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1. Introduction

Throughout my childhood, I was made very aware of how I was expected to behave. While on a more overt level this was related to my religious upbringing, meaning that I was expected to ‘live like a Christian’, this also extended to my understanding of gender. For instance, I recall one of my parents chastising my sister for refusing to follow my instructions during a gardening project. ‘He is a boy and you are a girl’ they admonished, ‘so you need to do what he says’. I remember being confused as to why, due to her being a girl, my sister ‘needed’ to listen to me. Looking back, I realize that I also felt that my sister was (and is) a far more capable leader, meaning that my discomfort was also rooted in not feeling able to fulfill the expectation of being the kind of man who could order people about. As a sensitive, non-athletic and effeminate child, I was therefore very aware of how I did not align with my parent’s idea of a ‘real man’ as being stoic, athletic, and masculine. Although I never directly questioned this assessment of gender, about a year after I came out as a gay man I moved to Vienna, Austria. Through this removal from my previous context, I was given the opportunity and the freedom to finally begin assessing my masculine identity for myself, free of the need to pretend to be my parent’s idea of ‘real man’. However, I quickly discovered that this idealized image was not so easy to shake. While some fellow queer acquaintances completely changed their identity upon moving away from their families, I was still very much entrenched in the expectations I had been brought up with, in spite of the outward pressures being largely absent in my new context. I began to ask myself ‘Why is it so hard to be myself, the way I want to be?’ This question eventually formed the starting point for my thesis: how have I been *taught* to understand and critique my identity as a man? In other words, I wanted to explore how masculine identity is taught to men in childhood.

The question of identity formation was further solidified through my introduction to critical whiteness theory and, later, critical masculinity studies, where theories of performativity revealed that race and gender were not as ‘natural’ as I had assumed.¹ In 1950s and 1960s France, the rise of structuralism (followed by post-structuralism and to a greater degree deconstructuralism) challenged theories of essentialism by suggesting that people are influenced by interrelating webs of discursive power structures.² Prior to this, essentialist

¹ My coming to an awareness of my privilege as a white man was a foundational aspect of this developing question. As such, I am aware that I come from a place of privilege in terms of both my gender, my skin color and my adherence to performances of race that are usually deemed to be ‘white’. This awareness therefore places me and my argument in line with Bailey’s concept of “[r]ace traitors”, defined as members of white circles who seek to question the very structures that privilege them (32-33).

² For a brief overview of the early years of structuralism, see Bazin (pars. 21-26).

thought had placed the individual at the center of their identity, suggesting that people are “naturally” inclined towards certain behaviors (McIntosh para. 1). Structuralism struck down the idea of certain elements being ‘intrinsically natural’ by arguing that people’s relationship with themselves and others is subject to the influence of social structures (Blackburn 1). Alison Bailey relates this influence to concepts of race as a performance, which she describes as “attitudes and behaviors expected of one’s particular racial group” that are enacted through race-specific “performances that follow historically preestablished scripts [sic]” (33). Bailey describes these scripts as including “a person’s gestures, language, attitudes, concept of personal space, gut reactions to certain phenomena, and body awareness” and indicates that these scripts are often context-specific (33). This means that being understood as ‘white’ in London in 1850 and being ‘white’ in New York in 2010 require variations of these scripts (33). As Heinz suggests, such “stereotypes and categories” are then repeated, accordingly confirming their continued validity and perceived accuracy as ‘natural’ (248). This means that race is not based on static physical features as has often been understood. Race is instead dynamic, hinging upon ever-shifting and subjective comparisons and hierarchies of belonging that are tied to the performance of these scripts. For example, Heinz indicates that, during the Fenian movement for Irish independence, the British government’s insistence that the Irish were not capable of self-governing was made under the implication that the Irish needed the governance of others (247). This can be seen in the increase of propagandic images of Irish figures as ape-like, which sought to visually “prov[e]” the closeness of the Irish with animals (247). In short, this depiction reinforced understandings of the scripts that placed the Irish into a category as ‘black’ and therefore in need of the governance of which they themselves were assumedly not capable. This example further indicates that categorizations of race often, if not always, serve a hierarchical purpose.³ As such, I follow Heinz’s definition of whiteness as a dynamic and fluid group of socially constructed self-identifiers that work to create and maintain power structures that can benefit and exclude groups of people (241, 249).

By maintaining scripts that are connected to the division of power within society, the ability to place other groups higher or lower on the social ladder becomes both possible and appealing to groups in power (typically consisting of white men). This hierarchy extends into gender in the form of women and men being assumed to be ‘naturally’ different in a way that suggests men are superior. Judith Butler ties this concept to the topic of homosexual men who

³ See Dyer (ch. 2) for a further examination of this topic.

adopt performances of hegemonic masculinity in order to ‘counterbalance’ their perceived negative association with masculinity’s opposite, femininity (70). Following this concept, I define hegemonic masculinity as a cultural standard that men are expected to compare themselves to, with the individual’s perceived success as a man being graded in accordance to how closely he is able to align himself to this ideal and how much he can simultaneously distance himself from femininity. While the elements that make up this ideal will differ from culture to culture, a hegemonic standard is consistently marked by both its perceived necessity and alleged achievability, meaning one can and should continuously strive to become ‘more of a man’. This is especially true in a society built on ideas of patriarchy (which I define as social systems that fix men as the most important, influential and capable members of that society), where failing to be like the hegemonic ideal for masculinity places one ‘further down the totem pole’ in terms of social value.

These definitions of whiteness and hegemonic masculinity indicate that performances of race and performances of gender are constructed through ideas of failure and success, suggesting that power dynamics are maintained through the control of idealization. Idealized images of performances such as whiteness act as a measuring stick by which one's worth in a white-centric society is measured. This example then equates the aspiration to become ‘more white’ with the aspiration to improve one's social standing. In terms of gender, as Matthew W. Hughey argues, white men formulate an idealized image of white masculinity that “privilege[s] and venerate[s] supposedly ‘masculine’ traits”, serving to position non-masculine traits as “lesser-than” and masculine traits as “ideal” (99). As a result, white men are suggested to be closer to the ideal than people of color and/or women and white men are accordingly assumed to have more social value since they are most capable of aligning with that ideal. In essence, the power dynamics of such a hierarchy are based around maintaining the depiction of white masculinity as idealized and therefore worthy of aspiration.

Since my argument seeks to deconstruct the discursive formulations of idealization through the framework of aspiration, this essay can be understood as inherently anti-essentialist. Although idealized depictions of white masculinity are often assumed to be static and ‘natural’, they operate as social arenas where discursive elements of power are solidified and disputed. As such, recognizing these idealized images as being socially constructed indicates that their formulation can be problematized and deconstructed. This brings into question the power dynamics behind essentialized understandings of ‘the natural’ of race and gender,

thereby providing opportunity for further deconstruction. Within my examination of the discussions surrounding ways in which idealized depictions of race and gender are formed through aspiration, I sought to connect the similar but distinct areas of critical white studies and critical masculinity. To narrow down this discussion, I will present two specific themes to provide a connecting thread which will outline my discussion of aspirational white masculinity. First I will examine whiteness in terms of transcendence, or the overcoming of the body, before discussing masculinity and how it is related to self-control. This allows me to present how the body acts as a representation of white masculinity's paradoxical formulation in terms of needing to be free of the body and while simultaneously needing to actively resist its influence. As I show, both of these themes are ultimately formulated through depictions of success and failure, through which the idealized (if contradictory) image of 'a real man' is defined. In order to illustrate how both of these aspirational elements are then depicted and framed as achievable during childhood, I examine an all-male summer camp in the period from 1950 into the early 1960s (which I term as 'the long 1950s'). I reveal how both overcoming and self-control can be presented through physical embodiments of success and failure, with aspirational qualities being mapped onto physical fitness and social markers that require the gaze of others. Through this framework and case study, I conclusively show that aspirational concepts of white masculinity are constructed as 'natural' and 'necessary' through the depiction of success, failure and comparison during men's formative years, thereby forming an ideal that affects the man's understanding of his and others' masculinity throughout adulthood.

2. Theory

2.1 "Flex to the Heavens": Transcending the White Body

In Richard Dyer's *White*, he argues that "[w]hite identity is founded on compelling paradoxes: a vividly corporeal cosmology that most values transcendence of the body; a notion of being at once a sort of race and the human race, an individual and a universal subject" (39). These two notions, that of the transcending or overcoming of the body and that of being both distinct and universal, are arguably the most interconnected and most impactful in terms of constructing white identity as superior and idealized. The first of these ideas, that of transcendence, is often thought of in terms of overcoming or endurance, while the second, that of universality, is shown in depictions of whites' supposed disconnect from their bodies (and as such their skin color). Both Dyer and Jeremy Strong have illustrated the idealization

of overcoming by linking it to discussions of physical fitness, with Dyer further relating this capacity as a rationale for how whiteness is positioned as the assumed standard for humanity. In the following pages, I will follow their line of thought by examining the sculpted body as a demonstrative symbol of overcoming seemingly impossible physical limitations, followed by a discussion of how religious imagery impacts this concept and how it plays into the role of white men as the human neutral or the 'everyman' figure.

2.1.1 The Everyman: "Able to Overcome The Body in a Single Bound!!"

As Dyer points out, a body that is muscular and of larger proportion is "an achieved body, worked at, planned, suffered for [which] requires forethought and long-term organisation" and that the act of "building bodies is the most literal triumph of mind over matter" (153). This argument suggests that those who are able to build their bodies effectively are often perceived through their ability to overcome the limitations of the body. As Strong indicates, this is most pertinent within the field of bodybuilding, which operates through a constant pursuit of suggestion, or of indicating potential, rather than actual function (171). Nigel Edly also notes a marked distinction between function and show in the relational difference between powerlifters and bodybuilders, since powerlifters tend to work towards an increase in strength and an increased capability for lifting weights without much thought for aesthetics (66). The goal for a bodybuilder does not rest on being better able to kick a ball or run faster. Rather, the bodybuilder focuses on being able to push the body past what is possible, specifically in terms of size. As Strong points out, the idealized image of bodybuilders is one that is not physically natural and is intended more for a visual appraisal of its bodily amplification as opposed to increased performance capacity (170). The proposed shape of the inverted triangle (typified of a small waist and broad shoulders) is informed most often by the before-and-after advertisements in bodybuilding magazines. This creates both a goal to strive towards ('I want to see growth in my shoulders like him') as well as informing a discourse between bodybuilders on what the ideal looks like ('the shoulders make him look off-balance, he needs to aim for symmetry') (Strong 166-67).

A major influence on crafting the idealized image of the built body can be found in depictions of comic book superheroes. Actors Henry Cavill, who most recently portrayed Superman on the big screen, and Hugh Jackman, known for playing Wolverine in the *X-Men* films, are both often praised for their ability to push their bodies to the limit in order to achieve the musculature of the comic book heroes, working out for hours on end to build and define their

bodies (Vanstone pars. 3, 7-8). The ability to overcome the limitations of the body and seemingly bring these characters onto the screen (a feat far more difficult than in animated depictions, where the flexibility of drawing⁴ makes such unrealistic proportions comparatively easy to achieve) is tied to the ethos of the hypermasculine comic book figures, which Paul McIlvenny argues presents the masculine desires of “unlimited strength, unrestricted movement, and unbounded space” (110). In other words, these fictional characters represent figures of aspiration who are able to overcome what the body is physically incapable of (Superman can fly and move an entire planet with pure brute force, Wolverine can heal from anything and has a seemingly limitless cache of energy). Superman’s indestructibility and his limitless strength in particular has been linked to the formulation of western white male ideals of the built body, based largely around the concept of overcoming. Paul Wells reveals that Superman’s depiction in some of his earliest on-screen appearances, such as in the 1940s Fleischer Brother’s cartoon adaptations, was largely concerned with his role as both human and not human, becoming a symbol for both the US and the ideals of the west in general (190). Superman’s strength and superhuman abilities, combined with his decidedly human alter-ego of Clark Kent, were used to contrast the noble west with the seeming unruliness of other non-western countries, such as Africa or Japan, through the concept of the everyman which I discuss in the following pages (Wells 193-94). Wells notes that Superman functions as an embodiment of the fear-driven need to fight against foreign ideas and peoples through the use of masculinity, ultimately creating an image of masculinity as indestructible and limitless (193). Superman’s relation to western colonialist ideologies is linked to his ability to bring a sense of order and enacted for the good of the entire world during a time of uncertainty after the second World War (193). The depiction of his capacity to overcome the unruliness of other peoples and cultures serves to place Superman as a “[force] of reason in the face of unchecked barbarity”, making Superman the new alternative to the mythological figure of Hercules and crafting a new myth for an age of increased globalisation and the resulting fears over foreign influence (Wells 194).

The indestructibility of Superman is the tool by which his overcoming is assured and his built body is the purest representation of his resistance to weakness. The image of Superman’s

⁴ It should also be noted that, while computer generated imagery (CGI) is commonplace in superhero movies and could be seen as a counterpart to animation, CGI’s relationship to the male body in terms of overcoming does not seem to rest upon CGI manipulating the body but rather on creating more extravagant worlds for the built male body to overcome. When a male body’s muscles are manipulated, it does not carry the same metaphorical significance as the real-life actor getting into shape and as such it is often avoided when such a lead character is required (one example being comedian Chris Pratt getting in shape to portray Starlord in the CGI-heavy *Guardians of the Galaxy* franchise).

sizable and proportionate muscles function as a symbolic armor against the weakness of others and as a tool assisting in the transcendence of the body. The symbolic weight of this depiction has only increased over time. As can be seen in Fig. 2.1 and Fig. 2.2, from the 1940s to today Superman's ability to overcome has become even more pronounced. Catching the falling pillars of a nondescript building is, much like Superman's 1940s physique, far less imposing and impressive than a modern-day Superman supporting a collapsing tunnel, his muscles bulging in high-definition through a skin-tight suit that might as well be skin itself. Moreover, the spectatorship involved has changed, shifting from the surprise of the 1940s cartoon series' famous opening catchphrase ('It's a bird! It's a plane! It's Superman!') to slack jawed wonder at the sheer impossibility of what Superman is capable of. The spectacle of Superman's ability to overcome the body, even if that ability is tied to his alien origin, is something to be admired and sought after, crafting a very appealing and pervasive image for the young male reader the comics have historically been aimed at.

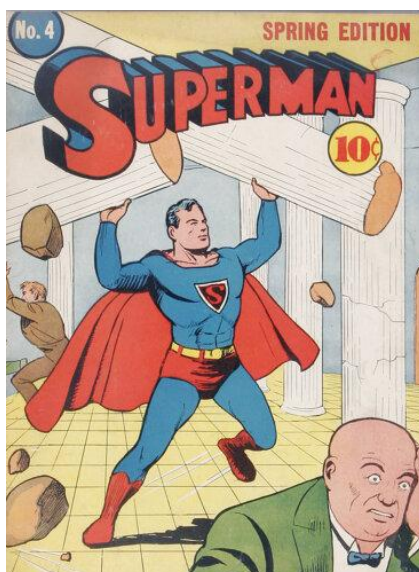


Fig. 2.1: "Superman No. 4" (Siegel et. al).



Fig. 2.2: "Man of Tomorrow" (Venditti et. al).

One aspect of the unrealistic Superman ideal that connects animation and bodybuilding is that of symmetry. Within classical art in general, symmetry is often posited as the ideal (perhaps most prominently seen in relation to the male body depicted in Leonardo da Vinci's symmetrical *Vitruvian Man* drawing), and Superman's depiction in comic books and cartoons follows suit with a well-proportioned and symmetrical figure. The direct influence of Superman's long-standing cartoon depiction can be seen on bodybuilders of all levels, from beginner to advanced, who often wear T-Shirts that feature Superman's 'S' logo. This draws a direct comparison between these men and the comic book hero, outlining the image of what

these men are striving to achieve. Budding bodybuilders will often push themselves to represent this impossible symmetrical ideal,⁵ sometimes even putting their health at risk for the sake of dragging fiction into reality by way of their bodies (Strong 169). Strong notes that much of the wording used in bodybuilding is in terms of danger, violence and war, with the terms “[t]renches” and “warriors” being used by some magazines to describe the processes of bodybuilders and words such as “ripped” or “shredded” being synonyms for having a low body fat percentage (167). This transforms the process of bodybuilding into a metaphorical uphill climb of sweat and tears, battling the odds to turn the body into an embodiment of an ideal that in and of itself is more fantasy than natural. It is a well-known fact that professional bodybuilders are at their weakest during a competition, in that they will conduct a series of fat-shedding techniques, including dehydration, in order to create a higher definition for their muscles (Strong 169). Coupled with the intensity of the stage lights and the intensity of posing causing competitors to sweat, the experience is dangerous for the weakened state of the competitors (Strong 169). This extends into film acting as well, with Cavill revealing that during the final stage of self-induced water deprivation,⁶ which he underwent to prepare for a shirtless scene for his role as Gareth in the Netflix series *The Witcher*, he was able to start smelling water due to his body being so dangerously dehydrated (Dupere pars. 1-6).

Interestingly, this embodied concept of overcoming the body also appears in situations where sport and fitness are not overtly present. Edly references desk jobs that require little physical exertion, such as accountant or lawyer, where, “in almost every case, there is an embodied aspect to these jobs – irrespective of whether it manifests itself as callouses, jet-lag or eye-strain” (56). Although these jobs do not require an overtly physical act of overcoming like in forms of manual labor, the role of the body and the act of ‘pushing through the pain’ comes into play through signs of exhaustion and ‘getting it done’ no matter the cost of health. These acts are therefore also tied to the idea of transcending limitations, in that these small symbols of endurance and rigour are tied to the belief that some form of physical exertion is a sign of overcoming physical weakness. This continues even into far less overt signs of endurance and overcoming. Edly suggests that having large and elaborate tattoos functions as a declaration of one's ability to sit and endure the long sessions of painful needlework, in that the man commits to a process and ‘sticks it out until the end,’ both in terms of the patience

⁵ Dyer also relates this aspirational goal to an ideal developed by generations of bodybuilding stars and the peplum films featuring them (many of whom were themselves inspired by the physicality of the circus strongman and the Spartans of Ancient Greece) (165-80).

⁶ Water deprivation is enacted in order to lose water weight, which more clearly defines the muscles.

required and the permanence of a tattoo (72-73). This infers that tattoos are understood as being earned through patience, pain and endurance and act as a form of transcending the body. This shows that the male body operates as an embodiment or even a display of one's ability to overcome, functioning as a physical representation of the mind behind the body, even in contexts that are less conspicuous than bodybuilding.

For Dyer, the concept of being free of the body is one of the elements that separates depictions of whiteness from representations of others. One illustration that Dyer employs is a description of a comedian who begins one of his stories by saying “‘There's this bloke walking down the street and he meets this black geezer’”, with Dyer pointing out that “the former, white image is not raced, whereas all the variation of the latter is reduced to his race” (2). In short, while non-whites are often identified largely in terms of their race, white people are often thought of in generalities. Through this logic, white people are seen as not bound to the earth and the body but are rather a figure of the heavens, unlike people of color who cannot fully escape being fettered to the flesh. This concept is furthered through these associations of whiteness and overcoming, in that the spirit of whiteness is assumed to have a greater capacity for overcoming the body since they are seen as being, as Dyer famously quips, “in but not of the body” (127). A correlation is accordingly suggested between the white man overcoming his limitations (by way of his strength of spirit) and his supposed freedom from the body. This means that instances of overcoming pain for white people become a symbolic representation of the white person's capacity to transcend their physical form and stand as someone defined by their character as opposed to their race. Being judged by one's spirit and not by one's race places a white person into a position where they are seen as neutral when compared to a person of color, in that the influence of the white body is understood as less potent.

This neutrality creates a great deal of representational power for whites, as it places whites into the powerful role of being the standard for what it means to be “human” (Dyer 9). While a person of color may only “speak” for their own racial group, a white person speaks for everyone since they are assumed to be less tethered to their raced body and can therefore represent the interests of humanity (Dyer 2). Within the understanding of masculinity, this concept becomes even more pronounced in the form of ‘the everyman’, which Wells describes as a role “in which male figures, or figures which are assumed to be male, become the symbolic embodiment of humankind” (196). The interests of the (usually white) male are depicted as being the interests of all. The power that this position holds, where one is

assumed to be free of such physical limitors as race, creates a rationale where the ‘neutral’ white man can claim to be the best representation for humanity and as such acts as the spokesperson for every group, not just their own. One way in which this highly valuable position is secured is through the idealization of those who occupy this place. In order to secure such an idealization, however, associations of whiteness and specifically white performances of masculinity must be presented as superior and more effective than lesser masculinities. In order to expand on this idea, I now turn my attention to Dyer’s analysis of one of the most prolific and idealized masculine figures in history: Jesus.

2.1.2 “[Whiteness] is Next to Godliness”: Images of Jesus and Masculinity

Dyer argues that “what makes whites different, and at times uneasily locatable in terms of race, is their embodiment, their closeness to the pure spirit that was made flesh in Jesus, their spirit of mastery over their and other bodies, in short their potential to transcend their raced bodies” (24-5). This means that white people’s more ‘spiritual’ representation has indications of transcending the body, which makes them ‘half human’ in that they are seen as closer to angels (Dyer 22, 24-5). This is further achieved through Christianity relating whiteness to depictions of Jesus, who serves as the ultimate model for transcendence. This Christian struggle of separating the mind (viewed as superior) from the body (viewed as inferior) is bound to the perceived possibility of being able to transcend the body in the same way that Jesus was able to (Dyer 16). The depiction of a white-skinned Jesus’ spiritual battle against his humanity is a point many Easter narratives focus on. Both Jesus’ temptation by Satan and the crucifixion therefore depict a perfect and infallible God’s choice to ‘become a man and walk among us’ in order to know what it is to be human.

