approach to the local groups.

I also read scientific accounts of the state of the environment. The rates of human population growth, industrialization, species extinction, and cultural homogenization exceed our capacity to comprehend their implications. After trying to educate the public of this overwhelming news, some researchers are now questioning the success of their information campaign. Has the public become desensitized to the scientific evidence, or frightened by it, or stunned with guilt? Ecopsychology explores the idea that we are, as a society, becoming numbed to bad news. I assert that a larger portion of research and action needs to be targeted to localized areas and groups of people. The lack of responsibility and respect for life processes and a deficient sense of community to support the relationship between humans and the environment must be addressed directly.

Numerous articles and authors focused on sustainability refer to this primary issue, the non-sustainable way that Americans inhabit the world, as a cultural problem. Anthropology developed the concept of culture long ago, but currently there seems to be an increased inclusion of anthropological concepts in lay literature regarding sustainability. Even young people are able to identify some of the root causes of our environmental problems. A group of high school students, called Youth for Environmental Sanity (YES!), developed a national speaking and workshop tour in which they visit schools and discuss rainforest destruction, extinction, nuclear waste, pollution and more. In one article about the group, the author describes how YES! ends its presentations “by addressing what may be the root of all these problems: the human attitude. It asks, ‘What kind of a world are we leaving for our children?’” (Thompson 1992:21). YES! may not explicitly name

culture, but it does specify the human attitude, which anthropology considers as an aspect of culture, along with behaviors and beliefs.

I see recently in lay literature explicit discussion of the concept of culture as implicated in the negative impact humans are having on their environments. One recent book, The Cultural Creatives, by Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson (sociologist and psychologist, respectively), explicitly discusses culture, but with an optimism about the potential for change. The authors describe three primary subcultures in America: the traditionals, the moderns and the cultural creatives. They assert that

since the 1960s, 26% of the adults in the United States—50 million people—have made a comprehensive shift in their worldview, values, and way of life—their culture, in short. These creative, optimistic millions are at the leading edge of several kinds of cultural change, deeply affecting not only their own lives but our larger society as well. We call them the cultural creatives... (Ray and Anderson 2000:4).

YES! is one of these. Ray and Anderson find in their research that the cultural creatives lack a sense of collective identity, which could be empowering for them to influence American culture more strongly. They suggest they draw on their collective memory, become self-aware as a subculture, and

collectively envision a positive future. A vision of the future can inspire a culture to invest in and provide for a better, more viable world...for our own children and all the children that will call forth the imagination and steadfastness necessary to build a new kind of future. And nothing reaches so deeply into our collective imagination as a story that tells the truths we need to hear (Ray and Anderson 2000:253-4).

The content of the stories may vary, but anthropologists are highly skilled at eliciting stories and finding connections or contrasts between them and can assist people in describing with their own voices their multiple visions of a positive future through stories/ethnographies.

Articles in a variety of lay periodicals, such as Plain Magazine, Talking Leaves, In Context, Yes, Wild Earth, and UTNE Reader, point to the need for a cultural shift. The lay environmental

literature of the upper middle class is calling for cultural change and culture workers to facilitate the shift to a more ecological culture. One of the shifts often recommended is towards a sense of place. Scott Sanders asserts that “one of the key problems in American society now, is people’s lack of commitment to any given place” (1993:98). He defines this lack of staying in one place as a contributing factor to our lack of responsibility and taking care of these places we inhabit on Earth. Anthropologists can assist by researching, identifying, and confirming other contributing factors to our dearth of sustainable living, as well as by identifying antidotes, such as having a homeplace.

Sanders suggests that symbols of the frontier, of our own pioneer mentality, and of a country founded by immigrants, combined with our restlessness, contribute to this lack of connection to our places. He claims that our pioneering spirit inhibits a sustainable lifestyle, while others (Jackson 1994: 10) suggest we can encourage a cultural shift by appealing to the adventurous and innovative nature of our pioneering spirit. Anthropology can help identify symbols, such as the frontier, that impede a shift to a more sustainable culture. In the following chapters, I will expand on what anthropology can offer.

In my quest for more sustainable communities, I found little information on creating intentional change. Robert Gilman in an article about the stages of change directly refers to anthropology and introduces the concept of elements of culture. He writes,

I’m using the term ‘culture’ in the anthropological sense of those patterns of learned behaviors (including all skills, technologies, institutions, and the physical artifacts that go with these) and beliefs (including myths, unconscious assumptions, values, and emotionally powerful symbols) that are shared by some distinguished group of people (1985:5).

He goes on to identify a third element--the surrounding environment, natural or social. He believes that when these three elements are mutually supportive a culture is stable. He alarmingly suggests that such stability does not exist now (a concept which could explain the instability in our environment). His next step is to describe the cultural change that would be necessary in order to

reattain a stable state. He proceeds to discuss ways to fill in the gaps of this process of revitalization.

Gilman describes three general steps in the process of revitalization: development of components of the new culture, transformation, and elaboration. First, he describes preparatory steps. These include the creation of new ways to meet basic needs, the development of components of the new culture, the functioning of components in small ways, and readiness for synthesis. Second is transformation, which often includes a dis-integration before re-integration. Third is the step of elaboration in which one of the potential futures gains workability and support. Gilman uses the metaphor of birth, and it is at this stage that the baby is born. He concludes by saying that an understanding of this process as well as a good sense of timing is necessary for the cultural midwife's success (Gilman 1985:9). Gilman's, and others', direct references to anthropology indicate an informal discourse between anthropology and the sustainability movement.

Some authors suggest the shift must specifically address beliefs, values, and behaviors. Joanna Macy identifies community and practice as ways to facilitate those changes. Concerning community she calls them base communities and describes, "just ordinary people meeting regularly in a discipline of honest searching and mutual commitment...Here neighbors or co-workers, parents or professionals organize and meet regularly to support each other in action" (1991:37). About practice she suggests,

Practice in the venerable spiritual sense of fortifying the mind and schooling its attitudes. Because for generations we have been conditioned by the mechanistic, anthropocentric assumptions of our mainstream culture, intellectual assent to an ecological vision of life is not enough to change our perceptions and behaviors. To help us disidentify from narrow notions of the self and experience our interexistence with all beings in the web of life, we turn to regular personal practices that range from meditation to the recycling of our trash" (Macy 1991:38-38).

As a deep ecologist (Devall and Sessions 1985), Macy emphasizes the spiritual aspect of working towards sustainability. The case studies, which will be described later, illustrate similar features: ordinary people meeting regularly, trying to support each other's actions, and to practice.

Anthropologists identify values and patterns. They have the tools to examine what its pleasures and goals are. So the regenerator could 1) identify what the current state of the specific cultural group is, then 2) identify what possible values, identities, and lifestyles that group wants, then 3) identify possible routes and pathways, as well as obstacles, to those goals. One author, Atkisson (1999), suggests we need to educate forerunners in a culture as to how culture changes so that they will know how to work the system, so to speak.

One way value shifts can be recognized is in the prioritizing of what is studied. In recent decades, the study of ecology has been acknowledged as significant and necessary for our contemporary world. This emphasis on ecology is made in postmodernism and is essential to some assumptions I have made in my research privileging the focus on the environment over other concerns as an essential issue of our times. Best and Kellner name several who “privilege ecology as central to postmodern science and see one of the key tasks of the new science to overcome the crippling opposition between human beings and the natural world, which is fundamental to the entire Western tradition” (1997:267). This reaching beyond the dichotomy of culture versus nature will foster the adaptation of more ecological identities and cultures.

The social sciences have been increasing their involvement with environmental situations. One anthropologist, Janet Fitchen, describes some of the primary tools of anthropology for use in the environmental movement. First, she lists the concept of culture; she treats the environmental agencies as a culture, in order to gain a better understanding about how to translate her findings to them (1988). Fitchen suggests that because of individualism, people prefer a participatory process in which locals have an active role in remediation or monitoring. Another anthropologist asserts that an anthropologist identifies “culturally appropriate words and symbols to use in promotional materials, appropriate people to use as spokespersons, and the best places to communicate with target audiences” (Bryant et al. 2001:236-242). The sustainability movement has a cultural identity that should be explored, to see how best to help those involved navigate their course. Thus, the

anthropologist does not simply do preliminary foundational research but also conducts research into how the product can be conveyed in a culturally appropriate manner.

Anthropologists can respond to the call for cultural midwives; they can play a substantial role in the cultural construction of reality. In the cases to be described, I consider that substantial role in the cultural construction of sustainable intentional communities. Next, I will discuss the theoretical background, which informed my approach in the case studies.

CHAPTER TWO THEORY OF MY APPROACH

THE APPROACH

I oriented my theoretical research around trying to understand how I wanted to work with the local groups, how to express that work, and how to motivate people to change behaviors. First, I will introduce the outline of ideas to be discussed regarding my approach of applied anthropologist as cultural midwife, including the participatory approach, imagined community, communications, psychology, education, and theories of behavioral change. Then, I reflect on the theoretical basis for this approach in cultural ecology (Steward 1955) and interpretive work in anthropology. I proceed to discuss recent, relevant themes in anthropology.

A primary assumption of my approach is that cultural change must occur both at the concrete level of behaviors and at the abstract level of attitudes and beliefs, which reinforce the behavioral changes. It is the anthropologist's duty to facilitate a group's communication about its own perceptions. With some introduction to anthropology and its methods, culture can be defined and described by the people who are the focus of the anthropologist's work. This can be used as a tool to discover what the community wants to emphasize about itself, as opposed to what it actually is. In order to accomplish this, my approach blends postmodern techniques and applied anthropology (or practice as contrasted to pure theory).

The first reference to this marriage between applied anthropology and postmodernism that I discovered was Johanssen's. Her suggestion of the collaborative ethnography invigorated my interest in using anthropological techniques to engage a participatory group of people with a common interest. I proceeded to examine postmodernism (which has been extremely inaccessible and uninterested in applied anthropology) and the applied tradition. My approach differs from traditional applied work because postmodern techniques (such as shared authority, dialogue,

community-created ethnography, and others) can alleviate some of the problems, which have been reflected on (the influence of personal biases, context, and power on the construction of a research project or authoring of an ethnography). This has been insightful, but now what Johannsen recommends is a shift towards postmodernism, since it has mainly served as a critique of texts, not as a prescription for action. I chose the latter approach in my research with the two local groups. When community interest and time allow, the applied methodology can be augmented by postmodern techniques into a process with community-guided results. This may include multi-vocality, a co-creative ethnography, shared authority, and increased attention to context.

The process and product of ethnography should be accessible and useful to the community that is the focus of ethnography, that they should be the new audience hearing the multiplicity of voices, which will encourage more dialogue, understanding, and respect. As more disciplines engage stakeholders of a situation, there grows a need for representation of multiple perspectives, which anthropologists can offer.

In my research, I propose that willing citizens intentionally construct in a group context an ecological identity in culturally specific ways. I believe the obstacles to transformation to an ecological lifestyle are primarily cultural attitudes and beliefs. Macy worked in the symbolic realm, envisioning nuclear waste sites as pilgrimage sites and guardianship as a spiritual practice, encouraging a tradition of poetry, song, rituals, and symbols connected to the issue of nuclear waste. Her efforts seem aimed at transforming people's attitudes towards waste and challenging their beliefs about how they should relate to it, laying the foundation for political, technical, and educational actions (Atkisson 1992).

Another underlying theme that shapes the above propositions is that the ecological struggle must be localized and de-centered (Best and Kellner 1991:26, 56, 123). When the struggle becomes more localized, communities can develop culture-specific and environment-specific ways of dealing with the ecological crisis. Anthropologists have a long history of immersing themselves in the local and then describing and synthesizing their observations. Now anthropologists can be agents of the local,

emphasizing the particulars of a locale and facilitating a more developed relationship between the local people and their environment.

The process of cultural midwifery allows for cultural diversity to flourish in the search for sustainable communities. It creates the opportunity for community-building to occur. The process opens dialogue between the anthropologist and community for mutual education and empowers communities with self-knowledge, responsibility, and commitment (as opposed to the creation of communities dependent on externals, such as anthropologists, for funding and innovation). The regenerative model can provide for environmental education of a community about their local ecosystem and their personal impact. It allows for an evolving sense of responsibility to the biotic community and builds a participatory construction of local, cultural identity.

My approach emerged from the minor tradition of advocacy and action anthropology. I was also influenced by feminist theory and ecological anthropology, which is a quantifiable approach analyzing a community's relationship to local ecosystems, their adaptations, resource use, and energy flows. Cognitive anthropology influenced me, because it can reveal the perceptual maps of people. The application of systems theory provided insights into what small acts of intentional change are up against. Below, I will explore in more detail the more significant theoretical orientations influencing my research.

Now I have discussed the building of my approach to the case studies. Next, I will discuss the theoretical basis.

THEORIES REGARDING THE NATURE OF REALITY AND INTENTIONAL CHANGE

In order to give the applied anthropologist as midwife a firm foundation, I examined two realms of theory. First, I will address theory about the nature of reality. I assume that, beyond humanly constructed versions of reality, there is some sort of underlying unity that cannot be accessed in full from any particular point of view. I am influenced by deep ecologists who refer to Spinoza's

description of the nature of reality. Deep ecologists profess “ecocentric” ethics; they do not value people above other components in an ecosystem; they focus on interconnectedness, emphasize design with nature, and consider human carrying capacity (Merchant 1992:86). I recommend ecocentric ethics for the regenerative model.

I also assume that reality is culturally constructed. Thus, it is not fixed, that our discourse, our conversations shape our reality to a degree. I extend this assumption, thinking as probably many environmentalists or sustainable activists do, that the mass discourse of the dominant culture, through the media and corporate influence, needs to be challenged by what are currently marginal conversations.

These marginal conversations suggest an alternate worldview or belief system to the dominant one. Best and Kellner trace the shift away from the belief in inexhaustible natural resources to a paradigm shift. They describe this paradigm shift and state that it originated with

Relativity theory, quantum mechanics, and the undecidability principles of mathematics, suggesting connections between major conceptual shifts in the fields of philosophy and science... 1) add the influences of systems theory, information theory, and chaos and complexity theory, all of which problematize determinist schemes of explanation; 2) connect these elements with similar changes occurring with literature, the arts as a whole, politics, and culture and everyday life in the broadest sense... 3) accentuate other key factors in the postmodern paradigm that involve the will to implode boundaries, transdisciplinary and multiperspectival thinking, eclecticism and emphases on radical difference, and the hermeneutic attack on realism and foundationalism; and 4) relate these changes to new social developments (such as the impact of computer technologies and the global restructuring of capitalism) as interpreted by critical social theory (Best and Kellner 1997:261).

The uncertain and variable field that is the domain of research must be reflected in adaptable methods and techniques, which is why I chose to include postmodern techniques.

The second line of theory concerns intentional change in behavior. I will explore a variety of arenas in which researchers discuss change, including the imagined community, innovation theory, co-operative management, communications, education, and psychology. One example is a scientist who studies biodiversity, Soule, who suggests there needs to be more motivational research related

to decreasing the rate of destruction of biodiversity and that the successes of politicians and advertisers could be useful models (Wilson 1988:465-469). The approach in my research is designed to respond to communities' culturally specific motivations to change towards a more ecological community.

In the process, the anthropologist asks for the imagination of communities to envision the sustainable community it desires. The concept of imagination invokes Anderson's (1983) concept of the imagined community. In my research, I will invite participants to imagine their future as sustainable and then describe that to me, which allows for cultural symbols to emerge and for people to imagine. Gregory Bateson said, "the world partly becomes...how it is imagined" (Sterling 1990:77). Through community processes, these conversations and imaginings not only provide an impetus for action, but also through facilitation can create assessments, plans, goals, and evaluations.

My explorations into communications theory also influenced my approach and model. Conflict theory and alternative dispute resolution processes may be necessary skills. I found myself involved in a variety of situations using a range of skills from the interpersonal to small group problem-solving, negotiation, and mediation.

Educational research explored the effectiveness of participation in efforts to create change in communities. Participatory research in secondary schools models collaborative, authentic, and relevant research. In one study, using an ethnographic method with an emphasis on participatory research, researchers found that "the convergence of participatory evaluation with strong leadership, frequent and open communication among school staff, and good timing can broaden the scope and deepen the nature of change" (Gold and Voss 1996:36). These demonstrate general success with the method of participatory research.

Theories in psychology, particularly in the subfield of addiction, are also relevant. Cognitive awareness followed up by support messages has proved helpful in changing the behavior of smoking (Prochaska and DiClemente 1983). Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has helped establish the

support group model, promoted an identity shift as necessary, and encouraged acceptance rather than denial. These approaches of treatment and management, particularly the behavior modification and cognitive awareness processes, informed my approach, which in its quest for cultural and personal change, uses a support group and allows for the sharing of personal stories. In stories identities are reconstructed, cognitive awareness is raised, and positive feedback is communicated.

In this chapter I explored the interdisciplinary, theoretical roots of my approach. I also discussed some assumptions I made. Next, I will describe some of the anthropological underpinnings of my approach.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY AND THEMES

In this section I will begin by briefly describing the role of specific anthropological theories. I will begin with cultural ecology, then discuss the symbolic which is emphasized in interpretive and cognitive anthropology. I will mention the findings of partnerships between anthropology and other disciplines such as climatology, and the relevance of applying systems thinking to complex environmental situations.

Cultural ecology, Steward's concept, focuses on "the adaptation of individual cultures to specific environmental circumstances" (McGee and Warms 2000:225). Although Steward was not an ecological determinist, his work speaks to the current assigning of blame of environmental damage to culturally acceptable, perhaps prescribed ways of being in the world, and the need to adapt our cultures away from behaviors and attitudes that are resource intensive and wasteful. I highlight cultural ecology because my research focuses on the adaptive nature of humans to their environment. I apply it as an active cultural ecology, because some people perceive an environmental crisis and want to respond to it, whereas cultural ecology does not usually examine conscious adaptations.

Authors of lay literature about the relation of culture to the environment often use the concept of the symbolic. Some activists have focused attention on signal species such as the spotted owl or whales. Organic food has become a symbol both for people and the environment (Milton 1993:212). The saving of heirloom seeds is a practical as well as symbolic act to maintain diversity. These symbols speak to people's symbolic sensibility sometimes more strongly than any rational argument about environmental policy. My approach explores perceptions and raises cognitive awareness of humans' relationships to the environment. It also explores ways to intentionally adapt so people can decrease their negative impact.

As Einarsson notes in his contribution to Milton's anthology, environmental issues themselves have taken on symbolic importance to the scale of the threat of nuclear war:

Many people worry about environmental issues. Global environmental degradation, including wildlife destruction, has taken the place of nuclear war as the greatest perceived threat to humankind, at least in those countries where people do not have to worry about food for the day. Apocalyptic messages are abundant, and so is a variety of literature on "how to save the world" (Milton 1993:73).

There are many self-described environmentalists today. Some of them seem motivated by the metaphor of the midwife birthing cultural change. Einarsson suggests that environmental campaigns have used metaphors to appeal to people. He states,

In the campaign for saving whales, metaphors, as rhetorical devices, have been of great importance in their power emotionally to engage people for causes that might otherwise have passed relatively unnoticed, and, as I said above. I believe that the metaphors and tropes used in these campaigns can also tell us a great deal about the basic assumptions of the environmentalists and of their opponents (Milton 1993:77-8).

Exploration of which symbols effectively appeal to certain people will strengthen the environmental movement. Interpretive and cognitive anthropology have addressed this realm. However, in order to appeal effectively, to people the information must be shared with lay people and organizations. In my approach, I recommend small, participatory, localized, and cooperative studies in order to

involve local people consciously in the efforts to make cultural change. This is distinct to the approach of advertisers, for example, who use research in a way that retains power and authority rather than shares it with consumers.

The editors of one interdisciplinary work on climatology write that “information, we all agreed, was of signal importance in the ability to make sound judgements in the face of a changing environment.” They also accentuate the advantage of heterarchies, “such as tribal councils [which,] while potentially agonizingly slow to make decisions because everyone has a voice in the process, have the advantage that information is not lost in a streamlining process” (McIntosh, Tainter, and McIntosh 2000:13). The local groups I observed were reminiscent of councils. They were not hierarchical. Decision-making was slow but inclusive of voices.

Mainstream America may not have perceived climate change or other indicators of environmental ill health as a problem before, but now as more and more scientists concur on global warming and related issues, public opinion is shifting (Ray and Anderson 2000). The complexity of Western societies and the associated environmental problems is high. Fortunately, systems thinking, in which a situation is viewed in terms of the relations between the parts, feedback loops, and hierarchies, is one approach utilized in recent years to address the complexity. Environmental policy making is one example of an arena in which systems thinking proves useful.

Next I will discuss key theoretical themes from current anthropology. These include action, advocacy, particulars, cultural studies, imagination, context, multivocality, reflexivity, co-creative ethnography, and multi-sitedness. I will also discuss a relevant perspective from current sociology.

Kay Milton is an anthropologist in whose writings I found thoughts concurrent with my approach. She and others feel “motivated by a concern that an important public debate, perhaps the most important of our time, was proceeding without a significant input from anthropology.” She mentions “the tension between detached observer of and active involvement with environmentalism” (Milton 1993:ix-x). Milton highlights three ways anthropological knowledge might be useful to environmentalism. They include anthropology’s study of human ecology

(including cultural ecology), interpretation across cultural boundaries (since the understanding of problems and implementation of solutions often crosses cultural boundaries), and finally the study of environmentalism, in an effort to refine the process of environmental advocacy (Milton 1993:3-4). Milton asserts as I do that “the study of culture can feed back into the object of its analysis and help to direct cultural change” (Milton 1993:7). She acknowledges that some anthropologists do this with ease and that others are uncomfortable with the potential of their research contributing to cultural change.

Milton emphasizes the importance of discourse in making cultural change. She points to theorists of an actionist model of culture (Habermas, Touraine, and Giddens) “which sees it [culture] as the process whereby social practice both constitutes and transforms itself. The principle mechanism through which this process operates is communication” (Milton 1993:8). She recognizes that environmental problems are identified through discourse and “Groups crystallize around the search for solutions, messages are articulated, responsibilities are defined and allocated” (Milton 1993:9). The case studies I look at in my thesis are groups which came together specifically to look at environmental problems and to discuss, hypothesize, and implement solutions on a small scale. Milton asserts that

Those who most influence the definition of environmental responsibilities are those who can make the most effective use of the tools of discourse... These tools will vary from one cultural context to another, but they typically include the news media, the mechanisms of formal and informal education, advertising, entertainment media and political lobbying. Environmental activism often takes the form of trying to empower local groups and organizations by increasing their access to these tools. Local protest groups are empowered by their supporters to employ scientific and legal experts... The larger NGOs are empowered by the funds they receive from their members and sponsors to engage in publicity campaigns, to produce films and education packs and to lobby decision-makers (Milton 1993:9).

My research focuses on a smaller scale than NGOs, publicity, and funding. It focuses on local groups of individuals who have formed a community of interest around a particular topic related to the relationship between humans and the environment. My purpose in studying such small scale environmental action comes from a conviction that change is more effective on the small scale when

it is reinforced and furthered among affiliations of people and potentially replicated in culturally appropriate ways.

Anthropologists can contribute to the exploration of key questions about who environmentalists or sustainable lifestyles are, how they became who they are, and what changes they are willing to make? Milton considers this:

What conditions promote the development of an environmentalist perspective? Why is it that some societies define environmental responsibilities in terms of protection or conservation, while others...apparently do not? What circumstances lead environmental responsibilities to be expressed through laws..., through scientific arguments...or through spiritualist goals...? How do different cultural expressions of environmentalism come to be adopted by different groups, and how does their interaction shape the character of an environmental movement or lobby...Different institutionalized ways of thinking and acting have been related to different concepts of nature, and have been shown to generate diverse cultural responses to environmental risks (Milton 1993:11).

Milton's questions can be explored by anthropologists in order to ascertain what the most effective approach may be for environmental action or persuasion.

She also states:

Once advocacy is identified as "making knowledge count"...it is shown to be a central part of the cultural process; the difference between "applied" and "academic" anthropology is seen as lying in what the knowledge is made to count *for*. Those who have argued against the participation of anthropologists in cultural change, on the grounds that it is inconsistent with scientific "objectivity," have, through their very arguments, *advocated* a positivistic image for the discipline and helped to privilege the discourse of science over that of morality (Milton 1993:13).

The debate on advocacy in anthropology is crucial. Milton advocates focusing on discourse and knowledge.

Another anthropologist whose writings are relevant to my approach is Arjun Appadurai, who emphasizes imagination as a tool available to people. He says,

there is a peculiar new force to the imagination in social life today. More persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of "possible" lives than they ever did before. One important

source of this change is the mass media, which present a rich, ever-changing store of possible lives, some of which enter the lived imaginations of ordinary people more successfully than others (Fox 1991:197).

The positive side of this is its potential to be used by people adapting to the environment in a more ecological way. The deficit is the influence of dominant systems such as mass media. Now ethnography must include the imagined and possible lives which people may live. Appadurai describes a

grinding of gears between unfolding lives and their imagined counterparts that a variety of “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983) is formed, communities that generate new kinds of politics, new kinds of collective expression, and new needs for social discipline and surveillance on the part of elites” (Fox 1991:198).

He then tries to describe the implications for ethnography. He asserts that

ethnographers can no longer simply be content with the “thickness” they bring to the local and particular, nor can they assume that as they approach the local, they approach something more elementary, more contingent, and thus more “real” than life seen in larger-scale perspectives... These complex, partly imagined lives must now form the bedrock of ethnography, at least of the sort of ethnography that wishes to retain a special voice in a transnational, deterritorialized world. For the new power of the imagination in the fabrication of social lives is inescapably tied up with images, ideas, and opportunities that come from elsewhere, often moved around by the vehicles of mass media (Fox 1991:199).

As I become familiar with the ecological subculture and how spatially separated it is, and not necessarily local at all, I find myself concerned about how to represent it ethnographically. I also value the local and hear a desire from participants in the discussion groups for more local connection and sense of community. So while there is an embeddedness in the large scale, there is also inescapably a desire for the local, the proximate, the community. In the co-creative ethnography I intend to conduct, part of the intention is to enliven the local, imagine possible futures, and acknowledge with what the local is interconnected. In other words, I attempt to conduct an ethnography of the particular.

Sociology's study of agency within social movements is relevant to my discussion of advocacy and action. Sewell defines agency as a capability to exert some measure of control over a social situation of which one is a part. He contends that "agency arises from the actor's knowledge of schemas, which means the ability to apply them to new contexts" (Smith 1998:193). Many people may wonder if it is legitimate and ethical for anthropologists to engage in advocating for community action about environmental issues. What effect would it have if the human population with which they were aligned lacked agency? Gamson, who has written about public attitudes towards nuclear power, states that "collective actions by social movements will be successful only when they are able to impose destabilizing narratives and symbolic codings on previously legitimate events and actors." Gamson looks at the impact of symbols on collective action. He states that "not all symbols are equally potent" (Smith 1998:202). Certain packages have a natural advantage because their ideas and language resonate with larger cultural themes. Resonances increase the appeal of a package; they make it appear natural and familiar.

In order to explore how culture contributes to action I turned to Swidler, another sociologist, who breaks down the relationship between culture and agency into "settled" and "unsettled" times in cultures or civilizations. In unsettled periods, she argues, "new ideologies are often reflexively constructed and deployed by actors. Using the analogy of culture as a 'tool-kit', Swidler suggests that agents can create lines of action from the repertoire of cultural elements at their disposal. However, in both cases there are cultural limits to innovation" (Smith 1998:168). This suggests that culture can be employed, used by individuals with specific intentions, but warns that there are limits to what can be accomplished. Swidler describes her analysis in terms of three steps:

First, it offers an image of culture as a "tool-kit" of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems. Second, to analyze culture's causal effects, it focuses on "strategies of action," persistent ways of ordering action through time. Third, it sees culture's causal significance not in defining ends of action, but in providing cultural components that are used to construct strategies of action (Smith 1998:172).

My research reflects some of these in its approach.

In Ethnography Through Thick and Thin, George Marcus describes the concept of multi-sited ethnography in a contemporary world in which fieldwork sites no longer have discrete boundaries. He advocates “making arguments through description, the delineating of processes, the orchestrating and representation (or evocation) of voice, etc.” (Marcus 1998:13). Marcus encourages exploring the ethnographic sites in terms of their connections and relationships, which prompted me to think about how our local sustainability group is, or is not, connected to groups across the country

He addresses self-indulgence in ethnography. This is a critique which I find useful to consider, as it could be applied as a criticism of my research. He describes

the danger of ethnography becoming mere self-quests...How to move from the personal or from exploration of affinity to the proposal which speaks to other scholars and scholarly communities, as well as perhaps to the nonacademic public, is an important aspect of the evolution of any contemporary ethnographic research project (Marcus 1998:15).

Because I have designed a research project within a domain for which I have affinity, with participants with whom I am acquainted, I run that same risk. However, the subject matter is relevant to our time, when there is serious concern about our environment and the debates about responsibilities of people. Thanks to the recent reflective mode of anthropology coinciding and following postmodernism, anthropologists as midwives can feel fairly warned about the risk of self-indulgence.

As I consider multi-sitedness, I find systems thinking concepts (hierarchies, scale, and feedback loops) useful for comprehending the relationships and connections in a visual way. Marcus notes that events give form to a narrative of multi-located ethnographies. Comparison and juxtaposition also give form to the ethnography. I intend to compare the work of one national environmental group with the work of our local sustainability group (Marcus 1998:52).

The theoretical background from anthropology and across disciplines, about the nature of reality and intentional change, clarified my approach. The recent authors and passages reminded me of the reasons for proceeding in my research in certain ways. I included these recent, critical perspectives

anthropology, although I do not take these positions to any nihilistic extreme. The ways these theoretical orientations are incorporated in my research will be discussed next in the methodology chapter.

CHAPTER THREE, METHODOLOGY OF MY APPROACH

Anthropology can play a substantial role in the sustainable community movement. The methods discussed below illustrate some of the ways in which anthropology can help. After discussing the methodology I relate some of my ethical concerns and how I addressed those.

In my research, I used applied and postmodern anthropological methods in order to observe three groups and speak with some of their participants. Then I used postmodern techniques to narrate that story and to convey my findings and experience in the ethnography. After considering the story, I also analyzed the potential effectiveness my approach. I was looking for qualitative validation (or its absence), through case study and comparison, of whether the model could alter cultural patterns of behaviors and attitudes that adversely affected the community and the environment (as defined by the communities).

This study was a pilot test of my approach, in which I combined applied and postmodern techniques, and facilitated discourses within the community aimed at creating adaptive and sustainable strategies. Techniques included participant observation, informal dialogue, structured interviews, and a focus group. I also applied systems methodology.

Although the focus of my research is on the case studies, I have been developing a sequence of phases for cultural midwifery; and, I considered them during the case studies to see if they were relevant and effective. During fieldwork, the phases overlapped and did not necessarily follow a chronological order. The phases include dialogue, definition of the community, definition of needs, designing a plan of action, implementation, and evaluation.

In order to test my approach and to answer my original research questions, I observed voluntary communities of interest. These were not demographically diverse. I compared three case studies with similar domains of interest. Two were local in Charlottesville, Virginia: Community From Within and Lunaissance Sustainability Circle. I was a member of the same extended social network of many of the participants in the local groups. I often interacted with people outside of meetings.

Another was a discussion group using the protocol of the Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) in Corvallis, Oregon. A fourth comparative case was Global Action Plan in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Rockland, New York, which I used for contrast. Each group had 4-15 participants who attended the meetings because they intended to make positive changes in their lives according to some principles of community and sustainability.

First, I observed a NWEI discussion group. I was present for three meetings as well as social gatherings. I interviewed one of the participants about his experience. Then, I organized with other people the Community From Within Group. I conducted participant observation and interviews over a period of three months. It and the next group, the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, followed the same pattern, which will be discussed further. There was overlap of content discussed in both groups, but as their names imply, one emphasized community while the other emphasized sustainability. Next I will discuss the methodological process which I applied to both Community From Within and the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle.

Participant observation throughout all of the phases of the project gave an etic perspective on a subset of questions, which were related to the case studies. They included: What defines the community? What are the communities' needs in order to evolve a more sustainable relationship with the environment? And how is the process able to address those needs? I observed at least 34 meetings, as well as informal gatherings.

Discussion group meetings engaged community members with each other about sustainability issues. These were akin to focus groups (small groups of people, usually a subset of a larger group, who are focused on a certain topic, often for research purposes). But, since they were the primary domain of study, I considered a focus group to be a subset of the discussion groups. One focus group was held as a subset of the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle. It was a committee, which volunteered to take on the task of establishing a process for identifying indicators of sustainability for the larger group. Communication techniques such as small group decision-making, brainstorming, and problem-solving proved useful.

With the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, I applied systems thinking and mapping in order to examine patterns of behaviors. Some of this was conducted in the group meetings with participation from community members in order to identify obstacles to sustainability and indicators of sustainability. I also used systems thinking and mapping during the analysis of data in order to identify patterns and leverage points.

