

“Where Boys Can Be Boys” – Investigating Cultural Models at a Woods Camp

Abstract: Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) suggests a somewhat circular process of identity influence, and posits that what we believe and value is revealed in our activity; and conversely, what we do is influenced by the beliefs of the community of which we are a part. Using Activity Theory's third principle of "Historicity" (Engeström, 2001), this paper considers the contradictions, tensions, conflicts and breakdowns of cultural models at a traditional New England camp for boys over time, and raises questions on how and why the cultural models have evolved. Interviews and identity artifacts of recent campers are compared with historical camp artifacts in order to better understand how the cultural models have developed, and what forms of cultural narratives are most effective in promoting and preserving attitudes and belief systems.

1. Introduction: Cultures of Learning.....	1
1.1. Context.....	2
1.2. Goal of Paper.....	3
2. Theoretical Framework.....	3
3. Data and Methodology.....	6
3.1. Sources: Early Cultural Models.....	6
3.2. Sources: Current Cultural Models.....	10
3.3. Analysis.....	11
4. Findings: How Cultural Models Have Evolved.....	13
4.1. Communitarianism.....	14
4.2. Ruggedness.....	18
4.3. Improvisation.....	21
4.4. Luddism: A New Turn.....	23
5. Discussion: Effective Mediums to Propagate Cultural Models.....	25
6. Sources.....	27

1. Introduction: Cultures of Learning

The study of Education is much more than a scientific inquiry into best methods for delivering content. It requires a deep understanding of the many cultures in play in deciding what content should be taught. A primary influence in the content of curricula can be better understood when one examines the cultural models held by the local community. It must be understood that we learn all the time, so the term “educators” here

refers not only to formal teachers, but also to learners' friends, family, peers, and the media and all cultural artifacts to which they are exposed.

1.1. Context

What follows is not arranged chronologically, for chronology has very little to do with Flying Moose. That is why campers from the distant past can return in the 1980s and feel very much at home with the same buildings, the same attitudes, and the same philosophical outlook. That is why old campers can enjoy current copies of the camp newspaper; and present day campers can derive an equal amount of interest from the old copies in the files. That is exactly as it should be. Very little changes at Flying Moose except the length of boys' hair. (Price, 1986: 4).

In 1993, I took a job as an Assistant Director at a small rustic camp for boys in New England called Flying Moose Lodge. The camp is off the grid and closely integrated into the land it is situated in. They build and use beautiful cedar-canvas canoes, not for show, but for "Everyday Use" (Walker, 1989) to send out on trips to be used and abused by 10-16 year old boys. This practice caught my attention, and in many ways changed my life. I have now made summers at that camp part of my life for the past 15 years, and while working in the present, have looked extensively into its history to try to understand why things are done a certain way, and what attitudes and beliefs led to current practices. The past four summers I have researched the use of GPS-assisted Augmented Reality (AR) video games that tries to recreate a hiking game that regularly took place at the camp in the early twentieth century to structure some of the camp's hiking trips. An interesting side-note that kept showing itself in the research interviews is the role that adventure and "toughness" play in forming the campers' identities as members in the camp community. This led me to formally consider how boys at the camp see themselves and the

community of campers that they belong to — a community that self-references themselves as "Moosers."

1.2. Goal of Paper

In order to better understand how attitudes and belief systems operate over time, this research project ascertains recent cultural models (Holland, 1987) demonstrated at a traditional New England camp for boys and compares them with the cultural models promoted by the camp's directors since 1922. The data consists of: 1) semi-structured interviews of recent campers about their trip experiences; 2) individual and group identity artifacts (plaques) campers construct and display to commemorate their time and experiences at camp; 3) articles and skits created by camper groups for their peers, chronicling their trips. It matches these recent models with older cultural artifacts created by campers and staff in the past, including camp songs, the self-published memoirs of a long-time camp director, plaques created by previous campers, and camp newspapers written by campers. It also includes the author's own observations and notes on the camp collected over the past fifteen summers. The research employs narrative analysis (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and D(d)iscourse analysis (Gee, 1999) to unpack the cultural models in order to consider how and why they have changed over the years through the camp experience.

2. Theoretical Framework

Our Magic Formula has evolved over the years, and when I took over it was well established. One reason that I think it may be a unique program is that its development has obviously been influenced by such factors as the camp's physical location, the camp's size, the availability of possible

trips in the immediate area, the clientele we seem to have attracted, and the vision of those who saw its possibilities back in the days when Flying Moose was still a part of old Camp Magunticook (Price, 1986:47).