The “gentilisation [sic]” of Jesus, who was born Jewish yet in most mainstream Christian media is depicted as white, has historically been a tool for the positioning of whiteness and masculinity as a corollary of spiritual and racial superiority (Dyer 68). A white Jesus serves the assumption that, by association, white men are simply better at overcoming and are consequently more suited to deciding the best interests of all. Women and people of color are assumed to be tied to their bodies and are thereby limited in what they can do (as discussed in the next section). The white everyman, however, is seen as having access to both the physical and the spiritual, and bears the responsibility of maintaining order through the act of transcending chaos and bringing rational thought to a world that is subject to the body (Dyer 27-28; Wells 196; Edly 64). This is again related to their “white spirit” (which Dyer connects

to the idea of “enterprise” [15]) and is correlated with the potential to transcend all current limits in order to move the human race (which whites themselves represent) forward into a better age (30-33). The paradox of this superiority rests on the fact that white men simultaneously occupy the position of ‘human’ while also being ‘better than human.’ Much like Jesus, they are simultaneously fallible and infallible; they have an idealized connection to their spirit that is also complicated by the body that houses their spirit (as discussed in the next paragraph). Much like Superman and his mild alter-ego Clark Kent, the white man must use his deeper connection to his spirit to be able to lead and inspire others, which is achieved by overcoming his body while simultaneously retaining the position of ‘human’ that having a limited body entails.



Fig. 2.3: *The Ascension* (Tisi).

In a way, Jesus stands as the ultimate success story when it comes to a man overcoming the limitations of the body for the good of humanity, in that he literally ‘conquered death’ so that all might be saved. In depictions of Jesus’s ascension into heaven, he quite literally ‘rises’ up and out of the physical world, his glowing white skin marking him as spectral and separate from the darkness of others stuck on the ground (Fig. 2.3). The drama of the Jesus narrative rests upon God, in the form of Jesus, experiencing human pain and sin, yet being able to overcome and rise above the agony of the flesh inherent in the struggle of mortality (Dyer 17). Dyer suggests that men are often seen as inhabiting the Jesus-esque role of being internally divided between mind and body, with the act of being in pain functioning as the “supreme expression of both spiritual and physical striving” (17). The goal of overcoming this inner and outward agony is depicted as a constant battle and a burden born exclusively by

white men, who must fight and overcome their inner demons in order to remain close to rational thought (Dyer 28). Dyer relates the visual element of the crucifixion story as being of particular importance to the image of white men as needing to overcome the physical, in that the visualization of the white male body in pain is one that is filled with agony but also contains elements of beauty and “dignity” that result from the act of suffering (28). While the pain is unabashedly presented – often quite graphically in film adaptations – it is suggested as being worth the effort for the sake of the greater good. Through his pain and his overcoming of the agonies of the flesh, Jesus makes universal salvation possible and is therefore an archetype who is worthy of praise and of being aspired to (Dyer 17). This idea is then distilled into the value of overcoming challenges both physical and otherwise and on both a large and small scale. By indicating that the best rewards are those most sweated after, the value one places on being able to overcome, as well as the shame of not being able to overcome, increases accordingly.

When the ability to overcome is positively related to whiteness, the assumed value of endurance and transcendence will be emphasized by white people in order to have a reciprocal effect on the value and importance of whiteness. When an assumed propensity for order and structure in whiteness exists, for example, it can then be mapped onto hierarchies in which it is the responsibility of white men to use their spirit of enterprise to overcome all obstacles for the good of all. This can be seen in the earlier discussion of the British government using ideas of racial superiority to argue that the Irish (who were depicted as animalistic and even ‘black’) were incapable of effective self-government and that they needed the British to ‘bring things in order’ (Heinz 247-48). This inference of superiority indicated that the ‘gentile’ and white-coded British government was better suited towards positions of power and the black-coded Irish government much less so, painting an image of British control being enacted for the good of the less-than-capable Irish constitution. As a consequence, the whiteness of the British government was idealized by associating it with the propensity to govern both white people and others. For whiteness to maintain such status of superiority, however, it is vital that the value of order and control remain stable and that the *inability* to overcome be viewed as dangerous. As I discuss in the next section, this is often achieved by positing another group as a point of comparison, whereby whiteness can identify its positive attributes while not directly referencing its own racial identity.

2.2 “Get Ahold of Your [Other] Self!”: Self-Control and Pillar Masculinity

Martin Hultman and Paul M. Pulé point out that “white men [are presented with] the unspoken expectation that theirs is a life that could be self-made if only they worked hard enough” (20). The essentialist notion that everything can be overcome by a ‘real man’ who stays in control of the situation is highly endemic within white western society where men feel challenged to overachieve and are rewarded for reaching beyond limits. This is seen most prominently in the notion of the ‘self-made man’, an influential image within the bootstrap culture of the US. As pointed out in the introduction, essentialism suggested that people are “naturally” a certain way, which does not address the impact that society and discourse can have on the individual’s ‘potential to change’ (McIntosh pars. 1, 7; Blackburn 1). Although structuralism could be said to have destabilized the idea of the self-made man (in that an act of self-making is ultimately a means of interacting with societal structures and discourses in new or varying ways), the ongoing influence of essentialist ideas continues to maintain that the self-made man can successfully create and recreate himself at will without the interference of outside forces. His only limitations for change are the limitations he imposes on himself. This can lead many men to experience feelings of inadequacy when they cannot overcome some goal or limitation, even ones that are out of their control, since essentialist ideas place responsibility for change on the shoulders of the individual. This is most often posited through forms of self-control, or rather the capacity to exert control over the body. It is this idea of control as it relates to both the masculine and the white self that I turn my attention to now.

2.2.1 “It’s Only Natural”: Gender, Race and Self-Control

Before continuing, I would like to here differentiate between forms of overcoming discussed in the previous section and the form of control that I term as self-control. While the two are connected, in that one is assumed to require the capacity to control oneself in order to overcome the aforementioned limitations of the body, for the sake of my argument I use ‘overcoming’ as the end goal, or the aspirational element, that demands the use of self-control for it to be realized. In this sense, I have worked backwards, starting with the goal of overcoming and now looking at the primary tool used to reach that goal. If whiteness is a measuring stick, as already established in the introduction, then self-control is one of the notches most necessary and most universal. In the following pages, I will illustrate the ways in which self-control is gendered and racialized, first by examining how gender and race are

understood in relation to self-control and white masculinity and then by briefly discussing the societal pressures that promote these images of white male self-control as important.

Within the concept of whiteness, the concept of self-control is key to maintaining the purity and the integrity of whiteness's position as the 'default' human. If a white culture is to maintain the image of being best suited for leadership through the perceived knack for overcoming, a person in a position of power being unable to overcome the limitations of the body is considered to be the ultimate failure. The ability to think clearly and rationally, which is implied to be interconnected with the mind's control over the body, is assumed to be 'natural' for men and 'unnatural' for women. Within western cultures, women are implied to be more closely tied to their emotions and more deeply related to their bodies (Edly 64-5). The disdain for female bodily functions can be seen as tied to the white need to maintain control over the body, as well as transcend it, in that the monthly menstrual cycle serves as a constant reminder of a woman's physical body. One has only to look at conversations surrounding Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign in 2016 in order to see how this perceived danger of susceptibility to the body can be weaponized against a person seeking to increase their power and influence. Clinton's alleged menopausal state was presented as a case against her, with the argument being that she would be more likely to set off a nuclear war during a 'menopausal rage' (Rutherford-Morrison para. 1).⁷ Being depicted as near (or at least accustomed) to the influence of the body creates the inference that women are more likely to be susceptible to the flesh. This coded presentation thus perpetuates the assumption of men as less connected to their bodies and their emotions, simply by way of assuming that these are 'natural' physical differences. The implication is that men's superiority as a gender is ultimately due to their 'innate' abilities for self-control, meaning that the common misogynistic phrase 'she's being emotional' is derogatory by way of its implication of an inability to self-control.

For white men to retain power, the depiction of white masculine-coded traits (including, but not limited to, self-control) as being essential for leadership must be constantly renewed. As seen in the introduction, Heinz indicates that a repetition of "stereotypes and categories" is

⁷ This example is one of many where women in positions of power have been touted as being less capable than their male counterparts due to their alleged increased nearness to emotion and their susceptibility to the influence of the body by way of hormones (see Stuart for an example). This deeply misogynistic argument, which ignores instances where men in positions of power have been shown to be capable of intensely emotional decision-making and have succumbed to the desires of the flesh (Clinton's own husband being a famous example of a man's inability to 'keep it in his pants'), is at its root an argument based on the gendering of self-control.

essential to securing white men's position as being true and even natural (248). The repeated representation of these stereotypes, especially in regards to whiteness and masculinity, is almost always bolstered through processes of 'othering,' or through marks of difference. Hamilton Carroll points out that "[w]hite masculinity holds for itself the privilege of definition: to be white is to be not black; to be male is to be not female" (7). In other words, masculinity and in particular whiteness⁸ define themselves by what they are not, as opposed to what they are. As noted in the previous section, assuming the role of the neutral or the standard for humanity holds great representational power, in that those who do not fall into the same category can be more easily reduced to those very differences. When the borders are crossed, such acts of 'invasion' must be marked as trespassing rather than breaking new ground or disproving the restrictions of gender or racial performances. Terms such as 'a woman doctor' are marked by their deviatory nature from the expected masculine norm, in that the role of doctor is most often ascribed as a man's job (with the inverse being true of 'male nurses'). This idea of exceptionalism maintains the borders of gender by indicating that these trespassers do not truly belong, questioning both their abilities and their right to be in the same arena as those who 'do' belong. In the end, this concept of 'the exception proves the rule' is focused on proving that certain aspects of gender are natural and that deviations make the borders over which they cross more pronounced. As such, these 'exceptions' function to assist in reiterating what 'the norm' looks like by the very fact of them being representations of the opposite of 'normal'. This is an issue seen continuously levied against groups who seek equality with a culture's dominant race and/or gender (such as women's rights, race rights, gay rights, immigrant rights, etc.) and makes crossing over these lines a constant battle against stereotypes.

Where the act of difference-making and border-crossing becomes most pronounced and most based upon the issue of self-control, however, is in terms of race, particularly in regards to black masculinity. Simon Clarke and Steven Garner argue that "white identity is identified with holding power, decision-making and, crucially, problem-framing" (17). Problem-framing on the part of those in power is an effective tool because it identifies sources of danger and points of weakness, thereby framing, through the process of differentiation, how sources of safety and points of strength are identified. This is obviously always in the favor of those in power. Dyer deduces that such a framing is useful, especially

⁸ George Lipsitz argues that whiteness in particular is depicted as the perfect example of "the unmarked category against which difference is constructed" (369).

when paired with the aforementioned neutrality attributed to whiteness, in that those in power have historically maintained control over their own representation and the representation of othered groups (xxxiii). By controlling representation, whites are able to keep themselves in a place of neutrality and maintain difference from others, in that white culture can decide what is unacceptable to white culture (and therefore demarcate what is acceptable without directly relating it to whiteness). More often than not, this act of differentiation is achieved through white discourses on whether or not a race is assumed to have the ability to exert self-control.

Although questions of self-control are also levied at other racial identities, such as Hispanic and Indian (which Dyer points out are often identified as ““buffer”” races [19]), blackness has historically been framed as the ‘true opposite’ of whiteness and as such is a point where many of the comparisons and differences of whiteness and its ‘other’ are drawn (Dyer 48). While much has been written about the politicizing of the black body,⁹ many of the key themes on this topic, at least in terms of whites problematising and policing blackness, are based around the belief in ‘the natural’ as it links to self-control. While discussions of whitely scripts (an idea by Alison Bailey referenced in the introduction [33]) show us that there are few (if any) aspects of performances of race that are ‘natural’ (as opposed to being taught and enforced by societal norms) the perception of certain aspects being intrinsic to specific groups still persists. Some of the more tame versions as it relates to blackness and self-control is the idea of black people as inherently lazy. Clark and Garner suggest that this depiction serves the purposes of comparison by sequestering the image of black people having a lazy and irresponsible nature in the minds of white people, who then mark this as a negative and universal characteristic of black culture (29). The pop culture image of a lazy black man has been indelibly etched in the minds of white Americans, a famous case being Disney’s controversial 1946 film *Song of the South*, which has long been criticized for its furthering of racial stereotypes (Tobias pars. 2-3, 6-9). The main black-coded cartoon characters are slow, simple and avoidant of any kind of responsibility, a trait that follows into other films from this era, such as the vagrant crows in Disney’s *Dumbo* (Tobias pars. 2, 5-8). Even today this stereotype is levied at black men who are considered ‘loafers’ or ‘no-good’ and who cannot seem to get their lives together (a simple google search for ‘lazy black man’ presents thousands of articles and opinion pieces that maintain and argue for this belief). While this outdated stereotype might seem harmless at first glance, the danger in this depiction is that it presumes that black men lack the discipline to be able to control themselves enough to work

⁹ See Curry; Dyer (ch. 2); Hughey; Perkinson; Schmitt; Wells; Wilkins; Zuern.

hard and better their social standing (traits associated with whiteness). Through this implication, it takes little imagination for this assumed 'natural' lack of control to be sent spiraling into darker areas, particularly in terms of aggression and violence.

Masculinity in and of itself is continuously linked to violence, as Edly points out when he reveals that, within the field of feminist and masculinity studies, one point of agreement rests on men being more inclined to violence than women (135). Within the context of the 'Me-Too' movement, one particular form of male violence has risen to the forefront of the discussion, that of sexual violence. Jonathan Rutherford argues that a historical image of masculinity depicts men needing to resist sexual desires and emotions in favor of emphasizing rational and controlled behaviour (Rutherford and Chapman 26). Julian Wolfreys continues this thought by pointing out that, in spite of this emphasis on control, "often masculinity is associated with an uncontainable aggression or (threatening) sexual virility" (201). The violence connected to this depiction is even inserted into the vernacular, with phrases like "hitting that" or "banging that" tinging heterosexual sex with violence (Ward 43-44). As a consequence of sexual desire being commonly understood as part of men's nature, the role of control in discussions of male sexuality has historically been undermined by this perception. In the discourse surrounding sexual aggression on the part of men, this idea of the natural is often presented as a counter-argument, with some men (and even women) proposing rape as a result of men who "couldn't help it", often seen in the statement 'boys will be boys' (Weiss 822). This reveals that men are deemed to be sexually driven on a universal level and that this is constantly threatening to spill over. A woman who inadvertently triggers this desire is then deemed to be responsible, as opposed to the man himself, shifting the blame partially (if not completely as has sadly been the case) to the victim of the aggressions. Edly explains that this urge is seen as subconscious and beyond the control of men, so much so that it is a part of their very being, a perspective that is entrenched in depictions of men throughout media (122). The satirical stereotype-laden song "Let's Generalize About Men" from the TV Show *My Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* touches on this by declaring emphatically (albeit ironically) "All men only want to have sex \ There are no exceptions, all three billion men are like this," presenting the common assumption that sex is the ultimate driving goal for men (Bloom 01:09-20). According to these and other stereotypes, male sexual desire is assumed to be 'natural' and something that they cannot completely control, suggesting that they should not be held responsible for what is 'part of their nature.'

While other areas of conflict exist, white masculinity's battle between the rational mind and the irrational body takes on a particularly paradoxical hue when it is examined in terms of refuting sexual desires. In comparison to discussions of white male sexuality, when examining depictions of black male sexuality it is the role of control that becomes most overtly important. In Ancient Greece,¹⁰ where masculinity was highly prized, the emphasis on the ability of men to control their sexual desires was shown in the favoring of smaller genitals, with larger penis sizes being ascribed to "barbarians" (Bordo 24). In other words, the penis (a symbol for libido) was depicted as small to suggest that it was less obstructing to the power of the mind. In a modern context, however, the size of the penis has come to symbolize the extent of the challenge to a man's control over his sexual urges. As a result, the size of a man's penis and sexual appetite is correlated with an implication of how great his urges are, indicating how much control he must exert to master them. Susan Bordo discusses the idea of the phallus, or the "symbolic 'double'" of the penis as a representation of the "manly capacity to transcend the power, needs, desires—and even the biological sex—of the body" (31). Wolfreys argues that "in so far as masculinity connotes sexual potency, black men have been defined as excessively so, but in so far as masculinity connotes greater rationality and self-control, the black man has been viewed as insufficiently so" (204). The white fascination with the black penis can therefore be seen as resulting in part from its symbolizing the sexual voraciousness that comes with a large sexual appetite and the disregard for controlling those desires (a state that is assumed to be alien for 'civilized' men who are in control of their sexuality).

Dyer comments that "the sexual dramas of white men" are often focused on white men's inability or struggle to resist their urges, connecting this focus to the impact of the church (27). Edly furthers this argument by pointing out that this religious influence was ultimately based around a rejection of lust, using marriage as a form of caging the beast of sexual desire that was depicted as man's undoing (118). This means that men are continuously tasked with resisting their urges. As seen in many action films, the act of men being seduced by the femme-fatale, who takes advantage of men's perceived need for sex, implies that sex is truly a truly man's greatest weakness. The ability to resist such an inherent weakness is viewed as necessary in order to resist failure and losing control, which would mean that a man has 'failed' to be white. The role of religion in curtailing sexuality, even masturbation, has been

¹⁰ For further examinations of Ancient Greece, masculinity, race and civilization, see Dyer (ch. 1, ch. 4); Edly (60-61); Perkinson (177); Schmitt (40-9).

paramount in associating sex with “‘giving in,’” thus creating an atmosphere of shame around sex (at least outside of marriage and reproduction) and the desire for it (Schmitt 41). The Bible itself warns against the longing for partners “whose genitals are like those of donkeys, and whose emissions are like those of horses”, indicating fear and condemnation of sexual voracity (Ezekiel 23:20). This can result in white men projecting their shame and guilt in regards to sexuality onto black men, marking white sexuality as superior by way of the white man’s “admirable and heroic” control, placing them above black men’s “wantonness” (Schmitt 41). A lack of self-control is levied against black men, marking self-control’s overcoming of sexual desires as a key element to undertaking sex in a “civilized” manner (Schmitt 41). To successfully engage with sex as a white man is to have a huge desire for sex (symbolized in how big his penis is compared to others or how many women he beds) but be able to deny it. The result of this is a furthered association with white masculinity and self-control, where self-control becomes paramount in men understanding and undertaking their role as men in society, even in the private sphere.

The danger of the “lustful, insatiable Black man” is that he has an appetite too large to be controlled and is a symbol of sexual degeneracy that is deeply seated within white society’s understanding of black sexuality (Terrance Macmullen 10). However, when a white man is seen as adopting the voraciousness of a stereotypically black performance of masculinity, it is not enacted in order to enjoy a ‘lack of control’ but rather to embrace the increased sexual capacity that a black men encapsulates (but which the black man’s race prevents him from constructively enacting). The white man’s assumed propensity for control codes such a sexual performance as ‘lustful’ but not dangerous in the same respect because of the assumption of control associated with his race. Indeed, in the face of this challenge to sexual performance, in that black men are assumed to more advantaged in regards to sex, many white men will mark themselves as superior on the basis of their ability to maintain their control of their erotic desires (Edly 126-27). Edly notes that, since white men are taught to aspire towards being in control of their bodies, they are at their most vulnerable when it comes to the act of sex (119). It is in sexual situations where control is at its most necessary since the vulnerability of being naked opens the male body up to scrutiny in a way usually reserved for the female body.¹¹ The fear of inadequacy, either in terms of size, capability, duration of an erection, or control over ejaculation are at their most potent in this arena, since the propensity to ‘fail at performing’ is often connotated with shame and emasculation (Edly 119). Richard

¹¹ This topic will be further discussed in section 5.2.1 in terms of defining the gaze.

Schmitt remarks that “[t]he fear of our own inadequacy projected onto Black men can also be turned around into a kind of assurance that Whites are sexually adequate because we civilized men have civilized penises” (40). In this sense, a smaller white penis would symbolically still be a better penis because of the rational, sexuality-resisting white mind behind it. As such, the black man's large penis turns into a symbol for what occurs when a monstrous sexual appetite cannot be kept under the control of the man attached to it.

Establishing elements of white masculinity through the repeated positioning of femininity and black masculinity as a counterpoint is a vital aspect of maintaining hegemonic masculine ideals. As Patrick McGann points out, “[i]f [hegemony] is to persist, the unruliness must be subdued by reducing it to ‘otherness’” (90). In other words, any kind of hegemonic ideal, be it in terms of race or gender (or other categories, for that matter), is reached by identifying instances where failure (willful or not) to align to that ideal are present, thereby crafting ideas of boundaries that should not be crossed. This process of othering is a tool by which deviancy can be marked through its difference, thus suggesting the ‘right way’ through acts of negation (‘no real man would wear a dress’) and maintaining the rules and regulations for any given performance of gender, race, etc. This extends as well to other aspects that are termed as feminine and masculine, most of which are paradoxical, such as in the discussion of civilization as masculine and nature as feminine. For example, Edly references Amy Seidler’s suggestion that western schools of thought have consistently “align[ed] men with the mind, rationality and civilisation – and women, in turn, with the body, emotions and with Nature” (65). This image of nature as being associated with women and femininity has long been accepted as true and has only recently begun to be deconstructed as essentialist thinking (Hultman and Pulé 126).¹² Accordingly, civilization has historically been a representation for the rational white male mind, while “othered” groups are understood to be less inhibited by the responsibility of being the neutral for humanity. However, as discussed further in the following chapter, ‘civilization’ is also understood in terms of the feminine, in that it is seen as being a ‘softening’ influence upon men (especially in terms of the softness of body and character). This suggests that the civilized world is viewed as the antithesis to the hardness of masculine ideals, even as civilization is simultaneously a representation of the white man’s mental capacity and his responsibility as a vital ‘pillar of society’.

¹² As seen in common terms like “mother earth” or “mother nature”, the ability of women to give birth has long informed this essentialist understanding, turning women into embodiments of the body’s connection to nature by way of their menstrual cycle (which is often thought of in terms of the cycles of the moon and which is a constant physical reminder of their reproductive ability) (Hultman and Pulé 140, 144). See also Clatterbaugh (49-51) for a further examination.

The paradox of civilization as both feminine and masculine is at its root a suggestion that the increasing influence of women is damaging to masculinity. One instance would be the ‘invasion’ of women, which is often attributed to women entering the workforce and increasingly demanding (and receiving) equal pay and opportunity, thusly shaking the essentialist notion of women as passive and incapable of the same individualism as men (Edly 9-11; Clatterbaugh 49-51). Any fear of the threat to white masculinity is ultimately a fear that the ‘other’ has begun to succeed in infecting ‘a man’s world’. In terms of race, reproduction is perhaps the most far-reaching representation of this fear. The fear of whiteness being overwhelmed and eventually eradicated by “the unstoppable breeding of non-whites” is linked to the belief that non-white groups are more proficient at reproduction since they do not have the ability (and the responsibility) to control themselves in the same way as white people (Dyer 216).¹³ In both this example and the example of women in the workforce, the primary fear is that white men can no longer count upon being as influential an aspect of society in the way that they once were. This is a considerable threat not only in terms of white masculinity’s ability to wield power but also to the construction of white masculinity’s understanding of itself and depiction of itself as a vital part of society’s ongoing development, which I discuss in the following chapter.