I began building rapport through dialogue and participant observation. I assessed current lifestyle related to sustainability through participant observation. I observed general socio-cultural factors and motivating influences. The first phase of this study began with dialogue about what community members want. I explained who I was as an applied anthropologist and what my interest was in the situation. We focused on where our interests overlapped. This dialogue occurred in individual interviews and group processes. From this initial dialogue, I identified key consultants in the community who exhibited interest in the project as well as extensive knowledge of the community.

During the first meetings, participants (with key consultants as facilitators) asked themselves the subset of questions I mentioned earlier (who they were as a community, what sustainable meant to them), and prioritized environmental needs they wanted to address in order to attain their definition of sustainability. A group brainstorming session and goal setting followed.

During the next phase, participants had the opportunity to organize and facilitate meetings and make presentations to the group (thereby allowing me to see what is significant to them). While I assimilated the feedback, they and any volunteers were responsible for checking in with others in their group for input on the plan of action. These small groups provided the basis for alliances to enact plans of action. As needed I participated, organized, and facilitated these working alliances to meet the community's goals. Implementation took various forms, from relevant volunteer work to small group projects to individuals making household changes.

After a series of meetings, I interviewed participants. Interviews offered in-depth emic perspectives on my research questions. Interviews also illuminated specifics of the community's

actual process, such as what different community members' and different community groups' definitions of sustainable were. I conducted twelve structured interviews, in the sense that I followed a list of questions, but open-ended in that I was interested in linkages, which raised additional questions. I conducted two non-structured interviews, for a total of fourteen interviews. In addition to the observation, interviews provided a holistic perspective, enabling me to unfold aspects of the nature of the communities. Many informal conversations informed this project. These often occurred during the social period of meetings, but also by phone or in chance meetings. I hoped to be led to questions from the participants' responses, thereby developing more questions as the interviews proceeded, reflecting their worldview and concerns. The interviews attempted to answer additional research questions, such as: What environmental issues are most pressing? How can we most effectively approach these problems? What prevents us from addressing these problems?

The Lunaissance Sustainability Circle was a long-term study lasting approximately two years. I chose to reflect the depth of that experience with a photographic, community-created ethnography. The ethnography is intended to engage individuals in the ethnographic process and invite them to contribute their voices, images, and acts. During the interviews, I asked five of the most committed participants what photos they would take to depict the role sustainability has in their lives. I also contributed my own ideas for pictures. The description that accompanies the pictures is a composite of voices from the interviews plus my observations. Camera equipment was used to form the ethnography. Community members were given the choice to help during the process of editing the raw data.

Next I analyze the data accumulated from participant observation, interviews, and systems analyses throughout the process, and compared/contrasted survey information with regard to changing interest and participation over time. I compared the local groups with another national group called Global Action Plan (GAP). Because of the long distance to the nearest active group, I reviewed the published literature on GAP extensively. I also examined their own materials,

including workbook, team leader packet, and website. I conducted two phone interviews with campaign managers in Rockland, New York and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In addition, I conversed briefly by phone and e-mail with an outreach coordinator at the home office in New York.

As I relate the methodology used, I also want to indicate my methodological concerns. One involves the difficulty of collaboration. In a study on collaborative change in secondary schools, the authors address some of the difficulties in the collaborative process:

While the term literally means “working together,” that is not necessarily easy. The articulation of joint effort in a social group always involves issues of the distribution and exercise of power. Foucault (1979) points to this in his epistemological notion of *power/knowledge*. He asserts that all knowing is situated in, and thus inevitably shaped by, the power position and the power interests within which the knower inquires. Collaboration in inquiry among university-based researchers and public school-based practitioners and parents, then, involves sharing power across lines of institutional turf, professional status, and personal identity. When power and prestige are unequal, “collaboration” can easily result in co-optation, or even in domination masked by a euphonious label (Erickson and Christman 1996:150).

The authors follow up these thoughts by stating specifically where the dangers lie. They suggest that the power/knowledge dynamic exhibits itself in several aspects of research, from “the initial framing of topics and questions of research interests, through the various methods in data identification and data collection, to analysis of the evidence collected and conclusions drawn from it” (Erickson and Christman 1996:150). I tried to mitigate this tendency by sharing authority as much as possible.

A major ethical consideration of this project was my role and agenda. The confessional introduction of the author has been a technique that emerged from postmodernism as an attempt to avoid reinforcing the earlier trends of authority and legitimacy. I see value in conveying briefly where I was coming from and why. At about age thirteen, I became enthralled with utopias and dystopias. This pervaded my interests in high school and influenced my course of study in college, where I opted to study anthropology and religion. At first it was a naïve search for some idyllic better way of life. Most recently, it has evolved into a search for tools and techniques within

anthropology to help environmentalists and others seeking to protect the environment. The observer aspect of anthropology appeals to my personality. In my recent quest for a more activist and advocacy anthropology, I needed to develop other skills, such as facilitating, leading, public speaking, and navigating complexity.

My choice of domains was opportunistic, in that I was able to transform this extracurricular interest into my academic work. I remain optimistic that my research will have value to the discipline of anthropology, to environmental activists, and to culture workers in general.

My intent was to share the perspective and methods of anthropology, which participants could then use in other situations. With both local groups, I described my research briefly before conducting it. I asked participants to inform me if they objected to it.

One primary ethical concern was influence on the people involved in my study. The method of participant observation required my presence and involvement in community activity. Both my presence and involvement potentially influenced the situation. I attempted to minimize unnecessary influence by maintaining reflexivity and by adhering to a community-guided process. My personality also allowed me to be less conspicuous. I also encouraged participants to take leadership roles, to consider the role of culture, to become amateur anthropologists in a sense, and to take personal responsibility.

As one of the facilitators, I encouraged acknowledgement of emotions involved in addressing particular issues; a few other facilitators did this also. The experience of informative presentations about the local environment was at times depressing or shocking. However, we attempted to redirect issues or emotions if they had a negative impact on the community process. When changes in the interaction between the population and the environment are perceived and are achieved by a community, then influences on the people involved could range from profound lifestyle changes to several specific adaptations to no obvious effect.

Interviews brought up sensitive issues for people. Prior to interviews, I briefly explained my research. Then the interviewee consented. I committed to anonymity for the interviewees, which

seemed to put people at ease. I used pseudonyms in my data. My criteria for selecting the interviews varied with each group. For NWEI, I interviewed the only person with whom I was in contact. For the local community group, I interviewed everyone willing, which was a majority of the group. For the local sustainability group, I interviewed the most active participants, as well as someone who was active in a local barter network but less so in the sustainability group. For GAP, I contacted the home office and interviewed the person they recommended; then that person recommended someone else, whom I interviewed. During the interviews, the questions I asked were open-ended. Those I selected were based on typical ethnographic questions and consideration of the data accumulated from observation. Participants added some questions. Interviewees were aware that they could stop the interview or pass on certain questions at any time.

The discussion group meetings, decision-making process, and potential work parties brought together diverse people and interests. There were conflicts occasionally. The groups opted to use a modified consensus process for decision-making.

The co-creative ethnography required time from participants. After two years people explained they were too busy, and the sustainability meetings stopped, so the cooperative part of the ethnography was not as extensive as I had hoped out of respect for people's boundaries. I and participants took the pictures (the shots they had discussed with me during the interviews). I offered that people could help edit, but few responded.

Multi-vocality was essential to me; at each meeting, individuals had opportunities to speak uninterrupted. It engaged the multiple perspectives that reflect the heterogeneous nature of a community and allowed for differences to emerge. However, because of the nature of the formation of discussion groups around a topic of interest, the groups naturally attracted individuals who had similar values and interests. Because I was attracted also to the content of the groups, there was no conflict between the participants and me about overall goals of the projects.

Another consideration was the potential emotional stress of the process and any behavior changes which occurred. To counteract the profound effects of internal and external change, I

emphasized a community-guided process using methods of consensus, local presentations, and a pace that was set by the community. Facilitators tried to maintain an atmosphere of respect and cooperation rather than blame and conflict.

Because of my long-term relationship with the community, I intended to maintain the relationships that developed. I was and continue to be committed to protecting the rights of those involved in the project. I will not disclose their identities without their permission, nor will I intentionally misrepresent them or their experiences. My general means for maintaining ethical standards was reflexivity. I took responsibility for my perspective by considering and stating my biases and by being aware of my influence.

I have discussed the methodology, emphasizing the blend of applied and postmodern techniques used. Then I shared my ethical considerations. Next I will describe the case studies.

CHAPTER FOUR THE CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I report chronologically on three case studies I conducted. I discuss the comparative analysis of the fourth group in the analysis chapter. The first group I observed was the Northwest Earth Institute discussion group in Corvallis, Oregon. Next, I helped to develop the Community From Within Group in Charlottesville, Virginia. After that I helped develop the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, also in Charlottesville. Finally, I researched Global Action Plan. For each of the four groups, I relate and discuss, when applicable, observations, interview feedback for each group, and themes or patterns. For Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, which was the most extensive case study, I discuss the focus group and systems thinking. First I will share the background of the Northwest Earth Institute.

NORTHWEST EARTH INSTITUTE

Background

Dick and Jeanne Roy co-founded the Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI). They describe their vision that

NWEI would be a pioneer in taking earth-centered programs into work places. There employees would gather, in supportive groups, to consider the implications of living at a time when human activity is degrading the earth in so many ways (Roy and Roy 2000:12).

To accomplish their mission, they developed four reading packets with discussion questions. Articles inform the readers about the situation of the environment and about practical steps people can take. Choices for Sustainable Living was used as a discussion packet for the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, which will be discussed later. Selected articles from the packets Deep Ecology and Discovering A Sense of Place were shared with the Community From Within Group, which will also be discussed later.

The Roys established a system for the proliferation of discussion groups and a protocol for the discussion groups. They fit the description of culture workers, who work to change culture from the realm of values and attitudes (the last group I will discuss, GAP, complementarily addresses change from the realm of behavior). The Roys use the word “pioneer” appealing to the American spirit of pioneering, of adventure, of being a founder or forerunner.

The Roys describe their story:

On October, 1st, 1993, Dick left his practice of law to join Jeanne as a full-time volunteer. With three start-up grants, we founded the Northwest Earth Institute with the following mission: **Motivating individuals to examine and transform personal values and habits, to accept responsibility for the earth, and to act on that commitment [bold is theirs] (Roy and Roy 2000:12).**

Their story serves as a testimonial, an inspiration to others to live according to their values. The articles they include in the reading packets often describe the work of individuals. Joanna Macy, whose writings are included in NWEI’s packets, inspired me to develop my approach. The structure of the meetings informed the structure I developed for the Community From Within Group and the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle. NWEI served as a model for the other groups with which I worked.

When I lived in Corvallis my husband participated in the series sponsored by NWEI. He attended at least 16 meetings and several social events from winter 1996 through fall 1996. The discussion group he joined was focused on deep ecology and bioregionalism. I observed three of the meetings (which were held at our home) over the time he was involved.

News of the group spread both by word of mouth and by fliers posted at specific sites around town. I observed the development of a close group. Often when the phone rang, someone from the group was calling to invite my husband to go do something fun. Though the group's numbers dwindled little after the first reading packet, participants who remained seemed intimate with each other.

Just as the founders used their story to inspire others, the format of the meetings allowed for inspirational stories in the beginning. As rotating facilitators all of the participants had the opportunity to lead and speak. The discussion questions invited responses. I observed testimonial stories, which conveyed a broadening identity, as well as simple anecdotes reflecting understanding of the readings. The use of story will be discussed more in the section on GAP. It will be visible in the photographic, co-creative ethnography, which reflects the story told by participants in the sustainability group (about their ideal, future, sustainable day and what images symbolize sustainability to them).

The group diverged from the NWEI series after two packets and became a more general book study group. But until that point, the group kept up good attendance, rotated facilitators as the Roys suggest, stuck with the material, and discussed the questions at the end of each chapter. I did not notice any significant lifestyle changes.

Despite the closeness of the group and their continued contact, I did not notice a community reinforcing behavioral changes. This was not the primary mission of the group. I did notice an enlivening of beliefs that demonstrated caring for the environment. Perhaps these beliefs were held previously, perhaps they were dormant, or perhaps for some people some of the ideas were new. All the participants who remained with the group seemed open and interested in the ideas.

Evaluation

Anthropologists in their work take their observations and interviews, as well as other data gathered to analyze, then to report the findings. In this process the researcher evaluates how the data has been gathered. This reflexivity enables the researcher to consider the process of gathering data, examine whether other avenues can be utilized, and maintain awareness of the impact of the researcher. To analyze the NWEI experience I interviewed Aaron, who participated in NWEI's discussion groups, and considered my observations of the group including conversations with participants. I explored primary sources produced by NWEI, from discussion books to letters. Finally, I reviewed a few articles about NWEI in the press.

Findings

When asked how his group got started, he said there was a flier with a contact person. The initial meetings were held in coffeehouses, then held in people's homes on a rotation basis. Spouses became involved if they attended social gatherings, if they were present when the meeting was hosted at their home, and if they attended one meeting in particular to which spouses were invited.

Aaron discussed the effects of the series on him. He described being in a period of transition, moving to Corvallis from out of state, not knowing anyone, and not knowing the area. The period of transition felt like an opportune time to engage in a discussion group. He found that the discussion group "helped [him] to develop some friendships outside of work with like-minded people interested in similar things" (Interview with Aaron 2002). He felt a sense of community develop over time. He says he continues to send holiday cards to several of the participants six years later. He found that the packet, which focused on bioregionalism, facilitated his adaptation to

this new bioregion. He felt encouraged to become more aware of the bioregion, its components, its boundaries, its salient features.

I asked him what stimulated him to continue to attend. He replied that initially it was exciting to meet new people, to see enthusiasm for new ideas, and he enjoyed the readings. He did say that the group waned after the two discussion packets, and lost momentum. The group adapted by changing its focus to books on specific topics rather than reading packets. He said the group survived the change and thrived.

Next I asked him if he had been involved with environmental issues previously. He replied that he was aware of issues and he tried to be personally responsible. He was not wasteful, nor did he consume much by American standards. He said he paid particular attention to water consumption. However, he said he has paid less attention to that lately.

Then I asked what his likes and dislikes were regarding the group and the process. He said he liked how well NWEI had set up the meetings and how the facilitation rotated, and he enjoyed the reading material. He also appreciated how the group held to good attendance at regular meetings. He disliked the fact that the group consisted primarily of women. Only one other male participated and only for a short time. When I inquired why he thought that was so, he said he thought perhaps the format was more appealing to women than to men and did not elaborate.

Next I asked him what he would have liked more of with the group. He said he would have preferred more action and less processing. He said people discussed many ideas, but there was very little practical application of the ideas shared in the group context.

I asked him what motivated him (anecdotes, ideas, facts, or images) to take any particular actions. He felt motivated by descriptions of experiences of others, whether they were authors or fellow participants. He mentioned one woman in particular who motivated him. She shared with the group experiences she had with teachings from her spiritual path, which emphasized personal responsibility. These teachings she applied to her relationship with the environment in terms of

being accountable for her actions. This example along with her conviction inspired Aaron to become more accountable.

Next I tried to ascertain the extent of the influence of the discussion group experience on him. I asked how often he thinks about deep ecology and a sense of place, whether he thinks of those more as a result of his participation in the group or not, and what brings it to mind? He replied that he does not think about deep ecology much. He does think about a sense of place often. He thinks it is likely that he thinks about it more because of the group, but was not positive. Then he shared words that he associates with a sense of place. They include, “watershed, distinct microclimates, dialects, mountain ranges, native people, large primates and their territories.” He described what continues to bring a sense of place to mind. During a typical day, what brings it to mind most is seeing a trash pile at work (which is at a new home construction site). The large trash pile prompts him to consider “the cycle of manufactured products, raw material use, and waste.” As a supervisor, he has decisions to make regarding the waste. He says he can either send it to the land fill in a diesel dump truck or burn it. He feels like neither is a very good option.

I asked him what changes he noticed as a result of participation in the group. He said he could not pinpoint changes. If there were changes, they were subtle and slight. I asked what he most valued about the experience. He said he most valued the sense of community that developed. He felt it helped him to become more connected to the community, and he got a flavor of the people there.

Then I asked if people interacted more or less with fellow participants after the experience. He said the group evolved into a book group and that people met socially. Our family moved, so his interactions were then limited to holiday cards.

Finally, I inquired if he would attend future, similar meetings. He said yes, but he preferred more action than discussion. He was not interested in exploring more ideas with people. He expressed particular interest in support for finding ways to reuse materials.

I found that although Aaron experienced benefits, the emphasis of NWEI was not on long-term changes, nor was the emphasis on long-term community building. The next group I will discuss emphasized community building more.

COMMUNITY FROM WITHIN GROUP

Background

In the winter of 1999, the Community from Within Discussion Group evolved from conversations between organizers of a small cooperative day camp for children. Each of the four organizers of the discussion group, including me, is a mother of young children. We shared a range of experiences and expectations about the concept of community. As individuals and as a group, we intended to articulate a definition of community, to develop an increased understanding of community, to ascertain key ingredients of a functional community, and to manifest a useful action for the group to undertake after the meeting series. Organizers decided it served us better to develop our own protocol as we went. This served my research because I was interested in how people would define community and intrigued by the evolution of a specific protocol. The structure we developed allowed for flexibility in that all participants would have the opportunity to research, develop a reading packet, and facilitate a topic. Conversations, as well as the initial planning meetings, constituted the dialog phase of the cultural midwife model. The four organizers of the series developed the structure for the series, which constituted the plan of action phase in the regenerative model.

A chronological examination of the meetings is useful. We began with planning meetings once every few weeks for several months. The goal was to develop a letter of invitation (see Appendix A), vision statement (see Appendix B), and format for the series of meetings we were organizing. Then we each shared these with acquaintances in order to advertise the group.

After the three planning meetings, we held two open meetings prior to the series of six meetings, for a total of eleven meetings. Anyone who received the flier or heard about the discussion group by word of mouth could attend the open meetings in order to inquire about the nature of the discussion group. During the first open meeting, a point of contention became obvious over the

number of meetings individuals felt permissible to miss. Some thought no meetings should be missed, others thought two or three should be allowed. The issue was settled with a compromise that it was acceptable for someone to miss one meeting. However, someone else in the group should be contacted to learn what was missed. The individual who suggested that compromise missed three out of eight meetings, the highest absentee rate of anyone in the group, which led to resentment at the end of the series. The two individuals who had had the dispute agreed at that point that, in the future, there should be more realistic expectations that people may need to miss more than one meeting.

The second open meeting was smaller and more intimate. The group had several interests in common, including previous acquaintance (except a single mother new to town). Eventually, the newest member contributed to the planning of meetings as well as hosted the group's first social gathering when the series was completed. She may have had more invested in her commitment to the group due to her circumstances and a need to network socially. The open meetings allowed the group to explore its needs. This constituted the "definition of needs" phase of the midwife model, although needs continued to be expressed and addressed throughout the process.

During meetings, everyone had an opportunity to share a personal story. The story told by the woman who had recently moved to town remains prominent in my mind. As a teacher in Washington D.C., she led a classroom with a high population of students who had recently moved to the U.S. and needed to learn English skills. She sought to improve community relations within and beyond the school by organizing events that would integrate her students more into the fabric of the school, inviting their families as well as the public. When she left her position after several years, the program she developed fell apart. She had not realized how much everyone in the program depended on her to pull them all together. This seems to be a useful forewarning to anyone attempting to facilitate community building: that the community needs to be strong enough without one or two of its leaders.

The community that then gathered for the series of six meetings was composed of the organizers, the newcomer, a husband of one of the organizers, an acquaintance, and a former employer of one of the organizers. The broader context for the group was a population in the Charlottesville area well versed in the concept of community. The Charlottesville area is home to at least three intentional communities. Occasionally, ex-residents of these communities migrate to Charlottesville to reside and mix with the general population. Members of this group were familiar with residents of these local communities and were familiar with both the benefits and the realities of people's experiences living in those communities. In fact, participants were probably homogenous in their disillusionment with that model of community. Throughout the series, I observed idealistic perspectives frequently which unavoidably influenced the group's expectations, goals, and communication practices, such as attempting to work with consensus.

It became apparent during the planning stage that, among the organizers, people had different objectives for reflecting on community. Objectives ranged from understanding what community means, to building community through reflection on it, engaging in community actions, making friends, and satisfying research requirements. We agreed on a structure that would satisfy the variety of objectives involving reflection and understanding. We decided to brainstorm and eventually decide upon an action, a physical activity, that would bring people together, rather than a mental activity. This was to be determined by the larger group after the series of meetings.

The implementation phase began with the series of six meetings. The group was implementing the plan to organize a group to reflect on community. The first meeting focused on historical and cross-cultural reflections on community. This was less stimulating to the group than the facilitators anticipated, possibly because the group did not have enough time to read and absorb the information included in the timeline.

This meeting segued into the "definition of community" phase. The group shared personal stories of voluntary or involuntary community experiences in which we each had noticed community thriving in our lives, or noticed its absence. Several themes emerged from the various

stories as facilitating community, including group or dorm housing, close proximity, frequency of interaction, common purpose, and unusual or isolated contexts (such as one participant's story of working in the Peace Corps in a remote village in Morocco). Fewer themes became apparent for what hinders community building. The discussion and synthesis took much longer than the facilitator anticipated. After that segment concluded, the facilitator shared a synthesis of the meeting which she had written. She said, "It was the hope and goal of this process that future endeavors to build community could be assessed for viability through the lens of these components. These components are listed in terms of highest priority for healthy and rapid community development. They include personal identification with a group (this relates to each individual's feelings of belonging); unity of purpose (end/goal); common values (means/ how to reach the goal); population (size of the group, with smaller being easier for community to happen quickly); structure (relationship to community depending on the health and balance of the type of structure imposed on the group); and intensity (proximity to each other, amount of time, dislocation, with dislocation being the only aspect of the synthesis that was not universally expressed as highly relevant. Primarily, those who had experienced extreme dislocation felt the dislocation had a huge impact on the formation and intimacy of their community experience. Those who had not experienced dislocation could not really relate to it)" (Pickering 1998).

After the first two meetings, I observed participants relaxing and chatting. One person asked another for a ride home. Another recognized one participant from his restaurant business several years ago. Over time, a few of these relations deepened. Some did not. By the end of the series, three parents were exchanging some childcare. Two participants compared healing work they were undergoing with a local healer. There was discussion amongst a core of the group about what form the group could take after the series of meetings concluded.

The facilitator for the third meeting shared with the group that she has never felt capable of belonging in a community that she has always felt alienated. This may have been a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because of this and past impressions, several participants may have been biased against

this facilitator (whom several people had found to be unreliable). The organizers did not clearly address this issue from the beginning, and so there was residual distrust and perhaps some feelings of alienation of this participant that may have interfered with full appreciation of her facilitation and full integration into the community that was forming. Her presentation's intellectual pace was much faster than the rest of the group's. When the group reflected at the following meeting, people commented that the facilitator had assumed everyone believed in the same assumptions as she did, which was not the case.

The next topic explored interconnectedness with a ritual modeled after one conducted by environmental activists. The ritual is called the Council of All Beings. The feedback after the meeting was positive. One person forgot his homework (to make a mask representational of an animal). He flexibly took on the role of human in the council we held and listened to the grievances of all the other animals. One participant shared her experience of reading the homework, during which she wept for the creatures of the ocean. The depth of bonding at this meeting seemed strengthening to the group. In the interviews, most participants mentioned this as a topic they would like to repeat and explore more deeply.

The next topic focused on diversity. This was the first meeting that was facilitated by two participants who were not originators of the series. This seemed beneficial to the previous facilitators, who had less preparation to do, and empowering for the new facilitators. They met at one of their homes and conversed over the phone in order to plan the meeting. Several months later, they still occasionally arranged to meet and let their children play together. Again, the personal sharing format was utilized to discuss the issue. Several participants were out of town during this meeting, so it was a small group of four who met. All participants commented later how intimate it had felt. Perhaps it is a useful stage for community building to have a period of a smaller core of individuals defining themselves within a larger context.

The final meeting began with disappointment that a member who had already missed two meetings could not attend. Several participants discussed the issue amongst themselves initially.

Eventually, the whole group addressed the disappointment during the sharing space in the meeting's agenda. Because the meeting did not have an assigned leader, (as an experiment in functioning without an appointed facilitator), the group needed to function as a community in order to proceed. After a brainstorm, the group agreed to try to meet and hold potlucks once a month to check in about community issues in each other's lives, as a community support network. The group expressed various interests, and settled on a workday at one of the participants' extensive garden during the summer.

Participants, in particular, the action-oriented ones, looked forward to the spring action as a measure of how the group would function as a community after the series of meetings ended. Of the ideas generated for actions, we potlucked and went camping. People discussed community during these gatherings, but not in a focused way. The gatherings quickly faded, but from my observations, 90% of the participants continued to feel a bond with the people in the group, and felt they explored the concept of community personally and as a group. After the series of meetings, I, and another participant, wrote a description of what the group did in a format that could be replicated by others to initiate their own group (see Appendix C), because people had expressed a desire to replicate the experience we created. I have relayed the background of the Community From Within Group. Next, I will share my evaluation of the process, then the interviews, and later I will discuss my findings.

Evaluation

Throughout this process, I contributed in several ways to the group's reflection on its culture(s) and ways individuals or the group could adapt to a more sustainable way of living. These ways seem limited in scope initially, but may have subtle lasting impact. First, I gathered the organizers to plan the series of meetings. I helped the other organizers to develop a vision statement and a list

of topics to be discussed. We discussed community in the abstract. As communicated in the vision statement, our intent was to look at community in a local way by beginning with personal experiences. This implied a personal responsibility for understanding how one relates to and defines and participates in community, which could gradually expand into broader community contexts.

I interjected a cultural perspective. For the first topic of the series, I researched and shared examples of community (as the organizers of our series were beginning to define it) in other cultures and other time periods. I also suggested a topic relating the human community to other life on the planet in order to apply what the group had learned. The topic of interconnectedness was explored with a participatory approach in order to gain further understanding about the success of participation increasing motivation.

An important contribution of the applied anthropologist is evaluation of the process. The evaluation process also contributed to the dialogue and planning phases (for future events). One of the skills of anthropologists is qualitative research and analysis. In the interview process with the Community From Within group questions were directed towards understanding what role, if any, the series of meetings had in participants' lives. It was a one-on-one time for participants to reflect on what had been discussed and what meaning it had for them. Participants contributed their own questions to the interview. People seemed to ponder the questions regarding future possibilities. People spoke most on the questions about relations. It seemed to strike several people that we had done something simple but unusual for many people—to gather 8-10 people together once a week for six weeks to consider intimate issues and share personal stories. Even if we did not have any new insights, the simple act itself was community building in a subtle way, according to one interviewee. I interviewed four participants.

I began by asking participants to describe their relationships with the other participants before and after the series of meetings. Then I proceeded to ask participants to describe a typical week and what role, if any, the group played in their week. After that I asked interviewees to imagine what their involvement in the group would be like in the future. Next I inquired about specific topics,

trying to obtain feedback on the content of the meetings. I asked if the group met the expectations people had. Then I focused on the structure of the group, again trying to obtain feedback which would be helpful if the group were to be replicated. At the end of the interview I asked what questions the interviewee would ask and, as I proceeded to interview others I incorporated those questions (see Appendix I for detailed description of interviews).

It was difficult to minimize bias, in terms of interviewees suspecting I was looking for a particular answer. I tried to minimize this by phrasing a question as, “what role, if any” and encouraging honesty. I did receive feedback useful for the purposes of replicating the experience. I was able to discover themes through comparing and contrasting the interviewees’ responses. I will share these next.

The initial interview questions revealed developing relationships between participants. Most people were acquainted prior to the meetings. After the series participants indicated that relationships had deepened with at least one other participant.

When I asked participants to describe a typical week with regards to the group they responded in a variety of ways. At the very least participants considered during the week the next week’s meeting and the topic to be discussed. Some felt their experience radiated to other aspects of their lives. Yet another indicated that she felt the significance of the group in her weekly rhythm more after she had facilitated once.

From questions of past relationships with other participants to current involvement with the group I then ventured to ask about the future, and what participants see as their potential relationship with the group. Only one participant expressed skepticism about the cohesiveness of the group. Other participants said they could imagine calling on other participants for assistance in the future.

The remaining interview questions are more detail oriented. They pertain to topics and structure of the group. For a thorough report on the interviews see Appendix J. Next I will discuss my findings based on the interviews as well as observation.

Findings

Participants in the series utilized the group as a sounding board for issues they encountered in other communities in their lives. Participants discussed the numerous different communities they encountered in their lives. The group acknowledged multiple communities, which included a shared chiropractor, shared neighborhoods, neighborhood associations, children's regular playdates, long-term friendships, and joint preparation for Y2K. The primary purpose for the series was support for the other communities in our lives, some of which overlapped between participants.

There was noticeable residual idealism. For example, the word "tribal" was mentioned at least a dozen times over the series. Often it was mentioned in the context of what tribal societies would do in such and such a situation. Two books on the reading list, Chalice and the Blade (Eisler 1988) and Ishmael (Quinn 1995), were read at least in part by the four organizers. They influenced the organizers' ideas about gender, environmental responsibility, valuing of work, peace, and different economic systems. Several organizers, including me, were influenced by the utopian genre of literature. Despite trying to be pragmatic after having witnessed or experienced community failures or having had negative community experiences, the shared ideal remained. That ideal seemed to imply that this community we were forming would be cohesive in the future and would play a significant part in our lives.

Several instructional obstacles arose: difficulty finding a time for everyone to meet, lack of a clear decision-making process and leadership roles, low trust levels between several members, and different expectations of what proportions of different activities should be included (of intellectual discussion versus community activism versus community-building activities). The first obstacle, available time, informed us that we needed to pace ourselves for the series of meetings so there would not be a high attrition rate. All parents of young children found it difficult to set aside time to meet. However, there was a strong commitment to the idea of the discussion group, which

propelled everyone to complete the planning process. Each of the four organizers were mothers of similar values (particularly regarding parenting), ethnic groups, and economic and education levels. The majority of mothers worked part-time. Two of the three of these worked mostly when their partners were caring for their children. The other mother was single, developing her own business. Common parenting values seemed to link the organizers together and correlated to the motivation for building community together.

Next, the lack of a clear decision-making process and lack of leadership roles led to a slowing of the planning process. I agreed with one of the interviewees who said that she did not think a group like this could arise spontaneously. I observed people leading busy lives that do not allow room for much spontaneous discussion. The concentration of a few organizers who then share authority with participants who join can help a group coalesce. Without a clear leader, we referred to the book, Formal Consensus (Butler 1987), as a decision-making guide. I provided photocopies of the consensus process and protocol, but not everyone was familiar with using it. There was brief discussion of consensus. Participants generally looked to each other for approval of an informal proposal or idea before moving to other items. Without 100% approval, there would be further discussion until there was 100% approval, or an adaptation of the proposal that was satisfactory. This became inefficient at times when, for example, people's personalities conflicted. There was no clear process for addressing concerns of someone absent from a meeting.

In times of conflict, the natural leader in the group tended to intervene. Her quick thinking, articulateness, and extrovert nature enabled her to intervene quickly when the meeting became unfocused. This was useful at times, but sometimes she intervened so quickly that other members of the group felt dis-empowered or frustrated about not having a voice in a situation. I anticipated that there would be some confusion about my role as a graduate student intern, that there would be expectations that I lead or direct the group. I explained the concept of anthropologist as midwife, so that participants in the planning process understood their full responsibilities in creating the discussion group and would not rely on me. Unfortunately, this was not clear to several

participants, who expressed they did not understand the purpose, format, or roles. One couple who did not complete the series (for a variety of reasons including moving out of town) stated that a lack of clear direction was unappealing.

The issue of trust emerged because one participant continued to owe members of the group money for childcare during the meetings. The situation led to reluctance from other participants to hire childcare in conjunction with this person and alerted the planning group to the need for clearly defined finances, childcare expectations, and communication about distrust. The group was able to find a resolution that felt fair, which provided childcare but relied less on financial commitment and more on bartering from the participant who had not paid that previous time.

The final obstacle, different expectations about the proportion of intellectual discussion, community activism, and community building activities, was only alleviated, never fully resolved. Because each participant was responsible for planning one of the meetings, each person could plan the type of meeting s/he wanted, within reason, thereby satisfying personal expectations. Discussion of our different expectations alerted us to what each person desired from the group. This helped us consider different needs when we planned. However, with all these considerations, I still heard undertones of “this wasn’t exactly what I thought it would be, but that’s OK.” I heard from one of the organizers, “I didn’t think it would be like this, and I’d rather do something more active, so I may not come to all the meetings, just the ones that appeal to me.”

Next time the series is planned, it will be useful to consider some of these obstacles in advance. Undoubtedly, there will be others. A close examination of pivotal events and points of conflict reveals the values and priorities operating in a group. Around the intersections of these, community building revolved.

I have noticed a ripple effect of community building from the positive interactions of group participants. In this next section, I will explore pivotal points chronologically. The pivotal points of community building included the topic that participants indicated they wished to repeat, the feelings

that were shared, homework that was forgotten, and a poorly attended meeting that was felt as intimate by the participants who did attend.