The theoretical framework for this study is based primarily on the tenets of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), which maintains that Discourse and Practice reveal values. CHAT builds on work in educational theory and psychology research done throughout the twentieth century relating thinking, activity or experience, and community (Dewey, 1910; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leont'ev, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1988). CHAT suggests an ultimately circular process of influence and posits that what we believe and value is revealed in our activity -- what we do; and conversely what we do is influenced by the beliefs of the community of which we are a part.

In many respects, this project focuses on Dewey's (1925) "antecedent process" in that it compares intended camp experiences as revealed in stories by its directors -- those who set the activities for campers and who carry the torch of the camp's historical situation -- with the experiences of current campers as revealed in their comments and identity artifacts. A long-time director speaks of "the magic formula" of what works at camp (Price 1987: 89). Everything from the Tuesday-Friday trips to serving French toast Tuesday mornings has been experimented, challenged, and found to work well, to the point that it has become ritual. This has been passed down from generation to generation as the way things work at the camp, and is codified and documented through stories about the camp and its community in the form of written, filmed, and oral narratives. Wertsch (2002) connects these types of narratives to collective memory, and points to the need "to

create a usable past" (p. 45) through them that can be "a means for anchoring or constructing one's sense of who one is" (p. 120).

Whereas much traditional sociohistorical literature only considers our growing into a cultural identity based on "major structural features of society," Holland et al (1998) link "the development of identities and agency specific to practices and activities situated in socially-constructed 'worlds'" (p. 7). Within these socially-constructed worlds, who we become is informed and influenced by cultural models, which are "images or storylines or descriptions of simplified worlds in which prototypical events unfold" (Gee, 1999:59). More specifically, cultural models can be seen as "presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared ... by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of the world and their behavior in it" (Holland & Quinn, 1987:4).

This sort of continuity is possible because the cultural models are passed on through artifacts. The society I discuss here is a community of 'Moosers' bounded in the geographical and temporal space of a summer at camp. Price's (1987) retrospective clearly demonstrates that boys at FML become part of tradition of 'Moosers' that spans states/countries and decades/generations. Besides biological families' own traditions of sending their boys to FML, Price views Moosers as part of growing family (Price, 1987:104), a belief that requires or encourages a respect of tradition, elders, and past accomplishments. Price's own deep admiration of Mr. Domi and his 'magic formula' for a successful camp is clearly evident in his narrative, to the point where Mr. Domi became

more than Price's grade school teacher, but also a personal and important mentor in the business and craft/magic of running a camp. Mr. Domi was the fatherly wizard who wizened visage set the lines of the face of FML throughout Price's tenure. Price would term Mr. Domi as the giant whose shoulders he precariously balanced upon.

3. Data and Methodology

Old Camp Magunticook had a collection of black and white slides, which were shown on occasion to attract new campers. Slides of that sort must have been popular in the early 1920s, for we have a large box of them, which depict the early days of Flying Moose. Things look remarkably the same today. Change the boys' knickers to blue jeans, bring the old cars and trucks up to date, modernize some of the camping equipment, especially the ungainly knapsacks and other pieces of World War I surplus, and Flying Moose 1987 could pass for Flying Moose 1926. (Price, 1987:105).

This project fits Stake's (1995) portrayal of a case study, in that its examination, although of multiple data sources, is bounded in time and place of the camp from its founding in 1921 up to the present. It is important to note then as Geertz (1973) prompts, "the locus of study is not the object of study" (p. 22). Accordingly, I am not studying the camp, but am instead looking for greater understanding of the cultural models embedded within its dominant discourse.

3.1. Sources: Early Cultural Models

Initial cultural models associated with summer camp experience were rooted from a search for *authentic experience* that welled up in the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th century, as a reaction against the perception of over-civilization (Lear, 1981). American men, Lear asserts, felt that they and their sons were becoming *soft*. This spurred a "back

to the basics” movement that sought to endow “the bone and blood that a man needs for his fighting days in the world” (p. 75). Summer camps were created and looked to in order to meet that need, and continue to do so today.

Early writing about camps, such as Wack's (1925) *The Camping Ideal: the New Human Race*, praise camps for creating industrious and hard-working citizens — “crime of every description and degree is multiplying in the proportion that leisure, unemployed, idle and mischievous leisure, is increased and placed at the disposal of individuals who have never learned what to do with time except to ‘kill’ it.” (p. 35). Wack and his colleagues toured all the 'good' camps of the Northeastern and Midwestern United States, singing their praises for an annual *Redbook* publication. “In our schools and cultural camps we can render the bald facts of childlife into the beautiful facts of a superior citizenship, a high-tensioned class of men and women of greater poise and power” (p. 91).

