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Appalachian Men of Action: Nascar At Bristol

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Two models of masculinity have been presented in consumer research: the Mountain Man (Belk and Costa) and The Breadwinner/Rebel amalgam (Holt and Thompson). Using depth interviews and ethnography, we examine boundary conditions for both these models. We find that it is necessary to take into account regional manifestations of masculinity.

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Appalachian Mountain Men-of-Action: Nascar at Bristol

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ABSTRACT

Southern white masculinity is often said to be distinctive. Scholarly treatments of the subject attribute the characteristics of conservatism, patriotism, independence, racism, a disdain for centralized authority and a tendency toward violence to southern white men (see e.g., Friend 2009; Watts 2008). The crucible for these traits is usually said to be the Civil War and Reconstruction which (partially) emancipated black males, while shattering the foundation of white southern masculinity, leading to a “crisis in gender” (Whites 1992; Wyatt-Brown 1982). As Friend (2009, p. viii) observes “the war’s outcome did not eradicate mastery and honor as the primary axes about which white southern manhood formed, but it did force a reconfiguration of how those ideals could be met.”

Both E. Anthony Rotundo’s (1994) *American Manhood* and Michael Kimmel’s *Manhood in America* (1996) largely ignored or disparaged white southern men as suitable cultural models of American masculinity, as did Gail Bederman’s (1995) *Manliness and Civilization*. Across these treatises, white southern men are described as drinkers, brawlers and racists who are most comfortable hunting, fishing, and driving around in pick-up trucks. We are not going to quibble with this characterization, as in broad form, aspects of it are accurate. Even southern white male scholars describe their own regional masculine culture as one which is “ beholden to a code of honor that... encouraged violence – martial, retributive or vigilante – gambling, blood sports, sowing wild oats, hunting and... by the early twentieth century, organized sports “(Creech, p. 25). What we do intend to argue, however, is that this same template has served as a model for masculinity since the region’s origins, well prior to the Civil War, and indeed prior to the Revolutionary War.

Just as whiteness is typically positioned in opposition to “ethnicity” in scholarly treatises (see Burton 2009 a, b) and masculinity is positioned as counter to femininity (see e.g., Martin, Schouten and McAlexander 2006), southern white male culture is positioned in opposition to that of the southern white female (Watts 2008; Whites 1992; Wilson and Ferris 1989), though both are said to be grounded in Fundamentalist Christianity. Indeed, the Bible is often cited as an authoritative source justifying the secondary status of women within southern white culture, generally (Cash 1941; McPherson 1982). Southern white masculinity is also said to be strongly linked to activities evidencing independence and self-sufficiency (see e.g., Littlefield and Ozanne 2011 for a discussion of hunting in the rural south). According to Watts (2009, p. 10). “The ideal of independent, performative white manhood ... continues in real and fictional varieties such as the rough frontiersman... moonshiners, many NASCAR drivers and fans, and pickup truck enthusiasts displaying gun racks and the Confederate flag”.

To date, there have been two detailed studies of American masculinity put forward in consumer research – that of the Mountain Man, as developed by Belk and Costa (1998) and that of the Action-Hero Man, developed by Holt and Thompson (2004). Our intention is to compare the white southern masculine ideology, as described above, with these two prior models in order to identify similarities and discontinuities among these three different perspectives on masculinity. Further, our study will also survey *boundary conditions* for the more recent of these two studies (Holt and Thompson 2004).

SETTING AND METHOD

The setting for our study is the area in and around Bristol VA/TN -- a location referred to by MSNBC commentator Andrea Mitchell as the “Redneck Capital of the World” during the 2008 US presidential campaign (statement made on-air June 5, 2008). Bristol TN/VA was founded in the late 1800s as a railroad terminal for the Norfolk and Southern Railway. It was during this period of time that coal mining became central to the economy of the Southern Appalachian region and a freight train system was established linking Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia in order to transport coal to the steel manufacturing centers of western Pennsylvania and the Great Lakes region (LaLone, 1997; Solomon and Yough 2009;). The entry of large-scale industrialization, organized labor and corporate businesses dramatically impacted the social ecology of the region, shifting men and machinery from working on the land to working in the mine and on the railroad (Bensel 2000; LaLone 1997 Solomon and Yough 2009).

For many men in the region, personal independence and self-reliance – which had sprung from their independent yeoman status -- became more difficult to maintain, as jobs and skills were increasingly dependent upon distant factories and external sources of capital (Lalone 1997; Williams 2002). As a result, personal expertise at activities such as hunting, fishing, carpentry, engine maintenance, sports and other outdoor activities became increasingly relied upon as signals of masculine competency (Watts 2008; Williams 2002; Wilson and Ferris 1989).

