

Dwelling dynamics in consumption encampments: Tailgating as emplaced brand community

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Abstract

Tailgating is an institutionalized form of public revelry and emplacement of brand community that occurs within the context of a consumption encampment. In this ethnographic investigation of tailgating in an American collegiate football setting, we explore the dwelling practices of stakeholders involved in the event. In the duration of a tailgate, a city is raised, and ultimately razed. Over the course of a day, a nomadic brand community encampment arises, replete with ersatz homes, a grid of streets with ingenious address coordinates, playing fields, and channels of information exchange. By examining the process of dwelling, we unpack the mechanics of the space-to-place transformation that characterizes consumption encampments. We analyze the role of three architectonic pillars of tailgating—chorography, conviviality, and community—in the emplacement of brand community and theorize the spatial essence of the collegiate brand.

Keywords

Community, consumption, encampments, festivity, place, tailgating

Brand communities develop around joint issues. These communities create and employ traditions and rituals which maintain a shared moral responsibility to the community (Bradford et al., 2012; Muñoz and O’Guinn, 2001; Schau et al., 2009). Such communities have been examined in the consumer research literature through conventions (Kozinet, 2001), online forums (Muniz and Schau, 2005), and clubs (McAlexander and Schouten, 1998). In the present research, we explore consumption encampments to theorize how physical manifestations shape brand communities. We employ the spatial metaphor of “encompassment” as an aid to our theorizing.

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Consumption encampments

Consumption encampments are evanescent phenomena of varying duration and composition, whose closest commercial analogs are periodic markets, such as swap meets (Sherry, 1990), farmers' markets (Heisley et al., 1993), and art fairs. They also share features in common with trade fairs (Penaloza, 2000, 2001; Rinallo & Golfetto 2006), brandfests (McAlexander and Schouten, 1998; McAlexander et al., 2002), and pop-up stores. Consumption encampments have been the focus of previous inquiry into dwelling sites such as the left field bleachers of Wrigley Field (Holt, 1995), Burning Man (Kozinets, 2002), Mount Everest base camps (Tumbat and Belk, 2011), and Mountain Man Rendezvous (Belk and Costa, 1998).

Consumption encampments also share a "dwelling" aspect which is different from the simpler "visiting" aspect attaching to most of their commercial cousins. Themed flagship brandstores (Diamond et al., 2009), coffee shops (Simon, 2009), and brandfests (McAlexander and Schouten, 1998; McAlexander et al., 2002) have occasionally sought to tap the dwelling ethos. However, a sense of dwelling is largely confined to populist constructions unfolding at a site of consumption, whether private or public, where managerial intention may guide rather than direct consumer agency. Spatiality is constitutive of social activity, not merely a setting for it (Cameron et al., 2010; Chatzidakis et al., 2012).

In the United States, "tailgating" refers to the "social gathering comprising individuals grilling, eating, drinking and socializing in advance of an event," most commonly football (Bradford and Sherry, 2015). In the duration of a tailgate, a city is raised and, ultimately, razed. A nomadic encampment arises, replete with ersatz homes, streets with ingenious address coordinates, playing fields, and information exchange channels. Informants identify themselves as members of particular families, clans, associations, and, most importantly, brand communities, temporarily resident in particular neighborhoods. As with other consumption encampments, there is a blurring of the boundary between the commercial and noncommercial at tailgates, but, by and large, a gift economy supplemented by bartering organizes relations between participants. Shared fandom and enmeshment in this gift economy intensify the feeling of dwelling in the community of tailgaters.

The tailgating of US consumers differs markedly from the behavior of such European cousins as English soccer fans, whose partying is largely confined to prematch drinking in pubs, in private venues, and in transit to the pitch or to the carnivalesque activity in the stadium itself. This behavior comprises a masculine domain characterized by hooliganism, the segregation of rival fans, and the copious consumption of alcohol rather than food. Authorities strive mightily to restrict and control the space available for this behavior (Pearson, 2012). English fans are less dwellers than occupiers in the sense we intend in this article.