In addition to producing hard-working citizens, camps were closely linked to progressive learning. From the days of FML's founding, Dimock and Hendry's (1929) *Camping and Character* claims to be one of the first "scientific" studies of the educational value of summer camps, drawing on early educational leader William H. Kilpatrick to write its foreword, and including numerous quotes by, and authoritative references to, educational philosopher John Dewey. Barksdale (1999) echoes both views, highlighting campers' social class and cultural ideas of manly, rugged, self-sufficient boys -- he uses the term "wilderness machismo" (p. 22). In addition to making men out of boys, Barksdale praises camps' educational value, quoting diplomat William T. Bullitt, who said, “it was a boys

camp in the woods that stood alone as ‘the best educational institution in the United States’” (p. 28).

For this piece, I look to the activities of campers and staff who 'set the standards' for Flying Moose Lodge through activities that they undertook many decades ago. My own experiences at the camp have spanned fifteen years as an assistant director. In this time, my involvement began as a total outsider to the history and culture of the camp, hired by the third director to bring in outside ideas. The first few years were spent trying to introduce substitutes to many of what I felt were outdated and inefficient traditions. These were often hailed by the young staff, but rejected or deeply tempered by alumni and the director's family. To better understand the resistance to 'modern ideas' on camping that I was bringing in, I began to research the history of the camp, digging up original texts and films, interviewing alumni, and inquiring into the sub-texts and stories behind the director's decisions. As I grew to better understand the culture of the camp, I grew to love it and to negotiate more conservatively between new ideas and traditional ways.

To understand the historical precedence for some of the major espoused cultural models exhibited at Flying Moose, I turned to three cultural artifacts that contained multimodal representations (Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T., 2001) of cultural models.

The primary source was the autobiography of the camp's second director (1940-1986), chronicling his first experiences as a camper in 1927, and stories from his tenure as the

camp director. Titled, *A Bad Case of Moosepox*, (hereafter *Moosepox*) the self-published document is more of a biography of the camp than a personal memoir, but its voice is very situated in the personal experiences of the author. Still, as a camper, counselor, and then director of the camp for 45 years, it is a voice that had great affect on the shaping and molding of many of the camp's strong traditions — one of which he indicates is a focus on tradition.

Supplementing this, I examined slides and 16mm footage of promotional film created by the original director in the 1920s and 1930s to show to prospective campers (parents) and their friends in neighborhood living rooms of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The film segments total over seven hours, and were donated to the North East Historic Film Society in Bucksport, Maine, where I had digital copies made. Far from Hollywood, these films were roughly edited. Some scenes are natural, some loosely staged, and some are total fictions. One example is of a group of campers sitting around a campfire smoking corncob pipes; when the camera approaches them, they become surly and confrontational. Chris Price (2002) tells me that his father created this scene as a practical joke; he gave the boys corncob pipes with flour in them and asked them to portray a seedy scene of camp for a reel to show mothers whose boys he didn't think would 'fit' at camp.

Kress & Leeuwen (2001) demonstrate that these sorts of artifacts provide a source of multimodal discourse to examine. In their filming and editing choices, the directors tried to capture their visions of the camp, and so revealed their values and the overall values

embedded in Flying Moose. Decisions made in design and production of this film footage for marketing, Kress & Leeuwen (2001) assert, reveal discourse not only in content, but also in expression.

The third source of I examine for cultural models are the camp-specific songs created over the years. Many of these songs, created by campers and staff in the early years of the camp are still sung and memorized with vigor each week by the campers, both during 'campfire' (singing) time, but also impromptu on trips, van rides, and throughout their lives — years after leaving camp. They include representations of group identity including models of masculinity, toughness, and adventurous spirit.

3.2. Sources: Current Cultural Models

Data to determine current cultural models also comes from three multimodal sources. As part of the research on using Augmented Reality games to study place-based inquiry learning, I have performed about forty semi-structured interviews of recent campers about their trip experiences. Although these questions focus on the activity of the hiking trip, much is also revealed regarding the cultural models that inform the campers' decisions and values. I also examine individual and group identity artifacts (plaques) that campers construct and display to commemorate their time and experiences at camp. These plaques are typically under two circumstances: 1) by a trip group after returning from a two-week canoe or hiking trip; and 2) by individual campers who have spent multiple summers at the camp, to mark their time at camp. The third set of sources I use includes camp newspaper articles and editorials created by campers and counselors (who

were campers), chronicling their trips and philosophies about the camp. I use a type of narrative analysis to match these recent models with older cultural artifacts created by campers and staff in the past, including camp songs, the self-published memoirs of a long-time camp director, plaques created by previous campers, and camp newspapers written by campers. It also includes the author's own observations and notes on the camp collected over the past fifteen summers.