Despite its remote Appalachian location, Bristol VA/TN is the origin point for two significant events in Southeastern regional history. The first is that Bristol was the site of some of the earliest commercial country music recordings. The so-called “Bristol Sessions” recordings of the Carter Family were produced there in 1927; Jimmie Rodgers also made early recordings in Bristol during the 1920s, as did Tennessee Ernie Ford during the 1950s (Williams 2002). The entrepreneurship and willingness of the local people to re-shape their production activities to match external commercial and technological opportunities demonstrated by the country music business are also characteristic of the primary research site of our study; the Bristol Motor Speedway.

Bristol Motor Speedway As Belk (2004, p. 273) writes, “love of automobiles, motorcycles and trucks is an overwhelmingly male preoccupation [due to] ... the association of such vehicles with power, danger, mobility, status competition, and industrial dominance over nature...” Belk (2004) further observes that male car enthusiasts will often undertake long distance pilgrimages to seek *communitas* with like-minded males in order to celebrate the power and glory that is the automobile. Perhaps no destination on Earth is more revered in these annual pilgrimages than the trio of August NASCAR races at Bristol Motor Speedway (BMS).

The week of August 16-21, 2010 was the fiftieth anniversary of the Bristol Motor Speedway and the 100th running of the NASCAR Sprint Cup Race. Thus it served as an ideal venue at which to observe southern white male culture in full flower. The primary researcher attended the three NASCAR-sponsored races during that week, taking photographs, making field notes, and collecting written materials available at the track and in the surrounding communities relevant to the races. A three person interpretive team with multi-

year ethnographic research experience was responsible for developing the collected materials into a comparative structure using *socio-semiotic analysis* (see Schroeder and Zwick, 2004, for a discussion of this method using advertising images of masculinity). Each document, individually, and the set as a whole was subjected to *close reading* by the three researchers using the two models of masculinity proposed in the consumer behavior literature (e.g., Belk and Costa 1998; Holt and Thompson 2004) and the southern white masculinity model described earlier. Thus, the methodology used in the present study is consistent with that of Belk and Costa (1998), but extends beyond ethnography to incorporate socio-semiotics (Schroeder and Zwick 2005). The present methodology differs from that of Holt and Thompson (2004). The latter study utilized experiential-phenomenological interviews – a method which has received recent criticism for its lack of cultural grounding (see e.g., Moisander, Valtonen and Hirsto 2009). We turn now to a detailed discussion of the two prior models of masculinity against which a comparison of the present data will be made.

MOUNTAIN MAN MASCULINITY

The Belk and Costa (1998) study focused upon modern-day mountain men who “adopt grooming, clothing and manners that appear strikingly countercultural, rustic and unique. They live for a time in ... teepees or tents at a variety of remote locations near sites of original [mountain men] rendezvous. Clothing and conveniences that did not exist in 1840 are banished, including cars, plastics, prepared foods, flashlights, radios... (pp. 218-219).”

In their study, the authors found a form of white male masculinity intended to “invoke a mythic and heroicized past” (p. 219). “The original mountain men they seek to emulate engaged in dangerous, often violent, activities, struggling against wild animals and hostile Indians. Their present-day imitators desire to partake of this mythology, while also merry-making, trading, and consuming large quantities of alcohol.” Notably though most of Belk and Costa’s participants were working class, some were middle class. Yet external social status hierarchies were abandoned at the campsite to “form a communal, homogeneous social structure....”

Belk and Costa found that most mountain men participants have atypical personal appearances including long hair, pierced ears, and full beards and/or moustaches. They propose that these signal rebellion against prevailing cultural norms that continue into their everyday lives (Belk and Costa 1998). Meat is heavily consumed during the rendezvous, as is beer and liquor. Several of the men are overweight due to these dietary patterns. Belk and Costa (1998) interpret much of this as a “celebration of the power and passion of the primitive; because [the mountain men] believe these qualities have disappeared from contemporary urban life (p. 230).”

Man of Action Heroes The 2004 article by Holt and Thompson critiques contemporary scholarly writings on masculinity, e.g., Ehrenreich (1983) and Kimmel (1996), as well as earlier work on masculinity published in the consumer behavior literature (e.g., Belk and Costa 1998). They propose that a central thesis in this literature is the social emasculation of American men during the twentieth century brought about by the industrialization of the American workplace and the increasing economic independence and political emancipation of women. This drove American men to engage in compensatory consumption in order to reinforce their manhood.