The temporary homesteading of public space, its conversion to personal space, and its ultimate transformation into public place are accomplished by tailgaters on carparks and playing fields. US parking lots have been described as the nation's contemporary commons and have the potential to become great public spaces. These lots become the sites of periodic markets, informal sporting events, and illicit parties, as well as tailgating (Ben-Joseph, 2012b). Parking lots in America serve many of the purposes that public squares satisfy in other countries and mirror the types of utility, integrity, and delight that make public place so powerful (Gatje, 2010). There is an "interiority" (Kronhagel, 2010) to such lots that renders them habitable.

This temporary space-to-place transformation occurs in a variety of American venues. For example, the practice of "boondocking" in Walmart parking lots that RV campers enjoy reflects this lure of the parking lot. Analogous encampments have emerged around Amazon's 34 US

warehouses, where “work-amperers” dwell at RV camps dubbed “Amazon Town,” at which Amazon pays the parking fee, and where parking lots at Walmart and Lowes handle the overflow (Woo, 2011). The ready availability of such “commons” ensures a stage upon which the performance of dwelling can catalyze the space-to-place transformation. The tailgate is the university’s opportunity to encourage this enactment.

By making minimally legislated space available to committed campers, the university is able to provoke the legendary energy of sports fans and yoke it to the institutional brand enterprise, effectively harnessing fans’ creativity in the service of brand building. This neglected fusion highlights the zealotry pervading some entertainment vehicles (in particular sports), nudging the singular toward the sacred. For simplicity’s sake, we refer to this fusion as brand community for the balance of this article. Both university and fan base recognize tailgating as an exercise in brand evangelism requiring complementary effort. By physically and ideologically emplacing this effort on a recurring basis throughout the season via face-to-face interaction, participants communalize the brand in a territorial key. Our research goal is to identify and analyze the emplacement mechanism by which fans transform public space first into private place, and then into public place.

Previous accounts of tailgating

Given the vibrancy of this particular form of vernacular culture, there are surprisingly few precedents for our study of tailgating. Breezy, “how-to” guides to the staging of these events (e.g., Drozda, 1996; Koreivo, 2011) predominate, and journalistic accounts (St. John, 2005) of parking lot partying vastly outnumber the analytic treatments of the phenomenon. The academic literature mostly considers the complicity of the tailgate in accidents involving automobiles and alcohol, even in studies of consumer behavior (Wood et al., 2011) where one would expect broader recognition of the practices, paraphernalia, and implications of the event.

A few academic articles bear upon our investigation, but primarily in a tangential fashion. Stamps and Arnould (1998) incorporate a glimpse of the festive character of tailgating in their ethnography of the annual Florida Classic football game. Gibson et al. (2002) employ tailgating as a window on the psychology of football fandom at the University of Florida that provides snapshots of tailgating activity. In their insightful ethnography of six tailgating occasions, Drenton et al. (2009) explore the ritual commitment of fans, using reversal theory to examine motives for participation and strategizing opportunities to capitalize on the marketing implications of the event. Newman (2012) treats tailgating at the University of Mississippi as a performance of racial politics and interprets the event as a metasocial commentary on the culture of the New South. Veri and Liberti (2013) have examined tailgating obliquely, through the vantage point of cooking, in their analysis of four episodes of celebrity chef Guy Fieri’s television program *Tailgate Warriors*.

Of greatest relevance to our effort, Bradford and Sherry (2015) have theorized the tailgate as a “vestaval” that promotes the conversion of private space to public place and temporarily suspends the relations of market and polity to offer a model for resisting the totalizing impact of the spectacle. They also examine (Bradford and Sherry, 2016) the governing mechanism that bridles revelry at these gatherings and imbues tailgating with festive license that stops short of dysfunctional disruption.

These academic exemplars collectively suggest a common theoretical focus that would repay long-term ethnographic investigation: emplaced consumption. Nominal nomads establish dwellings from which issue forth an astounding variety of consumer behaviors that contribute to the

creation of a brand community uniting participants under the aegis of their universities. The dynamics producing this consumption encampment comprise our focal interest. We use the spatial metaphor of encompassment to describe these dynamics, as it connotes both a surrounding and containing, or an incorporating and integrating that is also an entailing. Indeed, the archaic sense of encompassing embodies a causal dimension—causing something to take place or materialize—that aptly synergizes with our theorizing. Deploying materials and ideologies to create dwellings of nested complexity, tailgaters transfigure their surroundings. We theorize dwelling dynamics by analyzing the crucial cogs in the ritual mechanism that drives the space-to-place transformation that characterizes tailgating.