3.3. Analysis

Given the character and restrictions of my research setting and varied grain size of the analytical units, I found myself limited in the types of methodologies to employ for analysis. The Russian cultural-historical strand of activity theory has traditionally paid primary attention to naturalistic experiments on the mediation of everyday activity rather than overly controlled lab experiments, attempting to recreate the experiments in cross-cultural settings in order to abstract universal findings (Cole, 1996: 338-340). This approach however, does not work within the range and scope of my study.

Instead, I employ the ethnographic methods of narrative analysis (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and multimodal analysis (Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. 2001) to examine cultural artifacts that address a diverse set of camp activities at different stages in the camp's history. For current cultural models, I consider what the current interviews, artifacts, and my own observation reveals. For example, in interviews about how the ARGH tools and narrative mediated the activity, participants revealed not only what they thought the base activity was, but also their values and cultural models as individuals and members of the camp community.

In order to determine the contradictions, tensions, conflicts and breakdowns (Engeström, 2001) I mapped a unique activity system of an augmented reality game on handhelds (ARGH) that structured a camping trip (Martin, 2008), as it compared to the activity system of a traditional trip (*Figure 1*).

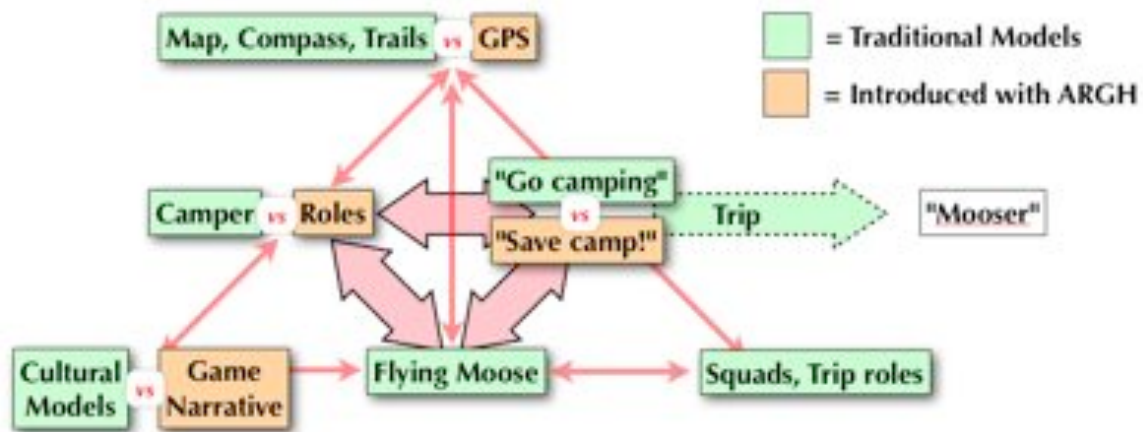


Figure 1. ARGH trip and tradition trip mapped onto Engeström's triangle.

I then use Activity Theory's third principle of "Historicity" (Engeström, 2001) to consider the contradictions, tensions, conflicts and breakdowns of cultural models between historical activity systems in order to consider how they have changed over the years through the camp experience. This study is qualitative, and as such I seek to explore and understand rather than explain the causes of the cultural models (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). However, in unpacking, some causal relationships seem apparent. It is through emerging patterns from these sources that I assembled overlapping cultural models of the current generation of *Moosers*.

4. Findings: How Cultural Models Have Evolved

Many of the cultural models that campers hold, such as communitarianism, ruggedness, and improvisation have not changed significantly since the camp was founded in 1922.

On the other hand, there is a less obvious, but noticeable shift towards an interesting form of Luddism that was not noticeable in early cultural artifacts, but has become significant.

That many of the cultural models have not changed significantly is partly due to design, in that many there is a conscious effort to not stray from many of the camp's traditions — what Price (1987) calls "the magic formula." He attributes the continued success of the camp, and its popularity with generations of families to how well the camp has stayed the course (p. 104). In the preface of *Moosepox*, Price explains:

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Almost every year for the past fifteen, I am reminded of this sense among *Moosers* that FML is an oasis of stability in a world of flux. Alumni from as far back as the 1930s will stop by to visit. Often they are traveling with their wives to meet their grandchildren for weekend in Acadia National Park; they see the camp sign as they drive by, some memory is triggered, and they turn around because they can't believe the camp is still there. They pull their walker out, or hold a wife, or child, or grandchild, and walk down to where the tents are. "My god!" they'll say, "Nothing has changed!"