Holt and Thompson propose that masculine cultural models such as the cowboy, Harley rider, and big game hunter are instantiated in mass media portrayals by actors such as Clint Eastwood, Bruce Willis and John Wayne. These circulating cultural icons are used as touchstones for a romantic model of masculinity which they

term the Rebel Model. This ideology of masculinity “harkens back to the settling of the American West... Hunters and trappers were represented as uncivilized, anarchic and fiercely independent men who survived through courage, physical skills and cunning... (p. 428).” The negative aspect of the Rebel Model is that such men can be viewed as “immature boys... men who refuse to grow up, taking flight from adult responsibility” (p. 428).

In contrast to this, Holt and Thompson describe the Breadwinner Model which is “grounded in the American myth of success... That America is a land of boundless opportunity...” (p. 427). As the country became professionalized and industrialized, men had to “soften the combative edges of individual achievement... [and] peaceably coexist within an ethos of teamwork and the rules of hierarchy... In the breadwinner model, men work hard and are dependable collaborators in a corporate environment... They are reserved, dependable, and devoid of self-aggrandizing flamboyance...” Holt and Thompson propose that “the most celebrated men in American culture are neither breadwinners nor rebels. Instead they draw from the best of both models... [They] embody the rugged individualism of the rebel, while maintaining their allegiance to collective interests... (p. 429).”

The sample Holt and Thompson used to construct their man-of-action hero model was “15 [heterosexual] white men from both working- and middle-class backgrounds... recruited from a Midwestern city of 250,000 and a small eastern city of 60,000 (p. 430).” Each respondent was interviewed in-depth using the existential-phenomenological method. Ultimately, two men, Robert and Donney, served as the middle-class and working class exemplars of how this model of masculinity is enacted in everyday consumption behavior. A shortcoming of this method is that, when used without supplemental cultural data, E-P interviews may render an overly mentalistic view of the subject of the inquiry (see Moisander, Valtonen and Hirsto 2009 for a review of these criticisms). We now turn to a historically-grounded evaluation of these models of masculinity vis a vis that of white southern manhood.

CONTINUITY, PERMEABILITY AND WHITE SOUTHERN MASCULINITY

The region surrounding Bristol TN/VA has a significant history not only with regard to the formation of southern white masculinity, but also that of American masculinity, generally. Daniel Boone and his extended family settled in the area in 1774. Violent confrontations with Native Americans in the Cumberland Gap area next to Bristol were a frequent occurrence for Boone and the other early settlers (Beeman 1984; Williams 2002). David Crockett, hero of the Texas militia at the Alamo, was born and raised in Limestone, TN, approximately 30 miles away. The direct descendants of these early settlers still live throughout the region (Kephart 1976; Williams 2002).

Thus, we propose argue that this region was the primary cauldron within which American ideals of masculinity were first formed – and mythologized -- and that an undercurrent of this original masculine ideology has been present in the area since Colonial times (Watts 2008). We also propose that this southern white masculinity has existed symbiotically and comfortably with external sources of capital and has consistently participated in the larger U.S. economy and corporate structures, as they developed (see e.g., Bensel 2000; Solomon and Yough 2009).

This suggests that the out-of-bounds Rebel icon, which Holt and Thompson (2004) see Boone and Crockett representing as frontiersman, did not exist historically. This factual discrepancy brings into question the hybridized model which they present. For example,

Crockett and Boone both were family men whose historic exploits and expeditions were primarily undertaken to support their families (Williams 2002). Boone was employed by the Hendersons, a regionally powerful set of brothers who engaged in trading with the Indians and land speculation (Draper 1998). Together with other Long Hunters, Boone engaged in fur trading and land speculation (Draper 1998). The famous Wilderness Road, scouted and constructed by Boone and 35 other early settlers through the Cumberland Gap, was a commercial project whose purpose was to open up the area of Kain-tuck (Kentucky) for the lucrative fur trade and land speculation (Draper 1998; Williams 2002).

Analogously, Crockett's stand at the Alamo was intrinsically linked to a commercial venture. The initial American settlers in central Texas had journeyed there from eastern Tennessee during the early 1800s in search of agricultural and trading opportunities with Mexico (Williams 2002). They arrived and settled as extended families, engaging not only in agriculture, but also in trading and mercantile dealings with corporations "back East" (Williams 2002). Thus, the presentation of the Rebel ideal and the Family Man ideal as oppositional foundations of American masculinity would seem to be factually inaccurate, at least in the Appalachian region.