Methodology

We conducted ethnographic fieldwork at a small private Christian college in the Midwest that we have christened Blackthorn University; we also use pseudonyms to respect our informants' confidentiality. Methods employed included participant observation, interview, photography and videography, autodiving, and member checking. Research was conducted at 25 home games over a 4-year period. As a comparative check on our home-game focus, and to consider wider variance, fieldwork was also undertaken at multiple away games, as well as at games completely unaffiliated with Blackthorn University. We also maintained contact via social media with informants during the off-season.

The project was conducted by an ethnographic team observing standard operating procedure for such an enterprise (Sherry, 2006). The authors worked with trained assistants in the data gathering and preliminary analysis phases of the field research. Data were shared among the team weekly, and regular strategy sessions were held throughout each season to analyze current data and plan subsequent collection. Team personnel, ranging in size from three to seven members, turned over on an annual basis. Teams were constructed to insure diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, region, generation, and familiarity with the phenomenon.

We adopted an emergent design (Miles and Huberman, 1994), sampling over time by opportunistic, critical case, snowball, maximum variation, criterion, extreme and typical case, and theory-based styles. Through prolonged immersion, we attempted to participate in and capture as many dimensions of tailgating as its stakeholders experienced. Data collection alternated between our persistent follow-up with established key informants and continual circulation for opportunities with new informants. Constant comparison drove continuous analysis, with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) three-stage process guiding coding. Levels of analysis included individual tailgates and their hosts on any given game day, hosts' tailgates across any given season, and hosts' tailgates across multiple seasons. Data also were analyzed on other dimensions including team performance within a season as categorized by the brand community (e.g. remarkable vs. expected), types of contests (e.g. rivals, highly anticipated, Armed Forces), and weather (e.g. pleasant vs. cold vs. precipitation). Our investigation comprised an expanded form of diachronic and synchronic analyses (Arnould and Waldorf, 1994; Thompson, 1997). We negotiated our analysis jointly. The authors integrated analyses across research teams and over years to produce a synthetic account of tailgating.

We acknowledge the limitations that both a football-centric and home team-centric interpretation of tailgating impose on our understanding of the phenomenon. We also acknowledge the impossibility of comprehensively capturing such a complex phenomenon in a single article, and have adopted the strategy of parsing our interpretation across multiple outlets (e.g. Bradford and

Sherry, 2015, forthcoming), in accordance with accepted ethnographic consumer research practice (Sherry, 2006).

Pillars of emplacement

Among the interpretive themes emerging from our analysis (see Bradford and Sherry, 2016, for additional themes), we have labeled three in particular “pillars,” in recognition of their architectonic nature: chorography, conviviality, and community. These pillars literally ground tailgating, marking it as a construction site and performative venue upon which a negotiated version of place arises. They produce an overarching sense of tailgating as a vernacular counterpoint to the spectacle in the stadium. We unpack these pillars and analyze their significance to the emplacement of brand community. For expository convenience, we follow anthropological and sociological convention first by not citing every observation as a “field note” and second by not privileging interview transcriptions over observation. We provide emic accounts of spaces, places, and practices, frequently highlighting native terms in quotation marks, all of which comes from our field notes. Table 1 provides additional illustrative data.

Chorography

Chorography is the place-making effort undertaken by consumers. Chorography involves both the deployment of material and the negotiation of meaning in the creation of a noncommercial servicescape. Chorography commingles enstorying, ensouling and emplacing. We employ the term in Walter’s (1988, pp 119–120, 143) nuanced sense to connote not just the “concrete milieu” of place, but also its “expressive universe”, that dwellers create by intermingling the presence of selves and stuff. Eliade (1959, p. 65) maintains that by settling and inhabiting a space, it is sacralized. This sentiment is shared by our informants. Place making at the tailgate begins with the deployment of material culture. The stuff of tailgating is distributed to define zones of consumption. Discrete places are constructed for the performance of particular activities and the enactment of the genres of tailgating.