2.2.2 “What’s at Stake?”: Pillar Masculinity

As suggested in the introduction, the construction of both whiteness and masculinity hinges upon the repetition of performative elements from each that retain their dominant position in society at all costs. As Paul Pulé reflects, “the world is rife with injustices that persistently promote men’s interests ahead of all others” (qtd. in Hultman and Pulé 7). For instance, by symbolically stripping black men of their ‘self-control’ through images of their perceived sexual voracity, white men simultaneously suggest an inherent problem with black leadership (thereby weakening the honor of black men) while increasing their own position as being better suited for leadership.¹⁴ The issue also appears in its opposite extreme in regards to areas of eastern Asia, such as China or Japan, where men have been proven to have higher intelligence to the point that they are often compared to supercomputers (Dyer 24). Depictions of men from these countries as less masculine (both in terms of their smaller penis

¹³ Dyer references the white anxiety surrounding the supposedly rampant reproduction of other races, especially black people, who cannot or willfully do not control their reproductive numbers. Dyer explains that this fear is seen both in regards to black men, with the rape of white women by black men being an invasion of white [male] purity, as well as non-white women (who are constantly pregnant and are seen as feeding off of the welfare system) (Dyer 26-7, 216).

¹⁴ For an example of this, see R. Schmitt 40-3.

size and lack of body hair) can be seen as a way to undercut their assumed control of their bodies, in that there really is not much that needs to be controlled. A man with a larger sexual appetite that he can completely control is deemed more effective as a leader, because he has more experience with exerting greater self-control than average. In this way, any inadequacy in regards to self-control (when compared to asian men) and sexual potency (when compared to black men) is excused through the white man's ability to control his strong bodily desires. In the end, the white man's form of self-control is assumedly superior because it must wrestle with dark desires and earn self-control (Dyer 28). As a result, the white man maintains the position of sitting perfectly between the two extremes, solidifying his position as more neutral and therefore a more natural leader.

With this position, which is depicted as necessary for the betterment and expansion of society, come all of the responsibilities for its continued maintenance (meaning white hierarchical structures must stay in place and be continuously repeated). While there are many forms of white male social responsibility, including government, fatherhood, and business, the majority of these forms, to a degree, have to do with the current and ongoing maintenance of a society. For the sake of my argument, which focuses on the formulation and idealization of aspirational elements of whiteness and masculinity, it is here that I coin a new term: Pillar Masculinity. Taking inspiration from Hultman and Pulé's discussion of economic expressions of "breadwinner/industrial masculinities" (42),¹⁵ as well as Edly's examination of masculinity and fatherhood in the term "breadwinner" (78),¹⁶ I define Pillar Masculinity as the assumption of male responsibility towards social maintenance and improvement. Hultman and Pulé describe "breadwinner/industrial masculinities" as extraction-based manual labor, such as coal-mining, that are viewed as essential to ongoing economic growth (42). In contrast, Edly's term "breadwinner" more loosely joins the familial and industrial concepts of male gender roles, with the focus remaining largely on the day-to-day performances of masculinity that contribute to the present-day society (78). While both these definitions mark the responsibilities that contribute to maintaining current hierarchies and patriarchal ideas, male social anxieties and pressures about working towards the future on a social (as opposed to economic or personal) level are not examined in great detail, an aspect that Pillar Masculinity aims to emphasize.

¹⁵ For further exploration of this term, see Hultman and Pulé (ch. 2).

¹⁶ For further exploration of this term, see Edly (ch. 4, ch. 5).

‘Pillar Masculinity’ is taken from the assumption that white forms of masculinity are seen as an inherited and necessary social responsibility, functioning as pillars that hold up the roof of society (or what many feminist thinkers would likely term as a ‘glass ceiling’), thus keeping everything from falling apart. The imagery of men holding things together or tearing them apart is deeply ingrained not only in pop culture, but also in religious and mythological contexts. At the beginning of this chapter, I looked at two images of Superman stopping the fall of a building or holding up different forms of support (in the former case, they are literally pillars), with the admiration and wonder of the onlookers supporting the majesty and desirability of this capability. The biblical story of Samson (Fig. 2.4) tells of a man who is robbed of his God-given super strength by a scheming femme-fatal (another illustration of a man ‘giving in’ to his urges and being punished for it), yet is redeemed when God returns his strength in order for Samson to dramatically push down the pillars of a pagan temple, destroying his corrupt captors and, symbolically, their pagan society. The idealized white man is capable of keeping structures together but also has the ability or the potential to be the source of their destruction. The most famous and oft-used example of a man acting as a form of structural support, however, comes from Greek Mythology in the form of Atlas, a titan tasked with quite literally holding up the sky. Artistic imaginings of the myth have shifted over time so that the image is almost always that of Atlas holding up the entire planet, with statue interpretations being most common likely due to the impressive scale they present (Fig. 2.5). These figures are shown to symbolize awe-inspiring strength, linked both to their endurance and their supportive importance, with versions of Atlas being carved into literal support frames for buildings (Fig. 2.6). These depictions are awesome in size and potential, their importance and ability carved into the bulging muscles that support literally everything.



Fig. 2.4: *Samson Destroys the Temple* (Samson).



Fig. 2.5: *Farnese Atlas* (Farnese).



Fig. 2.6: *The Atlantes of the Hermitage* (Terebenev).

While Pillar Masculinity places enormous pressure upon men to shoulder this responsibility in all its forms, thereby supporting society and preserving its patriarchal integrity, it also factors into facilitating the need for aspirational masculinity that I discuss in greater detail in my analysis of summer camp photographs. Briefly, in order to create strong pillars of society, young boys are trained in ways that further frame the forms of masculinity that they are already familiar with, with the expectation that they must be able to uphold these forms and “carry the torch” into the future. This is why aspiration is of the utmost importance, in that young boys must learn what their responsibility looks like (and more importantly does *not* look like) and, in effect, how they are expected to become pillars of society. Due to this, masculinity is framed as an honor that is worth aspiring to or as the best way for man to

contribute to society. In short, Pillar Masculinity facilitates and even demands aspiration because it infers both inheritance or legacy from previous forms of masculinity and futurity with the continued survival of humanity and society. This is especially true for the white man, who is placed in the apex position of society by virtue of his whiteness (overcoming) and masculinity (self-control).¹⁷

This emphasis on Pillar Masculinity in western society has been a deciding factor in the intergenerational lament of ‘men today are getting soft’, often levied at men who do not or cannot uphold any specific societal pressure the previous generation believed to be important (such as stoic behavior or having a typically stable / profitable profession). When a generation of men (and women) hold a certain idea of how society is held together, they often find that certain versions of masculinity are missing or no longer hold the same level of importance after passing the torch on (willingly or not) to the next generation. As a result, feelings of frustration become common, since their hard work of ‘raising men right’ has been cast aside in favor of a version of masculinity that they do not understand or believe in. As such, a common point of generational contention can be seen in the discussion surrounding disciplining children through physical punishment, which previous generations marked as an effective means of teaching children discipline (quoting the adage of ‘spare the rod and spoil the child’) and which modern generations more often view as child abuse (Hoffman and Prout 46-47). In the minds of older generations, the act of physically punishing a child is the best way to teach children how to properly obey rules. When this form of discipline is lost the children will not have the same kind of self-control as their generation. This reveals that the act of “passing on the torch” – especially to young men – is seen as a responsibility that can make or break a society depending on what is lost (and who is asked). The expectation of inheriting the role of “pillar” is ultimately a means by which young men are introduced to the pressure of Pillar Masculinity, in that they are told that they alone hold the responsibility of supporting society and keeping society afloat, an act achieved only through their successful understanding and enacting of specifically masculine ideas.

Essentially, the imagery of a ‘pillar’ emphasizes the assumed ongoing necessity of masculinity as a means by which society can keep running as normal, which then assumedly

¹⁷ In a modern context, this has been related to specifically white forms of masculinity in Hughey’s comparative discussion of white supremacist and white antiracist groups. Although they differ in some aspects of how to interact with a post-racial society, with white supremacists arguing for helping black people get back to their own sectors so they can “leave white’s alone” and antiracists believing that (due to social conditioning) black people are incapable of fixing their situation on their own, both groups feel a deep responsibility as white people to shift society towards their own understanding of a ‘better tomorrow’ (Hughey 112).

keeps society healthy and stable and allows it to survive in the face of trial and tribulation. As mentioned earlier, whites are often depicted as being inherently industrious and enterprising, another form of the overcoming “white spirit” (Dyer 15) and are therefore implied to be the key towards the development of society. This idea could also be thought of in terms of manifest destiny, albeit on a more localized level in terms of one’s own native culture. While the responsibility for upholding and improving the lot of the entire world is a part of the ‘white man’s burden,’ keeping things together at home is just as, if not more, important (Hughey 111). The common tendency of a man being labeled as ‘a pillar of society’ is an indication of his role in his community, in that he is important, necessary and worthy of admiration by those around him. How this is depicted (i.e. what constitutes ‘successfully’ upholding society), will differ from context to context, yet the basic idea is that these pillar performances are closely aligned (if not identical) to the hegemonic ideal of that society. This indicates that keeping previously accepted forms white patriarchal society intact is considered the duty of white men. Any movement away from that norm is therefore seen as a betrayal and a threat to both manhood and the societal responsibilities of ‘being a [real] man’. Consequently, the framing of aspirational images hinges on the notion that these ideas must be shown to be both ideal and a responsibility that is dangerous to fall away from.

2.3 “Holding it Together”: Overcoming and Self-Control

In this chapter, I have examined how depictions of overcoming and self-control overlap in terms of white masculinity. Forms of embodied mental exertion and the idealization of Jesus as a white man function to craft the act of transcending the body as one that is both admirable and necessary. The white everyman, who functions as the neutral standard of humanity, furthers this idea by implying that the ability to overcome the body is one that inclines white men towards the role of leadership and places white masculinity in a position of power. This position of power is then upheld by comparisons of white male superiority with the perceived inferiority of other genders and races, which I examined in terms of self-control and sexuality. By coining the term ‘Pillar Masculinity’, I was then able to show how the pressure placed upon men to maintain these forms of masculinity (and to successfully pass them on to the next generation) is introduced, thereby revealing the fantasy that masculinity is both vital and foundational to the continuous functioning of society. As such, I have shown how the construction of idealized images of whiteness/overcoming and masculinity/self-control creates an outline of success and failure that solidifies an image of white masculinity assumed to be worth aspiring to.

3. Corpus

As discussed in the previous section on Pillar Masculinity, the understanding of the intergenerational lament of ‘men these days are getting soft’ can be epitomized in the discussion surrounding the physical disciplining of children (Hoffman and Prout 46-7). The notion that children, especially male children, were not as strong as previous generations is tied to the belief that certain elements, such as physical discipline, are not being enacted to the extent that they once were. The adage ‘spare the rod, spoil the child’ is linked to this belief in providing children with a view of discipline that allows them to successfully follow orders. According to the critiquing group, the children who do not have this form of discipline will grow up to be ineffectual members of society. I have seen this related most prominently to the increasing visibility of the LGBTQ+ community, in that many anti-gay arguments by friends and family centered around ‘protecting the children’ from being ‘confused’ by depictions of non-heterosexual behaviours, ranging from same-sex relationships to trans people to non-binary gender identification. The passing of Proposition 8 in California in 2008, which effectively banned same-sex marriage, was due in some part to the belief that children need a father and mother and that a child of a same-sex couple would be living in an unstable environment (Hahn 150-51, 170-71). In other words, the concern over the development of children has long been a strong rationale for denying changes within society, in that the loss of what certain groups consider ‘essential’ for a child’s upbringing stirs up concerns for ‘the future.’

The concern over the development of children has taken many shapes over the years, same-sex marriage being merely a more recent case, yet where this concern has most prominently been encapsulated is arguably within the realm of the American summer camp experience. Michael B. Smith points out that many adults have a romanticized view of their own summer camp experience. He suggests this is linked to their own “ambivalen[t]” understanding of how negative modern life impacts children, as well as how nature has often been depicted as the cure for many developmental problems that result from children living increasingly urbanized lives (“Ego” 72-73). M. Smith’s statement indicates that this view is in actuality one part of a larger historical debate surrounding the impact that both urban life and life in nature can have on children’s development. In the last chapter I briefly referenced the contradictory understandings of civilization as male and nature as female. In the following pages I examine this conflict as it relates to the discussion of the development of children at summer camp. As M. Smith reveals and as I explore in this chapter, this conflict is

in actuality rooted in the historical assumption that the nature-based locations such as summer camp operate as a ‘safe space’ set apart from civilization, even as it is ultimately a product of the very civilization it claims to reject.

Before continuing, it should be noted that, while I use the plural neutral ‘children’ or ‘child’ to describe the participants of summer camps, the majority of summer camps in the first half of summer camp’s existence were enacted largely for young boys and many of the authors I have read focused on the male summer camp experience. Indeed, the fact that ‘children’ in this context is often implied to mean ‘male children’ indicates a strong sense of normativity for camping as a specifically male activity, in that masculinity at summer camp operated as the focal point for how organized camping was structured and developed. Therefore, while camps for girls certainly existed and increased in number over time (including the rise of coed camps), and while, to some extent, the ‘children’ term can be thought of as applied to girl camp experiences, for the sake of this masculinity-focused argument this chapter should be seen as almost exclusively directed at the male summer camp experience unless otherwise denoted.

I begin with a brief historical overview of how the summer camp experience developed and increased in prolificity during the first half of the 20th century. Following this, I examine the question of modernity as it relates to idealized images of the positive impact summer camp is assumed to have over children’s development, concluding with a discussion of how this essentialized depiction has been deconstructed and critiqued in more recent times. Through this, I will be able to use the second half of this chapter to introduce and explore the case study that provides the basis for my analysis chapter, Camp Leelanau for Boys, to show ways in which this camp had a particularly unique and complicated relationship with both modernity and ‘roughing it’, which can further be linked to ideals of masculinity and whiteness.

3.1 “Think of the Children!”: Modernity and Nature in the Summer Camp

The history of summer camp is part and parcel of the larger history of organized camping, which began over concerns of children being inundated by the gradual increase in urban living. Beginning in the mid-1800s, organized camping was formed as a reaction away from society’s gradual removal from its agrarian and pioneer roots (see R. Carlson 83-84; Dodson 109). Even from the beginning, the focus rested upon attempting to recapture a relationship with the “character-building forces of nature” as a means of attempting to deal with the

stressors of an increasingly urban existence (M. Smith “Ego” 73). In essence, the increasingly sentimental view of nature was tied in large part to ideas concerning civilization as being a softening or anxiety-inducing influence upon children, especially boys (Paris 19, qtd. in Rollwagen 267). The removal of children to the woods, where they could have a chance to develop in an environment free of such pressures, was therefore presented as the logical antidote (Paris 19, qtd. in Rollwagen 267). Much of the early camping experience was privatized, yet in the first half of the 1900s, when organized camping increased at astonishing rates, the Girl Scouts, the Boy Scouts and the efforts of the YMCA became representatives of the increase in public agency camps (R. Carlson 83-84). The Camp Directors Association, which would eventually become the American Camping Association, was formed during this period and provided a connection between the otherwise disparate camps (R. Carlson 84). Many of these early camps were simple in structure and largely designed to provide supervised camping experiences to the middle and upper classes, with the main goal being “improved social relationships and democratic participation” on the part of participants (R. Carlson 84). As part of this, much of the pre-war camping experience rested upon both class and religious solidarity,¹⁸ with Leslie Paris¹⁹ noting that many of these camps were “strikingly segregated” in accordance with factors such as religion and age in addition to race and gender (7, qtd. in Armitage 570). The explosion of organized camping in the second quarter of the 20th century was assisted by the rise in outdoor education,²⁰ which posited nature as the best teacher and increased the proliferation of nature as a necessary and much-needed aspect of the urban child’s life (see J. Smith “Outdoor” 366-67 2-3; Freeberg and Taylor 208). During this period, schools increasingly built their own camping sites or became associated with camping sites as nature’s depiction as an essential tool (not only for conservation but also for assisting in learning through tactile experience) continued to rise in importance (J. Carlson 43, 58).²¹

¹⁸ See also Dodson 112-113 for an early critique of the issues of class, race and religious groupings at summer camp.

¹⁹ To compensate for issues with finding a copy of Paris’ book, which offers a modern examination of summer camp perspectives, I have chosen three reviews that emphasized different aspects of Paris’s argument that are pertinent to my own and have limited my quotations.

²⁰ As opposed to summer camp, which was more overtly suggested to be training for life, outdoor education was more explicitly connected to the school and educational purposes. For an excellent overview of outdoor education’s history, see J. Carlson.

²¹ Similarly to Paris’ book, I also had difficulty acquiring the published version of J. Carlson’s overview of outdoor education’s history. I have elected to draw from J. Carlson’s doctoral dissertation, which likely contains much of the same content.

The most significant and lasting changes to organized camping in America came in the 1940s with the entering of the United States into World War II. Although up to this point there had been a strong emphasis on separation between the city and the camp, during this period the events of the outside world aggressively permeated every aspect of life (M. Smith “Ego” 82-83). Consequently, the divide between the idealized camping experience and “real-life” was aggressively shrunk (M. Smith “Ego” 82-83). Although many camps promoted camping as a nature-based “retreat” or even “refuge” from the war (M. Smith “Ego” 83), Dan W. Dodson remarked in 1960, “[i]n some instances there was a feeling that such camping for boys was a part of preparation of army life” (Dodson 109), an observation bolstered in the interwar years by the ACA pledging to “make adolescent fitness for combat” one of their main goals (M. Smith “Ego” 84). Consequently, a more regimented style of camping came into being that sought to prepare students for any eventuality (M. Smith “Ego” 82). This change was also related to an increase in concern over the poor physical health of young men, which had grown during the interwar years as a result of many American boys being rejected from service on account of their insufficient physical fitness (J. Carlson 25).²² As male physical health had been a core element in organized camping from the beginning,²³ summer camping naturally joined the rise in physical education curriculums in schools to address this deficiency and only furthered summer camping’s profile (J. Carlson 25).

In the aftermath of World War II, the increase in both consumerism and in academic interest continued to influence the camping experience even further than the interwar years. As Edly argues, consumerism not only provides solutions to needs and wants but it also “manufacture[s] discontent”, suggesting a problem that only the offered product (i.e. summer camps) can solve, and was notably present in advertisements levied at parents (an aspect I will examine in greater detail in my analysis chapter) (63). In other words, camp advocates were able to increase camping’s appeal by placing even more emphasis on the ‘lack’ of stability that non-camp areas created. This was part of an attempt to maintain the idea that camping and the city were largely separate institutions, in spite of World War II having proven that the real world was very much part of the camping experience. Bolstered by perspectives that camping provided an “invaluable experience which modern urban life does not provide” (R. Carlson 84), proliferated the theory that summer camping could act as a

²² Interestingly, Edly makes note of this being the case as well in Great Britain, where “the military authorities were shocked by the poor state of health shown by many of those who volunteered for active service”, which started a wave of interest and concern for “the health and vitality of the british male” (61).

²³ R. Carlson notes that one of the first private camps, founded by Joseph T. Rothrock in Pennsylvania in 1876, was specifically “intended to improve the health of frail boys” (83).

form of therapy to children of the WWII era (who it was feared were “troubled” and “insecure” when compared to previous generations) made summer camp an appealing institution for parents (M. Smith “Ego” 86). Approximately one in six American children going to summer camp in the post-war years (Armitage 572). By 1957 an estimated 12,000 resident camps alone were suggested to be hosting at least four million children (R. Carlson 83), demonstrating that the summer camp had hit its stride as an American institution.

The 1950s and early 1960s were in many ways the golden years of camping, largely due to the universal perspective of camping as providing a necessary escape from urbanization. M. Smith points out that the rise of the “burgeoning urban and middle class” acted as an impetus to concerns over the increase in capitalism, leading to what he describes as “a revisioning of nature as a sanctuary from the artificial, mechanized world of the city” (“Ego” 73). The assumed importance of nature was largely tied to romanticized imagery of American pioneer heritage, with multiple authors extolling the importance of the simple virtues of pioneer and agrarian ideals for children ‘trapped’ in urban environments (Dodson 109; Gillenwater 314). A camp director from North Carolina, C. Walton Johnson, further argued that interaction with nature was linked to the growth and development of important American presidents (such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, etc.) and that a reconnection with the “guidance” of nature was in actuality a reconnection with American heritage (M. Smith “Ego” 89). John Ledlie similarly argued that denying children “the benefits of the struggle with the environment” (itself an aspect of overcoming that could be understood as promoting ideas of whiteness/overcoming)²⁴ was the inherent problem in children’s developmental issues (98-99, qtd. in M. Smith “Ego” 89). This indicates that the paradoxical understanding of nature as both guide and opponent was a dominating aspect of summer camp advocates’ arguments for the value of nature. In essence, the value of nature as a part of the American identity was that it ultimately presented nature as a tool that provided both the ‘most natural’ and ‘best’ solution for both the social and character insufficiencies of modern children.

Another influence upon this increase in camping’s notoriety was related to a rising academic interest in analyzing the summer camp institution, which by this point had been on the rise for almost a quarter of a century and was deemed by some to be “sufficiently well

²⁴ These ideas were largely agrarian, in that pioneers had to ‘tame’ the land, but this was also related to imagery of journeying through the wilderness, particularly in imagery of Davy Crocket, as well as Lewis and Clark’s journey, where they learned simply to survive in nature.

established” enough to warrant academic perusal (Dodson 109). Many of the articles released during this time expounded upon the role of nature and camping as a “balm” for the mind of the modern American child, a perspective that had grown in notoriety among camp advocates and professionals during the war years and only increased afterwards (M. Smith “Ego” 82). This resulted in what M. Smith defines as a form of “*countermodernity*” which attempted to define itself as a new and improved form of society by pointing out the ills of other forms of modernity (“Ego” 71-72). Much like how performances of whiteness and masculinity define themselves by what they are not, the praise for nature and the extolling of the benefits of camping was usually framed through a direct or indirect attack on the aspects of civilization that were deemed to be denying the modern child an important aspect of their identity and development. M. Smith points out that the voices of many early camp advocates “convey the normative perspective with which historians of all child-serving institutions are familiar” (“Ego” 72). As such, an essentialization of how children were “naturally” inclined to connect with the outdoors permeates much of the early literature written on the subject (Mason 277; Carlson 54-55). As one camping director vehemently argued in 1964, “[c]ity life is definitely not made for children. It is not geared to their needs. It is not natural to them” (Webb, qtd. in Smith “Ego” 70).²⁵ The pervasiveness of camp as being something that all children could benefit was pervasive enough that it led some academics to suggest making summer camping a public interest, thereby giving children from lower-income families the opportunity to partake in a popular answer to problems of urbanization (see Dodson 112; J. Smith “Michigan” 508).