We propose that the present day Bristol NASCAR fans and drivers are cut from the same cloth as the region's early pioneer-breadwinner-entrepreneurs. We also document the fluidity and interchangeability between the drivers and fans/consumers. We propose that what is actually occurring is not compensatory consumption, rather it is *participatory consumption* in which fans/consumers participate as drivers/producers and driver/producers participate as fans/consumers. A common sense of Southern white masculinity, manhood and manliness is shared between them.

Stock Car Racing Origins Just as with early farming and hunting activities in the area, stock car racing was born of economic necessity and entrepreneurship. During Prohibition and the Great Depression, the rural Southeastern U.S. region was one of the poorest areas of the country (much as it is now). Seeking to supplement their meager farming incomes, enterprising residents began turning a portion of their corn crops into distilled liquor (Hirschman, Brown and Maclaran 2006; Howell 1997; Kellner 1971). Such activities were illegal and "moonshiners" were targeted by Federal tax revenue agents (Miller 1991). To outrun these "revenueurs", farmers used their ample mechanical skills to increase the speed and road handling ability of their family automobiles, using them to haul gallons of illicit corn liquor over the Appalachian mountains to central distribution points such as Atlanta, GA and Charlotte, NC (Hirschman, Brown and Maclaran 2006; Kellner 1971; Miller 1991).

In support of the thesis that entrepreneurship and undertaking risky activities may form a nexus of cohering values within white southern masculinity is an advertisement appearing in the BMS race program, which shows one of the "winningest" drivers at the Bristol Motor Speedway, Junior Johnson. Born in North Carolina to a farming family, Johnson is (in)famous for beginning his racing career using cars that he "ran shine" in during the week. Notably, the body copy blends references to the authenticity and illicitness of Johnson's off-track activities, as well as those of the product, a mythologizing motif discussed by Tian and Thompson (2007) as characterizing the 'hillbilly'.

Direct entry to the sport of stock car racing is still available today, just as it was in Johnson's era of the 1940s and 1950s. For example, a full page newspaper advertisement (August 18, 2010) from the *Bristol Courier* invites residents to come to the Volunteer Speedway in Bull's Gap, TN to both watch and compete in local races. This speedway is about an hour's drive west of Bristol and serves as

an 'entry point' for local men to try their hand at racing. Additional documentation of apprenticeships enabling young local men entry to the sport is provided in a BMS press release (Bristol Motor Speedway, 2010). The narrative valorizes stockcar racing as a signal of manhood and masculine pride in the region. Also notable is another article in the BMS Program about Chase Elliott, son of local NASCAR veteran driver Bill Elliott, who is competing professionally in an "entry-level" race at the age of 14. In order to possess a Tennessee Driver's License, one must be at least age 17. Obviously, these requirements are being 'bent' to permit boys to pursue this career.

Other communications in the BMS Race Week program (Bristol Motor Speedway 2010) reiterate the message of fan/driver interchangeability and father/son legacy. For example, an article on rookie driver, Trevor Bayne, age 19 and from Knoxville, TN emphasizes his being a racing fan since childhood, having been taken from school on race days by his parents to watch the competitions. However, perhaps the most iconic exemplar of the fan/driver and father/son racing legacy is Dale Earnhardt, Jr., the son of Dale Earnhardt, one of NASCAR's most spectacular (and aggressive) drivers. A print advertisement appearing in the BMS program carries the headline "Real Men Let their Right Foot do the Talking"; it assumes the readers' knowledge of this father/son linkage and equates Earnhardt, Jr. with authentic manhood. Only Earnhardt Jr's face is used as an identity marker, there is deemed to be no need to use text to identify who is being pictured.

WARRIORS, WEAPONS AND PATRIOTISM

Historically, the region surrounding Bristol VA/TN was the origin point for the Overmountain Men (Williams 2002), a colonial-era paramilitary force composed of farmers and longhunters who won the Battle of King's Mountain, a critical turning point in the Revolutionary War (Alderman 1986). The specifics of the militia and the battle, itself, are valuable in creating a deeper understanding of the current ideology of masculinity within the region and its exhibition in the events observed at Bristol Motor Speedway in August 2010.