Increased interactions in other community activities were observed. I will describe evidence of this. Two participants organized a babysitting co-op, which two other participants have joined. One woman commented that she often refers to the work we did, defining some of the ingredients of community, when she is evaluating the community quotient of a particular situation. Two participants cooperated on Y2K preparations. The reconnection of friends evolved into canoe trips and invitations for dinner. It is difficult to measure these effects, except to observe an increase in interactions between participants over time.

In the review of literature, I mentioned Gilman's stages of change (preparation, transformation, and elaboration). He suggests that cultural midwives benefit by understanding which stage of the birth a community is in. In retrospect, our group, as a study group, was in the preparation stage. Our spring action was intended to bring the group into the transformation stage. The action did not meet our expectations, but the study group itself connected people together so uniquely as to transform the relationships, a transformation stage for some participants. Interestingly, the next group I will discuss, the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, sprung from the Community From Within Group. It reflects an elaboration on the work done in the previous group.

LUNAISSANCE SUSTAINABILITY CIRCLE

Background

The Lunaissance Sustainability Circle formed one year after the Community From Within Group held its series of meetings. Two of the organizers of the first group were organizers of the second, including myself. Four participants in the first group participated in the second group. Again, organizers met initially to form the group loosely through a process of dialogue. Then, participants gave input to the structure and function of the group at the first group meeting. The group included artists, educators, parents, computer technicians and programmers, an ecological engineer, a midwife in training, a wholesaler of imports, a graduate student, an electrician/lamp repairer, an activist/musician, and two massage therapists. Attendance at meetings ranged from 5-15 participants. Overall, the average attendance was 7 participants. The group read extensively to become informed about alternative perspectives on the state of the environment not presented by mainstream media. Participants seemed to have values that emphasized simplicity and the earth.

The group had two consistent roles, each of which rotated each meeting. These were host and facilitator. The host was responsible for providing a space for the meeting, which typically was in our homes. The host usually provided a hearty potluck dish. The facilitator was responsible for contacting committee members for input on the agenda and for planning the agenda, printing it, and facilitating the meeting. I sent e-mails that summarized the previous meeting; I reminded people about an upcoming meeting; I coached people at facilitating if they were new to it; I kept track of future agenda topics; and I made sure there was a host and facilitator for each meeting.

About 7 months into our meetings, we attempted to identify a committee structure because people expressed confusion about whom to contact to help with a certain project. We enthusiastically identified committees and their associated contact people. In retrospect, we formed too many committees for the size of the membership. Several remained dormant; it was premature

to identify those as committees. Perhaps simply identifying contact people with particular interests would have sufficed. To date, the barter committee is the only committee that remains active. There also were the “indicators” and “buy less” committees which were active. The dormant ones were the CO₂, air quality, and public action committees.

Participants considered themselves to be busy people who wanted to be less busy. The level of commitment to attendance was low from some members. A few participants attended every other meeting, some attended occasionally, and a few came to almost every meeting. Some participated consistently for the first year or so and then became interested in doing other things.

The first organizational meeting was held in January, 2000, followed by the first group meeting in March, 2000. We established a pattern of meeting once a month on the new moon. Meetings concluded in October, 2001. Some of the interviews as well as the photographic, co-created ethnography occurred between November, 2001 and January, 2002. The total number of group meetings was 18 over the two years. We held occasional committee meetings and events also.

Within the context of the group, participants could identify what sustainability issue they wanted to focus on in their household and present to the group. We brainstormed ideas for the group to address (see Appendix D). This constituted the “defining needs” phase of the regenerative model and overlapped into the planning phase. Some participants developed an affinity for an aspect of sustainability and tried to share that with the group. One person promoted the \$100 Holiday and Buy Nothing Day. She organized workshops for people to make inexpensive gifts. Several people focused on developing a barter network. Some focused on household systems. One person initiated a letter-writing campaign. Another person was passionate about air quality and wanted to develop forms of public responses, but did not follow through on her idea. Committees and people working on specific projects occasionally opted to meet between the monthly meetings.

I will briefly describe the context of the group, which began with two situations. First, several members participated in a discussion group on the topic of community, mentioned previously. Second, several of the same individuals and some different individuals became concerned about

Y2K. They cooperated to bulk order food and share information and resources. When Y2K did not bring any significant changes, that affiliation of people met together to discuss how, where, and if to channel their collective focus. One woman mentioned becoming a sustainability book group. One elaborated on that with pursuit of actions relevant to the readings. After discussion, the small group decided to meet once a month. They told friends and acquaintances about the forming group, and the larger group had its first meeting in March, 2000.

I would also like to discuss the broader context of the group. Many members had read at least one book on the simplicity movement in this country. Many were attempting to live a simplified lifestyle relative to the average American. This attitude of simplicity influenced our orientation. Several of the group's projects (the barter network and the consumer green cards) were, and continue to be, efforts towards sustainability, but they also satisfy the simplicity orientation of the group.

Our group named itself Lunaissance Sustainability Circle after meeting for a year. The group waited because participants wanted to see what the group became before naming it. After a time, however, participants were unsure how to refer to the group. So, an initiative to name the group evolved. We brainstormed names over a period of two or three meetings. Words and phrases included: sustainability, new moon, tending hearth, circle, lunascent, lunation, and lunaissance (which is not really a word but a play on the word renaissance). This process of waiting, reflecting, brainstorming, and then naming constituted the "defining the community" phase. This was a thoughtful and restrained process, similar to the work of anthropologists and midwives.

Originally, the core group included 10-12 regular participants. This lasted for a year, then the average attendance decreased. Several members mentioned that, in the winter, they expected a decrease in their personal attendance, and the group was indeed at half strength. This slowed the development of some projects, such as the barter network website, because of a lack of momentum. At first, I interpreted the decrease in attendance as a linear trajectory downwards. But with systems thinking penetrating my way of thinking more, I realized that it was too soon to judge. I thought

that the attendance of this group would have a cyclical nature, given the group's decision to meet on the new moon as a way to connect to the rhythms of nature. I overheard members of the group mentioning their own tendencies to hibernate and to be introspective in winter. Thus, the attendance could have increased in the spring without extra publicity. Unfortunately, this increase did not occur.

As a response to the trend of low attendance, participants decided to write invitations for each participant to hand to one acquaintance whom s/he thought might be interested. First, we did a go-around (a technique in small groups in which each person has the opportunity to speak for a time about a subject without interruption) in which each person shared one or more reasons why s/he came to Lunaissance. I took notes during this process. At the end of the meeting, we used my notes to compose the invitations. Omitting details and contact information about the next event, the invitation is paraphrased thus:

People attend Lunaissance Sustainability Circle for a variety of reasons: a support group for education about sustainability, a place to talk about some things a lot of people aren't talking about, to anchor intentions to make positive changes in lifestyle which will help the environment, and to draw on a resource of energy, enthusiasm, and manpower (Pickering 2001).

Other comments from people about why they attended meetings included their use of meetings as a method for dealing with burnout, a way to receive immediate positive feedback for actions taken, and a way to tie individual actions into group actions (Pickering 2001). This also contributed to the "defining the community" phase of the regenerative model.

Our meeting agendas always provided an opportunity for feedback, which ranged from suggestions for the facilitators to musings about what moved people during the meeting. For example, at one meeting I received feedback that I needed to facilitate more opportunities for the

introverts to talk, because the talkers in the group tended to dominate that particular meeting. Thus, evaluation occurred on a monthly basis. Later, the interviews contributed longitudinal evaluation.

At our final meeting in the fall of 2001, we watched the documentary Affluenza (DeGraaf 1997). We began the meeting with our usual talking stick round. I intended for the question for the go-around to acknowledge the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and to tie sustainability in to peace. I asked simply, how can living in a sustainable way contribute to peace? One woman mentioned the SUVs driving on the road with their American flags, looking like a demand for control of oil. Someone suggested that unsustainable practices make us unhappy, which decreases our inner peace. Another person mentioned the concept of green religions, hinting that behavior changes need to be backed up by a belief system.

After some business, we watched Affluenza, which participants found to be both a humorous and a depressing portrayal of the serious impact of American consumerism. Participants seemed moved, at times repulsed, by some of the images. The movie began with Scott Simon from National Public Radio being diagnosed with affluenza, which is defined as “an unhappy condition of overload, debt, anxiety, and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more” (De Graaf 1997). Symptoms of affluenza included swollen expectations, shopping fever, chronic stress, hypercommercialism, material girls and boys, rash of bankruptcies (one of the participants in our group had just filed for bankruptcy), fractured families, social scars, and a global infection (De Graaf 1997). In the documentary, Duane Elgin described a culture of simplicity developing through study group and internet resources (De Graaf 1997). One fact that intrigued group members was the declining rate of participation in civic organizations.

A motivating moment in the video was the analogy drawn between the anti-smoking campaign in past decades to the sustainability movement today. A clip of an advertisement for smoking as cool drew laughter from our group because that is a less familiar sight now than previously. The segment suggested that an attitude adjustment for our society was needed, similar to the adjustment our society underwent regarding smoking in public places and the concept of smoking as cool (De

Graaf 1997). That message seemed to affect people deeply. They talked more about that section than any other and agreed with its message.

Our emphasis on local and community was captured in the images depicted on our currency for the barter network. Anyone who wanted to contribute to the design of the currency was invited to attend the design meeting. We discussed slogans, art, specific information that needed to be on the currency. A town scene with pedestrians was decided upon for the drawing. In the middle, we left space for a stamp (as a forgery protection). One member offered a design for the stamp, a pattern of ripples illustrating chaos theory. That member, an artist, designed and created the stamp, while another artist in the group drew the town scene. The currency symbolized, and still does, a connection between the local (town and specific people) and the complex, adaptive, self-organizing systems of which we are a part (see AppendixG). In fact, during the brainstorming process for a name for the group, words such as net, system, association, and council were suggested. The currency also signified a hope that our efforts would ripple out and meet the ripple effect of other sustainability efforts, eventually causing a credible disruption in the main stream of unsustainability.

The Lunaissance Sustainability Circle participants read several articles that discussed similar lifestyle change efforts. Our local group was able to gain the contextual perspective that it was one of many localized, similar efforts throughout the country, such as the NWEI and GAP groups as well as other local environmental groups. Initially, participants expressed feelings of isolation, but they later referred to an awareness of our group as one of many in an emerging system. Nationally known alternative press magazines such as Yes!, UTNE Reader, and Mother Jones and intentional communities across the country continue to use the terms culture worker, culture changer, or cultural midwife. Inspired not only by influences from travel or reading about other cultures' relationship to the earth, readings on sustainability, and data about the state of the environment, these authors were also influenced by this systems age that is symbolized by the computer and internet access and activism. Decentralized, multiple, localized approaches seem more catching than centralized, cumbersome, or conflict approaches to change. Our group too seemed to view its

effect in conjunction with the effects of other groups making similar efforts and hoped that our combined efforts might make a difference.

Another relevant movement growing across the country was and continues to be community supported agriculture (CSA). In a CSA, local farmers sell subscriptions to their farm before the growing starts. The money finances the farm. When the growing season begins, shares of produce are received by share-owners to enjoy fresh, local produce. Two households from the Lunaissance group plus an associated household joined a Community Supported Agriculture Farm. Reasons for joining included the desire for healthy food, support for the local farmer, land stewardship, and belonging to a community. Through membership and adaptation of lifestyle to the CSA, members form a community, albeit not a physical community in which people live in close proximity. The two households belonging to the CSA carpooled to the farm and discussed ways to cook certain unfamiliar produce.

This concludes my observations. Next, I will evaluate my observations and interviews, then share the co-creative ethnography that evolved from the interviews. After that, I will synthesize my findings.

Evaluation

Now I will discuss my role in the context of the group. I observed the juggling nature of my role, which included facilitating, organizing, observing, interviewing, arranging for guest speakers, analyzing, photocopying, procuring, distributing, and assisting others in their facilitation (such as by e-mailing the group, helping to compose the agenda, and supporting them in the meeting). I recapped the meeting by e-mail for all on the list. I also researched issues. When one person wanted to share information with the group about air quality issues because she was noticing more haze, I helped her search on the internet for relevant information. I also explained concepts that were

unfamiliar. For example, during the indicator process, there was confusion over what an indicator was. I provided definitions from a couple of sources. I shared my analysis of the group in indirect ways. For example, I wrote a report after the group had been meeting for one year. Rather than read or distribute the report I shared perspectives from it during the talking stick time or other appropriate times during the next meeting without seeming formal or distant (see Appendix E). I shared information, such as statistics, about the state of the environment. Other people brought articles also. Additionally, I encouraged reflection of the process by participants. At one of the first meetings, I asked people to reflect on what sustainability means to each person. For example, at one meeting I asked people to list privately some personal actions s/he wanted to take individually or as a community, then to consider what impedes that action. I gave examples of time constraints or feelings or financial constraints blocking action.

I observed others' roles in the group. One woman in particular was a charismatic change agent. I gleaned from interviews and casual conversations that some people had joined the group because of her involvement. When she suggested a new direction or initiative, people often followed her lead. She admitted that she tends to over commit her time, which happened during her participation in this group, resulting in her attendance diminishing. Unfortunately, some participants became dependent on her presence, and when her attendance waned, they seemed less enthusiastic about the meetings, and then their attendance began to wane. She also suggested more tasks and ideas than she could handle. When the group could not follow through on these ambitions, there was a dip in morale.

Another member always was responsible. She attended regularly; she completed tasks for which she volunteered and helped to organize the \$100 Holiday. The group needed more participants who could commit reliably.

Of the participants in Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, at least half seemed to be living in a more sustainable way compared to when they began participating in the group, decreasing their environmental impact, even slightly over time. I base this on observations of behaviors and confirm

with analysis later in the interviews. Fifteen percent of the entire group distinguished themselves by decreasing their observable environmental impact. From my observations, 100% seem to continue to have a greater awareness of sustainability and personal responsibility.

The depth of rapport and length of contact were a major asset in my research of Lunaissance Sustainability Circle. I was able to observe both the formation and slow dissolution of the group after almost two years of activity. This provided a broader perspective than I was able to obtain with any of the other groups in my research. Because of the length and depth of contact I was able to conduct two rounds of interviews with the group. The interview process provided insight into the participants' experiences of their roles. One concern about interviewing people I know is social desirability, that they would give me answers they thought I would want to hear. However, many times I heard people express feeling overwhelmed, frustrated and confused, which were not what I was hoping to hear.

The first round of interviews was oriented towards feedback for the on-going meeting. I examined the data gathered and based on that examination adapted my facilitation of the group. For example, interviewees expressed confusion about the process of identifying indicators. The confusion was observable, but the interviewee was specific about the awkward wording of categories, and suggested her own. Another interviewee clearly articulated her primary need was help with daily decisions such as cloth or disposable diapers (see Appendix J for thorough description of these interviews).

The second round of interviews was more extensive in terms of number of people interviewed and the number of questions. I tried to understand how people came to the group, why, and what kept them coming or not. One of the main ideas that emerged was that the community of people who participated served to motivate each other to improve our sustainability habits simply by being a part of the community.

I asked questions about the format and structure of the group. What emerged in this line of questioning was two fold. Participants felt both frustration at the lack of clarity and purpose, and enjoyment of the inductive, and at times ambiguous process.

When I asked participants how often they think about sustainability they replied individually, but as if in unison, “All the time!” The list of what caused people to think about sustainability was long, ranging from nature to shopping. Despite thinking about sustainability all of the time, time emerged repeatedly as the single most important obstacle to people improving their sustainable lifestyle (see Appendix J). Next I will discuss the phase that followed the interview process.

I took the interviews one step further with the co-creative ethnography. This was the most significant methodological contribution of my research, a tangible postmodern technique. It was effective at finding material that I was not able to access with traditional techniques. Images were suggested that I had never considered. It also gave the opportunity for more group experience and a tangible reminder of the group’s experience. The creation of the ethnography was a collaborative effort. Participants were asked in the interviews to describe images that symbolized sustainability to them. In some cases, participants took the pictures themselves. After I collected all of the pictures, I began to assemble them into a booklet that could be reproduced for everyone. With the pictures, I placed text quoted from the interviews about the image suggested. Within the booklet, I also included the composite sustainable day, which people described in the interviews. After assembling a rough draft I showed one willing participant the booklet for feedback. I printed enough copies for all of the participants who indicated they wanted one. The act of creating the booklet built community bonds as people interacted in order for pictures to be taken. The booklet potentially can remind people of the work they did together, the values they hold, and the community of which they are a part. The images people selected, as symbols, have the potential to motivate participants to continue to strive for a more sustainable lifestyle. Below is the co-creative ethnography we created.

Co-Creative Ethnography

I began by asking people to describe their ideal sustainable day or week. From these descriptions I distilled two composite days, drawing on the similarities between participants' descriptions. One is set in the city and the other in the country. Two people drew on experiences in other places they had visited in order to describe their ideal sustainable day or week. One remembered a friend's home in downtown Seattle. Another described the ecovillage in Poland where his son lives. Those images form the basis for the two visions described. I will use the present tense which some did (some also used future passive).

City Narrative:

I live in a house downtown, with no need on a daily basis for use of a car. I can take the bus. I walk to work. My work is sustainable. I am a massage therapist, nurturing people so that they are rejuvenated for their day. My children are cared for by my friend nearby. Up the street from me is a park (where my children play and where plays are performed in a little amphitheater), a grocery (with locally produced items), the library, and a second-hand clothing store. At the grocery, I buy fresh produce. In my yard I have a garden, a compost pile outback, and a clothesline for drying my clothes. I have canned food storage and a root cellar. My home is not chock full of stuff. My heat and water are solar powered. I don't spend much time doing errands. I am relaxed and have a slow pace to my life. I have time to do creative projects rather than spending resources. There is ample time for my work as well as rest, my social life and exercise. I have enough. Tonight is the one night each week that dinner is delivered to me by my friend down the street, in exchange for a massage once a month. Other days, our family has plenty of time to plan for meals, so we do not need to eat out often.

Country Narrative:

I live in an ecological community out in the country at the base of the mountains. The community was established with a vision of living in a sustainable way. We have an apple and plum orchard. The organic garden is in full production. We support ourselves through our convention center. The meetings that take place are usually related to healing or ecology. Recently there was a seminar on healing herbs. Our cows give us raw milk. We have little need to go down to the nearest town.

The scenario set in the country did include some of the features of the first scenario as well, but I chose not to repeat them. One woman who responded to the question did not draw on a concrete place or time. She summarized eloquently her vision for a sustainable day as, “ a day where my wants are equal to my needs, and my needs are reachable with minimal resources spent” (Interview with Barbara). Another interviewee pointed out that in her sustainable life, people would have a high knowledge quotient of how things are made, the plight of laborers, and the additional environmental cost of items (Interview with Joan).

It is important to note the difficulties for participants who want to make sustainability more typical in their days. The prohibitive cost of some choices is discouraging. One woman said, “You have to be rich to move downtown [in Charlottesville]” (Interview with Kallie). She also mentioned that, when she returned from her visit to Seattle, it was depressing coming back. She complained, “It’s just not set up to live sustainably [the city of Charlottesville where she lives]” (Interview with Kallie). Another person mentioned that she would love to remodel her recently bought home near downtown, but that the systems she would like to incorporate are too expensive (Interview with Joan).

Next I asked, “What images of sustainability in your life would you want to depict with a camera? Do you mind me taking a picture of one of those images at some point?” I will share the actual images photographed. One person in a suburban home suggested a picture of her clothesline as the only one in the neighborhood. She described this as “the littlest thing you can do [for sustainability].” She wondered why, besides adherence to the restrictive covenants, others did not hang a clothesline. She thought perhaps people viewed it as “an aesthetic [issue], not being middle class, something tawdry” (Interview with Kallie). Perhaps it is an issue of convenience and time. She also carools to school with another family; so, I included a picture of her daughter carpooling.



Fig. 1 The only clothesline in the neighborhood



Fig. 2 Daughter's carpool

Another person mentioned several images, including: her husband on his bike, riding to work; herself with a carload of kids carpooling; and a barter exchange, in this case an exchange of barter currency(see Appendices F and G) for demolition work (Interview with Barbara).

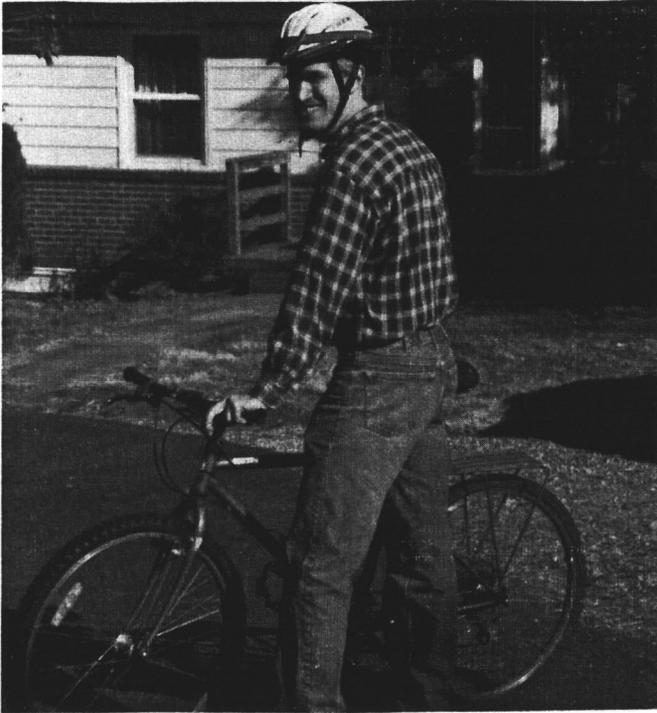


Fig. 3 Bike commuter



Fig. 4 Carpooling



Fig. 5 Barter exchange

Another interviewee suggested a picture of him at the ecovillage community in Poland where his son lives (Interview with Daniel).



Fig. 6 At the ecovillage in Poland

One thoughtful response was an image of a participant's family. She elaborated, "We are a symbol of sustainability because I've put a lot of energy ...so everyone's needs are getting met...not taking too much...the love in our family circle" (Interview with Penny). She also mentioned a picture of herself walking her daughter to school, which is on the next page.



Fig. 7 Walking to school

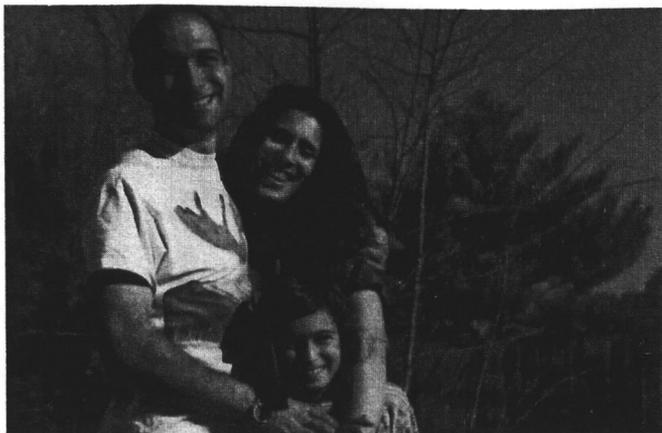


Fig. 8 Family as symbol of sustainability

One person listed these pictures: recycling bins (here they are the bins for plastics), her feet walking places, and her laundry room which has environmentally sound detergents. These are shown below.



Fig. 9 Laundry detergents



Fig. 10 Walking



Fig. 11 Recycling bins

She also described an intriguing image of she and her new husband “looking wryly at each other, representing inner conflict in each person [about difficult personal choices regarding sustainability],” which is not included. She elaborated that choices are often difficult, saying, “our culture is geared towards not sustainable” (Interview with Joan). I have observed that the most sustainable choice is often the most expensive one. For example, environmentally sound detergents are often more expensive than regular detergents.

I included photos of what is symbolic of sustainability for me, and my husband. Mine was a picture of me making repeated calls to cancel junk mail. I wanted to emphasize persistence in my symbol of sustainability.

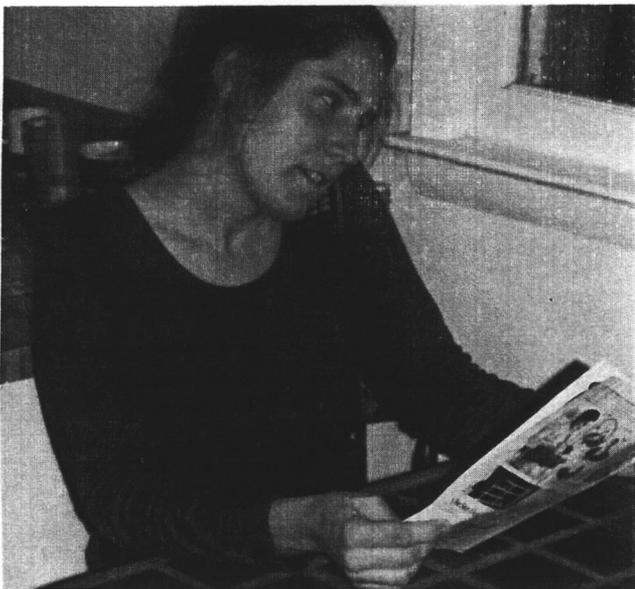


Fig. 12 Canceling junk mail

My husband is shown conserving water by installing low flow faucets and showerheads, and, significant to him, disposing of the high flow showerhead.



Fig. 13 Installing Low flow faucet



Fig. 14 Installing low flow shower head

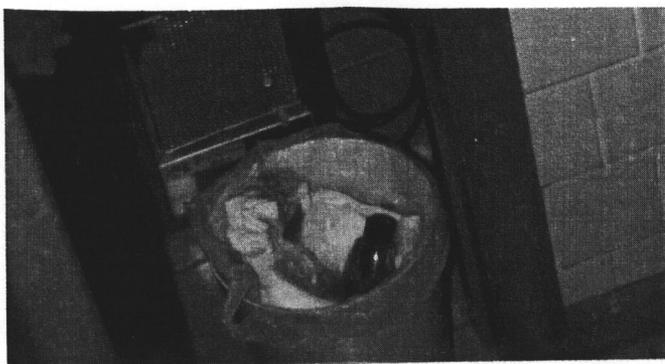


Fig. 15 Disposing of high flow shower head

I also included pictures of actions mentioned in the group, which many participants practice. These are composting and buying local produce (here a participant is picking up her weekly bags of produce from the CSA's drop-off point).

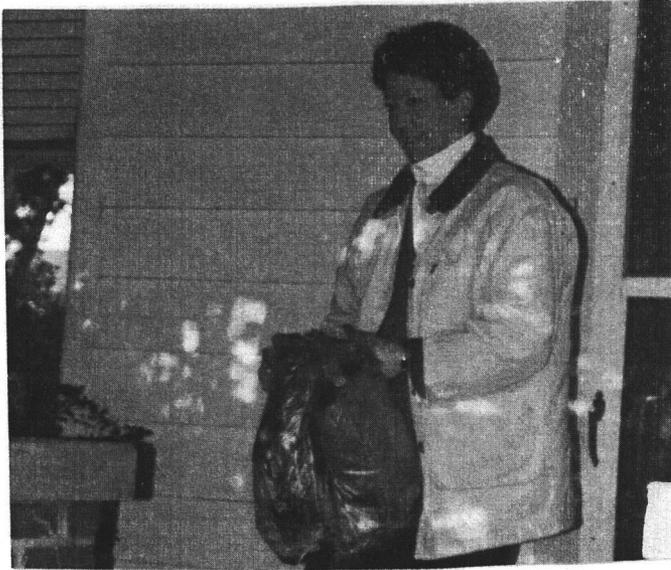


Fig. 16 Buying local produce from CSA



Fig. 17 Composting

Another symbol that I heard motivating people in the group, including myself, was the image of what we are leaving future generations. I took a picture of my daughter recycling cardboard at the recycling center. It looks as if the recycling is looming over her, as the mounds of waste we produce now might loom over her generation in the future. But, it is the recycling of waste in this picture, an image representing how the future can take different courses.



Fig. 18 The waste our future generations face

This finishes the co-creative ethnography with Lunaissance Sustainability Circle participants. Next, I will discuss my findings. Then I will explore in detail the work of the focus group and application of systems thinking.

Findings

In my findings I noticed several themes among group members in their responses to the group process. One was confusion about how to approach issues people wanted to address. Others included identity, privacy, individualism, and interconnectedness.

The first theme I noticed emerging in the discussion group was a general sense of confusion or fogginess about how to approach the subject matter. This seemed to correlate with times in the meetings when there were perhaps too many ideas introduced for discussion. This also occurred when discussion went on a tangent about someone's personal fears or anxieties about the state of the world, and how there was an urgent need for work to be done. There are techniques available to address those concerns. I recommend cultural midwives become familiar with these techniques.

Related to this was a lack of identity for the group (possibly because there were so many possibilities) and a simultaneous craving for identity. Some people in the group seemed interested in a name, a vision statement, a mission, and a process, and in networking with related local groups. Others seemed hesitant to define ourselves too soon. There was also clearly a lack of available time in people's lives for all of the above, which became a significant variable in the group's process.

There was a theme of dichotomy. People in the group constantly referred to discussion versus action. Those who preferred action expressed a weariness of mental discussion. This seemed to be a way of becoming socially connected within a subset of the larger group. Learning style research suggests that people are wired for different ways of learning and that this is not a cultural trait.

Another way of becoming socially defined as a group was our choice to all read the same book (Believing Cassandra) and to ask people who joined the group to read the book. One person in the group joked that it was an initiation into the group. Someone else suggested that it helped everyone have a common language of sustainability.

An American cultural trait, privacy, seemed apparent in one situation in particular. A participant (a Canadian) in the group suggested doing a sustainability audit of each other's homes (like an energy audit that the electric company might do). Another participant responded with a grimace, while another joked that maybe she did not want to host the next meeting after all. It became clear that people felt their privacy would be invaded if the group pursued that option.

Individualism, which is a corollary to privacy, became apparent in the group process as well. During the indicator process, there was speculation about what the development of indicators meant to participants. One person seemed to feel slightly threatened as an individual by this and suggested that households should not feel a compulsion about the indicators. Most people had not interpreted the indicator process as a compulsory process, rather as a useful and meaningful guide.

As a response to this, what became important to participants was support for one another. Participants wanted to feel supported in taking actions that were counter cultural because it was so difficult to make choices that were so different from those made by most people in society. Support also emerged when people expressed fear regarding taking new actions. I saw acknowledgement that change is difficult, frightening, and slower than desired.

I observed more interconnectedness between certain people. Some people discussed car pools and errand sharing when they socialized. For some people it was more facile, especially for those who already had a degree of closeness on which to expand in areas related to sustainability. For others it was less easy, especially people who did not already enjoy a degree of closeness. The social aspect of the meetings, the potluck primarily, provided fertile ground for connections to deepen, car pools to develop, and other arrangements to be made. A section in the agenda for announcements allowed people to announce events such as yard sales, the local river festival, a

house to rent, and a give-away of used clothes. This provided more opportunities for people to connect outside of the meetings.

Because a majority of the participants had young children, I observed numerous times parents complaining that they have not been able to live in as sustainable a way as they did prior to becoming parents. I heard more than once, “since [so-and-so] was born everything went out the window,” indicating that participants felt they could be more responsible environmentally before they had children. Issues of lack of time and need for more convenience were often cited as culprits related to their change in lifestyle. The convenience of packaged goods, of the automobile, of buying a new product rather than hunting for a used one was tempting for all parents. There was a sense from two of the families that now that their children were getting a little older (no longer babies), they were trying to regain some of the practices to which they were accustomed. The homogeneity of the group may have been beneficial in that people could relate to the constraints each other faced in the life stage of parenting young children.

I thought about whom the group attracted. Not only were there many parents, but most of the participants had college educations, shopped at health food stores at least half the time, and would identify themselves as “alternative.” In terms of occupation, there were several teachers, several self-employed, several homemakers, a massage therapist, a construction worker, computer technicians, and artists. The group was not very diverse ethnically, nor apparently economically. Despite feeling that their lives were busy, all participants had some amount of leisure time to visit with friends, to attend school meetings, and to exercise.

One idea, car sharing, was referred to repeatedly by group members. The concept was described in an article in the NWEI reading packet (Roy and Roy 2000:III-13). More than simply the concept of sharing a car, the author suggested a cool car as a way to make the idea appealing. This idea of “cool” motivating people to take further actions stimulated participants in our group and increased their optimism about people adopting new behaviors. Other creative, original ideas from fellow participants stimulated people. One person suggested a health club that would generate electricity

through the use of the mechanized equipment. Another person suggested requiring cars or gasoline to contain a dye that is emitted from the exhaust of automobiles so that the pollution becomes more visible and apparent to motorists.

I considered which ideas received the most attention and why. Fewer miles driven in the car seemed to gather attention at several meetings, including an impassioned description of how one person felt every time she put gas in the car. Only two participants in the group lived in the immediate downtown area where many stores are within walking distance. Many of the families may find it difficult to access public transportation with more than one child, a stroller, and belongings. So, group members found themselves dependent on the car and resentful of the design of cities that makes it prohibitive to choose other options.

