

Summer of Ritual:

The Construction and Perpetuation of Summer Camp Culture

Honors Thesis in Anthropology

By Jack F. Mourouzis

Advisor: John M. Watanabe

Abstract

This study concerns the institution of summer camp in American culture. Through ethnographic research, it shows that camp experience is effective at building lasting, meaningful traditions alongside strong personal relationships. These ends are accomplished through the ritualization of many elements of the camp experience – most notably the traditions, but also various activities, and indeed the entire experience of camp itself. Play, friendship, and ritual all come together to create a durable sense of nostalgia for camp and the camp experience. Ultimately, it is the ritualized nature of the camp experience, in connection with camp traditions and the personal relationships developed at camp, that helps explain camp's persistence as a cultural institution in America.

Preface & Acknowledgements

This past summer, I engaged in ethnographic research at a YMCA summer camp in Indiana, known for the purposes of this study as Camp Catawba. My research focused on the general culture and function of the camp, with particular focus on the role of counselors in facilitating the camp experience through their construction of a dynamic culture and leading the ritual aspects of summer camp. I was originally interested in the idea of summer camp as a persistent institution in American culture. Camp had played a significant role in my life and in the lives of countless Americans over the past century. It is both a longstanding cultural institution and a popular culture phenomenon, evidenced by its frequent inclusion in television, film, and, to a lesser extent, literature. However, upon further investigation, it seemed that there was relatively little academic work on the subject¹, a strange fact given the ubiquity of summer camp as a cultural institution in America.

During my background research, I developed the theory that summer camp's persistence as an American institution is derived from the rituals and rites of passage that make up the summer camp experience, which in turn create memories and nostalgia that simultaneously keep people coming back to camp while also reinforcing a kind of 'mythical' experience that is both personally and culturally significant in America. My hypothesis was that the ritualization of the camp experience leads to its memorability and nostalgia, which perpetuates camp as an institution. The general, guiding research question was: *What role do rituals and rites of passage play in constructing the culture of summer camp, and how do they reinforce the development of*

¹ While there was in general not much literature pertaining to summer camps, I did explore what was available. Notable sources included Dennis Waskul's "Camp Staffing: The Construction, Maintenance, and Dissolution of Rules and Identities at a Summer Camp"; Abigail Van Slyck's *A Manufactured Wilderness*; Kate and Anthony Seeger's "Beyond the Embers of the Campfire: The Ways of Music at a Residential Summer Children's Camp"; and Michael Smith's "The Ego Ideal of the Good Camper and the Nature of Summer Camp."

nostalgic feelings? My research consisted of observations over the course of one entire summer (while also working as a counselor at the camp) and more intensive investigation and interviewing during one specific week devoted exclusively to research, with interviews focusing on multiple staff members. During my time in the field, I looked at the role rituals played in the construction of the summer camp's culture, in addition to the function of an individual camper's stay (whether for one session or for several weeks) as a rite of passage.

I would like to offer my sincerest gratitude to Professor John Watanabe for his constant, consistent support throughout the duration of my research in his role as my thesis advisor; in addition, I would also like to thank Professors Chelsey Kivland and Sienna Craig for helping to develop my initial research thoughts and for pointing me in the direction of valuable sources, in addition to the rest of the Department of Anthropology for approving the thesis project. Furthermore, thank you to the staff and directors of Camp Catawba for their guidance and involvement as subjects in the project (particularly those who sat down for interviews), and to Camp Catawba's executive director John for allowing my research to take place at the camp.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. History of Summer Camp	9
3. Camp Catawba	13
3.1. General Description	13
3.2. Geography	15
3.3. The Weekly Experience	19
3.4. Free Time and Play	34
3.5. The Serious Side of Camp	39
3.6. The Role of Counselors	41
4. Ritual Descriptions and Analyses	47
4.1. Introduction	47
4.2. Indian Ceremony	47
4.3. Survival Baptism	54
4.4. Ragers	58
4.5. Closing Campfire	62
4.6. Chapel	70
4.7. Overnight	73
4.8. Devotion	79
5. Camp as a Ritual	82
5.1. In General	82
5.2. Nostalgia and Camp	87
6. Conclusion	94
7. Appendices	98
7.1. Appendix A – Map of Camp	98
7.2. Appendix B – Daily Schedule	99
7.3. Appendix C – Song Lyrics	101
7.4. Appendix D – Ragers Ceremony	102
8. Bibliography	108

1.0 Introduction

Michael D. Eisner, the CEO of The Walt Disney Company, writes in his 2005 memoir

Camp:

Camp grabs hold of you when you're young, the kind of home you at once claim as your own but also share, share with the kid in the cot next to you and share with the venerable staffman who's been there longer than you've been alive. It's one of America's ultimate communal dwellings, a shared experience and anchor of stories that campers young and old exchange far from our camps, long after we've spent our last night in a tent or cabin. Camp is a laboratory for safe danger, and the science practiced in this lab will never be outdated. It's God and humans teaming up to provide nature's ultimate playground, where survival in the woods becomes an exercise in training for life's real-world, man-made challenges; where young people can develop their physical and natural skills while also maturing and growing socially. (Eisner 2005: 171-172)

The institution of summer camp is one that is familiar to all in the United States; it has touched the lives of countless Americans since it emerged as an institution in the late 1800s. It has become the quintessential coming-of-age institution in America, and a rite of passage for millions of youth. Though generally seen as a place for fun and friendship, camp in fact proves to be a rich cultural landscape of unique traditions and rituals that shape a distinct experience in the lives of American children.

A week at camp, whether it be just one session or multiple weeks, is a time-out-of-time experience, in which children are freed of normal societal obligations and relationships (such as school, organized sports, parents, and siblings) and placed into an 'adventure of the woods' – living a ritualized lifestyle centered on play, friendship, and, as Michael Eisner puts it, "safe danger." A sense of recreation dominates, ranging from the pure fun of games like capture-the-flag to the mock-seriousness of certain rituals geared towards entertainment and group bonding. But camp is also a place for growth, where campers learn about themselves, how to interact with others, and about the world in general; they are helped along in this endeavor by their counselors,

who construct a free-spirited, recreation-oriented culture, but also serve as mentors to their developing campers.

Ultimately, the nostalgia that comes from the camp experience is derived from a number of its various elements. At camp, both counselors and campers build strong, lasting personal friendships, in part due to the playful, carefree lifestyle; however, the entire camp experience is indeed a ritual, and through the *communitas* of its liminality, to use the terms of anthropologist Victor Turner, its participants are bonded in unique way. In fact, not only is the camp experience itself a ritual, but countless smaller rituals also mark the camp experience; these serve various purposes, with some more geared towards ‘serious’ ends than others, but all successfully build up these interpersonal relationships. This experience is created by the dedicated effort of the counselors, who serve both as the organizers of camp activities and traditions and as the guides through the ritual experience. It is difficult to characterize the nostalgia created by the summer camp; ultimately, it seems to be an intricately-woven combination of a longing for that sense of adventure in the outdoors, the carefree joy of childhood, tight-knit relationships, and the unique, even magical experience that is camp.

The camp in which my research took place was the same camp that I attended as a child, and also where I had worked as a counselor in the past. I also attended two other camps as a child, but the majority of my time was spent at this camp. The experience was quite varied, with some years much more positive than others; going in, I was quite familiar with the overall experience of this particular camp. However, this familiarity did not prove a detriment to my research for several reasons. First and most importantly, every summer at this camp is always different. While there is some overlap in camp leadership, camp staff, and campers attending the camp, there is always a large population of new people involved – particularly so this past

summer, as roughly two thirds of the staff were working there for the first time. The staff members whom I got to know also served as ‘local informants’ to an extent, helping to orient me within the new staff (especially considering I missed a significant portion of the staff training week due to Dartmouth’s schedule). Furthermore, the camp had added new facilities, activities, and had a new camp director, which resulted in many changes coming into this summer. Finally, the daily schedule had changed significantly, making the overall day-to-day experience different from my previous time on staff. However, regardless of these changes, the core spirit of camp – its values, longstanding traditions, and personal connections – still remained. Far from an impediment, my role as a camp counselor enabled me to gain first-hand knowledge of what goes into the process of constructing a summer camp’s culture. Throughout the summer, I made general notes and other observations related to the work of counselors and corresponding behavioral trends in campers on a general level.

Observations generally focused on patterns of interaction between counselors, the daily function and routine of camp life, various camp traditions that have been standard practice for many years, and ritual occurrences throughout the week. Due to the impracticality of obtaining informed consent from parents to interview campers, my research focused largely on the activities of staff members, particularly counselors, and the way they consciously and unconsciously shaped campers’ experiences through various means, from leading a ritualistic cabin activity to participating in campfire performances. Counselors play an invaluable role in the camp experience, from facilitating day-to-day activities and rituals to keeping the ‘spirit’ of camp alive through eight long, stressful weeks. They are essentially the backbone of the camp, sustaining the experience from summer to summer through the passing on of what come to be accepted as camp traditions.

The perspective of returning counselors or counselors who also attended camp as campers is particularly interesting because of the insight it gives on rituals and rites of passage that come to constitute camp traditions in the experience of campers. The interviews I conducted focused on the experiences of individual counselors, particularly their memories from camp both as campers and counselors and their motivation for working this particular job. These interviews, specifically the counselors' perspectives on their own memories regarding the camp experience, are important because of the connection it allows me to make between the ritual experiences at camp and persisting memory and nostalgia. This idea comes from Randall Tillery, who writes that "I have strong memories of... moments loaded with symbolic and historical significance for what camp means to me; the moments when I was able briefly to contemplate the significance of camp for myself as a place differentiated from the constraints of life" (Tillery 1992: 376).

The logistics of research proved difficult, as the role of counselor is a very active and involved job. During my weeks as a normal counselor, I generally only found time to write up fieldnotes during the Siesta break after lunch and in the evenings. Thus, my week devoted solely to research proved invaluable, as I could take notes on-the-fly and dedicate time to interviews, while not having to worry about my duties as a counselor (which were truly round-the-clock). Over the course of the summer, due to my role as a normal counselor, I successfully became 'part of the group' on the summer staff, despite being slightly older than most. I also believe that my self-consciousness regarding my role as a counselor also affected my performance in the job; I became aware of the level of nostalgia in myself, as I often felt myself motivated to recreate – on a few occasions, even very explicitly – the experience I had as a camper with the campers for whom I was responsible. In other words, I experienced first-hand the nostalgia that this type of intensive work begets within the individual. Furthermore, working as a counselor also helped to

increase my understanding – particularly with regards to the meaningfulness of various activities – of the counselor’s importance and just how much effort – physical and emotional – goes into the process.

In addition, this project entailed a comprehensive examination of the existing historical, sociological, and anthropological literature regarding summer camp, much of which contributed to my overall research, despite pertaining to issues not addressed directly in my thesis. Overall, there seems to be relatively little in the way of summer camp-related anthropological and sociological research. I find this likely due to potential research restrictions such as those I faced; because camps are privately-run and involve minors, it can be difficult to obtain the appropriate level of informed consent from study participants and their parents. Furthermore, because of the age aspect of summer camp, it may be difficult for older researchers (such as graduate students or fully-fledged anthropologists) to integrate into the camp environment, which is generally populated by children and young adults in their late twenties. Interestingly, however, summer camp is indeed a common setting and element utilized in creative arts, particularly film, television, and writing (often in the form of memoirs, such as Thomas Adler’s *Campingly Yours: A Heartwarming Journey of a Lifetime at Summer Camp* [2009], among others). Despite these obstacles, I am surprised by the relative lack of scholarly literature on summer camp, particularly on the in-depth level of ethnography.

In the existing literature on summer camps, one topic that has been explored deals with race- and gender-based interactions in more diverse summer camps (as opposed to primarily white), explored by sociologist Valerie Ann Moore (2001, 2003). Many articles provided relevant information on the function, traditions, and other institutions at summer camps, such as “Organizational Character: On the Regeneration of Camp Poplar Grove,” which describes the

deliberate overhaul of a summer camp's various structures (both physical, regarding the camp's geographical layout, and social, including a critical look at camp traditions) (Birnholtz 2007). The masters thesis by Zelda Ruth Cohen, "Playing for Privilege: An Ethnography of Play in a Summer Camp," proved to be perhaps the closest work in terms of ethnography to my own research and served as a useful model on which to base my project; however, Cohen's thesis focuses more specifically on trends in play in an attempt to "elucidate the ways in which play is utilized by young people to manipulate and alter social structures," rather than on the ritualistic aspects of camp (Cohen 1980: 11). Finally, a useful historical source detailing the function of summer camps was found in the 1929 camp handbook *Camping and Character: A Camp Experiment in Character Education*, as it gave useful insight into the day-to-day function of early camps and detailed how they operated, showcasing a stark contrast to the camp experience of today (Dimock and Hendry 1929). For example, skills (such as swimming and campcraft) and learning, along with physical fitness, were emphasized to a much higher degree (Dimock and Hendry 1929: 18).

That is not to say, however, that approaches of cultural anthropology have not been applied to summer camp; several articles, including Randal Tillery's "Touring Arcadia" (which discusses the various macro and micro cultural implications of summer camp, regarding summer camp's historical role in American culture alongside the individual impact camp has on the individual, but in the greater context of American culture) and Jay Mechling's "The Magic of the Boy Scout Campfire" (which describes the ritualistic nature of a Boy Scout campfire within the context of the organization, though focusing particularly on Boy Scout songs and neglecting Victor Turner's ritual framework) do utilize ethnography to analyze the ritual aspects of camp and their cultural significance. In fact, Tillery's article does touch on the subject of ritual (with

reference to Victor Turner) at summer camp, though not on as deep of a level as my thesis; Tillery uses Turner's framework to gain a deeper understanding of camp as a ritualized experience in an attempt to explain its influence on America historically, but he does not analyze individual rituals within the camp experience. Furthermore, Stephen Feuchtwang's article on "Ritual and Memory" proved informative as it characterized the connection between rituals and memory, particularly in its most persistent form: nostalgia. On that note, Svetlana Boym's work on nostalgia in *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001) served as the best framework for characterizing the concept of nostalgia itself.

In contrast to these other works, the major focus of this thesis is the ritualized nature of camp and its many layers of ritual elements. These camp rituals are explored through the lens of Victor Turner, whose groundbreaking scholarship on the tripartite structure of ritual and the ritual process in general, especially the ideas of liminality and *communitas* as these apply to American children on 'an adventure in the woods,' is the main inspiration for this thesis. In pursuing the idea of camp as a whole being an important rite of passage for American children, I also rely on the writings of Johan Huizinga regarding elements of play in culture and in ritual experiences, as play also is a central tenet of the camp experience. Existing scholarship on camp does not seem to acknowledge the true importance of the role played by ritual in the historical persistence of camp, even though summer camp indeed constitutes a rich cultural landscape to be examined; being the main focus of my thesis, this in-depth analysis of summer camp's rituals and overall ritualistic nature is an important contribution to the study of summer camp. More broadly, this thesis will focus on the history of summer camp, the function of summer camp, rituals of summer camp, and the role of memory and nostalgia as derived from the camp experience. Specifically, topics discussed include:

- The history of summer camp as an American cultural institution
- A general description of Camp Catawba: its history, geography, and day-to-day function
- An analysis of free play at camp and its implications for participants, contrasted with the more serious and emotional elements of camp
- The role of counselors in constructing the camp culture and experiences and their impact on the campers they mentor
- In-depth, ethnographic descriptions of various summer camp rituals coupled with analysis through the framework provided by Victor Turner
- Analysis of the overall camp experience as a ritual within one's development as a youth
- The connection between camp, memory, and nostalgia and the impact on both an independent and collective level

2.0 History of Summer Camp

The origins of summer camp stretch back to the summer of 1881, when Dartmouth College student Ernest Balch, who had just completed his sophomore year, journeyed out to Burnt Island on nearby Squam Lake, where he founded Camp Chocorua. Named after the nearby mountain, Camp Chocorua is widely considered the first summer camp anywhere in the world. Balch, in addition to the other founders of early summer camps, was motivated by the key principles of the emerging industry: “a manufactured peer group of older boys [typically of the ages 12-16] gathered under men’s guidance for outdoor recreation, health and physical activity, and character development” (Paris 2008: 18). The camping movement, wholly rooted in the ideal of “back-to-nature,” is also seen as a reaction to the increasing feminization of boys in cities and suburbs, as “Fearing that the sons of such households were becoming “sissies,” many worried that this erosion of manliness would undermine the military might required to pursue the all but imperial aspirations of the United States” (Van Slyck 2006: xxii). Campers at Chocorua engaged in outdoor recreation, contributed to the function of the camp (such as cooking and cleaning), and even learned about personal finances by earning a 25 cent-per-week salary. However, the camp, which began with only Balch, his brother, two of his friends, and five campers, only lasted until 1889, at which point over 25 boys attended the camp during the summer.

Following the success of Balch’s camp, many other similar camps run by educated, college-aged young men sprung up in the years that followed; roughly twenty-five private camps existed by the end of the 19th Century, and this number expanded to several hundred by 1910 (Paris 2008: 39). Around the same time, a new type of “organizational” camp emerged.

Organizational camps, such as those run through the YMCA or other similar societies, offered

lower rates and more convenient locations, in addition to being more inclusive². (Paris 2008: 40). Whereas private camps catered to wealthy urban children, organizational camps increased access for poorer and working class urban children³. As the Scouting movement gained steam in Britain through General Robert S. S. Baden-Powell and eventually came to America in 1910, many camps were founded under the banner of the Boy Scouts of America. In addition, the first girls' camps also began to emerge around 1900, though they were far fewer in number than boys' camps; the general sentiment behind these camps was based on the ideas put forth by President Theodore Roosevelt, of building women into "the wise and fearless mothers of many healthy children" (Paris 1990: 46). Coeducational camps involving both boys and girls did not begin to spring up until the midcentury (Paris 2008: 345). In addition, camps that catered to specific subpopulations – such as Jewish or black children – also sprouted up; it became the norm for urban children, particularly those of both the upper and middle classes, to attend camp. By the 1930s, there were over 5,000 summer camps in operation across the United States, servicing upwards of two million children (Paris 2008: 62).

Over time, camps developed many elements that still prevail today. The inclusion of the campfire as a central evening activity seems to be a quality shared by even the earliest summer camps (Van Slyck 2006: 175-176). Religion also played a prominent role at early camps⁴. In the earliest days of camp, camp leaders "felt that most camp activities were simply too boisterous for the Sabbath, and they worked to establish a different tone on this day of rest" (van Slyck 2006: 52). The use of the title "counselor" also emerged in these early days, specifically at Camp Asquam in the 1890s (Maynard 1999: 8). Another major example is the inclusion of (often

² Today, the YMCA claims to have 315 overnight camps nationwide (Camp 2018).

³ In 1900, a private camp would typically cost around \$150 for a ten-week summer. Organizational camps (specifically, YMCA camps) only charged between \$35 and \$50 (Paris 2008: 40).

⁴ A chapel, or some variation of a Christian worship space, was incorporated into nearly all camps.

stereotyped) Native American imagery and motifs, a practice that dates to the early 1900s, serving the purpose of ingraining “positive” qualities of Indian culture and life, such as “greater playfulness, physicality, and emotional expressivity” into white, urban and suburban youth, picking and choosing ‘representational’ (in reality, stereotyped and neither historically nor culturally accurate) aspects of Native culture, resulting in the juxtaposition of totem poles (characteristic of the Pacific Northwest) with feathered war bonnets (a Great Plains phenomenon) (Paris 2008: 201). Despite modern resistance, “an overwhelming number of objects exist at camps as material reminders of colonial stereotypes, and each summer that they continue to be used in programming, they perpetuate misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples” (Shore 2015: 21). However, in more recent years, there have been attempts to reform these elements of summer camps, with many advocating that “Rather than silencing all conversations about Indianness out of shame and discomfort, camps ought to allow Indigeneity to be re-imagined” (Shore 2015: 26-27).

Throughout the 1900s, the institution of summer camp grew nationwide, and even sprung up in various other countries in different forms; notably, the Young Pioneers of Russia maintained a strong camping tradition in pursuit of communist and Soviet ideals. The Hitler Youth of Nazi Germany also utilized principles of American summer camp in the training of young adolescent boys for future military service (Lepage 2009: 72). However, America’s tradition remains the strongest.

Camp also remains prevalent as a cultural symbol, often occurring as a setting in film, such as 1979’s *Meatballs* (often considered the quintessential camp film, and also served as a launching point for actor Bill Murray’s career) or 2001’s cult classic *Wet Hot American Summer: First Day of Camp* (which was reborn in a popular Netflix television series in 2015).

Not everything is the same, however. For example, the original motivations behind camp – reinforcing ideals of manliness in boys – has changed more to a values-centered guide, instead instructing campers how to be good people. Finally, the scope of camp has grown drastically from its humble origins on Squam Lake. Today, camping in America exists as an \$18 billion industry, with over 8,000 overnight summer camps in operation serving over 14 million campers each summer (ACA 2018).

3.0 Camp Catawba

3.1 General Description

The summer camp where my research took place is known for the purposes of this study as Camp Catawba. It is a traditional⁵ summer camp located in Indiana and affiliated with the YMCA⁶. The camp dates back to the 1940s and originally served only boys, but began accepting girls in the 1970s. It functions on a standard summer camp model, consisting of eight one-week sessions, with options for campers to stay for two-week sessions, half-week “mini-camp” sessions⁷, or any longer period of time. The camp also offers a “Ranch” program geared towards horseback riding, a leadership development program, and a counselor-in-training program; these campers participate in the general camp program, but take part in some specialized training activities – riding lessons, leadership skills, and counselor training, respectively – in addition to the standard camp activities. The general camp population is divided up into three units:

- The Hill – girls ages 6-12, overseen by Molly in her second summer in the position
- The Village – boys ages 6-12, overseen by Andy in his first year
- The Valley – teen boys and girls ages 13-17, overseen by Jacob, who previously worked as Village Director

Other programs are overseen by various directors. Mike (in his first year) and Connie (who previously worked as Valley Director) jointly oversee the camp’s leadership programs with the oldest campers. Abby, in her first year, oversees the management of the water facilities and

⁵ The word “traditional” here is somewhat problematic. I am using it to refer to what one might commonly think of as a typical summer camp: campers living in cabins with counselors in a nature-oriented setting, isolated from mainstream society, cities and towns. This is opposed to a themed “camp,” such as an art camp, computer camp, or space camp, or any kind of day camp in which campers are dropped off and picked up by parents in one day.

⁶ Despite its affiliation, Camp Catawba is not particularly religious, and rather than directly spreading Christianity, instead attempts to stress the secular four core values of the YMCA: honesty, caring, respect, and responsibility.