Navigating begins with nominal nomads steering by such Blackthorn University fixtures as campus buildings, monuments, and signage to find the designated general space wherein an appropriate homestead can be sited. Massive aluminum light and sign poles aid navigation within the parking lots. Consumers also orient by names on stadium gates or academic buildings, by fixtures of the physical plant, or by the staging paraphernalia of earlier-arriving tailgaters. Consumers post a range of signage to mark their sites and facilitate the wayfinding of friends and family. Our informant, Cliff, shares: “We have a wind sock with a duck, our last name is Duckworth . . . So that’s kind of our trademark so everyone can find us.” Billowing mascots and characters and a diverse array of fanciful signage also help tailgaters personalize their place.

The principal material objects used to install encampments are vehicles, although sometimes space may be “staked out” by earlier arrivers using household items, such as beer and soda boxes or lawn furniture. A range of vehicles (e.g. bicycles, ambulances, trucks, and recreational vehicles) is used to establish place. The exteriors of these vehicles may be unadorned or lavishly decorated in the tradition of art cars. Panels may be painted with partisan slogans, signs, and images or affixed with brackets and rigging to accommodate temporary displays. RVs may support awnings, or buses rooftop platforms, to extend the vehicle’s place anchoring capability. Many vehicles sport vanity license plates that proclaim affiliation with university. Interiors of the vehicles may be extensively customized to house team memorabilia and lavish entertainment systems. Further, vehicles are

Table 1. Illustrative verbatims and field notes.

Pillar	Consumer experiences from interviews and field notes
Chorography	<p>“The first thing we do is set up the Wolfman [a huge inflatable lawn decoration] so that people can find us.” (Greg)</p> <p>“My grandparents have taken really extreme approaches to still tailgating even in bad weather. [T]hey’ll bring their tent and then they take like PVC plastic and tape it up around the entire thing so it’s almost like an enclosed room outside . . .” (Kelly)</p> <p>Many tailgaters bring big TVs to their tailgates. Usually, you will find other football games or the Blackthorn pregame show being shown. One informant even watches typical television shows, stating, “If you come back in about an hour, we have a montage of the premier videos before the seasons. We have a collection of those, a video montage off the iPod. We watched <i>The Office</i> this morning, <i>30 Rock</i> and <i>Modern Family</i>.” (Field notes)</p>
Conviviality	<p>While he was tailgating, an unknown man stopped by and asked to purchase some wine or beer because he had just proposed to his fiancé at the Cavern on campus. Instead of taking his money, the group invited the two to tailgate with them for the rest of the day and they all became great friends. (Field notes)</p> <p>“ . . . You can tell a lot about the people around here by the pronouns; ‘we lost’, ‘our quarterback’, ‘our lineman’, ‘our defensive line.’ There’s an ownership sense . . . [it] can facilitate these quick 30 second, 45 second, kind of acquaintance making conversations.” (Austin)</p> <p>So plan for forty and then if we get 25 and if the guys next store want the rest of the 15, you know they can have it . . . I mean that usually happens, people just walk around. And my Dad’s been to a couple of tailgates and he knows a couple of people so we’ll ask them over. And again I’ve asked anybody around if they want anything, need anything, come on by and we’ll probably do the same to them (Bill)</p>
Community	<p>“If we give it everything we’ve got out here [in the lots], there’s no excuse for them [the team] not to give everything they’ve got in there [the stadium]” was a commonly voiced sentiment. (Field notes)</p> <p>“It’s about all of us just staying in touch . . . I can point to all these guys in yellow shirts and tell you he’s from Michigan, he’s from North Dakota, Boston, Wyoming, Minnesota, New York . . . people are from all over . . . Everyone goes everywhere, so this has been a way for everyone to come together and stay in touch”. (Claude)</p> <p>“Football is not just guys on the field, people get emotionally involved with this, when their team wins the world is beautiful, when their team loses its like <i>they</i> lost. And the people that tailgate, they believe this stuff, they don’t even see themselves buying into it, they already bought in. [. . .] They buy in that football is community, they buy in . . . into to, its community its camaraderie.” (Lewis)</p>

endlessly customizable, lending a personalized touch to the myriad temporary homesteads. The most common accessory is a canopy, an adjacency providing shelter from the elements. Canopies range from simple roofs to elaborate multi-family tents.