While city living was mostly assumed to have markedly weakened children physically, according to such countermodernity arguments it had also affected them socially and mentally. From the beginning of the organized camping movement the social and mental health of children joined physical health at the forefront of camp organizer’s attempts to provide children with tools, which they were assumed to need in order to fully develop into proper adults. In regards to social development, city life was accused of having a negative effect on children’s ability to socialize properly, citing the suffocating influence of family

²⁵ This was bolstered by claims that the apparent innocence of children precluded them (much like women and images of infantilized Native Americans) to a special connection to nature, bolstered by suggestions (such as those by Mary Hanwiler) that children “seem naturally to fall into [the Indian’s] way of living” (Hanwiler 12, qtd. in M. Smith “Ego” 89) and that childhood was “a time of innocence and of savagery” (M. Smith “Ego” 76). See also Heinz (247-48) for an example of infantilization in terms of the Irish and power hierarchies.

dynamics²⁶ a lack of proper social interaction with peers (Dodson 115; Mason 276).²⁷ The desire to increase a child's ability to socialize was deemed increasingly important and many camps focused on creating programs that promoted interaction and socialization with others (Pitts 174; R. Carlson 84). These programs ultimately sought to facilitate children's interactions in a group environment, with the thought being that the child would learn to be a 'team player' who was aware of how his actions affected others (Mason 275-76.). As a consequence, one proposed benefit of nature was that of equal footing, with Henry Wack suggesting "Nature" with a capital N "treats all with equal justice" (Wack 56, qtd. in M. Smith "Ego" 77). This idea proposed that camp was an institution free from the hierarchies and influences of society and would allow boys to experiment with different forms of social interaction in an environment assumed to be both safe and separate from everyday (Tillery 378-79). The assumption was that such an environment would eventually allow the child to better integrate in a rapidly changing society, in that they had been able to effectively develop their ability to interact with others (or at least others in their own social group) (Mason 275, Dodson 115).

As the issue of 'character-building' was a cornerstone of camping since its inception and tied to effective leadership, it was also a major cause for concern over children who had become too reliant on parents, especially mothers, and other modern comforts (Mason 276).²⁸ This was deemed to have the effect of creating children who were lazy, despondent, and dependent on others, casting modernity into the role of the indulgent environment where children were spoiled and incapable of independence and constructive use of their time (Dodson 109). The emphasis on self-actualization was in essence a desire to promote "character formation" and "discipline" (P. Schmitt 100, qtd. in Tillery 378), which was suggested to be achievable within a summer camp program that was conducted by leaders who were believed to be "of integrity and character" (R. Carlson 84).²⁹ This belief was tied to a narrative of boys being too inundated by the feminizing influence of the mother and civilization, both of which were

²⁶ It was even proposed that family relations were in fact inferior to group relations like those fostered at camp, due the stifling nature of exclusively "interfamilial relationships" (Dodson 115).

²⁷ M. Smith points out that the National Playground Association attempted to correct this on an urban level through the building of public play areas, in that "recreation" on the playground was hoped to be "a means of socialization and building character ("Ego" 75).

²⁸ See Hinckley for an early 1900s example of this idea.

²⁹ This was tied to notions common in discussions of outdoor education (which was more directly tied to school curriculum in an outdoor environment such as the woods), in that recreational living was promoted as the ideal learning environment (J. Carlson 26-29).

viewed as suffocating the independence of young men (see Dodson 115; Armitage 570).³⁰ The “tyranny of modern city life” referenced by Winthrop Talbot in 1905 (654, qtd. in M. Smith “Ego” 75) was partly due to the increasing influence of women within society which was accused of having a negative effect on traditional gender roles and creating a lack of intergenerational male interaction (Dodson 115; Edly 9-11). Boys’ attendance at a summer camp was therefore a key to allowing specifically masculine forms of character-building to flourish (Dodson 115-16) and to “revitalize [the] bodies and spirits sagging under the weight of urban life and its conveniences” (M. Smith “Ego” 73).³¹ In other words, men were seen as being increasingly less able to actively and successfully contribute to modern society and as a result there was a perceived need for men to reinvigorate their masculinity away from female influence and from the comfort of civilization (Dodson 115; Edly 9-11).³² This concept of ‘escaping’ the feminine-coded city and its modernity was framed as needing to teach boys how to resist these influences and relate to old forms of masculinity that were assumed to be ‘healthier’ both for boys and for society. This indicates that civilization was coded as feminine in instances where it threatened hegemonic ideals of masculinity, even as civilization had been traditionally marked as the responsibility and arena of men. Yet it was through this very positioning of the paradoxical ‘escape the city to save the city’ goal that summer camp compromised its self-positioning as a ‘safe haven’ as the next section reveals.

3.2 “Think of the Future!”: Critiques of the Summer Camp Experience

In all of these proposed benefits of summer camp for the improvement of a child’s physical, social and personal capacity, the key benefit was consistently that of transformation, especially in regard to character-building. This was presented in the idea that summer camp could change children for the better so that they could be more effective, independent and useful members of American society (Dodson 113). Part of this understanding was tied once again to the assertion that camp, by virtue of its place in nature, was ultimately set apart and not “physically and psychologically embedded in the ‘real’ world” and presumably freed the camp experience from society (M. Smith “Ego” 80). Yet it was this very promise of

³⁰ Paradoxically, during this same time period there coexisted the understanding, as Edly points out, “that a child’s psychological development and well-being required the consistent presence of the mother (96). This points to the contradiction that the role of mother was viewed as vital while also being suffocating (although it could be argued that the mother’s role was largely viewed in terms of care as opposed to encouraging development).”

³¹ This belief would later expand into understandings of adult masculinity in the form of the mythopoetic movement, indicating that the assumption of men needing to escape civilization (itself coded as the specifically female-focused aspects) would hold sway for the rest of the 20th century (Clatterbaugh 49-51).

³² For a more modern example of this belief, see Clatterbaugh (49-51).

‘transformation’ that undid the notion of camping as untouched by society, exposing the contradictions that lay beneath. Camping programs not only had to fulfill parent’s expectation for their children to undergo the assumedly “positive” changes promised by the camp experience – promised either directly from the camp itself or indirectly through societal understandings of what camp life could do for a child – but these programs also had to rationalize camping as creating transmittable skills that could then be positively applied to urban living upon the child’s return (Tillery 379). Consequently, one particular critique seen in the development of organized camping was that some camping skills were deemed to have a “particularly high mortality rate” (Hymes 67, qtd. in M. Smith “Ego” 82) largely by virtue of their being only usable in the specific environment of the camp (M. Smith “Ego” 81-82). One early example was the skill of axemanship, which was critiqued specifically for its lack of direct applicability to living in the city (M. Smith “Ego” 74). This critique suggested that the symbolic learning of morals and values such as axemanship was seeking to “reconnect [campers] with both nature and the ‘goodlife’[sic] of their frontier forbearers” (M. Smith “Ego” 74) and was actually less important than skills that could be directly applied to life in the city. Tillery points out that, over time, institutions placed increasing emphasis on skills that could be applied to the real world, with the Boy Scout movement as early as 1915 introducing a merit badge system that included awards for activities such as “automobiling”, “business”, “civics”, and even “plumbing” – all of which promoted skills that had little to do with “being one with nature” (378). This suggests that camps felt pressure to orientate themselves towards living in an urban society in order to promote and rationalize their role as being important in shaping a child’s eventual capacity for effective urban living. Even the most gung-ho of camp directors increasingly had to deal with the demands of their primary customers – the parents – who expected programs to teach skills that would improve their child’s capacity to be independent and capable in the increasingly demanding landscape of modernity (Rollwagen 267). The expectation of modern amenities such as indoor plumbing only further clashed with the idealized ‘roughing it’ aspect of pioneer living (Rollwagen 267). Although camps worked hard to promote the image of themselves as immune to the negative effects of society, they ultimately “were the products and the perpetrators of contemporary cultural ideas” (Rollwagen 267).

In more recent times, the paradox of this assumed separation between summer camps and society has been a source of great interest among academic sources, who have pointed out that this separation sought to construct the summer camp experience as a neutral area of

experimentation, when in actuality it functioned for the solidification of preexisting social structures. M. Smith points out that the assumed benefits of the “escape from the city” (“Ego” 76) offered by summer camp were beginning to be criticized as early as 1947 by Fritz Redl (“Ego” 86). Redl cautioned against the “tension” that could exist for children faced with adapting to the new camp environment, even as the child was simultaneously tasked with “preserv[ing] character traits necessary for social adjustment in the real world” (M. Smith “Ego” 87). This idealized image of what a child at camp ‘should’ be able to ‘naturally’ accomplish was termed by Redl to be “the Ego Ideal of the Good Camper” and was, according to Redl, a historically unquestioned expectation for children’s development at summer camp (139, qtd. in M. Smith “Ego” 87). Redl further suggested that this form of summer experience contained no small amount of risk for the child if they were unable to fully adjust to the various new stimuli of both location and program, especially if distinctions between the “real world” and the “*manufactured* community” (as Tillery termed the summer camp environment [377]) were not made clear from the beginning (M. Smith “Ego” 87-88).³³ This constructing of summer camp’s reality was suggested to affect the child’s relationship with their identity, in that the benefit of ‘becoming whoever you want’ was that a camper could ‘remake themselves’ in an environment painted to be separated from the influences and pressures of the real world (Tillery 379). Along the same lines of ‘transmittable skills’ mentioned previously, however, certain elements of a summer camp environment, such as the taking on of a new identity, were not fully transmissible to a city life by virtue of the two environments being assumed to be vastly different and separate. The constructed summer camp identity realistically only functions during the camp’s intense period of specialized socialization, where the construction of the camp as ‘separate’ creates a context that allows for such a ‘shedding’ of past behaviours and identities. This new identity would then lose traction upon reentry to the real world where the child’s past identity still holds sway, creating incongruities between the two that could potentially cause problems of identity for the child.³⁴

³³ Such distinctions could take the form of, as Redl suggested, a clear statement from the camp that children were not expected to “swap their identity with the complexity of urban occupations for [...] dated daydreams” but rather the children would “use some of the trappings of these ego ideals during the rental period for the inculcation of some of the values smuggled in under their romantic disguise” (143, M. Smith “Ego” 87-88). In other words, the camp should very openly identify itself as a temporarily constructed environment meant to facilitate growth of the child on their own terms.

³⁴One pertinent example is the French exchange student in the film *Son of Rambow* (2003), who is viewed as exotic and cool by the English students (a role he heartily embraces) but upon return to his fellow French students he is revealed to be viewed as a loser by his peers. The inconsistencies in his constructed and ‘real’ identity are shown to be a cause of pain upon his return, where his former self can no longer operate without the specialized context of the English school.

Redl critiqued the problems that can occur when a culture such as summer camp is made up of generalized ideas about “social expectations” (142, qtd. in M. Smith “Ego” 87). For white boys, for example, this expectation was often framed in terms of their eventual responsibility to uphold society. Wack argued that civilization would “decline and fall” should the dominant group in a society – normatively assumed to be white men – fail to line up with masculine ideals of productive living; itself coded as being the antinome to the effeminizing effects of civilization mentioned earlier (M. Smith “Ego” 77). The adage of ‘protect the children’ in this case was particularly posed as code for ‘protect society’ (in the case of white men, a further reference to Pillar Masculinity) and was achieved by corralling children into environments where their development could be streamlined (Tillery 380). Campers at such camps were therefore isolated in areas where they were constantly surrounded by peers and leaders who, more or less, looked like them and had similar backgrounds (Tillery 380). This reduced the overt influence of deviant groups and allowed for social understandings of gender and race to be achieved through the process of osmosis (M. Smith “Ego” 76).³⁵ Osmosis can be defined as a form of assimilation, or simply ‘learning how to behave’, that is achieved purely through “virtue of proximity” (Saltmarsh et. al 29). As Saltmarsh et. al argue, this expectation exists within parent’s understanding of education even today, reflecting an ongoing belief in the effectiveness of ‘learning the ropes’ simply by being surrounded by groups of peers who behave ‘the right way’ and absorbing the group hegemony subconsciously (33). As Tillery points out, however, any “attempt at hegemony is never uniform”, in that it is “always subject to *counter-hegemonic* influences from other groups” that appear in the form of different performances of race or gender (Tillery 385). However, as Tillery further argues, when previously accepted aspects of society are threatened, society has the tendency to “enact processes to bring the potential threat under control and back in line with social norms” (380). As such, organized camping functioned not only to compound hegemonic ideals of race and gender but also to function as what Howard McClusky termed “a corrective” to deviant behaviors (14, qtd. in M. Smith “Ego” 88).

When taken into consideration that many of the camps were isolated on numerous fronts, including race and gender (Paris 7, qtd. in Armitage 570), it becomes clear that summer camps offered the perfect arena for the solidification of hegemonic ideals of both gender and

³⁵ Some mid-1900s camps even went so far as to limit minorities at their camps to avoid sullyng their reputation (Dodson 112-13).

race.³⁶ As Paris notes, the transformation aspect promoted by camps indicated that the camps were increasingly orientated towards a future that integrated traditional ideas with societal improvement, which in and of itself “exemplified a broader social ambivalence about which direction was healthiest and most beneficial” (168, qtd. in M. Smith “Rise” 179). This can be seen in discussions of how camping was praised as a means of control over the development of children, so much so that Harvard President Charles Elliot championed organized camping as “the most important step in education that America has given the world” (P. Schmitt 101, qtd. in Tillery 378). As early as the 1930s, camp advocates suggested that summer camp had the potential to operate as “a place where the most degrading influences of the machine age would be absent”, a statement that suggested the selective control from the camp organizers (M. Smith “Ego” 80).³⁷ This resulted in what Tillery terms a “containment project” of camping, which describes the creation of “a world of *natural* relations and community” and forms a simulation of “the real” that is ultimately made up of “social subjects [who] are predominantly white and middle class” (382). In other words, essentialized ideas of race and gender solidarity could be promoted by limiting the influence of deviatory aspects and depicting ‘approved’ performances of race and gender as ‘normal’, ‘natural’ and ‘desirable.’

Following the golden age of the summer camp in the 1950s and early 1960s, the increasing societal instability brought about in the 1960s and 70s only increased the urgency of camping acting as a defense against “the collapse of an already fragment, over civilized society” (M. Smith “Ego” 89-90), even as the camp lost its influence due to a negative correlation of summer camps as sites of danger through the rise of the slasher genre and also the increase in specialty camps (Malinowski pars. 18-20; Armitage 572). Yet even in more recent times, the general notion of civilization and nature as separate continues to persist, with M. Smith pointing out that the YMCA camping committee organization created a film in the mid-1980s that strongly suggested that “the contrast between urban life and nature was the basic rationale for operating summer camps” (“Ego” 91). This reveals that the notion of nature as separate from civilization remains the ultimate rationale for summer camps to exist, even as

³⁶ Dodson suggested in 1960 that camps were perfect for interracial mixing, yet he coded such interracial mixing as being for the benefit of the unraced “dominant group” to meet others outside of their group (Dodson 112). This marks a telling correlation with the tendency of whiteness to turn ‘outliers’ into essentialized examples of ‘the other’ for the education of white children, who are assumed to need to see a contrasting racial to understand their own race.

³⁷ While some fears of modernism were more directly tied to elements such as “unproductive leisure”, where children ‘wasted’ their time, there was also a marked concern over “the supposedly effeminizing effects of consumerism” and also to fears over “immigration” and “that modern conditions might lead to ‘race suicide’” (Armitage 570). For further examples of ‘the Leisure Problem’ see R. Carlson (85); M. Smith “Ego” (77-78); Armitage (570).

this separation is undone by the influence that civilization exerts over understandings of nature.

3.3 “Think of Roughing It [in a comfy chair!]”: Modernity, Christian Science and White Masculinity at Camp Leelanau for Boys

Camp Leelanau was one of many Michigan camps that sprung to life during the first quarter of the 20th Century. Its history and development is nevertheless one that marks a unique position, not only in terms of how the issue of modernity and nature was understood within the camp but also in terms of how the conflict between the mind and the body was embodied within camp practices. The camp was initially private³⁸ and at least for the first few decades meant exclusively for campers from Christian Science households. This resulted in the camp enjoying a solid amount of repeating campers thanks to the religious exclusivity, which would have been important for parents of the Christian Science faith, as well as location, with the majority of students coming from the Michigan³⁹ area, and family loyalty, with several families sending multiple generations to the camp. This means that the developments of the camp were likely influenced by and had influence over the summer camp experiences of largely the same groups of campers. The camp also represented an unusual development in terms of its relationship to education, in that it began as a summer camp and eventually expanded into a school system that included a girls summer camp and a coeducational school during the winter months, a development that in Michigan was normally seen in reverse, with established schools eventually expanding their programs into the summer. This suggests that the role of education was important to the camp founders and likely had a very direct influence on how learning was integrated into the camp’s culture,⁴⁰ especially in how personal growth was positioned as a key factor within the camp’s ethos both in terms of how nature was understood as needing to be overcome and how Christian Science emphasized the importance of the mind’s control of the body.

³⁸ In 1963 the camp moved from being privately-owned to becoming a non-profit organization and by the 1970s the campsite housed both Camp Leelanau for Boys and Camp Kohahna for Girls (“Camp Kohahna” para. 3). This preceded a separation from the school with the formation of the non-profit Camp Leelanau and Kohahna Foundation, Inc. in 1988, which took sole responsibility for the camp’s operation (“Camp Leelanau” para. 3).

³⁹ Huey notes a smattering of campers from Alaska, Mexico and even parts of Europe and China (although largely in the form of the children of diplomats) as having added variety to the largely Michigan-based camping dynamic into the early 1930s (160), yet this percentage was likely small and had little bearing on the largely localized clientele for the camp.

⁴⁰ The initial years of the camp included a strong emphasis on education, with tutoring in subjects such as history, math and even Latin being made available (Huey 52)

In the following pages, I will break my discussion into two sections, with the aim being to reveal how the camp uniquely connects to my earlier discussions of whiteness/overcoming and masculinity/self-control. The first section focuses on the camp's unique relationship with modernity and nature, suggesting that 'civilized living' at the camp was tied to the ideals of overcoming found in whiteness. The second section will then briefly examine the role that Christian Science played in formulating ideals of white male forms of self-control within the camp's culture, as well as indicating the importance that self-improvement held for the camp's internal construction. By doing this, I will be able to provide a fuller analysis in the context of specifically white forms of masculinity in my analysis chapter, where I focus on how these aspects are related to ideals introduced within the framework of aspirational masculinity. It is also worth noting that, unless otherwise specified, references to "the camp", "Camp Leelanau" or "the campsite" are directed towards Camp Leelanau for Boys. The "Leelanau Schools" program consisting of "Leelanau for Boys" and "Pinebrook for Girls", which took place in the off-season years, will therefore be delineated as separate entities.

3.3.1 Overcoming the Forest: Modernity at Camp Leelanau

The very first brochure for the camp opined "[a] boy of adolescent years needs an environment where he may live free from the artificial stimulus and excitement of modern city life"; indicating that the camp's foundational understanding of urbanization was, at least on the surface, in line with what many summer camps advocated (*Winter Brochure 1929-1930*, qtd. in Huey 126). This brochure further offered the previously discussed assumption of nature being of the utmost importance for a boy's development, in that "[v]irility, independence of thought, and a proper sense of individual responsibility and initiative develop normally when a boy is free to roam the hills, study the lessons which woods, clear streams and clean skies teach" (*Winter Brochure 1929-1930*, qtd. in Huey 126). However, the older boys would reside in "14x16 army tents with wooden floors and walls" with a counselor and up to three of their peers while the younger campers lived in a small house where they were supervised by Mr. and Mrs. Beals (*1924 Brochure 4*, qtd. in Huey 51). In short, the camp contained elements of 'roughing it' for the older boys but nevertheless sheltered the younger boys with elements of modernity. The sense of modernity would only increase following the construction of "The Homestead" building in 1929, which functioned as a cultural center for the school where the boys ate, undertook activities, and where some of the older boys slept in pairs (Huey 59, 62-63). Other buildings were eventually built or repurposed and turned into facilities, including a gymnasium and a building that housed the

facilities for “photography, nature-study and model aircraft”, furthering the modernization of the camp (*1932 Brochure* 7, qtd. in Huey 164). As is claimed in a 1929/30 school brochure, “the ideal of Leelanau is to lead boys by quiet but perceptible degrees to an appreciation of adequate education, and of the beauty and satisfaction of culture home living” (*1929/30 Brochure* 5, qtd. in Huey 63). In summary, there was a pointed embrace of comfort and modernity that stood in stark contrast to the rougher versions of Camp Life being practiced at many other camps.

The integration of modern ‘civilized’ amenities alongside interactions with nature would form the backbone of much of the camp’s identity. Although the latter emphasis on nature was more prevalent in the early years of the camp, the former emphasis on modernity was swiftly taking precedence by the 1940s. Huey argues that was due in large part to the continued feminine influence of Cora Beals and Helen Huey, who contributed their dowries to the Leelanau endeavor (29). As a result, as Huey describes, the aesthetic of the camp was one that embodied “a modern, democratic spirit of rustic simplicity” (29). The concept of the ‘modern rustic’, a combination of vintage ‘pioneer’ Americana with modern standards of interior design, can be thought of as an epitomization of the intriguing interaction of civilization and nature that is prescribed here by the camp’s culture. While on the one hand the emphasis on the importance of nature remained evident, on the other hand many of the ideals of ‘roughing it’ vanished with the beginning with the construction of the Homestead.⁴¹ This was only furthered with the eventual reformatting of certain areas of the camp into a resort beginning in 1937 (Huey 182), further emphasizing modern comforts as a point of return after excursions in the great outdoors.