⁷ These sessions are only for younger campers under the age of 9, usually as a kind of trial run for their first experience at summer camp.

lifeguards. Kristen, in her second year, oversees the ranch and horse programs. Jane, who previously worked as Valley Director (the year before Connie), serves as the operations director, overseeing housekeeping, paperwork, the camp store, and other similar engagements.

In addition to this “leadership staff” of eight directors, there were three important camp ‘higher-ups:’ John, the executive director (in charge of business affairs and the general running of the camp year-round), Ben (the senior program director in charge of summer camp, in his fourth year), and Charlie (the summer program director, the direct overseer of day-to-day camp function). Ben and Charlie played a fairly active role in the summer and were generally present doing their jobs and helping with things where needed, in addition to acting as general support and guidance for the rest of the staff.

The bulk of the staff were, of course, the counselors; roughly forty of them served as the direct leaders for groups of campers in cabin groups each week of the summer. They generally served in pairs, leading a group of anywhere from six to twelve⁸ campers in a cabin; in addition to watching over the cabin group, counselors also teach the five clinic activities that occur each day, which generally consist of any assortment of campers. On occasion, there might be three counselors in a cabin, though this only occurred in younger cabins in the Hill and Village, which are generally regarded as higher-maintenance than older cabins.

Each week, Camp Catawba has a different theme for that particular week; themes for this summer included Star Wars, Harry Potter, and Wild West, among others. During my week of research, which was the sixth week (session) of the summer, the theme was Halloween. Despite having a different weekly theme, the day-to-day workings of the camp were generally left unaffected; the normal routine and structure never change. Rather, the theme served as a kind of

⁸ Though rare, there were instances of four or five campers in one cabin in smaller weeks.

‘spice,’ changing the flair and flavor of the everyday aspects of camp. For example, during Halloween week, counselors dressed up in silly costumes during check-in and at random times throughout the week, cabin groups decorated their cabins with paper spiderwebs, and the campfire skits involved spooky, Halloween elements. However, most staff and campers do not hold the themes in particularly high regard; for the most part, they are largely ignored for most of the week.

3.2 Geography

For reference, a map of the camp is included as Appendix A.

The most important building at Camp Catawba is the main lodge. It serves as a dining hall, meeting place, and multipurpose space, while also housing bathrooms, the main kitchen, a spacious back deck with a view, carpetball⁹ tables, and the trading post. It is centrally located and nearly always in use by someone for any of a variety of purposes. Just outside of the lodge is the main field, also known as the flag field; this is where cabins line up for assembly. The field is also used for various outdoor camp activities, and holds a gaga pit¹⁰ and nine square¹¹. In between the main field and the lodge is the amphitheater, which overlooks the pond and is also a common outdoor meeting space used for lunch assembly, opening campfire, and Monday clinic dismissals, among other events.

Adjacent to the lodge is the camp office, where the upper-level directors have their offices, in addition to the program office, where the leadership staff team primarily works. This

⁹ Carpetball is one of the most beloved games at camp, generally used as a casual game during downtime. There are two tables located on the back porch of the lodge. The basic object of the game is to knock the other player’s billiard balls off the table with a cue ball, which is rolled back and forth down the table.

¹⁰ Gaga is another beloved downtime game at camp. It involves a group of people standing in a ring and hitting a ball to roll it into other people’s feet or legs. The last man standing wins.

¹¹ One final entry into the downtime games category, nine square is similar to four square, but includes nine squares, and players hit the ball up over bars instead of bouncing it on the ground.

space is also used as a multipurpose space for counselors, where various supplies are kept. The basement of the office (adjacent to the “old arts and crafts” area) is the largest storage space on camp, holding sports equipment, clinic supplies, and much more. The front porch of the office is also a popular relaxation spot for staff due to its picnic table and rocking chairs, and is often the meeting spot for staff members on their nights off.

The third major building at camp is the multi-purpose building, also known as the alumni lodge or MPB. Its upstairs includes a small kitchenette, bathrooms, a storage closet, and a multi-purpose space with a large projector screen (if a movie is ever shown – a common rainy day activity – it is shown here). This upstairs space is used for a variety of activities clinics, and is never ‘tied down’ or booked for one specific activity. The lower level of the MPB includes bathrooms, storage, the infirmary, and the nature center. There are spacious decks on both levels. Also adjacent to this building is the “farm,” consisting of a pigpen and chicken coop.

The three unit areas of camp are the Hill, the Village, and the Valley. Each unit is located in its eponymous location: the Hill on the hill, the Valley in the valley, and the Village on a flat wooded plain. The Hill consists of three buildings, each of which holds two unconnected cabins which are named after Native American tribes¹². The cabins are organized in ascending age order, with the youngest girls living in the cabin closest to the main camp road. These cabins consist of one main room with 14 beds lining the walls, in addition to a full bathroom and a porch with chairs and a picnic table. There is little inter-cabin interaction, and the two firepits on the hill are rarely used. Hill cabins often have three rather than two counselors because of the higher bed count per cabin and high-maintenance nature of younger girls.

¹² According to camp leadership, historically, the land on which Camp Catawba sits belonged to the Shawnee.

The Village is located on a flat, open wooded clearing adjacent to the poolhouse¹³. This unit, which houses the younger boys, consists of nine round, one-room, canvas-walled, yurt-style cabins named after space programs and missions¹⁴. Due to the high number of cabins in this area, the Valley unit often will use one of the nine cabins to house the oldest boys. These cabins do not include bathrooms; instead, residents of the Village use the pool bathhouse for washing up. Each cabin has two doors opposite each other, and each door is located on a small deck with benches for sitting outside¹⁵. Each cabin holds 12 beds, which are simply arranged in a circle along the outer walls. There is a firepit in the middle of the Village, which is often used as a relaxation and social space for both campers and counselors. It is also one of the most popular after-hours social spaces for counselors after campers have all gone to bed.

The Valley unit, which houses all campers above the age of 13, consists of five buildings. One is a yurt-style cabin similar to the ones in the Village, one is a fairly simple one-room building with a bathroom, and three are two-cabin duplexes. The layout of the duplexes is displayed in Figure 1:

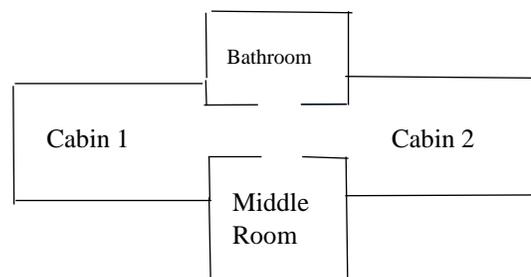


Figure 1

One building contains two cabin spaces, a bathroom that is shared by the two cabins, a “middle

¹³ This term is used interchangeably with “bathhouse” to refer to the building structure housing the toilets, sinks, showers, and pool equipment that is adjacent to the pool.

¹⁴ These cabins are relatively new, being constructed in the mid-2000s. It is unclear why the camp decided to break with the tradition of Native American tribe names for cabins, but the most common theory/explanation given is that the camp leadership at the time thought they looked like flying saucers and thus decided to give them space-themed names.

¹⁵ The back porches are also used as bathrooms at night, as they are more convenient than the bathhouse.

room” where counselors store their belongings and sometimes sleep¹⁶, and a small hallway connecting the two.¹⁷ Cabins do interact quite often within the building, often moving between spaces to play card games, talk, and hang out. All Valley cabins are names after Native American tribes. Also present in the Valley is the Valley Chairs, a picnic table, and the Valley Swings¹⁸; all of these social spaces are commonly used by campers and counselors during the day and by counselors after-hours.

Throughout the Hill and Village, there is generally not much of a controversy regarding the quality of cabins, specifically because all are identical. This is especially the case on the Hill; cabins with closer proximity to camp are preferred for that reason, but generally, counselors’ preferences are based on age group rather than the cabins themselves. In the Village, cabins have more “quirks,” such as Gemini, which, according to camp lore, is haunted¹⁹. However, despite these quirks, counselors still base their preferences on age groups rather than physical cabins.

The Valley cabins, on the other hand, are more varied in their quality. The duplexes possess very small bathrooms and showers, which become dirty very fast, and have air circulation problems, which results in them being hotter than cabins in other units. The yurt is generally preferred due to its independent bathhouse; however, from week 3 on, it was occupied exclusively by Connie with the oldest girls. Two of the duplexes were occupied exclusively by teenage girls; one duplex, the single cabin, and one cabin in the Village were occupied by teenage boys.

¹⁶ If there are empty beds in the cabin room, counselor are obligated (per the Valley director’s directive) to sleep there; if not, they sleep in the middle room.

¹⁷ In every empty space/break between lines, a door exists; thus, the cabins are technically in separate spaces. Some cabins keep these doors closed more than others, as there is no requirement. Mingling of two cabins in a duplex is dictated by the wishes of the counselors; most allow, and in fact encourage, mingling.

¹⁸ These are several swinging chairs attached to trees in a small copse in the Valley.

¹⁹ This is one of two major “ghost stories” told at camp. The first one, about the “ghost of Challenger Site B,” is more commonly told, but there is also a second story about the “ghost of Gemini,” which involves a bullied camper who hanged himself from the ceiling fan and continues to haunt residents of the cabin to this day.

The three unit areas and the other main buildings of camp make up what is generally referred to as “main camp.” While there is no official designation, essentially all other areas are peripheral, and not utilized as frequently as the main camp areas are. Most of the camp’s facilities are located adjacent to main camp and are included in the map. Other commonly-used areas include the ranch, the Alpine Tower rock climbing area, the High Ropes area, chapel, the pond, and the athletic field are all located close to this area. The Moonlight campfire area is also within easy walking distance, as is the primary woods and trail area at camp. “Hidden Paradise” is a rarely-visited, scenic clearing at the very edge of the wooded trails. The camp also owns a significant property, known as “Outpost,” that is located away from the primary camp area, with a different property in between; on foot via the trails, it is roughly fifteen minutes away. This area, which is unmapped, includes a large open field where the Overnight trip takes place, a small network of trails, the shotgun field, and the proper Outpost area, which includes the Outpost pavilions and a horse corral²⁰.

3.3 The Weekly Experience

For reference, a copy of the full camp daily schedule (as distributed to camp staff) can be found in Appendix B.

For the main staff of counselors, a standard week of camp begins at noon on Sunday. The lead staff have already arrived at 11, going over their more specific business for the week and planning the topics for the main staff meeting at noon. Each week, the main staff meeting was facilitated by one member of the lead staff – this week, it was Connie. This was the second week in which the main staff meetings were conducted in a different format; they were changed from

²⁰ While “Outpost” technically refers only to the location of the Outpost cabin and horse corral on this separate property, it is also used to refer to the entire separate property.

the previous one, which Ben deemed the ‘circle of sadness’ – the entire staff sitting in a circle in the main lodge with lead staff members going over various reminders about doing the job properly. The new format served more as a stress-relieving ‘pump-up’ session, where job reminders were kept to a minimum (instead, these reminders were saved for the individual unit meetings, which were conducted in smaller groups in a more relaxed setting). The main staff meeting does include several points that are necessary to address with the full staff, one example being that of needing additional people to work over the weekend.

Charlie offers a reminder, the same every week: “Remember, this may be week six for you, but it’s week one for all the kids.” His words serve as a reminder to the staff to continue giving their all in the job and remind them not to succumb to laziness or tiredness. Following these short addresses, Connie leads the staff in a game of “Pruí,” which is a sort of twist on tag. Once the game is finished – after about fifteen minutes – John assembles the staff again and leads them in a prayer which he deems “one of his favorites” – the Serenity Prayer. Most of the staff are not particularly religious but participate anyway out of courtesy.

Once the prayer is finished, John invites the staff to indulge in the Oreo balls that his wife baked for the staff (she provides a different treat every week). The staff has a few minutes to enjoy the sweets and relax before moving on to their unit meetings. These always take place in the same locations for each unit from week to week: the Valley staff meets on the back porch of the lodge, the Village near the fireplace in the lodge, and the Hill at Old Arts and Crafts²¹. These meetings focus on the more specific reminders for the week and do not typically run for more than 10 minutes.

²¹ “Old Arts and Crafts” refers to an area with picnic tables under an awning behind the office and adjacent to its basement – this area used to be the designated area for arts and crafts, but that area was switched to an old, dilapidated cabin in the Valley in 2016. No suitable new name was ever suggested, so the old reference stuck.

As a counselor in the Valley, I attended the Valley meeting every week. Jacob began every meeting with everyone going around and saying one thing that went well and one thing that went badly – and how it could be improved – from the previous week; this activity was commonly called “Rose and Thorn.” Many cited their co-counselor (universally referred to simply as “my Co”) as something that went well the previous week; another counselor, Joe, who typically worked with 14-year-old boys, claimed that the previous week was “one of the best cabins I ever had.” Vincent, who worked with 13-year-olds, discussed a bullying problem that occurred as one of the bad things, but also thought that the situation was handled well. Following Rose and Thorn, he issued two major reminders: keep sinks locked because of chemicals kept in the cupboards, and spend more time in the cabin instead of “retreating into the middle room”²². He also distributed the week’s order forms²³ and issued a final reminder: “The Valley is the best unit, you are all doing great, so keep it up!”

Following the unit meetings, counselors are sent off to their cabins to make their final preparations before the campers arrive. This time is relatively relaxed; most have already gotten situated, so they rest a bit – a valuable break before the chaos of check-in. Around 1:30, the counselors head to the cookout for some lunch. Soon after, Mike, Connie, and John head to “the big tree”²⁴ to run the Speedy Check-In, where parents and kids first go to learn their cabin assignments and see if there is any other paperwork needed from the camp. Once everyone has had their lunch, they return to their units with the unit directors. Two counselors are assigned to

²² One Valley cabin building contains two cabins, one bathroom that the two cabins share, and a middle room where counselors store their belongings and sometimes sleep (if there are empty beds in the cabin room, counselors sleep out there; if not, they sleep in the middle room). However, the middle room often serves as a counselor-only social space, often times during night and Siestas.

²³ On the order forms, counselors write down information regarding their cabin to make sure there is enough food for the Overnight trip on Wednesday. It has spots for number of people, the number of sleeping bags needed (for campers who didn’t have one), dietary restrictions, and night off preferences for co-counselors (each counselors and director gets one night off a week).

²⁴ This is simply a large, landmark tree located at the intersection of the camp’s main road.

“Popsicle Patrol” and walk around camp with a red Radio Flyer wagon and give out free popsicles (they also carry a small donation bucket). By 1:40, families generally have begun to trickle in, even though check-in officially starts at 2:00. John thus makes the executive call to begin check-in a few minutes early, and parents begin to help their kids lug the suitcases to their cabins. Most of the Hill girls stay in their cabins; the boys of the Village hang out in their cabins or on the porches, and the Valley campers congregate around the Valley Chairs²⁵, with many playing football or frisbee off to the side.

At 3:00 PM, most if not all parents have departed, leaving their children for a week that John promises will be “safe, fun, and life-changing” for each and every camper. At this time, regardless of whether all campers have arrived, counselors take their cabins around for “Rotations.” These are a set of four different stations of things to get done at the beginning of the week; they include clinic activity sign-ups, health checks, a visit to the trading post²⁶, and the swim test.

Clinic activity²⁷ sign-ups are held in the pavilion and staffed by counselors whose campers are currently at that station. Molly and Andy are permanently stationed there throughout rotations, and help make sure everything runs smoothly, while also collecting and logging the schedules into a computer. Campers go around on their own, often with their cabinmates, and sign up for five different clinics, then turn in their clinic sheet carbon copies to Molly and Andy. At the health check station, campers are checked for lice and any other preexisting ailments or

²⁵ Also known as the Octagon, this is a ring of swinging benches around the main firepit in the middle of the Valley.

²⁶ The camp store; cabins go in once a day after dinner to purchase camp memorabilia and various snacks. The visit on Sunday afternoon is only so campers can see the selection in advance.

²⁷ These are the activities that take place thrice in the morning and twice in the afternoon in periods of an hour. They are various camp activities that are structured and run by a small team of at least two counselors. They are almost exclusively referred to as “clinics” and the selection is quite large; clinics offered weekly include, but are not limited to, archery, riflery, arts and crafts, survival, canoeing, kayaking, nature, rock climbing, dance, drama, basketball, soccer, and fishing.

potential health issues. At trading post, cabins briefly visit to see the selection of items for purchase.

Swim tests, on the other hand, are a significantly less routine station for many campers. More than just the basic judge of a camper's swimming ability, the swim test proves a challenge for many; getting the coveted green band is, for a great number of campers, a significant achievement in their camp career. The test itself is quite basic; campers must swim across the pool from the shallow end to the deep end, cross under the dividing rope, tread water for a minute, and swim back. Successful swimmers receive a green band; if a camper can swim, but cannot tread, or is tall enough to stand in the shallow end, he receives a yellow band. If a camper can neither swim nor touch the bottom while standing normally, he receives a red band.²⁸ The swim test is not, per say, a ritual; however, for many campers, it is a significant milestone representing their personal growth over their tenure as a camper, serving as a mark of nostalgia for personal achievement in childhood.

Following rotations, which usually finish around 4:30 PM, the entire camp has time to hang out before dinner assembly. Cabins have free reign of the main camp area, and congregate in every available recreation area – nine square, gaga, basketball, carpetball, tetherball, and volleyball. Many also just sit around and talk, getting to know each other. At this point, first impressions have already passed, and the friendships start to solidify. In a cabin group, the counselors' word is law; amongst the campers, however, all are equal. In the Hill and Village, there tend not to be cliques of “popular” versus “unpopular.” However, in the Valley, a social hierarchy can occasionally develop, with various cliques forming amongst campers; these rarely

²⁸ Green band campers can do any water activity. Yellow band campers may not enter the deep end of the pool and are not allowed to participate in certain water activities such as kayaking. Red band swimmers cannot participate in many water activities and are required to wear a life jacket in the pool, in addition to being required to take a swim lesson as a clinic.

have any serious consequences, however, and most campers tend to treat each other with respect. While bullying is a problem that occasionally develops, it is not a problem in every cabin; it also tends to happen more amongst younger campers than in the Valley, though it is still a fairly common occurrence. Most cabins generally bond quite well, and though there may be subgroups of closer relationships, most campers tend to be on friendly terms. Some campers come to camp with friends; this tends to speed up the socialization process for those kids. Similarly, campers who have come to camp before often know other campers and will choose to hang out with them in addition to meeting and making new friends. Counselor Joe remarked “Usually I just take my cabins to nine square. Sometimes they play football nearby, but everyone can basically run around the field and do whatever they want ’cause everybody’s all here.”

Following this period of free time, at approximately 5:20, the bell is rung by Abby, the Director-on-Duty²⁹ on Sundays. One counselor from each cabin acts as a “hopper” and goes inside to “hop” (set up) the tables for the meal, and everyone else assembles in their lines for the first lowering of the flag. The Hill and Village line up along the road leading to the lodge, while the Valley lines up on the sidewalk along the front of the lodge. Since it is the first one, an older, more competent cabin is given responsibility: this is almost always Mike’s cabin of the oldest boys. Abby heads inside to help set things up, while outside, flag begins with Mike proclaiming “Please remove all hats, sunglasses, and bandanas!” This phrase is used at the beginning of every flag assembly; it is not required to say, nor is it required to use that specific wording, but this is what everyone almost always says. Everyone stays silent in their lines³⁰ (or is reprimanded by a

²⁹ Director-on-Duty, almost always abbreviated and referred to as DoD, is the member of the lead staff designated as the point person for any issues that go on during the day, in addition to running meals, doing nighttime rounds, and ringing the bell.

³⁰ The younger cabins are generally more disciplined and directed by their counselors to assemble in neat lines; the Valley cabins generally always devolve into blobs rather than straight lines.

counselor to stay silent) as the flag is lowered in standard fashion and folded in the appropriate manner³¹. Connie takes the flag from Mike and carries it into the lodge to set it in its storage place as everyone breaks into an applause. Though this is not required or even traditional for the lowering of the flag, everyone simply decides to clap. Once the applause dies down, Mike steps forward once again and cries out, “This is a repeat-after-me song!”

At camp, there are two types of songs: repeat-after-me and catch-along. Repeat-after-me indicates that the group sings the line after the leader, and catch-along indicates that everyone sings the lines together. Either of these phrases is proclaimed in a similar manner before every song. Mike opens this flag assembly with “Mr. Columbus,”³² a song about Christopher Columbus discovering America. He then moves on to the repeat-after-me song “Da Moose,” which he traditionally sings with Andy. Many counselors or groups of counselors have their “own” songs; while song “ownership” is discouraged, people generally respect not “taking” other people’s songs, and counselors do get upset if “their” song is “taken.” When this song is almost over, Abby peeks out of the lodge doors and holds up a thumbs-up, which is an indication to Mike (the campers, facing away from the lodge doors, do not see this signal) that the lodge is ready to go, and everyone may enter for the meal. Mike cuts off his song and yells for everyone to go to dinner. The Hill and Village enter through the main doors, while the Valley enters through the “Valley doors” (which are really just normal side doors to the lodge – they enter this way because the Valley tables are set up on that side of the dining hall, and because it eases the traffic entering both sets of doors).

³¹ There is no actual formal training on how the flag is actually to be folded; even though there is a standard method dictated by the US Flag Code, this is not always followed and it is simply folded up in a manner similar to the official one, and the ceremony is treated with respect otherwise, even if these rules are not followed out of ignorance.

³² The lyrics to this song, along with “Da Moose,” can be found in Appendix C.

Things are rowdy before the meal begins, with everyone already beginning to bang on tables in anticipation. Once everyone is inside, Abby begins the meal by getting everyone's attention with the classic "Hip Hip!" – "Hooray!" call³³. Because this is the first meal of the week, Abby gives the "tour" of the lodge while standing at the stage, which is located near the back doors of the lodge. She is assisted by Thor, a counselor from Germany, who typically helps her out with the lodge and mealtime orientation, pointing out the various locations as she references them. She begins by explaining how Hoppers work before meals: two campers, dictated by their cabin counselors, will come in as the first hopper bell is rung to set up the tables for their cabin. After this, she explains that there are two doors to the kitchen labeled "In" and "Out" and that these two doors should be used only in their respective manner. She further explains about the bus tubs for dirty dishes in the middle of the lodge, and how the coffee bar is for adults only, and concludes by pointing out the salad bar, gluten free bar, toast/peanut butter bar, and milk fridge.

Following the presentation, she begins with grace. Every meal begins with both a singing grace (which is Christian, and also "fun" in the style of other camp songs), followed by a moment of silence. The first meal always, by unspoken rule, sees the "Johnny Appleseed" grace, so Abby raises her arms over her head to form an O shape as the whole camp breaks out into a chorus of "O." Once the short song is over, she asks the camp to join her in a moment of silence. After a few seconds have passed, she says "Campers can go up for dinner meds³⁴, and hoppers can go up and get their food trays." The schedule of food is on a two-week rotation, with some

³³ This phrase, and others like it, are known as attention-getters. The person trying to get everyone's attention calls "Hip Hip!" and all others who hear are expected to shout "Hooray!" and quiet down after the call.