Gasoline-powered generators provide additional power for flat screen TVs, sound systems, and computers. Satellite dishes are deployed to receive signals. Tailgate-mounted accessories such as grills are in widespread use. As the season grows colder, propane heaters may be deployed to keep tailgaters warm. Cooking gear ranging from the (“maiden voyage”) shiny new to the (“seasoned,” “antique,” “heirloom”) battered old is essential to the creation of place, beginning with the abundant comestible and potable stores themselves. A cornucopia of food and drink is arrayed on

game-themed tabletops and seasonal tablecloths, furnished from coolers and containers stored below and behind the tables. Gas grills, griddles, pots, pans, chafing dishes, platters, bowls, plates, tableware, and napkins are common to most sites. Blenders are ubiquitous. Storage bins may help define the perimeter of a tailgate's territory.

Gaming equipment is used to define play space around the tailgate. Platforms used for playing pedestrian-friendly variants of horseshoes—"corn hole" and "washers"—are prevalent. The platforms are often custom painted with the logos of sports teams to which consumers are devoted, facilitating conversations with fans of various metro areas. Footballs fill the air, defining emergent and fluid fields of play, as do drinking games such as beer pong, beer bong, and shotgun. Six-foot tall Jenga puzzles amuse children. Individuals may lose themselves in a book or a playlist defining inner place.

We find three general kinds of place established by tailgaters in their deployment of material objects. The most common and deeply appreciated place is close and personal. Nominal nomads found a temporary homestead within the perimeter of the larger encampment, from which they engage in a public enactment of family. Specialized "rooms" and activity zones characteristic of the home and its environs (i.e. designated as "kitchens," "bars," "dens," "yards") are established by tailgaters. Figuratively speaking, the walls and fences of the residence are removed, rendering the dwelling transparent to onlookers.

A second level of place, at once distinct from but intimately intertwined with the personal, we call the sectoral. Sectoral place is designated by its inhabitants as a village or a neighborhood, a multi-sited dwelling whose residents profess a bond of kinship, friendship, or easy familiarity. There may even be nominal or ceremonial mayors or commissioners of these sites.

Fans acknowledge a third type of place—which we call the tribal—that exists as an overarching construct binding them together into a brand community. They are, collectively, "Thorners." Acting as a host for seasonal rivals affords 'Thorners the opportunity to perform and enact their brand, reinforcing its essence in contrast to that of the other team. This brand community provides a sense of belonging that 'Thorners describe as "family" and "home," as befits committed fans. This sense is further shaped and reflected in the celebration of regional tastes brought together in one gathering place, which we understand as *terroir* (Jacobsen, 2010; Trubek, 2008). Tribal place creates a commons (Sherry and Kozinets, 2007; Visconti et al., 2010) that residents experience as the *genius loci* of the gathering.

Through chorography, goods, services, and meanings are deployed to create the built environment of tailgating and, in collaboration with the other two pillars, infuse it with a tribal ethos. Chorography both comprises and enables performances of place affiliation. It is the most tangible of our pillars and the most sensual manifestation of emplacement. Next, we present our second pillar, conviviality, which together with chorography gives rise to community.

Conviviality

Conviviality is literally the fondness that we observed consumers exhibit for the companionship taken in drinking and feasting. It consists in the dynamics of hospitality, the dance of host and guest. If the collective tailgate can be considered a hybrid of the bazaar and the salon, where a "community of the midway" (Sherry and Kozinets, 2007) is felt to reign, then the predominant currency can be construed as the potential allure of a prospective guest as an interactional partner for any particular host. This is especially true in the case of new, untested prospects, who may prove to be simple, immediate sources of pleasant distraction, or who may become long-term

friends. Many informants described a practice of incorporating a stranger into their party initially as an ad hoc act of hospitality and gradually welcoming that person into the interior realm of fictive kinship. Sometimes these adopted guests become co-hosts, joining the existing encampment with one of their own and extending the tailgate over several sites. These trading partners establish and strengthen their bonds through the mutual exchange of fellowship, which is underwritten by a sharing of food and drink, two quintessential gifts (Visser, 1965, 1986, 2008).