The Overmountain Men and their families had taken up residence on lands west of the Appalachian Mountains in areas now comprising northeastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia. Alderman (1986, p153), reports that, "they settled on land believed to be in Virginia, but which was actually issued to Lord Granville of North Carolina...., leaving the Watauga settlers without legal claim to the land..." Thus, the Watauga settlers, who included Daniel Boone and John Crockett, the ancestor of David Crockett, had only a tentative hold on their lands. With the assistance of the Hendersons (mentioned earlier), the settlers purchased a large tract of land from the Cherokee in 1775. Comprising a total of 20,000,000 acres, this was the largest land transaction in North America prior to the Revolutionary War (Alderman 1986); it was called the Watauga Settlement. Notably, the settlers chose *not* to declare themselves part of the British colonies and similarly refused to commit their allegiance to the nascent US colonial government, declaring themselves to be an independent nation (Alderman 1986).

In 1780, the British threatened to attack the area. The Watauga Settlement militia organized itself and a force of 1,000 men marched through North Carolina, picking up an additional 350 volunteers. Though largely untrained and completely unauthorized, the volunteer militia traveled overnight to arrive at King's Mountain. According to an eye-witness account, they "circled the mountain and then charged straight toward the British" (Alderman 1986, p. 217). An hour later, the British commander, Patrick Ferguson, and the majority of his British force lay dead on the battlefield. The Watauga men then returned home. This display of colonial-era American masculin-

ity did become the stuff of legend, being replayed most recently in Mel Gibson's 1999 film, *The Patriot*.

The commitment to patriotic sacrifice as a source of white southern masculine pride was very visible at the Bristol Motor Speedway during August race week. The opening ceremonies before each of the three races included displays of American military prowess and power: Honor guards accompanied by veterans, often disabled, from the current Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts marched onto the track and up to the ceremonial platform. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the entire audience of 165,000 persons, as 3 military jet fighters flew overhead. On Saturday night, the capstone of the week's events, six paratroopers were dropped by military aircraft onto the race track, as a giant American flag was unfurled in the stands. Fireworks went off and the Star Spangled Banner played.

Reinforcing this patriotic theme was an article in the BMS race program for the "Impact a Hero" public service program which provides financial and social support to disabled veterans. These soldiers were described as "fighting the War on Terror and keeping Americans safe." Because self-sacrifice is seen within this worldview as one's *obligation* to the community, those who are killed or injured while fulfilling public service duties are considered heroes and martyrs.

The working man ethos was also given voice during the BMS race event through a Tradesman Challenge sponsored by Irwin Tools. This contest pits mechanics, welders, carpenters and other manual workers against one another in speed and performance competitions. The common thread across the races and these competitive events is *physical and mechanical competence*, combined with speed and withstanding challenges from others. A print ad for Irwin Tools found in the BMS race program depicts the mechanic in a heroic pose – competent and in control of a much larger machine.

THE CONFLUENCE OF MASCULINE HONOR, VIOLENCE AND CHRISTIANITY

We next consider a sermon to the mustered Watauga Overmountain men discussed earlier. The region, then as now, is viewed as the Bible Belt (Williams 2002), a bedrock of fundamentalist Christianity. Consistent with this characterization, the minister invokes a clear linkage between *God's will* and the *right to use violence*. This religious justification for aggressive actions has been – and continues to be – a core element of white southern masculinity.

My countrymen, you are about to set out on an expedition which is full of hardships and dangers, but one in which the Almighty will attend you. The Mother Country {England} has her hand upon you...and takes that for which our fathers planted their homes in the wilderness – our liberty... The enemy is marching hither to destroy your homes. Brave men, you are not unacquainted with battle... You have wrested these beautiful valleys of the Holston and Watauga from the savage hand... Go forth in the strength of your manhood to the aid of your brethren, the defense of your liberty and the protection of your homes. Oh, God of Battle, arise in Thy might. Avenge the slaughter of Thy people... Help us as good soldiers to wield the sword of the Lord."

We additionally glimpse in this text strong ideological support for vigilantism and 'taking the law into one's hands', even to the extent of waging war against an existing government, if God's law is believed to differ from it. This value is very much in evidence in the contemporary politics of the region, with the area strongly supporting John McCain in 2008 and 'Tea Party' libertarian and conserva-

tive candidates in the 2010 elections. Regional residents remain both suspicious of the Federal Government and skeptical of its ability to improve their lives. Although the Civil War was the battleground where the ideological divide between white southern male honor and the Federal government played out most vividly (Wyatt-Brown 1982), the same sense of honor and retributive justice led to decades' long feuds between men in various family groups (e.g., the Hatfields and McCoy, see Waller 1988). In several of the documents we collected, honor was said to underlie on-track feuds between individual drivers. The same sense of "giving him what's coming to him" is felt among the fans, who boo and throw cups at drivers whom they believe act unfairly on the track, e.g., by cutting off other drivers, wrecking competitors' cars or pushing them against the wall.