³⁴ Meds are called for before each meal, often times while people are still at flag, though occasionally after the grace (depending on when the camp nurse is ready). The nurse's station is located in the back corner of the lodge, out of the way of main traffic.

meals occurring every week. Some meals are preferred to others; for example, “Taco Tuesday” dinner and Friday morning’s baked oatmeal breakfast are always popular, whereas the corn dog lunch is generally poorly received.

About ten minutes into the dinner, one of the girl Valley tables – Apache 2 – spontaneously breaks out into a yell: “Give me one!” After the yell, they bang on the table in a defined pattern, then shout “Give me two!” and bang out another pattern. They then proceed to shout “Give me three!” and bang out another pattern (which seems to be an extension of the first two – each one builds on the other), then shout “Break it down now!” and bang out a different pattern, which is more intricate and ends with them throwing their arms in the air and yelling “Woo!” This strange tradition, which seemingly serves no purpose, is only performed by girls’ cabins in the Valley, and is led by the counselors. It occurs usually at least once a meal during lunch and dinner, and never at breakfast. It has no name, and is indeed rarely referred to; on the rare occasion that I heard someone reference it in conversation, it was called “Give Me One.” This action has been happening as long as anyone can remember, and as a result, its origins and meaning have been lost; regardless, it continues. Perhaps the most likely explanation was something that Ben mentioned to me offhandedly at one point in time (and not in reference to the “Give Me One” phenomenon): “The more chaotic and loud a dining hall is, the more fun your camp is. As long as the chaos is controlled.”

After dinner, all cabins head out to the main field for a variety of different spontaneous, unplanned activities. During this time, Ben and Charlie take cabin photos; cabins are called one-by-one to come up to the stage and pose in a funny way for a group picture, starting with Hill, then Village and Valley cabins.³⁵ At 7:15, Abby rings the bell, and everyone makes their way

³⁵ This seems to be the general order for most things at camp; the “ladies first” standard is often coupled with the youngest first mentality.

over to the amphitheater for Opening Campfire³⁶. Cabins take their seats on any of the open benches; they are not assigned, but younger cabins generally take the lower/closer benches, and the older cabins sit more towards the back. Counselors sit on the ends of benches, with campers in between. Occasionally, counselors will lead a truddy³⁷ of campers in to use the restroom. Extraneous directors take their places at the picnic tables located at the top of the amphitheater next to the YMCA statues³⁸.

Opening Campfire begins with a small group of counselors coming out to perform a main skit once everyone is seated. Campfires follow the format of one main skit led by this small group of counselors which tells a story regarding the week's theme. Each short mini-skit makes a subtle (or not-so-subtle) reference to another standalone camp song or skit, which then interrupts the main skit's performance and takes place. These standalone songs and skits can be performed by anyone, though generally only by counselors or returning campers at Opening Campfire. The campfire planners, who meet after dinner to plan the main skit and the other³⁹ skits and songs that will be performed, try and keep it even with regards to skits and songs – on this particular night, there are five of each planned for the campfire performance. The songs for this week include *Rattlin' Bog*, *Bubble Gum*, *Yodeler*, *Tennessee Wiggle Walk*, and *Boom Chicka Boom*. The skits for this week include *Dead Dog*, *Candy Shop*, the *Director Skit*, the *Monster Skit*, and

³⁶ At Camp Catawba, the word 'campfire' refers almost exclusively to either of the two rituals that frame the beginning and end of the week: Opening and Closing Campfire. A campfire for any other purpose would only ever be referred to as a fire, or by the specific location (such as the Valley firepit). Campfires are not a nightly occasion, and often campers do not even sit around a campfire at any point during the week, as traditional/stereotypical presuppositions regarding camp might lead one to expect.

³⁷ The 'Truddy' system is the modern version of the more traditional 'Buddy' system. This rule, which is strictly enforced, requires that a camper must always be accompanied by a counselor and at least one other camper when going off somewhere away from a larger group of people.

³⁸ These statues, which are carved out of wood and depict four people spelling out "YMCA" with their bodies, are commonly referred to as the "creepy YMCA people" due to their uncanny appearance. They are generally disliked by the staff and campers alike.

³⁹ Counselors and campers sign up for skits and songs to perform during dinner with Jacob, who then passes on the list to the group of counselors running the campfire.

the *Rock Skit*⁴⁰. When a skit is announced, the entire audience breaks out into a chorus of “S... S K... S K I T uh huh, S... K... I... T...” and then various cries of the word ‘skit.’ This chant has been done as long as anyone can remember, and its origins are unknown; interestingly, no similar chant exists for songs.

Once all the skits and songs have been performed, the staff go up on stage unit by unit to give their introductions: the Hill first, followed by the Village, and then the Valley. Each counselor and director introduces themselves alongside their co and answers a themed question, usually decided on the spot by the unit director. This week, the questions include:

- Hill: What is your favorite Halloween candy?
- Village: What would your favorite Halloween costume be?
- Valley: What is your favorite scary movie?

Following the introductions, which also feature lots of laughs from the crowd, Connie, Molly, and Ginny go up to give the speech about Ragers, a program of the YMCA that is focused on goal-setting and self-improvement. They tell the story of the program’s beginning, ask people in the audience who are Ragers to stand, and then encourage those aged twelve or older to participate; campers who do choose to participate in the program later are involved in an important ritual on Thursday evening. As they finish their presentation, Mike comes up onto the stage to discuss the Lightfinders program. Lightfinders is apparently a program unique to Camp Catawba; Mike describes it as a program intended to recognize people who have a profound impact on someone’s life over the course of a week at camp. Mike keeps his description shorter and intentionally ambiguous, but he does stress that it applies “if someone has *truly* changed your life this week.” The Lightfinder ritual, which recognizes some of the strongest relationships

⁴⁰ This skit is traditionally performed by Mike and Connie with the leadership campers.

built during a week at camp, takes place at the Closing Campfire on Friday night, and is one of the most moving rituals that takes place at camp.

Finally, after the short presentations, the Hill and Village are dismissed to their cabins and the pavilion⁴¹, respectively. The Valley stays behind, and everyone comes down to the bottom of the amphitheater, close to the stage for a more intimate atmosphere, especially as the sun is beginning to disappear below the horizon and the sky darkens. All the counselors come up to the stage, and Jacob gives a presentation on the three main rules for the Valley: being role models for the younger kids (who “both literally and figuratively look up to you” – a buzzphrase used every week), no bullying, and no ‘purple’⁴². After the presentation is finished, Jacob asks a few trivia question to determine who gets to have smores first (Mike sneaked off to retrieve the supplies after he finished his presentation on Lightfinders). The first trivia question is “Who was the killer in *Friday the 13th*?”, keeping with the Halloween theme. Each cabin, once a question is answered correctly, gets to come up for smores; all the counselors are now on stage, hanging out and playing music while they hand out marshmallows and sticks. Some counselors even conscript campers that they know to cook marshmallows and bring them smores, so they can continue to stay on stage and hang out. This Valley introductory session is a new aspect of camp this year, introduced by Jacob to encourage social interaction in the Valley, where social interaction is the most important; the other units do not get this bonding experience, but it also would not have the same value for the younger campers. After another 10 minutes of hanging out, once the sun is fully down, Jacob dismisses cabins to go take their nighttime medication and return to their cabins for showers and bedtime. Cabins get ready for bed, do their nightly

⁴¹ The Village meets at the pavilion to briefly go over rules and expectations regarding the bathhouse, which regardless always ends up egregiously dirty.

⁴² This is explained simply – boys are blue, girls are pink, and the two colors should not mix. ‘Dark blue’ and ‘hot pink’ are also prohibited.

Devotions, and then finally go to sleep.

Devotion, a serious discussion between a cabin group about personal matters directed by a counselor, almost always takes place just before bed every night (see section 4.6), and as such, upon its conclusion, the counselors immediately direct kids to use the bathroom one last time before bed. A bit of time to talk and hang out is always allowed, but soon enough, the lights are turned off. The official, scheduled time for lights out is 9:30 PM for the Hill and Village and 10:00 PM for the Valley, but this is a ‘soft’ requirement; in the Valley especially, cabins are often up past 10:00 PM. On the first night of the week, counselors are expected to stay in cabins with their kids, and are not permitted to roam around the camp, visit the lodge, and hang out in common areas. Some of the directors head to the office to do work. Valley counselors, however, are permitted to be in their middle rooms, and most go there to hang out for a time. These rooms indeed become important social spaces for staff bonding. During week 7, the Valley boys duplex cabin counselors brought in a small television and PlayStation, and hosted an after-hours counselor FIFA video game tournament. The absolute curfew on every night of camp is midnight; directors are permitted to stay up later if they have work to do, but the midnight cutoff is still strongly suggested for their own well-being.

Monday begins the first ‘normal’ day of camp, with the standard daily routine of clinic, afternoon, and morning activities. I begin my day by waking up at 7:00 for a shower. Not everyone wakes up at this time; technically the only guideline is that everyone must be at flag at 7:50. Some female counselors and directors, such as Connie, report waking up at 6:50. Hill cabins, according to Molly, typically begin waking up around 7. Village and Valley cabins vary, but most wake up around 7:15⁴³. On Mondays, Mike is the ‘DoD⁴⁴,’ so he is in the lodge running

⁴³ Joe and Paul, who are almost always with the 14-year-old boys, get their kids up at 7:40 and rush them out to flag.

⁴⁴ Director on Duty – it is always referred to by its acronym.

the meal. One of the older Hill cabins runs flag, and when the counselor reads 7:50 off her watch, she makes the call for flag to begin. Morning flag assembly is accompanied by the pledge of allegiance after the flag is raised; once that is recited, flag songs proceed as normal.

After breakfast, counselors and campers return to their cabins for cleaning. Cleanup is taken more seriously by some than by others, even though counselors are taught to stress it during training. The cleanest cabin in each unit, as judged by the unit directors, is announced at lunchtime assembly. Following cabin cleanup, cabins make their way to chapel, which begins at 9:00 AM sharp every morning during the week. Once Monday's chapel has ended, campers and counselors make their way to the amphitheater for the beginning of clinics⁴⁵. Everyone assembles to make sure all campers are heading to their appropriate locations with the full group of campers registered for each activity. The purpose is orientation for the rest of the week; from Tuesday on, campers go directly from chapel to clinics, and directly between clinics the rest of the day. Mike stands up on stage and passes out lists of clinics to the staff members running each activity, who each go off to a distinct nearby location – such as the GaGa pit or the flagpole – to congregate with their campers before heading off to the activity location. Clinics occur three times in the morning and twice in the afternoon; some last for multiple periods, but most only for one. At Camp Catawba, clinics run on the principle of 'progressive programming' – the idea that each day's activities builds on what campers have learned each day. While not all clinics meet this standard of quality, campers still look forward to their chosen clinics every day.

After the three morning clinics have finished, the entire camp assembles at the

⁴⁵ There are many different clinics offered at Camp Catawba. A general list is as follows: arts and crafts, rock climbing, archery, canoeing, dance, outdoor cooking, aqua dance, basketball, shooting sports, fun and games, swimming, fishing, survival, kayaking, mountain biking, horseback riding lessons, and a themed clinic (that matches the week's theme – for example, Pirate clinic during Pirate week). Occasionally, experimental or short-lived clinics are offered, such as cloud watching or science experiments.

amphitheater for lunch assembly. At this time, the unit directors announce the winners of the cleanest cabin competition; the winning cabins get to go in first for lunch. Once the cleanest cabin awards have been given out and any other announcements have been made, songs are sung while the lodge is set up for lunch. When everything is ready, cabins are called to go in. Following lunch is Siesta, an hour-long period of rest in the cabin that the entire camp participates in; afternoon clinics follow directly after. After the conclusion of afternoon clinics, campers will either return to their cabins for cabin activity or to the amphitheater for free activity time. Cabin activity, which takes place on Mondays and Fridays, is an organized activity featuring just one cabin group (on occasion, cabins join together for a group cabin activity). It can be anything from simply shooting arrows at archery to the elaborate 'Indian Ceremony' ritual. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday feature free activity time, in which campers all congregate at the amphitheater and have free choice of activities; the options are similar to clinic activities, but having it not bound by signups allows campers to explore other interests.

Dinner follows afternoon activity, and then there is a brief period of downtime, where cabins either hang out at one of the many casual activities around main camp or return to their cabins to relax. Evening activity usually begins at 7:15. Monday's evening activity is the unit activity; for the Valley, it is 'Valley Swim,' and the entire Valley goes to hang out at the pool. The Hill and Village activities are more varied from week to week, and often also reflect the week's theme. Every other week the younger two units participated in a scavenger hunt-type activity led by the leadership campers. Other weeks, the Hill participated in craft rotations, and the Village held the 'Village Games,' a friendly competition between all the younger boys' cabins. Tuesday's evening activity is capture-the-flag – a summer camp staple – which is played on the athletic field. On Wednesday, evening activity is replaced by the Valley's overnight trip,

while the Hill and Village hold a cookout and pool party, where the unit directors grill burgers and hot dogs and everyone hangs out before going to the pool to hang out some more. Thursday night is the camp dance, which is held in the lodge and features camp-appropriate popular music. On Friday, the Closing Campfire ceremony takes place, rounding off a week of camp in ritual fashion.

3.4 Free Time and Play

Apart from the period after rotations, the free time after dinner is the only period throughout the week when most campers participate in semi-structured play; they play basketball, tetherball, gaga, and hang out on the main field, among many other things. Generally, the younger campers engage more with each other in play, whereas older campers are more involved with counselors, with many in-depth conversations involving campers and counselors occurring. This is when a lot of the ‘get-to-know-you’ process happens, as prior to this time, everyone has been occupied with their rotations; now that there is nothing urgent to be done, everyone has the opportunity to relax and make pleasant conversation. The nine square line is a common opportunity for getting to know one another, as the line can often grow quite long, so everyone interacts instead of just standing around watching the game.

Though the entire week could be considered to fall under the category of play, this time represents the activity in its purest form. Here one can see that play “adorns life, amplifies it and is to that extent a necessity both for the individual – as a life function – and for society by reason of the meaning it contains, its significance, its expressive value, its spiritual and social associations, in short, as a culture function” (Huizinga 1949: 9). In the pursuit of the “fun” goal of camp, play is the most effective means to an end. Furthermore, play reinforces the bonds

constructed between campers (and, indeed, between counselors as well) during a week at camp, due to the fact that “A play-community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over... the feeling of being "apart together" in an exceptional situation, of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms, retains its magic beyond the duration of the individual game” (Huizinga 1949: 12). This process occurs both during individual activities of play, where friendships are built on a more surface level, and over the course of an entire week, when lasting bonds are solidified.

The two major camp-exclusive games played during free time are gaga and nine square.⁴⁶ Gaga is played in a large (roughly 20 feet in diameter) pit with wooden walls, and is located roughly equidistant between the pool and the amphitheater. There is no limit to how many players can participate; often, a game will begin with upwards of fifty people (certainly too many to count). To begin a round, the ball is tossed into the pit and allowed to bounce twice, with the entire group calling out “ga” on each bounce. Once the second bounce hits, players are allowed to bat the ball with their hands in an attempt to hit other players below the knee. If the ball makes contact with someone below their knee, or a player knocks the ball out of the pit, they are out. In addition, if someone hits the ball twice in succession without another player touching it, the person is out. Play does not stop if someone is hit below the knee, but does stop if the ball is knocked out; in such a case, the ball is tossed back in in the same manner as the beginning of the game. Calls are made by the entire group of players and spectators, but counselors have the final say; for example, if a call is overwhelmingly made that a camper is out, but the camper denies it, counselors will step in to make sure players are being honest and leave the pit. Once two people are left, the final two are allowed to hit the ball three times in succession, rather than once. The

⁴⁶ While basketball, tetherball, and various unstructured games involving a football (such as 500) are also played, these two games are overwhelmingly the most popular and draw the largest crowds.

last player standing is declared the winner.

Gaga is a particular favorite amongst younger boys, who generally make up the bulk of most games; however, due to their reckless playstyle and undeveloped coordination, it is almost exclusively older boys who win. Male counselors participate, but generally prefer not to try their hardest, unless they are up against an older camper; otherwise, they will intentionally let the campers win. Female counselors rarely play gaga and are much less competitive than male counselors; I never observed a single win from a female counselor, though a few female campers did claim wins on several occasions. On occasion, gaga can cause minor injuries, particularly scrapes; these 'injuries' seemed to coincide with younger boys getting out. On one occasion, two boys from different cabins in the Village even began a small scuffle, which was quickly broken up by counselors; the two boys were then taken aside and given a stern reprimand regarding their behavior, which represented a critical learning experience for the two of them. In addition, many campers choose to hang out near the gaga pit and 'watch' the game; in actuality, they are just socializing in a populated area.

Nine square is also located in the main field, closer to the basketball court. The game is essentially a mixture of volleyball and the traditional schoolyard game of four square. It consists of a tall rack of blue poles, extending over the heads of even the tallest counselors (although its height can be adjusted, it is typically kept at this level). The poles are arranged into nine squares, with the middle one being the 'king' square. The king serves by tossing the ball (usually a large, light, bouncy ball) up and over the pole into another player's square; players then hit the ball over the poles in an attempt to prevent the ball from hitting the ground after falling through one's square of poles. If the ball goes down through someone's square and hits the ground, the person is out, and everyone moves up a spot. Furthermore, if a person hits the ball and it does not go

through someone's square, and instead lands outside the poles entirely, the person is also out. Unlike gaga, this game is perpetual; the 'winner' is simply the person currently in the king square.

Nine square is a much more social game, specifically because a large part of the game involves waiting in the long line to enter the arena. Campers and counselors alike stand in the line, which can take several minutes to clear, and talk about any variety of topics. On Sunday, it is usually small talk and getting to know each other. Later in the week, this turns into discussions of what happened during clinics, discussions about potential dance dates, and any number of random topics. There is no real trend; I observed a truly wide variety of conversation topics while standing in the nine square. One other reason that conversation thrives at nine square is because it is played primarily by older campers and counselors; younger kids are simply not tall enough to be competitive and instead opt to run around, hang out with other children their age, or play different games. Furthermore, because of the older, more emotionally mature participants, nine square is much more casual than gaga, with the game really being played for fun above all else.

In addition to free time for outdoor play, campers also receive some time for recreation in the cabin. During Siesta time, some counselors mandate that campers stay quiet and attempt to get some rest; others, however, allow them to hang out freely within the cabin; here, when campers are not simply hanging out and talking, play generally occurs in the form of card games. The Valley also has an additional period of free time at the end of the day following evening activity; because they are not quite ready for bed at the time evening activity finishes, campers

proceed to hang out in the cabin or even in the Valley around the Octagon⁴⁷.

These periods of free play, however, are not just centered on recreation; in addition to building social bonds, it serves an important ritual purpose in the weekly experience of camp.

Huizinga describes the tightly-woven relationship between play and ritual:

Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life as being ‘not serious’, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly... It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means. (Huizinga 1949: 13).

This accurately depicts the status of play as an activity at camp: on the surface, it appears carefree and purely recreational, but it is in fact deeply influential for its participants. During this free, unstructured play time, campers are unconsciously learning about interaction with others, bonding with those others who share the experience, and building the confidence to enjoy themselves and the company of their peers in a social setting. It is also a time for campers to seek out new friendships without fear of rejection, as interest in another person can be written off as casual conversation (particularly in the case of older, teenage campers expressing interest in a member of the opposite sex). During this time, the foundation for trust in one’s camp peers is built; the fulfillment of this trust comes during the serious times of camp, specifically during campfire and devotion.

⁴⁷ Another reason for this downtime is due to the layout of the Valley cabins. Because most only possess two showers for upwards of 20 people, showers can take quite a bit of time, and because there is no prescribed activity during this time period, counselors and campers, together or separately, simply hang out in their respective cabins.

3.5 The Serious Side of Camp

During my structured interviews with various staff members, I inquired into their reasoning behind coming back to camp year after year, both as campers (for those who attended the camp before their time on staff) and as counselors. One major theme that emerged was the importance of other people – the interpersonal relationships fostered by the camp experience – as a major reason for why people always wanted to come back. In her interview, Connie elaborated on this further, describing how “Camp fosters a sense of community and comfort – so, you’re comfortable being yourself – which gives you the opportunity to really break out of your shell in a way that you probably wouldn’t be able to do in a normal social situation like school, because you’re focused on different things.” Andy took this further, also citing the importance of the Devotion time as playing a major role in this process:

It’s a very intentional process; it’s not an accident that it happens... You have fun during the day, and at night, you take things seriously. Everybody always really easily makes that switch between having fun during the day and making really fun memories to “Now we’re serious, and we’re talking about really important parts of life. And you don’t do that at home... you don’t do that outside of camp – where you’re suddenly talking about really important, deeper stuff, while also doing these crazy things that you don’t do at home during the day. Talking about the struggles in life helps people to open up more. I remember when I was fourteen or fifteen, those were some of the realest conversations that I’d had in my life up to that point; at camp, during the devotion time, kids opening up and talking about things they wouldn’t talk about at home.

Andy highlights a noteworthy distinction between the daytime and the nighttime at camp. Indeed, very few activities geared towards pure enjoyment or casual learning (such as clinic activities or camp games) occur, if at all, once the sun has gone down. The schedule seems to have been designed around the daily cycle of the sun in Indiana during this time of the year. With darkness not having fully fallen until roughly 9:30 PM, most on the Hill and in the Village

are done with showers and getting ready for devotion and bedtime. In the Valley, campers are not quite in bedtime mode, but still calming down and simply hanging out in cabins or around the Valley firepit. However, no organized, purposefully-fun activities are prescribed for this time. Opening Campfire has usually concluded by the time the sun has fully set. Even on Overnight this is the case; the setting sun is a signal for smores to get going, and by the time they are finished, darkness has fallen, and Jacob calls the entire Valley together for Devotion. Furthermore, during Closing Campfire, darkness usually falls around the time Lightfinders have completed, depending on the length of the fun portion. As such, the daily cycle of the sun symbolizes the division of focus within the camp experience: fun during the day, seriousness at night. This distinction also parallels the campfire talk traditions of the Ju/hoansi, proving Wiessner's observation that "The appetite for firelight as a setting for social intimacy and openness in conversation remains very much a part of modern life" (Wiessner 2014: 7).