4.1. Communitarianism

There seems to have always been, at this camp, strong communitarian elements, with emphasis placed "not on the individuals, but rather on the affiliations they have with the various groups of which they are a part" (Christensen & Levinson, 2003:859). This stands in contrast to some of the writing of other outdoor educators, such as Kurt Hahn (1960), whose focus seems to be more on the testing of oneself as an individual.

At FML, the campers operate individually within a number of overlapping groups. They are foremost in tent groups, where they bunk with other boys their approximate age. Throughout the day when at base camp they operate in rotating squads to peel vegetables, serve and clean up after meals, and sweep and pick up common areas. On the weekly trips, they camp in groups of 4-6, pairing or tripling up in canoes. At meals, they sit at one of four tables for a week at a time. In the evenings at camp, they crowd together to sing and to hear stories. These groupings are part of the "magic formula" (Price, 1986) that has been passed down to directors since the 1920s. They are traditions that inform and structure the models of communitarianism today.

4.1.1. Communitarianism in Past

Evidence of communitarianism is thickly threaded throughout the history and present of the camp. As mentioned earlier, it has been built into the structure of the camp (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Some camp groups from 16mm film footage: game groups (losing here), trip group, calisthenics group (everyone), squad groups (ice cream), tent group (rolling flaps), skill learning groups (swimming).

From the earliest archives, the song "Flying Moosers Strong and Husky" was one of the earliest FML songs, found in the *Glass Slides* series of photographs from the 1920s, and is still one of the most requested campfire songs to this day (Figure 3).

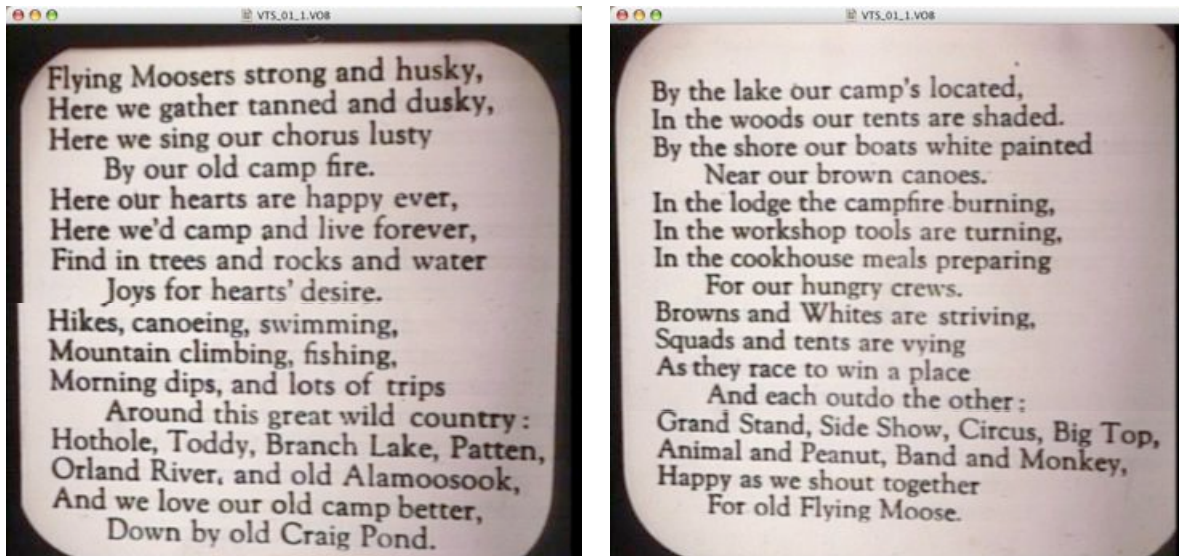


Figure 3. Song Lyrics to "Flying Moosers Strong and Husky" from the *Glass Slides*

*Flying Moosers strong and husky,
 Here we gather tanned and dusky,
 Here we sing our chorus lusty
 By our old campfire.
 Here our hearts are happy ever,
 Here we'd camp and live forever,
 Find in trees and rocks and water
 Joys for hearts' desire.
 Hikes, canoeing, swimming,
 Mountain climbing, fishing,
 Morning dips, and lots of trips
 Around this great wild country :
 Hothole, Toddy, Branch Lake, Patten,
 Orland River, and old Alamoosook,
 And we love our old camp better,
 Down by old Craig Pond.*

In these song lyrics are clues to the cultural models of *Flying Moosers*. Most noticeably, we hear only plurals describing the activities — they act together just as they sing together. Forgive me as I bring a dramatic voice to the interpretations of the cultural models within the lyrics.