When examining the general emphasis on modernizing and expanding the camp during the first part of the 20th century, it becomes clear that aspects of overcoming and controlling nature were evident in how the camp was structured. Although this is seen in general terms with the building of structures that largely retained the comforts of the city, such as the Homestead, it was also part of the summer camp’s general culture as well. One version of this would be the camp’s eventual introduction of the work program, which had been in place at the school since the 1930s (Huey 157). This program consisted of campers being paid to put time and energy into various landscaping and improvement projects for the camp, which were

⁴¹ Huey references boys having slept in freezing cots up until the Homestead’s construction (350). Images from the school further show the presence of modern conveniences such as typewriters and radios (Huey 143), with students studying, playing games, giving musical performances of music in comfortable and well-furnished rooms, all of which belie the presence of a forest and a lake just outside the window (see Huey 135, 143, 145).

indicated in the brochure as “gardening, landscaping, working with wood and stone” (1935 *Brochure*, qtd. in Huey 182). This program would later expand to largely replace the aspect of tutoring at the camp, with campers having the option to earn money through the optional work program (Huey 180). This placed emphasis on what Huey terms as “the Protestant work ethic” (181-182) which is defined by Thomas Andersen et al. as Protestantism’s value for “hard work and thrift” (1756). This particular concept has been directly linked by self-proclaimed isolationist Frank Chodorov to the previously mentioned ideas of the ‘self-made man’ (and also Pillar Masculinity), with the self-made man being understood as someone who successfully bears his responsibility to society (187). This suggests that tasks and projects such as these further indicated a seeming indifference to nature as a force of its own and merely as a project for continued white development on a personal and, therefore, a societal level. Hultman and Pulé suggest that depictions of male stewardship in nature are tied to religious assumptions of nature being in need of the control that the male body is capable of producing (89). It is further argued that stewardship is often understood as being for the benefit of both nature, which receives assumably much-needed order, and white men, who challenge and improve themselves by taming the wildness of nature (and symbolically the wildness within) (87-9). Instead, while nature was indeed used as a means for the self-improvement of the campers, it was also suggested as a force that must be overcome for the continued improvement of the camp and its occupants.

During the war, the proliferation of modernity at the camp was more directly questioned, yet it ultimately signaled a shift in emphasis where overcoming was even more implicitly suggested to be necessary for surviving the real world. As Huey points out, a section of a camp brochure published around 1943, titled “Has Our American Youth Grown Soft?”, strongly implied that the general feeling was that Leelanau had become far too engrossed in the comforts of home, heralding the introduction of a military inspired curriculum that would last into the 1970s (300). Within this double-page spread, which could be thought of as a declarative manifesto for the camp’s new wartime structure, the author decries the “past emphasis on material ease and the artificilites of so-called civilization” that were deemed to have had a negative effect on “morale” and denied children the ability to really ““rough it”” in the same manner as their ancestors (*circa 1943 Brochure*, qtd. in Huey 301). Comparing the old camp structure to a “circus, a playground for the indulged” and even condemning the camp’s position as a “camouflaged summer resort”, the text outlines further changes that include the purchase of 410 acres for the purpose of creating access to woodland resources

for the boys (*circa 1943 Brochure*, qtd. in Huey 301). The building of the Wilderness Camp in 1945 also indicated a return to more traditional forms of organized camping which further became evident in the camp's increasingly regimented activities and scheduling, (Huey 296, 300). While the camp as an institution (which included two schools that took place in the off-summer seasons) did not entirely shift focus away from educational achievements,⁴² the aim of the summer camp's program was altered indelibly to re-introduce more outdoor activities that aligned with 'frontierism' ideals of rough living. In other words, the sense of modernity that up until this point had held so much sway was publically rejected in favor of a form of camp that was designed with the intent of "sending home our summer campers as better American fit for any eventuality" (*circa 1943 Brochure*, qtd. in Huey 301). The camp had orientated itself even more intently towards providing civilization with strong and, more importantly, resilient adults capable of overcoming the trials and tribulations of modernity. This stance indicated that, even though aspects of modernity were no longer as accepted as they once were, civilization's influence on the camp's culture had only increased. In short, like so many camps that sought to create a better future by controlling the development of children, it is exactly this concept of education and a camp's function for civilization that shows the camp's connectedness to the city.

In spite of this reorientation during the war, a continued emphasis on comfort, order and education *in spite* of nature was the prevailing notion of the camp. One brochure declared that "boys are lead [sic] to realize that they can camp in the woods all summer and still be real gentlemen" (*1929 Brochure* 5, qtd. in Huey 51). This showed that, even in the early days of the camp, the fact that modernity held so much sway at the camp was tied to the promise that the campers would hold on to their 'civilized' behaviours regardless of the influence of nature. This promised that boys would not become 'wild' but rather it would increase their overall capacity as 'gentlemen'. As revealed earlier, nature is often viewed as the antithesis of specifically masculine-coded elements of civilization. Dyer points out that a white man can therefore be posited as being superior based on his ability to remain civilized and in control of himself within the context of the 'wildness' of nature (156-7). Dyer further suggests that the imagery of 'white male savages', such as Tarzan, are idealized based largely on their ability to be within nature and not lose themselves (157-8). This means that these white men retain the individuality that results from their whiteness and masculinity, which marks him as

⁴² Images from this period show educational activities (chemistry [Huey 323] and studying [Huey 325]) still being conducted at the camp, and tutoring was still being offered at the start of the 1960s (*1961 Brochure* 27)

superior to ‘the other’ of nature, in that he is able to resist being consumed by the wild. In this sense, much like in the earlier discussion of sexual desire being marked by one’s ability to control it, the camp ultimately tasked boys with proving that they could ‘rough it’ in the wilderness while not compromising any habits of self-control (such as manners and cleanliness) that were marked as civilized.

3.3.2 Controlling the Body: Christian Science and Whiteness

While the aspects of overcoming seen within the summer camp’s developing treatment of nature and civilization offer more direct examples of how forms of whiteness were presented to campers, one aspect that was likely even more intrinsic to the camp’s culture was the influence of Christian Science that permeated the foundation and development of the camp. Not only had all four of the camps’ founders had been educated to various degrees at Christian Science institutions (Huey 49), the first schedule in 1924 indicated that a slot of time each day was designated for “[Christian] Science study” (Huey 50) and many of the early advertisements appeared in the influential magazine *The Christian Science Monitor* (Huey 341). The first brochure for the summer camp in 1924 directly indicated that Lelanau was intended “for boys from Christian Science families” (1924 *Brochure* 3, qtd. in Huey 51) and teachers were also subject to Christian Science faith, with one teacher’s 1935/36 contract requiring that she be prepared to “study faithfully Christian Science and apply [her] understanding of it” (Huey 352). This continued into the mid-1930s until, in 1935, it was declared that boys from Protestant homes “who wish to apply Christian Science to their daily problems” would be accepted (qtd. in Huey 180). Curiously, by 1939 the camp brochure contained a statement declaring “there is absolutely no connection” between the camp and the church, even though many of the staff were themselves avowed Christian Scientists and the camp was devised with boys from Christian Science homes in mind (1939 *Brochure* 5, qtd. in Huey 352).⁴³ That such a contradiction remains is likely an indication of an increased desire to expand the camp’s net of potential campers while not alienating the parents who had for generations been sending their children to a Christian Science camp. This implies that, although the influence and pervasiveness of Christian Science at the camp in the 1950s was denied, Christian Science was nevertheless a major element in how the camp was structured

⁴³ While founding member and camp director Arthur ‘Major’ Huey firmly rejected the notion of Christian Science exclusivity in Leelanau, he seems to have faced some criticism, seen in a long written response in 1952 where he critiqued the suggestion that “qualified students” be denied entry because they were not scientists” (1952 *Letter* 1-2, qtd. in Huey 414).

and run. As such, there was an undeniable influence of these ideals upon the camp's foundation and developing identity.

Christian Science as a religion is unique, in that it is the only modern denomination founded by a woman and in that it places direct emphasis on the mind's ability to manipulate the body. Founded in 1879 in Massachusetts, Christian Science is described in *A Companion to Metaphysics* as operating under a form of radical idealism, termed "panpsychic", which understands that the material reality inhabited by the body is an illusion and that the mind is the only "true" plane of existence ("Idealism" 318). Bryan Wilson further labels Christian Science as having a "perfectionist ethic" that emphasises the ongoing "work" (both during life and after death)⁴⁴ of strengthening the mind through focused study (127). This will assumedly push the mind into a "state of consciousness" where physical ailments "do not exist" (Wilson 125). Margaret P. Battin argues that sickness in Christian Science is viewed as the result of "alienation from God" and the goal for the afflicted person is to fully come to the realization that the sickness is merely an illusion, enacted through study and prayer (often with the instructional guidance of a "practitioner") to realign the mind to a healthier state (11). While a stereotype of refusing all medical care does exist, strengthened by stories of much-needed medical attention being refused by Christian Scientist believers and leading to the deaths of adults and minors (Vitello pars. 1-2), there is no doctrine stating that medical care is forbidden, according to a member of The Christian Science Board of Directors (Trammel para. 2).⁴⁵ Instead, there is an understanding that prayer and concentrated study of the bible and Christian Science manual (which outlined the tenets of Christian Science understanding) operates best when not manipulated by the influence of medicine, leading to the concept of traditional medical care being secondary to the power of prayer (Wilson 157-58; Trammel para. 2).

Upon reading this doctrine, a clear line becomes evident between white masculine ideals of overcoming and self-control which reside within the Christian Science faith. By giving so much emphasis on growing the mind in order to achieve spiritual nearness to God, this religion uniquely epitomizes the ideas of "[t]he white spirit" outlined by Dyer (15). The emphasis on the mind's ability to transcend and marshal the "illusions" offered by the body

⁴⁴ Both heaven and hell are viewed by Mary Baker Eddy, the religion's founder, as being merely states of mind or realities constructed by the individual's mental state as either strong or weak. As Eddy argued, "[t]he sinner makes his own hell by doing evil and the saint his own heaven by doing right" (qtd. in Wilson 125)

⁴⁵ Interestingly, avowed Christian Scientist Arthur 'Major' Huey (one of the camp's four founders and Michael Huey's grandfather), famously convinced the ("assumedly Christian Science") parents of a fellow student at Amherst College to allow for the boy to have life-saving surgery (Huey 352).

ultimately indicates an understanding of the mind being, much like whiteness itself, “in but not of the body” (Dyer 127). This aspect of the camp’s identity therefore suggests that the camp had a foundation that was very concerned with striving towards ideals of whiteness, in that these ideals reflected many understandings of Jesus as an idealized man through his ability to fully transcend his body. Although Huey suggests that the influence of Christian Science would continue “in spirit” after the school was no longer private after 1963 (352), the current website states that the school is once more exclusively “for young people enrolled in the Sunday Schools of Christian Science branch churches”, indicating that the camp has returned to its roots in exclusivity (“About” para. 1). The website also includes declarations of their mission to “cultivate Christian character and leadership qualities based on the practical demonstration of Christian Science” and, more importantly, to assist campers in “[learning] the joy of overcoming self-imposed limitations” (“About” pars. 2, 4).

That these ideals continue even today in connection with Christian Science reveals that the camp’s relationship with the mind-over matter aspects of Christian Science were, in the end, the most pervasive and lasting influence on the camp’s ethos. This solidified its place as a unique example of an institution promoting the decidedly “white” behaviors of overcoming and controlling. The concept of ‘self-imposed limitations’ in particular can be thought of as placing the blame for failure purely upon the shoulders of the individual, suggesting that the person alone is responsible for their individual successes and failures (further tied to the earlier ideas of individually in the forms of the “protestant work ethic”, “perfectionist ethic” and also of ‘the self-made man’, seen both in the camp’s work program and in Christian Science). Since the mind is assumed to be ‘the only reality’, the mind’s capacity to transcend the limitations of the physical is more directly promised “if you work hard enough”, making transformation appear far more achievable for those capable of ‘making it’. As such, this concept of achievable transformation can be assumed to have played a large role in the expectations of Christian Science parents, who hoped their children would “gain experience in applying Science in new and challenging activities away from home” (“About” para. 4) in a manner that would directly assist the child’s continuing journey towards transcending their body. As a result, the camp’s culture provides a unique and compelling instance of whiteness/overcoming and masculinity/control permeating a child’s summer camp experience, both on an explicit and implicit level.

3.4 “Into The Woods We Go!”: Summer Camp and Camp Leelanau

Within this chapter, I have outlined the general historical understanding of summer camp’s influence on the development of children, seen through the perspective of modernity as having a negative influence, requiring the child to escape to the ‘healing safe space’ that nature is assumed to epitomize. I have also introduced critiques that problematized summer camp’s depiction as a ‘natural’ and ‘pure’ space, which consequently revealed that summer camp’s culture was in fact constructed for the purpose of controlling the solidification of hegemonic ideals, thus indicating that the camps are directly influenced by the civilization they claim to be removed from. This then provided me with a historical backdrop against which to analyze the history and culture of my case study, Camp Leelanau for Boys. I showed that the camp’s understanding of nature and modernity revealed the value that was placed upon resisting the wildness of nature in favor of behaviors considered to be more civilized (itself an unstated synonym for “whiteness”). I continued my analysis with a discussion of the longstanding influence of the religion of Christian Science, showing how the mind was implicated as having a great influence over the body. This allowed me to reveal how the summer camp’s culture strongly pointed towards idealized imagery of the white desire to transcend and control the body’s limitations. Through this overview of both the general understanding of summer camp and Camp Leelanau as a specific case study, I more fully brought out the aspects of white masculinity that can appear at summer camp and revealed the ways in which they were presented as idealized, necessary and attainable, which functioned to promote aspirational images of masculinity that I examine in my analysis.

4. Methodology

Before continuing, it is important to outline my rationale for my analysis chapter, both in terms of the selected time period of the long 1950s and in terms of the types of materials being examined. Additionally, I will present the limitations to my analysis and show how they are taken into account within the broader scope of my analysis.

The time period I will focus upon within my examination is the long 1950s, meaning the time period from 1950 until 1963. While concern for the physical health of boys had already been on the rise in America since the interwar years, the increase in prominence for bodybuilding during the 1950s indicated an increase in the admiration for the white built body’s “potential for action” discussed earlier. As such, this period would have featured a continuous display of the male physical embodiment of both success and failure reflected at Camp Leelanau, since

magazines, films, advertisements and comic books presented images of built bodies. The 1950s also featured the height of “separate spheres for men and women” within society’s understanding of public life and private, further suggesting that the social responsibility of men, as both providers and leaders, held particularly strong notions within the “superstructural arrangements” of family dynamics during this period (Edly 101).⁴⁶ Consequently, the pressures felt by young boys would have been especially influenced by the expectations for their adult life and only further exacerbated the need to ‘become a man’ at the risk of losing their identity and failing to live up to their responsibilities.

I have already outlined how the camp’s history of modernity and Christian Science influences mark it as distinct from other camps of the time, yet the camp is also positioned along other lines of interest. The camp was marked by a strong emphasis on discipline and following orders, with the camp president being well known for his repetition of the speech “‘This is Not a Democracy’” (Huey 349-350). In other words, the camp environment was heavily regimented and elements of rebellious or deviatory behavior were therefore even more strongly reprimanded, thereby creating more restricted (and clearer) illustrations of what was un/acceptable for campers to do. Furthermore, as stated earlier, the increased propensity for the continued attendance of campers, for reasons of religion, location⁴⁷ or familial loyalty, provide a desirable consistency of returning campers within the camp’s ongoing development during the long 1950s. Camp Leelanau’s focus on male fitness within the camp is also a markedly potent example of aspirational white masculinity, both in terms of the images selected for their advertisements and in their selection of activities that focused largely on physically strenuous activities, (which can be linked to indications of overcoming the limitations of the body found in Christian Science). In addition, the appeal of the camp rests on the fact that, as a case study, it has not yet been discussed, thereby allowing me to forge new territory within a well-established framework of critical whiteness studies and masculinity studies.

⁴⁶ For a 1960s example of this concern over changing gender roles in relation to summer camp, see Dodson 115.

⁴⁷ In my research of both the history of organizing camping and outdoor education, it became increasingly apparent that the state of Michigan was historically at the forefront of the development for both institutions, indicating the innovations that many camps in Michigan conducted were encouraged by the State Legislature (J. Smith “Michigan” 509, 511). Even more importantly, the earliest critiques of the idealization of organized camping, William Morse and Fritz Redl, were University of Michigan alumni who worked at open air camps in Michigan (M. Smith “Ego” 82). This suggests that the forms of camping present at Michigan were not only influential but also received a great deal of developmental focus, therefore making Camp Leelanau part of an innovative development in camping in general.

Any detailed analysis of Camp Leelanau is made possible due to the compelling and exhaustively researched book *Straight as the Pine Sturdy as the Oak* by Michael Huey, a descendent of two of the camp's original founders. Without this comprehensive book, any form of analysis would have been almost impossible to undertake and I am deeply indebted to Huey's work. Despite this important resource, there are limitations that need to be addressed. Huey's book remains the only major source of historical information that exists on the camp, meaning that discussions of the camp will largely quote almost exclusively from Huey's work. The limitation of this is that I am unable to reference additional perspectives on the camp, meaning that I will rely almost exclusively on Huey's narrative. Huey's work nevertheless is strong and well-researched and as such I am confident in my reliance on his exploration of his family's camp.

Another limitation to my examination is in regards to my access to materials from the camp during my chosen time period of the long 1950s. When I visited the camp in summer of 2018, I was granted access to the camp's archives. During my visit I attempted to gather as much pertinent information as possible from my chosen time period of 1950-1963. During my search, however, I found that the promotional brochures for the years 1957, 1959, 1960, 1962 and 1963 were not within the archive. Additionally, dates for certain files were missing, and as a consequence there is some difficulty in ascertaining how long certain camp structures were part of the camp's culture. While these missing documents would need to be found and considered for an even fuller and more concrete image of the camp to be constructed, I was nevertheless able to collect enough additional materials (including primary documents from Huey's book, the counselor training handbooks from 1960, 1962 and 1965, as well as a 1957 songbook) to make up for some of these deficiencies. I therefore believe that my analysis does not greatly suffer from this shortcoming, especially since I do not cover each year specifically but rather am drawing a generalized image of the Long-1950s, with the corpus allowing me to draw conclusions of certain aspects of the camp's internal structure.

Since the first half of my analysis focuses on the meanings found within the selection, inclusion and deletion of images and texts, I drew from the field of social semiotics' understanding of how historical documents transmit meaning when considering my primary documents. Jeff Bezemer and Carey Jewitt describes the field of social semiotics as being primarily focused upon "meaning makers and meaning making", which is accomplished through the examination of "the media of dissemination and the modes of communication that people use and develop to represent their understanding of the world and to shape power

relations with others (1). This is achieved through the exploration of “semiotic resources”, which Theo Van Leeuwen describes as “action, materials and artifacts” that is used to communicate meaning, either through physiological or technological means (ranging from facial expressions to computer programs) (285). As Emilia Djonov and Sumin Zhao explain, the capacity of meaning-making is that it “is dynamic, simultaneously shaped by and shaping the social contexts in which it is employed” (2). This process can consequently be thought of as exploring the reciprocal relationship between the consumer of the resource and the resource being consumed. For example, the parent viewing camp brochures during the long 1950s likely had a preconceived notion of the benefits of sending a child to a summer camp. These expectations (such as ‘boys need the outdoors to be healthier and more masculine’) are then projected onto the content of the brochure, yet these meanings are simultaneously altered by the implications of the brochure’s content (such as ‘boys can become healthier and manlier when they conduct these particular types of outdoor activities’). Consequently, the resource contributes to and influences the evolving discourse of what constitutes both ‘healthy’ and ‘masculine’. These meanings are then affected by the selection of the images (only showing the images of fit boys) and/or the text (stating the importance of the proposed camp life for building a strong body), all of which function as a means by which the idea of what constitutes ‘a fit masculine boy’ is influenced by the semiotic resources in the brochure. This is then furthered when the parent shows the child the camp, thereby contributing to the child’s own understanding of what meanings these resources constitute.

For my analysis, I examined images and documents from the camp during the long 1950s, with special attention being given to images that represented instances of embodied elements of aspirational masculinity. I examined and catalogued the changes in text and image selection within the brochures (along with my supplemental materials from the camp’s archive and Huey’s book) with the aim of mapping out the shifting emphasis on elements of embodied aspirational masculinity throughout my chosen time period. Once this was completed, I was able to deduce which core ideas changed over time and which remained foundational to the camp’s ethos. This allowed me to extract and analyze the development of social meanings that were being projected over time by the brochures (and the camp itself). As a result, I was able to more fully understand how the camp constructed its promotional image in order to entice parents into sending their sons (thusly revealing what aspects of masculinity were considered by both the camp and the parents as ‘necessary’ for the child’s

development) and how these same ideas revealed the idealized ideas of whiteness and masculinity being taught to campers during the camp's running period.

This format allowed me to examine the elements of white aspirational masculinity contained within the brochures, thereby enabling me to more fully explore how my selection of semiotic resources provide examples that encompass and reference meanings that contribute to and influence a discursive formulation of idealized images.

5. Analysis

As discussed earlier in relation to the concept of osmosis at summer camp, it was commonly assumed that being in proximity to older symbols of masculinity would somehow allow boys to observe and absorb some of the idealized elements these leaders assumedly possessed.⁴⁸ Camp Leelanau was no different, in that it initially was described as being meant “to give these boys a wholesome summer and to develop to the fullest in each boy a truly manly character” (1924 *Brochure 3*, qtd. in Huey 51), indicating an early desire to develop specifically ‘true’ masculine forms of character within isolated environments. For example, the first brochure for the school indicated that “Leelanau’s Winter Session is organized as a home school [sic] for character building” that gave young boys from the 7th to the 10th grades the opportunity to “live with college men who are especially trained to study and teach the individual boy according to his particular needs” (129/1930 *Winter Brochure 1*, qtd. in Huey 57). This indicates that intermale mentorship for the purpose of personal improvement was at the forefront of Leelanau’s corpus, both at the school and the camp. By 1950 the structure of the boy’s camp consisted of three different age groups: the Earlybird Group (ages six to eleven) and the combined Wilderness Group that was made up of the Backwoodsmen Group (ages eleven to thirteen) and the Pioneer Group (ages fourteen to seventeen). This emphasized interactions between different age groups – even if only at dinner and camp meetings as in the case of the Earlybirds and the Wilderness Group – which directly indicated that the school ultimately sought to encourage younger boys to mold their understandings of masculinity on the performances embodied by both older boys and men. This encouragement points to the fact that forms of aspiration were an important aspect of both the camp’s internal

⁴⁸ Leelanau was not alone in this structuring of leadership as a benefit of such interactions, with a 1890s camp brochure suggesting that “living a free, outdoor life, and having at all times the sympathetic companionship of young men of refinement, experience and character” was “the ideal summer outing for a boy” (Rouillon 703, qtd. in Smith 76). This sales pitch ultimately functioned as a promise that the summer camp experience was optimal for the positive development of young men.

structure and what was deemed important for the camper's 'natural' and 'healthy' development.