The only prescribed activity following nightfall, in fact, is Devotion. As previously stated, Devotion occurs every night, and covers a wide range of topics, though it usually focuses on personal struggles and growth. It is taken completely seriously by counselors and campers alike. Due to its very nature, it is often the most significant process contributing to the fulfillment of the third aspect of executive director John's stated goal of the camp: "safe, fun, and life-changing." In fact, two other camp processes (which are also rituals) also play a major role in fulfilling this aspect: Lightfinders and the Ragers Program. These three rituals all serve to change people's lives through affirming interpersonal relationships and encouraging individual work towards personal growth, with this personal growth being an ultimate end goal of the camp experience (see sections 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7). The Ragers program in particular embodies this sentiment; as a YMCA program, it encourages participants to set goals that allow them to grow

in “mind, body, and spirit” – the three central tenets of the YMCA. In the pursuit of these various ends, camp “consciously presents an image of being a liminal environment (without ever using the word, of course), and camp uses ritual and metaphoric processes to reconstrain and direct children toward ‘socially responsible’ roles at a time when their liminality represents potentially dangerous forces” (Tillery 1992: 380).

3.6 The Role of Counselors

An integral part of the camp experience are the counselors, who live in every cabin and play an active role in the construction of the culture at Camp Catawba. The official job description reads as both narrow and general, stating that the counselor will “supervise a group of campers in a residential setting and provide a safe, fun environment” in addition to fostering “social, spiritual, physical, and intellectual growth.” This, however, does not cover all the bases in terms of what the job actually does, especially when looking critically at the role. In a broader, more technical sense, the role of counselor “emerges from a small-group culture where meaning is grounded in interaction, and idiocultural constructs emerge within an isolated and localized social world” (Waskul 1996: 29). The role of camp counselor thus is self-defining because counselors can only exist within the camp culture that they themselves perpetuate.

It is difficult to overstate just how important the role of counselor is to the camp experience. Simply put, counselors do everything; they plan and run clinics and cabin activities, facilitate capture-the-flag⁴⁸, lead devotions, and perform songs and skits. It is these activities that make up the backbone of camp; without clinics, devotions, and activities, camp would not be what it is. However, counselors very often go above and beyond in their duties to further create

⁴⁸ Capture-the-flag occurs every Tuesday evening as part of the evening activity; the entire camp participates, split up into four teams. It is played on the athletic field, which is split up into four sections by orange cones.

‘magic’ at camp. During Halloween week, Ben and the directors came up with the idea to have a haunted house competition during a particularly rainy day; counselors were the ones who rallied their cabins to create some truly terrifying displays for the competition. During the Christmas themed week, counselor Julian created a series of “Siesta Games” (that took place during Siesta time) for his cabin, in which campers could compete in small Christmas-themed competitions for a small prize of a sweet snack (but, more importantly, bragging rights within the cabin). Counselor Joe pioneered “Mafia Monday”⁴⁹ cabin activity with the boys of the Valley, and Ginny came up with the idea to put the creek float innertubes in the pond for a bumper cars-style game.

Their impacts, however, are not just on recreation and activities; counselors do in deed offer their eponymic ‘counsel.’ Over the course of the summer, counselors helped mitigate conflicts between campers who truly came to dislike each other, talked to campers who were in the midst of dealing with their parents’ divorce, and offered support to campers struggling with issues regarding their sexuality. It is clear – from observation and from their interview comments – that for most counselors, their primary goal is giving campers the best experience possible.

One of the most important aspects of the role of counselor is fostering the sense of collectivity that is critical to the camp experience. On a basic level, cabins operate as a collective, sharing meals family-style and operating in an egalitarian democratic way, with all campers having equal voices. This collectivity, however, is not limited to the cabin unit; it is also present in the staff itself, which has to operate as a cohesive unit in the pursuit of the camp’s ultimate goal of being “for the kids.” While not an official motto in the same vein as John’s “safe, fun, life-changing”, this phrase is used instead as a constant reminder from and for other

⁴⁹ This cabin activity involved at least one, usually two or three Valley boy cabins sitting in a circle of chairs in the multi-purpose building playing the game of “Mafia” while enjoying popcorn made in the camp popcorn machine.

staff members as they go about the summer. Through this shared goal, the counselors build deeply meaningful social bonds with one another. Counselor Ginny describes how “For counselors and staff members, the friendships are mainly based off of the fact that you can see your coworkers growing and becoming better people. And you strive to create a great environment for all the kids. So you really just want the best for your coworkers and friends.” Furthermore, amongst the campers, the collective experience of camp also helps to inspire the forming of social bonds, as campers “tend to be more open to meeting different people” because of the open, inclusive environment in which campers are free to make their own decisions when it comes to making friends, as opposed to being guided by parents. Though some come to camp with a friend or know some others from previous years, campers all arrive on equal footing; everyone still needs to make new friends and build up new social networks.

This sense of collectivity also informs the culture itself because it leads to everyone being ‘on the same page’ with regards to camp culture: “Because camp programming involves collective rather than individual efforts, the experiences of the staff are shared with campers and one another. In the process, collective meanings emerge, become attached to behaviors, and ultimately shape the role of camp counselor itself” (Waskul 1996: 39). This process is most clearly exhibited by spontaneous occurrences that become part of the canonical tradition of the camp in question. One example from Catawba would be the adoption of “square” as a camp-wide inside joke. Originally utilized by a small group of counselors during staff training week as a joking insult, the term then reached the entire staff and filtered down into the campers throughout the summer; it ultimately became the go-to term of jesting mockery throughout the

camp.⁵⁰ Indeed, there are many occurrences of spontaneous happenings joining the camp canon, such as the “Arnold Company” song⁵¹ and the general plotline of the Director skit⁵².

Counselors work hard to uphold the cultural tenets of camp (such as the upper management-mandated focus on the four core values of the YMCA), but also to preserve the cultural practices and mythology of camp. This is exhibited by the continued telling of the story of the “Ghost of Challenger Site B.” The origins of the story date back to late 1990s and early 2000s, after the camp restructured its programs. Previously, teen campers had been known as Challengers, and slept at different locations in tents in the woods. One of these locations, Challenger Site B (the second of two locations, with the other being known as Challenger Site A), was located off in the woods near the Archery range, and the only remnant of the site was a sign that still stood at the entrance to the pathway into the woods. Because the program no longer existed, campers had no idea what the sign referred to; sometime in the early 2000s, counselors made up a story that continues to be told to this day as the trademark, go-to “scary story” of Camp Catawba. The story deals with a cabin of girls, in which one of them was mercilessly bullied. One night, she decided she could no longer bear the mocking, and took her violin – with which she annoyed the other girls every day whilst she practiced – out to Challenger Site B in the dead of night, wove a rope with the violin and bow strings, and hanged herself. According to

⁵⁰ An example of its usage would be something along the lines of “Only squares don’t drink water at meals.” As no term would ever be used to denigrate a camper, the phrase instead comically encourages the campers to stay hydrated, while offering an amount of encouragement in the form of knowingly false denigration.

⁵¹ The “Arnold Company” song emerged in the mid-2000s as a parody of the existing “Penguin Company” song. The “Arnold Company” version, instead of dealing with a company of penguins waddling around, refers to the popular culture figure of Arnold Schwarzenegger, and talks about him showing off his muscles and “getting to the choppa.”

⁵² The Director skit, a longstanding skit at summer camps in general, is about a group of people filming a movie, and depicts them acting out a scene in various funny styles. At Catawba, this scene has a strictly-set plotline. This was established by a group of counselors who began a particularly comical incarnation of the skit in 2014. The plotline of the ‘movie’ that is being ‘filmed’ in the skit is not technically set in stone, but those counselors who came up with the plotline in 2014 set a precedent for the skit in the future; through 2017, the same plot was still being used.

legend, her ghost still haunts camp, coming after bullies to strangle them with the same rope. And, allegedly, if one ventures near the Challenger Site B area late at night, the ethereal sounds of her violin can still be heard echoing through the woods. It is not an exaggeration to say that ‘everyone at camp knows the story’ – while it is generally not told to younger campers, most if not all returning campers know it by the time they reach the Valley. The story’s perpetuation is due wholly to the work of the counselors in carrying the fire of the camp’s mythology year after year.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the campers, counselors prove to be the ultimate role models. Counselors are not quite stand-ins for parents, as their relationship to the campers is quite different; however, they are the primary authority figure in the lives of campers, and work to achieve positive development in the campers that they are “raising” over the course of the week at camp. Connie describes how counselors are actually able to be more effective than parents, as “You’re a new face. I’ve found that kids are willing to reveal a little bit more about themselves as people than maybe they would be to their parents, just because you’re a lot younger and they look up to you.” In the “Notes on Camp” edition of the *This American Life* podcast, one of the subjects is a counselor named David, who is described as “a force. David is the one people turn to. David is the man, at least when it comes to some things... for the 13-year-old boys in his cabin” (Glass 1998). When one of his campers is nervous about making a move on a girl⁵³, “David’s got his back. David will see that things go OK for him” (Glass 1998). At the end of the day, the job of a counselor is to provide their full support to their campers, helping

⁵³ Here, there is a significant cultural disconnect between the camp of yesteryear and modern-day restrictions. As previously mentioned, ‘purple’ is not allowed at Camp Catawba, and a counselor would never encourage ‘making a move’ or any similar activity. However, the rule does not apply to dancing and bringing ‘dates’ to the camp dance on Thursdays; as such, the teen dance becomes the single biggest focal point for boy-girl interactions. Getting a date to the dance is seen as a major goal for many campers in the Valley. Thus the principle – a counselor helping a teenage boy in the pursuit of a female companion for the dance, which may be his first ‘serious’ encounter with the opposite sex – is consistent with David’s actions in the 1998 podcast.

them to grow in the short period that they supervise them; the ideal, then, is to be like David, and while not all counselors may achieve this goal to the same degree he does, the motivation is still present. The sentiment that counselors played a major role in not only the campers' experience, but also their own personal development at camp and as a person, was unanimously shared by all counselors I interviewed who were previously campers. Valley counselor Joe worded it best: "My importance as a counselor is giving kids a mentor."

In their roles on the 'front lines' of the camp experience, counselors are the ones who have to deal with the more trivial, day-to-day issues and problems that occur throughout the week. Some of these issues pertain only to staff, like general drama and relationships that inevitably develop when young adults are placed together for an extended period of time. However, counselors are also the ones who deal with the numerous issues that arise involving campers. These can range from bedwetting to homesickness to physical fighting. Counselors lend their wisdom to Valley campers grappling with the trials and tribulations of adolescence, break up scrappy fights between Village boys in the gaga pit, and convince crying Hill girls that they indeed do want to stay for the full week. All of this work is performed in the pursuit of the two main missions of camp: creating a "safe, fun, and life-changing" experience, and doing so "for the kids."

4.0 Ritual Descriptions and Analyses

4.1 Introduction

As previously described, there are a number of smaller rituals and ritual-like experiences that contribute to the overall camp experience. Here the framework provided by anthropologist Victor Turner serves as the basis for analysis of ritual processes. These rituals link various elements – play, personal development, and social interaction – to the individual in a ‘magical’ way. Some of these rituals (the Indian Ceremony, Survival Baptism, Ragers, and Closing Campfire) are more overt than others, as some simply only possess ritualized elements rather than being fully-fledged rituals (Chapel, Overnight, Devotion). Regardless, all play a critical role in the highly personalized experience of a week at camp.

4.2 Indian Ceremony

The so-called ‘Indian Ceremony’ is a cabin activity that, according to its current practitioners, dates back at least ten years; its exact origins are unknown, but the counselors that currently put on the ritual recall it being done when they were younger campers. The ritual is performed during cabin activity on Friday; it is not performed every week, and only so when the counselor (or, in this case, director; Andy, who previously put on the ritual when he was a counselor, did it with several cabins during the summer) deems a cabin ‘worthy.’ In this sense, it is somewhat of a privilege for a cabin to undergo this ritual. It also only takes place with younger boys’ cabins; the oldest that participated was 14, but it generally (and, according to its practitioners, traditionally) only occurred in the Village. Though it is named the Indian Ceremony, it derives nothing from actual Native American ceremony or culture; on the contrary, it only to play on popular stereotypes regarding Native American ritual performances.

The ritual begins with one of the counselors heading to the banks of the Catawba Creek; near the main area where people go to be near the creek, there are several large, relatively flat rocks where people can stand. Several feet into the creek (which is about thirty feet wide) there is another rock; the counselor builds a fire on the rock. While this is happening, the other counselor, while heading over towards the creek, instructs the campers to find a stick of some sort on the ground or in the woods nearby. Once the fire is ready, the other counselor accompanies the cabin down to the banks and instructs everyone to take their shoes off and line up shoulder-to-shoulder facing the fire, while they all stay silent. The counselors involved step into the creek and give a short speech describing how this “ancient” ritual has been performed by the Indians native to this area for centuries, and that by participating, they would become one with the spirits of the natural surroundings and of Camp Catawba. This is, of course, all nonsense; in fact, the speech is impromptu and made up anew each time the ritual is performed. The counselors also explain how the ritual is performed; one-by-one, the campers will be called up to step forward into the water⁵⁴, place a pre-chosen stick in the fire, and spit in the fire. Once the camper has done this, the counselors turn away from the group, consult briefly with one another, and come up with a silly, somewhat-Native-themed nickname for the camper. For example, a camper wearing a ‘Nike’ branded shirt is given the nickname “Nikehawk.” Once the nickname is given, the entire group – as was instructed in the introductory speech – joins together in the ‘war chant,’ which consists of slapping the thighs twice and shouting “Hu!” while jerking the forearms backward, as if pulling on an invisible cart. One by one, each camper is called up and given a nickname. Once the final camper has gone, one of the counselors performs another impromptu speech about the journey to manhood the boys have just undergone, ritually

⁵⁴ In the ritual, this is done by saying something along the lines of “The spirit of the water has chosen ____ to step forward next.”

burns a wildflower, then takes a large stick and topples the entire fire into the creek, extinguishing it in a cascade of smoke and steam.

The entire ritual is conducted in a wholly serious manner on the part of the counselors; they maintain a straight face throughout the performance, and even suppress laughs during particularly funny nicknames. Thus the campers, after a few moments of trial-and-error (reprimand from the counselors), also follow suit and take the ritual seriously. This is one of the major reasons why the ritual is effective. In addition, the ritual is different from most normal camp activities, and in this sense, is also a new and fun experience. Finally, the ritual's uniqueness in the context of an individual's camp experience – coupled with its framing as a profound, important historical process – contributes to the nostalgia of the experience.

After the ritual is over, the group returns to the main area of camp to play nine square. Though the campers ask if the ritual was actually real, their disbelief is palpable; nevertheless, the counselors insist everything is truthful, with their smiles giving away the ruse. In essence, they all but confirm that the entire performance is nonsense. However, this fact is not important to the campers; they all clearly enjoy the experience, and the counselors report that the cabin group seems more bonded afterwards. The medium- or long-term effects are difficult to judge; however, according to the counselors, in the short-term, the campers clearly take something away from the experience. Interestingly, the nicknames are generally not used afterward; a few of the more funny and memorable ones are used jokingly while the group plays GaGa before dinner flag, but none are used seriously and consistently.

The Indian Ceremony ritual fits well into the framework of *rites de passage* theorized by Arnold van Gennep and developed further by Victor Turner in his book *The Forest of Symbols*. Van Gennep's idea regarding rites of passage identified these rituals as "rites which accompany

every change of place, state, social position and age” (Turner 1967: 94). These rituals involve three phases: separation, margin (generally referred to as liminality), and aggregation. Turner describes these three stages in detail:

The first phase of separation comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a “state”); during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject (the “passenger”) is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state; in the third phase the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations of a clearly defined and “structural” type, and is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards. (Turner 1967: 94)

Because of its importance in the ritual process of rites of passage, Turner focuses much of his research on the liminal period as the most insightful and telling portion of the process. This tripartite structure is also one of the reasons that this ritual – while being ‘fake’ – still has real, effective function. In this sense, as long as the ritual is performed, it does not matter that the entire ceremony is made up by the ‘elders’ – it still is effective in the same way a ‘real’ ritual would be.

The Indian Ceremony indeed possesses a clear separation, which consists of the silent walk to the creek, which is also – in several ways – physically separated from the main camp area. The walk is down a steep flight of stairs, and the location’s distance from the main camp area filters out much of the noise of other camp activities. The ritual also takes place only in the company of the participating cabin; no other campers or counselors are involved. Similarly, at

the conclusion of the ritual, the cabin group goes back to the main camp and continues on with 'business as usual,' both literally and figuratively returning back to the whole of society (albeit with their newfound knowledge and sense of belonging, manifest in the form of the given nicknames).

With a clearly defined liminal period, the Indian Ceremony also includes an element of "invisibility" with regards to the participants. Turner notes this critical element, explaining how the initiates become "transitional-beings" during liminality (Turner 1967: 96). In the context of camp, the participants (and the leaders) are wholly separated from the society that is the camp, and as such are unseen by and detached from the whole. Furthermore, in the context of the ritual, they are 'invisible' through their silence, which is sustained through the entire experience, with the exception of the war chant. This, however, is performed as part of a whole, so individuality is completely absent. This invisibility is broken only when the individual is called forth by the counselors to receive his nickname; however, as this is the moment where the passage takes place for the participant, it is necessary for the ritual.

Another important element to Turner is the necessity of the lack of possessions. Initiates possess no social status, no role in the society, and no physical objects during the ritual (Turner 1967: 98-99). The Indian Ceremony actually embodies this principle quite well, as the only possession brought by the initiates – the stick (along with the clothes on their backs) – is burned as an integral part of the ritual. The aspect of equality in comradeship is also present; aside from the calling up of each individual (which happens to every person in the group), the initiates are instructed to stand side by side in a line together. As such, any distinctions between them as far as social hierarchy or societal roles are eliminated. Furthermore, the process of nicknaming – an 'ordeal' gone through by the collective group – also serves as a kind of acceptance into the

greater, transcendental spirit of the camp, as they too have endured a ceremony that has (allegedly) been performed here for centuries. Campers enter the ritual as campers, and end up different than they were before.

Finally, Turner notes the important role that the monster or terror-inducing images play in the rite of passage, which are “manufactured precisely to teach neophytes to distinguish clearly between the different factors of reality, as it is conceived in their culture” (Turner 1967: 105). Rather than inciting fear, however, the goal of these objects is to make the initiates “vividly and rapidly aware of what may be called the “factors” of their culture... Monsters startle neophytes into thinking about objects, persons, relationships, and features of their environment they have hitherto taken for granted” (Turner 1967: 105). While the Indian Ceremony does not include any explicitly monstrous images – or any images that are anything other than the norm – it is, rather, the form of the ritual itself that is ‘monstrous’ – or unnatural – in the sense that it is completely alien and different from any other aspect of camp, or the boys’ everyday experience. The campers’ fear of the what is going to happen during the ritual, at least up until the point of the first initiate’s reception of his nickname, also embodies this purpose. In addition, this strange juxtaposition – fire in the middle of flowing water, a place where it normally would not be – adds a further element of uncanniness to the ritual. All in all, being made aware of the alleged historical roots of the ritual, prescribing a set form of action, and withdrawing to a secluded location during a time which is typically occupied by traditional camp activities, the ceremony is sufficiently out of the ordinary to elicit the same kind of thinking response.

The symbols prevalent in the ritual are interesting because they are wholly intended as such by the leaders; burning the stick and spitting in the fire, as well as knocking the fire into the water, are quite intentionally meant to serve as symbols, not necessarily to convey any specific

message. Turner first describes the “dominant” (or “senior”) symbols, which are “regarded not merely as means to the fulfillment of the avowed purposes of a given ritual, but also and more importantly refer to values that are regarded as ends in themselves, that is, to axiomatic values” (Turner 1967: 20).

With Turner’s distinction, the dominant symbol is the creek, which not only symbolizes the flow of time, but also helps in defining the nature of the ritual and the society in which it takes place. While lending its name – Catawba – to the camp and thus the society, the creek also serves to define the performance of the ritual. The fire also plays a central role in the ritual, symbolizing life in the context of the camp. By contributing their stick, an inflammable essence, and their spit, an essence of themselves, the boys contribute to this collective spirit, which is then symbolically joined with the flow of time when it is pushed into the creek. The two symbols’ close connection with the camp (the creek lending its name to the camp itself, while fire being a principle symbol of summer camp as an institution) further symbolizes the ritual’s importance to not only this specific camp’s spirit, but to the collective spirit of camp in general.

This is, however, only my interpretation of the ritual and its symbols, as it is indeed entirely made up by the counselors putting it on; despite this, it is still worthwhile to fit it within Turner’s framework. Despite the wholly manufactured nature of the ritual – every action is carried out with the intention of seeming ritualistic – the general reasoning for the performance remains a mystery. The counselors never explain anything (perhaps because there really is no ‘true’ explanation), and so the campers are left to deduce for themselves what the meaning of the ritual is for them. The counselors’ subtle acknowledgement of this fact – conveying the message of “As far as you know, it IS real” – also reinforces the idea of the mock-serious nature of camp rituals vis-à-vis their realized effects.

One final noteworthy aspect of the Indian Ceremony is its connection with Emile Durkheim's writings on totemic principles in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Durkheim writes on the distinction between everyday social interactions – the profane – and the larger, enduring collectivity within which those interactions take place – the sacred. These experiences in the ritual become wholly distinct from experiences in society, as “The two sorts of representation form two kinds of mental state, and they are as separate and distinct as the two forms of life to which they correspond. As a result, we feel as though we are in touch with two distinct sorts of reality with a clear line of demarcation between them: the world of profane things on one side, the world of sacred things on the other” (Durkheim 1995: 214). In the Indian Ceremony, this is accomplished through the recitation of the ritual's ‘history.’ As the counselors characterize the current experience as one that is ancient, other, and of deep importance not only to the participants, but to the spirit of the camp itself, the experience of the campers becomes a sacred one. Their existence in the world of the Indian Ceremony is tied in with, but wholly separate from their lives in the society of camp.

4.3 Survival Baptism

An interesting example of a spontaneous ritual – unplanned and not rooted in any form of preexisting camp tradition – occurred on a Wednesday morning during Week Six. I was observing the Survival clinic, a clinic activity that I often chose to observe due to its unique nature. Most clinic activities were fairly straightforward, geared towards one activity the entire week. Archery serves as a good example: campers essentially do nothing but shoot arrows the entire week, with a little point competition or water balloon targets thrown in to spice things up. In the Survival clinic, however, the activities were not as focused on specific programming; basic

survival skills were taught, but the clinic also included various outdoor activities, such as making natural clay, going on hikes, and playing camouflage capture-the-flag in the woods. The clinic also ran for a two-hour period versus a one-hour period, and included campers over the age of twelve with a relatively high ratio of counselors, so it involved significantly more social interaction and bonding than most clinics.