On Friday night, a man-to-man conflict occurred between two drivers. This is described by BMS (Bristol Motor Speedway, August 2010) as follows: "Sparks flew, fenders crunched ...A tangle between Brad Keselowski and Kyle Busch saw Keselowski spin off the nose of Busch's machine. Busch was welcomed with a shower of boos in Victory Lane". A discussion of the moral necessity created by the underlying white southern male ideology leading to such events is given below, taken from a local newspaper: "You know it when you see it...the right way and wrong way to get aggressive on the race track...Naked aggression, but done in a way that allows (the other driver) to stay on the race track; it comes down to racing somebody with respect" (Dave Ongie, *Kingsport Times News*, "Speaking in code", August 2010, p. B1)

WHITE SOUTHERN MALE STATUS: SUPREMACY OR SEPARATION?

We turn now to considering one of the key points said to differentiate white Southern masculinity from that found elsewhere in the country: do white southern males set themselves in dominant positions over women and non-whites, particularly blacks? Does the pre-Civil War tradition of white male supremacy continue? We propose that what is currently practiced is not so much an ideology of *supremacy*, but rather one of *separation*. In the photographic materials collected before, during and after NASCAR race week and from observations made of the spectators who attended the races, there was clearly a predominance of white men. The local sports writers covering the race were white males; the BMS executives whose photographs were shown in the program were white males. The CEO of the companies, e.g. Food City, Irwin Tools, sponsoring the races were white males. The pit crews were composed of white males. The race drivers – with *one* exception – were white males; (the sole exception being Juan Pablo Montoya, who is Hispanic).

However, comparing race and gender as separate bases for classification, racial separation seemed more marked than gender separation (and see Burton 2009 for a discussion of whiteness and social separation). For example, the spectators were virtually all white. However, the percentage of woman ranged between 20% to 30% across the three events. Similarly, an examination of the BMS employee photographs shown as a group in the race program found about 30% to be female, but only one non-white person (a black female) among the set of 109 BMS employees. Although the region around Bristol has only a 6% presence of blacks and a 2% Latino population, this would still suggest a lack of inter-racial representation at the raceway.

We believe this obvious disproportionality in race and gender grows more from the desire of Southern white males to *separate* or *distance* themselves from females and non-whites, than from an ideology of supremacy. Supremacy requires that the subordinate gender or race be present and publicly displayed in a subordinate

position to the master (Dollard 1937). Yet women and especially non-whites of either gender were neither highly visible nor placed in subordinate positions. The more justifiable interpretation would seem to be that BMS represents a refuge, haven or 'turf' in which southern white males can share ideological camaraderie. It is a place where "[white] boys can be [white] boys".

DISCUSSION

We now discuss the areas of agreement, disagreement and extension between the present study and the Belk and Costa (1998) and Holt and Thompson (2004) models of masculinity.

Belk and Costa 1998: The Mountain Man We found three points of overlap with the Mountain Man study. First, the dietary habits exhibited by the modern-day Mountain Men and the Bristol Motor Speedway NASCAR race fans are virtually identical. At BMS the commercial vendors supplied meat, especially pork, several brands of beer, hard liquor and tobacco products, including snuff, chewing tobacco and cigarettes. These were accompanied by white bread, cornbread, baked beans and French fries. Fans consumed large quantities of these foodstuffs; approximately half of the fans observed were overweight or obese.

However, although copious quantities of liquor and beer were consumed, most attendees did not appear intoxicated. Drunkenness would have made climbing up the steep concrete steps to one's seat very difficult, and some who had over-imbibed did fall down in the attempt. Personal coolers and foods were allowed in the stands and occasionally empty cans would be thrown toward the race track to express displeasure at a driver's performance, but this behavior was not

Typical

Extending Belk and Costa's recounting of these dietary practices, we suggest that they evidence a celebration of masculine food ways. 'Real men' are expected to eat large quantities of meat (i.e., the muscles of prey animals) in order to construct their own body muscle mass. They are also expected in the southeastern U.S. to be able to drink large amounts of alcohol, but not to lose control or become ill while doing so. The notion that a real man can 'hold his liquor' is embedded in the regional culture (see e.g., Miller 1991; Watts 2008). Consistent with prior findings on gendered meanings of foods, virtually no green vegetables or dairy products were available for consumption at the track. This is consistent with our interpretation of the events as representing a gender-segregated site.