Another idea that was expressed several times was how to spread awareness about the issue of sustainability. Besides discussing networking with other local environmental or community groups, we discussed engaging in the 5-year comprehensive plan the city was working on and putting sustainability on the docket. One participant suggested that each person could initiate a sustainability group in his or her own neighborhood association.

Participants did initiate a letter-writing campaign. This lasted for several months and enabled me to see what issues people chose to address. The issues included opposition to genetically modified food, support for a recent traffic calming effort by the city of Charlottesville, and letters to the president and the secretary general of the U.N. voicing support for signing the Climate Change Treaty. One person took this a step further and began attending the local farmer's market each Saturday with a petition regarding genetically modified food. He became an outreach person for the Organic Consumer's Association.

A final theme of humor trailed through the meetings, starting with the book Believing Cassandra. It emphasized humor in the face of the depressing news about the state of the world. One humorous anecdote was shared about another woman and myself who had been involved in the errand sharing circle. We had agreed to communicate with each other when one of us would be shopping at a store

such as Kmart in order to help shop for each other (so as to reduce the number of car trips as well as the number of impulse buys). I went to Kmart, forgetting to call anyone until I arrived in the checkout line. I walked out of the store and on my way back to the car ran into this other woman who had left a message on my machine asking if I wanted anything from Kmart. We laughed as I told her I had just remembered I was supposed to do that too. The laughter helped to diffuse the frustration about doing errands and at my forgetfulness.

There was a stated desire to have fun also. We agreed to play a game at one of our meetings. This was a recommendation in the book Believing Cassandra so that people would not become too bogged down by the bad news of the state of the world. We played the innovation diffusion game, which was a bonding experience involving role-playing. Other ways of adding some fun to the meetings included having a potluck and honoring arrival time, during which people loved to socialize. At times, in fact, it was difficult to orient the group to the official start of a meeting because people were enjoying conversation.

Some of themes discussed acted as constraints, other themes were responses to those constraints. For example, the themes of support, humor, and having fun together were responses to the difficulty participants faced achieving their goals. Next, I will discuss in detail the focus group that worked on indicators, a process, which had its own difficulty.

Focus on Indicators

Background

The work with the local sustainability group in the past year or so, as well as the work with the community discussion group, inspired participants to identify indicators of sustainability or community. Participants expressed interest in developing their own indicators that were meaningful

to them. I tried to ascertain what those concepts meant to participants rather than imposing my own concepts. I will now describe the background for the process of defining indicators. Then I will evaluate the process and describe my findings.

Marlor et al. (1999:216) explains how the researchers sought endogenous validity in indicators, meaning “that the variables, and the assumed relationship between variables and indicators, arise from cognitive structures or schema held within the community. We saw our task as encouraging communities to identify endogenous concepts that express the collective good”. I attempted with fellow participants to ascertain what their definitions of indicators were and how they would measure them.

The process of developing indicators was inspired by the group’s discussion of a recent book on sustainability called Believing Cassandra, by Alan Atkisson. The purpose of the research was to assist the group in developing a process of discovering household indicators that would reveal ones that were culturally appropriate and personally meaningful to the participants in the group. This was one way participants could become skilled at amateur anthropology, and empower themselves.

It would have been simpler for our group to adopt indicators from another group, such as Sustainable Seattle. However, because individuals had expressed interest and the group seemed enthusiastic, the intent of the project was to develop indicators that were meaningful to this particular group. I thought it best to develop our own process of indicators. For example, we would not want to simply adopt Seattle’s list of indicators (Sustainable Seattle 1998), which included salmon runs, because we have no salmon, nor are salmon an important symbol in Virginia. We also did not want to simply adopt the indicators developed by some local residents in the Charlottesville area (T.J. Sustainability Council 1995, 1998), because we did not feel part of the process. With meaningful indicators, the hope was that participants would empower themselves to complete their intended actions.

The sustainability group wanted to define our own indicators. We did not have a process for developing indicators, even though the group intended to develop them. Because the group did not

know how to develop the indicators, it assigned a committee to the task. I and two others volunteered for the committee. I considered the committee to be a focus group (the two other members consented to my research). I considered the larger group to be part of the domain, the immediate area of study. I was a true participant observer since I was a member of the group as well as the committee.

The group suggested finding categories for brainstorming and then framing the indicators, so that was the first task for the committee. Then we were expected to share what we had worked on with the group and expand or adapt it to suit the group's needs. Besides Charlottesville's accords, I researched Sustainable Seattle's indicators. Then the committee considered the focus and priorities of our sustainability group, brainstormed categories, researched definitions, and referred occasionally to the Seattle and Charlottesville accords. I started by asking if these were intended to be indicators for households or for the group as a whole or for individuals. The committee responded, "Household." I then asked for clarification of what defined household. The committee decided it was the house and beyond to include the yard and the household members' interface in the community (driving around, buying things, participating in elections or school, etc.)

I continued by asking what types of categories within sustainability came to mind. This was too open-ended. So we scanned the written resources I had gathered and looked for categories such as economics, which caught someone's eye. When someone suggested an indicator, I asked how it would be weighed or valued. For example, I asked what would come under economics. The two members mentioned work, money, barter systems, and scale. Further, one member explored work in several aspects: how it affects a household, how the household interfaces with the broader economy, and whether it is soul satisfying or not. Each of us contributed ideas about scale, including the words appropriate, human, local, small is beautiful, and the concept of some mechanism for every decision we make. Thus, we developed an outline of the category with subcategories.

We thought of resource use as a category, which would include consumption, inputs, the waste stream, and habitat. Then, in one book, we saw the label “biosystem” and decided it had fewer connotations than “resource use”. Next to it on a chart was the term “built environment” which we decided to use as an additional category because it covered our homes and durable goods in a way that biosystem did not, which we had not yet considered. I asked what built environment would include. One of the members, who was an architect in training, addressed this by suggesting it meant adapting, repairing, and reconditioning.

A few more terms were discussed, including integration of concepts into our lives, relationships, governance, health and spirituality, and community. I asked if they were related in some way. There was agreement. We played with arranging them and found that relationship covered personal responsibility, community, and governance. The word intangible seemed to apply to all of these subcategories. At that point we felt we had covered the area of general categories.

Then I asked how a household goal within a category would become an indicator. Someone on the committee said it needed to be measurable, so that there would be a feedback loop for decision-making for example about how a household uses its water. Someone else said that there would be suggestions for work to be done towards that goal, after which it would be measured again. One of the members suggested we use arrows inclining, declining, or remaining level to indicate the progress, stability, or regress on a particular indicator.

The first indicator that was considered was the number of loads of laundry washed per week. This seemed relevant to the group considering that over half of the group consisted of parents of young children. We used that as a prototype for the development of other indicators and their corresponding measuring devices. We established a goal of fewer laundry loads per week. Then we brainstormed ways to measure that (water bill or counting laundry loads). Then we brainstormed suggestions to decrease frequency of loads. In practice, once suggestions were implemented for a time, then there would be another measurement to see if the household is nearing its goal.

We discussed how the group members could support each other's progress towards household goals. Committee members suggested that the group could listen to each other's ideas and dilemmas in the talking stick format. They could give each other suggestions if they were desired and could connect household work towards sustainability to larger indicators (at which point we thought of things like average water use per capita as a point of comparison). I brought to the group a poster called "Choices and Changes" that I had obtained through Sustainable Seattle which show the relative impact of a few simple choices (such as driving one's car one less day per week) if a neighborhood makes that choice, if a town, if a city.... People felt struck by the multiplied effects.

After the committee meeting, I volunteered to type up the content of our discussion, plus organized a reading packet for the large group and e-mailed it to the group. At our next large group meeting, the sustainability guidelines committee explained our work and asked the group to let us know what it needed now. They responded that we needed to discuss the indicators further at the next meeting. I volunteered to organize that effort, thinking this would be an opportunity to bring the group into the process of developing its own indicators rather than simply adopting other groups' indicators. I researched what and how other groups developed indicators. The group brainstormed (using big sheets of paper for everyone to see and have access to for writing ideas) and then prioritized or rated the indicators with a dot system (see Appendix H).

I jotted open-ended questions on the reading material that was available on a table at the meeting. One question was, "How do we link up with the material the T.J. Sustainability Council developed [Charlottesville's council on sustainable development]?" Another was, "What are the obstacles to some of these objectives?" The agenda for the meeting allotted 45 minutes for reviewing the material on the table and writing indicators during the potluck part of our meeting. This was the aspect of the meeting during which I wanted more participation from people. After we formally started the meeting, there was time for a go around (which is when everyone in the circle has a chance to say something) about the indicator process. We then continued with other meeting agenda items, but in the closing go around, some people referred back to the indicators. I

interviewed, with open-ended questions, two of the members of the group by phone the day afterwards. Throughout the process, participant observation was an invaluable tool.

I will explain further the brainstorming of indicators. During the meeting, I laid five sheets of big paper with markers on an accessible table. On each sheet was written in large letters the name of one of the categories (built environment, bio-systems, economics, and the intangible). The fifth sheet of paper had written on it “alternative categories or other” for additional thoughts people might have about categories, which provided the opportunity for suggestions about changing the categories. I had written a few examples on several sheets of the paper (biosystem, economics, and alternates), because I had observed confusion in a few people upon arrival about how to approach the exercise. On the alternative category page, I wrote categories of indicators used by Charlottesville and Seattle, so people could see the way other people had done it and hopefully spark some ideas. I explained that individuals in our group could write indicators with appropriate measures that were meaningful to them about sustainability. We had read descriptions of larger groups doing this, where the planning commission (for Charlottesville and its surrounding counties) went through a public participation process for developing indicators a few years ago. We had also read about Sustainable Seattle, which developed extensive and widely read indicators. A few group members did contribute indicators. At the end of the meeting, I asked people to indicate which one to three indicators the group had generated they preferred to focus on. This helped to inform me what topics and activities would be priorities for the group members and the group as a whole.

Evaluation

Although I thought I had described and written the framework for indicators, actions, and measures, I had difficulty communicating the exercise and getting as much active participation in the indicator process as I expected. Perhaps not all participants saw the relevance of the exercise.

People had difficulty focusing on writing; some did not understand what we were doing. Perhaps the group was distracted that night (it was the birthday of one participant), and a critical mass was not achieved. Some participants may have had a learning style that did not work well with visual or relational exercises. Finally, some participants may not have viewed the topic as something needing such exploration.

Confusion was apparent during the indicator process. Clearly, some people in the group wanted to have a mechanism for household level decisions such as whether to choose paper or plastic at the grocery store or to diaper their babies in cloth or disposable diapers. People expressed how overwhelmed they would become with the small but repetitive decisions. They became overwhelmed by not knowing in a measurable way which choice is better. They had a desire to know quantifiably how an alternative choice reduces the negative impact on the earth. There seemed to be a desire for indicators that were easily referenced on the household level of sustainability. One participant, who had attended some of the process during which the T.J. Sustainability Accords were developed, noted that ours was a more bottom-up process, whereas the T.J. Sustainability group conducted a more top-down process.

The indicator process did not meet my expectations. It did illustrate the need for consistent attendance, background reading, and clear, simple directions for the group. The group consented to revisit the issue of indicators later. Meanwhile I would take the data we did accumulate and synthesize.

Findings

Next I will describe what I found. Some people (because there was a lack of clarity about what exactly an indicator was) wrote down goals, many of which could be developed easily into indicators. Goals included under “built environment” were conscious, careful, simple design of

homes. Building of homes would prioritize practicality and function, as well as beauty. Homes would be designed to “fit” with the natural surroundings. Mixed use development was supported. Someone suggested urban retreats, such as places in urban areas where people could connect to nature or a place in the country where people could go to connect to nature. No indicators per se were listed.

Under “intangibles”, many goals were listed, but again no indicators. Goals included nourishment of the soul (such as playing a musical instrument, creating art, moments of silence, blessings before meals, seasonal celebrations). Another goal was fostering connections to neighbors by sharing resources, meals, and childcare. Someone suggested finding ways to educate or model for our children ways of practicing sustainability on a community level. Another suggested having a Thanksgiving where all the food was grown within thirty miles of our homes. One person suggested participating as a community in rituals such as the Council of All Beings.

Under “economics”, a few goals were listed. One was learning more about activism and diffusion theory. Another was decreasing TV consumption. Someone suggested researching products or businesses in the Co-op America green pages. One person listed a goal of a smaller budget. The measurement for that goal could be bank, store, and credit card receipts. Suggestions for achieving that goal included limiting purchases to sales or thrift stores and doing the Your Money or Your Life program (Robin and Dominguez 1992).

Under the category of “biosystem”, I asked what the obstacles were to meeting goals. I wrote convenience and habits. Others wrote lack of awareness and mainstream culture’s way of preaching consumption. I listed goals such as using less water and producing less trash. People added the goal of driving less and the measurement of miles per week or month driven and the suggestions of walking more, consolidating trips, and an hourly car rental. Another goal was growing our own food or crop sharing. An additional goal was using less energy with a measurement of the electric bill and suggestions of line drying clothes, using a solar oven or haybox, buying at local stores, and using portable lighting.

The final category to discuss is “alternative categories”. I wanted to give people an opportunity to suggest optional categories. I simply wrote examples from what other groups had used. Unfortunately, no one contributed.

Participants seemed to have little prior experience with this type of exercise. They initially felt drawn to the concept but not to the application. It seemed to require more of people than they were able to give. I learned that I needed to explain things more thoroughly, but with brevity. I realized I can not rely on people to do the reading that is necessary for the process prior to the meeting.

A problem I identified was a lack of connection between the work that the local planning commission had done regarding sustainability and the work that smaller groups of acquaintances or neighbors were doing. If there was more understanding of what the city was pursuing regarding sustainability, then local residents could contribute towards progress of the local sustainability accords. Thus, residents could perceive a link and an impact that their efforts had on the city-wide goals. I obtained a copy of the local sustainability accords, which I made available for the group and the committee to peruse.

In the next phase of my research, I observed participants wanting to know what the measurable effect of their choice was. On the demand side of consumption, members weighed their choices asking pointed questions: What is the measurable effect of cloth versus cotton disposable diapers? What is the measurable effect of driving one less day per week? What is the measurable effect of a more efficient car? Members shared their research. This research acted as a leverage point. Members took time to become familiar with each issue in a comfortable way. Most members were college educated and found researching issues interesting. They made an effort to put the responsibility of sustainability on their own households by decreasing demand for goods and energy use, with a goal of placing the burden of proof at the supply end eventually. In the interest of exploring issues more systematically, I widened the breadth of methods in my research to include techniques from systems thinking.

Systems

Background

In addition to the applied anthropology and postmodern approaches utilized in my research, I also used concepts from systems thinking. Systems approaches border on ethnography as they try to ascertain a variety of descriptions of a particular situation. The anthropological approach, which is reflexive in its ethnography, can contribute to such research. Systems can help the anthropologist and various stakeholders to organize information in a useful way.

Systems are everywhere; our universe is composed of systems. A simple system is x causes y . With more study, feedback loops can be observed related to the consequences of x causing y . Hierarchies of systems and subsystems can be viewed with a broad perspective as well as other matters of scale. The systems thinker can perceive emergent properties, structure, function, and connectivity. When confirmation of a system is necessary, traditional reductionist science can be used to validate it.

In ecology, the language and concepts of systems are frequently used. In anthropology, a system of dividing the discipline into subdisciplines is apparent. The problem solving necessary to the regenerative model requires the insight of systems thinking. Ecology's portrayal of ecosystems explains these relationships on a physical and biological level. Understanding the complexity of the human/social systems through understanding the complexity of ecosystems magnifies the complexity of the relationship between people and their environment.

In systems thinking, the whole is considered as well as the parts. This is compatible with anthropology's holistic perspective. Soft systems practitioners diagram the whole of a situation.

representing stakeholders, data, government agencies, citizen input, and more. Then they look for patterns, feedback loops, leverage points, attractors, and defining features of the system. Other important aspects of systems thinking include an eye towards relationships between and within parts of the whole, and acknowledgement of hierarchy. Some similarities with anthropology include a concern with patterns, functioning, and working with dynamic wholes (Plas 1986:3) [Patton 1999]. The process that I recommend using as a cultural midwife is a very similar methodology to soft systems and critical systems thinking. Similar to other systems approaches the process that evolved from my research also includes feedback loops and an evaluative component. As a meta-discipline, it is easily paired with other disciplines, as it is paired with anthropology in my research.

The systems worldview is not necessarily new nor limited to the West, but an increased awareness of it is recent in the West. Systems thinkers assert that the Western worldview is shifting from the mechanistic (machine age) to the systems worldview, which looks at complexity, connectivity, and an organism approach to objects of study. Because my research focuses on educated middle to upper middle class Americans, another reason for pairing anthropology and systems thinking is that the systems approach may be a language that the people in my research speak. The terms may be culturally amenable to them and thus useful for exploring the complexity of our group and its contexts both environmentally and culturally.

Both postmodern anthropology and systems thinking share an emphasis on context, complexity, dialogue, and the multiple voices of stakeholders. They have different methodologies for discovering these. Systems theory focuses less on how the observer has influenced a situation but more on the whole situation. The appeal of pairing it with postmodernism is that it potentially balances the narcissistic tendencies that have emerged in anthropology, which in some cases focus more on the author than anything else.

My pairing of anthropology and systems thinking is validated in Senge's The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook (1994). There he quotes Clifford Geertz, author of The Interpretation of Cultures, who states, "There is no such thing as human nature independent of culture" [(Geertz 1973) Senge

1994:26]. In my research, I question how local organizations respond to the dominant culture in terms of significant issues like the environment and community. Do they form their own cultures in response? How can anthropology help empower them to develop and sustain groups with identities that can challenge the systems? How can systems thinking illuminate the issues the groups encounter and identify leverage points and pathways to solutions?

Evaluation

Early in our process, the group discussed systems research that showed the limits to growth and learned how that research had been updated and variables accounted for recently. The group attempted to write and draw together what the indicators of sustainability and their accountable measuring devices or watermarks would be. Then the group undertook household and group goals, but had trouble achieving them. In an effort to credibly disrupt current household systems of habitual waste or careless use of energy, the group attempted to draw goals and obstacles in order to discover leverage points. By becoming aware of what self-sustaining patterns exist, participants could find ways to disrupt these patterns. I assumed that knowledge of how a system was operating would be empowering.

Because the group was unclear about the mission or identity of the group, I suggested and the group agreed to draw our group as a system in order to provide clarity. Unfortunately, when the group had the task of drawing the group, its committees, affiliations, and things the group has done, the formal sense of the meeting dissipated and members began to chat. They chatted about sustainability or things tangential to it but hesitated to participate in writing and drawing right away. I started writing and drawing first, and one by one, all but one member had contributed something in writing. The other member contributed verbally while others scribed.

One essential idea in systems thinking is the concept of feedback loops. When the original members designed the meetings, they included a check-in at the end of each meeting, in which members had the opportunity to reflect on the meeting's content and process. The facilitator could receive any necessary feedback on how s/he led the meeting (Butler). During several individual interviews (formal and informal), I asked for comments on how the meeting was facilitated. One member gave feedback regarding a meeting I had led that had been a full and difficult meeting to facilitate. I welcomed her input. She said that I could give more opportunities for the introverts in the group to talk and help taper the talkers more (Interview with Priscilla). This pointed me to a need for more understanding of different learning styles (Kolb 1984) and communication styles.

Because participants had read about systems, they had a basic knowledge of what they are and how they could be worked with in our lives. This was reflected in the process of choosing a name for the group. Participants expressed a strong interest for some part of the name to refer to the collective of people involved. The group brainstormed about the work circle, followed by council. Then researching synonyms, the participants listed net, association, and system. The group chose circle, but I found it interesting that the group considered the word system. It implied to me a sense the group had of itself as a system in and of itself. It also implied intentions of the group to close feedback loops in our personal lives, so that we would have less impact on the environment.

One member shared an observation of closing the loops after she attended a sustainability convention. She helped deliver the lunches and said that all the lunches were packaged in individual, disposable boxes. Each box cost \$1, not including the food. She was dismayed that, at a convention on sustainability, the organizers had not closed the loop, and instead had generated unnecessarily a waste stream.

By contrast, what follows is an example of a feedback loop that began to close in our group. When our group started, it included two households that lived in the country (at least 30 minutes from town). One couple expressed that they were not sure what their connection to this group was because of their lack of proximity, but they expressed a hope that there would be some relationship.

One member of that household was, and continues to be, a published writer, activist, and speaker on sustainability who travels around the country. The group (including myself) hoped to retain that household. Over time, however, they attended fewer and fewer meetings, until they were no longer participating. Soon they established a community-supported agriculture farm. Several members of the group bought shares and enjoyed produce deliveries in town of fresh produce straight from the farm. The group discussed canning days to preserve food if there was a surplus. Members could contract for working shares in which each household contributes 6 hours of work at the farm during the growing season. This had the potential to strengthen bonds between members and did so moderately. This became a natural expression of a rural connection to an urban sustainability group, a farm that fed city dwellers, and a group of city dwellers who consciously chose to support the work of one local organic grower. Next I will discuss my findings in depth.

Findings

Leverage Points Discovered

The structure of systems has points at which the system can be affected, can be escalated or de-escalated. This is called a leverage point. In analyzing the group from a systems perspective one of the main reasons is to understand what the leverage points are so that they can be utilized in the process of the group striving towards its intentions.

A leverage point that emerged repeatedly was blocks of free time. Because many members of the group had young children, their lives felt overwhelmed. It was difficult for some parents to make time to attend a meeting, not to mention undertaking complex tasks. Those members perpetually tried to make time to undertake a new level of sustainability that they had identified.

They became overwhelmed by the demands of daily tasks. For those participants, it became important to strategize ways to systematically find time for their stated goals of living in a more sustainable way. I examined the leverage point of time. In the future, I would suggest that members envision for themselves how they want their household to operate and interact with the world in a sustainable way. I would also offer research and information to help them decide how to use their hour most efficiently, because group participants indicated they wanted to know what changes would have the greatest effect. Then, after prioritizing steps to achieve this, the members could decide to devote an hour a week regularly to some act of becoming more sustainable. Cancellation of junk mail is an example, because when the junk mail slows down, more time is available because there is less material in the home to peruse and fewer items to recycle, which could lead to fewer recycling trips and more time. Thus, this is a loop with feedback that provides leverage for other actions. The leverage point is illustrated in figure 19.

An emergent property revealed itself through systems thinking. An overall balancing sustainability in our daily lives, a sustainable lifestyle that was remaining sustainable by not trying to incorporate too many environmental actions at one time, or attend too many meetings. This is exemplified in figure 8. For that photo the participant describes her family as sustainable, meaning everyone's needs are getting met. Participants in the group emphasized that they did not want to get "activist burnout." In other words they wanted to maintain a balanced lifestyle.

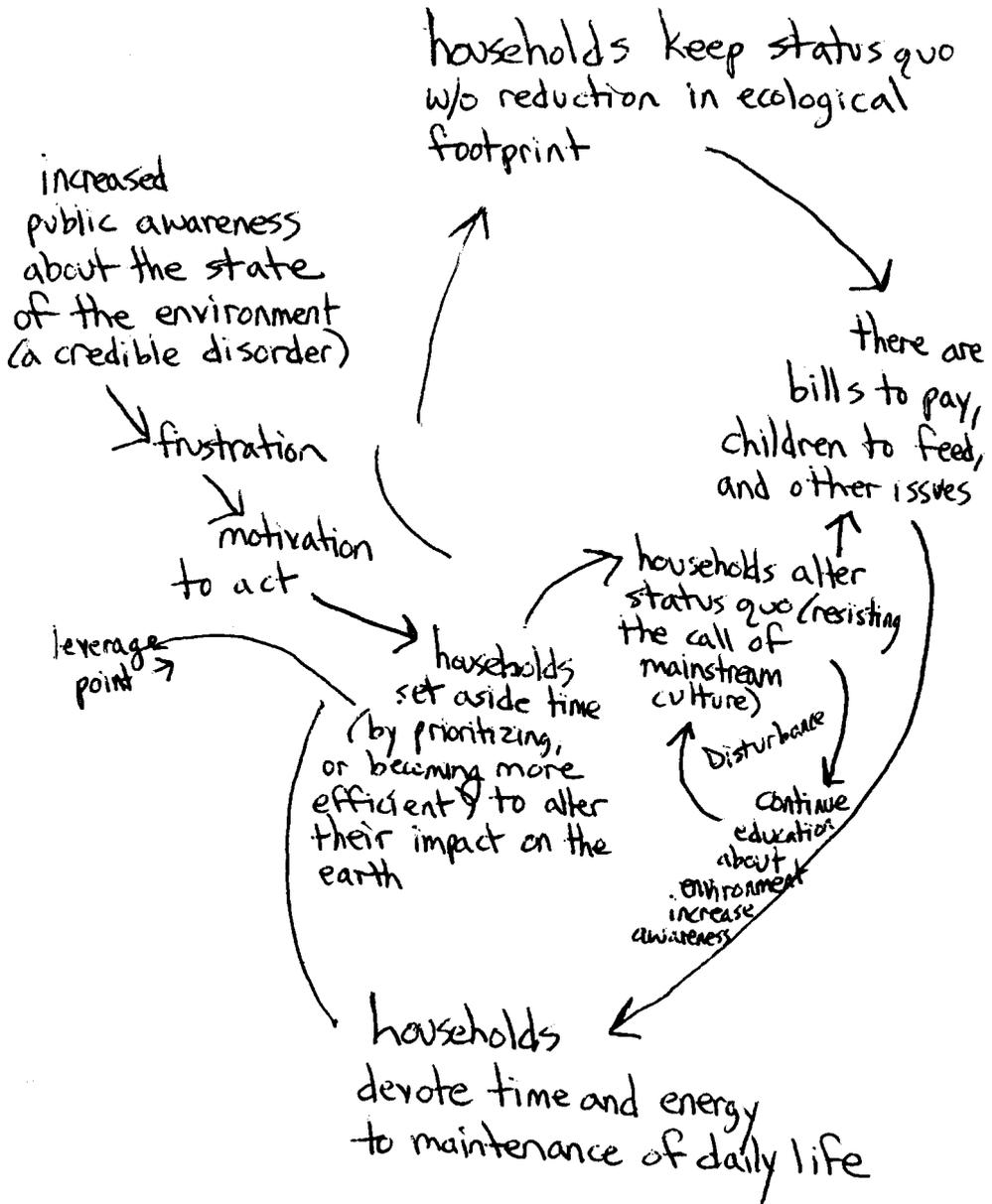


Fig. 19 The leverage point of time

A different approach to the time leverage point would be accepting a certain level of chaos and disorder in the home during the transition to a more sustainable lifestyle. Members could consider this a credible disorder that attempts to disrupt the self-sustaining reinforced loops of a non-sustainable lifestyle. It is common in systems to see a credible disorder dampened. This illustrates how, through seeing the way systems work, group members can become more aware of the tendency of systems to dampen (through the balancing aspects of the system) the effects they want to achieve.

Another leverage point I noticed was financial incentive. Some members had read Your Money or Your Life, a book about budgeting. As people engage in the program it recommends, it reduces the household impact on the earth. The book was passed around the group to the extent that over half had explored its contents. Some experiences that people share in the group relate to ways they tried to save money. These included having just one vehicle, getting rid of private mortgage insurance on a home, reducing utility bills through energy conservation.

Addressing emotions that arose with learning about the state of the environment revealed itself as another leverage point. Some resources I have read address the fact that when people learn about the state of the environment, they experience strong emotions, which can sometimes numb or block people from taking any action (Macy 1983). By having a check-in time at the beginning and end of each meeting, when each participant has the opportunity to say something if he or she chooses (a talking stick is passed around the circle), people could express what they felt. The feelings may still have been overwhelming, but at least they have been vocalized. One facilitator did this directly by posing a question about goals and the corresponding emotional obstacles that arise associated with those goals. This was asked for our initial go around (in which everyone had an opportunity to speak to an introductory question decided upon by the facilitator). People in attendance seemed deeply thoughtful and did express emotions of fear, anger, hopelessness, and guilt. In light of studying the overshoot and collapse model of Limits to Growth, by Donella Meadows et al. (Roy and Roy 2000:viii-7), parents spoke of their concern for their children's future. Emotions were a

tricky leverage point because, at one level, they could motivate people, and at another they could overwhelm people. When emotions become too overwhelming, people feel hopeless. Then they lose sight of the value in the individual or group actions. Giving voice to those feelings lets people know that other people experienced similar feelings. This can be reassuring, letting people know that it is normal. After expression of those feelings, the group could work together to brainstorm and systematically approach an issue, keeping focused on the positive.

Another leverage point we identified was attracting members. Some of the systems drawings, focusing on the group process, identify patterns in the group which could be credibly disrupted by an addition of more members [see diagrams]. Primarily, the group tended to have many ideas and not enough people to undertake the tasks. With more members, the aggregate effect of the group would become more visible. A related option mentioned by a participant was that of the group joining other local groups. There were and continue to be several local environmental groups in Charlottesville focused on sustainability. With a coalition, more public events (such as an Earth Day 2002 event) and more legislative leverage would be possible with the combined membership. Some of the group's projects created self-sustaining loops, trying to increase membership. The consumer green cards we developed had a contact number and were passed to acquaintances. The barter network will connect its members to other people who participate in it, as well as to the sustainability group. Plus, there will be a link from the barter network web page to the sustainability web page, as well as a link with Tradelocal, a local economy group. This may attract more participants for a future incarnation of the sustainability group. Publicity in local weekly papers was another option to attract more members. One local paper had asked for articles by members of our group. One member wrote articles about sustainability with some of the ideas researched and generated by the group but did not advertise the group itself. That may be a next step.

The group also worked on prioritizing the ideas generated. This was another leverage point that the rotating facilitators considered. When planning or leading meetings, the facilitators could remind participants that we need to address the many ideas already generated. Ideas could be noted

for future reference. Because people in our group tended to get excited by new ideas, facilitators could remind members to focus on the ideas that we have committed to seeing through to completion and developing doable action plans (such as with the barter network).

Of all the leverage points discussed above, time is the most significant. Most of the other leverage points mentioned rely on available time, attracting members and addressing emotions for example. Unfortunately, the members had little available time. Cultural midwifery requires a significant input of time.

Group Thinking

Group thinking emerged as another outcome of the group's work. One of the benefits of undertaking household sustainability in a group context was seeing the aggregate effect of individual actions. For example, if one person from Charlottesville were to cancel his or her junk mail, there would be minimal impact on the larger system. If twenty people all cancelled their junk mail within the same time period, someone working for a catalog or at a recycle center may take notice. Participants often considered the combined effect of their actions. They started thinking like a group.

Several useful resources demonstrated the aggregate effects of certain actions. One book, The Consumers Guide to Effective Environmental Choices (Brower and Leon 1999), explores household choices. The GAP packet gives numbers of how many pounds of carbon dioxide are reduced by particular actions. A chart called *Choices and Changes* shows measurements for 8 household actions (for example, replacing a vehicle with one that is 10mpg more efficient). It shows how much environmental impact is saved by one person's choice to do one of the eight actions. Then it

shows the effects of a community of 20,000, a nation of 270 million people, and the Earth with its 5.5 billion people doing that action. It shows the aggregate effect step by step. The group members appreciated the access to these types of information. They seemed to feel encouraged by the greater significance of the group effect over the individual effect. This type of thinking led them to increased awareness of the group as part of larger systems. Those systems were perceived literally as part of the ecosystem, and as part of a sustainability movement, locally as well as nationally.

Another benefit was having an identity and affiliation with something that affirmed one's own values. That affirmation strengthened the individual when s/he decided to read a book about sustainability or stopped buying new clothes whenever the urge struck. The individual knew the group would support such decisions, when those decisions were different from the choices of most Americans. The individual knew that s/he would have the opportunity to report back to the group about what steps s/he had taken. Most members of the group had affiliations such as a friend, acquaintance, or sibling with whom they crossed paths more frequently than once a month. These interactions of members tacitly or explicitly reinforced the shared values. Often, there were school car pool arrangements, appliance sharing, or childcare swapping, all of which supported the values of living in a sustainable way (reducing consumption). These interactions served to reinforce the system we were developing together.

The group also expanded the sustainability knowledge base of individuals. This developed not just with the selected readings, but also through anecdotes, shared articles, facts someone has read, and personal experience. The increased knowledge base possibly acted as an incentive to motivate members to continue with their efforts. Many members of our local group were shocked by data that showed the environmental impact of a typical American household (Wackernagel and Rees 1996), which reinforced some people's commitment to sustainability. The concept of the ecological footprint was often referred to as a reminder of the necessity of sustainable actions (Wackernagel and Rees 1996).