This particular week, there were twelve campers and five counselors involved, in addition to myself. The Wednesday morning activity, taking place during the second and third periods, was a creek hike, which generally occurred once a week. The hike occurred at the furthest fringe of the camp, beginning at the spring that is typically visited on overnight. Survival clinic, as dictated on the first day of activities, always met at the chairs at the top of the amphitheater. We then all walked out together towards the Outpost area, turning off onto the path leading down to the spring and the creek that it fed into. It is a forested area that is rarely visited (generally only by the teens on Overnight). After stopping for a quick drink from the freshwater spring, Mike (the director of leadership programs, and also the leader of the clinic) led the group upstream, passing a number of landmarks that he had named (the terrain and surroundings are indeed quite interesting and unique; we pass a sheer rock wall known as ‘Dead Man’s Gorge,’ several springs, and various unusual rock formations). After a sharp bend in the creek, we came to a fork and went to the right, where we eventually came to a sizeable waterfall with a pool of water at its base.

As we all congregated around the pool, a male camper engaged Mike in a game of “What are the Odds?”⁵⁵, daring him to completely submerge himself in the pool. They guessed the same

⁵⁵ “What are the Odds?” emerged this summer as a commonly-played game amongst the older campers and staff at Catawba. It involves one party daring a second party to do a certain task, usually something funny: for example, one might say something like, “What are the odds you smash your face into the mashed potatoes?” The second party would say a number (usually between 10-20, but higher for particularly undesirable activities). Then, a third party

number, and Mike dunked himself in the pool, resulting in laughs and cheers from the group. He then proceeded to climb up on top of the waterfall. The campers began to follow him, but he stopped them, claiming that one could only climb the waterfall if they had “baptized” themselves in the waters of the creek. The camper who issued the initial dare was the first one to follow in Mike’s footsteps. Another camper followed after him, and then two more counselors. At this point, peer pressure had set in, and the group began chanting individual names to coerce people into dunking themselves in the pool. Eventually, even the most stoic holdouts gave in and the entire group “baptized” themselves in the pool and climb the waterfall.

The rest of the hike continued as it normally did, with a noticeably higher level of conversation and enjoyment; the group seemed to have bonded significantly through the experience, particularly when considering social interaction as a measure. Speaking with Mike after the clinic during assembly, he explained how the event just simply ‘happened;’ there was no precedent for it, and it was essentially him getting carried away in the unique experience. He explained how his motivations for Survival clinic are “giving the campers the best experience in the best clinic,” and this was an example of giving the campers a “cool” experience that they would remember.

This ritual is difficult to characterize within the traditional tripartite structure of ritual because of its spontaneity; no parts of it are actually intended to be ritualistic, even though that is ultimately what the experience turns out to be. Regardless, the three processes can be definitively identified. The separation phase occurs as the group embarks on the hike out to the Outpost area; by departing the main camp area, they also symbolically separate from the society of camp. The liminal period is the time on the hike. While at this location, which is physically separate and, in

would count down from three, and after the countdown, both participants would say a random number between one and the stated number. If the two numbers match, the person is obligated to complete the dare.

many ways, full of ‘monstrous’ imagery⁵⁶, participants (which include counselors and campers) undergo the ordeal of fully submerging themselves in the pool of water, while building bonds of solidarity in the process. The hike back to camp – in soaked clothes and with increased social interaction due to the bonding during the liminal period – serves as the return to normal society.

The Survival Baptism ritual is also noteworthy because it was wholly spontaneous; no part of it was planned, and it occurred completely out of the blue. However, this ritual also provides a clear look at the development of *communitas* within the ritual process, as derived from the liminal period. Turner describes this concept in his book *The Ritual Process*, writing:

“What is interesting about liminal phenomena for our present purposes is the blend they offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship. We are presented, in such rites, with a “moment in and out of time,” and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties... It is as though there are two major “models” for human interrelatedness... The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders.” (Turner 1969: 96).

The Survival clinic is already one of the smaller activities, as it is always capped at twelve camper participants; the counselor-camper ratio is also quite high, and this, coupled with the fact

⁵⁶ The stream where the hike takes place holds many unique natural formations, such as the aforementioned Dead Man’s Gorge, in addition to other rock walls and overhangs around and above the stream, spooky-looking trees, several waterfalls, and freshwater springs. There is not really any other place at camp that is like this in terms of natural surroundings.

that the campers are also all over the age of twelve, makes for one of the most dynamic clinics in terms of social interaction. Because of this, the marked differences in the group dynamics following the ritual were particularly stark. This is due to the growth in *communitas* experienced during the liminal period; because everyone participates in the same ordeal (which, in this case, is indeed uncomfortable, unlike many of the other ‘ordeals’ at camp), these feelings of solidarity and growth through a communal experience are enhanced. The reason this ritual ‘works’ is due to this bonding experience; by submerging one’s self in the water – just as every single person in the group has – the entire group collectively becomes something different – a tighter, more intimate social group – which is symbolized by their physical state of wet versus dry. Upon returning to the camp and joining the rest of the population at lunchtime assembly, members of the Survival clinic stand out because they are still wet from being in the creek.

4.4 The Ragers Program

The Ragers program exists at countless YMCA camps across the country, and has been existence for decades. Its official description is provided during Opening Campfire by Connie, Molly, and Ginny: it is a goal-setting, personal growth-oriented program for all those aged 12 and up. Campers that are interested attend a series of meetings that occur during lunch, then seek out counsel from their counselors or other ragers at camp, in the formulation of a short list of goals that help the person to better themselves in mind, body, and spirit – three pillars of the YMCA. There are seven levels of rags: blue, silver, brown, gold, red, purple, and white. White, the highest level, is quite rare; it requires a lifetime of dedication to the YMCA. Ginny is the highest level rager at Camp Catawba, with a purple rag; only a handful possess brown, gold, and red rags; most campers stop at blue or silver, save for a select few that often times help run

rag ceremonies alongside the counselors.

The blue rag ceremony, which is by far the largest⁵⁷, occurs every week on Thursday evening during the camp dance. Ginny makes an announcement after several songs have played for all those participating (they have been notified prior to the dance) to meet out on the front porch of the office. There, they are assembled into a line, place their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them, and have the blue rags tied over their faces as blindfolds. Once everyone is ready, Ginny begins reciting the script⁵⁸, which is available in Appendix D. One of the assistants – which is often another Ragger counselor, but sometimes a helpful Ragger camper – stands in the front of the line and walks slowly, leading the train of people down into the valley. In accordance with the script, there is a ‘keeper of the outer gate,’ three counselors along the trail, and a ‘keeper of the point.’ In Catawba’s iteration of the ceremony, these lines are read by various assistants as they walk around the trail; they are not stationed at various points, but rather walk along with the group. This is because it is often only Ginny along with one or two assistants, who will alternate reading the various parts along with Ginny. However, the train still stops at various locations along the trail; the ‘outer gate’ is the entrance to chapel, and then the train proceeds to stop at several random points along the trail as it winds back into the woods and eventually leads to the Ragers’ Point, which is located along the river on a small, flat floodplain that is surrounded by sheer rock walls. The location is indeed “off the beaten path,” and physically hidden from the rest of camp; it is at the end of a long, winding path near chapel that is rarely traversed by non-Ragers. The location of Ragers’ Point is only revealed to those who

⁵⁷ Blue rag ceremonies could involve up to thirty initiates, though there were usually only around fifteen to twenty. Other level rag ceremonies rarely had more than a few people; the largest one this summer was a silver ceremony that had five participants.

⁵⁸ One major difference at Camp Catawba is that the ceremony leaders always provide a disclaimer that the ceremony makes references to the Christian God, and that participants ought to feel free to substitute whatever power they believe in if they see fit. This fits with Catawba’s generally secular nature, and makes the Ragers program more inclusive overall.

are participants in the Ragers program; for other campers and counselors, the location might as well not exist, because they have never seen it and would never have the opportunity to stumble upon it.

The Ragers' Point itself consists of several concentric structures of rocks: a circle on the outside, a square inside of that, and a triangle inside of that, with a cross in the center⁵⁹. The blue ragers are lined up around the outside of the structure, and the assistants stand inside the structure according to their levels, and continue reading the script. Eventually, the initiates are told to take the position of the blue rager, which involves kneeling on the right knee. Once everyone has done this, the blindfolds are removed, and the rags are tied if the designated tie-er is present. Every Rager chooses one person – generally a mentor of a higher rag level – to tie their rag, which completes the process of entering that rag level. Often, it is Ginny or one of the other assistants involved in the ceremony, but can sometimes be someone else. If this is the case, the initiate simply holds onto the rag until he comes across the tie-er at some point in the future. Once the rags have been tied or tucked away for later, the group recites the Ragers Creed:

*I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.
I would be friend to all – the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.*

Following the recitations, the initiates are taught the secret Ragers' handshake, which is a

⁵⁹ Stepping inside the various rings is restricted only to certain levels of ragers. Blue ragers are allowed to access the Ragers' Point. Silver and brown ragers may enter the circle. Gold and red ragers may enter the square, and purple and white ragers are allowed inside the triangle. This is different at Catawba, as different restrictions are specified in the script, and may indeed differ from camp to camp. The notion of different levels within the symbolic rock structure is also consistent with Durkheim's notion of protection and isolation of the sacred from the profane; it is recognizable, but not fully accessible, and could potentially be achieved, though not easily.

normal handshake with interlocked little fingers. Initiates are offered a short time for personal reflection, and once everyone is ready, the entire group returns to the main camp area and rejoins the dance. Participants come away with a new sense of belonging and resolved commitment to the goals they have set; they also receive access to a new location, a secret handshake, and a symbolic rag to wear around their necks.

Much like the Closing Campfire ritual, the Ragers ceremony also features a critically important, ritualistic period of separation. First, the campers are visually removed from their settings through the blindfold, and are rendered ‘invisible’ in their own perspective, as their visual sense has been completely cut off. Then, as they are ritually led away from main camp and toward the ritual site, the opening words of the ceremony⁶⁰ reinforce this separation: “You are now leaving behind the noise of everyday life and entering upon a journey that will make you aware of the presence of God. We want you to join us in a quiet and serious hour with God. I urge you to be silent so as to hear Him speak through the stillness, through the voices of others, and from within your heart.” Through these words, participants in the Blue Rag Ceremony enter into a world of the sacred (and in this sense, the quasi-religious), leaving behind the profane until liminality has passed. Furthermore, the location is of particular importance in this ritual, as it is truly separate and indeed hidden from mainstream areas of camp; this is consistent with the Durkheimian notion of prohibition of the sacred, in which “Sacred things are things protected and isolated by prohibitions,” but also in which “this prohibition cannot go so far as to make all communication between the two worlds impossible, for if the profane could in no way enter into relations with the sacred, the sacred would be of no use” (Durkheim 1995: 38).

⁶⁰ Due to Camp Catawba’s secular nature, a short disclaimer is given before the scripted words of the ceremony are read, informing the campers that they may feel free to substitute any higher power they see fit in place of the word “God,” even though “God” will be read aloud.

The liminal period of the Ragers ritual also utilizes monstrous qualities (which, at this camp, tend to never be 'monstrous' in the Turnerian sense, and rather simple uncomfortableness or uncanniness) by bringing the campers to a unique, never-before-seen location, in addition to keeping them blindfolded for the entire separation stage. Indeed, the walk down to the point is not short, and involves many mangled roots and rocks along the path that constantly trip people up as they walk along. In addition, the participation in a highly structured ritual is also a new and strange experience for many campers, most of whom have never participated in something like this before.

The Ragers Program is also noteworthy because it sets into motion a liminality which does not end; indeed, this is, in a sense, the entire goal of Rags. By entering into the program, participants commit to a phase of liminality characterized by the setting of and commitment to personal growth-related goals. Even at the highest level, this is intended to be an ongoing process; most people also do not reach the highest level, or advance much further than the first two Rag levels. Perhaps this is why the ritual itself has no formal rite of return; participants may return to the camp group, but their state of liminality as a process of their commitment to their goals does not ever truly end.

4.5 Closing Campfire

The most significant and developed ritual that occurred over the course of the summer was the closing campfire ritual, a beloved camp tradition that dates back to before anyone could remember. The ritual serves as a kind of culminating experience for the week, serving as a bookend to the opening campfire ritual on Sunday night; it is, in this sense, both an individual ritual taking place at camp and the most integral part of the ritual that is the camp experience as a

whole. There are only two formal campfires during the course of the week: Opening and Closing. All other instances of campfires – fires lit in one of the many firepits around camp – are unstructured, casual encounters as opposed to the elaborate, performed rituals of Opening and Closing. As such, only these two instances are referred to as campfires; all others are generally just called “fires” or referred to as “a fire in the Village firepit,” for example.

The Closing Campfire ritual begins on Friday night with the lining up of cabin groups around the flagpole in the same fashion standard for meal assembly, after Jane, the director on duty, rings the bell. Up to this point, counselors have been furiously preparing behind-the-scenes; a group of six⁶¹ met right after dinner to begin planning the main skit, two counselors have been up at the ranch saddling horses to ride, and Jacob has built a large bonfire in the fire ring. By the time the cabins are organized and finished with their last bathroom trips, the two counselors who were up at ranch have ridden their horses down to the flagpole, and Mike and Connie begin to call the cabins one-by-one, starting with the youngest girls’ and boys’ cabins. The cabins line up next to each other in single-file lines behind the horses. Once everyone is in their lines, the two directors call for silence, and they lead the lines of campers and counselors (following the horses) down around the lake and off towards the Moonlight campfire site. There they file into the half-circle amphitheater of benches, which they often fill.⁶² The ranch counselors leave on their horses, and everyone remains relatively silent until the counselors come out onto the stage for the main skit.

The performance of the campfire involves one ‘main skit,’ which is a planned performance telling some kind of story by a small group of counselors that relates to the theme

⁶¹ This number was not set in stone, but there were always at least four counselors in charge of “running” the campfire. On several occasions, counselors-in-training also participated in the campfire.

⁶² This particular week, there is one bench reserved for extra staff members, in addition to the camp Gator (utility vehicle) parked behind the benches, where several other staff members sit; it is very full.

of the week (in my week of research, the theme was Halloween). Each ‘segment’ both advances the plot of the main skit and includes a reference to a standalone camp skit or song, which campers signed up for during Friday dinner.⁶³ Signups are run by Jacob, who generally accepts 10-12 skits or songs. These may or may not come from the established canon of camp skits and songs; it is not uncommon to see an original skit, though generally songs are not original. The dance and drama clinics also have their performances. Often times, cabin groups have prepared skits or songs; sometimes, it is just a few campers helped out by a counselor.

One example of a skit that is commonly performed – usually at least once a week – is the Monster Skit. This skit typically involves five people: a father, played by a counselor, three camper boys, and a monster, played by another camper. The skit opens with the three boys talking during a sleepover, and the father coming in to tell them that it is time for them all to go to sleep. The father walks off stage, and a monster appears behind the boys, scaring them and causing them to scream, which results in the father coming running in. The boys cry out that they have been antagonized by a monster, but the father brushes it off and leaves. The same thing happens again, and the father comes running back in. This time, he is significantly more frustrated, and yells at the boys as he leaves the stage. Finally, the monster appears for a third time, and when the father runs in, he sees the monster. The monster bull rushes the father, tackling him to the ground. He removes his mask, revealing himself to be another one of the boys, and together the boys steal the father’s wallet and cell phone and run off stage. Another skit, the Director Skit (which is typically performed only by counselors at Opening Campfire), involves the filming of a movie, which has been long and arduous, culminating in the terrific final shot, which is ruined when the cameraman reveals he has left the lens cap on. Most skits are

⁶³ Opening campfire consists of standalone skits that are performed by counselors or returning campers. Closing campfire consists exclusively of standalone skits that are performed by campers.

similar to this in their stupid, silly, somewhat dark, yet camp-appropriate style of humor.

In week 6, the whole 'main' part of the campfire lasted about an hour and fifteen minutes; it was one of the longer ones of the summer, as they generally only last about an hour. Once the final performance has occurred, the main skit counselors emerge from behind the stage and find spots out in the audience (there is no curtain call). At this point, Mike and Connie come up to the front and introduce the 'serious' part of campfire. This change in mood will be reflected by a change in applause method; instead of clapping, audience members are allowed to snap, give a golf clap, do a reverse clap, and the marshmallow clap. Once the new cheering methods have been introduced, one of the two (they switched off every week) proceeds to 'make it rain.' This involves Mike or Connie starting at one edge of the seats and moving to the other, and each pass doing a different action, which progresses from rubbing hands together, to snapping, to patting one's thighs, to stomping on the ground, and then back in reverse order. Once it is concluded, Mike returns to the front of the crowd and says "If I call your name, or if you nominated this person for a Lightfinder, please come with me." He reads off a list of names and they head off over toward the lake in one big group. Some weeks have more Lightfinder recipients than others; during week 6, there were 26, which was higher than normal. Those who were not called stay behind to watch several 'serious' performances by campers. Most are slower or more emotional songs; on a few occasions during the summer, campers sing original songs and recite original poems. Sometimes, there are not enough 'serious' performances by campers; if this is the case, some counselors step in to perform some songs on guitar.

At this point, the Lightfinder ceremony ritual is taking place concurrently over near the lake. Anyone at camp can nominate any other person by writing them a letter and submitting it to Mike. In terms of fostering strong, lifelong relationships, no process is more important than the

Lightfinder ritual. A process unique to Camp Catawba that dates back to at least the 1980s, many cite Lightfinders as one of the most important moments of their lives. It is not uncommon to see campers and counselors refer to their nomination as a Lightfinder in Devotions, and some counselors even opt to get tattoos reminding them of their nomination as a Lightfinder; indeed, the meaningfulness of this program cannot be overstated. It is not seen so much as a goal of a camper, that everyone must receive a Lightfinder at some point during his or her camp career; rather, it is seen as the manifestation of a truly life-changing, profound relationship that has developed during the course of two people's time together at Camp Catawba.

The ceremony takes place on the banks of the lake near the boathouse; it begins with Mike handing out the letters to the nominators, who then find a nearby spot to read their letter aloud to the Lightfinder. They then proceed to tie a wooden bead around the recipient's wrist with a suede cord to serve as a reminder of their status as a Lightfinder. Once the emotional moment is over (many finish the ceremony in tears and embraces), the pairs return to the main campfire, often arm-in-arm.

Once everyone has returned from the ceremony, the director team takes a seat on the stairs of the stage to call cabins up for 'friendship sticks.' The first cabins up are the counselors-in-training and other leadership campers; this is so that Mike can take them around to place them at their spots for the upcoming Prayer Walk. The cabin group heads to the front – in between the stage and the firepit – and together grasp a stick, count to three, and toss it into the fire⁶⁴, while simultaneously proclaiming some short phrase together. This short phrase is usually some sort of inside joke from the cabin group, and serves as a way to showcase the communal bonds they

⁶⁴ This action is echoed in the Indian Ceremony, where the initiates place their sticks in the fire. It is likely that the action in the Indian Ceremony was derived from friendship sticks at closing campfire. It seems the action of burning a stick clearly carries an important symbolic meaning within camp rituals.

have developed over the course of a week together. Once the leadership campers have gone, cabins are called up in order from youngest to oldest, beginning with the youngest girls, then youngest boys, and so on, until every cabin has been called.

Once friendship sticks have finished, all counselors make their way to the stage and put their arms around each other. Andy sits down in front to play the guitar, and the entire staff proceeds to sing “Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)” by Green Day, followed by “Wonderwall” by Oasis. This performance often results in a significant amount of tears from the audience, usually from the younger campers. Once this is done, the director team takes a seat together on the steps to the stage (excluding Andy, who stays to play the guitar, and Connie, who sings several songs) and begins to call out the names of cabins to dismiss for the Prayer Walk. The cabins are called from youngest to oldest, with one boys and girls cabin being called and dismissed together. Andy and an assortment of various counselors then perform from a fairly set list of popular⁶⁵ songs as the cabins are dismissed one by one for the Prayer Walk. Once all cabins have been dismissed, the small team of remaining directors stays behind and hangs out for a few minutes before heading back to their respective units.

The Prayer Walk, despite its name, does not include any actual prayer. Rather, as a cabin approaches a station⁶⁶, they congregate around the readers and hear a short story or poem, often in the style of “Chicken Soup for the Soul,” which communicates a wholesome moral lesson. Cabins proceed from station to station until they have gone through all five, at which point they return for showers and bedtime. The Valley cabins, however, proceed to the basketball court to

⁶⁵ These songs are all “mainstream,” or recorded musical songs that are fairly recognizable. Titles include “The Scientist” by Coldplay, “Down in the Valley” by The Head and the Heart, “Iris” by The Goo Goo Dolls, and “Skinny Love” by Bon Iver, among others.

⁶⁶ There are typically five stations, each manned by 2 or 3 CITs or other leadership campers, and are placed at various locations on the way back to main camp from the Moonlight campfire area.

have one final devotion as a group.

This ritual fits well into the Van Gennep tripartite structure of ritual, with its three clearly-delineated, ritualized parts. The separation phase begins with the ringing of the bell as the campers assemble around the flag to form their lines. The separation begins when the horses approach and lead the two lines of campers – which have been separated into parallel lines of boys and girls – away from the main camp area and toward the ritual site. Interestingly, the Moonlight campfire area is not used exclusively for Closing Campfire; several clinic activities make use of the location throughout the week. However, serving as a site for Closing Campfire remains its true purpose. The phase of returning to mainstream society begins when the directors on stage begin to call out the names of the cabins to embark on the Prayer Walk. The Prayer Walk itself is also structured in a form that encourages reflection not only on the campfire or even camp experience, but on life in general.

Though the beginning and ending phases of ritual are of particular importance in this ritual, the liminal period is still the most important and impactful phase of the Closing Campfire ritual. The aspect of invisibility is not necessarily enforced within the ritual itself. However, as the entire population of the camp (including the high-level directors) are present, the main area of the camp is completely devoid of inhabitants; in this sense, they are ‘invisible’ through their lack of presence in the physical location of camp, as there is really no other time during the week that main camp is totally deserted. Interestingly, the skits and songs that make up the bulk of the experience are the least important in terms of its ritual aspects; what comes after is of much more importance. However, they do serve to bring the campers out of the normal, day-to-day life of camp, as campfire skits are commonly held to be the pinnacle of entertainment at camp⁶⁷. The

⁶⁷ Despite the overwhelming anecdotal evidence that people simply love skits, skits also have their own announcement before each and every one, as detailed before. No other performance at camp has this distinction.

important aspects of the ritual begin when Mike and Connie give their short talk about the mood change and proceed to 'make it rain.' In a sense, this is also a kind of separation phase into a ritual within a ritual, as it is once again drawing the body of participants out of the 'normal' world of skits and songs and into a deeper, more reflective period of the campfire. The 'make it rain' action is also performed by every single person present, which reinforces the critical aspect of collectivity.