Up to this point, I have sought to explore whiteness and masculinity in ways that not only deconstruct their essentialist depiction as being 'natural' but also to examine ways in which both are depicted as achievable and (more importantly) desirable. It is here that I will focus and expand upon the latter of these ideas through the coining of the term 'aspirational masculinity'. In order to show ways in which Camp Leelanau imbued both its public image and internal structure with elements of aspirational masculinity, it is important to first define and workshop the concept of aspirational masculinity in order to establish the foundation on which I will build my argument. I will first outline my definition of aspirational masculinity before conducting a brief exploration of Camp Leelanau's 1962 Counselor Training Program, in order to reveal how the camp constructed its internal values around the concept of aspirational masculinity. Following this miniature case study, I will apply this concept to an exploration of how elements of aspirational masculinity were both presented to parents through promotional images and also impressed onto campers in real-time through the internal structure of the camp.

5.1. "Be the Man You [Should] Want to Be": Aspirational Masculinity

I define 'aspirational masculinity' as the presentation and idealization of a set of standards that are deemed as being characteristics worth striving for in order to be a 'true' man; a process which begins in childhood and continues to frame a man's understanding of his masculinity. While hegemonic masculinity (which I described in the introduction as a cultural standard to which men are expected to compare themselves) functions as the basis for this term, aspirational masculinity describes the specifically didactic construction of how the ideal can be achieved. This is accomplished through consistent forms of positive and negative reinforcement, which are situated both in terms of the boy's own masculinity and how he relates his masculine identity to the example of other men. In terms of negative reinforcement, for instance, a young boy might be presented with the necessity of hiding his emotions. He then receives negative feedback on showing emotions through visual cues (emotional men in films being depicted as weak or sappy), auditory cues (his parents or teachers admonishing him with 'boys don't cry') and social cues (displays of male emotions, either by the boy or by other males, being met with discomfort or disdain by partners or peers). Similarly, aspiration is also conducted through positive forms of reinforcement. In the

example of concealing emotions, positive reinforcement would then be received through the same visual (films and literature depicting masculine heroes as stoic and rarely showing emotions outside of anger), audial (being praised for emotional control) and social (men in control of their emotions being treated with respect by peers) means.

More often than not, positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement will simultaneously be presented through comparison of what is deemed a successful and unsuccessful performance of masculinity. When a boy succeeds, it is usually framed as his having avoided the failure of another. This is seen best in competitive arenas such as the field of sports or in business, where it is often thought that ‘there can only be one winner’. Failure is always a present threat and must be continuously avoided in order to escape falling into an unsuccessful performance of masculinity. This turns the process of aspirational masculinity into an unstated competition between men who are constantly avoiding ‘losing the gender game’. Such an interrelation of positive and negative depictions is almost always accompanied by the promise of reward (attention from the desired gender, promotions, approval of peers, etc.) for a successful performance of masculinity and/or the threat of consequence (being ignored by the desired gender, being passed up for a promotion, disapproval of peers etc.) for an unsuccessful performance. This functions to form an image of a man that is assumed to be happy due to his more fully encapsulating ‘true’ masculinity. This occurs regardless of how realistic such rewards and punishments may actually be. Even in situations where these rewards or consequences fail to appear it is often ascribed as an anomaly or an exception to the rule (much like the illustration of ‘female doctor’ in the theory chapter) or the fault of some other factor. The blame is instead deferred to an outside influence that assumedly ‘robbed’ the man of the reward that he ‘should’ receive for his ‘successful’ performance of masculinity. This maintains the essentialist notion of aspirational masculinity’s ‘positive’ influence, since the blame is not understood as resting with unrealistic or outdated ideas of hegemonic masculinity.⁴⁹

All of these factors contribute to an ongoing discourse, which outlines what factors create the aspirational and idealized image of a ‘real man’ that needs to be aspired to in that specific context. This idealized image will therefore indicate which elements are most important to that given society, meaning that this ideal will change over time and will vary from group to

⁴⁹ This ‘anomaly’ argument can extend to work (‘I was passed up for that promotion because the guy they picked is related to the boss’), to relationships (‘women like her can’t handle a *real* man’), to sport (‘he runs faster because he has longer legs than me’) and beyond.

group. While in one culture physical prowess might be more important than mental aptitude, in another culture wit and charm may be more desirable than emotional control. In other words, aspirational masculinity is a tool by which a culture's specific hegemonic ideal for men is reflected onto young boys and confirmed as being worth striving for in order to successfully be a part of that society. Additionally, by framing idealized images as 'aspirational' (a term that connotes both change and futurity) these ideals can exist within their contradictions by remaining peripheral by way of it always being out of reach. The ideal then acts like fog: visible all around but is never quite inside of the individual's grasp. Even if the individual does not attempt to strive towards the ideal, it is framed as something he 'should' be striving towards. This means that, even if the boy does not align with that ideal and is happy with not being 'a real man', through a framework of positive and negative reinforcement nevertheless exerts influence on the boy's understanding of his masculinity. For example, celebrity Jonathan van Ness of *Queer Eye* fame has pointed out that he wants to help push the boundaries of what is expected of men (Lee pars. 32, 47-54), indicating that van Ness is still aware of these borders and expectations even as he robustly defies them.⁵⁰ Van Ness's example suggests that aspirational masculinity ultimately works as an attempt to establish and increase the influence that hegemonic masculinity exerts upon the boy's understanding of his own masculine identity. It is this process of establishing hegemonic masculinity's influence that I turn my attention to now.

5.1.1 "See the Man and [try to] be the Man": Aspirational Leadership at Camp Leelanau

Camp Leelanau's Counselor Training Program (hereafter "the CT Program") was a week-long workshop designed for seniors in high school. After taking a final examination at the end of the program, the seniors became counselors so that they could apply what they had learned within the context of Camp Leelanau. Even today, the camp's website promotes the CT Program's value in "developing leadership skills" and promoting "the ability to take initiative", declaring that boys and also girls would be encouraged to become "confident and dedicated Christian Scientists" ("Counselor"). The website even goes so far as to label this program as "unparalleled" ("FAQ") and even "profound" ("Counselor"). That the CT Program still exists and is exalted by the camp organizers indicates that the program has consistently operated as a foundational aspect of the camp's self-promotion as a place that 'produces leaders'. Yet this program also contained a further use for the camp's leaders: by

⁵⁰ Although van Ness identifies as non-binary, at the time of writing he uses he/him pronouns.

personally overseeing the training of the counselors, the camp could also ‘recruit’ these counselors to enforce the camp’s values during the camping period. This means that the camp’s CT Program functioned to outline what the camp considered to be the ‘qualities of a leader’, which the counselor needed to aspire to while also using these same counselors as tools by which campers would also inadvertently learn the same set of values.

Within the 1962 Counselor Training Handbook, the overarching focus is on the counselor’s goal of being more like the program’s idealized vision of a counselor.⁵¹ After the opening pages detail the schedule for the workshop week and a few facts about the camp itself, the handbook lists George S. Miller’s “Ten Tested Rules of Executives” as an outline for the counselor himself, stating that these ten rules could also have been named “Ten Tested Rules for Counselors” (4). This list contains elements that strongly register leadership as being composed of the previously discussed aspects of whiteness/overcoming and masculinity/control, seen in goals such as “to keep silent about my own feelings, experiences, and opinions” and to “hold steady under strain” (*Handbook [1962]* 4). This indicates that there was not only an expected ideal of specifically white forms of hegemonic masculinity within the camp’s structure, but also that these hegemonic ideals were assumed to be indicative of the skills and responsibilities required of an eventual ‘Executive’. As such, the camp program suggested to the counselor that learning to encapsulate these ideals successfully was valuable not only for success in life but also for their future career. Success here meant success in the future and aspiring to these ideals would allow the counselor to unlock their potential as a leader (therefore increasing their value in society). To achieve this, the handbook seems to suggest at various points, these younger counselors would need constant interaction with and approval from the older leaders (8-10). This priority not only provided examples of masculinity to the counselors, but also indicated that any deviatory behaviors of campers could be indirectly controlled and minimized. For instance, a counselor could bring up the fact that a camper is crying because he misses his family. The leader might reiterate that the counselor should comfort the camper while also encouraging the camper to ‘buck up’ and ‘find something to occupy his mind’.⁵² In this way, the leader is able to not

⁵¹ This is a marked difference from the 1960 Training Manual, which is not nearly as dense and features more information about general camp activities, indicating that the changes in this manual were far more recent (see *Manual [1960]*). These changes would then last until at least 1965 (see *Handbook [1965]*).

⁵² The handbook does recommend reporting when campers felt homesick, but this conflicts with the expectation that the teenage counselors should be expected to ‘keep in control of their emotions’, as well as the idea that boys should be distracted to keep them docile (*Handbook [1962]* 4-5, 9). As such, both indicate that this ‘comfort’ rule was meant only for the Earlybird group and likely was not the case in older boys who more than likely would have been shamed for their vulnerability.

only further outline for the counselor what the responsibility of ‘leadership’ looks like, in this case pushing others to exert self-control, but to also indirectly pass that information on to the camper via the counselor. This created a flow of masculine ideals such as ‘boys don’t cry’ that would permeate all levels of the camp.

The handbooks illustrate that aspirational masculinity tends to function in a two-fold manner, in that the counselor must aspire to become more like the ‘more mature’ masculinities of the leaders while also working to be a good representation of the ideal for the younger group. The handbook itself provides a sense of this ‘middle’ positioning in the section containing the “Rules of Executives”. One illustration of this is the emphasis on treating everyone equally, with the argument being that “those who feel beneath [the counselor] will respond with new values” (*Handbook [1962]* 4). This indicates that, if the counselor was able to perform his masculinity correctly, ‘lesser’ performances of leadership and masculinity would be inspired to emulate him. Even more importantly, the following statement that “those who seem above [the counselor] are also timid” (*Handbook [1962]* 4) also humanizes the idealized man ‘who is above’. The suggestion is that such men are really not so dissimilar from the counselor, meaning the counselor has every possibility to ‘make it’ in the same way. These idealized men are described as timid, implying they are not perfect, unreachable examples but rather ‘normal’ men who happen to better encapsulate the ideals of masculinity (which is assumedly the reason they are ‘above’ the counselor). In short, there was simultaneously a pressure of self betterment and a pressure to better instruct others in how to live.

The responsibility to inspire others takes up the bulk of the handbook’s inferences about aspiring towards ideals of leadership. The concept of ‘leading by example’ is referenced twice in the general information section in the handbook, with an underlined point stating that “the campers are watching your life more intently than listening to your counsel” and the another encouraging promptness on the part of the counselor, since “[a]gain, example is the best teacher” (10-11). The handbook inferred that the camper would be constantly watching (and more importantly scrutinizing, as discussed later) to see how the counselor’s masculinity and leadership skills held up in the dynamic of the camp environment. Any slip-up of the counselor’s performance of masculine leadership was tied to ‘setting a bad example’ and jeopardizing the development of the campers. This paints the campers as being reliant upon the counselor’s successful performance of leadership, placing pressure upon the counselor to ‘perform’ as best he can and as consistently as he can to the campers’ benefit. This is exemplified in terms of work ethic, with one section discouraging “[laying] around the cabin”

when the counselor had free time on nights other than their night off, instead encouraging that the counselor make constructive use of their time by interacting with the campers (*Handbook [1962]* 9). The pushing for interaction between campers and counselors facilitated the emphasis of the counselor's role as being a positive influence on the campers as consistently and as effectively as possible, in this case by "[getting] to know" them (*Handbook [1962]* 9). Moreover, this mandate can be thought of as suggesting that constructive use of time had a correlative benefit for their own development (especially in relation to the ideas of 'protestant work ethic' already present in the camp's structure). In other words, the counselor bore the responsibility of performing masculinity for the camper's benefit – a performance which he was expected to model after the 'mature' examples of masculinity encouraged by the leaders of the camp – in a way that solidified (and therefore 'improved') the performance of the counselor's own increasing role as a 'pillar of society'.

It is here that the aspect of performative transformation within aspirational masculinity comes into focus. The campers would have likely seen the counselor 'trying' to be like the older leaders, which would have given an understanding of the generational scope of aspiration that they themselves will one day be expected to be a part of. As such, the position of the counselors being in the middle serves as a strong indicator of a generational hierarchy that is constantly marching forward towards a better version of the male masculine self.⁵³ This is glaringly apparent in the handbook's previously mentioned "Rules for Executives". For instance, the previously mentioned suggestion that "those who feel beneath [the counselor]" will learn "new values" by the example of the leader focuses in particular on inspiration as a motivator for transformation (4). It presumes that the role of the leader sparks a feeling of inferiority on the part of 'lesser' expressions of masculinity. The suggestion is that these 'lesser' men will 'instinctively' want to change their less-than-satisfactory behaviors so that they may achieve what the leader has achieved. This was then implied to be a mark of difference between the eighteen-year-old counselor and the seventeen-year-old camper, who the year before had been the counselor's peer, in that the counselor was more actively improving his ability as a leader (further emphasizing the idealization of the self-made man). Another point promotes allowing other men at least three failed attempts, suggesting that, for the man in question, "it may be a matter of finding his place" (*Handbook [1962]* 4). This is seen in the handbook recommending that discipline should occur in a manner that "[bore]

⁵³ This is markedly similar to instances of Pillar Masculinity in particular, in that the social responsibility of masculinity is set up to be a generational necessity of upholding the past and encouraging the future to remain stable.

some relation to the offense”, thereby indicating an attempt at ‘correction’ by forcing the camper to ‘do it again, but the right way’ (5). This seeming inference to the old adage of ‘try try again’ (itself a key aspect of the camp’s promotion of protestant work ethic discussed earlier) placed emphasis on actively working towards change and pointed counselors towards encouraging and promoting this process of aspirational transformation.

Both of these statements not only marked change as ‘good’ and ‘necessary’, but also promoted white forms of overcoming and ‘the white man’s burden’. For example, as discussed earlier, the depiction of white men being better suited to leadership is tied to their ‘natural’ ability to overcome obstacles. The ideals of whiteness align with the presumed ability to be better suited to bring order and control to the chaos of others, suggesting that the role of leadership is to ‘help others do what they cannot do themselves’. In this case, the ‘lesser’ groups are people who ‘are not there yet’⁵⁴ and they must look to the ‘right examples’ to learn how to ‘get there’ and unlock their potential. The final point of the list further declares that leaders, “having done all things, [should] decide, and having decided, not to change without good reasons” (*Handbook [1962]* 4). This promotes the idea of resisting the influence of others and ‘staying the course’ once a decision has been reached, even though promoting change in others was previously listed as the primary focus of being a leader. The inference, therefore, is that these counselors must not only be capable of inspiring change, but they must also resist any change suggested by others, as such a change would imply that the man’s own masculinity is ‘wrong’. This contradiction references a pervasive aspect of white masculinity, in that the goal of performing whiteness and masculinity is not to fundamentally change or ‘improve’ the ideals of such a performance, but rather to simply become *better* at performing them. In a white hegemonic society, women and people of color are understood as *only* being able to aspire to white masculine ideals since they can never embody them to the extent that white men can. This idea once again posits the white male as being ‘most capable’ of being a leader and bringing order to the world largely because he is depicted as a representative for the human race. The hierarchy that this proposes, which is deeply tied to colonialist ideas of ‘the white man’s burden’ and ‘manifest destiny,’ is one where only white men are capable of deciding what equates to an aspiration-worthy performance of whiteness and masculinity. This positions white masculine forms of leadership as a responsibility that the counselors must learn to embody as effectively as possible for not only the good of the

⁵⁴ This includes both younger white males as well as men of color, all of whom embody ‘lesser’ or at least ‘less mature’ versions of masculinity.

campers but also to the future of humanity. A humanity that the counselor and their charges are assumed to represent.

The unifying thread that connects the above three examples from the “Rules for Executives” is that the responsibility of transforming into a ‘better’ version of oneself is always termed as being the responsibility of the individual. Especially for Christian Scientists, as discussed earlier, this form of self-actualized change was always posited as both possible and necessary. This links back not only to ideas of summer camping being a transformative process,⁵⁵ but also to the desire to promote the idea of the ‘self-made man’ mentioned earlier. For example, counselors were instructed to help the younger campers unpack but to let them do the majority of the work so that they could ‘learn to do it themselves’ (*Handbook [1962]* 5). This suggests to the counselor and to the camper that increasing independence and the ability to be self-sustaining are important goals for white masculinity. In essence, transforming into a more individual version of oneself was understood to require that the individual make the effort and/or be ‘encouraged’ to change themselves. The suggestion was ‘you only get out of camp what you put into it’. As I show in the following pages, this idea of transformation was depicted at the camp through acts of comparison and competition, which were enacted through embodied forms of aspirational masculinity.

5.2 “[Any of] Your Boys can [Try to] be Men”: Embodied White Masculinity

Although aspiration can take many forms and is transmitted through a variety of means, including but not limited to visual, auditory and social, the visual element of aspiration is perhaps the most potent. As discussed in the theory chapter, specifically embodied forms of white masculinity are the most prevalent in terms of crafting images that connote and transmit meanings of whiteness/overcoming and masculinity/self-control. For example, the early discussion of bodybuilders referenced how their bodies, even when inactive, are understood in terms of the muscled body’s “potential for action” (Strong 171). As Strong points out, the flexing of muscles as conducted by bodybuilders is an action distinct from muscle that is being employed for manual labor such as digging or pulling, in that flexing operates solely as an embodied representation of what the muscle “*could*” do (172). The image of these men’s flexed muscles is an inference to the fantasy of what these muscles embody: the mind’s ability to conquer the limits of the body. In essence, the importance of flexing rests less on the actual function of the muscle and more on the significance of the

⁵⁵ See Tillery (379) for an example of this.

meanings being mapped onto the built body. This is similar to the earlier discussion of the penis, which operates as an embodied representation not only of the man's sexual appetite but also of his ability to exert control over it. As such, both examples of the body and the penis are ultimately indicative of how specific depictions of whiteness and masculinity are often tied to aspects of embodiment. This means both the body and images of the body can and often do operate as a sort of semiotic resource, in that how the body is visually presented can indicate and convey certain meanings to the person viewing the body.

The embodied forms of white masculinity mentioned up to this point are also related to aspirational masculinity, in that they are in many ways performative. The building up of the body's muscle and penile enhancements both seek to transform the body in a way that increases its proximity to the ideal for the body or the penis. Such a transformation is then suggested to have a positive effect on how these men view themselves and (more importantly) how they are viewed by others. These aspired-to elements also give a further indication that these ideals are reachable, presenting a sense of control and possibility to transformations. It is inferred that a person has influence over how others view them. In essence, both embodiment and aspiration are rooted in promoting the impact of how others see you, suggesting that you can control the meanings that are being transmitted through the process of transformation. Within the following pages, I will examine the depiction of these embodied elements of white masculinity within Camp Leelanau's culture. This will first be conducted in more direct terms of how images of physical fitness and shirt-offness culture in the camp's brochures make use of the gaze to promote the camp's transformative processes to the parents. This gives a sense of the more overt inferences of aspirational masculinity seen within the camp's promoted self-image, as well as giving a sense of the parental expectations that were likely pressed upon the campers when they arrived at the camp. I will follow this with an examination of a less explicitly stated example of embodied aspirational masculinity within the camp's culture, seen in the usage of clothing as markers of success and failure. This will enable me to reveal ways in which transformation was promised, both through visual depictions of scrutiny to the parents and through comparison being enacted in everyday life at the camp to the campers.

5.2.1 “I’m Too [Athletic] for My Shirt”: The Gaze, Physical Fitness and Shirt-Offness Culture

Within my analysis of the development of Camp Lelanau’s brochures, it became clear that the developing usage of text and images indicated how the camp advertised to parents during the long 1950s. The 1950 season, which coincidentally was the camp’s 30th season, shows the brochures merely giving a general sense of the camp’s structure. It is only by 1955 that there is a notable shift in the brochures, which largely do away with the text and instead overload the pages with images. Additionally, previous text references to “your boy” (*1952 Brochure* 2) in the introduction were changed to “a camper” (*1955 Brochure* 2). This indicates that the program was attempting to be far more generalized and less overtly directed at the parents, even as it was even more explicitly implied that ‘any (real) boy can do it, why not yours?’ Nevertheless, a parent-directed formulation only increased by 1958. Here the brochures drastically shifted focus to expounding on daily camp life and assurances of safety. The brochures now sought to give parents as much of a sense as possible of what the children were doing and how they were being protected. For instance, a new section combined the previously separate sections of swimming, sailing and water sports into a new section titled “Fun and Safety in the Water”, which outlined the various safety procedures intended to keep the children safe (*1958 Brochure* 10). By 1961, the collage style of the previous seasons gave way to a more minimalist selection of images (often 1-3 per page), with the renewed usage of “your son” returning to the explicit direction towards parents (*1961 Brochure* 6). Here the ‘promise’ of the camp was front and center, with a new section titled “Adventure Calls” using poetic and literary prose to paint an image of the parents’ son “[riding] a swift and silent canoe” and “[standing] quietly in a forest glade watching a family of deer browse” (*1961 Brochure* 6). This new text promised the parents that ‘this could and should be your son’ and painted a fantasy of what their son might become if only he were to attend the camp. This signals that the camp’s image was fully brought into the aspirational modus that it had referenced since the beginning.