More of the group's experiences with systems thinking are described below. I shared with the group a game called The Innovation Diffusion Game, mentioned in the book Believing Cassandra. The game illustrates for people how innovations diffuse through culture, based on the theory of cultural diffusion. It gave everyone an experience of being involved in the diffusion of an innovation in one aspect or another because everyone received a role to play. The roles varied from the curmudgeon, to innovator, to change agent, to the recluse, the iconoclast, and the mainstreamers. The role was described on the card each person pulls randomly. Then people simply started playing their roles. The innovator invented something. The change agent tried to persuade mainstreamers to try it. The curmudgeon was not going to budge. The iconoclast gave the invention a kick from behind, moving it forward a bit by critiquing the current way of doing things. Observing and participating in this game, I saw everyone as part of the diffusion. The original innovator was lost in the shuffle. Who the innovator was no longer seemed important. It was the work of the whole group that brought the innovation as far forward or backward as it went. The author of Believing Cassandra discusses how innovations, in order for them to catch on with the mainstream, have to be culturally appealing in order to accelerate the process of cultural change (Atkisson 1999), which is a significant point. As mentioned before, in car sharing programs in several locations across the country (members pay a deposit and hourly rental fee but have fewer costs than those incurred if maintaining their own car), a hip, cool car would more appealing to mainstreamers than a clunker.

Next I will describe several examples of how ideas seemed to evolve more from the group rather than from individuals. One was an idea originally stated by one woman who mused that wouldn't it be great if everyone's exhaust was dyed a strong color. The idea emerged during a discussion of how to make the external costs of our everyday lives more visible so that we could be more conscious about everyday decisions. The group thought hers was a wonderful idea because everyone notices the huge diesel truck and its black smoke spewing in the air, but cars when functioning well look benign. Several months later at another meeting, a different woman mentioned how she wished her neighbor, who uses Chemlawn, could see that the chemicals go

directly downhill to drain in the river with runoff. She suddenly mused out loud, “if only the chemicals were dyed” so her neighbor could really see them. She did not seem to remember the previous idea about exhaust. I mentioned the similarity of the two ideas. More importantly, it was a moment of group think in which the group, having had extensive shared readings and numerous discussions to the extent that we were thinking along similar lines, was becoming a thinking organism.

The process of naming our group exemplified group thinking also. We had been referring to it informally as new moon sustainability circle in lieu of a formally agreed upon name. Then, as mentioned earlier, members in the group expressed a desire to have more of a sense of what the group was about, who it was. Some people mentioned that having an agreed upon name may give a sense of unified purpose. So, over a period of a few months, we discussed name ideas. Someone suggested the word lunation, which refers to the period of time between the new moons. Someone heard that and suggested lunascent, an invented word with roots referring to new moon and birth. Several of us misheard what that person said and thought he said lunaissance. Eventually, the group consented to the name “lunaissance sustainability circle.” When we reflected on that process later, one of the individuals expressed that the word lunaissance was his idea. As I had noted in my notes, several of us had misheard and said aloud the word lunaissance for clarification. This seemed to show again a group thinking moment and the importance of different perspectives, demonstrating Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. We may never know whether it was a group idea or if that one individual had the idea.

Patterns

Systems consist of patterns. One pattern I mentioned previously, which seems to be an American cultural trait, was a tendency for the group to generate more ideas than it could undertake. Even though we no longer had a need for brainstorming, new ideas were often generated. At one meeting, a young woman, who considered herself an environmental activist, enthusiastically offered to present information on the environmental damage from the coal-fired power plants in southern Virginia. By the next month, her enthusiasm had waned. I proceeded to help in researching her presentation. We discussed ways to approach the issue (letter-writing); however, she did not follow through. Allocating time for sustainable actions competed with time allocated for daily life routines. Again the theme of time recurs. It affected numerous ideas.

New ideas seemed to become addictive to the group, much more appealing to some people than following through on previous ideas. Fortunately, the group managed to focus on some ideas and follow through on them. For example, some members held "\$100 Holiday" workshops that people could attend and create simple homemade gifts and share ideas for more homemade gifts to give in an effort to spend and consume less during the holidays. Such projects require an investment of time however, which brings back that theme.

Next I want to discuss an addiction feedback loop. Here I experimented with archetype systems drawings and found the addiction loop did fit with the group. The two local groups had organizers but no clear leader. Because I was researching as well as participating, I did not want to be the leader as well. However, I found myself keeping the group going, organizing meetings, reminding people about upcoming events, volunteering to facilitate if no one else volunteered. Another example of the extent to which I kept the group afloat occurred when I was away for one meeting. The meeting had been planned but was cancelled for a variety of reasons. It made me think about my role as participant observer and how much I valued the group for the insights into sustainability

and small group work that it provided. Because I was more invested in it (with my research interests) than some members I tended to volunteer more than others. An experiment in refraining from enabling the group yielded expected results (decreases in attendance and in the level of functioning of the group).

This concludes the portion of the paper on the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle. I discussed results from observations, interviews, shared the co-creative ethnography, discussed in depth the focus group, and systems applications. Next, I will analyze results, contrasting the case studies with a fourth group, Global Action Plan.

CHAPTER FIVE, ANALYSIS

CONTRAST WITH GLOBAL ACTION PLAN'S ECOTEAMS

Background

The organization I compared with the two local groups was Global Action Plan's EcoTeam program (GAP). In this section, I will describe GAP and share my observations based on a review of primary and secondary resources. In particular I will discuss an article focusing on identity through story formation as it relates to the groups.

GAP fosters local groups which encourage concrete actions people can do to help their household function more ecologically. The groups act as support, a resource, and as something to be held accountable to. The format is similar to the three groups discussed previously. The EcoTeam workbook has topics for each meeting (eight meetings total), and facilitators rotate. There is an opening inspirational, discussion of the actions, commitment to further action, and often a sharing of food. GAP significantly differs from NWEI in that it focuses on how to make changes instead of why. GAP is less focused on beliefs and attitudes, and more focused on behaviors. GAP representatives support the work of NWEI and view the work of the two groups as complementary.

Of the two local groups in Charlottesville, the Community From Within Group was more similar to NWEI in that it explored the philosophical underpinnings to ideas about community. However, it deviated from discussion and undertook actions that were community building. The Lunaissance Sustainability Circle was a hybrid of NWEI and GAP and emphasized action even more than the Community From Within Group. Members purposefully tried to straddle the balance between discussion and action.

Our local sustainability group considered studying GAP's study guide, the Ecoteam workbook. When I read GAP's workbook I noticed that it too involved a group of people with similar values, intentions, format, and demographics, though without the involvement of an anthropological researcher. I found it to be an appropriate comparison group and selected GAP as a control (as I did NWEI). In order to do that, I reviewed the academic literature about GAP, reviewed GAP's published literature, and interviewed two campaign managers to compare the development and significant role of their discussion groups in GAP's EcoTeam programs with the local groups.

Had our group decided to undergo the GAP program, participants would have needed to purchase EcoTeam. The cost felt prohibitive to some people, so I offered to lend or share my copy. However, the group was in its decline when considering the possibility of GAP, and we did not join the program. The program involves making choices for action in the arenas of garbage reduction, improving home energy and water efficiency, transportation efficiency, eco-consumerism, and empowering others through one's social networks. The EcoTeam process aims to establish a quantitative baseline of resource use and waste before, during, and after the program (Kitchell et al. 2000). Then the EcoTeam workbook helps groups calculate the aggregate effects of the group's actions. This linking of individual action to collective action is a common technique in environmental efforts.

Scanning through the EcoTeam workbook, I looked for symbols for cultural transformation and signs of purposeful intent. Immediately I noticed on the cover a home, designed like a small earth with diverse neighbors and friends coming in and out. The figures bear potluck dishes, help with tasks such as composting, and ride bicycles. The symbol of the earth home illustrates the two-pronged emphasis on ecology and community. The first page after the copyright page shares Margaret Mead's famous and inspiring quote, "Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world—indeed it's the only thing that ever has" (Mead in Gershon 1997:cover page). The quote itself has become a symbol of initiatives to change. The workbook then defines the terms, "sustainable" and "stewardship". It makes explicit its intent to foster

stewardship and sustainable lifestyles. The workbook even offers an incentive, a Global Citizen certificate and pin, after completing a certain number of actions (Gershon 1997).

For each action, an image is illustrated; these are often humorous and inviting. They depict neighbors from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles performing actions together. The title for each action is often a clever play on words; for example, a page dedicated to recycling is entitled “Back by Popular Demand,” and a page instructing people how to reduce junk mail is called “Junk Mail Diet” (Gershon 1997:5,9).

The workbook lists a variety of actions in each category from which people may choose. The categories again are *garbage*, home energy, water efficiency, transportation, eco-consumerism, and empowering others. The actions are listed in order from the basic to more challenging; for example, the *garbage* section begins with the action of recycling and ends with the action of developing a zero *garbage* household (Gershon 1997). The actions are explained in recipe form and are easily understood. A point value is assigned to each action and totaled at the end of each section. This appeals to the American spirit of competition and its zeal for numerically valuing activities from sports to schoolwork. This point system would have been helpful for Lunaissance participants who wanted to know the comparative advantage of choosing one action over another.

The workbook is set up to function as a log. There are score sheets on which to record points at the end of each section. There are blank pages entitled “Action Notes” to encourage journal-keeping of the experience or for noting questions or anecdotes to share with fellow participants. There is a form inviting feedback from participants with specific questions. The last request posed on that form is “Please share any story about your experience that might motivate others” (Gershon 1997:103). The article discussed below explores the use of story in the EcoTeam format.

“Identity Through Stories: Story Structure and Function in Two Environmental Groups,” which appeared in Human Organization (2000), describes the research by one applied anthropologist of GAP. The authors hypothesize

that an important motivation for action is the individual's self-conceived identity. People who consider themselves, for example, an "alcoholic," an "environmental activist," or a "conscientious consumer" are internally motivated to act in ways consistent with that identity. In a study of local environmental groups we find that some groups have members tell stories that help promote identity development as well as encourage pro-environmental actions in other ways. These stories have predictable structures regulated by the groups and are consistent with the types of actions the group aims to promote (Kitchell et al. 2000:96).

I observed in the local groups that participants needed to share stories. Eventually I realized how valuable that process was to the participants and the group.

The authors relate identity to the concept of a figured world. They reference Holland et al. (1998) who state, "A figured world is a conceptual construct that places identities in relationship to each other and to expected actions. These 'forms of self-understanding [identities] are always constructed relative to a figured world of social life' (Holland et al. 1998:68)" (Kitchell et al. 2000:96). They observe in the GAP group that a figured world is developed. The expansion and further development of the figured world seem to strengthen identity. For environmental groups, this can be fortifying when the dominant culture is so opposing.

Kitchell et al. find that through the individual actions in the context of the group effort, "a supportive community is formed in which members empower themselves and each other to develop less harmful and consumptive lifestyles. This internal focus on lifestyle change is similar to the AA program aim" (Kitchell et al. 2000:98). The EcoTeam encourages change in lifestyle for the benefit of the individual, the group, and the planet. In my reading of the workbook, I notice the use of the aggregate effect of actions. The workbook asks individuals to keep track of the weight of their garbage, their car's fuel efficiency, and so forth. In AA, similar references to quantity are made, such as noting how long it has been since one's last drink. One person's progress inspires others to make progress as well. In the EcoTeam process, after changes have been implemented, they are recorded, the difference is noted, and the difference each individual contributes to environmental health is added up to obtain a group effect.

Kitchell et al. explore further how the story is used. They find that the AA model is used by an environmental group called HazTrak Coalition in the region they are studying and that “the story always ended by showing that one person can make a difference” (Kitchell et al. 2000:99). This harkens to the American focus on individualism. The HazTrak story process proceeded as follows: The participant “1) discovered the issue; 2) gathered information; 3) took action within the political system; 4) linked the environmental damage to present and future quality of life; and 5) became a successful networker” (Kitchell et al. 2000:99). At HazTrak another result is the equation of being a member in the group with an “identity as an environmentalist” (Kitchell et al. 2000:102). In the local groups, I noticed an identity with the concept of sustainability or community, not necessarily environmentalist.

The authors found that in the EcoTeam meetings, the story pattern involved the following components: “ 1) review specific actions prescribed in the previous meeting; 2) describe which actions were taken; 3) disclose results of those actions; 4) elaborate on any deviations from the manual; 5) decide whether to continue that action outside of the team; and 6) choose actions for the next session” (Kitchell et al. 2000:100). Their research then looked specifically at story function. They find that the “‘EcoTeam provides a network and support of like-minded people so you don’t mind getting strange looks when you bring your own bag to the grocery store.’ This is an action-enabling aspect of developing an identity as part of a group” (Kitchell et al. 2000:101). The story telling plays a crucial role in this, just as in AA.

Personal stories can facilitate identity formation and the behavioral change appropriate to acceptance into the figured world of each of the groups discussed. As part of the members’ process of self-realization, they are prompted toward a behavioral change consistent with their newly acquired identity (Kitchell et al. 2000:101).

This process is known as scaffolding. The example of AA is related in terms of inconsistencies being corrected. The authors describe, “When other members notice inconsistencies in the story, they will nudge the storyteller in the right direction by relating a similar story with a correction

leading them to assume a nondrinking alcoholic identity” (Kitchell et al. 2000:101). In the local groups similar patterns evolved with anecdotes during which people would question each other about an inconsistency kindly, “Did you think about this option or did you consider doing this?”

The authors summarize their findings by stating that the telling of stories brings people into the group and its figured world. They conclude “the resulting identity within a figured world provides a strong impetus for, and support of, action by group members” (Kitchell et al. 2000:105). In my work with the local groups, I noticed how significant the interactions, which allowed for identities to be expressed through story, seemed to participants. These times occurred during the go-around at the beginning and end of the meetings and during potlucks and social conversations. I have noticed, since the decline in the local sustainability group, fewer conversations regarding sustainability, although I have observed that it remains a focus for people.

Articles posted on the Global Action Plan website include some longitudinal studies on outcome of involvement in the Ecoteam program. One study conducted in Portland, Oregon, examined transit pass use at the end of the program and six months later and found increased use of the passes over time (Tri-Met 6 Month Follow-up Study 1998). This demonstrates the benefits of linking up a sustainability group with city or county programs.

Having a leader or campaign manager in a paid position provides more time for efforts like these, which illustrates one benefit of leadership. If that person is culturally sensitive, s/he can ascertain what kinds of programs will feel most accessible and beneficial to the community. One of the strengths of GAP, which our local groups did not attempt, is its coordination with local governmental programs. Thus, local agencies could use the change agent of GAP to promote some programs of local environmental interest to their benefit and GAP’s.

The other long-term study was conducted in the Netherlands and described in an article entitled “Effectiveness of the EcoTeam Program in the Netherlands.” The research was designed to examine which behavioral changes resulting from participation in the EcoTeam program persisted two years after participation. The authors acknowledge that the past

research on long term effects of intervention techniques is scarce. The few studies into the persistence of short term effects have concluded that achieved improvements on environmentally [sic] behavior tend to diminish on the longer run. An urgent need exists for intervention techniques that produce lasting changes (DeYoung, 1993; Dwyer, Leeming, Cobern, Porter, and Jackson 1993). (Harland and Staats 1997:2)

However, the Netherlands study found that shortly after participation there were 26 improved behaviors and investments and 20 unchanged behaviors and investments. Two years later, of the 26 improved behaviors, there were 19 behaviors and investments that remained improved, and 7 behaviors and investments that improved more. Of the 20 unchanged behaviors and investments, there were 16 behaviors and investments, which remained unchanged, and 4 behaviors and investments which improved independently (Harland and Staats 1997:3). The authors suggest that “perceived behavioral control and habit, two components that have become stronger during participation in the EcoTeam Program, are factors that promote the use of more environmentally friendly transportation means” (Harland and Staats 1997:4). In their final remarks, they suggest that future goals for GAP might include increasing enrollment. They say, “One way to stimulate enrolment [sic] in the program might be lowering the threshold for participation.” How to lower it would have to be discussed (Harland and Staats 1997:5). As I discovered with our local sustainability group, the cost of the workbook was higher than expected for some participants. They seemed comfortable purchasing a workbook and a book each costing approximately \$15, but were shocked that another workbook would cost double the price of the first workbook. Decreasing the price for the workbook might lower the threshold.

The sustainable lifestyle campaign in Portland generated another study. The data corresponds in part to another study in Columbus, Ohio (EcoTeam Survey in Columbus, Ohio 1999). This found that 33% of participants met at least once with their group after the conclusion of the program. Seventy-eight percent have shared their experience with others, 100% are interested in further meetings, and 94% now interact more with their neighbors (GAP 1999:1,2). Again this is similar to my findings with the local groups. The Community From Within Group met at least twice after the

series of meetings, for potluck and camping as well as berry picking. Participants in both groups indicated they were interested in future meetings at some point. I have observed participants sharing the experience with neighbors, friends, and church communities. One woman called recently to ask if I had more of the buy less cards that the group produced because members of her church were interested.

The article shares some of the suggestions generated by participants for the study. There are several that are most relevant to the Charlottesville groups. In another survey participants and coaches expressed a desire that “coaches should play a bigger role.” The study reports, “As more and more coaches are actually coaching in their own neighborhoods, they want to spend more time with their teams and deepen those relationships. The EcoTeam staff are now encouraging coaches to drop in on their teams for a few minutes at every other meeting, so they are able to support their teams and build strong connections with their neighbors” (Global Action Plan 1998:5). I found having a deep relationship with the groups and continuity between meetings beneficial, although time intensive.

The study found that participants desired “more support from staff or their team in the replication process.” Portland has responded to this by initiating a training program for volunteers who would help with recruitment, network between teams for future events, and organize future events for a team after the official program has ended” (Global Action Plan 1998:5). I found this interesting as I consider how to develop further the cultural midwifery process, and I aim to have a long-term relationship with groups but fewer leadership responsibilities.

The feedback from participants of the EcoTeam program is high praise. One participant in the Boston area only produces four bags of trash annually. He says, “EcoTeams help you change your habits... Once you learn how much you waste, you generally don’t want to turn back” (White 1998:5). In Kansas City, the campaign manager is optimistic that by 2003 there will be “10,000 households trained to help the environment through EcoTeams” (Mansur 1998:6). She asserts that, “Once that many people are on board, according to a theory of social change known as social

diffusion, the movement takes on a life of its own” (Mansur 1998:6). This hearkens back to the Mead quote at the beginning of the workbook.

This type of thinking illustrates the intent to promote cultural change towards sustainability one person or small group at a time, and it indicates a systematic approach to doing so. This intent is articulated in GAP’s professed goal: “to expand the EcoTeam Program to a point of sufficient concentration and visibility so that it achieves ‘critical mass’ and will diffuse throughout the population as households continue to form new EcoTeams” (Market Street Research, Inc. 2001:1). In order to gain a broader perspective on GAP’s work, I contacted the home office. The office personnel put me in touch with a campaign manager who made himself available to me for an interview and recommended another campaign manager that would be willing to be interviewed. I will discuss those interviews next in the context of my evaluation.

Evaluation

Due to distance and time constraints I was not able to observe in person the functioning groups. I would have preferred to do so. Lunaissance Sustainability Circle considered using the EcoTeam workbook produced by GAP, however a decline in attendance prevented us from taking that step. However, by conducting extensive review of primary and secondary sources, as well as conducting two interviews I obtained enough data as well as inside perspectives to compare and contrast the case studies with GAP.

The primary and secondary sources revealed that the goals of my study and the goals of GAP are different, as are the results. However, it appeared to me that the different objectives and techniques could complement each other. With that in mind I interviewed two of the campaign managers.

Findings

I interviewed Michael Dowd, campaign manager for the Rockland County, New York office of the EcoTeam program. He has started 210 EcoTeams. I asked how he gains and retains participants. He said that usually people hear about the program by word of mouth, by reading an article about it, or by attending an event which has information.

He shared his one minute spiel saying, “Have you heard about the EcoTeam? The EcoTeam is a county and state funded program, helping neighbors get to know each other better. While building community connections you can save money, time, and resources in your home. We have an introductory meeting about once a week. Put your name and number down if you are interested” (Interview with Dowd). He describes the multi-faceted nature of the program, that it addresses issues about neighborhoods, community, and ecology.

When I asked him if he has noticed patterns regarding who is attracted to the program, he replied no. He finds that a variety of people have participated: retired, twenty-somethings, wealthy, poor, with or without kids. This he attributed to the emphasis of the program on neighbor to neighbor contact. This is not geared for “the environmental elite,” as he phrases it (Interview with Dowd). He said the program does not specifically alter its discourse for different types of people. However, Dowd said he intuitively responds to the needs of people. If it is a cul de sac of families with young children, he may address the specific needs that arise, such as carpooling or toy purchases or diapering. He suggested that groups almost always address concerns unique to their situation. Some examples of actions taken by groups on specific matters not included in the workbook include confronting drughouses, establishing community gardens, lobbying for speed bumps, developing a tools/skills list for a small scale barter system, and placing a picnic table in an abandoned lot.

I asked him, “What moves or motivates people most towards actions?” He replied, “leaving a positive legacy, contributing to the future in a positive way.” He added building community with their neighbors also motivates people to do their homework for the workbook, so as not to let their

neighbors down (Interview with Dowd). In the local groups, I noticed guilt arising in some people when they had missed a few meetings. I wonder if the high level of familiarity between members in the local groups allowed them to ease that guilt more readily, rather than letting it dictate more responsibility. If the group had a lower level of familiarity but still a high level of proximity (such as neighbors), the guilt may be effective in encouraging people to be more responsible to their team members.

However, Dowd asserts that the EcoTeam does not use guilt to induce people to act, nor does it overeducate people about the state of the environment. Dowd says he explains to people that habits are habits, rather than berating people for living less ecologically than they could. The program is designed to meet all people where they are. It offers about a paragraph for each category, enough information to understand the rationale but not get overwhelmed. Then it suggests easy step-by-step actions. He acknowledges that the workbook was designed to be accessible to Americans. Each action is described in the format of a recipe, with which most Americans are familiar.

I asked Dowd how he responds when people complain that they do not have time for these meetings or actions, which I heard from participants in our sustainability group. He replied that he takes that option away early on in the process. He describes to groups a longitudinal study conducted in Portland. Participants were asked why they joined. A common reply was, "I almost didn't join my EcoTeam. I can't fit this in my busy schedule. But, when am I ever going to get a chance like this to get to know my neighbors better? Man am I glad I did" (Interview with Dowd). Dowd said the vast majority of teams meet at some point after the 4-8 month program for potlucks or block parties.

EcoTeam has a high attendance rate. Dowd says it is unusual for an attrition rate of more than one or two households. GAP's goal is 90% retention. The rate of retention was lower in the local sustainability group but similar in the local community group and in the Corvallis NWEI group. The sustainability group may have had a lower rate of retention because it was a longer term commitment. The group met for almost two years, as opposed to four to eight months for GAP.

Dowd explained why he thinks the program is so effective. He said it is designed for habit change. Accountability and peer support play a big role. For example, participants find themselves thinking the day or two before the next meeting that they haven't taken their action yet. They feel like they do not want to disappoint their neighbors. Another reason for its success, he claims, is that it does not require a particular worldview. One does not have to read deep ecology or view the earth as a living organism to do the workbook. He says, "Mainstream culture doesn't have to agree with a worldview to have bioregional practices" (Interview with Dowd). NWEI does the opposite, says Dowd. NWEI raises consciousness. Dowd respects this approach, finds it valuable and complementary.

Dowd described a method of removing obstacles to actions. The program describes easily comprehensible rationale for the action. In addition to taking away the objection of "I don't know what to do or how to do it," he finesses with his spiel about former participants who said they did not have time to follow the program but were glad they did despite that. He also questions some common illusions for many Americans (the true frequency of their sustainable actions and that recycling is all that is necessary). He explains that many people have read extensively or studied environmental issues but do not follow through with actions. The program encourages people to become more consistent with the actions they already do by demonstrating the measurable impact of an action done 20% of the time versus 90% of the time. I asked, "What types of things prevent people from taking sustainable actions?" His response confirmed his previous claims. He listed a lack of peer support, no accountability, too much information, and a lack of know how (Interview with Dowd).

I asked Dowd, "What qualities are useful for a recruiter, a team leader or a coach?" He listed qualities such as warmth, friendliness, an inviting tone a sense of importance and vision regarding the work, coachability, and capability to follow through on tasks (Interview with Dowd). He said that average, everyday folks have been leaders. They do not need to be naturally skilled at leadership. Dowd said GAP researched what was needed to be an effective team leader. They

debriefed people who had gone through the process, both people who had been effective in getting teams started and those who had not. They discovered what works and what does not and incorporated this into their training program.

When I asked him how he thought applied anthropology could be of assistance to programs like GAP's, which are trying to effect cultural change, he replied that he did not know. I mentioned the concepts of culture workers and cultural midwives, which I assumed he would be familiar with, considering his line of work. He said that is what the GAP program is doing. He asserts "they [GAP] are the best thing around." I explained how anthropologists study culture and peoples and cultural change. He sounded like they did not need any help. Then he paused and said it was an interesting question, as if he was considering it.

I gave him the opportunity to add anything he wanted to add. He emphasized that GAP's program is just as much about community and neighbors as it is about environmental issues. He said that sometimes people get the impression that it is more about the environment, but it is not. In fact, "people say they love the community part the most." He finished by saying, "We all want home to be a healthy, safe place to live and build trust with our neighbors. We all want to feel that how we live our lives is leaving a positive legacy" (Interview with Dowd).

Next I will discuss my interview with David Binell, whom I interviewed first and who referred me to Michael Dowd. This was a less structured, more informal conversational interview. Because he was more brief, I will focus on the aspects of his interview that did not overlap with Dowd's comments. The home office of GAP referred me to Binell as the closest contact person geographically because he resides in Philadelphia.

David Binell described the difference between a city-sponsored campaign, of which he is a part, and an at-large group. In Philadelphia, the city sponsors the GAP program, so there is staff and funding which foster many city-wide groups, which has been done in Columbus, Ohio, Kansas City, Rockland County, New York, and Portland, Oregon. An at-large group is similar to our local

sustainability group (particularly if we had engaged with the EcoTeam program without city sponsorship).

In Philadelphia, Binell and his coworker are currently phasing out the EcoTeam program and phasing in the Livable Neighborhood program, also designed by GAP. The Livable Neighborhood program, as the name suggests, focuses more on the neighborhood but naturally includes ecological issues. He described how the neighborhood program analyzes what kinds of actions to take. He listed three levels of issues for action: First, a neighborhood must assess, can we handle this as a block empowerment group? Second, can we handle this in partnership with the city? Third, this issue is out of our hands. He gave the example of drug dealing as an issue that can be analyzed according to those three levels. His group is currently trying to adapt their program towards low-income neighborhoods.

I inquired about how he recruits participants and maintains attendance. He indicated it is much more difficult as an at-large team. Based on my experience with the local groups I agree with his assessment of the difficulties of an at-large team. He said sponsorship provides a figure of authority (which I have tried to avoid with the regenerative model because I wanted it to empower groups), which serves to remind participants about the value of the work they are voluntarily doing. I interpreted his mention of authority as an aspect of city sponsorship that lends legitimacy. Binell also indicated that he attends events where he might find people interested in the concept and distributes information. His recruitment strategies seem similar to Dowd's

Binell, like Dowd, conducts training sessions for group leaders. He described the coaching process and offered to provide phone coaching if our group decides in the future to work on the EcoTeam workbook. The coaching process seems hierarchical with a distinct chain of command, albeit a relaxed command. Campaign managers like Binell and Dowd train local neighborhood group leaders at block trainings. Binell and Dowd receive coaching, primarily by phone, from coaches at the home office in Woodstock, New York (Interview with Binell 2001).

GAP informed me about what could be improved. For example, the local groups could learn from GAP about how to retain good attendance. GAP could benefit from more use of story in its process. One article discussed earlier, about the study of an EcoTeam by applied anthropologists, finds a familiarity with the technique of storytelling as a means of identity construction. But GAP excludes some useful features of anthropology, such as its techniques, which include ethnography, participant observation, an emic perspective, and interviews. Additionally, concepts such as use of symbols, multi-vocality, context, long-term relationship of observer, and a co-creative ethnography might empower the participants and GAP further to broaden their progress and reinforce it with community.

GAP has pursued its goal with remarkable effectiveness so far. In the analysis section of my research, I look at points of comparison. I specifically look at how the applied anthropologist as midwife of cultural change could or could not be useful in the two local programs and how s/he could have been useful in any of the programs. My emphasis is on the use of the co-creative ethnography (storytelling) as a tool for cultural reformers to engage participants in reconstructing an ecological identity with an emphasis on community of place and interconnectedness as necessary components of ecology. This remains in line with the apparent goals of the four groups. One of the interviewees from GAP replied when asked, what role he could see for applied anthropologists to assist GAP in their efforts at cultural change, “we are them [the cultural midwives]” (Interview with Dowd). But, I find that anthropology has more to offer them and will discuss that further in the next section. Illustrating that I will discuss some research questions, some of which I posed initially, and some which emerged during the study.

QUESTIONS

Effectiveness of the Combination of Applied and Postmodern Techniques

This final stage of analysis attempts to answer the research questions and to pose new ones. I examined whether community cohesion levels increased or not. I considered whether environmental impact lessened. I also considered whether the dialogue reflected both sustainable attitudes and lifestyles. Which sectors of the community became involved and why or why not? How useful was extensive participation by community members in the process of understanding and changing their cultural patterns with their environment? How were the different needs and expectations of different cultural groups within the community met or not met? How useful was the applied anthropologist, and in what ways? Did the combination of postmodern and praxis techniques work or not?

The combination of applied and postmodern techniques was unusual but complementary. The applied methods were easier to recognize as I was utilizing them because they gathered data in traditional forms. They were effective at more rapid assessments, more concrete data, and more organized gathering of data. Although they served as a code for my approach, the postmodern techniques were more difficult to identify as they occurred. Often, they became apparent in retrospect. The structure of the local groups allowed for authority to be shared easily and for multiple voices to emerge. I injected a consideration of context into group discussions frequently. In summary, the applied and postmodern approaches complemented each other, allowing me to access a broader and deeper range of data.

Role Of Anthropologist

As an anthropologist, I observed what motivated people by noticing what choices they made, what they emphasized, and in what types of topics they were most interested. I noticed people feeling motivated by other participants' expression of emotions regarding an environmental issue. The personal seemed to move people most. The concept of making sustainability "cool" appealed. For example, the concept of a "cool" car for a car-sharing program generated enthusiasm. After such observations I then accentuated or included the topics or images that caught the most attention. I could do this simply as a fellow participant when it was my turn with the talking stick, or I could make room in the agenda for items that seemed interesting to participants when it was my turn to facilitate.

This was similar to the systems thinking process. When I discovered leverage points, I could choose to work with those points effectively. For example, one leverage point was lack of time, which affected attendance. So in the last phase of the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, I offered to host, facilitate, and provide something to eat for participants. This adoption of numerous responsibilities was not my first choice because I wanted more participation from the group members in the different roles, but as I saw attendance wane I decided to adapt. The attendance did not increase, but I do think the life of the group was extended a few months.

Another aspect to the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle I noticed was that people preferred to do things their way. This appealed to both the individualist and homogenous natures of the participants in the group. For example, when the barter group (which grew out of the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle) decided to have a currency system, the participants asked artists who were members to design the currency. There was little interest in imitating another barter group's form.

As an applied anthropologist interested in local empowerment, I emphasized shared authority. For example, the photo ethnography contains images described by participants in addition to some images observed by me. I indirectly encouraged people to become their own anthropologists. The

interviews gave them pause to consider the questions, to describe their ideal or typical day. I asked them to think of questions. I emphasized often the role of culture. Many were already familiar with the concept and culture's role in sustainability in terms of our culture's behaviors and beliefs. Several of the readings I recommended expressed that further. I began to observe people examining their own culture, almost blaming culture as an obstacle to the changes they wanted to make. Beyond that I also noticed an attitude of developing our own culture in response, considering how to move past the obstacle and with what particular behaviors. There was a feeling of being in a counter-cultural movement. Participants began to get a sense of more people believing and acting as they do rather than feeling isolated. For the photo ethnography, I asked them to consider what was symbolic to them. As a result of these methods, participants in the local groups seemed to experience a greater degree of community cohesion and a lesser degree of environmental impact. They also seemed empowered to replicate the experience in their other community circles.

The observations over a long period of time allowed me in my dual role of organizer and researcher to input the feedback or observations into the system while the group continued. For example, I observed people experiencing intense emotions (related to the topics we were discussing), so I included in the next meeting's agenda a time for giving voice to those emotions. Another participant realized this and allowed time in the agenda she planned for people to speak about what emotions were blocking certain actions they wanted to take. When there was a call from some participants for more action, I formed agendas with more actions, such as the letter writing campaign. When people seemed to be feeling powerless, I encouraged them to take a turn facilitating and including on the agenda what moves them (in addition to the topics discussed by the group as a whole). One woman felt inspired to research air quality and brought that to the group with my encouragement and assistance.

In addition to informal inclusion of responsiveness to observed behavior, I also wrote a report for the sustainability group (see Appendix E). I shared the report informally (which seemed appropriate to the situation) within the context of the next meeting, in my talking stick turn and during

announcements. I did not make a formal presentation. For the community group, I helped to compose our format on a flier so that our group could be replicated. I described our intent, format, and topics. I asked for and received feedback on this from another participant.