The Lightfinder ritual also takes place during the liminal period within the liminal period; for those who participate, they effectively exist as participants in a third level of liminality. However, this ritual is more distinct than the serious portion within the greater campfire, and is much more self-contained, as it is fully self-referential and does not depend upon the context of the greater campfire to exist. This depth of liminality, however, does seem to show its effects, as participants in this ritual often undergo their return phase in tears, walking back with the person who nominated them.

Friendship sticks also are an important aspect of the liminal period, as it offers a chance for cabins to display publicly their collectivity through the proclamation of an inside joke and the communal burning of one mutually-agreed-upon stick. This action also reflects that of the stick burning in the Indian Ceremony, where an individual camper burns a stick to become one with the collective life of the cabin and the camp. Here, the cabin burns a stick to become one with the collective life, legacy, and spirit of the camp, solidifying their place as a participant in this age-old history.

Closing campfire also serves as a wholly unique experience within a typical week at camp. Even compared to its parallel ritual (Opening Campfire), it is much more structured, involved, and geared towards impact on the participants. It is less the conclusion of the camp

experience, and more of a culmination; the entire week-long experience is ritually reflected for the collective experience of the entire camp, while the participants leave different than they were when they came. It is one week in a nutshell, rather than a fitting way to end a week. This is also achieved in part due to its uniqueness; no experience at camp comes close to the level of heart put into the performance and the emotions experienced during its entirety.

4.6 Chapel

As previously mentioned, Chapel occurs every morning at 9:00 AM. In essence, Chapel is a Christian-inspired ceremony that attempts to convey a moral message (more specifically, related to the four core values of the YMCA) through fun songs and performances every morning during the week. After cabin clean-up time, the entire camp assembles in the Chapel area for the brief (roughly 10 to 15 minute) ceremony. Chapel takes place in its own designated location on a ridge overlooking the river; the river is not actually visible from the seats, but one can easily hear it flowing and also see the space above it through the trees. The seating is amphitheater-like, with three sections of benches descending down a flat slope toward a stage at the front, which is adorned by a large YMCA design: a triangle around a cross, with the words ‘mind,’ ‘body,’ and ‘spirit’ written on each side of the triangle.

The first chapel of the week on Monday is the introductory chapel, featuring a short rules presentation by the director team. Connie is the only one on stage at the beginning, and the rest of the directors enter late once every cabin has arrived. They proceed to break all the rules, including walking on the large rocks that line the path, shuffling their feet in the gravel, standing on the benches, wearing hats and sunglasses, and being general nuisances. Connie tells them off for all of the rules they have broken. At one point, Mike calls out “Son of a...” and Connie cuts

him off, screaming “Whoa! Mike, we don’t cuss in chapel...” at which point the entire staff chimes in: “Or anywhere!”

The director team then proceeds to the stage, where they sing the first song⁶⁸, “Pharaoh Pharaoh,” put on a short “Starfish” skit, sing the “Sing Hosanna” song, and put on the “Echo” skit⁶⁹. The Monday chapel is always the same performances, and also serves as an example demonstrating the standard form for chapel throughout the week: song, skit/story, song, skit/story, end. Generally, older cabins lead chapel throughout the week; some counselors, much to the chagrin of the directors, do shorter chapels than others. The assigned cabin is free to pick whichever unused songs, skits, and stories they wish for their performance. Unlike normal camp songs and skits, there actually exists a written guide for chapel songs, skits, and stories. Some of the stories are acted out to produce skits; in content, they often are in the vein of ‘chicken soup for the soul’-type stories, and the skit or story often closely follows the ‘theme’ of chapel, which is dictated by the day a cabin is assigned⁷⁰. At the conclusion of the chapel performance, an improvised ‘closing song’ is sung, which is often some comical twist on the day’s theme, or sung to the tune of a popular song. Interestingly, despite the plethora of religious associations present at Chapel, the service is not overtly religious; in fact, over the past several years, counselors have worked to minimize the religious associations present in chapel, instead opting for the experience to instill the four core values of the YMCA rather than preaching a Christian message (while still retaining the original religion-related name). It is not clear whether or not this lack of an overt

⁶⁸ Songs and skits for chapel are specific to chapel. They would never be performed in any other context. Likewise, songs that are performed at assembly or campfire would never be performed at chapel. This is because the songs and skits for chapel have at least a quasi, if not fully-fledged, religious theme, whereas other songs and skits do not.

⁶⁹ There is no real reason for these particular skits and songs being performed. However, they are all well-known (in the camp context), easy to follow, and consistent in their messages as performed by the directors. They offer a bit of continuity week-to-week as counselors generally switch things up during the rest of the Chapel performances.

⁷⁰ The themes include the four core values of the YMCA: Monday is the director/introductory chapel, Tuesday is honesty, Wednesday is responsibility, Thursday is respect, and Friday is caring. The Saturday theme is friendship, though this is not one of the four core values.

religious message is unique to Camp Catawba among YMCA camps; however, it seems to be that Chapel and camp in general have not been religious since the early 2000s at the latest, based on the memory of staff members.

The last chapel on Saturday is led by Mike and Connie, and always involves two random songs⁷¹, the ‘Hug skit’ (which showcases “different hugs learned throughout the week at Camp Catawba), and a skit displaying the different camp activities done throughout the week, such as capture-the-flag, archery, and so on. The final chapel is different because it is considered a performance for the parents, who attend before picking up their kids at the end of the week, in an attempt to involve them ever-so-slightly in the camp experience. At the end of the final chapel performance, John comes up to give a short speech to the campers and parents, while the rest of the staff make their way to the top of the amphitheater and form two human tunnels, which the campers run through when John dismisses them. At that point, campers can find their parents and return to their cabins for check out; the week is over.

This ritual is clearly defined by its separation and return periods, as the entire camp participates. The area is even marked by an archway through which everyone walks; as soon as one crosses the threshold, the rules and norms of Chapel time (such as no hats and not walking on the stone pathway barriers) apply. During the liminal period of the performance itself, in which the entire camp participates, the ‘sacred’ knowledge of the day’s core value is conveyed from the ‘ritual elders’ (the cabin group leading the Chapel for the day) to the ‘initiates’ (all of the other campers and counselors participating) in an attempt to teach them something new – or at least reinforce a positive message – about Christian-inspired morality.

⁷¹ These songs must not have been sung during the week and, per Ben’s orders, must not be “one of the more overtly religious songs, because we don’t want parents to think we are too religious of a camp, when in reality things are pretty secular.” Only a few of the chapel songs actually make direct Christian or biblical references.

4.7 Overnight

The Overnight camping trip takes place every Wednesday⁷² and includes the entire Valley – all teens over the age of 13 and their associated counselors, in addition to Mike, Connie, and Jacob. The process begins as early as the free activity time scheduled in the afternoon on Wednesday, just after clinics; Jacob, along with some help from various free directors (typically Ben, Charlie, and Mike) begin loading up the trailer on the camp's utility vehicle (known colloquially by its brand name, the Gator) with the supplies for Overnight. These supplies include a large folding canopy, charcoal, Dutch ovens containing pre-prepared meals (various pastas), plates and utensils, water coolers, coolers containing the breakfast food, and various other necessities. Once the trailer of the Gator is packed up, Charlie drives it out to the Overnight field, where Jacob and Mike soon meet him (having driven Jacob's car out). The Overnight field itself consists of a large, open field that is a slight hill, with the pinnacle being in the very middle. At this highest point, there is a forty-foot-wide recessed circle, with bricks lining the outside and gravel making up the floor. Campers and counselors alike always sit around the perimeter while hanging out. In the middle of the circle is the large firepit, which is encircled by the same bricks as the main circle. Here, Charlie drops off the trailer and heads back to main camp in the Gator. Jacob and Mike begin getting things prepared for Overnight – they set up the tent, light the charcoal, and begin cooking the Dutch ovens.

Meanwhile, the teens and counselors finish up their afternoon activities and then return to their cabins to pack their things for Overnight. Most simply bring sleeping supplies, but many also bring other items like flashlights, footballs or soccer balls, or playing cards. Once people

⁷² On two occasions during the summer, there were rainstorms that prevented Overnight from happening. On both these occasions, the whole camp did the cookout together near the Lodge, and then the Valley broke off from the younger units to watch a movie in the multi-purpose building. Breakfast was cooked outside the Lodge the following morning, and everyone slept in their cabins.

have their things, they meet at the Valley firepit. Once everyone has assembled, the counselors lead everyone across main camp and down the path leading out to the Outpost and Overnight Field. The campers who are involved in the Ranch program bring their belongings to their afternoon Ranch activity for Charlie to pick up and bring out later on. They then head up to the Ranch, where they get their horses prepared and saddled and ride out to Outpost. They leave earlier than the rest of the Valley, as their activity time period stretches right up to dinner. Instead of stopping in the field, they continue on down a path through the woods to Outpost proper, stopping at the horse corral located at the Outpost pavilion and camp site. They unsaddle their horses and let them loose in the corral overnight, then proceed back up to the Overnight field.

Once the main group of Valley campers arrive, the boys set down their belongings at the pavilion in the field while the girls proceed on down to the main Outpost pavilion. Traditionally, these are the designated sleeping locations for boys and girls; in the past, the locations moved around occasionally, but during the summer of 2017, this designation became permanent. There is a portable toilet at both sleeping locations for people to use; most boys, however, tend to opt for the woods instead. Once the girls drop off their belongings, they return to the field, where the boys have already begun eating⁷³, and the girls begin having dinner themselves. During this time, everyone mingles about; counselors generally are concentrated near the Dutch ovens to monitor who is taking food, and none venture far outside the circle. Campers, however, find various spots around the circle, the benches located near the circle, and the pavilion where the boys left their

⁷³ This is an interesting defiance of the traditional camp norm of ladies-first, youngest-first. A possible explanation for this is the unique nature of this meal. In past years, the Overnight dinner consisted of grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, which were pre-prepared, but only to an extent, since they cook much slower than the new system of Dutch ovens, which all are ready once the Valley arrives. In past years, the ladies-first, youngest-first norm was upheld. Jacob's reasoning for this is to "just get everyone eating so we can get dinner over with as quickly as possible." Given that there were no issues with food shortage (as their often was with burgers and hot dogs), he decided this was the best method of having people eat. Counselors, however, still go last, after all campers have gotten food.

belongings, spreading out in their various friend groups.

In the Valley, social interaction is a major part of the camp experience, contributing not only to bonds within cabin groups, but cohesion as a unit. Friendships often cross cabin lines, with campers interacting with campers in other cabins that are similar in age. Here, arbitrary categorizations such as grade in school are disregarded; all that matters is whether or not someone fits in with the group of people. Thus clinics also play a major role in campers developing friendships and friend groups; their participating in a clinic together serves to signify similar interests or tendencies, and a small group of social teens spending an hour together are bound to take social interest in one another. The gender breakdown of friend groups is also quite distinct from the younger campers at the cookout, who generally only flock with their cabin group during the hangout time of the cookout. As the Valley consists of teens who have begun to take an interest in the opposite sex, the interaction of boys and girls both within the same friend group and across group lines is much more prominent. Although single-sex friend groups are much more prevalent, mixed-sex friend groups still exist, and it is much more common to see boys and girls interacting on Overnight than it is during the cookout. The incidence of 'purple' on Overnight, however, does not prove to be a major issue; indeed, over the course of the summer, there is not one instance of campers kissing or engaging in any other kind of sexual contact. Based on anecdotal stories from counselors (and my own personal memories of camp), this seems to be a product of increased supervision by counselors in more recent years. Similarly, there are no fights or altercations due to the same reason.

Once everyone has finished eating, everyone is given a short period of time to digest and hang out for a bit longer. After a period of time has passed, Jacob and Mike announce the soccer game: whoever is interested in playing should meet on the soccer field, which is located at a

lower, flatter part of the Overnight field. The soccer pitch is by no means regulation; its exact dimensions are significantly smaller, and its goals are hay bales arranged in the shape of a goal. Jacob and Mike, as directors, act as captains in a traditional ‘schoolyard pick-’em.’ In order to minimize campers’ feelings getting hurt⁷⁴, counselors are always picked last. Once the teams are decided (they generally consists of not the regulation 11, but rather 14 or more), the game begins. Rules are fairly standard to normal soccer, but not particularly strongly enforced. The boundaries for the field are dictated by the grass; the field is mowed each week, so the longer grass signifies out-of-bounds. Goals are scored only by kicking the ball into the hay bale goal; kicks that go over do not count, and are discouraged. Because of this, the spectators sit not on the sidelines, but up on the hay bales, watching from behind the goalkeepers. Naturally, laughs always ensue when a ball is kicked high enough for the spectators to catch (or dodge) the ball.

The soccer game lasts quite a while, in addition to incorporating a lengthy halftime break for hydration (which is stressed during the hot days of summer) and rest. Campers who choose not to participate are perfectly happy entertaining themselves via other means, such as playing cards, tossing around a football, or just hanging out around the circle with their friends or their counselors. On several occasions, various counselors lead trips down to the spring⁷⁵ for campers to get a drink from the natural water source, which is an interesting activity for most, who rarely get a chance to do such things. As the sun falls even lower, eventually Jacob calls the game, at which point a traditional campfire has been lit in the firepit (in place of the former charcoal used for cooking the Dutch ovens). He announces that everyone should find a stick, and the mood heightens as everyone realizes that it is time to make smores. Campers bolt for the woods to find

⁷⁴ Interestingly, though this may seemingly go against typical ‘fairness’ standards at summer camp, over the course of the summer, no counselors or campers ever voiced any frustration or concern with the pick-’em system.

⁷⁵ This spring is located along the same creek where the Survival Baptism ritual takes place.

suitable marshmallow-roasting sticks as Jacob and John engage in a marshmallow-tossing spectacle, where John successfully catches marshmallows in his mouth that Jacob has thrown as far as he can. Once they have retrieved their roasting sticks, they go up to the designated counselors to get marshmallow. Like at the post-Opening Campfire smores session, counselors often ask campers to roast marshmallows for them so they can also enjoy the dessert. Also worth noting is that this campfire is not considered a ‘true’ campfire within the context of camp; as previously mentioned, only Opening and Closing Campfire carry this distinction. This gathering around a lit firepit is never even referred to as a campfire, but rather a fire; in this situation, the inclusion of a fire is more utilitarian, as it provides a means of cooking and appropriate lighting and ambiance for the following devotion.

Soon after smores are finished, the sun has mostly set and darkness is rapidly falling; this is Jacob’s cue to call for the Devotion to begin. Everyone in the Valley⁷⁶ takes a seat around the edge of the large circle, with the fire blazing in the middle. Jacob gives a short speech on the role of fear in people’s lives, and then says that everyone will go around and share a fear that they have. Only one camper opts out; everyone else shares a fear, ranging from heights to the dark to failure to loneliness. The reason the focus of the devotion is on fears is, according to Jacob, based on two reasons: the first is that it had traditionally been the topic of the all-Valley devotion on Overnight, and the second is that sleeping in the woods is, at best, an uncomfortable situation, and at worst, a frightening one. Thus, it was the perfect opportunity to address the topic of fears with the group, because everyone was sharing in the ordeal together. Furthermore, the experience of sharing something so personal in front of a larger group also helps to bring people out of their comfort zones and ‘face their fears.’ Once everyone has shared, Jacob offers a few closing

⁷⁶ This includes the directors and, on several occasions throughout the summer, Charlie and even John.

thoughts and sends everyone off to bed. The girls hike off to the main Outpost site, and the boys head over to the pavilion and get their sleeping bags prepared. Many boys opt to move their sleeping spots to the field to stargaze; probably around half choose to remain under the pavilion (which, most weeks, does not have enough space for everyone to sleep under). Jacob and Mike sleep on air mattresses up near the firepit to keep the fire going throughout the night and make starting it in the morning easier; Joe joins them, as they hang out together a bit longer before getting to sleep themselves. Sleeping on Overnight is difficult, but most at least get a few hours. Through the night, things are generally uneventful; campers and counselors occasionally get up to go to the bathroom, but otherwise, no major events happen, as most people are simply desperate for sleep. Usually it is warm and muggy, which makes it difficult to get comfortable; the first two weeks of the summer, it became so cold during the night that everyone woke early and came to huddle around the firepit for warmth as Jacob and Mike cooked.

Jacob and Mike wake up earlier than normal – before 7:00 AM – to get the fire started and the bacon cooking. Once they are up, people begin trickling in slowly, as the official wake-up call is not until 8:00 AM. Some are awoken earlier than the call due to the sunrise; most are too exhausted and try to get as much sleep as possible. Everyone is quite visibly exhausted, and most are silent for the entirety of the time as they find their places around the large circle and watch the directors cook bacon over the coals. Once they catch sight of the girls walking up from their campsite, the directors send for the rest of the boys to be woken up, and everyone enjoys a hearty breakfast consisting of cream cheese bagels, bacon, and orange juice. Once again, the queue for food is a free-for-all. Once everyone has eaten to their heart's content (the whole process is hurried along to a greater degree than dinner), Jacob gives the all clear for everyone to hike back to main camp, while he and Mike stay behind to clean the area up.

The Overnight trip is not, in the traditional sense, a ritual; however, it does indeed serve as an important bonding experience for the Valley during the week at camp. Perhaps no other experience during the week contributes as much to the bonds of *communitas*. It is an ordeal in the sense that it is physically uncomfortable and exhausting, and also something wholly foreign to campers who sleep in houses; through this, the campers (and counselors) learn more about each other through social interaction and develop memories that last far beyond the week. Without the Overnight experience, campers would not develop the same quality (and quantity) of social relationships, making it integral to the ritual that is the camp experience.

4.8 Devotion

As previously mentioned, Devotion is a smaller ritual that takes place every night throughout the week; it is described as a “quieter and more serious time for reflection at the end of each day.” Sometimes cabins will do joint devotions (more common in the Valley cabins), and sometimes in special locations (various firepits, the banks of Catawba Creek, and so on). The first night’s Devotion is always the same across the entire camp: What are your goals for the week? Some counselors make it more interesting by asking kids what they’re excited for, or ask what they want to get out of the week at camp. Both campers and counselors share, and the Devotion serves almost as a launching pad for a successful, guided week of personal growth.

Throughout the week, counselors are free to choose whatever form and topic they desire for their Devotions. Some Devotions have a more casual form, with kids staying in their beds, while some involve everyone getting on the floor in a circle, turning the lights off, and just having one flashlight or other light source in the middle of the circle. The liminal period in the case of devotions is not necessarily formally delineated, but it is generally evidenced by the

mood of the cabin and the positions of people within the space: casual and talkative before and after devotions, quiet and serious during the Devotion, and campers hanging out in various places throughout the cabin versus in their own beds or in a circle. The architecture of the cabin also plays a role; the Valley cabins have less open space in comparison to the Hill and Village cabins, which have large open spaces in the middle.

In Devotions on the first night, campers cite a wide variety of things, from succeeding in certain clinic activities, to making friends, to simply having a good time. Counselors also participate, sharing their goals and thoughts on the given topic throughout the week. During the rest of the week, these devotions deal with universal topics, such as the “turning point” (a time in one’s life when everything changed), role models, fears, and struggles. Participants often share deeply personal stories and experiences from their lives in order to contribute to the efficacy of the devotion experience. Without everyone’s solemn contribution, the devotion does not carry the same weight and does not reach the same level of effectiveness. Devotion is a time where people share personal stories and experiences, and work together to help each other grow, or learn something new about life. It is never considered a ‘joke’ by counselors; on the contrary, everyone takes it very seriously.

As cabinmates share these experiences – many of which are deeply personal and difficult to face, especially in front of a group of people – they build a tremendous degree of trust in one another. During this time, the campers in a cabin truly grow to understand one another on a profound level, resulting in a deep bonding experience. Devotion is what builds up campers’ solidarity during the camp experience as they develop intimate mutual friendships to an extent rarely, if ever, found in ‘normal’ life. While campers in a cabin do not always become the best of friends, and some cabins certainly bond more than others, each cabin’s experience is unique;

perhaps the clearest evidence is when a group of ten campers sways back and forth as the counselors sing the final songs of closing campfire. Through this action, they signify the importance of the unique, intimate friendship each cabin group has developed during the week; these relationships are, in a way, the manifestation of the ‘magic’ of camp.

On several occasions in the Valley, devotions occur in a large-group setting. On Wednesday during Overnight, the Valley has a devotion regarding fears, with everyone sitting around the firepit in the Overnight field. This experience serves as a major reminder to the Valley campers of the collectively shared experience that they are currently undergoing. This experience is reinforced by the full-Valley devotion held on Friday night after Closing Campfire, where all residents of the Valley – campers, counselors, and directors – meet on the basketball court after the conclusion of the Prayer Walk and share their favorite memory of the week. At this time, Jacob also reminds them that “This is the last time that this group of people will ever be together.” Through this statement, he reinforces these bonds by inspiring recollection and remembrance of the time spent together throughout the week. This, in turn, leads to nostalgia for camp and the camp experience.

5.0 Camp as a Ritual

5.1 In General

Though the camp experience is full of various rituals throughout the week, it can also be argued that camp itself serves as a rite of passage. Summer camps are indeed the consummate embodiment of this idea within American culture; they represent a coming-of-age adventure, where children spend (often for the first time in their life) extended periods of time away from home, experiencing the rugged wilderness in order to gain a newfound sense of strength and self not only through recreation and enjoyment, but also through trial and tribulation. This is reflected in the earliest summer camps, in which “the institutional goal was to address the strain of transition from boy culture to the world of men” (Maynard 1999: 6). As campers return home, they are different than they were before; after experiencing a week at camp, they possess newfound, ‘sacred’ knowledge, in the sense that it can only be derived from the separate⁷⁷, unique, and memorable experience that is camp. This is particularly the case in modern American culture; folklorist Jay Mechling describes this phenomenon, stating how “Forced to make their own rituals and their own tales in the vacuum left by modern adults... modern children invent pale substitutes incapable of carrying the heavy symbolic burden that rituals and tales must carry as the externalizations of internal anxieties, conflicts, and confusions” (Mechling 1980: 35). Summer camp fills this role, providing rituals – facilitated by counselors, who are different from typical adults – that help build social skills, set benchmarks for growth and achievement, and thus become the basis for nostalgic feelings, and a sense of personal well-being.

The camp separation and return phases are not so clearly defined, nor as important to the

⁷⁷ This sense of the ‘sacred’ as ‘separateness’ is derived from the ideas of Emile Durkheim, who distinguished sacred aspects as things that are taboo or out-of-the-ordinary.

ritual process, as the liminal period. Indeed, the separation and return phases exist wholly within the normal world. Campers listen to the radio in the car and talk with the parents about the week on the ride home; cars, radios, and parents are all things that simply do not exist within the world of camp. However, these rides to and from camp, coupled with the experience of check-in and check-out, are, on a personal level, critically important to the preparation for and unpacking/reflection of and on the experience of the week at camp. The separation phase is simply the check-in process, also inclusive of the campers' drive⁷⁸ to camp with their parents, a car ride that is certainly full of a flurry of emotions (excitement, anxiety, nervousness, confusion, enthusiasm, and certainly fear of the unknown). With the final kiss and wave goodbye to their parents, campers are no longer in the real world of mainstream American society, but rather are fully immersed in the world and society of Camp Catawba. The return period is also quite short, and could even be defined as the short jog through the human tunnel made by the counselors at the conclusion of the final chapel on Saturday morning. Realistically, it also includes the car ride back, as campers unwind, catch up with their families, and reflect on their week as they prepare to reenter the real world.