The sections providing the clearest examples of how the usage of images within the camp’s promotional materials developed are those that focused on water and land sports. During the long 1950s, these two sections were the most consistent in terms of what they proposed to parents, yet they most explicitly outlined the changes that were made to the camp’s promoted visual image. Up until 1961, for example, these sections were largely image-based, with some years eschewing text entirely. Even in the 1961 brochure, when the number of images

shrank considerably and the text even more so, visual depictions of sports activities were preferred over text in these two particular instances (9-12, 17-24). As such, the strong and consistent emphasis on the visualization of sports indicates that there was an increasing sense of ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’ in how the camp presented itself to parents. This was a common sentiment during the 1950s. During this period, photographs were in many ways still considered “simply information” (McGrath 195) and in some cases were considered superior to the assumedly more subjective medium of text (Weidner 162).⁵⁶ Roberta McGrath links this concept of the photograph as objective to earlier considerations of the camera as being “an instrument for seeing, for fixing, arresting an image of that object, that person, in that place, at that time, and for transporting it to some other place at some other time” (190). This understanding suggested that the photograph operated as a simple snapshot of life and was not seen as being capable of manipulating meaning. Tobias Weidner further relates this to the increasing influence of humanism and street photography after WWI, pointing out that human authenticity became vital for many photographers who sought to capture a realistic depiction of their subject (154-55). This meant that “posing” was strongly discouraged (Weidner 154-55). In other words, during the long 1950s there existed an assumption that photography was inherently impartial and ‘naturally’ leaned towards presenting neutral and authentic depictions. In this sense, the photographs within the brochures sought to establish themselves as ‘candid’ and realistic depictions of camp, indicating that they were visually transmitting what everyday life at the camp looked like. The parent viewing the images is meant to understand these images as giving an ‘insider look’ at what goes on at the camp. This indicates that, apart from the group photographs that appeared each year, the implication of the pictures being posed was seemingly avoided. Instead, the images attempted to present themselves as largely impartial, with the photographer being largely treated as invisible.⁵⁷ In the end, the snapshots function like a clip from *LIFE Magazine*, prompting parents to understand the photographs as ‘real’ and ‘natural’ indications of what camp life will look like for their son.

⁵⁶ This idea was tied to the popular representation of photography in the long 1940s as being a visual medium that was not confined by “‘language barriers’” and was capable of “[communicating] the realities of life”, which further served as a rationale for why photography was considered able to visibly represent “humanity [...] in condensed narrations of recognizable everyday situations” (Weidner 157-58).

⁵⁷ Even when campers do smile at the camera it often seems to be enacted in order to further add to a ‘candid’ and ‘spontaneous’ feel in the photographs, as it is usually conducted in very large group settings and seems to suggest that the cameraman called and said, ‘smile and wave’.



Fig. 5.1: 1950 Brochure (14).⁵⁸



Fig. 5.2: 1952 Brochure (16).

Creating trust in the realism of the photographs was obviously important to the camp and it was an aspect they strove to uphold. This is indicated in how they handled the overstepping of the boundaries of the photograph's objectivity. One particularly striking instance of this appears in the 1950 brochure, where an image of the naked boys showering together outside appeared in the brochure and was removed the following year (Fig. 5.1). This image, taken from above, looks down on the boys (and presumably some men as well) showering together. The image was replaced in 1951 by a similar photo (Fig. 5.2) which showed naked boys lining up to go to the showers. I argue that this indicates that nudity itself was not an issue in this instance. Instead, the issue is in how the gaze of the photographer was made obvious. The 1950s photograph places the gaze of the photographer into a voyeur-like perspective, as if they are looking at something they are not supposed to, making the presence of the photographer strikingly clear. In the replacement image, the boys' backs are turned and the camera is at an even level with the boys. Additionally, a fully clothed adult, who appears to be in charge of managing the boys as they wait their turn, is also included in the picture. This directly indicates that the cameraman in the replacement image was 'meant' to be present, since the presence of another adult suggests that both the boys (and therefore the person photographing them) were being supervised. This suggests that the problem of the 1950 image comes from its angle and 'caught in the act' structure, which invasively looks down on the naked bodies of underage boys as they shower. Laura Mulvey argues that "conventions of narrative film" seek to avoid making the viewer conscious of the camera and of their own role as an audience (Mulvey 843).⁵⁹ The shower example further therefore prompts the

⁵⁸ Although nudity was, at the time, not an issue for the camp in their brochures, I have elected to censor these images out of sensitivity and respect for modern understandings of both consent and underage nudity. I have also censored the faces and names of the campers in all camp images so as not to encroach upon privacy.

⁵⁹ Through the increasing convention of 4th wall breaks in films, this perspective is more frequently rejected in modern contexts.

consideration that such a strikingly voyeuristic image ultimately was removed because it made far too obvious what was being conducted in the images, namely that of how the viewer's gaze was being directed to consider and objectify the child's body. This element of objectification in particular introduces the curious interactions of the gaze and how it operates on and in the photographs through its use of the gaze on young male bodies, which the next photographic example will further illustrate.

In conjunction with the rise of structuralism, the notion of the gaze that developed in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the deconstruction of photographs as objective transmitters of information (McGrath 195). Roberta McGrath explains that the gaze occurs when someone (the subject) draws conscious or subconscious meanings through the focus on someone or something (the object) (193). McGrath references Roland Barthes's 1977 discussion of the gaze as a form of "information, as an exchange—a relationship, and as possession or apprehension" (Barthes 238, qtd. in McGrath 192). Barthes recognized that there is not a clear binary relationship between the subject gazing upon the object and the object being gazed upon (192-3). Rather, the "power of the image" was that it could affect the viewer and influence their perception of both themselves and the object (McGrath 192). This deconstruction of the essentialized idea that photographs were 'impartial' prompted discussions of what McGrath describes as the "space between the observer and the image" (195). The former passive relationship between the photograph and the viewer was now reformulated as being "an encounter (on both sides of the image)" (McGrath 195). Through such discussions, it was shown that the image can and usually does have an effect upon the one gazing at the image.

The topic of the gaze within visual media as it relates to power and gender is seen most famously in Mulvey's famous male gaze theory. As Mulvey points out, in an overwhelming number of films the perspective of the camera is one that appeals to a heterosexual male audience and is often enacted through the objectification and sexualization of the female body (Mulvey 837-8). Much like assumptions of white men being the default human, the ongoing proliferation of this perspective (thanks to the historically male-dominated field of cinema) creates the inference of the male gaze as being the standard gaze (Mulvey 838). This means, as Mulvey suggests, men are assumed to always be "the bearer of the look" whereas women are presented as objects to be looked at for the purposes of deriving pleasure or meaning from their bodies (838). The pervasiveness of the "determining male gaze" (Mulvey 837) in visual media (including video games, illustrations, advertisements, etc.) creates a

template where the audience is asked to identify with the male perspective as being ‘universal’ (Mulvey 837-9). The audience is consequently forced to view the audience through the perspective of the male gaze, regardless of whether or not they themselves are both heterosexual and male. This exerts power over representation, as the male gaze controls *what* kind of woman is being observed and *how* she is being observed, in terms of success (the sexy heroine) and/or failure (the homely shrew). An idealized image of women is therefore created through positive and negative reinforcement, as seen in the earlier example of ‘boys don’t cry’. This assumed ‘universality’ then further suggests how women are ‘naturally’ perceived by others, which invites women to compare themselves (as well as other women) to the idealized image being depicted through the male gaze (Sampson pars. 6, 16). The gaze can therefore be understood as a form of scrutinizing the self and others, either intentionally or unintentionally, for comparison with an idealized image.

Another aspect of the gaze is that it presents the uncomfortable realization that one can be gazed upon; the viewer (subject) can also become the viewed (object). For men, who have historically been depicted as being the subject and not the object, instances when the gaze is reversed upon them remove their position as being the ‘makers of meaning’ and turn them into ‘made of meaning’. As seen in the image of boys showering, the issue of the photograph was that it made unintentionally obvious that the viewer’s gaze was objectifying and drawing meaning from the bodies of the boys. Such a recognition of the gaze further facilitates the awareness, as Richard Feldstein describes, that the individual is also “the object of the other’s gaze and the target of unknowable desires and judgments” (Samuels 185, qtd. in McGrath 194). Strong points out that the earlier example of bodybuilding is an instance where the appraising gaze of other men is focused upon a male body (170). To remove connotations of homosexual desire that comes from appraising and discussing the bodies of other men, Strong argues, the built body is framed as being considered in terms of its “potential for action” (170-71), which Mulvey would term as the ability to “make things happen” (838). Conversely, female bodybuilders are often photographed in poses that emphasize their breasts and hips (Strong 173). This downplays these women’s ‘masculine’ potential and emphasizes instead their feminine passivity, meaning that the male gaze can confirm that these women are still ‘made to be looked at’ even when the same sport is being played (Strong 172-3).⁶⁰ As such, in order to avoid turning men into passive objects that are being scrutinized by others,

⁶⁰ This is an issue that still exists to this day, with a Norwegian women’s beach handball team receiving a fine for wearing shorts instead of the far skimpier bikini bottoms required at the 2021 European Beach Handball Championship (Brito para. 1).

men must always be depicted as ‘doers’ (aka the subject). This suggests that, should they be gazed upon and objectified or compared to others, it will be in terms of their capacity for ‘doing’ rather than for their role as ‘eye candy’. In other words, the examples of female and male bodybuilders indicate that photographing the body is always accompanied by a subconscious or conscious awareness of how the gaze will eventually create and transmit meaning from the bodies.

Within the context of the brochures, creating meaning by gazing at young male bodies is most evident in the pervasiveness of bare skin. Throughout the entirety of the long 1950s, shirtless bodies were a consistent and overwhelming presence in the brochures' construction, giving the camp a strong sense of ‘shirt-offness culture’ where the display of the male torso was near constant.⁶¹ The imagery of these shirtless bodies playing sports suggests that these smiling children were not only healthy, and that they were happy *because* they were healthy. The brochures therefore indicate that health is important to the camp and should be important to any parent who wants their child to be happy. Throughout the early to mid-1950s, the vast majority of the boys depicted in Leelanau’s brochures were shown to be athletic and largely devoid of body fat. The older boys in particular aligned with a mesomorphic body ideal, which describes a male figure that has broader shoulders, a thinner waist, a proportionate amount of muscle (avoiding a “bulky” look) and little body fat, which reveals the prized abdominal muscles (Edly 56-57). This idealized body type was further suggested to be almost universal at the camp by instances of non-mesomorphic bodies being relegated to group shots, where chubbier boys were shown running or swimming with their slimmer peers.

⁶¹ This can be connected to the emphasis on health that was part of some of the first organized camping experiences, which were based exclusively around helping sickly boys and were then furthered through concerns of young boys’ health after WWI (R. Carlson 83-84).

GAMES ... PLAY WITH MEANING



Fig. 5.3: “Games...Play with Meaning.” 1961 Brochure (21).

In 1961, however, there occurred an example of a non-ideal body being placed at center stage. In the image (Fig. 5.3), a boy is shown bouncing on an outdoor trampoline surrounded by shirtless peers, with the caption “Games ... Play with Meaning” (1961 Brochure 21). All of the boys are shirtless and the body language of the figures on the ground connotes rapt attention. While the boy on the trampoline (hereafter referred to as ‘BOT’) is assumedly the focus of the photo, he does not appear in the center. Instead, the placement of the caption brings the eye first to BOT in the upper left half of the image before drawing attention down to the audience of boys occupying the bottom half of the image. The structure of this photo, therefore, indicates that it is the act of gazing that is being emphasized in the image, since the spectators occupy more space in the photo than the boy, BOT, being looked at. In addition, the fact that the gaze is drawn down from BOT towards his audience means that the gaze must first travel along BOT’s bare torso before reaching the torsos of those watching him. The gaze of the person viewing the photo is being directed to absorb specifically how the BOT’s body is being scrutinized by the gaze of the boys around him.

The inclusion of this photo in particular⁶² stands as a strong example of aspirational comparison in the camp’s promoted image, in that it suggests that boys will ‘learn something’ from their proximity to their peers at the camp. In the image above, the gaze of the boys on

⁶² The caption that these boys are “play[ing] with meaning” further implies there is a purpose behind the activity, especially since this is the one instance of focusing on a shirtless body that does not align with the ideal, regardless of whether or not other non-ideal bodies were present off camera. Additionally, the fact that the amount of images was drastically reduced during this period further suggests that the message being relayed in this photo was important enough to warrant inclusion.

the ground is focused upon the body of BOT, which is seemingly meant in an encouraging way; the implication is that they are encouraging their comrade in his physical journey. However, the emphasis on the gaze within the photo suggests that BOT is being observed by those who ‘fit in’ better than he does and he must work to align with their idealized body type (or at least their athletic ability) under the scrutiny of his potential failure. This act of ‘trying’ is further emphasized by the presence of the two bodies situated directly to the left and the right of BOT, who are either instructors or group leaders. The assumedly older men have bodies that have been worked for and their tanned skin stands out as a representation of their time spent shirtless in the sun. The bright light brings out their defined and tanned muscles, providing a stark contrast to the pale and less defined body of the other boys in the image, especially the rounder figure of BOT. In much the same way as images of Superman and Jesus symbolize where the journey towards idealized white masculinity assumedly leads, these two figures operate as an embodiment of the ‘end goal’ for the activity of bouncing on the trampoline (itself a symbol of the process of ‘getting healthy’).⁶³ As such, while the other four boys on the ground are also not ‘there yet’ in comparison, since they are still pale scrawny when juxtaposed to the older two, they are nevertheless suggested as being further along than BOT since they are not the ones being put on display in a manner that directly promotes comparative scrutiny.

Through the act of gazing at the boys and the leaders gazing at BOT, it is suggested to the parent that BOT is being marked as different and will be pressured by both peers and leaders to align with an idealized vision of masculinity. The majority of the images in the brochures show boys working in groups to learn the various activities available at the camp, including climbing, riflery, archery, camping, canoeing, water sports, baseball and weightlifting. While this is meant to promote socializing and indicate to the parent that their child would be supervised (particularly those in the youngest category), the images visually suggest to the parent that the child will be surrounded by men and boys who can ‘lead by example’ and enable the child to develop a positive direction, suggesting that this is a benefit and important for the boy’s development. The act of gazing upon a child being gazed upon by others (and/or gazed upon others) works to ‘transport’ the parent into the world of the photo. This pushes the parent to imagine what camp life will supposedly be like for their son, while inferring

⁶³ The image of BOT could further be compared to the earlier image of Jesus’s ascension (Fig. 2.3), in that both feature a figure suspended in midair. The difference between the two is that the viewer knows that BOT will come down again whereas Jesus will continue to ascend. As such, the activity also functions as an embodiment of the challenge to continuously strive to more closely accomplish what the idealized image is capable of, regardless of how realistic that goal is.

how the camp culture will use the gaze to ultimately transform their child into a ‘real man’. ‘If your child makes a mistake,’ the brochure promises to the parent, ‘there will always be someone who will see and help to correct’. This suggests to the parent that the gaze will operate as an on-site symbol for identifying and correcting deviant behavior.⁶⁴ The trampoline photo there speaks to the embodied pressure to conform, both to the expectations of the camp and to the expectations of the parents who send him to this particular environment. These expectations for conformity are then mapped onto the physicality of someone who is not ‘ideal’, thereby indicating to his peers and to him what elements constitute failure or success. The meaning of BOT’s body is that he must take extra steps to ‘get on the same level’ as his peers, signaling to the watching children his body requires extra ‘correcting’. This further equates his body type with failure. It is an instance where the scrutinizing gaze of others is meant to shame the boy into transformation, in that his lack of alignment to the ideal is framed in terms of his need to ‘correct’ his failure.⁶⁵ The smile on the boy’s face also indicates that he is happy in his journey towards transformation, thus strengthening the idea that he is happy *because* he is transforming to eventually become like the other healthy smiling boys at the camp. The message that this conveys is one where transformation is assumed to be a pleasure and a privilege, marking it as worthy of aspiring to, even though the reality is one that emphasizes the gaze as scrutiny and as pressure to conform.

In spite of the overt message of ‘aspirational development by way of encouragement’ that the image of BOT attempts to convey to the parent, it nevertheless brings up the potentially more negative sides of group osmosis within the camp’s culture. Don Ihde suggests that, during a child’s development, a discursive struggle begins that stems from the intermale dynamics of bonding (with the assistance of girls as well), which “help establish the set of relations which usually also reflect the hierarchies of who is favored and who not” (240). Ihde posits that “in male socialization, particularly in childhood, the role of body size and prowess is poignantly important” (235). As Ihde points out, the social leverage created by a combination of height and athletic ability can facilitate a difficult scenario for outliers who do not match up with the ideal (either by being short, having little athletic propensity or a combination of the two) (237). This presents the role that the gaze played within the actual camp environment, in that

⁶⁴ This was also true in terms of aspiration in the camp’s culture mentioned earlier, in that the camp counselors were also made explicitly aware of this gaze and its aspirational potential (see 5.1.1).

⁶⁵ For further explorations of shame and failure as key aspects of correcting or policing behaviors, see Edly (ch. 5); Hultmann and Pulé (68, 118-9); McGann.

the developing boys were constantly shirtless while playing sports and all of the various sports were located next to each other. It was easy to look next door and see other shirtless bodies participating in different physical activities. This created an environment where physical exertion was a main focal point of the camp and shirtless bodies provided markers of success or failure at a near-constant rate. As such, the usage of sports in conjunction with the gaze sought to indicate that the boy was either ‘there’ or actively ‘trying to get there’. This embodiment became a constant performance that indicated to others how much or how little a boy was able to perform the masculinity promoted by the camp. These performative elements then became part of the discursive struggle that would last throughout their adult lives. As shown in the following section, this extended beyond physically embodied forms of failure, with embodied markers of success also being a part of the camp’s internal construction.

5.2.2 “Say Yes to the [Hat]”: Embodied Social Markers of Success and Failure

The usage of physical fitness and shirt-offness culture as an advertisement for potential clients reveals much about how Camp Leelanau projected its expectations of masculinity on and through the body of the camper. In terms of directly influencing the boy’s understanding of his and others’ performance of masculinity, however, the camp’s structuring of reward systems was far more potent. One example stems from one of the most emphasized elements within the brochures, that of cleanliness. This can be seen on a more direct level in the brochures’ consistent promise that campers would be subject to “[a] minimum of one hot soap shower a day” (*1951 Brochure* 10). This was a reflection of the camp’s expectation that boys would retain civilized cleanliness ‘in spite of’ their time in nature, as discussed in the previous chapter. In keeping with the camp’s contrast between nature and modernity being represented in housing, such as the Homestead, the cabins were also expected to be kept in pristine condition regardless of their being situated in nature. Consequently, a cabin and area inspection was conducted every day by the head counselors (*Handbook [1962]* 6). Along with this inspection, points for cleanliness were given and the tally for the day was announced. This point system then functioned as a competition between the different cabins of each group (Earlybirds, Backwoodsmen and Pioneers), with one cabin from each group receiving a special dessert⁶⁶ at Sunday dinner for having achieved the most points for that week (*Handbook [1962]* 6). In other words, cleanliness was an expectation of the camp and

⁶⁶ As the term “extra dessert” is used in the handbook to describe this aspect of the inspection program, it is unclear if this denotes a ‘special dessert’ separate from the normal dessert of the night, or if this simply a second serving of the same dessert as the others (*Handbook [1962]* 6). For the sake of this argument, I have elected to go with the first option.

managing to best meet that expectation was directly rewarded in a very public and very tactile manner.

The rewarding of a special dessert to the cleanest cabins provides an introduction to the aspirational forms of embodied reward and consequence within the camp's internal structure. Sunday dinner was a time when the three groups ate together and the special dessert was awarded to the winning cabins. This meant that everyone at dinner on Sunday would see the winners enjoying their special treat. This provided an instance where the winners were positioned as an object of the gaze of others, albeit in terms of their success rather than their failure as was the case with BOT.⁶⁷ Additionally, one of three rules for mealtimes explicitly stated that exchanging desserts was not allowed, further indicating that the special dessert was exclusively for those who had 'earned' it and could not be enjoyed by others (*Handbook [1962]* 11). This was connected to a rule to "never deprive a boy of food (this means dessert) [as punishment]" (*Handbook [1962]* 5), which further suggests that a direct comparison of the normal dessert and the special dessert was always present at Sunday dinner. The special dessert functioned as a social separator, in that it symbolically distinguished successful cabins from unsuccessful cabins. As such, regardless of whether or not the individual boy actually liked the dessert, it stood as a symbol of his cabin's achievement. The 'competition' that this system necessitated consequently acted as a source of social inspiration, in that it was designed to prompt other cabins to collectively 'step up their game' in order to win next week. This was compounded through the announcing of daily inspection results, which functioned as a daily incentive to push for improvement in order to receive the dessert at the end of the week. In addition, the competition pushed cabins that had already won towards keeping consistently clean to avoid losing the special dessert the following Sunday. A snowball effect was then created, whereby boys continuously and increasingly had to 'one-up' each other for the purpose of winning the dessert. The example of the dessert ultimately reveals that reward and punishment, or rather punishment through the lack of reward, being enacted through embodied social markers of success was a primary method used by the camp to ensure that certain behaviors were rewarded in a way that publicly symbolized campers' accomplishment.

While the reward of the special dessert functioned to fuel competition specifically in terms of group cleanliness, another reward system at Camp Leelanau symbolically marked 'winners'

⁶⁷ It is not indicated whether this was announced before dinner or if this also constituted a ceremony where the desserts were brought out and then given to campers, in a show of anticipation and direct reward.

and ‘losers’ individually. The Sunday dinner was followed by the weekly camp meeting, titled “the Council Ring”, where the entire camp met together for a lesson and for the handing out of awards. These awards included medals for categories such as “Archery and Riflery”, “Swimming and Life Saving” as well as “Sailing and Canoeing” (*Handbook [1962]* 7). While these particular awards were based on non-Leelanau specific qualifications, such as those required by the Red Cross for Life Saving, by 1962 Camp Leelanau included a Leelanau-specific award system based around the “Green Hat” (*Handbook [1962]* 7).⁶⁸ Every week, the counselors would meet to nominate and vote on deserving campers from the Wilderness group who had shown exceptional or noteworthy behavior that week, with criteria based around “excellent work in the cabin” and “outstanding work in activities” with his peers (*Handbook [1962]* 7).⁶⁹ At the Council Ring on Sunday, eight to ten green colored hats were then awarded for the winning boys to wear throughout the week, meaning that a very limited number of campers received hats each week. The Green Hat was not only a reward that was given in full view of the entire camp, it was also a marker of success that was constantly visible during the following week. The hat, therefore, was a marker of distinction that directly encouraged the gaze of others, positing it as a point of desire and envy for the other boys in the Wilderness group. In essence, the article of clothing functioned as a demonstrative item of embodied success that depicted the non-wearer as being ‘not there yet’ by virtue of their not having the hat.