A few aspects of the local case studies indicated some areas in which the cultural midwifery process could become more effective. With an emphasis on shared authority, there was no outside expert. I did not elevate myself to this as an anthropologist because I considered myself a student of anthropology. Though not initially, at times participants in the Lunaissance group seemed to want an outside expert. In fact, interviewed participants praised the incorporation of guest speakers. I could have explained better, and more often, the potential role of anthropology (I was trying to maintain a low profile by not discussing anthropology often). Occasionally, it seemed that people were confused or had forgotten why I was interested in the project. Another concern I had was the degree of familiarity some of the participants had with each other, which seemed to give them more permission to be absent. Finally, I think a time frame that falls somewhere between the six-week series and the two-year series would be worth trying: The first seemed too short, and the second was too long to hold people's attention. I found through the case studies and comparative analysis that I was effective as a change agent. However, most of the research was qualitative. Next, I will consider how participants became change agents.

Role Of Participants As Change Agents

One of the greatest benefits of the local groups, as well as of GAP and NWEI, was the rotation of the facilitator role (in GAP, facilitators are called topic leaders.) I observed participants moving from passive participation to organizing an initiative. This tended to occur either simultaneous to their first experience of facilitation or afterwards. One man began circulating a petition from the Organic Consumer's Association. He attended the local farmer's market and talked to people about

organic food. This exemplified one of the intents of the group, which was to foster the birth of each individual participant's personal drive towards sustainability in unique forms, to empower others.

Before acting as change agents, people must maintain an awareness of the importance of an issue. Question seven in the sustainability group interviews asked, "How often do you think about sustainability?" The overwhelming response, "all the time," indicated that participants' attitudes and beliefs encompassed sustainability. The response was also discouraging. I became concerned that if these people, who think about sustainability often, have difficulty making changes in their lifestyle, it will be much harder to encourage change in people who do not think about it much.

Facilitators had the opportunity in all four groups to present material in which they were interested. They had the opportunity to begin the meeting with an inspirational reading or song. Hosts of the meetings, sometimes the facilitators, sometimes a fellow participant, shared their homes, which increased the level of intimacy between people. Facilitators and hosts for meetings occasionally invited someone to a meeting who they knew might be interested in the content, and who had not attended before. The networking potential of the group increased, prior to decline in attendance. Once there was a steady decline in attendance, people seemed hesitant to invite someone new because the meeting might have been small or, near the end, cancelled for lack of attendance.

Now I have discussed the anthropological techniques and the roles involved in the groups. Next, I will consider what obstacles emerged. Afterwards, I will discuss questions regarding the groups as a whole.

Obstacles to Change

The systems approach was most useful for identifying the obstacles to change. One obstacle was the need for more systematic approaches to topics and actions. For the first half of the group's life-

span, there was a lack of clear identity. The group responded to this by naming itself and working on its mission statement. The participants in the life stage of parenting young children cited frequently the need for convenience and a lack of time. Another obstacle was the disorder that can occur with a significant household change. Systems thinking showed that systems can dampen these credible disorders. Consistency between facilitators from one meeting to another was an issue that could be resolved with communication between facilitators prior to meetings so as to maintain the rotation of facilitators. In terms of group efforts to make changes, attendance was cited as a limiting factor.

The Support of the Groups

I assumed that the support of a group would enable individuals to increase their sustainable actions because they would have emotional and sometimes physical assistance. Through my observations and interviews, I found this to be true. People expressed the need to be accountable to each other, or to have the emotional support, or to have a group of people to call when s/he needed physical labor to finish a (sustainable) project. The groups augmented people's personal identities so that they identified themselves as people striving towards a sustainable lifestyle. Academic articles confirmed this.

The Decline of the Groups

The two local groups no longer meet. The organizers of the Community from Within Group expected this and structured a six-week series. However, participants felt a hope that they would continue to gather in some form. Some of them do, and did so formally in the LUNAissance

Sustainability Circle. Because the community group was primarily a discussion group, it felt time limited. It had a short life cycle.

The Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, encompassing both discussion and action, had the potential for a longer life cycle, which it realized. However, a few participants intended for it to continue longer than it did and sought through conversations to understand why it disbanded. Perhaps it had a natural life cycle. Almost two years may be a successfully long time for an informal group to continue to meet. Without an institution, a building, a staff, a budget, it had little to keep it going when the regular participants dwindled. They cited a lack of time or their interest moving to other things as reasons for their decreased attendance. Another factor may have been seasonal attendance. During the summer and during November and December (holiday time for many people), attendance lagged. A final factor may have been the context of world events. At the end of the summer of 2001, participants planned to increase their regular attendance, recruit more people, and begin study of a new workbook. However, the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001, may have affected people's priorities. Several people in informal conversations indicated feeling overwhelmed and unable to focus on sustainability at that time. A few others felt the events in September clarified for them the importance of living in a sustainable way. However, by the end of the fall season it was clear there were not enough participants to support continued meetings.

Considering that NWEI and GAP only attempt eight-week to four-month-long series, Lunaissance maintained interest fairly well. NWEI and GAP have had more consistent attendance, perhaps because it is easier for people to commit to a finite amount of time or number of meetings. But we had different goals. I wanted to form communities that fit into people's lives and adapted to their various and changing needs, whereas GAP and NWEI do not intend to do that.

Even though the groups no longer meet, participants still experience the effects and continue to strive for sustainability and to build community, although in a less concentrated way. Many participants in the sustainability group, as well as in the community group, joined the barter network. In barter exchanges, participants build community and encourage a local economy. Some

relationships deepened in the group processes and continue to do so. The local groups purposefully were formed within an existing affiliation of local people who would continue the work begun in the group after its life span simply through their continued affiliation. In this way, the local groups had a differed from NWEI and GAP which, although sometimes formed within existing affiliations, formed new affiliations. These new affiliations, the research shows, sometimes meet after the series ends for a potluck or a discussion, but do not appear to have developed as significant a network as these two local groups.

Public Participation

I assumed that public participation would empower participants to make changes they desired, rather than an expert recommending they make changes that were not appealing to them. Within their time constraints, participants embraced the participation aspect of the groups. They became most enthusiastic and supportive about ideas that came from each other. As people initiated projects (such as the barter network), participants assisted each other to help the projects reach fruition. At times, there were too many ideas and initiatives, considering the perceived lack of available time, which overwhelmed participants. As the group focused on a few, it became easier for people to commit time. The barter network required much participation (even in the design of its currency), and it is the only currently active aspect of the sustainability group.

What Applied Anthropology Could Offer GAP (and NWEI)

Now I will summarize the benefits of the involvement of an applied anthropologist. In particular, I will consider the benefit to organizations such as GAP. Then I will share some constructive criticisms of GAP's approach.

The techniques I used as an anthropologist included observation, interviews, and ethnography. (Anthropologists also can provide social impact assessment and risk perception analysis.) In addition, I established a particularly long-term relationship with the local sustainability group (approximately two years) which deepened our rapport. GAP coaches and campaign managers typically attend one or two of the initial meetings of a group and perhaps stop in at a final meeting. In my review of literature about GAP, I read accounts of participants in GAP recommending more participation from the leadership. I recommend this as well. I attended every meeting of the two local groups. Although the intent of GAP and the intent behind these two local groups is different, the personal attentiveness and consistent presence gave me access to observations that I otherwise would have missed.

The interviews allowed me to have one-on-one time with the participants and to hear from them their experience, recommendations, and desires for future participation. When there is follow-up on participant recommendations, they gain a sense of empowerment. GAP does ask for participants to write their feedback and send it, but this is not the same as face-to-face interactions.

The co-creative ethnography was a unique experience for the Lunaissance group. Each participant interviewed described an image to photograph. The photo ethnography gave participants an opportunity to consider what their personal symbol of sustainability is, an opportunity to feel part of a larger composition, the group composing itself around sustainability, and to see that in a unified format. They can view it, remember, and add to it, which may inspire them about their personal efforts towards a sustainable lifestyle as part of a larger movement. This creative process embodied

the energy of the group in something personal and tangible. I recommend that GAP engage participants in a reflective, creative process that symbolizes sustainability.

One of my main criticisms of GAP is that it does not emphasize the specificity of the local enough. The name of the program, Global Action Plan, confirms this. It is suggestive of the expert arriving and telling people what to do, much like the development model. It does not consider American individualism as a cultural trait. The images in its workbook aim to demonstrate diversity but are lacking in specificity. My experience is that photos of actual, diverse groups meeting and taking action would be more effective. Although the two local groups could have benefited from some of GAP's approaches, participants did not want to be handed a general procedure. They preferred to develop their own specific approach.

Another criticism is that GAP does not provide an avenue for continued support or a higher level of support for its at-large groups. Groups participate in the four-eight month series of meetings. The participants can then initiate and train other group leaders, but I am aware of no other opportunities. I would recommend a process of institutionalizing the lifestyle changes in some manner. I was interested in placing the photographic ethnography on display at the local environmental center and perhaps developing a quarterly meeting format under the auspices of the environmental center for the sustainability group to stay connected. As the authors of the Cultural Creatives noted, it is essential to institutionalize the cultural changes so that they have maximum staying power (Ray and Anderson 2000).

The research on GAP does not explore the qualitative nature of the changes achieved during the series. From the articles I read and the interviews I conducted with campaign managers, the level of interconnectedness does not seem as high as in the local groups. In my opinion, the value of community building is high in terms of mutual support in the lifestyle changes.

Again, we had different goals. GAP is successful at facilitating behavior changes and maintaining them beyond the life span of the group. One of my goals with the two local groups was

to form sustainable communities, which would reinforce the behavior changes as well as continued striving. Next, I will explore some overarching themes among all the groups.

THEMES COMPARED AND CONTRASTED BETWEEN THE FOUR GROUPS

I will not discuss all the themes mentioned previously, but will address the more overarching ones. Gender emerged as significant in all three groups. Of the two local groups, 75 % were women in the community group, and 60% were women in the sustainability group. This corresponds to the findings of Kitchell et al. that Haztrak participants are primarily women (Kitchell et al. 2000:98). Dowd and Binell did not note any significant issues related to gender.

Lack of time continued as a theme throughout both local groups. When I inquired with GAP leaders if that was an issue for its participants, one of them acknowledged it and said he tries to avert that complaint early in the process with an anecdotal story which carries the moral, "I did it anyway, and it was worth it" (Interview with Dowd). The two local groups apparently could not sustain more meetings or set aside more time for actions than they did. A network that was less intimate (such as co-workers or neighbors) may have been more accountable to each other.

The idea of wanting more, which is prevalent in American culture, was apparent in the groups. Participants wanted more from the group, Lunaissance in particular (the series was not long enough for participants in the Community From Within Group to want more). People committed to more and more personal and group actions, more than were feasible, and then felt overwhelmed.

Another theme, which was possibly influenced by my participation as a researcher, emerged--that of cultural obstacles to sustainability. I acknowledged the role of culture in molding behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. I also tried to reframe some of these as opportunities for new cultural growth. Now that the themes have been discussed, I will discuss the potential role of anthropologists in this domain.

CHAPTER SIX, DISCUSSION OF ANTHROPOLOGIST AS MIDWIFE

Even with involvement in formal or informal discussion groups, participants found it difficult to make the intended changes in lifestyle. After this study, I considered how these could be achieved. I explored the concept of midwifery as it related to the regenerative model and will discuss it further in this chapter. In order to assist changes in behaviors, lifestyle, and beliefs, I recommend that groups try the services of an applied anthropologist trained as a midwife for cultural change towards a more ecological culture.

Based on my study, I suggest that the anthropologist be adept at executing the following skills: analysis of what is impeding the changes; measurement of the aggregate effects of changes through research and illustrations; elicitation of the emic perspective; identification of symbols, facts, and processes motivating participants towards changes in lifestyle; grantwriting; public speaking; systems thinking; and project leadership. The researcher may encourage civic participation. I continue to assert the value of the cultural midwife concept. My use of the metaphor of anthropologist as midwife preceded my work with the groups; in fact, in my research with the groups, I tested the concept preliminarily (Gilman [1995] mentions the necessity for cultural midwives and cultural gardeners. Another inspiration for the midwife approach was Macy, who acts as a catalyst, a facilitator, an educator, a counselor, and team builder for groups. I based my approach, in part, on her work). Thus far, the metaphor has been confirmed as a relevant symbol with the majority of frequent participants in the two local groups being women and one of those a midwife in training. However, in my pilot test, I worked more as a birthing mother than as a midwife. The groups did not hire me. I determined the course of the groups to a large degree, more than a midwife would.

In order to develop the process further, I conversed with midwives about their work, read about midwifery, and listened to a talk by a well-known midwife, Ina May Gaskin (Gaskin 2002). I also

recalled my own experiences with midwives for my two pregnancies. The relationship between client and midwife ranges from professional to friendship. Midwives are involved in the birth process from the initial visit onwards through extensive prenatal care, including examinations and assessment. Ideally, rapport and trust are built throughout the relationship. Midwives are informed by herbal and allopathic medicinal techniques, and are skilled in any number of other areas, such as attentiveness, communication, sensitivity, spirituality, monitoring, comforting, and support (Citizens for Midwifery 1996). My experience with midwives is that they allow the experience of birth to be empowering for the woman, or at least for her to own her experience. They are there for support and intervention as needed with the minimum technology necessary. Midwives have lower rates of cesarean or forceps delivery. One of the leading midwives in the country was, in the 1970s, the first to report outcomes and frequencies of use of interventions such as those, outcomes which were not being reported by doctors (Gaskin 2002). Midwives administer fewer drugs in the birthing process. In different situations, midwives choose different techniques or approaches with the birthing woman. For example, when a labor is stalling, a midwife may ask one woman to soak in warm water, choose to puncture the amniotic sac, or allow some rest. The midwife experiments with what works in different circumstances. She is by necessity pragmatic. A homebirth midwife in a situation that requires emergency transfer to the hospital acts as an advocate for the woman. Midwifery theory suggests midwives prepare extensively for a birth, ensuring the woman is physically and emotionally healthy and has a supportive birth partner(s). Likewise, the anthropologist could come informed with a variety of skills (mediation, anthropological research, group process, etc.), playing a more facilitative role, offering her skills as needed. The anthropologist's role in the dynamic allows the community to be empowered by the experience of rebirthing its community identity.

Similar to the midwife, the anthropologist arrives on the scene with a variety of skills and experience as a result of formal or informal schooling, a mentor relationship, work or internship experience. The midwife can communicate with the mother about the consequences of choices

regarding different ways to approach the birth. Traditionally, the anthropologist's skills have included observation of cultural patterns, gathering of quantitative and qualitative data, analysis of data, writing and producing of ethnography, and teaching. I add to that list other useful skills: communication skills (mediation, consensus, persuasion, and small group problem-solving), the sharing of knowledge of other cultures' approach to problem-solving with respect to a particular domain, and creativity in reconfiguring the relationship between a community and its environment.

If a birth is going well and no medical intervention is needed, it is difficult to see the work the midwife is doing. Although she may still be facilitating the process, only her gentle suggestions or calm support may be noticed. If a birth becomes complicated medically, emotionally, or otherwise, the midwife begins using her other skills that are appropriate for the situation. An anthropologist can operate similarly. To the extent that the community is capable of birthing a more ecological culture, the birth should have few interventions. However, if the birth becomes too intense or complicated, or if it stalls, the anthropologist can refer groups to other individuals or organizations which have the skills and experience to draw upon to facilitate the birth.

Below I list the eight general phases of the cultural midwifery approach I have been developing. The eight phases interact with each other like a system (see Fig. 20). They do not necessarily follow each other chronologically.

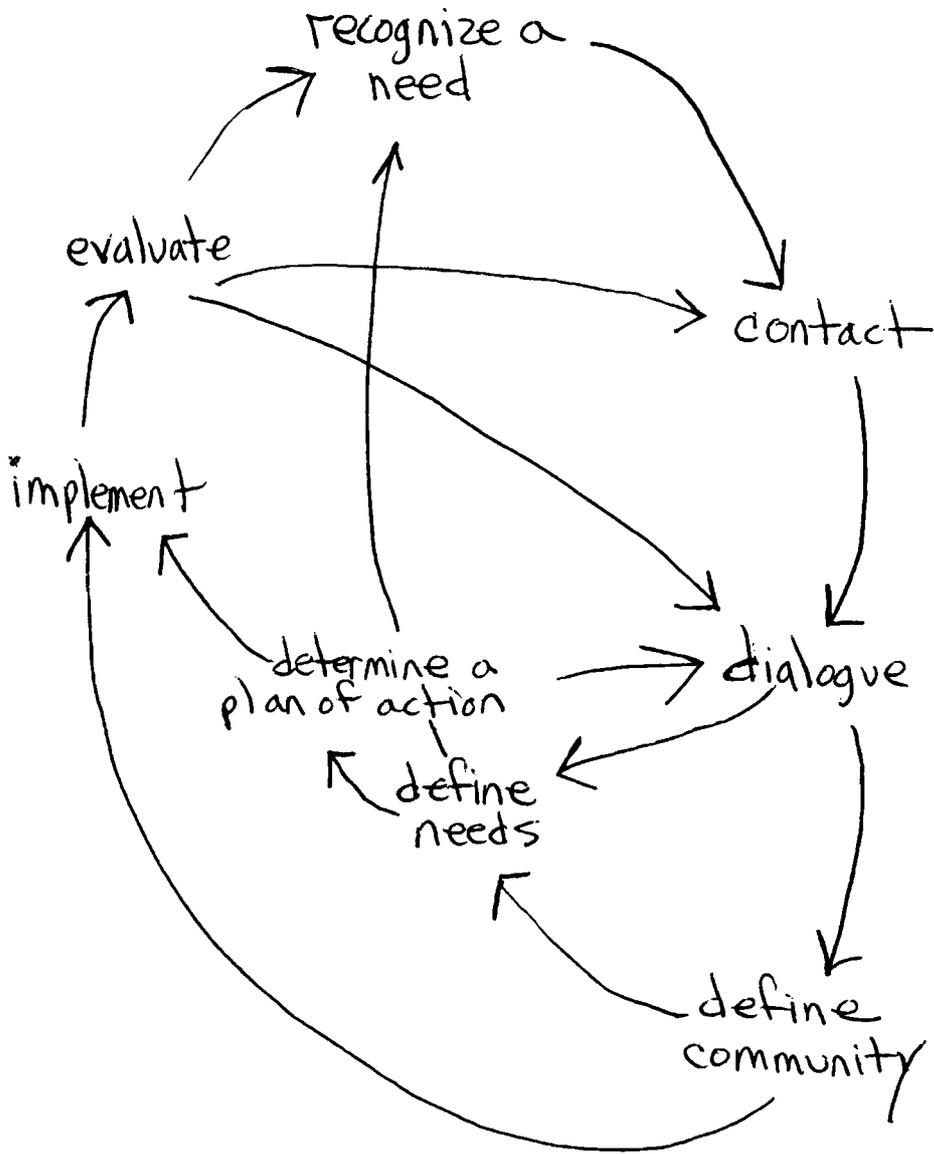


Fig. 20 Systems drawing of the approach

To **1) recognize a need** begins the cultural midwifery approach. Preferably the community recognizes the need, although there is quite a bit of precedent for that recognition coming externally, particularly since most communities are not aware of the useful role of the anthropologist. In an environmental crisis, this is analogous to a woman surprised but confirming that she is pregnant. More and more frequently, people are joining together in neighborhood associations, political action groups, and town meetings to discuss environmental issues (Ray and Anderson 2000). Their joining creates a temporary community, a community oriented around an issue. Through the process, these communities can transform themselves into more permanent communities of place. A community that forms around an issue will not necessarily translate into the same community of place. The issue that brought people together may transcend spatial boundaries, such as the issue of nuclear waste affecting the people who produced it, the people who live near it, the people who live downwind from it, and so forth, none of whom may be in close proximity to each other. Then, during the regenerative process when the community is defining who they are, they may want to envision how their issue-oriented community can transform itself into separate, more self-reliant, location-oriented communities. In this step it is possible for the community to reframe the situation that brought them together as an opportunity, much as recognition of pregnancy can be embraced as an opportunity (although I acknowledge that that is not always possible).

After recognition of a need, there would be some form of **2) contact**. This is similar to interviewing a midwife during an initial visit to ascertain whether this is the person with whom the pregnant woman wants to contract her care. People can rely on word of mouth or referral agencies for a cultural midwife, whether it is an anthropologist or another professional. If the anthropologist is the one contacting the community, then s/he must determine what an appropriate gesture is.

Once contact occurs, **3) dialogue** needs to be on-going so that the community and the anthropologist can discuss their assumptions, expectations, objectives, special needs, and so forth. Prenatal visits typically occur once a month until some point in the last trimester when they are held twice a month, then once a week. This sort of gradual, then intense work together is appropriate to

the anthropological process of gaining trust and then undergoing immersion. This is the point where I personally would want to be clear about my ecological goals, my assumptions about the nature of reality and how that shapes my work. Here the anthropologist needs to inform the community about what specific skills she can offer. This is where the parties involved need to determine if their interests are compatible. Also, when a midwife agrees to assist a woman with pregnancy and birth, she assesses through dialog, past medical records, and ongoing medical evaluations the risks involved.

To **4) define the needs** or problems clearly and thoroughly is the next step. After the community has become more familiar with who or what it includes, problems or needs may become more visible that were not recognized earlier on in the process. Here the anthropologist can provide an initial third party perspective on behavioral patterns, the community's relationship to the environment, quantitative analysis of energy flows, or qualitative analysis of significant symbols within the community. For the midwife, this aspect involves becoming clear on what the woman's needs are.

The next step is to **5) define the community** by discussing who is involved, what commonalities they share, and what differences exist, which could provide clarity for both anthropologist and community about how the people define themselves. In the birth process, this is analogous to gaining an understanding of who the woman is and who her support people are for labor. This also includes developing relationships between the woman and fetus, the mother and father, the midwife and the family, people to call, and people who may arrive after the birth from out of town. The process of defining communities is difficult to navigate, bound, and map, because communities are often shifting, and there are numerous perceptions of what constitutes the community.

For example, communities of interest can be geographically distinct. A community of interest formed around a leaking nuclear power plant involves the workers, the residents of the town in which the plant is located, people living downstream or upwind, antinuclear activists, local extension service, as well as the power company which may be out of state, and more. There is also

an historical component of defining the community. Where has the community been or where does it want to go with a particular issue? Who was affected 10 years ago when a bigger leak occurred?

In employing the term "community," I am in agreement with Crane and Angrosino who denote "different types of human groupings, both formal and informal" (1992:179). These affiliations and networks are what the anthropologist can access and observe. I employ the term local loosely, including any interested parties as well as a physical sense of local, and broadening to connect with similar interest groups nationally or internationally.

If appropriate to the circumstances, the regenerator can then facilitate the augmentation of community identity to include ecological or sustainable characteristics. This develops an orientation of place in terms of the bioregion the community inhabits or the local ecosystems the community encounters. Kirkpatrick Sale defines bioregion as "a life-territory, a place defined by its life forms, its topography and its biota, rather than by human dictates; a region governed by nature..." (1991:43). Just as anthropologists traditionally have looked at cultural characteristics to define a people, a bioregionalist looks at "natural characteristics" to define a bioregion (Sale 1991:55). And, just as definitions of culture are fluid and their boundaries permeable, so too are the definitions and boundaries of a bioregion.

Sale also describes an ecologist's version of community as "an essentially self-sufficient and self-perpetuating collection of different species that have adapted as a whole to the conditions of their habitat.... The community...is the observable reality of a place, as real as the functions" (Sale 1991:62-3). A city, for example, would need to consider not only its urban environment but the environments that support the city by asking: Where does our water come from? Our food? Where does our waste go? What landscape surrounds the city? What is the topography, the flora, the fauna? What was the region like before urbanization? Was it forest or prairie?

Defining the community is probably the most familiar territory for anthropologists--trying to gain an understanding of a group of people in terms of culture. In this process, the anthropologist is responsible for asking stimulating questions; facilitating discussion of what the people feel they

have in common, how they differ, what characterizes them; assisting them in organizing their ideas; utilizing communication skills to mediate differences or build consensus. A community may not generate a redefinition. In that case, the ethnographer could suggest an expansive definition of community which includes the local ecosystems.

Then the community needs to **6) determine a plan of action**, or birth plan. The components of a plan could range from concrete actions such as planning community work days in order to build a solar greenhouse to the more abstract of taking inventory of household energy flows. This could include forming a discussion group in which the participants self-assesses their relationships to the environment, or symbolic work such as creating earth-centered rituals or experiential workshops in which the people feel their ties to the local biotic community. A co-created ethnography can give voice to any of the above activities. This is when the community can assess how it wants to utilize the skills of the anthropologist as well as other professionals. The anthropologist may have experience in creating new symbolic relations to the environment like Macy, may have a familiarity with cross-cultural examples, or may have knowledge of the impact of risk perception versus risk itself. Using her traditional anthropological skills, she can assist with redesigning the way the community operates so that consideration of the community's cultural obstacles and cultural needs is primary. As the community assesses what its goals are, it may identify other professionals who may be helpful. An architect may have hands-on experience with passive solar design, for example. I imagine the plan of action to be dynamic and evolving. An example of this in Macy's work is the local fire groups, which are communities oriented around the issues related to nuclear waste. Macy and some of her associates have published a newspaper, which shares the process and engages other people in planning for their issue-oriented community.

The next step is to **7) implement**, or give birth. Here the community determines what in the plan of action works for them and what does not. I hold the pragmatic position that people use what works for them. If discourse is important to the community, several postmodern techniques could be useful. One is the concept of multi-vocality, or encouraging multiple voices to be heard.

Anthropologists have the skills for eliciting other people's voices or perspectives, although journalists are another professional group with this skill. Perhaps a community would care about what another community says. The concept of multi-vocality could be extended to listening to the voices and the needs of other species or aspects of local ecosystems, the voices of past, indigenous, and future peoples. An example of this from Macy's work illustrates the role of a non-dominative facilitator (which is how I imagine the regenerator to operate) in bringing together many voices. At a meeting discussing nuclear waste near Los Alamos, Macy suggested leaving an audio cassette for future beings telling them about the waste. She gave each person present the opportunity to say something to future beings. After people spoke, Macy noticed a shifting of attitudes in the room from the previous mood of "not in my backyard" to "a willingness to care for the waste in order to protect future generations..." (Macy 1991:216). Multi-vocality is not intended to exclude the voice of the anthropologist. There is value in the perspective of an outside expert who has been trained to perceive unconscious patterns or behaviors. The anthropologist can also facilitate discussion in order to raise other voices. If the anthropologist does not have the communication skills to solve problems and to mediate when conflicts arise, a professional facilitator or mediator may be useful.

Another postmodern concept of sharing authority should be utilized by having different focalizers for meetings each time or by making known and making use of people's different expertise. Recognizing the anthropologist's expertise as one of many explicitly shares authority. Recognizing the skills inherent in other participants further shares authority. For example, the group may include an architect, a social worker, an educator, and a builder. At different stages in the process, any of those skills may be useful.

The anthropologist can suggest that community members actively engage with her in the ethnography. If community-created ethnography is a part of the plan of action, then community members could take turns holding the pen, the tape recorder, the video camera, the paintbrush, whatever tools have been chosen. Essentially, by involving members of the community, the anthropologist is training them in certain aspects of fieldwork. Community members can be

involved in the editing of presentations of data as well. This guards against the postmodern observation/criticism that even when anthropologists have been informed by multiple voices, the final voice is the anthropologist as editor who decides what makes the cut and what does not. Again I will continue to focus on what anthropologists can offer to the emerging field of cultural midwifery.

The final step is to **8) evaluate**. Like postpartum check-ups and re-evaluation, evaluation follows a period of action providing time for reflection, assessment, and input. Here, the anthropologist's skill in assessing change, progress, and impact is essential. I mention re-evaluation because this is designed to be an ongoing process with an evolving, adaptable plan of action. It is iterative: the learning that is achieved by the community at one point affects the situation, which requires further experimentation and evaluation. Much like a midwife would apply what she learned from one birth with a particular woman to other births or the next birth with that particular woman, the anthropologist can integrate and apply learning based on reflective practice. Sometimes a midwife will receive direct feedback from her clients after a birth or even during the prenatal process. This gives the midwife the opportunity to adapt.

I questioned Mary Catherine Bateson (daughter of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson) about her thoughts on my topic of an applied anthropologist midwifing change. She suggested, "You have to identify what the culture wants, what it values. And then show them that this will get them what they want" (Bateson conversation 2001). She went on to explain that in the case of educating women in traditional cultures, one might list the reasons for a particular change, such as enabling women to support themselves and have fewer babies, which may not be what the men want. In a patriarchal culture, the reasons you state for a particular change must be appealing to the men. Similarly, a midwife explains a recommended course of action in terms of what is good for the health of the baby and the health of the mother. Near the end of a difficult labor, a woman may ask for an epidural because she is in intense pain. The midwife knows this is not good timing for an epidural because it will diminish the ability of the woman to push the baby through the birth canal.

She may reframe the conversation in terms of what the woman ultimately wants (similarly, the anthropologist can frame it in terms of what the community's ultimate goals are)—a healthy baby-- more than the immediate relief of the pain. Also, an anthropologist working on environmental issues will reframe issues in a way that highlights the benefits to the community of the least environmentally damaging course of action. For example, preservation of a wetland area could be explained as preferable to development of a wetlands area, which may be profitable but perhaps eliminate habitat for a particular rare bird.

I will explore the effectiveness of the approach step by step, then consider the midwife approach in general, and finally discuss drawbacks. The steps again are 1) recognize a need, 2) contact, 3) dialogue, 4) define the needs, 5) define the community, 6) determine a plan of action, 7) implement, and 8) evaluate.

These eight steps loosely correspond to Robert Gilman's aforementioned steps for revitalization, which are preparation, transformation, and elaboration. They also correspond to the Situation, Target, Pathway (STP) model (cite). Soft systems, critical systems thinking, and total systems intervention are also systems methodologies to address problem-solving, with which the eight steps I described above correspond. The similarities are likely due to the way we process information and problem-solve (at least in Western, academic circles). The reason I describe the eight steps with different terminology is because I based this on the case studies. These are terms that either seemed relevant to the participants or descriptions of what I observed in our process.

With the two local groups, I recognized a need for informal conversations between friends and acquaintances. They voiced a desire to understand their own perceptions or experiences of community, or a desire to live a more sustainable lifestyle, but felt overwhelmed by that task. Informal conversations turned to organizational meetings. I supported the formation of a response to the voiced desires to understand and to act in accordance with one's values. Other people recognized the need as well and they, if they had the time, participated as organizers as well. Because I was listening, observing, and familiar with my domain of interest, I recognized quickly

the needs expressed. Contact was mutual and rapid. When there was an opportunity informally, and at an organizational meeting, I expressed my interest in the situation.

The dialogue process was effective on three levels. First, the organizational meetings, which occurred prior to both of the local group meetings, explored the interests of the organizers. This happened most thoroughly with the Community From Within Group because it held four organizational meetings, while the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle had two organizational meetings. Each of the organizers, including myself, had the opportunity to express their individual interests in the subject. Then, at the group meetings, the structure always provided for talking stick time, during which everyone had the opportunity to say something if s/he desired. There was facilitated discussion and time for informal dialogue over snacks or a potluck meal. Finally, one-to-one dialogue occurred during the interview phase.

Defining the needs of the groups was an ongoing event. Originally, this was discussed in organizational meetings when a framework was created, but, because participants were empowered to lead meetings and contribute to the agendas, needs were expressed continually. Sometimes they were revised; sometimes they conflicted. A prime example of this in Lunaissance Sustainability Circle was the conflicting needs for action and discussion. The approach included listening to needs, observation, and attention to multiple voices.

Defining the community occurred on an ongoing basis as well. However, the most explicit discussion of this took place in the first meeting of the Community From Within series. The topic leaders researched community cross-culturally and presented a variety of materials to the group. As the anthropologist in the group, I volunteered for this task, which provided the group with some familiarity with anthropology; in fact, some participants seemed to become comfortable with some concepts rapidly. Then the group attempted to define, as a group, what community meant. It developed a list of indicators for community. In both groups, a sense of identity with the groups was palpable. In the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, I took this one step further with the co-creative ethnography. The interview process provided me with an opportunity to ask participants to

describe their ideal sustainable day. I also asked people to describe a picture that would symbolize the role of sustainability in their lives. This gave me a window into people's personal symbolism. It also gave me an opportunity to take pictures, with permission, and reflect back the collection of pictures with their own descriptions of the images as a community of sustainability in action.

The organizers determined a plan of action during the organizational meetings. However, in each meeting, there was an opportunity to plan for the next meeting or the next action or event. As the anthropologist, I felt invested in the process. I scribed notes from the meetings. I reflected back to the group by e-mail or in conversation the tasks on which the group had decided. Implementation could be viewed simply as following through on the original organizational meetings, but I viewed it as more. Each time the groups determined a task and followed through, I saw that as implementation. Examples of that ranged from offering the "\$100 holiday" workshops, development of the barter network, and production of the "buy less" cards, to shifting the content of the meetings to include more action, such as adding a letter-writing component. I contributed to the phase of implementing a plan of action in numerous ways. This phase expanded my multiple roles in many directions, from small group facilitator to problem-solver, to secretary, to researcher and educator of environmental issues.