A second consistency with Belk and Costa was the suspension of status hierarchies at the race track, especially with regard to apparel display. No one was dressed in business attire or even 'business casual'. There was a virtual absence of prestige brands. Instead, attendees wore shorts and t-shirts, jeans and tank tops. Both men and women wore trucker-style caps. Footwear included sneakers, flip flops, and sandals. The only apparent status identifiers were shirts and jackets emblazoned with a specific driver's image or car number. There were several men wearing Dale Earnhardt's image on their apparel, Earnhardt being viewed as a heroic martyr to the sport.

A third similarity with the work of Belk and Costa is a strong sense of community and camaraderie among the BMS fans. There is a large and mobile 'NASCAR nation' which travels from race to race across the country by camper as the season progresses. This 'nation' was strongly in evidence at Bristol, stretching for miles along all access roads near the Speedway.

There were two major *dissimilarities* between the expressions of masculinity we found, as compared to the study by Belk and Costa. First, their study noted a consistent preference among the Moun-

tain Men for items dating from the Native American cultures of the late 1800s. The Mountain Men typically construct their own clothing, equipment and camp housing, and spurn modern commercial manufactured items. Almost the complete reversal is found among the male attendees, drivers and pit crews at BMS.

Technological advantage is avidly sought in the racetrack setting. Male fans often wear radio-receiver headgear which permits them to listen to communications between each driver and his pit-crew chief. Prior to each race, a sheet of radio frequencies is distributed to the fans and those equipped with ear phone receivers (which can be purchased or rented on-site) are able to listen to drivers' conversations throughout the race. The drivers and crew also display a high level of technological competence, discussing turning and banking ratios, wear levels on brakes and tires, steering stability and other aspects of performance. Military/police style language is used and communications between driver and pit crew are unemotional and pragmatic. We propose that this is an outgrowth of the manual labor-based entrepreneurship of the region. Men of the region are comfortable with and competent at operating machines and employing technologies to achieve their goals (Hirschman, Brown and MacLaran 2006).

A second dissimilarity between the present study and that of Belk and Costa is one identified as well by Holt and Thompson. The performance-consumption model does not appear to be compensatory, but rather woven into everyday life practice. It is a safe bet that most of the men attending the BMS race can and do conduct primary maintenance on their own vehicles (Williams 2002). Observations made around the Bristol area indicate that local men can change oil, change tires, adjust brakes, fix headlights, tune engines, replace spark plugs and windshield wipers, and some are capable of rebuilding entire engines. Thus it is not surprising that they may closely identify with the drivers and crew on the track. However, male competence at manual labor in the region extends well beyond automobiles. Most local men can also perform electrical, carpentry and plumbing tasks, repair washers and dryers, replace gutters and repair lawnmowers, motorcycles and farm equipment. It is accurate to say these would be among the *culturally-expected* competencies for a man living in or around Bristol.

Thus when these same men arrive at BMS to watch the races, they come with a mindset and skill set largely comparable to the men driving the cars around the track and those re-fueling and re-tiring them when they come in for a pit-stop. It is this *overlap between producer and consumer competencies* that enables permeability between these roles for individual men. Fans can and do become drivers or pit crew members; drivers and pit crew members can and do begin their interest in the sport as fans.

Let the Circle be Unbroken: Holt and Thompson (2004)

In "Man of Action Heroes" (2004), Holt and Thompson challenge the masculinity as-compensatory-consumption thesis and critique as inadequate two models of American manhood, labeled the Rebel and the Breadwinner. Our study strongly supports Holt and Thompson's assertion that much of contemporary American masculinity does not represent *compensatory consumption*, but rather *participatory consumption*. That is, significant aspects of masculine ideology are enacted daily in men's lives. Their consumption choices and attitudes incorporate both the Rebel and Breadwinner models of manhood, as described by Holt and Thompson.

Where our analysis differs from the Holt and Thompson study is that we present historical documentation challenging the notion that the Rebel and Breadwinner models were *separate* ideologies within the southeastern United States. In our analysis, these two

ways of being men were *always* intrinsically interwoven. When the ancestors of the men now living in Bristol and environs arrived in the mid-1700s, they were competent to hunt, shoot, fight, make liquor, skin animals, fell trees, build houses, cure meat, plant and harvest crops, ride horses, forge iron and herd cattle and hogs (Hirschman et al, 2006; Williams 2002).