Much like in the previous section with regard to physical fitness, the camp promoted transformation through a continuous encouragement of what was likely framed as ‘friendly competition’. The rationale behind this system was based on the camp’s ongoing goal of inspiring transformation, in that the hats were required to be given back at the end of the week so that they could be awarded again (*Handbook [1962]* 7). This signaled to the campers that everyone had the chance to try to win the hat next week, positing that a boy without a Green Hat could work harder and be as successful as that week’s winners of the Green Hat had been. Additionally, even after winning, the act of having to return the hat the following week functioned to increase his determination to win the hat the next week, since a boy could

⁶⁸ This system is not present in the brochures for this period, so it is difficult to know when this system began and how long it was in effect. However, its existence coincides with many other aspects of aspirational masculinity noted in the previous section and can be thought of as a logical part of the camp’s overarching mission statement for inspiring change in boys.

⁶⁹ The nomination process depended on the counselor group’s unanimous decision, since a single dissenting voice (backed up by rationale) was enough to deny the nominated camper the Green Hat and a counselor could also nominate a boy from another group (*Handbook [1962]* 6). This meant that the counselors had the capacity to nominate boys and also deny them the reward based on their own opinion of the boy’s behavior, increasing their role in enforcing their role as being above the campers.

win the hat up to six times during a season (*Camp Leelanau Certificate of Achievement*). This process indicated that these markers required consistent work to achieve and were always in danger of being lost, thus forcing boys to avoid becoming complacent if they wanted to receive the recognition of the counselor. The hat was marked as a representation for having ‘come into your destiny’ since it stood as a distinction based on exceptional behavior. The idea of “[a]ttitude is of prime importance” (*Handbook [1962]* 7) further suggested that an ‘attitude adjustment’ had the potential to impact the boy’s chances of winning next time. As such, the encouragement of ‘try try try again’ was further proved to be an indelible part of how the camp encouraged self-induced transformation.

The award system, both in terms of the dessert and the hat, was a vital part of creating solidarity and group mentality within the camp’s infrastructure. Although instances of individuality were considered to be a positive attribute, often being the rationale behind a boy being nominated for the Green Hat, this was only when it did not take the camper out of the group hegemony.⁷⁰ One song from the 1957 songbook even tasked the campers to sing “[t]he more we get together, the happier we’ll be”, thereby reiterating the importance of being a part of the group (*1957 Songbook* 4). Consequently, being the reason for the cabin not getting the special dessert on Sunday, being a loner and not wanting to get along with others was marked as deviatory because everyone else was pushed towards group harmony and towards democratic socialization. As McClusky argued, the collective functioned also as a “corrective”, where group osmosis assisted in creating a sense of reality that formed the boundaries of what was considered good and bad (McClusky 14, qtd. in M. Smith “Ego” 88). In order to integrate into the camp culture, everyone needed to be part of the group and ‘fit into’ (aka take part in) the culture of the camp. Since the camp took place over a short period of time and in an environment assumed to be separate from the norms of the city, this experience would only have been intensified as a result of the micro construction of the camp’s culture. The repetition of such systems of reward therefore functioned to create an unquestionable norm that was deemed to be part of the camp’s cultural hegemony. For example, the process of re-awarding the hat on a weekly basis had the effect of repeatedly reiterating to the campers this normally unremarkable article of clothing was an embodied marker of aspirational masculinity, in that it was constantly visible and was even termed to be

⁷⁰ These systems associated individual behavior as a social responsibility, in which one boy not being clean ‘enough’ could endanger the chances of the group winning the dessert. Consequently, the pressure not to ‘let the others down’ functioned to push boys towards understanding how their actions impacted their peers, a goal that was common at organized camping institutions during this time (Mason 276).

“the highest award” for the Wilderness group (*Handbook [1962]* 7). While the camper may not have desired the hat itself, they were still being led to desire the positive attention facilitated by the spectacle of the award ceremony and the hat’s week-long embodiment of success. All of these elements together constructed a version of reality where such meanings had value. This means that, regardless of how the camper may have personally understood the award, these meanings were nevertheless internalized by every camper through group osmosis and the repetition of the hat being depicted as ‘desirable’.

The awards system culminated in the end of the year banquet, where, following a secret ballot from the counselors and campers, “the seven awards” were given to seven members of the three different groups. These awards were listed as consisting of “Leadership, Sportsmanship, Industry, Athletic Ability, Camping, Most Progress, and Inspection” (*Handbook [1962]* 7). More so than other aspects of the camp, these awards outlined the specific goals of masculine performance that campers were meant to be striving towards throughout the season. These awards therefore actively solidified the camp’s image of what a ‘real man’ needed to be capable of: the ability to lead, to be fair, to work hard, to be athletic, to survive in nature, to improve and to keep himself clean and in order. Since the other campers would have interacted with these winners throughout the season, the winning camper’s embodiment of these various ideals also helped further clarify an example of the ideal in action. For example, the boy who won most improved was presented as someone who had been working to change throughout the summer. The other campers would have known the boy at the start of the semester, meaning they would mentally compare with the boy standing before his peers with the medal. In other words, the awards ceremony was an instance where the winner of each award was posited as a prime example for having achieved these respective traits. More importantly, this was a rare instance where the campers also had a say in establishing who won the award. By placing this award ceremony as the culmination of an entire season’s goals for the campers’ development and then asking the campers to take part, the camp emphasized the campers’ active participation in formulating the ideal and marking it as success. The boys became further involved in the discourse of reward and took part in embodying the body of one of their peers with the meaning of success. They entered into the system of ascribing elements of aspirational masculinity, thereby adding more weight to the concept that these ideals were desirable and reachable since they voted on these ideas themselves. This subtly yet effectively marked the campers’ increasing integration into the world of idealization, strengthening this participation for their return home.

A previously addressed critique of the summer camp experience is that, since summer camp was assumed to be an isolated and specific environment, the city does not facilitate the values of summer camp to continue. In terms of Camp Leelanau's images of aspirational masculinity, however, this separation was not the case. By 1961, the camp had introduced a policy for a weekly report to be written for the parents. This report listed the various activities that fell under the different categories ("Leatherwork" for "Arts and Crafts", "Fishing" for "Water Sports", "Tumbling" for "Land Sports" and so on) where the boy could receive either an "A" for having received an award or a "P" for participation (*Life Report*). The marking of awards was also extended to include indicating if a boy had been awarded a Green Hat, the similar Hermes Button,⁷¹ an inspection award or a "C. T. of the Week" award (*Life Report*). A rating for the camper's personal development could also be indicated for the categories of "Cooperation", "Industry", "Responsibility" and so on (*Life Report*). All of these provided an outline for the parent to have an idea of how their child had/had not developed during the time period and also to note when or if their child had received a special honor or notation. This was furthered by 1964 in the form of the end-of-the-year certificate (Fig. 5.4) given to the boy, at least for the Wilderness Group, at the end of the season. This certificate color-coded the level of success and outlined the awards that the child had won, as well as the awards he 'could' have won. As such, the child's performance at camp followed them into the 'real world', creating implications for how successful or unsuccessful their development at camp was framed in their usual environment. Since the potential for comparison was very high, this certificate would have been especially potent in the case of boys from returning families. If a boy only received one Green Hat but his brother or father or uncle had received more, his performance would have most likely been considered insufficient, regardless of how his parents framed such expectations to him.

⁷¹ The Earlybirds had their own award system, titled the "Hermes Button" (*Handbook [1962]* 7). This much smaller marker of success was less obvious than the Green Hat, yet it indicated the same element of success and worked to lay the foundation for eventually being old enough to work for the Green Hat once the boy reached the appropriate age. This suggests that the boys were to some degree being groomed for the aspirational competition of the older groups, since the Earlybird groups would have seen the awarding of the hats at the same ceremony where they were awarded the pins.



Fig. 5.4: *Camp Leelanau Certificate of Achievement.*

Even without the influence of generational expectations, these reports and certificates functioned to quantify a boy's ability to accomplish the expectations of both the camp and his parents. The certificate, awards and reports created an embodied statement of his failure and success, quantifying his development by directly comparing his progress to the ideal that he was expected to reach. Through this framework, it can therefore be argued that there existed real-world ramifications for failing or succeeding to achieve the ideal. Any reaction from others (either positive or negative) would solidify to the boy how his performance of masculinity was received by others and function to strengthen the hold that this ideal held over the boy. This reveals that, although the camp operated within an environment separate from the everyday life of the boy, by framing the ideal as being aspiration-worthy the camp ultimately created very real-world consequences for how a boy understood and framed his masculine identity. The idealized images of the camp were solidified into the boy's everyday reality, further strengthening the idea that these images were, 'real', 'necessary' and that the boys must aspire to achieve them.

5.3 "Get Lost in the Ideal": Teaching Aspiration

In this chapter, I examined Camp Leelanau through the lens of aspirational masculinity in order to reveal ways in which aspects of aspiration are constructed and consequently taught to boys. I first coined the term 'aspirational masculinity' and developed my definition by showing how camp counselors were given an idealized image to which they were meant to

aspire, for the good of both their and the campers' successful development. I then explored promotional images in the camp brochures to reveal how images of boys' bodies being scrutinized constructed an idealized image meant to appeal to the parents. I also referenced the concept of the gaze to argue that the brochure's images functioned as a promise to help these boys 'improve', showing how this was achieved through the critical comparisons of fit and unfit bodies. As I argued, this created an idealized image of the performances of masculinity which the camp viewed as aspiration-worthy. I next examined how aspirational masculinity was framed within the camp's internal structure of awards, examining how articles of clothing embodied meanings and solidified the parameters of the camp's idealized image of masculinity while also actively engaging the participation of campers in the process. I concluded by showing how these embodied forms of success and failure impacted the boys' life upon returning home, thereby solidifying and increasing the influence of the lessons learned at the campsite.

6. Conclusion

6.1 "Look Out! The [Ideal] is Behind You!": Reflecting on White Aspirational Masculinity and Implications for Further Research

Throughout my argument, an effort has been made to point out the paradoxes inherent in assumed binaries of gender and race, with the goal of dissecting how these binaries are attached to aspirational concepts of white masculinity. Such an anti-essentialist argumentation is relatively easy to conduct, in that a closer examination of many elements of society that are deemed to be 'natural' can reveal the contradictions inherent in these binary systems. The most compelling and interesting examples, however, are oftentimes ones that are specific and based on individual experience rather than on generalized assumptions. These examples can then be posited as directly embodying the challenging of binary notions and also as being more 'relatable' than the vague generalities that can appear when studying groups of people. During my research, I found no indication of how the physical fitness or award structures specifically were received by the collective and individual campers during this period. It is therefore impossible (or at least extremely difficult) to fully examine the campers' understanding of the systems at Camp Leelanau during the long 1950s. For example, it could just as easily be theorized that for some campers the fitness aspect of the camp was only meant 'for jocks'. Similarly the Green Hat might have functioned as an undesirable marker of being 'a counselor's pet' and was consequently avoided. As a result, any reactions to the

physical program and Green Hat system would not have been consistent or universal, since this does not account for the unique 'exceptions to the rule'. This would have then affected how these systems were understood by the different dynamics of the camps' culture. For example, a camper might have been given a hat, but interpreted by others as having been given 'out of pity', an interpretation that might have undermined the notion that the hat was an 'honor to be earned'. In short, how an individual reacts to and understands images of aspirational masculinity will never be universal and the construction of idealized images will not always have the desired effect of painting these images as both reachable and desirable. This means that generalities will always have an element of refutability, especially in cases where generalities are used to reject other, albeit more accepted, generalities.

Nevertheless, I maintain that the value of examining both Camp Leelanau's physical fitness program and the award system is that they provide compelling instances of how aspirational masculinity is designed to promote a specific idealized image that hinges on self-improvement. By presenting embodied representations of the message 'that could and should be me,' suggesting that rewards were always available to those willing to change to align with an idealized image of a 'real man', the camp was promoting a specific 'end goal' of success that was already glorified and confirmed as idealized by society. This indicates that the potency of this promotion lies in the belief that these structures were important for the child's development. As such, it can be assumed that the camp truly believed the program was 'for the good of the child' and impressed this belief on the child through depictions of success and failure. Moreover, the Green Hat system served as an indication that embodiments of success required the gaze, in that rewards were performatively presented in front of the entire camp as a symbol of success, both during the week it was awarded and once the camper returned home though certificate. By repeatedly attaching meaning to those items as embodiments of having achieved something notable, the consistent awarding and display of these elements sought to confirm that these achievements had social weight outside of the camp environment. This indicates that, regardless of how the individual campers may have consciously understood the built body of their peers or the Green Hat award system, both processes served as a subconscious reminder to the campers that they were constantly under critique by others. By creating a mandatory system which promoted a specific set of ideals that required the campers' participation, willing or otherwise, the camp pushed campers to begin not only recognizing but actively taking part in a system that glorified striving to become a specific idealized image of masculinity, the achievability of which they

were expected to believe in and hope for. Through this process, in other words, the camper's identity was pitted against the image of masculinity in a way that outlined how he was 'not a *real* real man' and needed to become 'the man expected of him'.

Due to its occupation with the theme of identity, the topic of aspirational masculinity is one that proposes numerous opportunities for further research. Within the context of Camp Leelanau alone, there were many interesting concepts that could warrant further examination. The topic of homosexuality within the highly homoerotic environment of 'shirt-offness culture' during puberty would provide a fascinating examination of how homosociality, the gaze, fetishization, aspiration and sexuality might have interacted in the context of a summer camp.⁷² Additionally, the role of Camp Kohahna as embodiment of heterosexual desire could be further examined in the context of the yearly "Kohahna Day", where the two groups would meet and the boys would sing a song that affirmed heteronormative expectations,⁷³ serving to map meanings of heterosexual desire onto female bodies (Huey 421). The framing of non-whites and femininity as white masculinity's 'other' could also be further expanded through a more in-depth discussion of how nature is used by white masculinity to identify with and symbolically conquer forms of the 'other' (such as the usage of Native American traditions and regalia at the camp as a representative of the conflicting usage of 'the wild gentleman' and 'the noble savage'). Although a lack of first person examples at Leelanau in the long 1950s makes it impossible (or at least extremely difficult) to examine the internal social dynamics of these specific camp groups, this might be possible through the examination of other campsites and time periods, where this information might be more readily available. Such a usage of the framework of aspirational masculinity would then undoubtedly provide a further perspective into processes of actively contesting and affirming images of aspirational masculinity among peer groups.

In the broader sense of this subject, the topic of aspirational masculinity at summer camp would also be useful within examinations of modern performances of masculinity or within the context of other locations or topics. One such topic would be aspirational masculinity assisting in the examination of how leadership has historically been idealized as both white

⁷² For a fascinating example of this within the context of modern day understandings of homosocialism, see Ward (ch. 4).

⁷³ This was a yearly event hosted by the boys camp and began with the boys' performance of a "Camp Song", sung to the tune of "*Jingle Bells*" (Huey 41). The lyrics contain numerous instances of heteronormative gender performance (such as "hairy men" being identified as "really men") and numerous allusions to being amazing by "see[ing]" the girls, harkening back to Milvey's discussion of the male gaze and the objectification of the female body (Huey 421-22).

and masculine. For example, my argument could provide an interesting backdrop to contextualizing how masculinity was taught within political and economic structures dominated by men who grew up in the 1950s and came into positions of power before, during and after the turn of the century. This would provide a sense of how older forms of white masculinity were taught and solidified to these men during their childhood (with the common attendance of summer camp during the 1950s providing an ideal starting point), thereby giving a deeper context for current understandings of masculinity. Moreover, Pillar Masculinity's focus on social responsibility and 'the white man's burden' (both of which are framed through images of white aspirational masculinity) could be applied to further explore how social pressures affect generational responsibility, especially in terms of white men's shifting role in society. One particularly interesting example of this shifting perspective of masculinity can be found in the mythopoetic movement, which sought to problematize modern understandings of masculinity even as they affirmed many essentialized notions of whiteness, masculinity, femininity, civilization and nature. In an even broader and more recent context, my theoretical and analysis framework could also provide an excellent foundation for examining how social media facilitates and even encourages constructed images of idealization. This would be particularly pertinent for 'influencer culture,' where people's public images and personal identities are framed through images of embodied aspiration-based transformation, with a context that invites direct comparison in terms of fitness, health, art, and lifestyle.

6.2 "To be, or not to be [ideal]": Final Thoughts

As discussed in the introduction, although structuralism reveals that we all exist within a system largely out of our control, essentialism nevertheless continues to influence how many people understand their identity and the identities of those around them. When both race and gender are understood as being constructed, however, an analysis of how discourse solidifies essentialized notions of race and gender as 'nature' is possible, allowing for the deconstruction of those processes. I began this essay with the example of my own confusion as to why I was unable to fully shake myself of the idealized image of a 'real man.' I could not understand why I was uncomfortable embracing the aspects of my personality that were more 'feminine', in spite of the absence of overt social pressures to be the 'real man' of my upbringing. I found that my process of self-reflection was incredibly enhanced through the examination of how idealized images are constructed, thereby giving me the tools for dissecting and deconstructing my own 'idealized' image of masculinity. Through this

process, I have noted that the influence that this ideal has over me has dwindled considerably, since I now recognize them as constructed and taught, as opposed to a ‘natural’ standard that I happened to deviate from. In essence, I have been able to begin stripping this ideal of the power that it previously held over my perception of myself and others. Although this process is ongoing and will likely last throughout my life, the very fact of change occurring indicates the importance that such a deconstruction can have for understanding identity.

In discussions of my thesis topic with others, the general response has been that my primary message is ‘be yourself.’ While I initially rejected this simplified and, to my mind, overused message, I eventually realized that, while my research does not directly seek to declare ‘you can be who you are’, my argument is ultimately part of a larger framework that seeks to assist people in more easily reaching such a conclusion. By working to deconstruct the formulation of idealization, my argument functions to continue the work of critical whiteness studies and critical masculinity studies in providing tools that facilitate the deconstruction of idealized images. If Dyer’s original focus was problematizing “representation” (xxxiii), then my focus further explores how representation facilitates and is affected by images of idealism within childhood. If Butler’s argument of gender performance revealed how hegemony is constructed, then my examination of aspiration presents further examples of how hegemony is maintained and policed. My research showed me that everyone is aware of how they ‘fail to match up’ to an ideal in some respect and that it affects how we view ourselves and others. However, when we understand that the ideal is constructed and not natural, it creates the possibility to more easily and effectively tear down the old idea of ‘normal.’ Such a reframing of identity and idealization would hopefully promote sympathy and understanding, both for ourselves and others, freeing us from the limitations of idealized binary images of race and gender and pushing for the further embracing of the diversity of human experience

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7. Appendix

English abstract:

Since its inception in the late 19th century, organized camping has often positioned itself as the ideal environment for white male children to learn how to cope with the trials and tribulations of adulthood. This learning is often framed through forms of aspiration, in that depictions and connotations of both failure and success create an idealized image of white masculinity that is promised to be both achievable and worth striving for. Through the analysis of this performative ideal, my thesis creates a framework which connects whiteness to ideals of overcoming and masculinity to an emphasis on control of the self. I reveal that both are then solidified through their understanding of ‘the other,’ and create white masculine identity through formulations of negation or ‘failure.’ This thesis argues that the discursive construction of specifically white performances of masculinity is shown to rest upon ‘aspirational masculinity,’ or the processes of establishing and contextualizing a masculine ideal. Camp Leelanau for Boys in Michigan, USA during the long-1950s provides the case study for my exploration and application of theories of aspirational masculinity. I investigate dynamics of embodied aspiration through both the camp’s promotional imagery of shirt-offness-culture and the social markers of success within the camp’s internal award system. I argue that these systems are conducted in a way that emphasizes transformative processes while downplaying the essentialization of the ideal to which children are expected to align themselves. By exploring how the ‘ideal’ is constructed and stripping this construction of its status as ‘natural’, my thesis works to more effectively deconstruct ways in which idealized and essentialized images of white masculinity are taught during childhood.

Keywords: white masculinity, summer camp, aspiration, idealization, gender identity, childhood development, race performance, pillar masculinity

German Abstract:

Seit ihren Anfängen im späten 19. Jahrhundert haben sich Ferienlager oft als ideales Umfeld für weiße, männliche Kinder konstatiert, in welchem diese lernen können, mit den Schwierigkeiten des Erwachsenseins umzugehen. Dieses Lernen wird oft in Formen des Strebens gebettet, indem Darstellungen und Konnotationen sowohl des Scheiterns als auch des Erfolgs ein idealisiertes Bild weißer Männlichkeit schaffen, das sowohl erreichbar als auch erstrebenswert zu sein verspricht. Durch die Analyse dieses performativen Ideals schafft meine Arbeit einen Rahmen, der Weißsein mit Idealen der Überwindung und Männlichkeit mit einer Betonung der Selbstkontrolle verbindet. Ich zeige auf, dass beide durch ihr Verständnis des "Anderen" verfestigt werden und durch Formulierungen der Negation oder des "Scheiterns" eine weiße, männliche Identität schaffen. In dieser Arbeit wird gezeigt, dass die diskursive Konstruktion spezifisch weißer Männlichkeitsvorstellungen auf einer "aufstrebenden Männlichkeit" oder den Prozessen der Etablierung und Kontextualisierung eines männlichen Ideals beruht. Das Camp Leelanau for Boys in Michigan, USA, während der langen 1950er Jahre, dient als Fallstudie für meine Forschung und für die Anwendung von Theorien über aufstrebende Männlichkeit. Ich untersuche die Dynamik des verkörperten Strebens sowohl anhand der Werbebilder des Camps für die "shirt-offness culture" als auch anhand der sozialen Marker des Erfolgs innerhalb des internen Auszeichnungssystems des Camps. Ich behaupte, dass dieses System auf eine Art und Weise geführt wird, die transformative Prozesse betont und gleichzeitig die Essentialisierung des Ideals, an dem sich die Kinder orientieren sollen, herunterspielt. Indem ich untersuche, wie das "Ideal" konstruiert wird, und diese Konstruktion ihres Status als "natürlich" beraube, arbeitet meine Arbeit daran, die Art und Weise, in der idealisierte und essentialisierte Bilder weißer Männlichkeit in der Kindheit vermittelt werden, effektiver zu dekonstruieren.

Schlagwörter: Weiße Männlichkeit, Ferienlager, Bestreben, Idealisierung, Geschlechtsidentität, Entwicklung in der Kindheit, race performance, Pillar Masculinity