The camp experience thus can be characterized as a kind of 'familiar exoticism,' in which children can escape from normal life that they know well, but is still, in its own right, a coming-of-age adventure, as many children experience their first extended period of time not only away from home, but in a fundamentally different culture and exotic, unique natural environment. While at camp, campers are subjected to many new experiences, most of which are rarely, if ever, encountered in normal society. This is one of the main aspects that separates it from normal

⁷⁸ The camp primarily serves youth in the surrounding area, in addition to the three largest major cities: Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Louisville. As such, this drive is often upwards of an hour, and can be even longer for some; it is neither a short, nor a simple, trip for a kid facing a week of summer camp or just coming off of a session.

society; the lifestyle is structured entirely differently and is geared towards fun and personal growth rather than schoolwork and ongoing preparation for a successful career and life in mainstream society. For example, a child might have eight hours of work and focus at school each day during the year, and then come home and watch television or play video games; at camp, he or she would have only five hours of ‘class’ (which is much more fun-oriented than typical school) and is actively engaged the rest of the day until it is time for bed. It is clear that there does indeed exist “a vast difference between living at camp during the summer and living in urban homes and going to school during the winter” (Smith 2006: 81).

This distinctiveness, however, is not limited to just everyday dealings. Folklorist Bill Ellis describes the experience of camp as “a liminal one, exactly appropriate to the camp’s overall position between civilization and wilderness and analogous to the campers’ ambiguous status in the woods” (Ellis 1981: 496). Camp is, as the title of Ellis’ article suggests, a ‘mock-ordeal;’ while the trials and tribulations may not be like those experienced by the Ndembu or more traditional societies around the world, experiences at camp are sufficiently unfamiliar and uncomfortable enough to fill this niche for American youth. Similarly, the concept of *communitas* is reinforced by the ideas presented in Polly Wiessner’s study of the Ju/’Hoansi bushmen of Africa, whose ritualized campfire experiences often consisted of fireside storytelling resulted in “the extension of cultural institutions over time and space to link individuals from different bands into larger imagined communities” (Wiessner 2014: 7).

As all the different cabins and distinct units come together, they all experience the same emotions and endure the ordeal of summer camp together, bonding not only individual cabins and units, but the camp as a whole in the culminating experience that is Closing Campfire. This is even physically manifested during the counselors’ songs at Closing Campfire: as “Good

Riddance” and “Wonderwall” are sung by the entire staff, who stand arm-in-arm on the stage, most if not all campers also put their arms around one another and sway to the music. In this moment, it is the entire camp – the whole body of everyone who has undergone this experience together – physically linked together and moving in unison to the same songs.

The liminality of camp is clearly established by its highly structured lifestyle, something that is often quite distinct from normal life; it goes even beyond a simple period-schedule one might experience in school. Life at summer camp is life is described as:

“a *manufactured* community... This sensual and social structuring, compounded by the sense of removal, contribute to the impression provided by camp that it is an autonomous community, governed by unique ties and attachments, allowing the campers to attain a “closer” and “more natural” relationship to themselves, other people, and the natural environment... Thus, the personal negotiation between worlds I experienced is partly a directed negotiation in an environment designed to foster such a patently *liminal* situation. It becomes important, then, to see how camp inscribes liminality upon its participants through the development of a kind of structured anti-structure resonant with Victor Turner’s other notion of *communitas*.” (Tillery 1992: 377)

Because the lifestyle of camp is so vastly different from that of normal life, in both its structure and lack thereof, coupled with its leadership by fun-minded, free-spirited counselors tasked with providing the best possible experience for the campers, camp becomes a liminal period within life, distinct enough to create bonds of solidarity amongst participants that are unique to camp. The growth campers experience at camp is significant and unique; campers leave camp truly different than they were before, having undergone new experiences including “trying new ways

of social interaction; taking on challenges to become a better person; becoming closer to nature” (Tillery 1992: 379). The life knowledge that campers learn at camp is truly impactful, summed up by the idea that “[In their lives] everybody paddles through storms... Summer camp is where the tools to fend off the hard times are acquired. They are tools that have worked for generations of campers, and they will work forever” (Eisner 2005: 171).

One can also argue that the smaller, less important rituals throughout the week also contribute to the effectiveness of summer camp as a rite of passage in life. Even an experience as simple and as unstructured as mealtimes are indeed “ritual occasions, both in the sense that they tended to follow predictable patterns in which each participant had a well-defined role and in the sense that those patterns were intended to communicate important messages about the larger meaning of camp life” (Van Slyck 2002: 270). In other words, each smaller ritual throughout the week, as it communicates some kind of ‘sacred’ knowledge regarding camp life, is an integral part of the overall rite of passage experience. Even in the case of meals – which obviously still happen outside of camp – things are different; where one typically eats at home with the family or at the school lunch table during normal life, following normal table manners, eating at camp is amongst the cabin ‘family,’ and manners are much less restricted, evidenced by the extreme volume of the dining hall during meals.

At Camp Catawba, no ritual proves to be as in-depth, wide in scope, and individually impactful as Closing Campfire. As such, that is why I consider this occasion not only the most important single ritual, but also the culminating experience of the entire week in the sense that it validates and formalizes all the events experienced during the week at camp. The skits and songs performed have been learned throughout the week, practiced over time for the final performance during campfire. Furthermore, the friendship stick proclamations both affirm the bonds of

communitas – in addition to interpersonal friendships – built within each cabin group and serve as a reflection of the past week’s fun through the stating of an inside joke. In addition to affirming the values and other lessons learned during the week, the campfire experience inspires reflection and the building of memories of and nostalgia for camp for all participants.

Furthermore, each ritual experienced throughout the week sees some sort of culmination in the Closing Campfire ritual. Skits and songs are performed primarily by campers rather than counselors, offering campers a chance to display what they have learned in terms of performance throughout the week. This also reflects the strengthening of social bonds that have been reinforced throughout the camp experience, particularly those experienced on Overnight, within cabin groups, and even within activity groups⁷⁹. Lightfinders can come from anyone, and are not limited to people within certain groups; they prove that life-changing relationships can be built across cabin and unit lines. Rituals that reinforce values, such as Chapel, Devotion, and the Ragers Ceremony, are reflected in the prayer walk as campers listen to contemplative stories during their return to mainstream camp society. Closing campfire incorporates aspects from all of camp, and in this sense, is the perfect culmination of the week-long liminal experience.

5.2 Nostalgia and Camp

Much of camp’s effectiveness in creating a legacy as an important cultural institution in America is the nostalgia created by the experience. Svetlana Boym, author of the influential book *The Future of Nostalgia*, defines the term as “longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed” (Boym 2011). This definition involves elements of both place and time,

⁷⁹ During the second week, the Survival clinic group performed a skit that had nothing to do with Survival (it incorporated a collection of internet jokes and memes, and in a way was almost antithetical to the primitive, outdoorsy learning focus of the clinic), but was derived from ideas they developed during their week of socially interacting and bonding as a group.

distinguishing nostalgia from homesickness or fond memory, resulting in “new understanding of time and space that made the division into “local” and “universal” possible” (Boym 2011).

Furthermore, though it is more directly tied in with events of the past, nostalgia’s real effects are in the present: modern scholars on the subject regard nostalgia as “an occurrent emotion or affective experience, rather than simply a fascination with the past” (Howard 2012: 641).

Specifically, nostalgia is important because it plays a passive role in active decisions and experiences of the present, even to the extent that it influences “various acts of time-space distanciation, from the regulation of nation-states to globalization” (Legg 2004: 100).

Though the experience of camp is only one week (though there are many who stay for a longer period, or go to camp over multiple summers), it is much more meaningful than a week in the ‘the real world.’ In the podcast “Notes on Camp,” Ira Glass (1998) describes the impact of camp as “Everything. It changes people’s lives... Everybody at camp is just real close-knit. It’s like a bond that just happens. And that’s why a day at camp is two weeks in real life; it’s like a time-warp here.” As discussed in section 3.6 on counselors, counselor David describes just how impactful camp has been on his life; various other subjects in the podcast echo his sentiment, with one camper claiming that “Camp is all I talk about during the year... Because everything that goes on at home, you can always think of something that relates to something that happened at camp” (Glass 1998)⁸⁰.

At Camp Catawba, many counselors come back year after year, with many working as counselors for three or four summers; the leadership staff is made up almost entirely of former camp counselors, many of whom also grew up as campers. The camp experience is not just a week in the woods; it is a formative experience that plays an integral role in their future lives.

⁸⁰ This sentiment is particularly understandable after spending over a year working on an in-depth honors thesis project about summer camp.

The success of organizations like Camp No Counselors – which runs on the business model of “Escape to a weekend experience that combines your favorite aspects of childhood fun along with the best of what being a grown-up has to offer” – also showcases the desire for many to experience camp just one more time⁸¹ (Camp No Counselors 2018).

Camp’s impact is due largely in part to its memorable nature. What is it about camp, though, that is particularly memorable? According to counselors, two things come to the forefront in terms of the most memorable parts of camp: camp’s various rituals and the bonds built with peers. The rituals of camp – and the camp experience itself – are all performed in the spirit of fun, and thus qualify as play. It is in this state of play that nostalgia emerges:

“Play begins, and then at a certain moment is it “over”... Immediately connected with its limitation as to time there is a further curious feature of play: it at once assumes fixed form as a cultural phenomenon. Once played, it endures as a new-found creation of the mind, a treasure to be retained by the memory. It is transmitted, it becomes tradition. It can be repeated at any time... In this faculty of repetition lies one of the most essential qualities of play... In nearly all the higher forms of play the elements of repetition and alternation, are like the warp and woof of a fabric.” (Huizinga 1949: 9-10).

By its very nature, play begets both institutional tradition and nostalgia within the individual. The institutional tradition of Camp Catawba is wholly a product of the counselors’ active role in constructing the camp’s culture. In most cases, this is done unselfconsciously, as counselors work to construct the best possible week. In one particular instance, however, the

⁸¹ This camp offers traditional camp activities during the daytime between lunch and dinner, with larger camp-wide activities in the evening and a themed evening party at night. In addition to offering typical camp activities with a much higher degree of free reign than for kids at summer camp, CNC offers open bar all week long – certainly an added perk for many young adults indulging in this recreation of their childhood camp experience.

persistence of the ritual is the primary goal. During the second week of the summer, I was awoken in the dead of night by Andy, who told me to get up and meet at the archery range. After quietly dragging myself out of bed and walking in an exhausted daze over to the range, I came to find a small group of people sitting on the bench in total darkness. I could not recall how many; it numbered around eight people, and was composed of several directors and counselors, in addition to several CITs. I had been called to the assembly of the Shadow Rangers, a secret organization at Camp Catawba. The group would meet periodically in the middle of the night at the archery range and shoot arrows at night, some of which had their tips wrapped in paper and set on fire. We all took turns shooting arrows in the dark until we decided we were finished, at which point we put the bows back and were given a reminder that this group ought to remain totally secret; those who talked would be “expelled from the Rangers,” as the activity was technically against the rules. It turned out that the organization had actually begun in the summer of 2013, and its leaders – Andy included – desired that it continue on into the future as long as possible. This is a case of an active decision to make a lasting impact on the camp’s culture; its memorability is evidenced by its annual continuation. Furthermore, the members of this privileged group – to my knowledge, camp’s only ‘secret society’ – experience a certain level of solidarity in their shared experience. In tandem with his prior comments regarding the bonding experience inherent in play, Huizinga makes clear that these rituals of play are not only important for the individual and in the creating of memorable moments for every person involved; they are important because they lead to lasting bonds and friendships.

In my interviews, every counselor was able to readily cite several of their favorite memories from their time working at and attending camp. Andy, who attended camp for most of his childhood, looked back most fondly on catching a massive catfish during fishing clinic and

performing various skits (particularly the “Pirate Battle” skit⁸²). On a different note, he also mentioned a particular devotion from his time as a counselor in which one of his campers, who had been acting up consistently throughout the week, opened up to him and discussed issues in his life that he had never discussed before; this helped him to begin acting out less and enjoying the camp experience more. From this experience, Andy claimed that “it really changed my perspective on how much of an impact you can have on the kids. Because he told me this thing that he had never told anyone before.”

Other counselors and directors cited different memories for their experiences; Connie remembered sleeping on top of the rock climbing tower as a camper, and Jacob remembered “the last day of camp last year, with the perfect weather and stuff. The campfire. It was poetic.” I personally can vividly recall a day as a camper when it rained the entire time, but never thundered, so we participated in all of our normal camp activities in the pouring rain; I also remember planning out a detailed attack plan for a capture-the-flag game, which resulted in our team getting the final capture to win. Interestingly, people remember quite a wide variety of experiences – even only the aforementioned memories encompass memories regarding the self, others, exciting experiences, entire days, and small moments.

The ritual experiences of camp, as have been described, result largely in the forging of bonds between participants, such as in Devotion, the Indian Ceremony, and the teens’ Overnight experience. However, rituals also serve to create lasting camp memories and nostalgia for the camp experience. Participating in a ritual is “a corporeal experience... Ritual creates a memory, and when it is repeated, it is reinforced. Depending on its intensity and frequency, it is more or

⁸² This skit is only performed once every year during pirate-themed week. It consists of three kayaks of counselors, who are all dressed as pirates, engaging in a mock battle in the pond, which everyone watches during Opening Campfire. It is generally regarded as the greatest skit performed every summer.

less lasting or revisited, and moreover, it is recalled in other situations, adding to one's knowledge of what happened and to what it has by now referred in its own and subsequent contexts" (Feuchtwang 2010: 284). A ritual's impact does not just last the duration of the ritual, but rather continues through its impact on an individual as a memory.

In addition to a culture rooted in ritual and tradition, camp also begets nostalgia in the individual. Every person's experience at camp, while shared with many friends and peers, is ultimately individual, and the memories held are personal. Much of this nostalgia manifests itself in the form of lasting friendships; many counselors (myself included) have kept closely in touch, and even maintain their friendships in the years since they worked at Camp Catawba. The Lightfinder program, which provides a physical representation of an intimate friendship through the letter and accompanying bead, is seen as the ideal in terms of camp friendships. This is demonstrably true even in the long term; at one point during the summer, Ben's wife, who worked as a counselor in the early 2000s, had a group of old counselors with whom she still maintained friendships visit the camp for a day. The camp also holds alumni events year-round, including a dinner in July and a Christmas party in the winter.

Above the stage of the amphitheater, there is a wooden banner emblazoned with the name of the camp, signifying that the amphitheater is a major 'center-stage' of the camp experience; indeed, it is a common meeting place and the site of Opening Campfire, the closest thing to an orientation that occurs during the week. As the amphitheater stage sits adjacent to the lake, the back of the sign is rarely noticed; however, etched onto the backside of the wooden sign are three words: "The Friendship Camp." The central goal of Camp Catawba, achieved through the adventure of camp activities and the intimate relationships built during the course of a stay at camp, is to facilitate friendships. When people think back on camp, they think of the great

friendships they built there, and vice versa. In terms of the lasting effects of camp, the friendships are camp's biggest achievement.

One final element that feeds into nostalgia is the idea of achievement at camp. Camp does not just consist of a collection of fun activities that kids participate in. In fact, as previously mentioned, Camp Catawba utilizes the principle of "progressive programming" for its clinics, which is the idea that each day of the clinic should build off of what was done in previous days. Kids learn more about their activities – and themselves – as the week goes on. For example, in the shooting sports clinic, campers begin with air rifles, work on principles of shooting and aiming, and then progress on to .22 caliber rifles. Older campers are eligible for the advanced shooting sports clinic, which begins with riflery and progresses on to trap shooting with 20-gauge shotguns. Camp in general also incorporates elements of learning, competition, and achievement. Devotions are perhaps the most critical time for learning about one's self and about how people interact. Activities like capture-the-flag are important as they teach kids about sportsmanship and how to compete in a constructive way. Both of these elements of camp come together to result in achievement, such as when campers finally hit a bullseye in archery or win a game of capture-the-flag. And because it is all done in the spirit of play, camp becomes "a very reinforcing experience... These are challenges that help kids feel better about themselves, grow self-confident, build self-esteem. It's the idea of breaking a kid out of his comfort zone, and using new challenges as building blocks" (Eisner 2005: 40).

Ultimately, nostalgia emerges as the primary end of the camp experience. Aside from the given goals of safety, fun, and a life-changing experience – three things which, at Camp Catawba, appear to be achieved – the camp experience results in a deeply-held, esoteric longing to return to that out-of-time experience of growth, discovery, and adventure.

6.0 Conclusion

Summer camp has a rich and storied history dating back to the 1880s in New Hampshire. Over the course of its history, it has grown from one humble gathering led by a Dartmouth student to a multi-billion dollar industry that serves millions annually. Camp Catawba is only one of many; regardless, it possesses many of its own longstanding traditions and rituals that make a week at Camp Catawba an experience unlike any other. This week is highly structured, and provides time not only for organized, facilitated activities, but also for unstructured play and social interaction. Many of these activities are ordeals, and involve grit and effort; these help teach campers about competition and achievement, as they sometimes have to fight to reach their goals or defeat their opponents. Campers also learn the importance of trust as they bond as cabin groups through Devotions and other cabin activities, and come to value these interpersonal relationships to a higher degree. All of this is helped along by the counselors, who not only run the day-to-day activities of camp and play an integral role in its ritual performances, but also serve as mentors to the many campers that attend throughout the summer.

There are many rituals at camp, and they all serve different purposes. Chapel, which occurs daily, reinforces the values of honesty, caring, respect, and responsibility that camp attempts to ingrain in its campers. The Overnight trip undertaken by the teen campers, in addition to the Indian ceremony and 'Survival Baptism' rituals all play a major role in fostering social bonds between various groups of campers. The Riggers ceremony aims to instill a work ethic in its participants by encouraging personal growth through goal-setting. Devotion, a nightly occurrence, helps campers think about their own lives and their personal relationships, and also serves to bond cabin groups into tightly-knit groups of friends. Finally, the Closing Campfire ritual, along with the Lightfinders ceremony, rounds off the week by affirming the bonds built throughout the week. However, the camp experience as a whole also serves as a ritual; it is that

yearly experience in which campers retreat from the ‘real world’ and enter an adventurous landscape rich with camp-exclusive activities, life-changing rituals, and profound, life-long friendships. This experience and all of its various elements, unstructured and ritualized, serve to create a unique kind of nostalgia, exclusive yet universal to those who have participated in the camp experience, that perpetuates summer camp as a cultural institution and allows for the continuation of its rich traditions year after year.

These rituals fit cleanly into the framework provided by Victor Turner; they both possess the integral tripartite structure and build necessary bonds of *communitas* between the ritual’s participants. On a personal level, I believe that I experienced the development of *communitas* first-hand; given the level of bonding encouraged for the staff (in addition to the camp as a whole), it is difficult to avoid becoming ‘part of the family.’ While at camp, counselors and campers were, first and foremost, just that: counselors and campers. However, at camp, this *communitas* comes less from submission of camper ‘initiates’ to the authority of the counselor ‘elders’ – instead, it is derived from the trust built through authenticity, which develops in each tightly-knit cabin group, within each unit, and even across the camp as a whole. These intimate friendships developed in so short a time lead to a level of mutual respect and understanding not generally experienced in ‘the real world.’

These friendships, while seemingly developed naturally, are in fact developed rather unnaturally, as a result of a constructed phenomenon – the *communitas* built during organized rituals as part of the camp experience. During the liminality of camp, campers have the social barriers between them broken down, as all arrive on equal footing as mostly strangers and share the same privileges and opportunities. Their normal social identities are removed, and they are free to shape their own personalities and destinies while at camp. This allows socially equalized

campers, all of whom are isolated from their normal social statuses and identities in the outside world, reach a new level of intimacy in their newfound friendships together at camp through the various unique encounters at camp, such as unstructured play time and ritual experiences such as Devotion. Thus camp constitutes what Turner describes as a “‘moment in and out of time,’ and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties... organized in terms either of caste, class, or rank hierarchies” (Turner 1969: 96).

As a result of these various elements, a sense of nostalgia is created that endures into adulthood, resulting in a collective longing of all former campers to return to the idyllic adventure of summer camp. Because of summer camp’s scale in the United States, and lack of longstanding tradition in other countries, this is a quintessentially American phenomenon; every camper is a part of a 130-year-old tradition of fun and profound personal development. To put it simply, everyone wishes they could relive that fateful, adventurous, and imperfect-yet-perfect summer one more time.