Moosers, we hear, are young men who are "strong and husky" and "gather" together to "sing our chorus lusty." The chorus is "lust" rather than wimpy or grand or patriotic or sorrowful, and it seems understood that "strong and husky" men, if they are to sing, would sing no other type of chorus. Instead of *happening* upon each other (by chance), or

even *collecting* in one spot (like trash), Flying Moosers purposefully "gather" -- much as kings or warriors would before heading into battle together. They gather "by our old camp fire" -- an image of the masculine hearth that is familiar and ageless, a traditional meeting place of toughened men in the rustic outdoors, while presumably the womenfolk (the boys' mothers) huddle in the safe comforting warmth of the home fireplace. It is only "by our old camp fire" -- in such a place of requisite toughness, that the heart of Flying Mooser can be "happy ever." If possible, the Flying Mooser would forego all luxury, and "camp and live forever" in Spartan richness, where "joys for hearts' desire" is found "in trees and rocks and water."

The rest of the lyrics of this song, as well as those in all the other Flying Moose-specific songs still sung today focus on adventurous activities done in groups, and although many include competitive references, but even in competition they are in groups, and shouting together as a camp community.

*Browns and Whites are striving.
Squads and tents are vying
As they race to win a place
And each outdo the other:
Grandstand, Side Show, Circus, Big Top,
Animal and Peanut, Band and Monkey,
Happy as we shout together
For old Flying Moose.*

4.1.2. Communitarianism in Present

Perhaps because "Flying Moosers Strong and Husky" and other camp songs from the 1920s are still popular with campers and staff today, many of the models within them are also communicated to, and embraced by, today's campers. Most evidently is the sense of

campers' membership in groups. They move in and out of a variety of groups throughout the day — small tent groups of boys their age; small chore squad groups that range in age, abilities and knowledge of 'the way we do it at FML'; trip groups of boys with similar camping skills; and camp-color teams (brown and white) that follow generational lines (i.e. if father was brown, son is also brown).

In recent individual research interviews about their Augmented Reality game trip experiences every single participants responded as representatives of a group, detailing the trip in plural language — "In a regular hiking trip it's like 'yeah, we're gonna climb this mountain' but in the game it's like 'Yeah, we HAVE TO climb up the mountain to get this done!' " They spoke of spreading out in the woods to find the best route for the group, of going over maps as a group, and even of collecting blueberries together for the group's breakfast.

4.2. Ruggedness

The idea that camps turned soft boys into rugged men of character has been around since the earliest camps in New England. Barksdale (1999) reflects on the history of camps, highlighting campers' social class and cultural ideas of manly, rugged, self-sufficient boys -- he uses the term "wilderness machismo." Camp was attributed with changing coddled boys into young men who were "swarthy, long-haired and hardened ... as gloriously savage as their wild surroundings." (p. 22). At Flying Moose, it was once part of the letterhead: "where a boy comes into his own" (Price, 1987:129). This idea of the camp as a place of ritualistic growth and toughening is still present and evidenced in the

scores of second and third generation campers whose fathers and grandfathers felt that the camp provided them with toughening experiences, and who want the boys in their lives to experience them as well.

4.2.1. Ruggedness in Past

Many examples of demonstration days are documented at other camps (Hale 1984, Wack 1925, Mitchell 1970, Dimond 1935), arranged as a performance with each activity featuring star campers demonstrating activities in which they're most skilled, and 'average' or younger campers working together in a group activity.



Figure 4. Campers canoe jousting on Visitors' day.

These two slides (Fig. 4) are of 'canoe jousting' -- a sport that was somewhat popular at camps until the 1970s and 1980s when lawsuits and insurance costs put an end to it. With two men per canoe, each bowman stood balanced in the front of his canoe wielding a long pole with a padded basketball on the end of it. The stern-man, in the back of the canoe provided the horsepower and maneuvers, and they worked together to knock the bowman out of the opposing canoe. Its inclusion in a performance that highlights and

attempts to explain 'what camp is about' in real-time to the live audience, suggests a valuing of the ruggedness of the campers.

An alumnus who was a camper in the 1960s and counselor in the 1970s proposed that there's a certain hunger in campers to have stories of their toughness. He describes it a responsibility of the trip leader to create that narrative for the campers — "as a kid, you think you're hopelessly lost and about to face death! In reality, you're just a few feet off trail, but you get back and have this amazing story to share about how you survived!" (Childs, 2002).