Evaluation, too, did not simply occur chronologically. At each of the Community From Within Group meetings, there was an evaluation component to the meeting. At most of the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle meetings, there was an evaluation component. The interview process during both groups gave me the opportunity to hear feedback about participants' experiences.

Because I was exploring the concept of the cultural midwife I closely examined the relationship between the anthropologist and the groups. Particularly in the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, I was able to maintain a long-term relationship with the community. I was willing to do tasks that needed to be done that were secretarial and organizational because I was invested in the groups. As I explored in the systems section of this paper, this has its deficit too, in that I enabled the group to take less responsibility. Leadership remains an unresolved issue in this approach.

I elicited people's stories related to their development of a more sustainable (ecological) identity, which is one aspect of what I imagine the role of cultural midwife to be. I did this overtly through interview questions and the photographic, co-creative ethnography. I also was not obvious in my observations of personal story formations through the format of the meetings and informal conversations. In these, I observed people describing actions they had taken or ideas that compelled them that were new or increasing in their personal lives. The stories served to legitimize them as people striving to live a more sustainable lifestyle (that is what the group had agreed through reading and discussion was sustainable, which was a broad definition). I not only observed, but I participated in my own story development, reinforced others' self-conceived identity shifts, and provided opportunities for further shifts in identity. I was not the only one to do that because other participants naturally responded to people's stories as well, but in a less focused, constant, and consistent way, since it was not their priority as it was mine.

Drawbacks of the cultural midwifery approach emerged. Some drawbacks were related to the wide range of skills necessary to be an effective cultural midwife. The necessary group and communication skills, organizational skills, anthropological (or other professional) skills, and environmental knowledge were daunting to me in this pilot study of the regenerative model. Many skills are required for one position. It is possible that as cultural midwifery is explored more in the future, it will evolve into a role embodied by several people with complementary skills or by someone with a wide range of skills. As mentioned previously in the text, a cultural midwife need not necessarily be an anthropologist. I developed the approach to provide an anthropological response, but I welcome input from other disciplines to the development of cultural midwifery.

Another drawback discovered in the case studies was a lack of clear leadership, which was both appealing and confusing for participants. A midwife, although she does not dictate the woman's decisions during labor (unless there is an emergency), is clearly an authority, though in a manner that does not diminish the woman's authority. In the two local groups, I found it difficult at times to make myself visible as an authority, while trying to empower participants to take more initiative. I

was unable to generate effective leadership in the group. While trying avoid being the authority I undertook more leadership roles.

Another drawback emerged, that of testing a new approach. The approach, and its guiding metaphor of the midwife, is still open to development and thus is yet to be finalized. Because this was a preliminary test of the regenerative model, as the researcher in this pilot study I constantly faced new and uncertain ground. I often needed to improvise in situations with the local groups. From a different point of view the testing of a new approach may have also been an asset, due to my commitment to the project.

Several other drawbacks emerged. This was not a representative sample demographically because it targets existing social groups which may or may not be diverse. It is unclear how this approach would work with a different population. It is most likely to be replicable with a similar population (educated, upper-middle class, and with environmental attitudes). This brings up another issue, that this was a privileged group, who had the luxury of knowledge and time to participate. The final issue is that this process requires available time, which many people do not have, or perceive they do not have. I think this process would be inaccessible for somebody who has to work over-time to pay the bills.

I have discussed the potential outline for the applied anthropologist acting as a cultural midwife. I considered implications for it in analysis of my case studies. Now, I will discuss the significance of this study methodologically. Next, I will discuss the theoretical significance, as well as the significance of the domain. Finally, I will make comments and recommendations.

The methodology used in this project is significant because it integrates ethnographic methods to assess the status quo and uses those same methods to alter the status quo in the community-guided process. Additionally, the project's methods challenge the conventional concept of ethnographic authority by recognizing the innate authority of the community in order to empower it through the process, and by recognizing the authority of the ethnographer, in order to avoid overcompensation by privileging the voices of the participants exclusively. My role as ethnographer-midwife becomes

facilitative and authoritative. I find leadership a difficult issue to balance between the community members and me as researcher. Balancing the postmodern and applied approaches accentuates this issue of leadership, while trying to allow the community to express itself. The metaphor of the midwife speaks to this issue and guides my approach to leadership, because a midwife leads when she has relevant expertise to share or a crisis to manage, but she lets the woman ultimately birth the baby when major medical interventions are not needed. Similarly, cultural midwifery is a collaborative process. Leadership may come more from the researcher or the participants at different times depending on the context.

A major significance of this project is that it is accessible. The process was also empowering to citizens trying to gain an understanding of how the systems of which they are a part operate. The flourishing of study circles across the country attests to an increasingly active citizenship.

Although anthropologists strive to provide a holistic perspective, I am concerned about the lack of built-in representativeness in this project. When I consulted Mary Katherine Bateson about this research project, she cautioned me that the person who is willing (and has the luxury of time) to work with the ethnographer is not necessarily representative. Still, that person can help the neighborhood (Bateson conversation 2001). I expected that my key informants would not prove to be representative.

One methodological technique, the collaborative ethnography, was particularly beneficial. I intended for it to give people a sense of local identity, which is often lacking in suburban areas. Becoming familiar with people and place is crucial to supporting community efforts towards sustainability (Berry 1988). People need to know where they live. People need to know with whom they live in order to form networks that will bolster individual efforts to live in a more sustainable way. Much has been written in reflection on the impact of the anthropologist's actions, but there has been little experimentation in actually conducting such fieldwork (Brettell 1993). This project was significant methodologically because the ethnographer's facilitation and authority was coupled with the authority of community members in the collaborative process of selecting images to be

shown, describing them, and arranging them in a meaningful format. The pictures are not simply photographs I chose in order to capture an image of sustainability; rather, most of them are images suggested by participants as symbols of the role sustainability plays in their lives.

The theoretical significance of the model resides in the integration of applied and postmodern concepts. This intradisciplinary approach has been suggested by Johannsen, but to my knowledge it has not been tested in the field. The interdisciplinary nature of the theoretical background, from communications, systems thinking, psychology, education, environmental ethics, philosophy, and anthropology, enhances the approach by emphasizing the different critical perspectives of the individual disciplines.

The domain I chose is significant as well. The current environmental crisis requires input from a variety of disciplines. In my research I found that there are people who value sustainable lifestyles, who are motivated to change their habits and lifestyles, but without enough time to devote to the process in order to increase their efforts. Sustaining their efforts over time proved difficult. From my observations this was difficult because people are presented with many options for spending their time, and feel overwhelmingly busy.

For my case studies I selected groups, that were interested in forming intentional communities based on the concepts of sustainability and community. These were local groups, of which I was a participant, and a national group with similar interests, agendas, demographics, and format for comparison. The work was both in-depth and multi-sited. The boundaries between local and nonlocal were not always clear. The boundaries between my role as participant and my role as researcher were also not always clear. I was interested in creating intentional communities and studying the process. Additionally, this site (my home community) is significant because as central Virginia becomes a corridor for Washington D.C., communities here will experience much growth and change. The swelling of suburban areas in this part of the country calls attention to the need for focus on community and sustainability. A feeling of connection and identity is often lacking in suburban, commuter areas. The groups were able to bridge this fragmentation to a degree and for a

limited duration. They were able to support the intentional community efforts through meetings, projects, shared goals and values, and social interactions, but were unable to maintain a threshold of participation, and thus critical mass for further progress. From the case studies, I conclude that efforts such as this require a critical mass, participants who are able to give time to the project, and a few core participants who are able to provide more time and energy on an on-going basis.

I intended for the model to encourage future communities to adopt long-range, sustainable goals. With expanded understanding and connection to the local environment, more skillful handling of ecological processes will evolve so that communities will become more self-sufficient on the local scale (in terms of food, water, shelter, energy, and waste). Decreased human impact and increased stewardship can enhance the environment's health. Many participants, like myself, were idealistic about the changes we could make. Our intended changes were significant, but not as much as we would have liked. The main constraint was time, but also lack of commitment, priorities, leadership, and purpose. More importantly, what we sought to change were habits, which are hard to break. To examine these habits thoroughly we applied systems thinking.

I and the other participants became aware of the external forces of a variety of systems in which we were embedded. The individuals within the group seemed bent on achieving some small measure of impact, some empowerment to affect the systems of which they are a part. I do not intend to overestimate the potential impact of the imagined community, which can be formed in local groups. I am aware of the criticism Anderson's concept of imagined community has received. Hackenberg and Benequista note that they "were watching Benson in the act of imaging itself as a viable community engaged in self-management. This impression was rather different from the reality we have perceived in which external forces are combining in patterns of overdetermination that are both unplanned and unpredictable" (2001:158). The groups at times over imagined themselves, but the reality of commitment level and the embedded systems served as quick reminders not to daydream. One of the unique achievements of utilizing systems thinking was to

provide a sense of being embedded, not to overwhelm participants into feeling defeated, but to educate ourselves about how to work with the systems of which we are inextricably woven.

Because knowledge does not always motivate (Wilson 1988:465-469), the public process provides motivating experiences and community building to support the shift in identity. There is scientific research demonstrating how as Americans we need to modify our behaviors. The problems are systematic and require disruptions at key leverage points in order for the modifications to take root. An anthropologist can assess what sort of disruptions at what leverage points are culturally appropriate to a particular community.

Senge, in The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook (1994:20-21), states,

even though espoused values change, the culture of the organization tends to remain the same. It is a testament to our naivete about culture that we think that we can change it by simply declaring new values. Such declarations usually produce only cynicism. But deep beliefs and assumptions can change as experience changes, and when this happens culture changes. The carrier of culture is, as author Daniel Quinn says, the story we tell ourselves over and over again. As we gradually see and experience the world anew, we start to tell a new story.

Storytelling played a role in each of the four groups I examined. The ethnographer can facilitate the group's visualization and description of the future they desire to create together. By doing that, they can tell their story about their desired target over and over again to themselves, shifting culture little by little.

But again constraints of time and commitment decreased the impact of the methodology. The development of a sustainable community identity did not occur to the extent I hoped, and decreased to a degree as the groups faded. However, the relationships and systems that developed have not declined to levels prior to the group experiences. They are elevated above initial status, just not as elevated as participants nor I hoped, nor as elevated as they were at the peak of the group experiences.

A postmodern applied anthropologist with an understanding of the theory and methods of systems thinking has the potential to help groups of people sort through real and current issues that are important to them in a systematic and systemic way. I found the combination of systems thinking and anthropology to be complementary. Systems thinking provides an analytical, pattern-seeking approach; anthropology contributes an historically tried and thoroughly tested approach to gathering information about people and cultures that is as unobtrusive as possible. Their combined application to this domain of current environmental awareness in a local context can potentially generate an increased empowerment of involved citizens.

For applied anthropologists, I recommend a comprehensive approach utilizing the regenerative model when encountering situations that seem amenable to it. The comprehensive plan accentuates experience in some of the methods employed in this project as well as the traditional methods of observation, interviewing, and ethnography. The co-creative ethnography invited imagined sustainable lifestyles, elicited multiple voices, increased community bonds, shared authority, and improved communication and facilitation skills. Additionally, I recommend the development of a personal brief statement about what anthropology is and how it is being offered in a particular situation.

I have several specific recommendations for sustainability activists as well as applied anthropologists. I recommend trying to reach a more diverse audience for participation in the future but working with diversity that is part of existing community structures. For example, I recommend reaching out to different populations but working within their own organic communities, such as African American churches, certain volunteer groups, hunting clubs, athletic teams, or work places. The Community From Within Group organizers intended to reach a more diverse group in terms of ethnicity (the group ended up being 100% Caucasian). Other factors were not representational either, including gender (the group was 25% male, 75% female) and lifestage/age (78% were estimated median age 30, all with pre-school age children or younger; one man was around 60 years old). The fact that many participants were women with pre-school age children is significant

because it indicates an interest and availability of these women in the issues. Economic status seemed similar, but that is not verifiable; level of education was similar (78% had completed a bachelor's degree). In the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, I found the homogeneity helped the community building because people held similar values and lifestyles, which reinforced behavioral changes also. Some questions to consider include who seeks more community in their lives and why and when and how? The predominance of women may reflect a priority that women in childbearing years place on community (perhaps because of a need for childcare or adult contact). It also may reflect women's use of discretionary time, particularly those who do not have full time work outside of the home. The homogenous nature of our group was beneficial, however, because of the similar needs, life stage, and intense level of affiliation.

Another factor to remember is the commitment of time. In the Community From Within Group there were two participants who missed at least two meetings each, two participants who came to 100% of the meetings. Due to illnesses or travel, it seemed unrealistic to expect that everyone always be present. However, attendance contributed to community building. For example, it is significant to note that the four people who attended the most meetings all indicated feeling a greater degree of closeness with each other. I recommend asking for commitment to attend, but with understanding that it may be difficult for people.

The spring actions of sharing a camping trip, having a potluck, and picking berries together were community building events. However, I expected a more elaborate spring action to evolve. Participants expressed they felt pressed by a lack of time and other commitments and were unable to accomplish an extensive spring action. I realized that I had been looking towards the spring action to measure and prove the success of the group. I recommend reflexivity to maintain awareness of the researcher's and/or activist's personal measures of success.

Based on my experience with the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle, I recommend more use of the talking stick for taking turns during discussions. Also, the facilitator should have a timekeeper and have authority both to redirect conversations to stay on task and to give the opportunity to the

quieter members of the group to speak. If a meeting starts late, I recommend taking time to revise the agenda. This is easier once there is a decision-making process in place.

Variation within the format kept people interested. Alternating discussion with action seemed to satisfy the doers and the thinkers within the group so that they each had room for expression. Occasionally pausing and reflecting on the process, where the group was in the process, and what direction participants wanted it to go was necessary. Play time and potlucks were crucial because the degree of closeness among participants seemed to affect how easily errand sharing, car pooling, and other events tended to happen. Once, we molded clay into shapes representing some image or feeling of sustainability that would be symbolic to each person. An artist in the group initiated this project. She brought the clay with her and then took it home to fire the pieces, then returned them to their creators at the following meeting. Some images included a vessel like a bowl, a bear for strength to act in a sustainable way, and a frog, which symbolized to the person an indicator of environmental fragility, since frogs are often early indicators of environmental damage. People commented that they enjoyed having something to work on with their hands during the discussion, that the creative process felt beneficial during the discussion of depressing topics.

I recommend the group pursue the idea of initiating other sustainability groups in the city. That would provide more and diverse approaches to sustainability within the city, as mentioned above. A mix of some neighbors and some acquaintances, as this group had, seemed to work well because there was the degree of intimacy as well as some convenience for car pooling and tool sharing.

I recommend that local groups related to sustainability network. They could combine forces for larger undertakings and provide networking opportunities. Leaders of groups could become informed about the different opportunities around town so that they know when to combine forces or when they are fulfilling an individual niche.

For the applied anthropologist, I recommend conducting two rounds of interviews with each group in order to obtain before and after data for comparison. I conducted one round of interviews with each interviewee. I conducted one round of interviews for the community group and GAP. I

conducted interviews half way through the sustainability group and at the end, although not with the same interviewees. In addition to my observations, I relied on interviewees to self-assess changes they noticed as a result of the program. The first round should be held at the beginning of a series, the second at the end. Because most participants seem pressed for time this may be an imposition. I also recommend more quantitative analysis-- household ecological surveys, for example. Also, in a future project I recommend directly observing an entire series of GAP EcoTeam meetings. In future research, I also recommend confirmation of some of these qualitative findings with quantitative analysis. I recommend surveys of participants, including household surveys to gain access to measurable changes in resource use and waste produced by participants over time. This would allow the researcher to ascertain whether the observations, dialogue, and plans matched total lifestyle changes.

For nonprofit organizations (such as GAP) focused on the development of an ecological or sustainable lifestyle, I recommend the services of an applied anthropologist with the approach of a cultural midwife. The anthropologist can focus a nonprofit's efforts on leverage points that are culturally informed so as to get the most desired effect out of the least effort. The anthropologist can ascertain what symbols move particular groups of people so that, like advertisers, the organization can refine its campaign to appeal more effectively. The anthropologist can train staff in the techniques and qualities of attentiveness, observation, and responsiveness to specificity. The anthropologist can assist facilitators or campaign managers in finding leverage points to get the most change out of a given effort and improving his or her abilities to locate key events, change agents or roles in the community, patterns, and modes of change. Basic exploration of different subcultures' beliefs, behaviors, and norms is necessary. Additionally, the anthropologist needs to share authority, have excellent listening and observation skills, possess a willingness to collaborate with participants, and maintain an emphasis on local solutions whenever possible.

CHAPTER SEVEN, CONCLUSION

Now, I will draw conclusions from my research and discussion. Based on my observations and feedback given in interviews, the process described in the case studies was effective at developing sustainable community identity and experience to an elevated level, but not as elevated as imagined by participants, and did not remain at its peak elevation once the groups faded. The process was also effective at encouraging public familiarity with and use of anthropology, encouraging an ecological identity, eliciting multiple voices, and sharing authority. The process was effective for a number of reasons, but a primary one was the long-term and adaptive nature of my role, like that of a midwife. I found it beneficial as an ethnographer to be a member of the culture, to have direct, personal cultural knowledge and experience. For example, I could identify what the participants wanted and then shape the process to accommodate them without extraneous impediments (such as the requirements of a funding agency). My response strategies were always guided by a few simple concepts: local, sustainable, and community oriented.

GAP is effective at achieving its goals of specific behavioral change. But, GAP seems less effective at achieving some of the intentions of the local groups such as building long-term community bonds, making use of existing social systems (besides neighborhoods), such as alliances of friends and acquaintances, processing the emotions people experience relating to the state of the environment, and making the work meaningful and relevant to local groups such as ours. Our group could not motivate to undertake the EcoTeam program, in part because of the group's decline, but also because the participants did not want to be handed a workbook, to which they could not relate. The local groups and GAP simply had different approaches and intentions.

I hoped in my interviews of the GAP campaign managers to elicit more answers regarding questions that were raised by interviewees in the local groups. Some questions still unanswered include what strategies are available for getting other organizations involved in sustainability efforts and how to get through people's personal pain regarding the nonsustainable way they lead their

lives. Our local groups responded to the latter by providing avenues for expression of such pain, and to the former by attempts at networking locally, but wanted to learn more from experienced campaign managers.

As mentioned earlier the local groups were ineffective at maintaining the elevated levels of community and sustainable lifestyles at their peak once the groups faded. Because the approach requires a significant input of time, it does not address the issue of time constraints. Another model may address that more effectively. Thus, the peak effects were temporal in nature. Overall the model did produce some increase in sustainable lifestyle and community, not the quantity expected. Qualitatively, the approach produces deeper community bonds than GAP, perhaps because the community bonds can reinforce sustainability efforts. GAP has better quantitative data regarding the changes in lifestyle, and in my estimation their purposeful, thorough, and detailed approach is better at gaining more sustainable changes in lifestyle.

In conclusion, I effectively used anthropological techniques to obtain information, to analyze the experience, and to tell the story. The co-creative ethnography made personal and important participants' sustainable actions. Although the groups were effective in some ways in comparison to each other and GAP, there were aspects needing improvement. That led me to consider development of the approach of the applied anthropologist (ethnographer) as cultural midwife, which is an adaptive, community-guided process facilitating change in behaviors and beliefs. It is crucial to foster this adaptability to changing environments in local, culturally diverse ways.

REFERENCES CITED

Anderson, Benedict

1983 *Imagined Communities*. New York, NY: Verso.

AtKisson, Alan

1990 *The Innovation Diffusion Game*. Bainbridge Island: Context Institute.

1992 *Guardians of the Future; An Interview with Joanna Macy*. In *Context* (28): 37-38.
Bainbridge, WA: context Institute.

1999 *Believing Cassandra*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company.

Bateson, Mary Catherine

2001 conversation at the University of Virginia.

Berry, Wendell

1988 *The Work of Local Culture*. Harlan, IN.

Best, Steven and Douglas Kellner

1991 *Postmodern Theory* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

1997 *The Postmodern Turn*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Brettel, Caroline ed.

1993 *When They Read What We Write*. Westport, CN: Bergin and Garvey.

Brower, Michael and Warren Leon.

1999 *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices*. New York: Random House.

Bryant, Carol, James Lindenberger, Chris Brown, Ellen Kent, Janet Mogg Schreiber, Marta Bustillo, and Marsha Walker Canright.

2001 *A Social Marketing Approach to Increasing Enrollment in a Public Health Program: A Case Study of the Texas WIC Program*. *Human Organization* 60(3).

C.T. [sic] Lawrence Butler and Amy Rothstein

1987 *Conflict and Consensus*. Food Not Bombs Publishing.

Choices and Changes.

Seattle: KCTS and Sustainable Seattle. ND.

Citizens for Midwifery

Midwives Model of Care. Atlanta, GA. ND.

Crane, Julia G. and Michael V. Angrosino

1992 *Field Projects in Anthropology* 3rd ed. Project Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

DeGraaf, John

1997 *Affluenza* (videorecording). KCTS/Seattle and Oregon Public Broadcasting.

Devall, Bill and George Sessions

1985 *Deep Ecology*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Peregrine Smith Books.

Riane Eisler,

1988 *The Chalice and the Blade*. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, Publishers.

Erickson, Frederick and Jolley Bruce Christman

1996 *Taking Stock/Making Change: Stories of Collaboration in Local School Reform*. *Theory into Practice* 35(3). College of Education, The Ohio State University.

Fitchen, Janet M.

1988 *Anthropology and Environmental Problems in the U.S.: The Case of Groundwater Contamination*. *Practicing Anthropology*. *Practicing Anthropology* 10(3-4).

Fox, Richard ed..

1991 *Recapturing Anthropology*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Gaskin, Ina May

2002 *Lecture in Charlottesville, VA*.

Gershon, David.

1997 *Ecoteam*. Woodstock, New York: Global Action Plan for the Earth.

Gilman, Robert

1985 *Stages of Change*. In *Context*. Sequim, WA: North Olympic Living Lightly Association.

Global Action Plan

EcoTeam Survey. Portland Energy Office.

EcoTeam Survey. Columbus, Ohio. <http://www.globalactionplan.org/Files/ColumbusSurvey.html>.

Website. <http://www.globalactionplan.org/Files/EcoTeam.html>. ND.

Gold, Eva and Cameron Voss

1996 Making Children Larger and Cracks Smaller: The Role of a Participatory Evaluation in School Restructuring. A Report for the Gratz Connection. Prepared by Research for Action.

Hackenberg Robert A. and Nick Benequista

2001 The Future of an Imagined Community: Trailer Parks, Tree Huggers, and Trinational Forces Collide in the Southern Arizona Badlands. *Human Organization* 60(2):158.

Harland, Paul and Henk Staats

Effectiveness of the EcoTeam Program in the Netherlands. Leiden University.
<http://www.globalactionplan.org/Files/LeidenStudy.html>. ND.

Jackson, Wes

1994 Becoming Native to This Place:10. *In* Becoming Native to This Place. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.

Johannsen, Agneta

1992 Applied Anthropology and Post-Modernist Ethnography. *Human Organization* 51(1): 71-81.

Kitchell, Anne, Hanna, Erin, and Willet Kempton

2000 Identity Through Stories: Story Structure and Function in Two Environmental Groups. *Human Organization* 59(1):96 ,98-102, 105.

Kolb, David.

1984 *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. NJ: Prentice Hall.

Macy, Joanna

1983 *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers.
1991 *World as Lover, World as Self*. Berkley, CA: Parallax Press.

Mansur, Michael

7/14/98 Psst! Save the World; Pass it on. Enjoying, sharing life's harvest. The Kansas City Star. Kansas City MO. <http://www.globalactionplan.org/Files/Media.html>

Marcus, George E.

1998 *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press

Market Street Research, Inc.

The Market Potential for the Household EcoTeam Program. Northampton, MA.
<http://www.globalactionplan.org/Files/MarketSt.html>. ND.

Marlor, Chantelle, Barsh, Russell Lawrence and Levita A. Duhalungsod
1999 Comment on Defining Indicators Which Make Sense to Local People: Intra-Cultural Variation in Perceptions of Natural Resources. Human Organization 58(2).

McGee, R. John and Richard L. Warms
2000 Anthropological Theory. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.

McIntosh, Roderick J., Joseph Tainter, and Susan Keech McIntosh eds.
2000 The Way The Wind Blows. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Merchant, Carolyn
1992 Radical Ecology. New York, NY: Routledge.

Milton, Kay ed.
1993 Environmentalism. New York: Routledge.

Patton, Wendy
Systems Theory as an Overarching Perspective for Framing and dealing with Complex Problems.
<http://notes3.nms.unl.edu/infrstri/ns.../bf055d038af372e8862567df006989fe>. ND.

Pickering, Kristin
Winter, 1996 to Fall, 2001 Fieldnotes of observations and 14 interviews.

Prochaska, J.O. and C.C. DiClemente
1983 Stages and Processes of Self-Change of Smoking: Toward an Integrative Model of Change.
Journal of Consulting Clinical Psychology.

Quinn, Daniel
1995 Ishmael. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Ray, Paul H. and Sherry Ruth Anderson
2000 The Cultural Creatives. New York, NY: Harmony Books.

Robin, Vicki and Joe Dominguez
1992 Your Money or Your Life. New York, NY: Viking Penguin.

Roy, Jeanne and Dick
2000 Choices for Sustainable Living. Portland, OR: Northwest Earth Institute.

Sale, Kirkpatrick

1991 *Dwellers in the Land*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers.

Sanders, Scott Russell
1993 *Homeplace*. UTNE Reader 4.

Senge, Peter et al.
1994 *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Smith, Philip ed.
1998 *The New American Cultural Sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sterling, Stephen R.
1990 *Towards an Ecological Worldview: 77*. In *Ethics of Environment and Development*. Engel, J. Ronald and Joan Engel eds. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.

Steward, Julian
1955 *Theory of Culture Change*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Sustainable Seattle
1998 *Indicators of Sustainable Community*. Seattle, WA: Sustainable Seattle.

The Thomas Jefferson Sustainability Council
1995 *Indicators of Sustainability Interim Report*.
1998 *Sustainability Accords*. Charlottesville, VA: The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission.

Thompson, Karen
1992 YES!—Youth for Environmental Sanity. *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 16(2):21. Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival.

Tri-Met 6 Month Follow-up Study.
Portland, Oregon. <http://www.globalactionplan.org/Files/TriMet.html>. ND.

Union of Concerned Scientists
Briefings: Biodiversity, Population and Environment Linkages, and Sustainability.
<http://www.ucsusa.org/environment/0biodiversity.html>,
<http://www.ucsusa.org/environment/popenviron.html>, and
<http://www.ucsusa.org/vison/susvision.html>. ND.

Wackernagel, Mathis and William Rees
1996 *Our Ecological Footprint*. Stony Creek, CT: New Society Publishers.

White, Elizabeth Ross

Waging the Waste War Neighbor by Neighbor. The Christian Science Monitor. Boston, MA.
<http://www.globalactionplan.org/Files/Media.html>. ND.

William, Ray D.

2001 e-mail to Kristin Pickering.

Wilson, E.O.

1988 Biodiveristy. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Dear friends,

The topic of community frequently comes up in conversations and plans at different times and in different circles. Several of us are intrigued about community's multiple meanings and possibilities in our lives. So, Brynne Potter, Carrie Girotantis, Kristin Pickering and Sukhi Adler have been meeting periodically for the last four months to organize a community discussion/ action. Our focus is broad, not specifically looking at an intentional residential community. For six weeks we will explore the topic of community in the form of discussions and exercises, followed by an action phase in the Spring in which we will cooperate on a project. If you are interested in joining us please come to one of our open meetings. After reflecting on the open meetings you can choose to register for the six week session. There will be registration forms available there. Below are some questions to consider before coming to the open meeting. We're hoping people will share their experiences of community. Attached is our vision statement. As you will see one of our commitments is to document the process we're going through, for others who choose to undertake it. We would like to collect people's responses to the questions as well as any feedback along the way. Please call for directions and/or questions: Brynne 295-8326 or Kristin at 979-0244 or Carrie 832-2986. Hope to see you at one of the open meetings!

In Community,

Carrie

Kristin

Brynne Sukhi

.....

Define community in your terms.

Describe some current or past experiences in which you felt community was existing.

Describe some current or past experiences in which you felt community was absent.

What factors facilitated community working well?

What factors hindered community?

Describe some situations in which you would/ would have wanted more community at work?

List some ideas for the Spring action in which we work together on a project.

Please use additional pages. Let us know here if you are comfortable with your paper being included in the documentation process. Yes or No

APPENDIX B

Building Community From Within Vision Statement

We are a small group of individuals who are interested in a more defined structure for community building and developing lasting interdependent relationships among members of this local community. We seek to define community for ourselves and develop a healthy model in which we relate to each other as individuals, as a group, and as one species among many living on the planet. This model will include initial historical and cross-cultural reflection and the following focus points:

The development of heart connections beyond the nuclear family; the psychological aspects of relating in a group; the interweaving of the diversity that is necessary while finding some shared values; deepening our interconnectedness while expanding our caring and our actions here on this planet; we will conclude with visioning into the future how we can redefine our local cultures to be more community oriented and develop a practical application.

Intrinsically, the process of developing this model will be mutually supportive. Participants can find ways to reciprocate resources to allow for writing, thinking, and creating outside of regular meetings. As we progress through the process of creating the model, we will document it as a point of reference for ourselves, and other communities.

General Format

We intend to establish a diverse group of about 6 to 12 people who would meet on a regular basis for a period of about 8 weeks. We will ask that a commitment be made after the first two open meetings but before the first meeting of the series on February 6th to allow for the deepening of relationships within the group. To contribute to the deepening of relationships as well as to maintaining the group's pace in this process, meetings 3-8 will be closed to new members. We will conduct this series again if there is enough interest. The intention of the two open meetings will be to share your ideas, past experiences, and visions for the future. We will also discuss and finalize the topics of the future meetings.

The first open meeting will be held on Saturday January 23rd from 10 am to 12 pm. The second open meeting will be held on January 30th from 10am-12pm for those who missed the first or have further questions. The open meetings will be followed by a six week series on Saturdays beginning February 6 from 10 am to 12 pm. Childcare may be provided at minimal cost; if you are interested in this being please call one of us to inquire. A registration fee of \$15 will hold your space in the group and help to cover costs of the meeting space, supplies and childcare.

APPENDIX C

Creating Your Own Community From Within Group

Planning Meetings: Gather a few friends and acquaintances, ask them to each call someone else to come. Look over the sample topics. Brainstorm your own topics. As the group decides which topics to use or adapt, keep in mind that this is an opportunity for individuals to discover their personal community from within, as well as for the group to explore its community from within. Formal or informal consensus decision-making can be useful. Compare schedules and find a day and time once a week for a specified number of weeks in a row to meet. Another alternative is a weekend retreat format. Many in our group felt like 6-8 weeks was too short and suggested 10-12. For continuity in our series we met at the same place each time. Rotating houses for meetings as we did for our planning meetings is another option. Sample flier and agenda are attached.

Week 1 and 2 Topic: Historical and Cross-Cultural Reflections~~Here the facilitators presented an outline of significant events in history contributing to the development or dissolution of community. Then on a large piece of paper there was a timeline spiral in which members of the group jotted down events from the timeline or personal history events that felt personally relevant. Then the facilitator led a sharing of personal histories in which the person noticed community happening or not happening. After this the group took time to brainstorm common themes that came up in the sharings of what is necessary for community. Then we tried to synthesize what was said as a guideline for considering/evaluating situations' community potential, as well as for working to improve community building in a particular situation. Resources include: Chalice and the Blade, Ishmael, Intro. to Anthropology, Builders of the Dawn and Spiritual Politics by McLaughlin/Davidson

Week 3 and 4 Topic: Development of Heart Connections Beyond the Nuclear Family~~The facilitator for this session explained some basic neuro-physiology about how the brain works and how the brain and heart are connected. Then she led a balancing session using kinesiology and muscle testing and explored how our personal family histories affect how we act in group situations. Then she explored the behavior of the group using the same model. Resources include: The Continuum Concept, Joseph Chilton Pierce's books, Kinesiology, ~~Addiction Book~~???

Week 5 Topic: Interweaving the Diversity that is Necessary While Finding our Shared Values ~ The facilitating team assigned homework for prior to this

session to bring a symbol of ourselves to place on a group altar. We were also asked to consider a situation in which we felt our ideas or our person were or were not discriminated against. Then we did a personal sharing of those stories with discussion of what contributed to these situations.