The summer of 2017 will go on to mean many different things to the variety of different people who spent that time at Camp Catawba. For me, it was a summer of research and exploration, as I attempted to identify the many instances of ritual and explore as many aspects of camp as I could as I conducted my ethnographic field research. For many on the staff, it was a fun and memorable summer job that did not pay particularly well. And for the roughly 1800 campers who attended Camp Catawba for any length of time, it was – if the experience was successful – a safe, fun, and life-changing time, just as it has been for millions of children before them. Leslie Paris describes this process more eloquently:

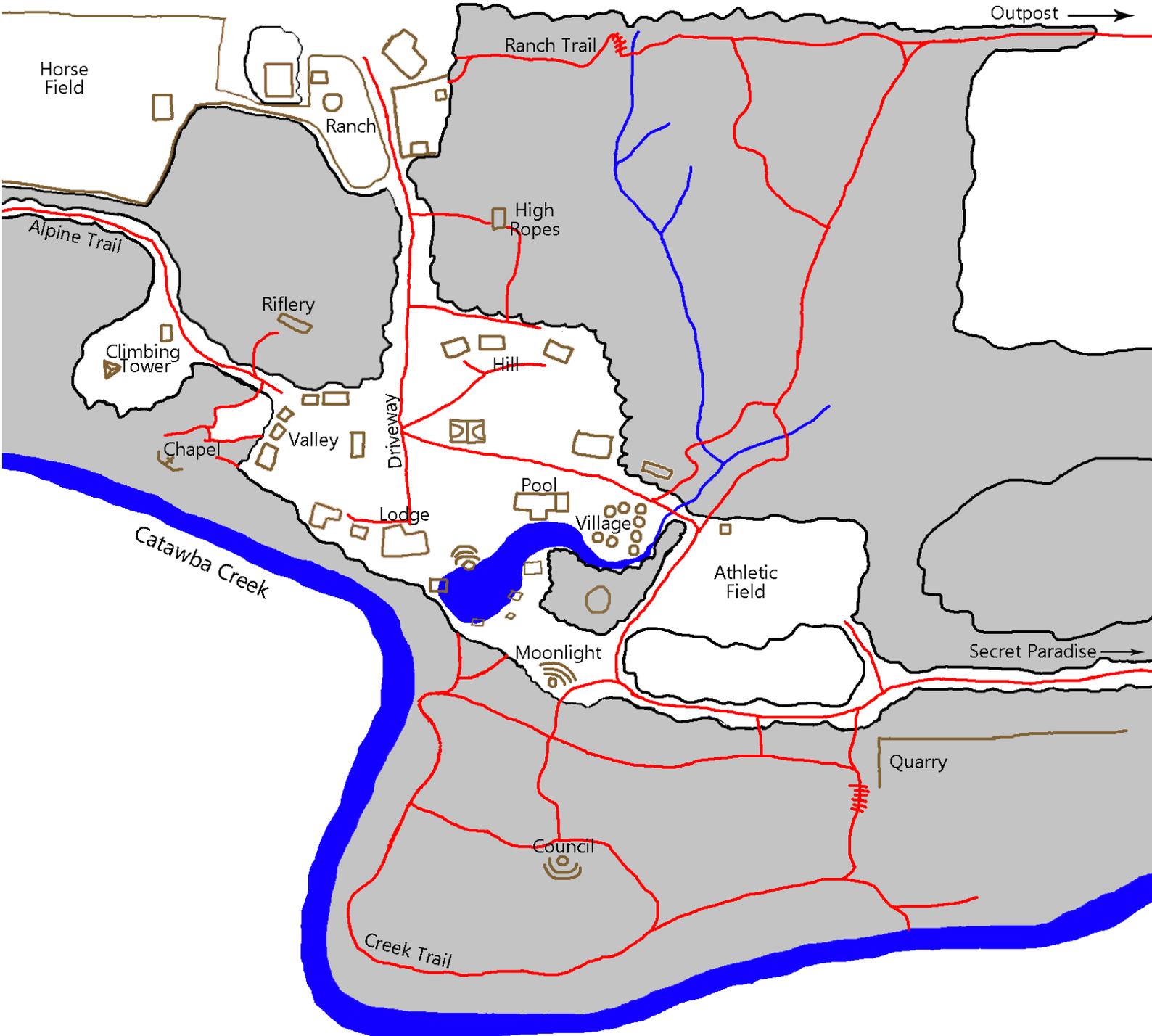
...Camp life [teaches] children nostalgia for camp and for their own childhoods
Youth... was itself transitory and impermanent. This triple nostalgia – for the
American past, for camp community, and for individual childhood experience – is
critical to understanding why camps have figured so influentially in American
culture and in many former campers' lives. (Paris 2008: 260)

Because of the free-spirited fun and recreation, adventurous activities, meaningful and
unique social interactions, and participation in profound, effective rituals, 1,800 children have
become better versions of themselves, and will go on to cherish their time spent at summer
camp: the adventure of a lifetime.

7.0 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A – Map of Camp

Camp Catawba Map



7.2 Appendix B – Daily Schedule

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

11:00 PM – Lead Staff Meeting
 12:00 PM – Themed All Staff Pump Up
 12:30 PM – Unit Encouragement session
 1:00 PM – Cabin Set up / Lead staff prep to Welcome
 1:45 PM – Everyone in their Check In assignments
 2:00-4:00 PM – Check in (3:00pm Welcome Rotations start)
 3:00 PM – Camp Tour/Cabin Photo/Wellness Check/ Swim Check / Clinic Sign up
 5:15 PM – 1 Counselor to Hop Tables
 5:25 PM – Flag Lowering
 5:30 PM – Dinner and Dessert
 6:30 PM – All Camp Orientation and Photo
 7:00 PM – Opening Campfire
 9:00 PM – Bed Prep / Letter Home / Devotion
 9:30 PM – Lights out

MONDAY-FRIDAY SCHEDULE

7:30 AM – Wake-up
 7:45 AM – Hoppers
 7:50 AM – Flag Assembly
 8:00 AM – Breakfast
 8:30-9:00 AM – Clean up
 9:00 AM – Chapel
 9:15-10:10 AM – Clinic 1
 10:15-11:10 AM – Clinic 2
 11:15 AM-12:10 PM – Clinic 3
 12:15 PM – Hoppers / Assembly
 12:30 PM – Lunch/Mail
 1:00 PM – Siesta (Rest time in the cabin)
 2:00- 2:55 PM – Clinic 4
 3:00-3:55 PM – Clinic 5
 4:00-5:15 PM – Cabin Activity Time (M and F) – Free Activity Choice Time (T,W,Th)
 5:15 PM – Hoppers / (W: Valley Campers depart for Outpost)
 5:25 PM – Flag Lowering
 5:30 PM – Dinner
 6:15 PM – Trading Post / Evening Program Prep
 7:15 PM – Evening Activity

- Monday – Unit Activity
- Tuesday – All Camp Activity (Scavenger Hunt / CTF)
- Wednesday – Pool Party/Overnight
- Thursday – Dance Party
- Friday – Closing Campfire

9:00 – Bed Prep. and Devotion

9:30 – Lights out

SATURDAY SCHEDULE

7:30 AM – Wake-up

7:45 AM – Hoppers

7:50 AM – Flag

8:00 AM – Breakfast

9:00 AM – Chapel (LDP/CIT)

10:15 AM – All Campers should be checked out and Weekend Camp Departs

7.3 Appendix C – Song Lyrics

Mr. Columbus

“Repeat-after-me” style

In 1492 three ships went out to sea
 The Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria
 And as they sailed across the sea on that historic day (*sailing motion with hand*)
 Oh way up in the crow’s nest you could hear Luigi say:
 “I wanna go home! (*stomp on ground*)
 Please, Mr. Columbus, turn the ship around. (*jump around in circle*)
 Oh, take me back, I wanna feel my two feet on the ground.
 Oh why you tell-a Isabella that the world is round? (*in faux-Italian accent*)
 Please, Mr. Columbus, turn the ship around!” (*jump around in circle*)

Da Moose

“Repeat-after-me” style

Da Moose, Da Moo-oose (*make antlers with hands*)
 Swimming in the water, (*swimming motion with arms*)
 Eating up his supper, (*pretend to eat from bowl*)
 Where did he go?
 He... went to sleep. (*sleeping hand motion*)

Da Moose, Da Moo-oose (*make antlers with hands*)
 Swimming in the water, (*swimming motion with arms*)
 Eating up his supper, (*pretend to eat from bowl*)
 Where did he go?
 He... died.

(fake crying) And now for the really sad part!

(entire verse is fake crying)
 Dead Moose, dead Moo-oose
 Floating in the water,
 Not eating his supper,
(hysterical) Where did he go?!
 He... *(very long held note)* decomposed.

7.4 Appendix D – Ragers Ceremony

Note: This is the official transcript used to run the ceremony at Camp Catawba and at Ragers' programs nationwide. However, as previously noted, there are minor changes that the leaders of the ceremony make, such as the disclaimer regarding the word 'God,' omission of the more overt religious references, and changes as to what Ragers may enter the various levels of the emblem at the Ragers' Point location.

THE BLUE RAG

Instructions:

This is not a part of the Ceremony and is not to be read aloud, but should be studied carefully by all Ragers who have parts in conducting the Ceremony.

In the presentation of the Rag, there is a very close, inter-personal relationship with a strong emotional impact. Your sincerity in what you are doing and saying as you take part in the Ceremony and as you welcome the Ragger into this step is an element, which makes for a meaningful experience.

READING

Persons with special parts should speak loudly, clearly, and slowly. As you prepare, if there are words, which are unfamiliar to you, ask about them. Remember to speak in a warm, personal tone. Be sure to read your part over in advance several times so that you know what you are saying.

HOW WE LEARN

say.

We learn best by the “feeling” that moves between us, rather than by just what we

Show a deep feeling of affection for those who are accepting the Blue Rag.

Explanations during the Ceremony appear in parenthesis and are not to be read aloud.

This Ceremony should be held in a secluded spot away from camp, including in any one Ceremony only the number of persons for which space is available at the Ragers' Point.

FOR INTERNATIONAL USE Under “Devotion to God,” you may wish to substitute the words: “My Country” for “America” or insert an appropriate international poem.

PERSONNEL NECESSARY FOR THE BLUE RAG CEREMONY:

Keeper of the Point
Four Counselors
Voices 1, 2, and 3
Guides for the candidates
Chaplain

The Blue Rag –
A Challenge of Loyalty to God, Country,
One's Best Self, and the Ragers' Creed

CEREMONY

GUIDE: (New Ragers to be blindfolded)

You are now leaving behind the noise of everyday life and entering upon a journey that will make you aware of the presence of God. We want you to join us in a quiet and serious hour with God. I urge you to be silent so as to hear Him speak through the stillness, through the voices of others, and from within your heart. The blindfold is merely to help you free yourself from distraction. Listen to the voice of God. Be aware of your feelings, to be aware of what is happening to you as you proceed along the trail. You may be feeling a certain amount of apprehension, perhaps even fear. Think of these words from Isaiah 41:10:

“Fear not, for I am with you.” Let us pray. (Guide offers a short prayer.)

(Guide leads Ragers(s) to the Counselor of the Outer Gate.)

COUNSELOR OF THE OUTER GATE: Guide, whom do you bring along this trail?

GUIDE: Counselor of the Outer Gate, I am bringing _____ (those) who wish(es) to accept the challenge of the Blue Rag.

COUNSELOR OF THE OUTER GATE: You were asked to learn the Ragers' Creed in studying for the Blue Rag. You will recall the first line:

“I would be true, for there are those who trust me.”

Being true includes being true to one's God, to one's Country, to others, to one's self. To be worthy of trust, we must strive to earn that trust. William Shakespeare in “Hamlet” wrote:

“This above all: to your own self be true, and it must follow, as the night follows the day, you cannot then be false to any man.”

Consider this: You who are blindfolded have shown your complete trust in us. Those who trust us that deeply are certainly worthy of trust themselves...of passing through this gate.

The second line of the Ragers' Creed is this:

“I would be pure, for there are those who care.”

“Pure” to a Rager means to be a real person. It means a person who can be counted upon, who won't let you down when you need him...his actions and his words are the same.

“It is not what he has, nor even what he does, which directly expresses the worth of a man, but what he is.” (Henri Amiel)

You may now proceed to the Second Counselor; but as you proceed, consider how you feel...what sounds are you aware of?

SECOND COUNSELOR: Guide, whom do you bring along this trail?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____ (those), who wish(es) to accept the challenge of the Blue Rag.

SECOND COUNSELOR: The third line of the Ragers' Creed is this:

"I would be strong, for there is much to suffer."

When we speak of strength, we are speaking of strength of character, as well as body.

"Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from a courageous will."
(Mahatma Gandhi from "The Prophet")

The fourth line of the Ragers' Creed is this:

"I would be brave, for there is much to dare."

You face dares every day of your life. They appear in the form of challenges. Bravery means facing life and managing to overcome obstacles that occur throughout your life.

"No man is worth his salt who is not ready at all times to risk his life in a great cause.
And the duty of life is to face it is fully and honorably as we possibly can."
(Theodore Roosevelt)

We challenge you to go out and meet the challenges of life with courage and self-confidence. You may now proceed to the Third Counselor.

THIRD COUNSELOR: Guide, whom do you bring along this trail?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____ (those), who wish(es) to accept the challenge of the Blue Rag.

THIRD COUNSELOR: The fifth line of the Ragers' Creed is this:

"I would be friend to all the foe, the friendless."

"Blessed are they who have the gift of making friends, for it is one of God's best gifts.
It involves many things; but above all, the power of going out of one's self and
appreciating whatever is noble and loving in another." (Thomas Hughes)

We read from the Bible:

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love
has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12-15)

I challenge you to be a friend to all. Sometimes those who are hardest to be friends with are the ones who most need friends.

This sixth line of the Ragers' Creed is this:

"I would be giving, and forget the gift."

"You give but little when you give of your possessions, it is when you give of yourself
that you truly give. It is well to give when asked, but is better to give unasked, through
understanding." (Khalil Gibran from "The Prophet")

You may now proceed to the Fourth Counselor.

FOURTH COUNSELOR: Guide, whom do you bring along this trail?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____ (those), who wish(es) to accept the challenge of the Blue Rag.

FOURTH COUNSELOR: The seventh line of the Ragers' Creed is this:

"I would be humble, for I know my weakness."

"Nothing will make us so charitable and tender to the faults of others, as by self-examination, thoroughly to know our own." (Fenelon)

You need to know yourself first in order to know and accept others. The final line of the Ragers' Creed is this:

"I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift."

To a Ragger this means life and our ideal of the way to live it. The opposite is to look down, to not care. One man put it this way:

"There are two ways of living; a man may be casual and simply exit, or constructive and deliberately try to do something with his life. The constructive idea implies constructiveness not only about one's own life, but about that of society, and the future possibilities of humanity." (Sir Julian Huxley from "Essays of a Biologist.")

By living our lives in constructive ways we can hope to change things for a better world.

"Life, be it happy or unhappy, fortunate or unfortunate, is the only good that man possesses and he who does not love life is unworthy of life." (Casanova from "One Love of Live")

You have completed your journey throughout the four gates. You may now enter Ragers' Point.

KEEPER OF THE POINT: Guide, whom do you bring along this trail?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____ (those), who wish(es) to accept the challenge of the Blue Rag, and has (have) met four counselors along the trail.

KEEPER OF THE POINT: You have traveled a difficult trail to reach this point. You have heard the meaning of the Ragers' Creed. You are being challenged to live by the traits set forth in the Creed...trust, character, strength, courage, friendship, giving, humility or self-knowledge, and the desire to live a better life. I congratulate you on your desire to accept these challenges.

Listen now to three voices:

VOICE #1: DEVOTION TO GOD

"Live your life while you have it. Life is a splendid gift. There is nothing small in it. For the greatest things grow by God's Law out of the smallest. But to live your life to the fullest, you must discipline it. Make your thoughts, your acts, all work to the same end, and not self, but God."

VOICE #2: DEVOTION TO COUNTRY (For international use change "American" to "My Country")

America is a unique way of life symbolic of the creative arts.

America provides the brushes, oils, pigments, and the canvas on which you can paint your life as you want it to be. You choose your own colors, your own form, design, and pattern.

America is any tune you want to play with fife and drum, fiddle or horn to establish the beat and rhythm of the upward march to high goals.

America is a book in which you set down your life by the way you live it. You are the principal character. You LIVE your own biography. You are free to be hero or villain, great or mediocre.

America is a stage, and the role you play in the drama of life is up to you.

America is a sports arena, and the rules are written so everyone has a chance to win.

America is an engineering achievement, a bridge over which you can cross the chasm of despair.

America is an architecture with which you can build the tower of your dreams.

America is a sculptor's hammer and chisel with which you can fashion yourself into the person you aim to become.

America is an art of living through which you can reach higher, think bigger, grow greater, and live deeper than anywhere else on earth.

VOICE #3: DEVOTION TO ONE'S BEST SELF

I have to live with myself, and so
I want to be fit for myself to know.
I want to be able, as days go by,
Always to look myself straight in the eye.
I don't want to stand with the setting sun,
And hate myself for thing I have done.

I don't want to keep on a closet shelf,
A lot of secrets about myself,
And fool myself as I come and go,
Into thinking that nobody else will know,
The kind of man I really am.
I don't want to dress up myself in sham.

I want to go out with my head erect,
I want to deserve all man's respect;
But here in the struggle for fame and wealth
I want to be able to like myself.
I don't want to look at myself and know
That I'm bluster and bluff and empty show.

I can never hide myself from me,
I see what others may never see.
I know what others may never know,
I never can fool myself, and so,
Whatever happens, I want to be
Self-respecting and conscience free.

KEEPER OF THE POINT: Perhaps the best way to sum up that which is presented in the Raggar's Creed is this passage from the Bible:

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of

praise, think about these things.”

If you wish to accept the challenge of the Blue Rag, please respond, I do. (Wait for an answer)

You may now take the position of the Blue Ragger, kneeling on your right knee. Think, for a few moments about the personal challenges which you have taken.

(While tying the Rag, a few words of encouragement should be shared with the new Ragger. As soon as the Rag is tied, have the person sit down, still blind folded, and be comfortable. Other Raggings may wish to speak personally with the new Ragger. When all Rags are tied and everyone is finished with their personal talks with the new Raggings, the Keeper of the Point asks for the blindfolds to be removed.)

You see before you the Emblem of the Ragger. The circle stands for the circle of friendship of all YMCA's and people around the world – wherever they may be. The square represents the foursquare life of a true Ragger: physical, social, spiritual, and mental. The triangle stands for strength because it is the strongest geometric figure known to man. Because of this strength – we have named the three points: Body, Mind, and Spirit – to remind you to keep the challenge that you have accepted for yourself. And at the center of our emblem and at the center of our hearts – lies the cross. It appears so that we never forget the wonderful lesson that Jesus taught to us through His life – His example and His words.

(Each Ragger may now take the position appropriate to his or her Rag if they choose.)

It is traditional that no Ragger enters that portion of the Rag Emblem reserved for other Rags. This tradition dictates that Blue and Silver Raggings remain outside the Circle. As you grow in body, mind and spirit, and take on new challenges so too will you become closer to God. Brown and Gold Raggings may enter the Circle but shall remain outside the Square. After accepting more difficult challenges and dedicating yourself to helping others through personal sacrifice, your relationship with God will strengthen. Red and Purple Raggings are invited to enter the Square, but shall remain outside the Triangle. Those that choose a lifetime commitment to God and service to the YMCA, and except the challenge of the White Rag may enter the Triangle and stand beside the Cross as a sign of their unwavering commitment to God and the Raggings Creed.

(An appropriate story may be told.)

Shall we repeat, or sing, the Raggings' Creed?

“I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.
I would be friend to all – the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.”

We will ask our Chaplain to lead us in short prayer, followed by all of us joining in the Lord's Prayer.

As you leave this place as a Blue Ragger, remember that you should no longer be the same person that you were just a short time ago. You have now taken upon yourself a new stature, that of being loyal to God, Country, One's Best Self and the Raggings' Creed. May God bless you richly in this new step that you have taken for him.

(The new Ragger(s) may remain at the point to meditate after the others leave.)

8.0 Bibliography

- “ACA Facts and Trends.” *ACACamps.org*. American Camp Association, 2018.
<https://www.acacamps.org/press-room/aca-facts-trends>.
- Birnholtz, Jeremy P. et al. “Organizational Character: On the Regeneration of Camp Poplar Grove.” *Organization Science* 18, no. 2 (2007): 315-332.
- Boym, Svetlana. “Nostalgia.” *Atlas of Transformation*. 2011.
<http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/index.html>.
- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- “CNC.” *Camp No Counselors*, 2018. <https://www.campnocounselors.com/>.
- “Camp.” *YMCA*. 2018. Web. <http://www.ymca.net/camp/>.
- Cohen, Zelda Ruth. “Playing for Privilege: An Ethnography of Play in a Summer Camp.” Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980.
- Dimock, Hedley S. and Charles E. Hendry. *Camping and Character: A Camp Experiment in Character Education*. New York: Association Press, 1929.
- Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press, 1995.
- Eisner, Michael D. *Camp*. Warner Books, 2005.
- Ellis, Bill. “The Camp Mock-Ordeal Theater as Life.” *The Journal of American Folklore* 94, no. 374 (1981): 486-505.
- Feuchtwang, Stephen. “Ritual and Memory.” In *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz. New York: Fordham University Press, 2010.
- Glass, Ira. “Notes on Camp.” Podcast. *This American Life*. 28 August 1998. Audio.
- Howard, Scott Alexander. “Nostalgia.” *Analysis* 72, no. 4 (2012): 641-50.
- Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949.
- Legg, Stephen. “Memory and Nostalgia.” *Cultural Geographies* 11, no. 1 (2004): 99-107.
- Lepage, Jean-Denis G.G. *Hitler Youth, 1922-1945: An Illustrated History*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2009.
- Maynard, W. Barksdale. ““An Ideal Life in the Woods for Boys”: Architecture and Culture in

- the Earliest Summer Camps.” *Winterthur Portfolio* 34, no. 1 (1999): 3-29.
- Mechling, Jay. “The Magic of the Boy Scout Campfire.” *The Journal of American Folklore* 93, no. 367 (1980): 35-56.
- Moore, Valerie Ann. “The Collaborative Emergence of Race in Children’s Play: A Case Study of Two Summer Camps.” *Social Problems* 49, no. 1 (2002): 58-78.
- Paris, Leslie. *Children’s Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp*. New York: New York University Press, 2008.
- Philipson, Bradley S. “How a Summer Camp Counselor-in-Training Program May Foster Resilience and Self-Efficacy in Adolescent Boys.” Tulane University, 2013.
- Shore, Amanda. “Notes on Camp: A Decolonizing Strategy.” NSCAD University, 2015.
- Tillery, Randal K. “Touring Arcadia: Elements of Discursive Simulation and Cultural Struggle at a Children’s Summer Camp.” *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 3 (1992): 374-388.
- Turner, Victor. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967.
- Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969.
- Smith, Michael B. “‘The Ego Ideal of the Good Camper’ and the Nature of Summer Camp.” *Environmental History* 11, no. 1 (2006): 70-101.
- Van Slyck, Abigail A. *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- Van Slyck, Abigail A. “Kitchen Technologies and Mealtime Rituals: Interpreting the Food Axis at American Summer Camps, 1890-1950.” *Technology and Culture* 43, no. 4 (2002): 668-692.
- Waskul, Dennis D. “Camp Staffing: The Construction, Maintenance, and Dissolution of Roles and Identities at a Summer Camp.” *Sociological Spectrum* 18 (1998): 25-53.
- Weissner, Polly W. “Embers of Society: Firelight Talk Among the Ju/’hoansi Bushmen.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 111, no. 39 (2014): 1-9.

A summer camp, or sleepaway camp, is a supervised program for children or teenagers conducted during the summer months in some countries. Children and adolescents who attend summer camp are known as campers. Summer school is usually a required academic curriculum for a student to make up work not accomplished during the academic year, whereas summer camps can include academic work, but is not a requirement for graduation. A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960. In particular, Van Slyck describes how camp leaders tried to "manage" girls' bodies through their perpetuation of "menstrual etiquette," using Rebecca Ginsburg's terminology for the discretion expected of menstruating girls (p. 162). Instead, camps adopted Indian names, featured architectural elements such as wigwams or Big Houses, and instituted the ritual of the council ring, at which participants played at being Indian. It contributes usefully to our understanding of the social construction of childhood between 1890 and 1960, while drawing readers visually into the settings of camp life. Notes.