4.2.2. Ruggedness in Present

The sense of ruggedness, and hunger to tell stories of 'near death' experiences is alive and well at FML today. It's something that the directors need to constantly address by double-checking with trip leaders and other members of trips when concerned parents call about a story their son related about almost dying on this or that trip. Stories of surviving 'death marches' are frequently related with a smile, as this 2006 camper does when asked what he learned about himself as a camper:

We have courage. We take things. Like I kept saying to myself "Power through!" when we were going through big thorny bushes, to just power through it. Keep going. Other camps might take pity a bit more. Instead of saying 'we gotta get there' and 'just suck it up!' they might stop and I don't know...

So we put you through a lot here?

Andy: yeah

Is that ok?

Andy: yeah, I think it's fun!

In their experiences on trips at FML, they learn more about their physical limits, and to push themselves harder to build those limits. They compare themselves to earlier cultures that moved through the land "when GPS wasn't an option" and they gain respect for them. They weighed the difficulty of a high mile day trail hiking with the difficulty of a much lower mile bushwhacking, and judged it "more hardcore."

You learn a lot about the wilderness and where you are. And I've learned more about myself. I can actually push myself harder than I thought I could. I have more confidence I what I could do.

I gained more respect for the people who first came out here and forged new trails. Mapping out new areas. It's pretty intense. Especially back in the day when GPS wasn't an option

It's a moving trip, so you carry all your stuff with you instead of just leaving it and taking your daypack with you, and we bushwhacked through a bunch of stuff; it was easy but hard.

4.3. Improvisation

Part of the allure of FML to campers and counselors is the improvisation involved and even required in camping trips. Finding a tent site among the ones not already taken, creating a meal with what the raccoons hadn't stolen the night before, righting a canoe that flipped in the rapids, dealing with a blister – and perhaps doing all of these things in an unexpected thunderstorm with other campers that you may not like very well. It can be difficult and challenging for members of the trip.

4.3.1. Improvisation in Past

FML has a great tradition of improvisation stories that get passed down in camp lore, such as repairing the broken gunwales of a canoe on a trip using saplings (Price, 1986:40), organizing campsites for the conditions available (e.g. using the truck to hold

up the tents), or designing 4th of July canoe floats using the numbered food boxes that are sent on trips (Figure 5). Although all action is situated, and therefore somewhat improvisational, there is a sense of celebration about the extent that improvisation is built into the structure of FML.



Figure 5. Example of improvisation at FML, from the *Glass Slides* (left), and *Reel 37* (right).

Price describes the environment that breeds this sort of improvisational spirit:

We have always considered our program to be quiet and informal, but it is quite obvious that that quietness and informality is interpreted differently by different people. Several years ago one camper told me that he really liked Flying Moose because it was so disorganized. I trust he meant unstructured. Informal we may be, but not disorganized. (Price, 1986:129).

4.3.1. *Improvisation in Present*

This level of informality continues into the present. A few years ago a counselor, somewhat frustrated about the lack of structured systems, exclaimed to me, "the scary thing about Flying Moose is that everything gets done only by the skin of its teeth!" What he described is akin to the pressure that campers feel when they get to a site in the rain, and find the tent sites flooded, with no dry wood around. It will be a difficult and

uncomfortable night, but when the sun comes out the next day they'll be proud and tell stories about how they set up the tarps in impossible conditions.

In interviews with AR Mystery Trip participants, there was a lot of improvisation references, where campers talked about "gophering to the next checkpoint," and discovering that they had to take circuitous routes around swamps. For one group, when the battery on the handheld computer died, they played the game using the map and the counselor's knowledge of the narrative. Another group played in manual mode when the GPS died. A group of 14-16 year old players gave up on the game when the batteries died, but spent their time creating a campsite for the next group of players to use. One eleven year old was intent on putting all the exciting experiences in a game, and claimed, "I was always thinking about how we could turn the land, like using it in the game, like when we saw the hunter's towers I knew we could use those in the game" – and indeed the hunting platforms turned into enemy snipers that groups had to quietly navigate past.

4.4. Luddism: A New Turn

Although a number of the cultural models evident in the camp's historical artifacts appear to still be present in current campers, there are some changes. Analysis suggests that some identifiers in the models that were perhaps intended to develop (e.g. 'roughing it') have stagnated into a form of anti-technology Luddism. For example, some current campers feel that to be a true camper requires an ability to survive and prosper in the woods without reliance on 'forbidden' technologies (such as GPS or electronic devices), and strongly object to the introduction of such technologies ("It doesn't belong here -- I

come here to get away from technology!” (Martin, 2008:9), but do not consider high-tech fabrics or L.E.D. flashlights as technologies that contradict those models of independence. When scrutinized, past camp narratives suggest that the camp directors were not shy to use the latest technology to sell the camp, and that campers had always used what they felt were the best technologies to ease hardship on trips.