Resources include: Spinning Hope, Weaving Tales of Peace and Justice; The Little Soul and the Sun; All I See Is Part of Me, The 12 Stages of Healing by Epstein

Week 6 Topic: Deepening our Interconnectedness while Expanding our Caring and our Actions Here on this Planet—Our assigned homework was to read an account of a Council of All Beings and to set aside time to connect with a particular animal or aspect of the earth. We then made masks to represent those animals etc. For our group meeting we held a council (see Thinking Like a Mountain for council instructions). We finished with dancing to reconnect with each other. Resources include: John Seed's Thinking Like a Mountain Joanna Macy, Peaceworks International's Handbooks on Dances of Universal Peace.

Week 7 Topic: Visioning Into the Future—First we took time to reflect on how the series has been for each of us. We shared a poem, prayer, wish. Then we brainstormed spring actions and took time to prioritize one or two of those.

Several specific suggestions from participants:

*The group benefitted from a few minutes of silence at the beginning of meetings, having a break, and sharing space which is conducted with a talking stick (ie whoever is holding the stick has the floor until the stick is placed in the middle of the circle and the next person picks it up).

*Most of our group preferred three hours meetings more than two, but not longer.

*Include as many participants as are interested in the planning stage.

*State upfront that this is a co-created project that is shaped by participants throughout the process. The purpose may feel unclear for some at the beginning.

*Take turns planning and facilitating the meetings.

*Consider how to reach a broader range of local community.

*Our group considered these to be important: providing childcare, regular attendance of meetings (challenging), a spring action to solidify the group's process.

Sample Spring actions:

cooperative garden, Y2K preparation, childcare trading, community discussion meeting once a month, sharing skills and knowledge, connecting with broader charlotteville community, storytelling, camping, bulk food ordering
bulk food ordering, camping trip

APPENDIX D

New Moon-Sustainability Group Ideas List

ride sharing: errands
bike riding
hay box
solar meal
project rotation/ sharing info/ resources
water catchment
tipi raising
DEEP play
group retreat
swap day
barter system
shared resources
community needs info
books-lending library
purchase tracking-Your Money or Your Life
ceremony-ritual-Council of all Beings
more play
more ritual
group household overhaul without judgement
food co-op
mail reduction
sing-a-longs (loud)
more stuff with kids/families

APPENDIX E

March Report to the Lunaissance Sustainability Circle

After a year of observing and participating in group meetings and committee meetings, plus conducting interviews I have noticed some things that I would like to share with the group.

What consistently arises for most of us is a theme of not enough time to do all the sustainable actions we'd like to do. I think trading childcare so that households can have time set aside for sustainability specifically is one option. Another is prioritizing those actions that will have a return of time on the time we invest. One example of this is canceling junk mail. If it is effective it can reduce time spent perusing catalogs or at least time in recycling. Another option is accepting a certain level of chaos and disorder during the transition to a more sustainable way of doing something.

Sustainable actions that reduce expenses are self-sustaining. Most of us have had a chance to look at Your Money or Your Life.

Giving space to the emotions that surface when reading about the state of the environment is another consideration. The feelings that come up can be motivating towards action, but they also can be overwhelming and numbing if we do not give enough space to them. Pacing the amount of bad news to one's own response capabilities to readings may be important.

The last few meetings have been smaller. This may be a cyclical, seasonal issue. But with all the creative ideas we generate it would behoove us to put some energy into attracting new members. I will write an article for Echo. Does anyone else have any ideas?

When the barter network is up and going we can network with other local groups with that concrete tool.

Because we have a plethora of ideas I think we need to continue to prioritize and focus on a few and see them through to completion.

After we finish our study of the northwest earth institute Choices for Sustainable Living the indicator work that we did last Spring can be fleshed out more OR we could undertake study of the ecoteam manual which has indicators and measurements for household sustainability. Is it important to us to develop our own measures and indicators or do we want to try out this method in the ecoteam workbook?

I look forward to a time when we have completed a few projects and courses of study and can describe together a positive, sustainable future local culture. The more we tell ourselves a positive future the more likely it will become. As an applied anthropologist I would enthusiastically embrace such a project. I am considering writing a grant for it. I can imagine a local organization like the Environmental Center or the Rivanna Watershed Project sponsoring such work.

APPENDIX F

The Barter Network

www.barter.argon.org

Swapping, exchanging, bartering. Though we use money to purchase most goods (food, clothes) and services (haircuts, phone service), just about everyone engages in direct trade of one sort or another. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. If you watch my kids tonight, I'll watch yours another time.

Bartering, as a way for individuals to get what they need, has a lot going for it.. Especially when the trading can be organized in such a way that when a tailor needs a room painted, she doesn't have to search for a painter who just happens to need a pair of pants made, before she can get the work done.

- **Bartering stretches your cash. By trading your labor for services like car repair, transportation or plumbing work, you can spend more money on goods and services that are difficult to barter for, such as food or rent.**
- **A neighborhood barter exchange can provide a reliable local support system to meet residents' sudden or emergency needs for assistance.**
- **By bartering residents give themselves the opportunity to make better use of local resources and further develop a wide variety of their own skills.**
- **Bartering between neighbors can strengthen community ties and increase the degree of local self-reliance.**

The Barter Network is made up of members of the greater Charlottesville community who want to barter skills and hand-made goods. Each participating member will advertise their skills and needs through a periodically updated directory (on-line and published). Members are invited to freely contact other members directly to request services. Members will "pay" for services with an alternative currency. A rotating group of three members will act as Coordinating Committee.

How to become an active member of the Barter Network:

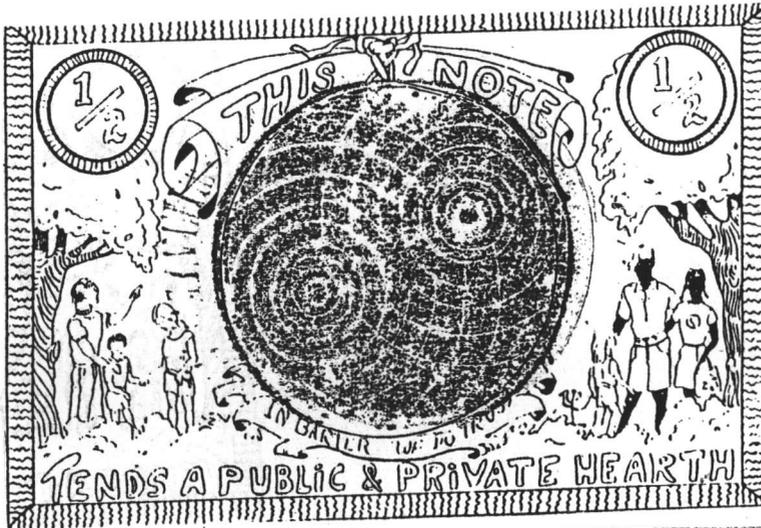
There is a \$3 activation fee that will defray the costs of currency production and incidentals. Upon receipt of this fee along with a completed activation form, you will given an account on the Barter Network website and 3 hours of currency.

To obtain an activation form or for any questions, contact a Coordinating Committee member.

current contact: phone- Jen 971-4679

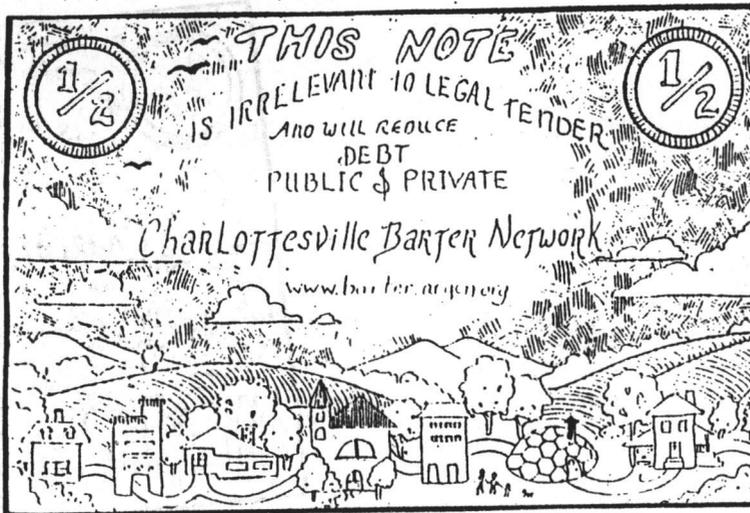
email- matthew@argon.org; www.barter.argon.org

postal-1208 Bland Circle , Charlottesville, 22901



If I really need or want the product, ask:

- Is it: safe to use? practical & durable? made from renewable or recycled materials taken in a sustainable way? a good value for the money?
- Is the manufacturer working towards sustainability?
- How will I dispose of it? What environmental impact will that have?
- What kind of package does it have?
- How far has it traveled?
- Is there some environmental, health, personal, or economic benefit that outweighs the product's environmental cost?



- Why do I want this?
- How will I use it?
- What are my alternatives?
- Can I get along without it?



A gift from Lunaissance Sustainability Circle
 Visit our site at www.luna.argon.org
 or call 804.979.0244 for more info.
 Come join us!

APPENDIX H

After surveying a variety of resources we identified several broad categories of sustainability: **bio-system, economic, built environment, and the intangible.**

Biosystem includes: 1) *the inputs* (consumption) such as food, water, consumer goods, energy use 2) *the outputs* sometimes referred to as the waste stream (some of which has great potential to be an input again) such as compost, rain caught in rain barrels, what's going down our pipes 3) *habitat/wild spaces.*

Economic includes 1) *work* (how it interfaces with the broader economy or affects the household) 2) *currency* 3) *alternate forms of currency* (such as time dollars or simple bartering) 4) *scale* (is it at an appropriate, human, local level—and is there a device such as an indicator we can access with our small and big decisions [such as purchasing a futon frame—rubberwood from Indonesia for less money, oak from California, a hand me down couch or????]).

Built Environment includes consideration of what is present and what we can do most sustainably with it adapting, repairing, re-conditioning).

Intangible includes 1) *integration* of the more tangible aspects into a system of sorts that can sustain itself with a less constant, vigilant attention 2) *relationships* within the household, to the community, personal responsibility in the neighborhood or town context, and more general responsibility to governance with the potential for consensus efforts 3) *Health* (decreased pesticide use in our household vicinity would lead to decreased health risks for an obvious example) 4) *spirituality and ritual* (I bet we all have some interesting resources to share here).

So with these categories the idea is to come up with personal goals related to a category such as doing less laundry in order to use less water. Then we can help each other develop or recognize pre-existing indicators such as the water bill or # of loads of laundry. Then we can brainstorm suggestions for ourselves or others if we're asking each other for assistance on an issue. Marc suggested air drying more after a shower instead of always using towels in order to decrease # of loads of laundry. Then we look at the measuring device again over time to assess how we are progressing towards our goal. A household chart would look like the following:

Category / Goal / Ways to Measure or Indicate / Suggestions / Re-measuring

Biosystem/ Using less water when doing laundry/Water bill or # of loads of laundry/ Air drying/water bill

My suggestion for not this April meeting but the May meeting is to focus on this by breaking into small groups— One group for each category (Biosystem, Economics, Built Environment, and Intangible). There we will all have the opportunity to share goals, find indicators or recognize pre-existing ones like the gas gauge in our car, share suggestions for meeting goals. Then we can rotate so we all experience each category. By the end we should have a lot of material for households to choose from. I can think of a few ways to document the process, such as audio taping the small groups or even more easily having a big piece of paper available to each small group category which is added onto by each group. Because this stuff is so relevant to my s...hoe' work I'd be happy to synthesize and handout the work that the group did together.

APPENDIX I

In the interviews with the Community From Within Group I began by asking participants to describe their relationships with the other participants prior to the series of meetings. One person did not know anyone. Everyone else knew at least someone, often more than one other person, but not everybody. They mentioned the ways in which they were affiliated.

The next question asked people to describe their relationships with the other participants after the series of meetings. One person described a sense of common purpose, trust, and new childcare arrangements (Interview with Barbara). One woman said that she and another woman with a child the same age started to visit with each other. Her relationships with other group members did not alter significantly, despite a feeling of commonality with them because of the group experience (Interview with Danielle). The woman who had recently moved to town reported a positive experience meeting new people (Interview with Kate). The man indicated that he felt that most of the relationships had deepened, except with the person who missed the most meetings (Interview with Daniel).

I asked participants to describe a typical week and to explain what part the group played, or did not play, in their lives. One woman indicated that participation in the group sparked many thoughts and “radiated into different areas of her life.” She confirmed that she was in the process of re-evaluating her marriage. This was one of the few venues where she could speak about that (Interview with Danielle). Another participant described feeling like the group was at the back of his mind. He would at some point in the week prior to the meeting prepare his thoughts. He said, “After a couple of weeks, it felt like the normal rhythm” (Interview with Daniel). In fact, this person seemed most invested in the group continuing in some form after the series. Another interviewee indicated that the group became more significant in her life once she facilitated a meeting with another participant. Since the series ended, she described, “the topics are on the forefront of my mind. It’s gotten me thinking more along the lines of community and my definition

of that has been broadened. The ecological references regarding community had a tremendous impact” (Interview with Kate).

Next I inquired what their vision was for their involvement in the group in the future. I asked them to describe a day in the future that includes some fruition of the visioning the group did together. One interviewee responded she would call group members for help on a project, which required a core group of people. She described the group as her “resource group” and gave the example of starting a cooperative school and needing a core group of people to help (Interview with Barbara). The man in the group responded similarly, as did another participant (Interview with Daniel). One respondent expressed skepticism that the group would maintain a cohesiveness. She did not think people would make time for it in their lives, that there was not enough commitment. She did say that within herself she felt “encouraged to be more conscious of [her] connections with the environment” (Interview with Danielle).

I asked what was least beneficial as a topic and why. Coupled with that, I asked what people would like to see more of. One of the women, who early in the series emphasized attendance, reiterated that she would like to see more of a commitment from people through attendance. She also suggested not connecting the series to a spring action (Interview with Barbara). Two interviewees said they most enjoyed the meeting which included the council of all beings ritual. One person said, “It touched a lot more emotions...it felt more personal. It drew people out in terms of describing feelings” (Interview with Daniel). One person said she would like a longer series, such as a 12-week series. She and another participant found the topic which focused on the historical aspect of community too abstract (Interview with Danielle). One woman would like to broaden the base of people drawn to the group and would like more diversity.

I then asked, “Did the group become what you thought it would?” One of the organizers indicated that she did not have a clear picture of what it was going to look like (Interview with Barbara). Another participant, who was not an organizer of the series, responded affirmatively, that the group did become what she imagined (Interview with Danielle). I observed a willingness in

most people to take the responsibility to co-create something unknown without a clear leader. One person wanted to know more about what to expect. She suggested stating up front, “We will co-create this...” (Interview with Kate).

Next I asked if people thought a group like this could form spontaneously, or if they thought a formal process was necessary. One person thought that certainly groups form over events and issues, although it may take more time. She said, “This has the advantage of acceleration” (Interview with Barbara). The woman who was skeptical of the group staying connected beyond the series was also skeptical that such a group could arise in our busy culture. She said, “Everyone is so busy... we’re all a preoccupied group of people, then spontaneous things like talking about community go by the wayside” (Interview with Danielle).

I asked other questions about the structure, the length of meetings, the childcare arrangements, and registration. The first interviewee responded to my inquiry, “What questions would you have asked?” with “How did the experience change your thinking about community?” She then responded to her own question by saying, “It reemphasized thinking about community because the last few years I had gotten away from it...not to isolate myself in a little family unit...to try to think of the big picture” (Interview with Danielle). I observed her in the meetings recalling prior experiences with community or previous interest in community.

Another interviewee suggested asking the question, “What was the gift you came away with, and what was a struggle for you?” She responded to her own questions, saying her struggle was the commitment to attendance. The gift for her was developing her personal definition of community, which was the question that led her to help organize the project. She felt excited about the list of aspects of community the group generated when she facilitated that topic. She intended to use that list as a barometer of community in her life (Interview with Barbara).

In the last interview, in addition to my list of questions, I asked both of the previous interviewees’ questions. The interviewee responded to the gift question, saying he saw how possible it is for people “to come together and almost make something out of nothing” (Interview

with Daniel). He described “some kind of glue holding us together, but it is not always immediately apparent.” To the question about how the series changed his thinking about community, he mused about what long-term effects he might experience as a result of the series. He acknowledged gaining practice in certain skills related to facilitating, such as developing an agenda and having a theme, as well as communication skills (Interview with Daniel). As one interviewee stated, the process accelerated what may have occurred spontaneously between individuals dialoging about community. That concludes the interviews with participants in the group.

APPENDIX J

The first round involved two interviews and occurred after a year of meetings. The interviews were structured with open-ended questions. The respondents were selected because they did not have the opportunity to contribute to the indicator process.

The first interview began by discussing the interviewee's experience of the previous meeting. Then I asked what she thought about the indicator process. After she voiced some confusion, I asked how she thought this process could be put into a format that is more easily absorbable. She felt confusion about the wording of some of the categories (built environment and intangibles). She suggested three categories: spirituality, economics, and consumption. Then the conversation turned towards the public's perception of sustainability. She considered how the concept of sustainability could spread. I asked what kinds of things she thinks about doing in terms of public actions. She replied that she imagines street theater and advertising as actions in which she would participate. Eventually, the conversation went to her many goals regarding sustainability. She mentioned her family's disinterest in the topic of sustainability. She said she does not get any response from her family when she sends them e-mails on the topic of sustainability. One idea she expressed was printing up cards, which on one side would say, "Do you want to be a hero?" On the other she would print statistics about the state of the earth and actions people can take to improve the situation. For her, the most important issue to focus on was driving and fuel use (Interview with Molly).

In the next interview, I also began by discussing the previous meeting and asking for feedback. I asked how I could have helped her participate more (after she expressed frustration at not being able to participate as much as she wanted). Then I asked for her thoughts about the indicator discussion in particular. That stimulated the rest of the interview. I listened, and when she raised a dilemma or a question important to her (e.g., how do we as householders see the measurable effect of choosing paper over plastic bags at the grocery, or of using canvas bags, which many of us use?), I volleyed

the question back by asking what she thought. She expressed motivation to research a source that would offer guidance about those choices, which she found in a book produced by the Union of Concerned Scientists. In terms of our group, she suggested the group needed a militant timekeeper, the facilitator should assign tasks, and the group needed to use the role of scribe again. A significant issue for her was the food she and her family consumed. She aspired to buy in bulk, to reduce packaging, and to eat fresh and organic food as it is economically feasible to do so. She expressed that she needed to see a measurable difference between actions. She mentioned the dilemma of cloth versus disposable diapers as an area where she would like to see data about the environmental impact of each. Her interest in this area sparked the indicator initiative (Interview with Priscilla).

The second round of interviews occurred almost two years after the group's inception, just as attendance and interest had decreased. I interviewed five participants (for a total of seven from the two rounds of interviews with Lunaissance participants), none of whom were interviewed the first time. I asked for interviews with participants with the most consistent attendance, except for one, whom I selected because of her involvement in the barter network (which developed in the sustainability group). There were 18 questions total. I will discuss the findings of the interviews question by question, with the exception of questions 14 and 15 which are included in the main text. In some interviews, I spontaneously added additional questions to follow a train of thought or to clarify a point the interviewee was making.

The first question was, "What or who brought you to the group initially, and what prompted you to participate for a time?" There were several types of responses. One was that it was a "personal thing I wanted to be involved with, a personal goal" or a "natural affinity towards the concept of sustainability" (Interview with Kallie, Joan). Another mentioned how her interest in the group emerged from her participation in preparations for Y2K, which stimulated her interest in sustainability skills (Interview with Barbara). Others mentioned their relationships with friends or acquaintances in the group, which illustrates how the group formed by word of mouth.

The second question asked, “What stimulated you to continue to attend meetings?” One woman shared that she “really wanted it to go somewhere, the group to do something to have an impact on the community” (Interview with Kallie). For another, it was enough to hear other people’s ideas and feelings (Interview with Barbara). The man, who began participating after the group had been meeting for 6 months, said, “the initial meeting made a good impression” (Interview with Daniel). Responses show that the group served as an attractor for motivation to make changes and responded to people’s emotional needs and needs for support.

The third question was purposefully ambiguous. It asked, “Were you involved with environmental issues previously?” I was interested in seeing what might be considered involvement for people. I did not want the question to simply focus on activism. Everyone considered themselves to have been involved previously. The involvement varied from being an environmental educator with an MA in the subject, to making environmentally informed consumer or personal choices (Interview with Kallie). One woman described her participation as a “step below activist” (Interview with Barbara). She called that step environmental participant. The only man interviewed described his involvement not as an activist in the normal sense. However, he felt his daily sunrise and sunset meditations as relevant. Other aspects of his involvement include simply awareness of issues, recycling, practicing conservation, and his former vegetarian restaurant (Interview with Daniel). One woman described involvement in her personal life from an early age. Currently 39 years old, she remembers at age 7 starting an anti-pollution club. She throughout her life has participated in clean-ups. She mentioned her membership in the Sierra Club as well as the Natural Resources Defense Council. She wrote letters and donated money (Interview with Penny). One interesting question posed by the environmental educator was, “What causes environmentalists to become who they are?” (Interview with Kallie). In other words, what types of formative experiences lead individuals to work for the environment? She felt that was a significant question to answer in order to become informed about how future generations could be raised in ways that would promote environmental consideration.

Question 4 asked, "What did you like and/or dislike about the meetings, the format, the group?" Several people mentioned that they liked having a common book to read as a focus point. One woman mentioned her appreciation of the committee structure (Interview with Kallie). Another woman said she liked the structure of the group, a balance between study and action, taking turns with leading/facilitating, and the process of the group shaping itself (Interview with Barbara). The male participant also mentioned balance of structure (such as topics) and flexibility. He liked the social aspect, too, especially the potluck. He mentioned the talking stick, saying, "Each person gets to say their peace within [the structure]" (Interview with Daniel). Others liked guest speakers, a creative process the group did with clay, variation, the once-a-month format, different parts to the meeting, having a "doing" aspect to the meeting, and a sharpening of personal focus on environmental issues.

One woman mentioned she liked how attendance was not required, while another said, "I wish that more people had made it a priority, a commitment to attend" (Interview with Kallie). The lack of consistent attendance affected cohesiveness and continuity. One person felt study and action were balanced. Another felt it was unbalanced, and would have preferred more action. In fact, several acquaintances of the group members said they would be interested in attending if there were more action, less meeting. The one person who emphasized study more than action said she realized that it is harder to get people to commit to studying what the effects of the actions are (Interview with Barbara).

Another aspect of the process that drew both praise and criticism was the group's evolving purpose and identity. Some people felt frustrated by the lack of clarity. Others felt more comfortable with the inductive process and would not have felt comfortable with a process decided upon by an outside expert.

Although some people liked taking turns facilitating and appreciated the variation in leadership, one person expressed that she didn't like some people's style of facilitating (Interview with Penny). This same person wanted more dynamism in the meetings, more passionate dialogues that would

motivate her to take action. For her, the topics were something passionate while the meetings “didn’t match the passion [she] felt.” When I asked her to elaborate on the concept of dynamism, she expressed that the meetings were often anti-climactic and needed more emotion and less intellectual focus (Interview with Pia).

The next question, number 5, asked, “What else would you like to see with the group?” Several people mentioned recruitment and outreach. Recruitment was necessary to one person because she felt the group needed to be a certain size to be self-perpetuating (Interview with Kallie). One woman mentioned “guerilla advertising” (creative fliers, tabling, events, and more) as a method of outreach, “making sustainability cool” (Interview with Joan). Some mentioned having a specific goal for the group. One of these was increased action in the local community by several people. She mentioned analyzing what actions work in our community so we can put our energy into the most productive avenues. She also described an interesting action, an environmental audit of city government buildings and parks, perhaps as an internal job position (Interview with Joan). Two people mentioned continuing with the EcoTeam workbook by Global Action Plan (Interviews with Kallie and Daniel).

Question number 6 asked, “What facts, anecdotes, symbols, images, ideas moved you/motivated you towards a particular action?” Several people mentioned the book Believing Cassandra (Atkisson 1999). The statistics and facts were not fresh in the minds of the participants, but the description of the urgency of the environmental situation was, along with the humor and passion in the writing, which stimulated the group. One woman said she felt moved when she entered a store and considered how much Americans consume relative to the rest of the world. She described “some poor people making pennies a day belching out this crap” (Interview with Kallie). Reduction of consumption became her primary goal as a result. She related it to the events of September 11th, saying, “This is why the world hates us...taking the world’s resources and turning it into useless stuff” (Interview with Kallie). One woman felt moved by the process of the group more than by any particular reading or fact. In particular, the first 6-12 meetings started with a moment of silence or

song, which she said was palpable for her: the grounding of the group as a whole lent itself to the early success of the group (Interview with Barbara). One of the participants who preferred action felt motivated when she heard about concrete actions, such as the chicken tractor one member was designing and building for another and a haybox (Interview with Penny). Another participant elaborated by saying she felt moved by “beautifully elegant systems” and gave the examples of Bill McDonough’s sustainable architectural work (specifically his leased carpet concept), passive solar homes, green economics, which internalizes the previously externalized environmental costs, and xeriscaping. She exclaimed, “I’m in love with bicycles,” the way they make human energy more powerful without pollution (Interview with Joan). One participant said the concept of the ecological footprint was new to him. He felt motivated by the disparity that was presented so visually (Interview with Daniel).

“How often do you think about sustainability or a sustainable lifestyle?” was the seventh question. Remarkably, every one of the five interviewees immediately responded, “All the time!” One woman expressed that she wished she could be oblivious, but she cannot, and she felt helpless (Interview with Kallie). Another person explained that he thinks about sustainability “in one way or another, probably every day, not as a formal thing like ‘what can I do for sustainability?’ It has become more deeply engrained as a lifestyle behavior” (Interview with Daniel).

Question 8 asks, “Do you or do you not think about sustainability more as a result of your participation in the group?” People were uncertain. I think it was hard for them to measure the difference over two year’s time. I also wondered if they felt obliged as my acquaintance to respond positively, even though I emphasized to each person to respond honestly. One woman said, “Probably yes...a gathering of support for that part of myself” (Interview with Penny). She mentioned, though, that her children were quite young at the group’s inception (seven and two years old). She was feeling a personal low in terms of her lifestyle’s environmental impact because of convenience and lack of time and energy. The group helped her garner those resources. Another participant said she was not sure if she thought about it more, but she did think about sustainability

differently. She said, “I see it more as a group issue—if you can get 5-10 people to participate, the ripple effect is much larger” (Interview with Barbara).

I was interested in what people’s responses would be to question 9, which asked, “What brings sustainability to mind?” Some people had answered this in previous replies, such as the woman who confronted sustainability whenever she went shopping. Several experiences were common among the replies. Besides shopping, they included being in the car, and dealing with food (not just purchasing but considering the environmental impact of its production and distribution as well as consumption). Other individuals responded: hearing about environmental degradation through the news, remodeling, recycling, throwing things away, being in nature. I did not anticipate one response, which was a feeling of being fortunate, or satisfied, and then extending those feelings beyond herself and her family. This led her to consider how she was taking and not giving back to the Earth (Interview with Penny).

Question 10 explored behavior by asking, “Have your habits altered since participating in the group? If so, how?” Two women focused on consolidating and minimizing driving. One woman had declared a “no car day” during her weekly schedule. The other began walking more and lived close enough to her daughter’s school and her own workplace. She made walking her primary exercise and involved her children in this. This person also felt empowered to make sustainable choices in the construction of a home on her property in town. She mentioned possibly tithing to the Nature Conservancy some of the profit from that. The woman who declared the “no car day” also focused on food. She bought a share in a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), researched local food sources, and now selects the most sustainable seafood to consume (Interview with Kallie). She also changed her bank account to a local bank. One participant did not describe any material changes. She did describe a change in her approach, a change in her awareness of sustainability and seeking out more efficient systems. She emphasized wanting to avoid burn-out which activists can face. She described the burn-out as “the acceleration of cultural speed” and frantic (Interview with Barbara). The male participant said his habits had not altered “but have

become more refined” (Interview with Daniel). Another changed habit mentioned by a participant was remembering more often to bring cloth bags to the grocery store.

Question 11 asked people to prioritize. “What was the most significant change?” The woman who researched food choices said immediately, “the way we eat, trying to use whatever we have” (Interview with Kallie). She mentioned reading Little House on the Prairie to her children and explaining the importance of putting up food and eating what is in season (Interview with Kallie). The woman who started walking more said her experience of how she felt in the web of life was the most significant shift for her. I interpreted her statement to mean that she was experiencing her connection more and was becoming more aware of the causes and effects of her personal choices (Interview with Penny).

Question 12 asked, “What did you most value about the group, the meetings?” Three people valued the common focus and unity. One woman said, “knowing there were other people who shared the same concerns” (Interview with Kallie). She continued to describe feeling isolated when everyone around her accepted the status quo. She wondered if something was wrong with her because she was concerned about the environment when it felt like not many other people were. Another stated that she valued “unified commitment and dedication to making change... and an initiation into that together” (Interview with Barbara). The third person said she valued “that people were willing to come together and talk about something so important to me, but is not addressed enough in our society” (Interview with Penny). One person who lived alone said simply, “the personal interaction” (Interview with Daniel).

Question 13 asked, “Do you interact more, or less, or the same amount with people who have attended Lunaissance Sustainability Circle? In what context?” One person said she “never sees most of the people” (Interview with Kallie). She described being locked into a busy schedule, but does see one person each week (the author) because their two children carpool to the same school. Someone else said the group did not change the frequency of her interactions, although she mentioned that she and the author do not interact as frequently as when we were planning and

attending the group. Another person said, "For a while, I was seeing Molly, Joseph, Kallie more and developed those relationships more outside the group." He explained that he stops and chats with people when he runs into them, which he would not have done previously (Interview with Daniel). Only one person explicitly stated that she interacted more frequently. She said she feels "closer with everyone, not necessarily that I see them more," and gave examples of people who are more a part of her community now.

Questions 14 and 15 are covered in the co-creative ethnography in the main body of the text. In Question 16, I tried to ascertain people's interest level in future meetings. I asked, "Are you interested in attending occasional meetings on specific topics? What topics come to mind?" Everyone replied that, yes, they were interested in future meetings. Most people had interest in specific topics. Several people mentioned enjoying the guest speakers we had and wanting more. Topics of interest included gardening, finding affordable sustainable options, expanding the city recycling program to include more varieties of plastic, making this town more bike friendly, decreasing our use of cars, finding ways to tie schools and their curriculums into the community, and finding ways to help keep our waterways more clean (specifically, the local Rivanna River). Three people mentioned a topic which would explore what kind of action to do next. One person said quarterly meetings would work best for him rather than monthly meetings (Interview with Daniel). No one else stated how often s/he would like to meet.

Question 17 afforded participants an opportunity to add anything. I asked, "Is there anything you want to add?" One woman said she hoped "that the group grows and continues and takes on a presence in the community" (Interview with Kallie). She also said she hoped the barter network, which emerged from the group, would also grow. One person critiqued the EcoTeam workbook for being farfetched and impractical. He thought the idea of a no-trash society was impossible (Interview with Daniel). One participant summarized her experience by saying, "This group supported and buoyed up my feelings and provided an avenue" (Interview with Penny).

The woman who participated primarily in the barter network shared some of her experience from a previous barter network. She said, “some good work [was] done and general assistance to each other brings us closer.” She said a benefit of the community building that occurred was “a safety net gets created for emergencies” (Interview with Joan). She mentioned it was easier to organize campaigns or actions with a base of people from which to draw.

One woman raised an issue that I had been considering. Referring to future groups, she asked, “Do you set it up, or do you give them [the participants] ownership?” She asked, “Who does what next week? How do you share responsibilities? Do a few people do most of the work? Do you find one person in each area for leadership? What types of personalities are drawn to this [work] and what are their agendas?” (Interview with Barbara). There seemed to be mixed feelings over the course of the group. At times, people seemed to want more leadership, and at other times, people seemed to enjoy being empowered to shape and co-lead the group.

This person also shared her perception of what different types of activism exist. She began by describing a binary system of resistance or alternatives. She gave examples of resistance as protesting, buy nothing day, or boycotting. The alternatives were locally made products, offering a counterpoint. Then she added litigious and punitive activism, including lobbying and legislation for green taxes or price including environmental cost (Interview with Barbara). She seemed to be searching through her own analysis of what was her niche in the available options for action.

My final question asked interviewees to form a question. I wanted to have some of their questions to use for the next stage of interviews as a way to encourage multi-vocality and shared authorship. I asked, “Do you have any questions for the people I will be interviewing who have years of experience leading sustainability groups, specifically EcoTeams?” Two people responded enthusiastically to this question. One started by simply asking, “How do you do it?” She continued to ask, “how to get people, not people who are already open to the idea, involved?” She asked, “Is it through business, the arts, laws, education, or appealing to their emotions?” She also wondered, “How do you get through people’s personal pain about their own lives not [being] sustainable?”

(Interview with Penny). The other participant asked for “good strategies for getting large organizations (cities, schools, and universities) to make changes. They can be such big change agents.” She asked if there was “anything going on in terms of lobbying state or federal level to reward sustainable choices?” She also asked, “What laws could be proposed or have been?” She also said she “loves hearing about models with some track record” (Interview with Joan).