Further, while they did not seem to exhibit the negative traits Holt and Thompson ascribe to Rebels (e.g., being selfish, juvenile), they often did rebel against authority, as witness their participation in both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The point we wish to make is that their behaviors may indeed be the stuff of which myth was (and is) made, but their actions were genuine, not fictional. More recently, the stockcar racing-moonshining mythos has been used to add dramatic flair to Southern speedways such as Bristol (see e.g., Thompson and Tian 2008), but these activities too have authentic, historical roots in the region. Though this may now be used as an advertising motif to sell liquor, the foundations are factual.

A second lacuna between the present study and that of Holt and Thompson is that the “Man of Action Hero” analysis takes as its initial foundation earlier social theorist treatises on masculinity, e.g. Kimmel, which are themselves culturally-constructed narratives about macro-cultural phenomena such as industrialization, economic stratification, and mass media products.. While this approach is quite appropriate when addressing socio-cultural trends on a national level, it risks glossing over vital specifics at a regional and local level. For example, although the majority of contemporary American men learned of Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, moon-shining and stockcar racing from films and TV shows, the men of the southeastern region *additionally* learned about them through family histories and direct personal experience. Roadsides in the region are dotted with topographical and human reference points; e.g., here is Crockett Tavern, here is Boone’s Creek, here is the Overmountain Men mustering site, here is the cemetery for the Civil War dead. This is an altogether different form of ‘grounding’ than images received via digital media. These constitute the tangible, familiar markers that give rise to an in-the-blood and in-the-soul sense of regional manhood. Factors such as these suggest that there is a strong need to address masculinity at a more organic, local level, rather than to rely solely upon grand-scale analyses that may mute regional differences.

A final variation found in the present study is the seemingly self-contradictory notion of blue collar entrepreneurship, which was not detected either by Holt and Thompson (2004) or Belk and Costa (1998). Perhaps the central performative feature of the southeastern region’s white male culture is its unique form of yeoman labor. Virtually all social theories of working class labor view it as a non-hegemonic mode of production (Bensel 2000). Craftsmen and laborers are depicted as interchangeable cogs in a much larger productive machine. For many industries in the Northeast, this was historically true (Bensel 2000).

However, the Appalachian region is the site of only one large-scale industrialized labor context, coal mining (Caudill 1963; LaLone 1997). Yet with the exception of men employed full-time as miners, the majority of southeastern regional male residents work either on their own farms or as skilled laborers, e.g., as mechanics, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and truck drivers. Though most of these men do not earn incomes in any way approaching affluent, they are financially independent.

Many grow their own vegetables, raise hogs and chickens for meat, hunt and fish, and maintain their own cars (and see Williams 2002). This provides a sense of self-sufficiency, dignity and per-

sonal worth that serves as a significant reservoir of manhood and masculinity.

We believe this sense of individual self-worth may be what men in many other parts of the country – whether factory workers or upper middle class service professionals – are seeking.

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Appalachian State Mountaineers Appalachian St APP. 6-0. South Alabama Jaguars South Alabama USA. The race boosts AlSCO's NASCAR Xfinity Series entitlements to three, as the company also recently extended Xfinity Series event sponsorships at BMS sister tracks Kentucky Speedway and Charlotte Motor Speedway. AlSCO is the only company with multiple race sponsorships on the NASCAR Xfinity Series schedule in 2019. "We are thrilled to welcome AlSCO into the family of sponsors here at Bristol Motor Speedway," said Jerry Caldwell, executive vice president and general manager, BMS. "It's exciting to be the first race of an AlSCO Xfinity Series tripleheader in 2019 along with our sister tracks at Kentucky and Charlotte. NASCAR Sprint Cup, Nationwide series action at Bristol Motor Speedway. NASCAR Sprint Cup Series driver Danica Patrick, left, signs a football for Tennessee head football coach Butch Jones and his son Alex Jones before the Food City 500 auto race, Sunday, March 17, 2013, in Bristol, Tenn. (AP Photo/Wade Payne). True grit! Kyle Busch celebrates his victory in the NASCAR Nationwide Series Jeff Foxworthy's Grit Chips 300 at Bristol Motor Speedway. It was Busch's fifth Nationwide Series win at the track. Flag 'em down. Men at work. NASCAR Sprint Cup Series driver Jimmie Johnson stands on the wall as he watches practice as his crew works on his car. Steep turn.