Perhaps because the camp markets itself as a traditional camp without electricity, Internet, or phones, the idea that it rejects all new technologies is conflated into its mission. Kids see a half-dozen remarkably maintained propane refrigerators from the 1940s and 1950s in use in the kitchen, and they bunk in canvas tents and Adirondock-style shelters that are so musty (and therefore old), that surely their fathers must have slept in the same tents, and they feel like they've stepped back into time into an era of their ancestors. What may not be as apparent to them is that the refrigerators are still in use because they work and the camp wants to remain off-grid; even new tents smell musty after a rain; and shelters have been rebuilt many times with the same pattern. They see the cedar-canvas canoes and assume that they're old, and kept around because the camp likes old low-technology things, when the reasons for the canoes is to provide an elegant form of transport that campers, and the camp community, has built by hand. Price further describes his love of the wood-canvas canoe as one of practicality — almost the opposite of luddism:

We were determined in our search to avoid aluminum and fiberglass at all costs. Early fiberglass canoes were remarkably unattractive, and aluminum canoes had their own special problems. They rode high out of the water, a feature which caused problems even in a moderate wind. On top of all that, aluminum and fiberglass canoes did not provide the flexibility of a wood and canvas canoe. Sometimes aluminum canoes tended to stick to

boulders rather than glide over them. This would cause them to come to a quick and embarrassing stop, as the rock grabbed at the soft aluminum. It isn't too difficult to follow the path of an aluminum canoe down a set of rapids by the aluminum blazes, but you had better not follow too closely. On the other hand, paddling a wooden canoe over all but the very sharpest rocks is quite an experience. Sitting in the stern you can watch the bulge work towards you in the bottom, as ribs and planking give just enough to allow the canoe to slide over. You can't do that with fiberglass or aluminum (Price, 1986:36).

5. Discussion: Effective Mediums to Propagate Cultural Models

For many of the families whose boys attend Flying Moose, the path from boyhood to manhood includes a few summers at this camp. It is a place, the founder would say, "where a boy comes into his own" (Price, 1987, p. 129). The current director modifies that idea slightly with an update, describing it as a place "where boys can be boys" (Price, 2002). It is a place offering opportunities to gain self-sufficiency skills, but also a place with familiar comforts -- even if not in a typically comfortable situation. For example, they get home-made ice cream, but have to hike in rain, sleep in tents, catch frogs, play canoe games, etc. They are learning skills that build, to a certain extent, on their own curiosity and competitive nature. Together, it adds up -- as the founder boasts: "Mark Twain never had more fun" (Price, 1987: 133). These attitudes and values are passed on from grandfathers, fathers, and older brothers who went to the camp, but they are also present in the camp lore that surrounds them, from songs about "strong and husky" campers who are "tanned and dusky" to individual identity plaques from past campers that convey "100 pushups a day for strong arms," to group-constructed trip plaques that tell of extreme adventures, such as "Chippy ate our GORP, so we ate Chippy!" -- complete with a tanned chipmunk skin.



Figure 5. A trip plaque documenting the adventures of a 2007 Appalachian Trail trip.

Not all artifacts are so extreme, but the influence that they model is apparent in subsequent design of narratives, as current campers try to out-adventure previous campers.

Bruner (1996) writes that "we frame the accounts of our cultural origins and our most cherished beliefs in story form" (p. 40). As G.M White demonstrates how cultural models can be seen in proverbs (Holland, 1987), likewise much of what those who run the camp value can be traced in the cultural models revealed by these stories. This research examines the Discourse – ways of talking-acting-interacting-believing as certain types of people engaged in certain types of actions (Gee, 2001) – of their stories about the camp, as conveyed multimodally (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) through slides, film making,

life/camp history writing, oral narration and artifacts. It then compares cultural models revealed therein with cultural models revealed by the narratives and artifacts of the current generation. It suggests which messages are ringing true to them, and begins to theorize why. This may offer insight into what types of stories and mediums are more effective than others in communicating attitudes and belief systems, which may ultimately help better present to future generations messages we feel are most significant. More directly, however, the process alone of identifying current cultural models can offer insight on which attitudes and beliefs that we try to pass on are actually getting through to the next generations, and which attitudes and beliefs we need to further emphasize in order to effectively pass on cultural values.

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