Our informants describe two distinct dimensions of the treatment of guests. The first consists in catering. The host provides a bounty of food and drink. This bounty may comprise a medley of specially prepared traditional, experimental and thematic dishes of varying degree of complexity and a wide variety of staples. Presentation of this cornucopic bounty varies from aesthetically stunning to austere pragmatic. Soft drinks are plentiful. Alcohol is provided in abundance and ranges from wide assortments of top shelf liquors and microbrews to serviceable wines and ubiquitous light beers.

The second dimension consists in connecting. The norms of tailgating charge host and designates with the creation and maintenance of social bonds. The facework of bridging and bonding is essential to the establishment of a convivial atmosphere. Hosts circulate among guests, facilitating conversations, renewing ties between acquaintances, and integrating newcomers into the group. This socializing responsibility may be interrupted by other duties, such as cooking or its supervision. Informants often likened hosting a tailgate to throwing a wedding, in terms of the financial, emotional, social, and physical investment involved.

Our informants describe a dark side to hosting, a kind of invidious comparison that our informant, Lillian, calls “keeping up with the Joneses,” which she experienced in reaction to being embarrassed at a tailgate at which she did not have enough food and drink for everyone who attended. Matching the neighbors does not pertain merely to quantity and quality of stores but extends as well to the world of tailgating accessories. Informants confess to lusting after gear, whether high- or low-tech, they see displayed at other tailgates and acknowledge a competitive spirit that drives some of their purchases. This escalating desire even touches the real estate upon which consumers are encamped. This mentality is a kind of postmodern variation of the potlatch, fueled in large part by the public visibility of private parties, which can foster a competitive ethic among hosts who, in creatively incorporating ideas gleaned from other venues, strive to outdo one another in their performances of hospitality.

Some guests remain at a single tailgate throughout the day. Others establish a home base at their customary tailgate and make sorties to the tailgates of friends and temporary neighbors. Still others engage in progressive tailgating, making the rounds to numerous other parties, often arriving at predictable intervals for particular purposes. Intrepid guests finagle ways to get invited to the tailgates of strangers, to which they may eventually become regular visitors. Our field notes are replete with accounts of strangers meeting at a tailgate and going on to become fast friends, some eventually co-hosts.

The primary obligation of the guest is to appreciate the efforts of his or her host through the consumption of massive amounts of food and drink and sustained social interaction that contributes to the vibrancy of the gathering. One informant describes the importance of food:

It's all about being social, being a part of a community. I think it dates back to those village times where people all ate in a circle around a crackling fireplace. It builds solidarity. We need everyone to be cohesive if we're going to win... Eating and the need to socialize are probably some of the most important aspects of life that we all have in common.

Guests may also contribute materially to the tailgate through gifts of food and alcohol, the lending of equipment, or through monetary donations that will help defray the host's expenses. Gifts of service, in the forms of setup or tear-down assistance, or of table management, are also provided by guests.

In a common interaction ritual, an individual weaves a line of patter, often in the form of a story, into the conversational fabric of the gathering, as an overture to joining the group or as a means of keeping the sonic atmosphere lively and interesting. Personal and family narratives are burnished over time, becoming more eloquent and rote, or more creatively improvisational in character with repeated performance. Stories are recounted, and accounts of storytelling itself are artfully rendered in respect of absent friends. Specific individuals may be called upon to regale the assembly with a particular story beloved of the group.

Ritualized banter among rival fans, often in the form of a ceremonial insult, a pregame prediction grounded in an exchange of statistics and intangibles, or a disclosure of insider information on respective programs, frequently results in the sharing of food and drink. Rivals may be encamped in intimate proximity or may have to walk a gauntlet of varying degrees of gentility through each other's enclaves on their way to the stadium. These aspects of dwelling give rise to reciprocal characterizations of rivals and to tales of great hospitality or hostility experienced at the hands not just of one another but of common rivals as well. Entire athletic conferences may be lionized or ridiculed for their tailgating traditions. The trading of these tales is often accompanied by the sharing of food and drink. "Host" and "guest" have a common etymology shared with the word "hostile," which hints at the "possibility of animus" concealed in these roles and suggests that a guest must be ritually "domesticated" by being made a temporary member of the host's house (*domus*); hospitality "disarms" the guest, "forestalling . . . violence or resentment" (Visser, 2008: 23). This ancient ethos may be detected in the intermingling of home and visiting fans at local tailgates.

Convivial conversation sustained by food and drink is institutionalized among the Irish as "the craic" (Gannon and Associates, 1994) and is a useful ethnographic comparison to the verbal performances at our field site. The verbal art of skillful repartee is especially esteemed among Blackthorn tailgaters. Culture heroes in the shape of former athletic greats and of legendary tailgate diehards are celebrated in informant lore. There is also an underlying ethic of Midwestern civility observable at the tailgate, not unlike the Danish notion of *hygge*, which Linnet (2010) described as an easy, comfortable sociality among individuals.

Conviviality is orchestrated through a division of labor, with individuals accepting established social roles entailing particular obligations. One person may supervise an entire tailgate and be designated the "head honcho." Sometimes there is a specified "cook" or "grill master," social coordinator, electronics specialist, entertainment organizer, or caretaker, who ensures that everyone always has enough food and drink. Someone may be appointed to remain behind and perform cleanup while others depart for the game. Roles frequently shift after the game. Someone who had not played a major role prior to the game may be in charge afterward.

Conviviality has a situatedness about it that energizes collective sentiment. Local hospitality engenders collective generosity in a way that encourages public place to emerge from a confederacy of private effort. Conviviality is both a multisited and transsited phenomenon. It energizes the brand community that chorography emplaces. Conviviality sets the stage for our third pillar to flourish.

Community

Community is the social solidarity arising from the conviviality that chorography situates. It establishes an ethos of perpetual homecoming among consumers. The gift of presence, the intimate

immediacy of dedicated attentiveness so rare in an era of endless distraction and microboredom, seems to arise from the gifts of food and drink. Relaxing in the company of kindred spirits united in support of the brand, partaking in the easy flow of conversation, playing simple games or watching ambient TV, drawing passersby into the fold, and countless other acts of easy sociality engendered by the camaraderie of the feast characterize this experience of tailgating. The gift of presence seems to heighten consumers' perception of their memberships in multiple communities.

At the micro level, communities of tailgaters coalesce around families and friends. Over time, friends can become fictive kin, effectively being absorbed into existing family units, or creating autonomous blended family units of their own. Further, families appear to tailgate more as multi-household units (vs. single households). These larger groupings may comprise intergenerational families and veritable neighborhood associations or villages. This is true as well for friends who do not recognize fictive kinship ties. The size of a tailgate may swell and contract during a season, but the gathering often acts as a magnet for friends of friends.

Intergenerational dynamics loom large in the creation of community (Epp and Price, 2008). Informants stress their long-term dedication to tailgating with stories of their first, and then prolonged exposure to the practice, under the enthusiastic guidance of an elder family member. The joy of bonding time becomes a family tradition to be exported to kith and kin, with attendant practices being transmitted, transmuted, and augmented. Tailgates are commonly described as a "reunion," an opportunity to reconnect with family members and friends able to partake when possible. On several occasions, shrines to ancestors erected at a tailgate site permitted the virtual attendance of departed relatives and reminded all present of the long-term continuity and persistence of community in the face of time (Doss, 2010). Maintenance of intergenerational continuity and the enshrinement of family tradition are important components of the tailgate experience.

At the macro level, tailgaters are defined by their allegiance to a team, the symbolic representative of a particular educational institution. Mike describes it as follows:

For me, tailgating is a lot about the game and Blackthorn football, but I think tailgating to me is bringing somebody who's never been to a Blackthorn experience, and then they leave as a fan. Because I'm a diehard fan. I love to bring somebody that says, 'Yeah I'll stop by your tailgate,' and then they come up and are like, 'Wow! This is cool!'

This macro community is an alliance of individual freeholders and clans defined by genealogy, class year, region, club, company, and convenience.

Informants identify the Blackthorn brand's essence to be "scholarship," "spirituality," "service," and "sport," interwoven in a fabric of "familial" *communitas*, and its campus to be at once a seat of grace and wellspring of tribal authenticity. The authenticity our informants derive stems largely, they say, from their active participation in the creation of traditions that merge organically with the Ur-tradition of Blackthorn University, enlarging and perpetuating it. Consumption is a necessary component of this co-creation.

"Tradition" is routinely cited by tailgaters to describe the compelling aura of the university and its football program. The etymology of tradition incorporates both the process of transmission and the thing transmitted; it connotes something valuable given in trust with the expectation that the recipient keep the gift intact, which implies both a social bond and sense of identity (Bronner, 2011: 27, 11). Tradition typically involves intergenerational transmission, the repetitive performance of collective and authoritative knowledge creatively enacted face-to-face in small tight-knit communities for strategic purposes, and the treatment of "lore" as a spiritual or ethical entity.

Our informants conceive of themselves not only as upholding and transmitting the official tradition of the university but also of creating their own traditions and conjoining them with the official tradition to co-create the university brand. Game day affords the university the opportunity to stage a brandfest and fans the opportunity to evangelize for their team. This potent combination of sacred and profane dynamics produces some very primal networking, which serves to expand membership in a number of the clan communities of tailgaters.

Community is variously rooted in and differentially sustained by multileveled place. Feelings of belonging are tied to and mutually reinforced by fans' connections to specific tailgate sites. These connections are not forged simply by passive inhabitation, but rather through an active dwelling in which place is continuously constructed.

Interpretive summary

We find brand communities may manifest and be enveloped in temporary encampments. In the brand community emerging in the lots, there is a belief that fans are not only creating a do-it-yourself extravaganza for themselves but that they are also contributing psychic and emotional energy to a prospective victory in the stadium. Informants told us that tailgating gets them "pumped," "primed," and "psyched" for the effortful work of cheering their team to a win on the field but, even more, creates a magical or mystical connection to the forces of victory. Blackthorn is able to delegate and energize much of its place branding effort to brand ambassadors whose aesthetic (and manual!) labor transforms the university's greenfield sites to an emplaced brand community (Cova and Dalli, 2009). The complex interplay between place, identity, and publics (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013) is on full display at tailgates.

Fans help co-create the brand community of Blackthorn University through the three pillars that ground the tailgate. Fans are engaged stakeholders whose dedicated and persistent public partying engenders the enduring feeling of family that humanizes the face of the formal institution and complements both the ideology and delivery mechanism of the spectacle in the stadium. They emplace the brand through the dwelling dynamics we have analyzed, establishing an ethos of homecoming and leavetaking that ensouls the university.

The tailgate is a fluid, open, and happening party sustained by nominal nomads. Hirschman et al. (2012: 307, 379) have described and theorized the "transformational spatial process" of liminality, including its facilitation by possessions and its occasionally attendant "gender territorial struggles," as they are situated in the American garage. Ours is more specifically a liminoid site, less concerned with (yet still evincing) role and lifecourse transitions than with transforming public space into public place, via the eversion of private place (Bradford and Sherry, 2015). Tailgating is a muted version of a temporary autonomous zone. The tailgate's pairing with football complements, contradicts, and completes a civil religious spectacle and highlights the shortcomings of a public space for which the extension of household place might compensate.

Across campus, thousands of tailgaters remove the walls that separate their households from one another and invite the multisensory participation of what would ordinarily be mere publics or audiences in the domestic life of the dwelling. These customized dwellings engulf public space in a way that tames or cultivates it and harnesses it in the service of a shared ethos. Public space is converted to public place through this mass eversion of households (Bradford and Sherry 2015). In our account, we have analyzed the role of crucial cogs in this eversion mechanism. We have used the concept of dwelling to theorize the dynamics that

emplace eversion. Countless personal traditions are performed in concert and merged with university traditions in a way that makes our nominal nomads both mystical teammates of the players in the stadium and active co-creators of the brand, bent on humanizing the spectacle of official game day experience.

Our informants emplace brand community in a very intimate and public fashion, inscribing tribal territory on land and soul. The spatial metaphor that captures the process we have analyzed is encompassment. Tailgating, as encompassment, reflects not only the encircling and enveloping of brand community, but also brings it about, in both material and ideological fashion. As the consumption encampment transforms from space to place and back again, through “co-created processes” involving a “full range of stakeholders” (Warnaby and Medway, 2013: 358), its nomadic dwellers celebrate the brand’s commensal essence.

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